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Landscape Alert

**Turfgrass Spring Blog # 2: 2020 Edition
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While it is the end of May and many warm-season grass species have greened-up, some bermudagrass and zoysiagrass lawns still have a significant amount of old, brown leaf material in them. This is likely the result of several compounding factors.

The impact of last fall's long, hot, dry weather are likely affecting green-up this season, especially in non-irrigated lawns.

A second factor influencing green-up could be all the rainfall this winter. Water is a good buffer of heat. Meaning that it takes more energy (i.e. from the sun) to warm a wet soil than a dry soil.

To date, the average 4-inch soil temperature for the entire month of May in Griffin, GA – central for the state – is 71.2 degrees F. That is 5.6 degrees F lower than for the same time last year. Similarly, the average maximum air temperature this May has been 8 degrees F cooler than May 2019.

Lastly, of the pictures, descriptions, and observations I have made, the lawns with considerable brown have a higher mowing height than is recommended for bermudagrass and zoysiagrass. The mowing range should be 1.0 to 2.0 inches.

The extra leaf canopy and thatch can act as an insulator, like the pink stuff in your attic and walls, preventing the sun's energy from warming the soil quickly. For these lawns I have suggested the grass be mowed as low as possible and remove all the leaf biomass. The objective is to open the turf canopy, permitting sunlight to reach the soil surface.

Taking it a step further, consider core aeration. Opening holes into the soil profile permits warm air into the root zone, warming the soil from the inside-out. By warming the soil, rhizomes will initiate new shoots, eventually reaching the soil surface and thickening the lawn.

For more information, go to www.georgiaturf.com

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