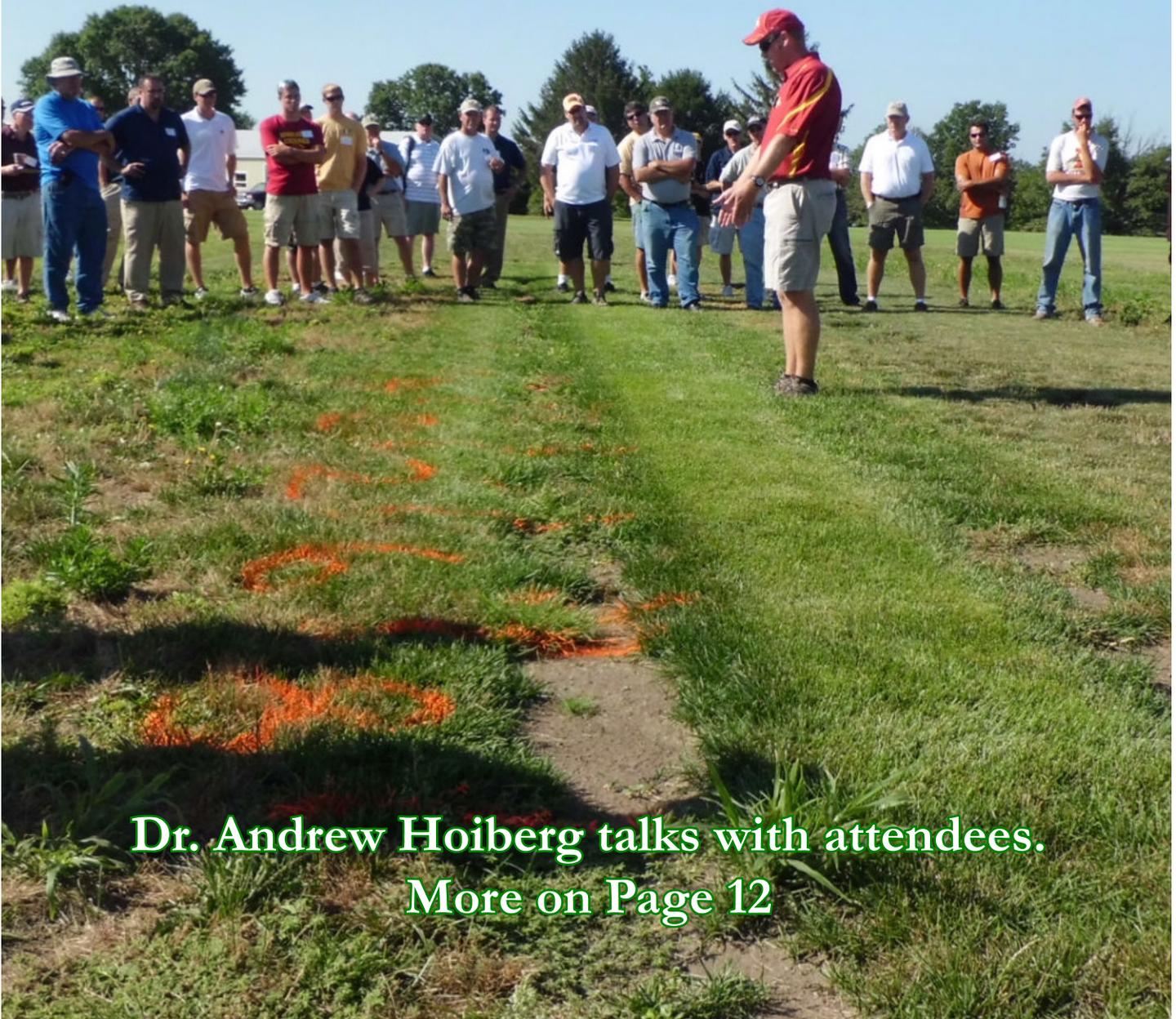


On the Grow

Volume 22 No. 4

August 2012

2012 Iowa Turfgrass Field Day



**Dr. Andrew Hoiberg talks with attendees.
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August Presidents Message - Camelot It's Not

Terry Griffith, Ajinomoto North America and IPLCA President



I was listening to the radio today and heard the song, Camelot, from the very successful Broadway musical of the 1960's. It tells about the sublime weather that was dictated to occur by King Arthur in the land of Camelot. Growing turf would have been a snap there. No extensive disease, torrential flooding, or desperate droughts would hamper your efforts and the results would always be perfect, lush, green turf. I have printed the lyrics here and underlined the decreed weather conditions.

It's true! It's true! The crown has made it clear. The climate must be perfect all the year.

A law was made a distant moon ago here: July and August cannot be too hot.

And there's a legal limit to the snow here in Camelot. The winter is forbidden till December and exits March the second on the dot.

By order, summer lingers through September in Camelot.

Camelot! Camelot!

I know it sounds a bit bizarre,

But in Camelot, Camelot

That's how conditions are.

The rain may never fall till after sundown. By eight, the morning fog must disappear.

In short, there's simply not a more congenial spot.

For happily-ever-aftering than here

In Camelot.

Camelot! Camelot!

I know it gives a person pause,

But in Camelot, Camelot

Those are the legal laws.

The snow may never slush upon the hillside. By nine p.m. the moonlight must appear.

In short, there's simply not

A more congenial spot

For happily-ever-aftering than here

In Camelot.

Well, we are definitely not in Camelot. Most of Iowa is enduring what I would call "desperate drought". Turf everywhere is struggling to survive and the rains just don't come. I remembered that one of my past customers, Dave Ostert, of Maquoketa Country Club, Maquoketa, IA used to keep meticulous weather records. I called him up yesterday and asked him if he still did that and yes he does still keep those records. I asked him if he could look back in his 1988 records. He typically records any rainfall at his golf course between March 1st and November 1st. His 1988 records showed that he received 16.3" during that time period. I asked him what had he received this year to date. He told me 8.7". I gasped when he told me that because it appears to me he is definitely on track to duplicate the devastating drought of 1988. That year it was so hot and so dry that there was a lot of turf that went beyond dormancy. The crowns of the plants got so dry that they died. I remember that heavy soiled lawns would have cracks big enough to stick your hand in.

There was extensive over-seeding in the fall of 1988 as well as in the spring of 1989. It might be helpful to arm yourselves with some of the 1988 rainfall statistics for your area. Irrate customers are going to wonder why their lawns don't look top-notch. It will help give you some ammunition in explaining how a lawn reacts when it only receives 1/2 or less of the normal amount of moisture. I think anyone that was an adult in 1988 will remember the terrible toll the drought took that year. Sometimes you can put on the best fertilizers, apply the most effective herbicides, apply the correct fungicides and still struggle with quality turf, if you are presented with conditions like we are having today. I guess we can dream of Camelot but as long as we manage turf we will have to rely on our best judgement and hope that Mother Nature helps out once in a while.

Managing Turfgrass During a Drought

Dave Minner, PhD, Iowa State University

As of mid-July most of the non-irrigated turf in Iowa is either dormant (brown from lack of water) or well on its way to summer dormancy. Forty six percent of the counties in Iowa are classified D1 Drought – moderate and 37% are classified D0 Abnormally Dry. Local agencies have enacted voluntary water conservation programs that limit water application to every other day based on even and odd house numbers. At this time I have not heard of any mandatory restrictions, but as the drought continues they become more likely. Those paying for water may also decide to limit irrigation simply because of the high water cost, especially on fields that are not being used.

Elwynn Taylor, Iowa State Climatologist reported at the annual turf conference that Iowa is long overdue for a major drought. Could this be the year? The Corn Belt is hit with a major dry spell every 19 years and as told by tree ring data and the last one was 24 years ago in 1988. The longest duration between droughts has been 23 years, so we are due. Each year the chances increase and Taylor gave a 50/50 prediction for this year that was up for a 30% chance the previous year. If you are not ready for it this year then you should be thinking about it for the near future. Along with historical data Taylor sites La Nina as a driving force for our impending potential for drought. La Nina --- cooler than normal water temperatures near the equator in the Pacific Ocean --- continues to influence weather in the Midwest. A drier-than-normal spring and summer and wild temperature swings are typically associated with the weather phenomena. As of mid-July we are experiencing root-zone (top 1-meter) soil moisture deficits from 2 to 5 inches across Iowa. The departure from Normal Precipitation (DNP) over the past 30 days has been 3 to 5 inches across central and eastern Iowa.

During dry summers, local water authorities may cut off water for outside use or only allow watering on certain days. Both measures are necessary and effective to reduce water consumption and relieve the strain on city water supplies.

To avoid severe loss of turf and to conserve water, turf should be managed each year in anticipation of water

restrictions. Here are some drought planning suggestions as well as a few things you can adjust when the drought actually hits.

Quick Facts On Turf Watering

- Turf in Iowa may require as much as 1 to 1 1/2 inches of water per week from irrigation or rainfall during the summer to remain green and actively growing. At one inch of water per week (624 gallons/1000 sq. ft.) an average size lawn of 8,000 sq. ft. would require about 5,000 gallons of water.
- Actively growing grass transpires water that serves as an environmental air conditioner to reduce the heat load around the home.
- Water use on cool season grasses such as Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, and tall fescue, can be reduced by 25% and still maintain adequate turf quality.
- Deeper roots draw moisture from a larger volume of soil and therefore require less supplemental irrigation.
- Taller grass has deeper roots and a lower tendency to wilt.
- Taller grass provides shading of the soil surface and reduces lethal temperatures near the base of grass plants.
- Turf mowed weekly at a taller mowing height is less likely to be scalped. Scalped turf loses density and has shallow root systems.
- During extended periods of summer drought, dormant turf (browned-out leaves) containing Kentucky bluegrass, tall fescue, or perennial ryegrass should receive 1 inch of irrigation every two weeks to maintain hydrated grass crowns and allow for full turf recovery when more favorable moisture and temperature return in the fall.

Learn To Read Your Turf and Know When To Water

Purple-blue wilting leaves, footprints that stay, and folded or rolled leaves are signs that turf should be thoroughly watered if grasses are to remain green and actively growing. Turf water use rates are high during sunny and windy days with low relative humidity. In situations where turf is not watered and rainfall is limited, grasses first show symptoms of wilt and later turn completely brown. When soil lacks moisture, grass

Managing Turfgrass During a Drought Continued

blades first turn bluish purple, indicating plant wilt. Another early sign of insufficient water in the plant occurs when footprints remain in the turf for several hours. Leaves with plenty of water quickly return to their rigid upright shape, while leaves lacking water will remain trampled for a period of time. Leaves also may be folded or rolled lengthwise along the blade, indicating a lack of plant water.

If high temperatures and dry conditions continue without rain or irrigation, the above-ground portion of grasses will turn entirely brown and die. Grasses are said to be dormant during this browned-out stage, since the lower portion of the plant usually remains alive but not growing. Thorough watering will bring the grass out of dormancy and new growth will resume from the below-ground base of grass plants. Even though grasses are dormant, watering restrictions that result in extended dry periods can cause large ground cracks, severe soil drying, and excessive loss of turf cover even when watering is resumed later in the summer or early fall. Summer dormancy of grasses is a mechanism that helps a grass survive, but it does not guarantee that the turf will fully recover from the browned-out stage. Dormant grass should receive at least 1 inch of water every two or three weeks during summer to prevent complete turf loss. Grasses may not show a noticeable greening, but that amount of irrigation should be sufficient to hydrate the lower plant portions and increase the recovery once adequate moisture is available.

Prepare For A Drought

Management practices in the fall and spring determine the drought tolerance of the turf in summer. To reduce the need for irrigation, your turf management program should maximize root volume and depth in preparation for summer drought. By the time summer rolls around, there is little you can do to help a field except mow and irrigate properly.

The following turf care tips will help reduce the need for irrigation and increase the chance of surviving summer drought.

1. Avoid the temptation to irrigate in the spring just to get grass growing. Allow it to green up naturally. Mow frequently and avoid scalping. Do not begin

to irrigate until dry conditions of early summer cause obvious turf wilt that lasts for more than one day. In the spring, atmospheric water demands are low and moderate wilting of turf does not damage the grass. If in the spring the soil is allowed to dry slightly and the grass to wilt some, a deeper and more hardy root system will develop. Such a root system will be necessary to reduce the need for summer irrigation and to survive drought conditions or when city water restrictions are imposed.

2. Mow grass as tall and as frequently as possible with a properly sharpened blade to produce a dense cover with a deep root system. Taller grass has a deeper root system that draws moisture from a larger volume of soil and results in less need for irrigation. A good mowing height for most lawn situations is 2.5 inches. Athletic fields that are not irrigated should be mowed no lower than 2.5 inches. However, in many irrigated athletic field situations the grass is mowed closer to produce a more favorable playing surface. Mowing heights for baseball infields can be as low as .75 inches and high performance soccer and football field may be mowed at 1.25 to 1.5 inches. Turf mowed at the 0.75 to 1.5 inch height will have a shorter root system and irrigation will be needed for turf survival during dry conditions. It is not advised to mow at these heights if adequate irrigation is not available or will be discontinued during the growing season. Mow frequently enough so that clippings are 1 to 1 1/2 inches long. Raise the mower height if grass has grown too tall since the previous mowing. Turf mowed at heights of 3 to 3 1/2 inches will have a better chance of surviving prolonged drought and water restrictions. Most turf mowed at 2.5 inches will require weekly mowing. Taller mowing heights are less likely to cause turf scalping, especially when grass leaves are rapidly growing in the spring.

3. Apply nitrogen fertilizer to cool-season grasses (Kentucky bluegrass, tall fescue, and perennial ryegrass) primarily in the fall. Some nitrogen may be applied in the spring if the field is sparse and bare soil is visible. Minimize summer application of nitrogen. Nitrogen fertilizer applied in the spring and summer causes additional leaf growth, which uses stored plant

Continued on Page 6

Managing Turfgrass During a Drought Continued

energy that normally would be used to produce roots needed for water uptake during summer.

4. Test the soil to ensure an adequate amount of phosphorus and potassium. Additional applications of potassium — 1 pound of K₂O per 1,000 square feet — in April and again in May or June will also improve the summer performance of grass.

5. Core aerify tight soils and thatched turf in the fall or spring to increase water and air movement into the soil. This builds better root systems. Avoid summer coring in the absence of water, since it may cause excessive drying and drought stress.

Conserve Water By Knowing When To Water

1. The best time to water a grass is from 6 to 8 a.m. when disruption of the water pattern from wind is low and water lost to the atmosphere by evaporation is negligible. Watering early in the morning also has the advantage of reducing the chance of turf diseases that require extended periods of leaf moisture. Avoid irrigation during midday and windy conditions.
2. Move sprinklers frequently enough to avoid puddles and runoff. Difficult-to-wet areas such as slopes, thatched turf, and hard soils may benefit from application of a wetting agent to improve surface penetration of water.
3. Water only when the plant tells you to. Become familiar with areas of the field that wilt first (blue/purple leaves, rolled leaves, foot printing). Water within a day of observing these symptoms.

Once the decision has been made to irrigate, then water the thoroughly. Should puddles or runoff occur before the total amount of water is applied, stop irrigating and resume only after the ground has absorbed the free moisture. Turf areas that are moist, firm, and have no visible water are ready for a repeat irrigation cycle. Areas that are soft and produce squasy footprints when walked on are not ready to receive additional irrigation.

A day after watering, check a few different locations in the field to determine how well your irrigation program is distributing water in the root zone. With a shovel, cut a slender 2-inch wedge 6 to 8 inches deep.

Estimate the moisture content at different depths in the soil profile by pressing together a golf-ball-sized amount of soil. If drops of water can be squeezed from the soil ball, you may be irrigating too much or too often. Soils that hold together without crumbling and appear moist have been irrigated properly. Soils that appear dry, dusty, and do not form a ball when squeezed have not received enough irrigation or the water is running off the surface of the field and not into the root zone.

Adequate soil moisture at 6 to 8 inches deep is sufficient to maintain grasses during the summer. A foot-long slender screwdriver pushed into the ground in several locations can also give a quick assessment of the moisture condition of the soil. The screwdriver will easily penetrate to the soil depth that has received sufficient water. The screwdriver test can also be used to help determine where and when there is a need for irrigation.

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Managing Turfgrass During a Drought Continued

Watering New Turf

Newly seeded or sodded areas require special irrigation. Newly seeded turf should be watered daily and may need as many as four light waterings in a single day. Keep the seedbed moist, but not saturated, to a depth of 1 to 2 inches until germination occurs (green cast to field and seedlings are 1/4 to 1/2 inch tall).

Seedlings of a new turf must not be stressed to the point of wilt. Continue with light applications of water — 1/8 to 1/4 inch — one to four times a day.

Apply straw (one bale per 1,000 square feet) at time of seeding to help shade the ground and prevent rapid drying of the soil surface. Straw also will reduce seedling damage from the force of large sprinkler drops. Watering with a light mist is best for establishing new grass. As seedlings reach 2 inches in height, gradually reduce the frequency of watering and water more deeply. After the new turf has been mowed two or three times, deep, infrequent waterings are the best.

Newly sodded areas require watering one or two times a day. Begin irrigation immediately after laying sod. Plan your sodding operation so that a section of laid sod can be watered immediately, while other areas are being sodded.

Sod should be watered so that the sod strip is wet as well as the top inch of soil below the sod. The first irrigation will take about an inch of water to achieve complete wetting of the sod. After watering, lift up pieces of sod at several locations to determine if it has been adequately irrigated. Continue watering one to two times a day with light irrigation to prevent wilting and to ensure a moist soil just below the sod layer.

As sod becomes established and roots penetrate and grow in the soil, gradually reduce the frequency of watering but wet the soil deeper. After sod has been mowed two or three times, deep, infrequent watering should be practiced. During hot, windy conditions, establishing sod may require several light applications of water per day to prevent wilt and potentially high lethal temperatures. In this case, light misting, just to wet the leaf surface and not to supply water to the soil, cools the grass plant as water is evaporated from the leaves.

Do not over-irrigate (saturate) the soil because that will inhibit sod roots from growing into the soil. If the sod cannot be watered on a daily basis, thoroughly water the sod and soil to a depth of 6 inches. This will delay the rooting time of sod but will reduce the chance of rapid drying and severe loss of grass.

Sod laid June through August should be watered as described above for proper establishment and should not have water restricted to cause browning and summer dormancy. Sod laid March through May has a better chance of withstanding summer water restrictions, especially if roots have developed to a minimum of six inches deep.

Drought and Water Restrictions

Each year parts of Iowa are affected by dry conditions. Thunderstorms occur sporadically throughout the state to give local and temporary relief from dry conditions. A good soaking rain that slowly delivers at least one inch of water over the course of a few days is always welcomed to recharge deeper soil moisture reserves. Non-irrigated turf in one county may thrive while the next county may already be experiencing summer dormancy from complete lack of rainfall. The “luck of the draw” concerning rainfall can seem very unfair, but the reality is that you need to prepare each year as if you will be experiencing annual drought and possible water restrictions.

The State Water Plan of 1985 sets forth guidelines for dealing with water shortage in Iowa. Unfortunately, water use by the turfgrass industry has a low priority. Typically water will be restricted for home lawns before it is restricted for golf courses and athletic fields. As drought conditions escalate here are some of the difficulties that Iowa lawns will face.

- There is the misconception that turfgrass can turn brown (go summer dormant) when dry and then return to the same level of turf performance when water and weather conditions improve. The reality is that that summer dormancy helps Kentucky bluegrass survive, but under extended periods of severe drought even Kentucky bluegrass can die. Perennial ryegrass is often a major component of the athletic

Continued on Page 8

Managing Turfgrass During a Drought Continued

- field and perennial ryegrass is even less drought tolerant than Kentucky bluegrass. When the field turns completely brown it is likely that some of the perennial ryegrass completely die.
- Dormant athletic fields quickly lose their competitive edge of density, are not traffic tolerant, and are easily invaded by weeds, especially summer annual weeds like spurge, knotweed, and crabgrass.
 - Post emergence summer weed control of crabgrass and broadleaf weeds will be diminished during drought.
 - During extended dry conditions the degradation of pre-emergence herbicides is slowed and their activity may extend into the late summer period for reestablishing turfgrass from seed.
 - Avoid fertilizer and weed control applications on dormant turf, especially when temperature exceeds 85* F.
 - Turf loss from white grubs is more severe during dry periods because these insects attack the root system.
- If this is not the year of the drought then it is certainly looming on the horizon; will you be ready?

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— **Todd McCabe**, Landscape Unlimited



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Changes In Pesticide Applicator Certification and Licenses

Kristin Schaefer, Dept. of Entomology & Gretchen Paluch, PhD, IDALS

The Iowa Legislature recently passed changes to the Iowa Code that will affect commercial, public, and private pesticide applicators. Previously, commercial, public, and private applicators had the option of paying one-year or three-year certification fees. Effective July 1, 2012, one-year certification fees are no longer available. All individual pesticide applicator certification fees will now cover three years. Certified pesticide applicators that currently pay one-year fees but are in a three-year qualification cycle will be eligible to pay the one-year certification renewal fee until the existing cycle expiration date.

Another change that took effect July 1, 2012 concerns evidence of financial responsibility for commercial pesticide applicator businesses. To be issued a license, commercial pesticide applicator licensees (businesses) will be required to provide proof of financial responsibility for a minimum amount of \$250,000 for property damage and \$250,000 for public liability, each separately. Certificates of insurance meeting the \$250,000 minimum requirements will be required to renew commercial pesticide applicator licenses for 2013. Certificates of insurance issued prior to July 1, 2012, will expire on December 31, 2012.

For additional information refer to the IDALS Pesticide Bureau website or call 515-281-8591 for private pesticide applicator information and 515-281-5601 for commercial pesticide applicator information.

Kristine Schaefer is a program specialist in the Department of Entomology. She can be reached at 515-294-4286 or e-mail schaefer@iastate.edu. Gretchen Paluch is pesticide bureau chief for the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. She can be reached at 515-281-8590 or e-mail gretchen.paluch@iowaAgriculture.gov.

IPLCA Dues Reminder

IPLCA First Notice of Dues Renewals were sent to your mailbox on June 1st.

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Iowa Turfgrass Field Day 2012

Andrew Hoiberg, PhD, Iowa State University

Education, question and answer periods, PAT training, viewing of research plots, pest identification tours, interaction with our industry vendors, and lunch by Hickory Park... Sounds like another successful ITI Field Day at the Iowa State University Horticulture Research Station. Approximately 150 attendees represented the various aspects of the turf industry in Iowa, while 40 vendors represented 25 companies from the commercial side. You folks are what make Iowa Turfgrass Field Days possible, thanks to all who attended!

The morning began with registration (accompanied by coffee and doughnuts from Casey's, of course), a short welcome from Dr. Iles, our Horticulture Department Chair, and an introduction of those responsible for getting the program and research station prepared for the attendees. Special thanks goes out to Nick Howell and his crew for making the Horticulture Farm look so good and setting up tents, etc. for the event, and to Dan Strey, Blake DeBont, Dan Oftele, and Adam Grimm for ensuring smooth day to day operation of the Horticulture Farm and helping keep research going.



Nick Christians, PhD talks about the Fertility Trial.

After the introductions, Dr. Christians headed one group while Dr. Minner headed the other for the first hour. Education during those sessions was broken into 15 minute talks and included the following topics:

- Post emergent crabgrass trials (Dr. Christians)
- Fertility trials (Dr. Christians)
- Seeding & Nitrogen trials (Dr. Hoiberg)
- GPS sprayer/boom coverage demonstration (John Newton, CGCS& Derek Richards)
- Logo painting demonstration (Tim VanLoo, CSFM & Crew)
- NTEP trials (Dan Strey)
- Japanese beetle discussion (Dr. Laura Jesse)
- Turfgrass disease discussion (Dr. Minner)

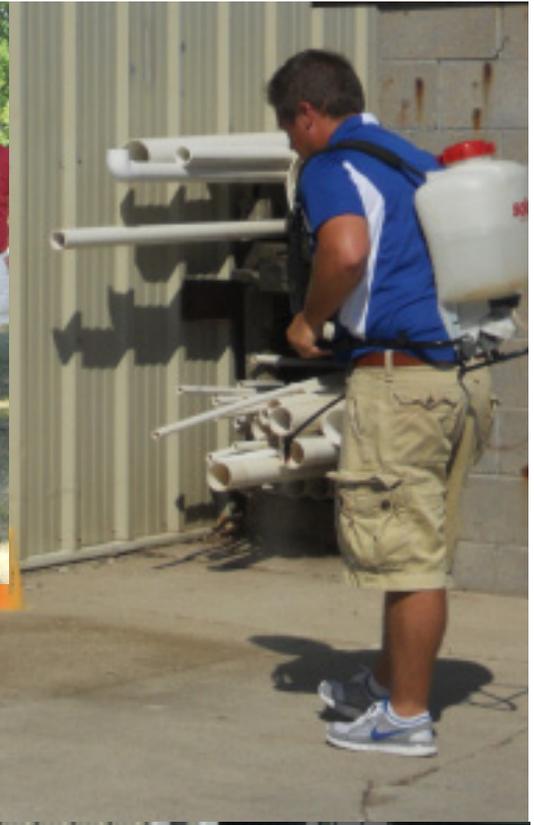
After the first hour of talks, attendees were free to continue with the other tour or begin the PAT training session. The PAT training is always one of the draws for Field Day and was full of great information and education. The information provided was:

- Sprayer/spreader calibration (Troy McQuillen)
- Safe application techniques (Troy McQuillen)
- Label discussion (Dr. Minner)
- Right of way (Dr. Robert Hartzler)
- Pesticide stewardship (Neric Smith)

After the morning sessions of education were completed, the tour gathered for a turfgrass insect, weed, and disease tour guided by Dr. Minner. Some of the highlights of the tour were Dr. Minner stumping the congregation with Poacompressa (Rough stalk bluegrass), and indicating the importance of raster pattern identification on white grubs.

The final event of the day was a delicious lunch provided by Hickory Park and ample time to visit with vendors and see all the great products they have to offer!

Thanks again to all who helped, attended, or participated in any way, the new format of Field Day really seems to be well received. Of course, if you have any feedback on anything at all, please feel free to contact the fine folks at the Iowa Turfgrass Institute.



Above: Dave Minner, PhD talks about Turf Disease

Right Top Side: Troy McQuillen gives a demonstration on Sprayer Calibration for Pesticide Applicators Training

Below: Laura Jesse, PhD and Donald Lewis, PhD talked about Japanese Beetle & Other Invasive Pest



Above: Joel Reiker gives a painting demonstration.

Left Bottom Side: Tim VanLoo, CSFM gives a talk about painting turfgrass.



The Iowa Turfgrass Institute would like to thank Josh Lenz for designing our 2012 Iowa Field Day Logo that was used in the painting demonstration. We would also like to thank Dan and all the Horticulture Farm Staff for all their prep work for this wonderful event.