Cornell TURFGRASS Short CUTT

YOUR WEEKLY LINK TO TURFGRASS INFORMATION!

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Gazing in the Grass

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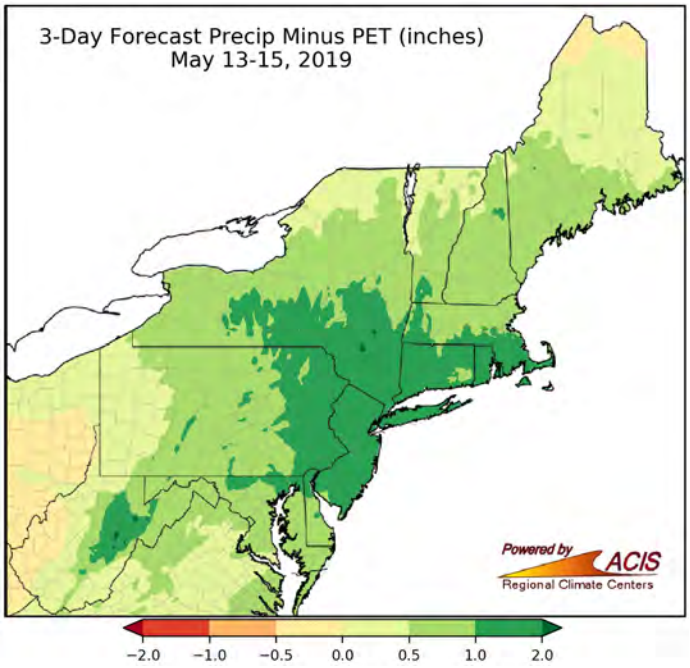
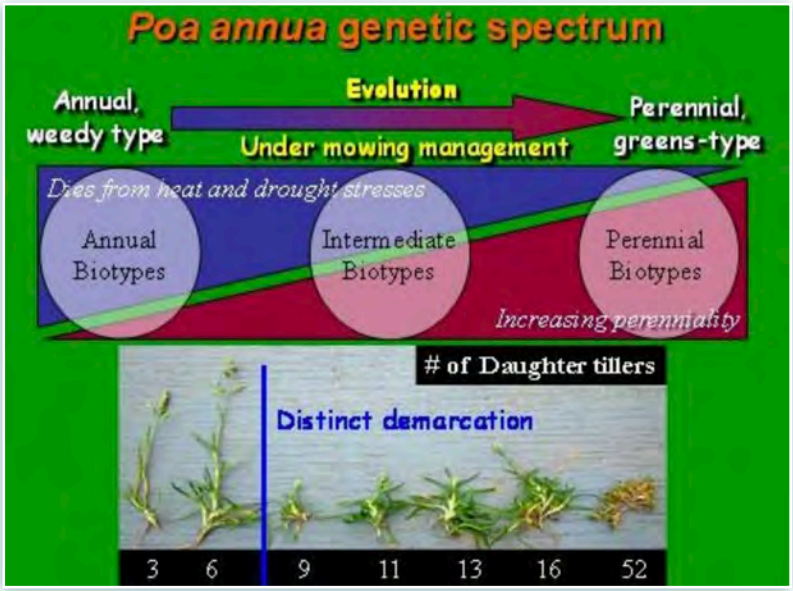


The Northeast US finds itself in a familiar pattern of steady rainfall, cloud cover, and the continued north to south cool to warm gradient. North of NYC growing degree days indicate 3-7 days behind normal, and south of NYC 3-7 days ahead of the 30 yr average. The persistent rainfall is keeping many soils saturated and difficult to perform maintenance, in addition to significant reductions in turf cover as the result of normal use for sports or golf. A close look at our gridded CORNELL FORECAST moisture deficit map reveals the expected swath of 1-2" excess. Currently EvapoTranspiration (ET) rates are averaging 0.50-0.75".n Essentially this is indicating that not accounting for potential water loss to ET, rainfall totals ranged from 2-3"!

Soils are holding more water and remain cool and this appears to be altering insect activity according to our soil insect ecologist Professor Kyle Wickings. "Moderate temperatures are allowing chinch bugs to persist through winter, crane flies are exploiting the extreme conditions and causing substantial damage." He continued, "excess moisture is forcing ABWs to be more spaced out since many fairway areas have saturated conditions that the ABW avoids and might move to wider area and be less concentrated come feeding time. "So far populations are emerging", he continued, "consistent with phenological indicators." , but clarifies with info from Professor Olga Kostromytska at UMass who reported samples for the Weevil Trak monitoring program are only adults to date, no sign of any young larvae emerging and don't expect to see any larvae for another couple weeks north of NYC. Of course, a stretch of warm weather (highs in the mid 70s), could change things quickly. In previous years tiny larvae in warmest locations were evident by mid-May, but not this year. The next indicator to watch for is *Rhododendron catawbiensis* full bloom, a good time to apply a larvicide. At this point it seems like that will be at least a week or two.

Heavy annual bluegrass flowering (AKA seedhead production) has begun along the PA line, up the Hudson Valley and into lower elevations of Central and Western NY. Annual bluegrass flowering is a rite of Spring in the Northeast that is viewed with varying levels of interest and disdain. Additionally, there are key physiological events that will begin to occur as heavy flowering ends over the next few weeks. Remember annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*) is a true winter annual (germinates in Autumn, overwinters as bunch-type grass, flowers in Spring and over summers as seed. The annual type (*P. Annua*) descends from a spontaneous mutation between *Poa trivialis* and either *P. Supina* or *P. inferma.* It widely adapted, found on ALL continents including the more northern reaches of Antarctica!



For lawn and sports turf managers, annual bluegrass is often more annual than perennial. Therefore, it is characterized by shallow roots, and like it's parent (*P. trivialis*), very susceptible to heat and drought stress. Interestingly, the last 12-14 months have seen records amounts of moisture in the Northeast, and there has been an increase in annual-type *P.annua* in the landscape, due to the lack of ANY measurable moisture stress. Good selective control of the annual type in these areas is post followed by pre-emergence herbicide application in late-August, Tenacity offers an excellent option, but beware of bleaching.

Credit: Todd Raisch Ridgewood CC, NJ

The inset image shows heavy annual bluegrass flowering in golf course tee surrounds adjacent to recently installed Kentucky bluegrass sod. Golf turf managers are often the most aggressive in attempting to suppress the flowering habit of annual bluegrass with plant growth regulators. Over the last several years many have adopted late season applications of Proxy and flowering suppression has improved. Of course there are demonstrated benefits of suppressing flowering such as increased rooting and stored energy for growth, so plan now for this autumn. Regardless of when or how much flowering occurs, when a flower is produced that tiller will senesce and die, rooting declines briefly, and often the perennial biotype will experience mild abiotic stress. Currently, due to the lack of any measurable heat or drought stress since early-2018, perennial *P. Reptans* populations are thriving and nowhere is this more evident than the putting surfaces such as the ones currently on display at the Bethpage State Park (Black Course) for the 101st PGA Championship. *Editors note: I am currently embedded with the course maintenance staff at Bethpage and can say with some confidence that in spite of all the rainfall these last few weeks, the P. reptan playing surfaces that have been heavily modified by sand are firm, dense, healthy, and fast! Best of luck to Andrew, Mike, Vincent and the crew!*