

EGCSA, Olde Florida Golf Club to establish test green

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Olde Florida Golf Club

The Everglades golf course superintendents Association, in cooperation with Olde Florida Golf Club, is in the process of establishing a test green for four new varieties of "ultradwarfs." The four varieties to be planted on the 2500-square-foot chipping green are FloraDwarf, Champion, TifEagle (TW-72), and MS-Supreme. Each of the four varieties will be planted in duplicate to insure the results can be validated.

Darren Davis, golf course superintendent at Olde Florida Golf Club, explained the driving force for the idea to do the project comes from golfers. He said, "As golfers have demanded faster, more uniform greens, the existing varieties of bermudagrass cultivars for greens — Tifdwarf and Tifgreen — are becoming unacceptable. These two varieties were developed in the 1950s and 60s when golfers accepted mowing heights that were somewhat higher than what we are seeing in the 90s."

In the last few years, researchers have been studying several new varieties of dwarf bermudagrass hybrids that spread vigorously with little vertical leaf growth.

Two of these, FloraDwarf and Champion, are both fine-textured mutations found on existing Tifdwarf greens. FloraDwarf was selected from a green in Hawaii, and Champion was discovered in Texas.

MS-Supreme was found as a fine-textured mutation on a Tifgreen (328) green in Mississippi. Therefore, all three of these varieties originated from Tifgreen, since originally Tifdwarf was a mutation found on an existing Tifgreen (328) green.

TifEagle is unique in that it is a mutation that was induced by gamma radiation

from Tifway II, a cultivar commonly used on fairways.

"These are certainly exciting times, with these new grass varieties becoming available. However, they are still unproven and we must exercise caution to determine which one, or ones, are best suited for which location. It is side-by-side comparisons in a controlled test area, such as this test, that will help determine that," said USGA Regional Director John Foy.

Dr. Wayne Hanna, developer of TifEagle, explained, "TifEagle will require more thatch control (verticutting, top-dressing and/or grooming) than Tifdwarf to produce quality turf. However, with proper management, it will produce better quality and more dense turf at 1/8 inch than Tifdwarf."

The project is being supervised by a committee consisting of Chairman Rick Tatum, golf course superintendent, The Forest Country Club; Vice Chairman Darren Davis, golf course superintendent, Olde Florida Golf Club; John Foy, director, USGA Florida Region; Dr. Wayne Hanna, research geneticist, USDA; Dr. John Cisar, University of Florida; Dr. Jeff Krans, Mississippi State University; Roy Bates, president Florida Turfgrass Association, golf course superintendent, Imperial Country Club; Mark Black, golf course manager, Bonita Bay Club; Dale Walters, CGCS, Royal Palm Country Club; and Terry Wood, president EGCSA, golf course superintendent, Royal Wood Golf & Country Club.

Committee Chairman Rick Tatum, superintendent at the Forest Country Club in Fort Myers, said, "The test plots are going to be extremely valuable for our area. These new varieties are originating from areas all over the country, and by having them side by side in our climate

we will be able to determine which ones are best for our conditions."

The existing green is currently being renovated. Basamid soil fumigant, donated by BASF, will be used to kill the existing bermudagrass.

Following this process, the top six inches of greens mix will be removed. Additional greens mix to replace this will be donated by Golf Agronomic Supply and Handling, a longtime supporter of the Florida golf course superintendents Association and their affiliated chapters.

The new varieties will be planted later this summer. All four varieties will be planted in equal amounts on the same date and treated identically. The plots are vertical strips which will allow the individual varieties to be aerified and vertically mowed separately, reducing the risk of cross-contamination. The project will officially run three years from the date of grassing.

The green is used by the membership of Olde Florida and will be mowed daily at a height of cut around 1/8 inch, the preferred height for the new "ultradwarfs."

The nature of these new grass varieties will require the green to be lightly vertically mowed and lightly top-dressed frequently throughout the year to control thatch. The greens mower that will be used will be a Toro GR1000 that has been provided to the project through the generosity of the Toro Company and their distributor, Wesco Turf.

"The Toro company has been a longtime supporter of research and the advancement of turfgrass management. The greens mower is being made available through an educational program funded by Toro with support from Wesco Turf," according to Greg Wright, vice president of commercial sales, Wesco Turf.