

WTA 2023
Summer Field Day
Registration on page 10

WISCONSIN turfgrass news

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SPRING 2023

A New Addition to Field Day 2023

By Bruce Schweiger, Superintendent, O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research & Education Facility

The growing season is in full swing and Mother Nature has reminded us who is really in charge. 80 degrees for a few days, then snow for a couple of days! Summer will arrive along with the WTA Summer Field Day and golf outing. You read that right, a golf outing. Field Day will be held at the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Educational Facility on Tuesday August 1st. Put that date on your calendar and for us old timers with a paper calendar, circle it in RED!

This year there will be the first ever nine-hole golf outing at Pioneer Pointe Golf Course, Neil Radatz, superintendent. That is right, you can play nine holes of golf at the new Pioneer Pointe GC in the morning. After golf you can head over to the O.J. Noer Facility, have lunch, and attend the afternoon research sessions. Golf will be a two-person scramble and limited to the first 52 registrants. You **MUST** be a paid registrant for Field Day to participate in the golf outing. Golf is **NOT** included in the Field Day registration cost.

Discussions with past summer Field Day attendees mention they consider the day as two separate events in one. The morning session is for general turf, landscape, lawncare and sports fields. The

afternoon session is the golf program. The "golf" attendees have let me know how note-worthy the morning sessions are and they contain valuable information for everyone in the turfgrass industry. On the other side I have the "general turf" participants that have stayed after lunch tell me they learned useful information in the "golf" tour as well. I encourage you to fight the stereo types and come for as much of the day and education as possible! Not every research topic is significant to all attendees but there are nuggets of valuable information everywhere, you just need to look, listen, and ask questions. The research tours are beneficial to everyone in the green industry. It doesn't matter if it is in the matter morning or afternoon.

This year's event will again be information packed. Summer Field Day has been developing a reputation as one of the best in the business and one you should not miss. We hope to drive those attendance numbers back into the mid to upper two hundred attendees. All proceeds from the Summer Field Day are put back in the UW-Madison turf program. See the Field Day flyer that is included in this newsletter for more information. ■



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A Holiday Predicts When Spring Arrives?

By Brad T. DeBels, PhD, Weed Man Lawn Care



February 2nd, does that date ring a bell? For those of us less familiar with holidays in which we celebrate the predictive ability of large rodents, that is Groundhogs Day. The holiday dates back to 1877 in the United States, originating from similar superstitious traditions centuries before. Punxsutawney Phil predicted six more weeks of winter for us in 2023. And more locally, Jimmy, the Sun

Prairie, WI soothsayer agreed, six more weeks of winter. I know what you are thinking...so? Well, Jimmy vaunts an 80% success rate, far better than his colleague in Pennsylvania at 39%. The prediction of more Winter was accurate, but maybe not the longevity.

For those of you similar to me, Spring starts on March 20th every year, no prediction required. Even then, is that really when Spring arrives for most of us? As far as I can tell Spring arrived four times in Southern, WI. And for some of you in the Northern part of the state or in the Upper Peninsula, it still has not arrived. Regardless of when it starts, it is always an exciting time for us in the green industry.

Maybe it is that first mow, the smell of fresh grass clippings, putting away the winter hat, firing up the irrigation system, or welcoming some new equipment. On the lawn care side, we are well into our second application of the year in the Midwest, and even further along to the South. And as I write, I look outside and see dandelions begin to uncontrollably flower. At the O.J. Noer Facility, research is again firing up for the season, unless you are a snow mold savant, in which case maybe your season is ending. The beginning of this research is truly the first preparations for the 2023 Summer Field Day on August 1st. Keep your eyes and ears open as there will be some exciting and new opportunities at this year's event. The amazing research and camaraderie will continue to be a staple.

Whenever your spring may start, I wish you all the best as you prepare your properties for the busy season ahead and look forward to seeing you this summer! And as always, thank you for your commitment to furthering turfgrass research and education by partnering with the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association. ■

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Tall Fescue's Wisconsin Achilles Heel

By Paul Koch, Ph.D, Department of Plant Pathology, University of Wisconsin-Madison

One topic that I stress in the classes I teach and the presentations I give is that no grass is perfect. Every grass species out there has strengths and weaknesses, and one of the most sustainable choices a turfgrass manager can make is the selection of the right grass for the right growing environment. For example, Kentucky bluegrass has a dense growth habit, good traffic tolerance, and excellent cold tolerance...but it performs poorly in the shade. Fine fescues do better in the shade, are resistant to numerous diseases, and don't need to be mowed as often...but are not traffic tolerant.

Tall fescues have increased in popularity in recent years for a number of reasons, especially when mixed together with Kentucky bluegrass. Compared to Kentucky bluegrass they are more shade and drought tolerant and require lower levels of nitrogen fertilization. Compared to fine fescues the tall fescues are more traffic tolerant. This has led to tall fescue being labeled as a 'low input' or 'low maintenance' grass species, which has attracted lots of attention from those looking to maintain a turf surface in a more sustainable manner. Tall fescue has always been known to 'green up' slower in the spring compared to bluegrass and be more susceptible to ice encasement injury, but it's becoming increasingly apparent that tall fescue is also significantly more susceptible to snow mold injury compared to bluegrass and ryegrass as well. This was especially true this spring across much of the region that experienced intense snow mold pressure. Even in Madison, where snow mold pressure was not overly high this winter, tall fescue was in noticeably worse shape compared to other lawn grasses (Figure 1).

The good news is that snow mold and other winter injuries rarely completely kill tall fescue and that they recover in a few weeks time once good growing conditions return. However, that's dependent on good spring growing conditions, which can be sporadic in certain years (this one included). For sites where early spring performance is critical to success of the site a late fall preventative snow mold application may be warranted to have the turf looking it's best coming out of winter. We conducted a small research trial back in 2017 looking at products for snow mold control on athletic turf and the results can be viewed here (https://tdl.webhosting.cals.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/42/2017/05/UWSnowMoldReport2017_SportsTurfWausau.pdf). Tall fescue can be a great grass, but good communication and preparation is key for dealing with the injuries that a Wisconsin winter can inflict on tall fescues. Remember, there is no perfect grass. ■



Figure 1. Pink snow mold damage on a tall fescue lawn in Madison, WI in March of 2023.

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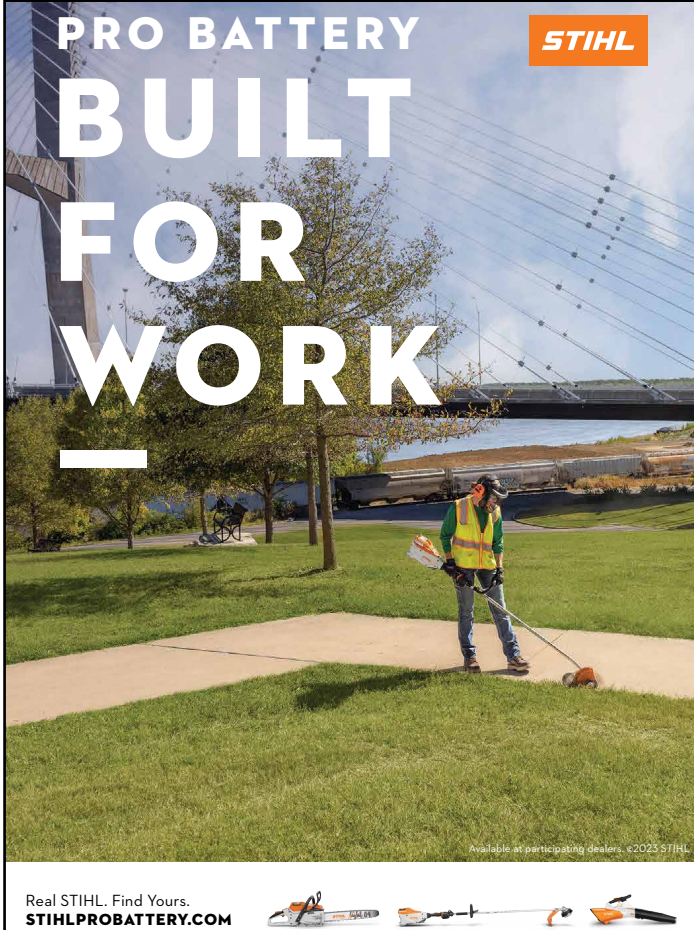
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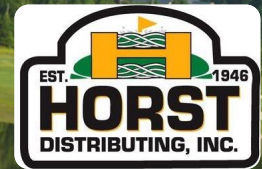
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The Inaugural Turfgrass Apprenticeship Program Bootcamp was a Big Success

By Doug Soldat, Ph.D. Department of Soil Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Around noon on February 22, 2023, a few short hours before another major winter storm pummeled the Midwest, nineteen students completed the bootcamp portion of the Turfgrass Apprenticeship Program. We celebrated with a pizza party, handed out certificates while someone played Pomp and Circumstance on their cell phone, and took a few pictures to commemorate the moment. The students came from Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota. Some commuted to the O.J. Noer daily, while a group of others commuted weekly and stayed two nights at a nearby hotel for a discounted rate. As implied by the name, the bootcamp was intense. It included 144 hours of classroom and field instruction, covering topics including introductory turfgrass management, soil science, irrigation and drainage, turfgrass nutrient management, and integrated pest management. Towards the end of the bootcamp, students worked in teams of two to build pest management programs and nutrient management plans that drew upon the knowledge they gained in the previous 11 weeks.

In addition to the classroom instruction, the students made several site visits to learn from practitioners like Eric Leonard at TPC Wisconsin, Josh LePine at Maple Bluff CC, Neil Radatz at Hawks Landing/Pioneer Pointe, Phil Davidson at University Ridge, and Chad Grimm and Dave Noltner at Blackhawk CC. They learned about insect identification and ID from P.J. Liesch from the Entomology Department (and former research technician with Dr. Chris Willimson) and visited the campus greenhouses to get experience in identifying common turfgrasses and weeds. The students also learned from TDL Manager Kurt Hockemeyer and Soils Graduate Student Travis Miller. The bootcamp students also made a trip to Kohler for the WGCSA Symposium at the American Club where they networked and learned from the excellent speakers on the program. Students who were interested in obtaining their Wisconsin Pesticide Applicator's license studied for that and took the test at the O.J. Noer near the end of the program. The students are now into the apprenticeship phase of the program and are working on completing tasks and developing competencies in relevant areas under the guidance of their summer supervisors. Once those tasks are complete and the skills developed, they will receive



Figure 1. The 2022/2023 graduates of the Bootcamp portion of the Turfgrass Apprenticeship Program. Left to Right: Dr. Paul Koch, Jack Stranges, Dillon Nelson, Isaac Herr, Nick Saraga, James Ramicone, Ryan Stone, Jesse Oliver, Peter Fedrigon, Gage Jehnsen, Jake Keyes, Tristain Jehnsen, Aaron Bodete, Mat Uselmann, Ethan Bublitz, Mason Naatz, and Trey Ryan. Not Pictured: Chad Evert, Caden Holt (both left the party early to beat the storm) and Ben Storbeck (who was in Nashville, TN for the Turfgrass Producers International Conference).

Q1 - 1. How satisfied were you with the Turfgrass Apprenticeship Program Educational Bootcamp?

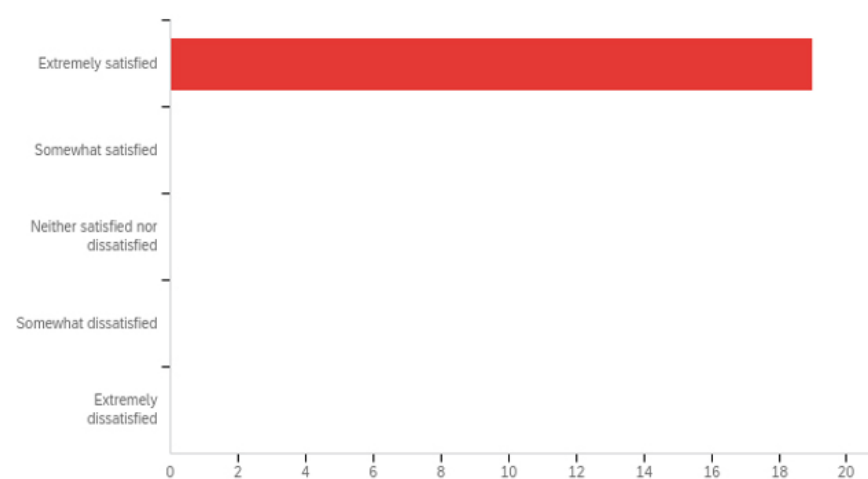


Figure 2. Our first survey to the bootcamp students asked about how much they enjoyed the experience. While we are already working to make the program better next year, this is a pretty good start

another certificate of program completion. Paul and I will be checking in with these students over the summer.

We are extremely grateful for the industry support that helped make this program possible. All major turfgrass associations in Wisconsin provided substantial monetary assistance. Thank you to the WGCSA, the WSTMA, the WTA, and the WSPA. In addition to the scholarships, these organizations worked with us to develop the details of the apprenticeship program and helped with marketing and getting the word out. This program would not be what it is without your support, and we look forward to working together again this fall. Overall, Dr. Paul Koch and I couldn't have been more satisfied with the outcome from the first year. It was a

pleasure getting to know these students and watching them make connections from their work experience to what they learned in the classroom. Paul and I are always seeking to improve our educational offerings, so we surveyed the group at the end of the program and according to that survey (see figure below), they thought it went pretty well too! We are already planning for the second cohort of TAP Bootcamp students. As of this writing we already have 11 students enrolled for the 2023/2024 bootcamp, so we are expecting another big group. Please help spread the word and direct people to the TAP Website at www.turf.wisc.edu/academics. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to Paul or me by email (plkoch@wisc.edu or djsoldat@wisc.edu). ■

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2023 Snow Mold Trials

By Kurt Hockemeyer, TDL Manager, Plant Pathology, University of Wisconsin – Madison

Last year at this time I was writing an article about how slow the spring has been. And aside from that one week in April where we had 70s and even reached the 80s, spring 2023 has been chilly yet again. This combined with massive amounts of snow in our northern research sites delayed our trips up north to rate our snow mold research plots. But I finally have all the data in hand. In this article I will be highlighting some of the takeaways from our snow mold research this past winter.

Leaf Mulching Study

In this study, last fall we applied 2 depths (5 cm or 10 cm) of either mulched or unmulched leaves to a lawn height turf plot. The idea was to see how different leaf mulching techniques affect snow mold development over winter, and also overall turf health. Plots that received no leaf mulch treatment did have a small level of disease present (6.3%), were of acceptable turf quality, and had slightly reduced turf color. Plots that received approximately 5 cm of mulched leaf material performed the best in all three assessment categories: no disease was present, turf quality was excellent, and turf color was the highest compared to the other treatments. Treatments that received 10 cm of either mulched or unmulched leaves were the worst performing treatments. In addition to high levels of snow mold infection, the turf plants were smothered and individual plants were chlorotic and etiolated. Plots that received approximately 5 cm of unmulched leaves performed similarly to the non-treated control. Interesting to see that adding some insulation to the turf crowns resulted in better turf quality in spring. Not dissimilar to heavy topdressing greens in fall in my mind.

Snow mold control in Marquette, MI and Wausau, WI

These are our beasts of trials here. This year we evaluated 126 treatments at both locations. But the results from these two studies could not be more different. Both locations had approximately 120 days of snow cover and most of the disease was pink snow mold.

Continued on page 8



Figure 1. Disease pressure in a nontreated plot from Wausau, WI. The damage in the plots was caused by *Microdochium nivale*.



Figure 2. Marquette snow mold plots after snowmelt in late-April. Many of the products broke down this year, even ones we expected to perform well. Fungicide persistence likely played an important role.



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Most fungicide treatments in Wausau performed exceptionally well. Most of them controlled snow mold completely or very close to completely. Marquette on the other hand was a different story. Most of the fungicides applied were better than the nontreated control, but almost none of them were of acceptable turf quality. The average amount of disease across every treatment was 40%. So if your fungicide treatment had less than 40%, you were better than average. But how many out there would be happy with 20-30%? Probably nobody. But unfortunately, that's what happened this year in our Marquette study.

So if everything was so similar between Wausau and Marquette, why the huge difference in results? I think it must deal with early winter rain and snowmelt events, and late winter snow depth. Marquette had some snowmelt and rain events in late November and early December. Our research has consistently shown that these winter events are the largest drivers of fungicide dissipation over winter. So it's possible that some percentage of the fungicide residues that were applied in late October were washed away in early winter. So then less fungicide persists in the canopy come late winter. And as Wausau was starting to melt off, resulting in less insulation for snow mold development, Marquette snow depth was increasing through most of March. Then because very little fungicide residues had persisted into March in Marquette, pink snow mold probably went crazy and started to infect just about every treatment. This of course is speculation, but I think my speculation makes sense.




Figure 3. Most of the treatments in Biwabik, MN performed well.


Snow mold control in Biwabik and Brainerd, MN

We also conducted two large trials in northern Minnesota in collaboration with our turf research colleagues at UMN. Most of the disease at these two locations was speckled snow mold. And most of the treatments performed very well. Because the causal agent of speckled snow mold (*Typhula ishikariensis*) is more slow growing than the causal agent of pink snow mold (*Microdochium nivale*), it seems that many of the fungicides performed better at these locations in Minnesota.

We also had our snow mold timing study and our pink snow mold study. Each of these two studies had their own unique wrinkles this year. But I won't talk about that here. Watch out for our release of reports on all our snow mold studies in the next couple of weeks. Publicly available reports can be found on our website, tdl.wisc.edu. ■

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SUMMER FIELD DAY

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Field Day Schedule

8:00 am	Registration
8:00 am to 3:00 pm	Trade Show
9:00 am to 9:30 am	Welcome Session
9:30 am to 11:00 am	Turf Tours (Educational Talks TBD) Frost Inc Ice Control Talk
12:00 pm to 1:15 pm	Lunch
1:30 pm to 3:00 pm	Golf Turf Tours (Education Talks TBD) Frost Inc Hightech Sprayer Talk

Golf Outing

- 8:30 shotgun Pioneer Pointe GC**
- 52 golfers maximum
 - Two-person scramble
 - Carts are mandatory
 - \$40 per golfer (plus Field Day Registration)
 - Golf can *only* be added on to the WTA SFD registration
- Pioneer Pointe Golf Course**
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Registration Form

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2023

June 22nd	WSFMA Field Day	Wisconsin Dells High School
June 27th	WGCSA June Meeting.....	Grand Geneva
July 11th	Assistant/EM Golf Event.....	The Baths; Blackwolf Run
August 1st	WTA Field Day	O.J. Noer Facility
September 18th	Wee One.....	Pine Hills C C
October 3rd	WTA Golf Outing	South Hills Golf & C C

To make sure a Spring/Summer turf event is still scheduled, please contact them directly.
Phone numbers for some of the common organizations are listed below.

**WTA Members -- If you have an important date that you would like to share with other members,
Call 608-845-6536 or email audra.anderson@wisc.edu to include it in the next calendar.**

Contact Telephone Numbers

GCSAA	Golf Course Superintendents Association.....	800-472-7878
iLandscape	the Illinois + Wisconsin Landscape Show	630-472-2851
NGLGCSA	Northern Great Lakes Golf Course Superintendents Assoc.....	906-424-4176
Northern	Northern Green	651-633-4987
PAT	Pesticide Applicator Training (Turf and Landscape 3.0).....	608-262-758
TDL	Turf Diagnostic Lab	608-845-2535
TPI	Turf Producers International	800-405-8873
WDATCP	Pesticide Certification & Licensing.....	608-224-4548
Wee One	Wee One Foundation Golf Outing	630-457-7276
WGCSA	Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association	920-643-4888
WPT	WPT Garden Expo.....	608-262-5256
WSFMA	Wisconsin Sports Field Management Association.....	920-671-4383
WSPA	Wisconsin Sod Producers Association	262-895-6820
WTA	Wisconsin Turfgrass Association	608-845-6536