

Following are the most frequently asked questions arising from golfers as many courses in the Great Lakes region are experiencing widespread turfgrass winterkill.

Why did the grass die?

A thick sheet of ice literally suffocated turf for a majority of the winter. In some cases, the ice cover lasted for over 100 days.

What was different this winter?

An ice and snow storm prior to Christmas and heavy rain in early January flooded the ground. The following polar vortex quickly froze the liquid water and encased the turf in suffocating ice cover.

Why did some grasses survive?

There are two prominent grasses on golf course putting greens around the Great Lakes. Creeping bentgrass is a desirable species which is very tolerance to ice cover. Annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*) is a weed that can slowly invade creeping bentgrass greens. This grass species cannot tolerate prolonged ice cover and will quickly die from ice suffocation.

Could anything have been done to prevent this winterkill?

Extremely expensive waterproof turf covers and ice removal helped in some cases. However, turf damage is still widespread in spite of these preventative measures.

What's being done to aid recovery?

Thinned turf will recover slowly, but most courses will require overseeding to some extent. Golf course superintendents are using their experience and education to quickly repair and recover from the winterkill damage. The new seedlings will need expert care to speed recovery and prepare the new plants for summer heat and drought stress.

How long will recovery take?

Recovery will largely depend on Mother Nature. Warm temperatures and ample rain will help accelerate recovery, but a cold and dry spring will hinder seed germination and slow recovery. Please be patient.

What can golfers do to help?

Please respect all cart rules and golf course signs. New seedlings can be easily killed by foot or golf cart traffic. Patience now will accelerate recovery and get your favorite course back to tip-top shape as quickly as possible.

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Figure 1. Widespread winterkill can be seen around the Great Lakes region. Many of these dead areas will need to be reseeded this spring. Please be patient.