

**NORTHERN MINNESOTA GRASS SEED GROWERS  
NEWSLETTER  
MAY 5, 2009**

**INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to the first edition of the Grass Seed Growers Newsletter for 2009. The primary objective of this newsletter is to report on growing conditions, crop development and progress of perennial ryegrass and bluegrass crops. The newsletter will be sent weekly; with pest alerts as pests infestations dictate or production problems arise

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**RYEGRASS GROWING DEGREE DAYS (GDD)**

Ryegrass GDD will be tracked for the 2009 growing season with comparisons to the last three years. A base temp of 32 degrees F will be used for ryegrass (T-Base =32 F). The GDD information presented in the table below is year to date data through and including April 30 for 2006 to 2009.

<b>Year</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>09 vs. 08</b>
March	30	6	90	53	+24
April	247	202	322	529	+45
Total	277	208	412	582	+69

The 2009 season is 69 GDD ahead of 2008, but -135 and -305 GDD behind the 2007 and 2006 seasons, respectively. Typically, mildew in bluegrass is the first disease of the season. In the last three years, mildew infestations have corresponded to the accumulation of approximately 650 GDD. How close will the 2009 season compare to the previous years? Field scouting will determine the actual incidence of pest outbreaks.

Keep in mind the number of GDD can change quickly. For example, in 2007 the first week of May accumulated an average of 23 GDD/day. Weeks with above normal temperatures will increase the rate of GDD accumulation, while a cooler than average week will result in a slow accumulation of GDD.

**GENERAL CROP CONDITION**

**Ryegrass**

It is still too early to assess the winter survivability of perennial ryegrass. However, if ryegrass plants have white roots and the crown tissue is whitish to green in color that is a good sign that ryegrass survived the winter. A few days in the 70's will shift the young ryegrass plants into a growth mode and will be a better indicator of winter survivability.

**Bluegrass**

Bluegrass fields are greening up and for the most part, look good. Bluegrass plants will soon beginning show signs of "stretching out" and will soon begin a rapid elongation growth phase. It is important to get weed control operations completed prior to this elongation and jointing stage.

## **PEST MANAGEMENT**

### **Ryegrass**

Herbicide applications are right around the corner. Now is the time to scout the fields for broadleaf weeds. Winter annuals (dandelion, shepardspurse, and cockle) are growing well and are beginning to bolt and flower. Annual weeds (volunteer canola, mustard, and smartweed) are first to emerge in the spring. Weeds grow fast and regular scouting is essential to determine the best weed control program for your situation.

### **Bluegrass**

It's not too early to begin to scout bluegrass fields. One of the diseases that cause economic losses in bluegrass is powdery mildew. This disease is favored by cool, wet conditions with lush bluegrass plant growth. When these conditions exist, this disease can rapidly infect bluegrass plants and in just a matter of days can rapidly spread throughout an entire bluegrass field.

## **CROP MANAGEMENT**

### **Ryegrass**

If ryegrass has not been fertilized, now is the time to begin planning a ryegrass fertility program. A single application of nitrogen has been successful in the past. Recent trial results indicate a split application of nitrogen may offer more efficient use of nitrogen with higher ryegrass yields.

### **Bluegrass**

If bluegrass was not fertilized last fall it is critical to get nitrogen to these fields soon. Aerial applications of nitrogen should be considered if field conditions will not allow travel for in the next week. Nitrogen must be in the root zone during the rapid growth phase of late tillering and jointing.

A discussion of fungicide choices for mildew control in bluegrass, fertility programs in ryegrass and spring herbicide applications in bluegrass will be included in next weeks edition which will be released on May 12, 2009.