

2012

The 2012 golf season could be described in one word, drought. The entire year saw precipitation levels under-average. The temperatures rose steadily from January to March. March saw its first 80-degree day of the year. May through July was hot and dry with rainfall deficits. The irrigation water had to be rationed. The irrigation pond was maintained by a well. We could only water with the water that the well produced. This water was used in order of importance. Greens watered first, tees were second, followed by watering the fairways with enough water to keep them from going dormant. The roughs were not watered. Mid-August brought some beneficial rainfall. This helped immensely. The shorter days, cooler nights aided in turf recovery. Not all turf recovered. In September, reseeding areas was necessary for areas that did not recover. October was the first month that we received above-average precipitation. December was the second month to receive above-average precipitation. The year ended with a 12" deficit in precipitation. The dry weather was also great golfing weather. Play began in March and continued till Thanksgiving.

Above-average temperature in February through June caused many plants to bloom 2-3 weeks before their expectancy date. Tulips bloomed at the end of March. In this area, Easter is expectancy date. This pattern was seen on phlox, crabapples and coneflowers. June through August was continued hot and dry. Ponds and wetland areas became dry. Grasses began to grow over the evaporated ponds and wetland areas. The evaporated wetland areas allowed us to do some manual willow removal. Plants that were able to withstand drought and heat, survived. The native grasses survived. The drought did not slow down the growth of evasive species such as willows and olive bushes. Trees began dropping leaves in September from stress. The drought caused a variety of plants and tree to go dormant early. Selectively choosing native areas not to mow was important to avoid putting more stress on the plants.

Wildlife at Oak Grove is always changing. The turkeys that hatched in 2011 returned. They would be visible on the course during the day quite frequently. Other species that were visible often were painted turtles, snapping turtles, and two pair of sandhill cranes. When wetlands began to dry up, you could see animals during the day searching for water. Predatory birds' population was good. Hawks could be seen waiting for smaller animals to come to these wetland watering holes for their food. Lack of precipitation helped diminish the food supply for animals. When wetland areas went completely dry, minimal animal activity was noticeable in daytime hours on golf course.

The greatest challenge of 2012 was water management. In a record-setting drought year, the turf conditions at Oak Grove were good. Disease pressure was decreased by dry conditions. Dollar spot was the primary target during season. Most of the season had ideal environmental conditions for this pathogen. Mowing patterns and frequency were monitored closely in order not to subject turfgrass to more stress. Reduction in mowing contributed to the turf recovery in August. Aerification on the greens was performed in October. We used small coring tines to reduce stress and mechanical injury on sensitive turf. Process worked well and with timely rains the greens were fully recovered in two weeks. Sound water management and cultural practices was Oak Grove's best defense against record drought.