2011

The 2011 golf season was a season of extreme weather variations. Coming off the snow blizzard in February that dropped over 18 inches of snow, the weather did not improve. March saw seasonable temperatures with thawing not beginning till the 3rd week of the month. April gave us one last shot of snow on the 15th, melted quickly but remained below average temperature wise. May stayed below average temperature with above normal precipitation. Memorial Day weekend arrived and so did the heat. June, July and August saw periods of high heat indexes mixed with sporadic thunderstorms that produced heavy down pours. September and October brought seasonal conditions. Once November arrived so did the chill.

The uncharacteristic weather of 2011 was most evident in the flora and fauna at Oak Grove. Phlox that usually bloomed in mid-May did not bloom until mid-June. The crabapple trees along the entrance driveway did not flower until the beginning of June, which usually occurs around Mother's Day in northern Illinois. The wildflowers in the native area on the south side of #4 tees did not bloom until mid-July. Even many of the native grasses did not develop seed heads until September. The trees began turning their autumn colors in early September. In the fall, designated areas were not mowed down in an effort to not put stress on native plants with the late development of the season.

The wildlife has seen some changes. There were no coyotes or foxes sighted this year. The number of predatory birds appears to be down. This is evident by rabbit and chipmunk population that has increased. The deer population is strong. The painted turtles and snapping turtles were seen quite often throughout the season. There was a new addition; a family of wild turkeys made Oak Grove their new home. In September, they were spotted with 16 hatchlings. When seen again in October, the hatchlings showed immense growth quadrupling in size. We look forward to see how many return in 2012.

Maintaining turf health in 2011 was challenging. The cool wet spring created a shortened root system on the turf. When the turf was exposed to the heat it showed stress immediately. Much of the weather through July and August was prime conditions for pythium blight and wet wilt. Water management was critical during this period to avoid outbreaks of pythium. Cultural practices were used in place of fungicide applications. There was minimal turf loss in the fairways around drainage swales due to wet wilt. Following heavy rains, high heat and humidity: there were ideal conditions. Considering how difficult the weather conditions were, Oak Grove fared very well by using sound IPM and cultural practices.