
From: K-State turf information [K-STATE_TURF@LISTSERV.KSU.EDU] on behalf of Megan Kennelly [kennelly@KSU.EDU]
Sent: Friday, May 29, 2009 11:44 AM
To: K-STATE_TURF@LISTSERV.KSU.EDU
Subject: [K-STATE_TURF] K-State turf: 2 abiotic lawn problems
Attachments: May 29 abiotic.pdf

Hello,

Attached is a newsletter with descriptions of some home lawn abiotic issues from the past week. irrigation, thatch, weed-whacker blight...

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K-State Turf May 29 2009

There have been a couple of interesting abiotic issues this week.

1) “It can’t be drought stress...”

I had a call, email, and sample from a homeowner who reported that their fescue lawn greened up just fine and was looking great in March. Then, a few weeks ago they started noticing a little browning at the tips, and about 10 days ago the whole lawn started looking really brown, all at once. They said they were irrigating 3 nights/ week, and thought it might be a disease.

Clue #1 is there really aren’t any diseases that hit tall fescue this time of year

Clue #2 is that the symptoms came on so uniformly and suddenly.

Then the sample came in, and, guess what the soil was bone dry. So, maybe the irrigation system isn’t working like they think. I suggested putting out cups around the lawn to make sure the overnight-watering is actually coming on like it is supposed to. Another tip, from my colleague Ward Upham, was for the homeowner to use a soil probe after watering to see how far down in the soil profile the water is getting.

On top of the potential irrigation issue, the turf is getting thatchy, nearly ½ inch. Turf with thick thatch is particularly prone to drought stress. It’s getting too late now to aerify cool-season turf.

2) Weed wacker blight

While enjoying a walk around my neighborhood, I saw some classic symptoms of weed-wacker blight. There were straight lines of brown/dead turf right along the sidewalk and driveway. I’ve



Hmm, that’s a pretty exact pattern

seen this neighbor use a gas-powered weed wacker, and maybe there is a gas leak. There was more blighting around the mailbox and a street sign, other places where the weed-wacker would be used. Next time they are out I might ask them about it.



The area around the mailbox is not looking too good.



Around a street sign