



Louisiana Turfgrass Association

Serving the turfgrass industry for over 50 years

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Bermudagrass Commonly Infests Weak St. Augustinegrass

For a lawn care professional, there is no immediate gratification for taking out bermudagrass in St. Augustinegrass. Glyphosate then plug or re-sod is the route that most contractors end up taking in severe infestations. However, to get in a situation where bermudagrass is taking over probably means some mismanagement of the St. Augustinegrass has occurred. There are probably some problems with mowing height, disease and insect management and fertility.



Bermudagrass (narrow leaf grass) infests thin St. Augustinegrass

Mowing height: The biggest error homeowners and lawn care companies make when it comes to St. Augustinegrass is with mowing height. St. Augustinegrass has little tolerance for close mowing and scalping and becomes very susceptible to invasive weeds like bermudagrass. Realize that in a full sun situation – the growing advantage goes to bermudagrass over St. Augustinegrass. Your only defense in full sun is to maintain St. Augustinegrass near 3” and allow the broader leaved St. Augustinegrass to shade back the shade-intolerant bermudagrass. So prevention with correct mowing height is really essential. This means lawnmowers may need to be set on the highest or next to the highest setting to achieve the correct mowing height.

Disease and insect management: Another problem that I see with St. Augustinegrass is turf managers often allow diseases like brown patch and insects like chinch bugs and armyworms kill back large patches of the lawn.

Brown patch is a very common disease that causes circular dead spots in the lawn. The disease infects many different types of southern turfs but St. Augustinegrass is the most susceptible species. Brown patch becomes most active when temperatures drop below 80 F. This corresponds to fall and spring in Louisiana. The disease tends to become inactive when temperatures exceed 90 F. Nitrogen fertilizer applied too early in the growing season (ex. February to early March) or too late (ex. September/October) and in excessive quantities also tends to increase the severity of the disease. I encourage lawn care professionals to apply a fungicide such as azoxystrobin, just before brown patch season in the fall and spring (see product labels for application frequency), recommended fungicide to prevent or lessen the severity of the disease. Any weak or dead area of the lawn is probably going to end up with a significant bermudagrass infestation.



Brown patch damaged St. Augustinegrass is very susceptible to bermudagrass infestations

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Potential Spring Disease Issues

Spring is a little early this year, which means that “green-up” will also be a bit earlier than normal. With that in mind, it’s time to take action to prevent potential disease problems that we are likely to encounter in the next month or so. The two diseases that we encounter most often in the spring are large patch caused by *Rhizoctonia solani* and dollar spot caused by *Sclerotinia homeocarpa*. Oddly enough, your fertility program will have a profound influence on both of these diseases, but not necessarily in the same manner. If the warm weather of late February got you in the mood to mow and you’ve already applied weed and feed, as many of my neighbors have, you’re more likely to run into large patch problems than if you had waited until the grass was fully out of dormancy. On the other hand, if your fertility program last year was a bit on the light side, you may see some dollar spot.



Dollar spot in a St. Augustinegrass lawn.

Both of these diseases are more likely to develop when the days are warm and the nights are cool leading to the frequent development of dew or periods of fog in the morning because both *R. solani* and *S. homeocarpa* require free water on the leaves to grow and cause disease. Both diseases can also be controlled with fungicides, but they need to be applied preventatively. Fungicides readily available at garden centers that are effective against *R. solani* include azoxystrobin and triadimefon, whereas those effective against *S. homeocarpa* include propiconazole, myclobutanil, triadimefon and thiophanate-methyl. Yes, azoxystrobin is now available for use by homeowners and is sold as Maxide Dual Action Disease Killer granules. However, the ready-to-spray formulation available under the same name contains propiconazole, not azoxystrobin.

Dr. Don Ferrin
LSU AgCenter,

For information on commercial fungicides for control of these and other diseases of our warm-season turfgrasses, see the presentation I gave at the Louisiana Turfgrass Association in January at http://www.lsuagcenter.com/en/lawn_garden/commercial_horticulture/turfgrass/disease_pest_management/DiseasesofWarmseasonTurfgrasses.htm

Successful Annual Meeting!

The Louisiana Turfgrass Association held one of the most successful annual conferences back in January. Our featured speaker was Dr. Wayne Hanna, a world renowned turfgrass breeder from the University of Georgia. He really did an outstanding job informing our group about how varieties were developed and the latest on new varietal development at the University of Georgia. Additionally, our attendees learned about tropical sod webworms and armyworms as well as disease problems faced by turfgrass managers throughout the year. The afternoon was dedicated to athletic field management.

I had a lot of positive feedback regarding this meeting. I look forward to seeing all of you back in even greater numbers next January.



Troy Romero, outgoing president of the LTA, receives a plaque of appreciation from our new president, Don Brasseaux

Raspberry crazy ants

A new invasive pest ant was discovered near Pasadena, Texas in 2002 by Tom Raspberry, a pest management professional. This ant is called the Raspberry crazy ant and is named after the man that discovered it. The species is yet to be determined with the scientific name currently being *Nylanderia* sp. nr. *Pubens*. The numbers of these ants build up to very high levels, and the ant may become a great nuisance. In some cases the numbers of Raspberry crazy ants are so high that people cannot enjoy their yards and pets avoid the yard. Wildlife may also be affected as the ants cover the landscape and displace other organisms. These ants do not have stingers and thus, do not sting. These ants do bite causing a sharp pain that fades quickly. Raspberry crazy ants also get in electrical equipment resulting in short circuits and electrical equipment failure. The economic impact and impact on wildlife of these ants is currently unknown. Very high numbers of ants may cover the ground and trees resulting in the movement of wildlife out of the area. This ant has been observed in bee hives causing the bees to leave quickly. The Raspberry crazy ant has been observed to displace fire ants. However, residents that have experienced Raspberry crazy ants prefer fire ants.

Adult Raspberry crazy ants are reddish-brown in color. Workers are all about the same size, 1/8 inch long, have long antennae and legs and have many, long, coarse hairs on their body. There is no club on the 12 segmented antennae. These ants are found in very high numbers (millions) and crawl erratically and rapidly. These ants do not make a centralized nest, and nests may occur under anything that holds moisture. Pictures and videos of these ants may be found at the following website: http://urbanentomology.tamu.edu/ants/exotic_tx.cfm.

Most ant baits are not attractive to these ants and thus, not effective. Areas around structures may be sprayed using acephate,

pyrethroids, and fipronil to form buffer zones. Raspberry crazy ants will cross these buffer zones in 2 to 3 months after treatment.

The ants spread naturally through budding. However, they are moved much more rapidly through the actions of humans. They may be moved in any material or container that is infested. It is extremely important that these ants are not moved into new areas. Carefully inspect incoming materials to make sure these ants are not introduced.



Worker



Raspberry crazy ants in bag of leaves (top); trash can (bottom).



Images courtesy of the Center for Urban and Structural Entomology, TAMU

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Economic Outlook

The economy looks a little better

Roger A. Hinson, Professor

(Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness)

This article contains personal opinions and conclusions.

These are not official policies or statements of the LSU Ag Center.

Generally, economic reports contained signs of improvement at the end of 2010. Perhaps that was most obvious in the stock markets, which generally did very well in 2010, and has continued into 2011. The economy is growing. Conference Board reports indicated that the Leading Economic Index (LEI) for the U.S. increased in November for the 5th straight month, and 19 of the last 20 months. Factors that helped with the recovery were the low interest rate policy of the Federal Reserve (Fed), stimulus spending both in the US and in other parts of the world, and 'quantitative easing' (bond purchases by the Fed). These have led to profitability - up 28% over year-ago levels - in the U. S. Software and equipment investment is up 19% in the past year, the strongest of many recent years. The Fed noted that risks remain in the form of a particularly weak housing market, in spending cuts and layoffs from state and local governments, financial strains in Europe, and pressure on state and local governments to balance their budgets. High unemployment and factories operating below capacity reduce the likelihood of inflation. Some business' good fortune has come at the expense of other groups. Banks are more profitable because their low cost of funds. But rates on savings and bonds have squeezed many Americans who use interest proceeds to pay living expenses. Low rates make these people less likely to be buyers or shoppers. On the other hand, the two year extension of income tax rates, the one-year cut in the Social Security payroll taxes, the investment expense provisions and the lower capital gains tax should prove to be important business and consumer incentives.

One example of positive results in the business world came from Federal Express. The company noted record-setting peak shipping numbers and increasing demand, and expects that higher

manufacturing and industrial production will increase its volume. As a general example, the Institute for Supply Management said its index of factory activity rose to 57.0% in December, the highest level since last May.

Consumption: The economy's backbone, the consumer, returned to the malls at least for the holiday season and the relatively strong kick-off to holiday shopping continued in December. Consumers seemed to be splurging on themselves, unlike in the past few holiday seasons.

Real gross domestic product: The output of goods and services produced by labor and property in the United States increased from an annual rate of 2.6 % in the 3rd quarter of 2010 to 3.2% in the 4th quarter. The top area of increase was personal consumption expenditures.

Jobs: Unemployment stands just under 15 million, with a 9% rate. The Labor Department reported that businesses and government advertised nearly 3.4 million jobs at the end of October, up about 12 percent from the previous month and at its highest since August 2008. The number of new unemployment benefit applications fell over that period as well, signaling a slowly improving trend in the job market.

Housing: Sales and construction normally are drivers of growth. Sales have been encouraged by mortgage interest rates at historic lows, and signed home contracts late in 2010 were higher than at midyear, but low by historic standards. According to the Commerce Department, sales of new homes rose 5.5 % in December to an annual rate of 290,000 units, about half the rate considered 'healthy'. Also, almost ¼ of mortgages owe more than their house is worth, compared to a historical rate of about 1%. Foreclosure rates have trended down over the past few months, partly because of evidence that lenders handled foreclosure documents improperly. Expect the foreclosure rate to go back up.

Consumer confidence: The Thomson Reuters/ University of Michigan's index of consumer sentiment and index of consumer expectation have moved to higher levels over the past few months, and probably influenced holiday shopping.

The economy looks a little better

Louisiana's picture

In the latest Louisiana Economic Outlook, Loren Scott attributes a somewhat stunted state growth forecast for 2011-2012 to continued moratoriums on drilling for oil and gas, and on taxes and regulations placed on the oil and gas industry. Oil prices topping \$100 a barrel may be just what the state needs, Scott said. Jobs projections for the state's eight major areas in 2011 were mostly positive, with the largest being an increase of 0.9 % in the Lake Charles area. The state continues to experience impacts (the drilling moratorium for example) that lead to a declining state budget. The state's receipts, mostly sales taxes, declined by about 3 % from November to November, but were little different in terms of year-to-year change in December and January.

What can we expect from 2011?

- interest rates probably will move up a little based on growth and increased demand
- an increase in foreclosures from unemployment, underemployment, and banks correcting their processes
- corporate profits will stay high, but cost-cutting to spur profit is harder now
- the recently passed tax bill will support economic growth in 2011
- the recovery is likely to remain slow, keeping the unemployment rate elevated
- pessimism will remain with us. Job woes are clearly a major worry.

While there is plenty of 'not so good' news, there are many consumers with good jobs at wages/salaries that enable them to purchase turf and ornamental plant products. The recession and reduced sales reportedly have induced some producers to cut back on maintenance of crops, and that both compromises quality and offers opportunity for growers who are committed to providing value to their customers.

New Turfgrass Herbicides for 2011

Specticle (indazaflam) – new preemergence herbicide from Bayer labeled for all of our summer turfgrasses grown in Louisiana including St. Augustinegrass and centipedegrass (consult product label). Herbicide has a long residual and is excellent on many of our problematic grasses like *Poa*, crabgrass, and goosegrass.

Katana (flazasulfuron) – PBI Gordon herbicide that provides excellent overseed removal in cool temperatures. Labeled for zoysiagrass and bermudagrass.

Blindside (sulfentrazone + metsulfuron) is a new FMC released postemergence herbicide that should provide good broadleaf control and some sedge activity as well. Blindside is labeled for bermudagrass, zoysiagrass, centipedegrass and St. Augustinegrass.

SquareOne (carfentrazone + quinclorac) is a new postemergence herbicide from FMC that has the grass activity spectrum of quinclorac and increased contact broadleaf activity from carfentrazone. Bermudagrass, zoysiagrass, and quite surprisingly, centipedegrass are listed on the product label.

I am getting the most calls on....

Winter weeds infesting home lawns

- hard to beat atrazine + Speed Zone, Celsius.
- Overseed removal in bermudagrass
 - Monument, Katana, Revolver are all good options.
- St. Augustinegrass not coming back in certain areas
 - could be some winter kill if the lawn was scalped exposing the growing points to freezing or lack of recovery from the tropical sod webworm damage from last year.
- Centipedegrass not coming back in certain areas
 - more than likely these are thatch areas prone to winter kill
- Is Virginia buttonweed out?
 - Yes! It is going to be a record breaking year treating lawns for buttonweed.

Bermuda infests weak St. Augustine, cont'd pg. 1

When it is hot and dry during the summer and early fall and you're not able to water, there is a good chance that you are going to have a few dead spots caused by chinch bugs. Unfortunately, before the St. Augustinegrass recovers in these thin areas, bermudagrass gets a foothold. Therefore, apply insecticides like bifenthrin and imidacloprid to reduce chinch bug populations. Maintaining good soil moisture with proper irrigation will also aid in the prevention of chinch bug damage to the lawn.

Last summer, we had a severe outbreak of the tropical sod webworms and armyworms. Huge areas of St. Augustinegrass were either killed out or weakened severely. These areas will be full of bermudagrass and Virginia buttonweed this summer.

Fertility: Both St. Augustinegrass and bermudagrass respond to fertilizer. However, many homeowners and even lawn care professionals provide little or no fertilizer for the lawn. Some will apply a weed and feed in March and that may be the only fertilizer their lawn receives for the year. I like to fertilize St. Augustinegrass about 3 times in Louisiana during the growing season. St. Augustine is very aggressive when it is fertilized and mowed at the correct height. You can use the aggressiveness of St. Augustinegrass to out-compete most weeds. Applying fertilizer at the proper time and amount is very important to the overall health of your St. Augustinegrass. As for pH, both bermudagrass and St. Augustinegrass will grow in acidic soils but bermudagrass seems to be less affected. Liming to raise the pH would probably be more beneficial to St. Augustinegrass than to bermudagrass. Again, the goal is to make growing conditions more favorable for the St. Augustinegrass. The only way to truly know your soil's fertility and pH is take a soil sample.

Herbicide Options

Ethofumesate Suppression Option: There is one selective chemical option for the suppression of bermudagrass in St. Augustinegrass. Ethofumesate (Prograss or Poa Constrictor) tank-mixed with atrazine will suppress bermudagrass infestations in St. Augustinegrass. This combination should be sprayed at least 3 times spaced at 21 to 28 days intervals starting at bermudagrass greenup. Ethofumesate is labeled for commercial and home lawn applications by licensed applicators.

I have evaluated this herbicide in the past as a management tool for bermudagrass infesting St. Augustinegrass. We are looking at it again this year at different rates and timings. It will hold the bermudagrass back, but in severe infestations the advantage really goes back to the bermudagrass over time. It might be a tough sell to your clientele when they are expecting bermudagrass elimination. I would never guarantee 100% success. Remember, this treatment only suppresses the bermudagrass. Also, ethofumesate will not work if the turf manager continues to mow the St. Augustinegrass too low.

Glyphosate and re-sod option: In severe infestations, you probably need a do-over. Apply glyphosate at high rates. Wait a couple of weeks, cut out the bad area and re-sod with bermudagrass-free sod.

Ron Strahan
LSU AgCenter

Weed ID: Goosegrass (*Eleusine indica*)

Goosegrass is a common summer grassy annual that infests all species of turf grown in our area. It germinates when soil temperatures exceed 60 degrees. Usually I see goosegrass germinating 2 to 3 weeks after the first emergence of crabgrass. Light is required for germination so weak turfgrass has problems with both crabgrass and goosegrass. Goosegrass has a prostrate growth habit, and is often white in the center. Unlike crabgrass, the weed does not root at nodes. Goosegrass is considered as an indicator plant for soil compaction. Look for it on heavily trafficked areas like cart paths and golf greens. I see it a lot in front of dugouts on baseball fields. Home lawns have problems with goosegrass in areas where cars are parked. Once goosegrass gets well established, the weed toughens and does not mow cleanly in lawn grasses. It tolerates close mowing on golf greens.



Goosegrass

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Goosegrass, cont, pg 6

Control options: My favorite preemergence herbicide on goosegrass is oxadiazon (Ronstar and generics). It is very effective. Unfortunately, this herbicide cannot be used in residential turfgrass or on centipedegrass. Most of the preemergence herbicides that we use in turfgrass have activity on goosegrass. However, goosegrass is one of the first weeds to be released as the herbicide starts to break down. Specticle (indazaflam) is a new herbicide from Bayer that has a good long residual on most annual grasses like goosegrass.

Postemergence options are not available for St. Augustinegrass unless you are a sod farmer. Sod farmers can use asulam (Asulox). Don't even think about lawn care guys! There is a tremendous amount of injury with this herbicide that would be a real shock to your clientele.

Sethoxydim is a very good option for centipedegrass turf. Fenoxaprop (Acclaim) is a good option in zoysiagrass. Diclofop (Illoxan) or formamsulfuron (Revolver) can be used on golf greens. Repeated MSMA + Sencor can be effective as well. Make sure you follow the new regulations for MSMA use.

Goosegrass infesting compacted golf greens



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Turfgrass 101: Role of phosphorus in turfgrass

Phosphorus (P) is an important part of compounds essential for energy storage and transfer during respiration and photosynthesis and is a component of cell membranes as phospholipids. Mature grasses with well-developed root systems are very efficient at getting phosphorus from the soil. That is why most fertilizers for turfgrass provide small amounts of phosphorus per application relative to nitrogen and potassium.

Phosphorus deficiencies are really not that common. Visually, there are not a lot of symptoms to look for in established turfgrass. However, phosphorus deficiency can cause a purple discoloration of the leaf blades and poor greenup after the winter. Don't confuse the purpling that centipedegrass gets as a P deficiency. This is usually a stress response to cold temperatures or excessive traffic.

Centipedegrass is not a big P user anyway. More than likely, you may not ever notice a symptom on established turfgrass.

Phosphorus levels are very important to root growth and development. It is extremely important to have adequate levels of phosphorus during turfgrass establishment. I saw first-hand last year how very low phosphorus levels can impact bermudagrass establishment on a sprigged high school football field. Parts of the field never fully established and this low level of phosphorus was one of the major contributing factors. Phosphorus is not prone to leaching and soil amounts do not change much over time like nitrogen and potassium.

You would expect more problems with phosphorus deficiencies in sandy soils with low organic matter. Soil testing is the only sure-fire way to know if your soil is lacking in phosphorus. In recent years, phosphorus runoff into streams and other waterways has become a real issue and the use of this nutrient may be headed for regulation.

**Phosphorus starved Bermudagrass**

http://www.lsuagcenter.com/en/lawn_garden/

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