

MarketWatch



Most distributors were pretty excited about Spring heading into May, with wide reports of excellent movement for April. Unfortunately for many, May could have been much better. Some Midwest states, such as Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, will experience their 16th day in a row that the "severe storm" warnings will be posted sometime today. Surrounding states have not fared much better; some worse. Heavy rains, flooding, high winds, tornados, hail and the like are just not that great for seed movement. Now, the good news? Most are saying that 'the work is still there', and that may mean a better than average June or a better than average fall, again, depending on the weather.

CropTalk

Weather continues cooler than normal in the Willamette Valley. May was below normal rainfall, making it the fourth consecutive month in this pattern. Most crops will be ready to begin harvesting one week to 10 days earlier than normal. At this time there is no reason to expect anything but an average crop. The next few weeks are important, because too much heat could shorten the crop. There seems to be more perennial ryegrass fields with heavy contamination of poa annua. We will know much more in the next 30 days!



Even the Best Have a Hard Time Growing Good Grass



Most golf fans are aware of this week's Memorial Tournament at Jack Nicklaus' Muirfield Village Golf Club in Dublin, Ohio - dubbed one of the world's best golf courses. Now you'd assume that a place like this would have no problem growing grass, right? Well, for the most part that's true. Muirfield is absolutely one of the finest examples of perfect turf anywhere. So why after only one year of rebuilding their greens, planted with some of the best bentgrasses, were many of their greens struggling to survive last year? According to their new superintendent Paul Latshaw, it had nothing to do with the grass; rather, it had everything to do with the trees. After 30 years of growth, the trees surrounding the greens are simply too much for the turf. For example, the 18th green, historically the healthiest and most open green had a root depth of six pennies (why they measure in pennies, I do not know!), compared to the shady 14th green's depth of one penny - a sixfold difference! So what did they do to solve this problem? Well, for those of you who will watch the tournament, expect to hear much discussion about how many trees they have removed - and they aren't through yet. Simply put, shallow-rooted plants, like bentgrass cannot compete with trees. You can have one or the other, but not both.

Research shows that plants growing in very dense shade are typically drained of food reserves, resulting in weak plants. And although not as common under fancy greens like those found at Muirfield, in clay soil, most of the shade trees' feeder roots grow in the upper 8 inches - exactly where turfgrass roots grow. Worse still, tree roots can grow a significant distance past the trees' drip zone, thus constantly inhibiting and robbing turf plants of light, water, air movement and nutrient and making them more at risk to insects, disease, and environmental stress. It's a wonder that any shallow rooted turfgrasses live for as long as they do with such an uphill battle.



So, What is the Best Grass for Shade?

Well, if The Ohio State Univ.'s **8-Year evaluation** is any indication, the answer might surprise you. Way back in 1992, thirty cultivars, representing seven species were planted to evaluate long-term persistence of turf in shaded conditions. Fertilizers, pesticides and irrigation use were held to a minimum in order to reflect typical management for golf course roughs, parks, etc. Can you guess what species had the highest ground coverage and the best visual quality ratings after 8 years? If you guessed tall fescue, you're right. In fact, during the study period, the tall fescues actually improved in quality and coverage. This was probably due in part to the fact that **"tall fescue's deeper and more extensive root systems gave the turf a competitive advantage over the other species for nutrient acquisition."** For a complete copy of this very interesting study, contact Jonathan at 888-550-2930 or jonathan@smithseed.com. And, for access to some of the best "competitive advantage" around, make sure you are selling Smith Seed tall fescues, like **Titan Ltd., Rendition, Kittyhawk 2000**, and our newest member, **Covenant!**