

Tale of the plugs: We need your help
February 24, 2014

Last week, graduate student DJ Michael and I took turf plugs from turfgrass areas around the John Seaton Anderson Turf Research Center in Mead, NE. Winter in Mead and most of Nebraska has been tough with little snow cover, relentless wind, and dramatic temperature swings. Overall the turf looked battered and bruised with colors ranging from straw brown to white. The bentgrass putting green at Mead was no exception. The higher areas on the west side of the green looked very white while lower areas of the green had a dark brown water-soaked appearance. Our footprints lingered as we walked across the surface to take our samples. Clearly the leaves were dead but what about the crowns? We took several samples from the white areas of the green (west side), the darker brown northwest corner of the green, a perennial ryegrass plot, and a rough bluegrass plots with the method described in the Turf iNfo from last week: <http://turf.unl.edu/pdfctarticles/samplingwinterkill.pdf>.

The plugs have been recovering in a greenhouse on East Campus for the past week. To our surprise, the first plugs to show signs of life were from the worst looking (bright white) areas of the creeping bentgrass putting green. New green leaves emerged from the crowns less than two day after being placed in the greenhouse. There has been limited new leaf emergence from the brown bentgrass and rough bluegrass areas and no emergence from the perennial ryegrass after seven days. While it's great the white bentgrass area is still alive, the rapid green-up may indicate that area is less cold hardy and could be more susceptible to low temperature injury this week. We will continue to monitor all of the plugs for another week before we declare them dead. The moral of the story is you can't visually tell if there is winterkill by simply looking at the turf. Take plugs inside to assess the situation.

We need your help. Please complete the winterkill survey or call (402.472.1869) or email me with the state of your turf plugs. We need to know how widespread the damage is across the region. We can host recovery workshops and create a press release to notify the public if injury is widespread. We've also created an online survey for you to anonymously report the condition of your turf plugs. Please take the time to complete the survey even if all your turf plugs green-up.

Find the online survey here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/winterkill>

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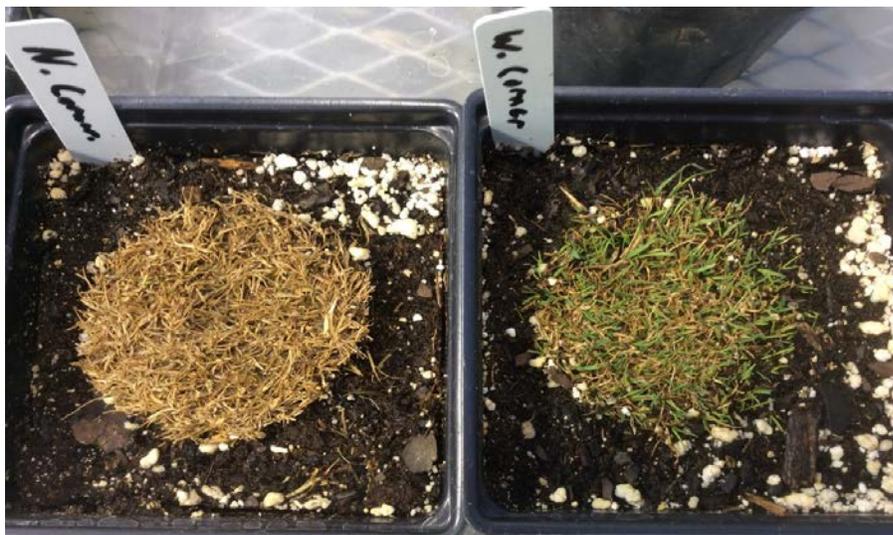


Figure 1. Despite looking much worse in the field, plugs from the west side (right) of the bentgrass green have rapidly improved in the greenhouse compared to the plugs from the north corner (left).