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### **LANDSCAPE ADVISORY BULLETIN: Keeping Bermudagrass Healthy**

Bermudagrass is found in landscapes throughout the Rio Grande Valley, particularly in commercial environments. When this grass species is healthy, it can take on all kinds of stress. Heat, wear, and disease challenges usually pose no problems for this tough turfgrass. Looking at the grass in the Valley, however, there are clear indications that Bermudagrass is struggling.

The following items should be considered in order to understand what happens when the grass is struggling:

- 1) Bermudagrass has more stringent nutritional requirements than most other grass species. Specialists in the field often say that Bermudagrass is a heavy feeder. It requires more nitrogen than other grasses.
- 2) Landscape irrigation itself contributes to nutrition problems. Applying irrigation water to the turf several times a week, year after year, leaches plant nutrients from the soil profile. After a while there is nothing left in the soil for the turf to feed on.
- 3) It is important to remember that fungi, even the harmful ones, are ALWAYS present in the soil. They too are hungry and they want to live off the carbohydrates produced by the Bermudagrass.
- 4) Grass is similar to us humans: when it is healthy, it can handle the various stresses that come its way. Healthy Bermudagrass can compete favorably with many of the fungi present in the soil. But unhealthy turf, especially when nutritionally deprived, cannot put up much of a fight against harmful agents.
- 5) Now add tremendous heat stress, and the situation becomes worse. The grass begins to decline as the fungi get the upper hand. Metabolism in plants is enzyme dependent. When the heat soars, the enzymes have to

**shut down because their active sites are warped, leaving them unable to function. For much of the day the unhealthy turf just sits there, unable to produce much energy. The grass becomes easy prey for the harmful fungi.**

**So, what can we do?**

**Two measures are important. In the fall treat the turf with a fungicide to cut down on the number of harmful disease fungi. Secondly, feed the turf appropriately to make it healthy enough to grow and resist the onslaught of diseases.**

**During the summer, when the heat is intense, take a good look at the Bermudagrass. If there is a lot of brown turf, realize that you may have an irrigation problem OR a fungal problem. Hopefully you will realize that your turfgrass is struggling to survive.**

**This information bulletin was compiled from existing sources for Top Cut Lawn Care, Inc.**

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