MINNESOTA TURF SEED GROWERS NEWSLETTER
MAY 12, 2009

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 May 10 for 2006 to 2009.

Year	2009	2008	2007	2006	09 vs. 08
March	30	6	90	53	+24
April	247	202	322	529	+45
May 1-10	133	96	254	185	+37
Total	410	304	666	767	+106

The 2009 season is 106 GDD ahead of 2008, but -256 and -357 GDD behind the 2007 and 2006 seasons, respectively. Keep in mind the number of GDD can change quickly. For example, in the first 10 days in May the accumulated GDD was less than 10/day in 2008 and over 25/day in 2007. How does 2009 compare? The accumulated GDD for the first 10 days in May was 13/day.

GENERAL CROP CONDITION

Ryegrass

It is still too early to assess the winter survivability of perennial ryegrass. For the most part, it appears ryegrass made it through the winter quite well. Reports of winterkill in winter wheat have been observed in low areas of fields. Ryegrass may follow a similar pattern. A few days in the 70's will shift ryegrass plants into a growth mode which will be a better indictor 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 will soon 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.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture approved a 24C label for Nortron in ryegrass. Nortron at 2 pints/A has activity on volunteer cereals, annual bluegrass, foxtail barley and other grassy weeds. Nortron has soil and postemergence activity. However, it is critical to make applications before grassy weeds have 2 leaves for postemergence activity.

Bluegrass

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.

Many fungicides have activity on powdery mildew in bluegrass. However, Tilt appears to the product of choice for mildew control in bluegrass. Product rates of 2 to 4 oz have been used successfully in previous years. Keep in mind the higher use rate will offer extended period of disease control.

Beacon is used for quackgrass and other weed control in bluegrass. The Beacon use rate is 0.38 oz/A, and should be used with a non-ionic surfactant. Beacon applications should be made before the jointing stage in bluegrass. The jointing stage in bluegrass corresponds to the time when the variety 'Park' gets the uneven (ragged) look.

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 fall or spring. Fall applications of 100-30-30 to 130-30-30 are used across the ryegrass growing region. In the spring, nitrogen fertilizer rates are reduced to 80-30-30 to 110-30-30. Ammonium sulfate at a rate 5 to 20 units have been used with positive results. Local experience will determine the optimum product rate and mixture. Several growers are experimenting with split application of nitrogen. Split applications of nitrogen offers the advantage of improved nitrogen use efficiency and reduced the potential of loss of nitrogen due to extreme environmental conditions. Several trials will be conducted this year to evaluate various fall/spring splits and spring spit applications of nitrogen.

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 weed control options in ryegrass will be included in next week's edition which will be released on May 19, 2009.