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# Control of fungus diseases on turfgrass

by P. O. Larsen, Associate Professor Department of Plant Pathology The Ohio State University and The Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center

Control of fungus diseases on turfgrass is a troublesome and expensive problem. There are a number of management practices that can lessen, if not totally prevent the incidence of diseases caused by paint pathogenic fungi. Since fungus spores require for their production and moisture germination, any practice that will lower relative humidity or prevent the prolonged presence of free water on foliage will generally be helpful in controlling many turf diseases. Thinning tree and shrub foliage to reduce shade and increase air movement over turf areas should lower atmospheric humidity and increase evaporation of water from leaf surface. Removal of dew and plant exudates from grass on fairways, greens and tees by syringing or dragging a hose these areas is frequently across practiced by golf course superintendents. Dethatching and aerification are reducing over-wintering helpful in inoculum and improving soil drainage, the latter being particularly important in the control of certain soil borne fungi such as Pythium.

- MECHANIC NEEDED -FOR TURF EQUIPMENT Experience & Tools Necessary W. F. MILLER COMPANY 1593 South Woodward BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN 48011 Telephone: 313-647-7700 A balanced fertilization program will also do a great deal to minimize the incidence of disease. Generally speaking, a vigorous, healthy plant is less susceptible to attack by diseasecausing micro-organisms. Therefore, any management practice which encourages good plant growth will probably aid in disease control.

In some instances, cultural practices are not enough to prevent disease initiation and fungicides are required. One needs to answer several questions before deciding what fungicide to use in a disease control program: What is the disease? What fungicides are effective against the disease and which ones are available? What is the cost of the fungicides that are known to be effective on a per unit area basis at the recommended rate?

The disease type will frequently determine whether systemic or contact fungicides should be used. Presently, systemic fungicides are more effective than contact fungicides for the control of Fusarium blight and striped smut. However, there are no systemic Continued on page 8



# **GOLF DAY**



Above right: Gerald Gill, left with Warv Dominic, center, and Bob Kope checking the ticket sales.

#### MORE PHOTOS OF OUR GOLF DAY At bay pointe c.c.

Right: Bruce Wolfrom tabulating the golf scores.

Below right: One of the gaming tables - filled with hopeful players.







## Update on cool weather Brown Patch a continuing problem

By H. Cole, Jr., L. L. Burpee and P.O. Sanders

For years Brown Patch has been recognized as a warm temperature, humid weather disease of colonial bents and the older mixed creeping bentgrasses of greens and tees. Typically the disease would smolder causing patches of brownish discolored grasses until the weather became especially "muggy" and warm when smoke rings and active patches would appear overnight.

Older writings about golf course diseases contain references to winter Brown Patch but these brownish rings patches were little more than or curiosities. In the mid 1970's, however, persistent reports of brown rings or vellowish brown rings or patches were being made from golf courses throughout the East. Often these symptoms occurred when temperatures were in the 50's, 60's, or 70's. Superficially, they resembled typical Brown Patch, but in many instances symptoms were not controlled by the common Brown Patch fungicides or at best were checked for only a few days. As the reports filtered in, we were about to blame the disease on fungicide resistant low temperature strains of Rhizoctonia solani and we were going to publish a note about the resistance problem. Fortunately. Dr. Robert of the U.S.D.A. Pasture Sherwood Research Laboratory asked a most important question: How do you know the fungus is Rhizoctonia solani, the cause of the common warm temperature Brown Patch? To make a long story short, we didn't and it wasn't. The superficially looked like R. fungus Solani, but there the relationship stopped. After much literature and laboratory searching the fungus turned out to be a Certobasidium sp., a Rhizoctania relative to R. Solani but completely different in temperature requirements and fungicide sensitivity. The Current Situation

As more samples and reports of disease occurrences rolled in, it became apparent that we were not dealing with a curiosity but with a problem of consequence on golf turf. Symptoms have been reported on fairways, greens, tees, and aprons.

We could isolate the Ceratobadidium fungus from many of these turf areas; from some we could isolate neither Ceratobasidium nor R. Solani but still other unidentified fungi. At present we Continued on page 13



# **1979 Officers and Directors**

Clem Wolfrom, Superintendent of the Detroit Golf Club, Detroit, Michigan was re-elected President of the Michigan and Border Cities Golf Course Superintendents Association at the annual meeting on Tuesday, October 3, 1978, at the Maple Lane Golf Club.

James Timmerman, Superintendent of Orchard Lake Country Club was elected Vice President, replacing Bruce Wolfrom who became our new Secretary-Treasurer. Bruce is the Superintendent of Barton Hills Country Club.

The two new Directors of the Association elected to three year terms are Mike Edgerton, Superintendent of the Meadowbrook Country Club and Fritz McMullen, Superintendent of Forest Lake Country Club. The two retiring Board members were Ward Swanson, Superintendent of Plum Hollow Golf Club and Jim Timmerman who moved up to Vice President.

After announcing the winners of the election, President Clem Wolfrom, gave a special thank you to Bob Hope for his tenure as Secretary Treasurer all these years and to Ward Swanson for 16 years of his service as a Director and past President.

PEOPLE. . . are like stained glass windows that sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but in the darkness true beauty is revealed only if there is a light within.



#### Fungus diseases continued

fungicides that are known to control Helminthosporium leaf spot or melting out. Similarly, only contact fungicides are currently available for control of Pythium blight. In some instances, as with Sclerotinia dollar spot, both systemic and contact fungicides are available for control of a disease. The choice of fungicides in this situation should not be made solely on the price of the chemical per pound of packaged weight, but rather on the amount of material needed per unit area and the duration of time for which the fungicide will be effective. Even though most systemic fungicides are generally more expensive per pound, they usually are applied at lower rates and are effective for longer periods of time.

Another consideration in the choice of fungicides is the possibility of treating more than one disease with a single fungicide when there is overlap of diseases. By carefully examining the labels of fungicides and personally observing their performances regarding disease control, it may be possible to save time and money at certain times of the growing season by using a single fungicide to control more than one disease. In these situations, one should take note of whether the fungicide rates applied are adequate for control of all components of the disease comples. For example, the rate of systemic fungicide necessary to effectively control Fusarium blight is about 3-4 times higher than that needed

for Sclerotinia dollar spot, whereas similar rates of several commercially available contact fungicides are effective against Helminthosporium leaf spot and dollar spot.

The decision as to whether to treat a disease on a preventive or an "as needed" (curative) basis is governed by several factors. A primary concern usually is cost of the material. If there has been no history of a given disease in that area, we could certainly not recommend the indiscriminate use of a fungicide, or any pesticide, where they are not needed. Pythium blight is an example of a disease which is generally treated on a curative basis, since incidence of the disease is not always certain every year even though an area may have a history of the disease. Fungicides that are presently available for Pythium blight control are contact fungicides, usually having a residual property of no longer than a few days to a week. Therefore, effective, practical control of Pythium blight is dependent on daily early morning inspection of the suspected areas and the immediate application of an appropriate fungicide at the first sign of disease.

Helminthosporium leaf spot, Fusarium blight and striped smut are examples of diseases that are extremely difficult to control unless you use a preventive program. This implies that the fungicide is first Continued on page 11



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#### Fungus diseases continued

applied prior to the time when the fungus first becomes active or before disease symptoms appear. Leaf spot a disease in which spores are is produced on the leaves of diseased plants. Since no systemic fungicides are available for leaf spot control. uniform applications of contact fungicides at regular intervals are required to provide continued protection. Fusarium blight and striped smut are both caused by fungi which invade the vascular tissue of plants. This makes disease control difficult after these have invaded the grass pathogens plant. Once symptoms appear on grass infected with the Fusarium blight or striped smut pathogens, it is quite difficult to control the diseases even with systemic fungicides. This observation points to the need for awareness of when these diseases usually occur during a growing season so that fungicides can be applied prior to the initiation of disease activity, but still not so early that unnecessary or premature fungicide application will occur.

Recommendations concerning specific fungicide use for turfgrass diseases can be obtained from Extension Service bulletins available from The Ohio State University.

The preceding comments on disease control are certainly not all-encompassing, but they are intended to aid in making decisions concerning the use of fungicides for controlling turfgrass diseases. September Issue, Divots Editor, E.J. Sylvester

THE VISITOR. . .paid his green fees, fixed up a match, and went out to the first tee. Taking his stance, he gave a wild swing, and missed completely. "By Jove!" he said to his opponent, "it's a good thing I found out early in the game that this course is at least two inches lower than the one I usually play on."



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Tom's formal training was in Horticulture, Floriculture, Soil Science and Landscape Management at Michigan State University. After completing the Nursery and Landscape Management Course at MSU, Tom served as Landscape Manager at the George Young Nursery in Oak Park for 8 years.

Tom was Technical Turf Sales Consultant for Agrico Chemical Co. for 13 years, and recently completed 5½ years as Sales Engineer for Sprinkler Irrigation Supply Company.



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David R. Forgan

#### Brown Patch continued

believe that the disease is not going to become the scourge of turfgrass but merely another problem to be solved on the way to qualify turf. It would appear that humid, cool weather is most favorable for disease development.

Where did the problem come from: Why Ceratobasidium now and not 10 years ago?

Any new problem always stimulates the question of why not? and not Answers have ranged from: before? the discontinuance of growing season use of mercury to the introduction of the benzimidazole systemic fungicides in wide use. Others have blamed shifts in the weather towards cooler, wetter summers. At this point there is no correct answer and there may never be one. The best we can do is speculate based on the facts on hand. Our best estimate is that increased Red Thread prevalence and severity has also brought Cool Weather Brown Patch to prominence. Fungi respond to their environment. Those that are favored by a change in the environment become more common; those that are less favored become less common.

Where do we go from there?

The major practical problem that the turfgrass manager faces is disease control to a level compatible with the uses of the area in question. At present we just do not have enough information about the disease to make clear recommendations for either cultural or fungicide control. Continued on next page



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Environmental manipulation does not seem to offer promise, especially for the golf course superintendent who is locked into a multitude of other concerns dealing with irrigation and culture. From a fungicide view the best recommendation would be to stick with success. If Cool Weather Brown Patch does appear and your current program is not holding it, then try shifting to other fungicides labeled and registered for Brown Patch until you meet the fungicide situation. Dan Loughner, who is working on his M.S. in Plant Pathology with us, will be evaluating fungicides in the laboratory. green house, and with luck, in the field. We will be screening both the Rhizoctonia solani warm temperature Brown Patch group as well as the Ceratobasidium cool temperature group of fungi.

From The Keynoter, Penn. Turfgrass Council

#### THE HISTORY OF A LIE

First, somebody told it, Then the room wouldn't hold it, So the busy tongues rolled it Till they got it outside: Then the crowd came across it, And never once lost it. But tossed it and tossed it. Till it grew long and wide. This lie brought forth others. Evil sisters and brothers. A terrible crew. As headlong they hurried. The people they flurried And troubled and worried. As lies always do. So, evil-boded. This monstrous lie goaded, Till at last it exploded, In sin and shame. But from mud and from mire The pieces flew higher. Till they hit the sad liar, And killed his good name. Reader of Ann In The Monett Times Thanks - George A. Davis





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