

MINNESOTA TURF SEED GROWERS NEWSLETTER
August 18, 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 August 16 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	515	501	746	730	+14
June	860	870	990	943	-10
July	943	1034	1156	1206	-91
August 1-16	545	549	538	566	-4
Total	3,140	3,162	3,842	4,027	-22

The 2009 season is -4 GDD behind 2008, and -702 and -887 GDD behind the 2007 and 2006 seasons, respectively. Last week we finally received several days of day time temperatures in the high 80's and low 90's. This week we are back to the cool conditions that have been with us most of the year.

Last week was a good one for ryegrass swathing and several area fields were harvested. Ryegrass can mature quickly in hot dry weather. Be sure to talk to your seeds man and keep an eye on ryegrass fields that are close to maturity. When ryegrass is close to the 40% moisture level, seed moisture can drop 2% points or more per day!

GENERAL CROP CONDITION

Ryegrass

Ryegrass swathing will continue this week. Combines will be in the fields later in the week if the weather forecast holds true. Keep an eye on ryegrass maturity as fields can turn quickly. As ryegrass seed moisture levels decline, the amount of seed shatter will increase. Ryegrass fields that have turned quickly may have to be swathed in the early morning and evening. This technique of not swathing in the middle of the day was a management practice used to reduce seed shatter in timothy seed productions.

Bluegrass

Burning of bluegrass will continue this week.

CROP MANAGEMENT

Ryegrass

When to swath ryegrass? That is a question often asked by growers. It seems our eyes are drawn to the most mature areas of the field. When making the determination on when ryegrass is to be swathed, be sure a **representative sample is taken from the entire field not just the areas that are most mature**. One method to get a representative field sample is to take samples from areas that look mature, from areas that are intermediate and from areas of the field that look green. Note the percentage of the field in each of these categories. This will give you a good overall field estimate of maturity. Once these samples are collected seed moisture can be determined using a microwave oven.

If possible delay swathing until moisture content of the seed is 35 to 40%. Seed moisture content is determined rubbing the seed from the spike and using the microwave oven to remove the seed moisture.

Caution: In addition to the seed sample, place a small amount of water in a microwave safe container. This will prevent the seed from exploding in the oven. Start with a predetermined seed weight (10 grams) and set the microwave oven for 1 to 1.5 minutes. Continue this procedure until the seed weight is constant. For example, if the initial weight was 10 grams and the final weight was 6 grams the seed moisture is 40%.

Bluegrass

With the bluegrass harvest almost complete the next step in bluegrass production is burning. A good burn is one of the CRITICAL steps in bluegrass management. A good burn sets the stage for seed production for the next season. Relative humidity levels in the 40's or lower tend to promote a clean burn of bluegrass straw.

Remember to get a burning permit and it's always a good idea to give your neighbors a "heads up" when you plan to burn. One of the first reactions to smoke in the neighborhood is a house or building fire. A phone call or two prior to burning will ease some of this anxiety.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA RESEARCH

Rust Collection

Cristal Cisneros, a graduate student in St. Paul, is working on ryegrass rust as a part of her graduate studies. She would like to gather ryegrass rust samples from the ryegrass growing counties of northwest Minnesota. If you have, or know of ryegrass plants that have rust, contact your agronomist, seeds man or send a reply by e-mail and arrangements will be made to get these samples to St. Paul.

Ryegrass starter fertilizer trial

This trial was seeded last week at the Magnusson Research Farm. Ryegrass has emerged. Preliminary observations indicate ryegrass emergence is similar in plots with starter fertilizer compared to no fertilizer. However, more time is required to make a recommendation. This trial will help determine the response of ryegrass to a starter fertilizer. A starter fertilizer may increase the fall growth rate and/or improve winter survivability of ryegrass.

The next edition of this newsletter will be released on August 25, 2009.