

**At least you haven't had to mow much
April 12, 2018**

It's not a secret, spring is way behind this year. The good news, many haven't had to mow yet and it's still too early to apply those pre-emergence herbicides. The bad news, spring seeding will be much more difficult this year. The cold weather has slowed germination and is compressing the spring seeding window. That means there may not be a sufficient period of time for the seeds to germinate and mature before the summer stress ramps up. For homeowners, we don't want to force green up with a lot of nitrogen fertilizer and we need to hold off aggressive cultivation until the turf resumes normal growth.

Another issue we are seeing on golf courses is winterkill. While it isn't as widespread as 2014 and 2015, there are patches and areas of dead turf. It's been tough to tell for sure because it's been so cold. Is the turf really dead or just slow to wake up? To definitively know, bring plugs inside and watch for green up. I'm sure some areas will be dead and others will just be slow. It is good to know, especially with the shortened seeding window.

So what killed the turf? It's hard to tell. It could have been the mild and dry weather last November and December followed by the sub 0F temperatures at the end of 2017. It could have also been some crown hydration and regrowth in March that reduced cold-hardiness prior to temperatures in the low teens last week. Superintendents that made multiple DMI fungicide applications for snow mold or continued their PGR applications until early December also have noticed slower green up. It's difficult to know the exact reason, but the end result is usually the same.

This spring has been tough, and the Climate Prediction Center isn't optimistic that the below average temperature pattern is about to change. For now, homeowners should be patient and professionals should assess the state of their turf. If seed is needed, get it in the ground to try and salvage as much of the spring before Mother Nature quickly turns up the thermostat to summer. At least it's been easy to keep up with mowing so far.

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Figure 1. Winter dog spot damage may require seeding this spring, especially if on tall fescue or perennial ryegrass. Rake up the soil and seed as soon as possible to lengthen the spring seeding window.



Figure 2. Late season DMI and PGR applications have led to some discoloration. The grass is green and growing beneath the straw-color leaves, but is slow to elongate. Eventually the dead leaf tissue will be mowed off.

Figure 3. Some of the annual bluegrass spots on this green are very slow to green up. They may be dead from the extreme weather swings. Take plugs to confirm they are dead.



Figure 4. My backyard green developed wilt on the ridge (left side) last November and never recovered. It appears to have weakened the turf into the winter. Significant winterkill.