

**Do I need to water right now?****November 2, 2017**

While many news outlet across Nebraska have recently highlighted the above average precipitation this past October (Fig. 2), the timing of all that rain wasn't best for turf health. Light drought stress prior to winter can help the turf harden off before the severe cold. The turf crowns (the growing point of leaves and roots) accumulate sugars in fall which remove water between the cells. This increases cold tolerance. Drought in early to mid-fall can also turn on genes to promote cold hardiness. On the other side of the spectrum, turf with visible drought into winter may be at greater risk of desiccation.

The wet conditions in early October didn't allow for much drought/cold preconditioning. Since then, however, the lack of rain fall and warm weather has promoted a fair amount of drying. Some areas even have visible drought symptoms. Over the past week, most of Nebraska has received less than 0.05" of precipitation (Fig. 1). The question now is, "How much do I need to water going into the winter?"

For turf growing on heavier soils (more silt and clay), additional irrigation may still not be necessary. Turf growing on sandy soils will likely need some irrigation to prevent visible wilt. My recommendation would be to allow the soil to be near, yet safely above, wilt points. You don't want to see wilted turf this time of year. If necessary, small amounts of irrigation will help keep the turf dry but healthy going into winter. It is also recommended that heavier sand topdressing or protective covers be applied to turf areas that have a history of winter desiccation.

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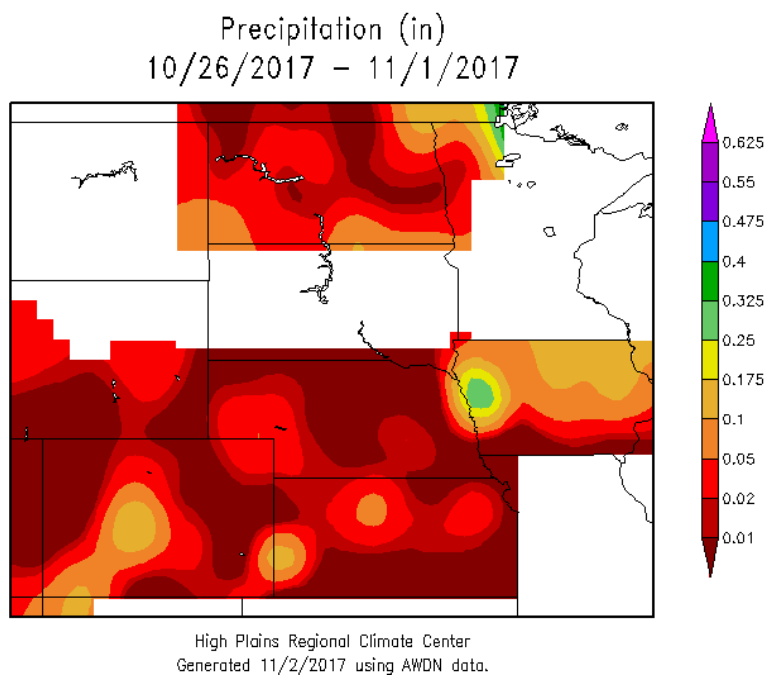


Figure 1. Total precipitation over the past seven days. Most of the rainfall occurred in early October, but that last half of the month has been very dry. This has led to visible drought symptoms in many turfgrass stands. It is especially true for grass growing on sandy soils.

Image courtesy of the High Plains Region Climate Center (AWDN maps).

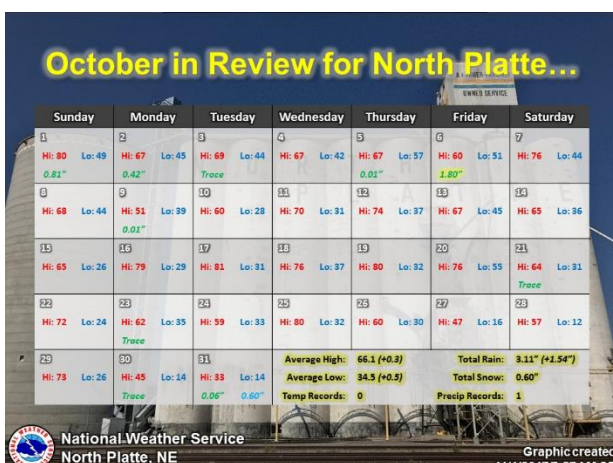
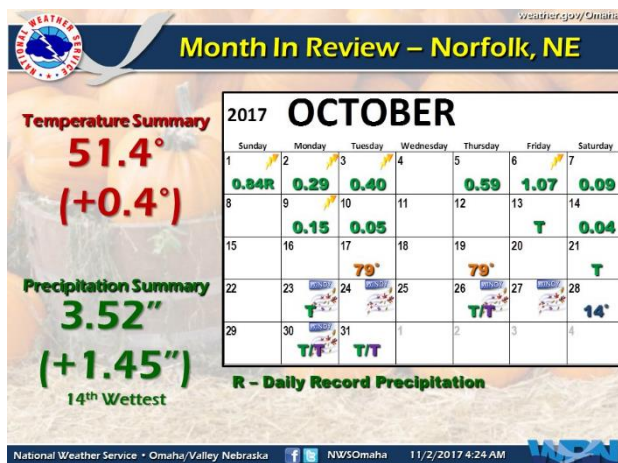
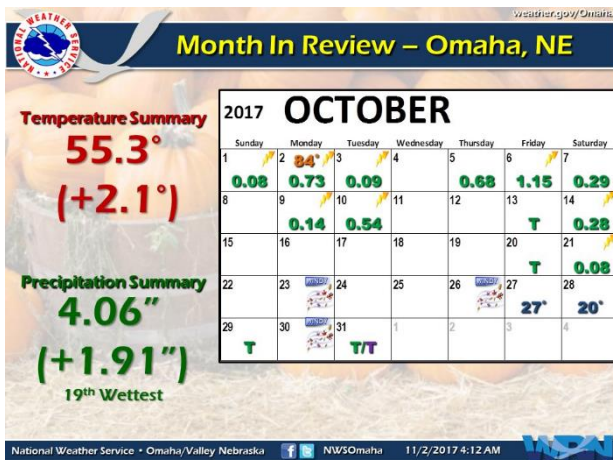
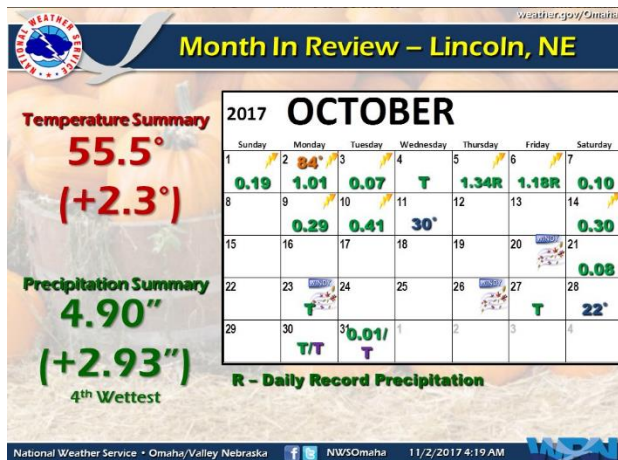


Figure 2. Weather summaries from the month of October in Lincoln, Omaha, Norfolk, and North Platte, NE. These figures were generated by the National Weather Service Offices near Omaha and North Platte and posted on their Twitter accounts.