USGA unveils research progress

New bentgrasses on horizon due to USGA-funded turfgrass breeding

DEFinitive information from the 21 USGA-sponsored three-year enviromental research projects that began last year will not be available, for the most part, until the end of the study, late 1993 or early 1994, according to the United States Golf Association.

USGA Green Section National Director Jim Snow said in his first-year summary of the research that for most projects "1991 was a year of constructing facilities, developing and testing experimental procedures, and collecting preliminary data.

"It also should be pointed out that an ambitious quality assurance/quality control program was established for all of the pesticide and nutrient fate studies, ensuring that data can be validated under the closest scrutiny," Snow said.

BROOKS takes helm of Lawn Institute from retiring Roberts

James R. Brooks has been named executive director of The Lawn Institute, replacing Dr. Elliott Roberts, who retired April 1.

The announcement was made by Mike Robinson, president of The Lawn Institute. Robinson said, "We are extremely pleased to have an individual of Jim's stature and reputation assume the leadership role for the institute."

"His proven expertise in marketing, public relations, and association management will enable The Lawn Institute to become even more active and visible in educating the public as to the environmental benefits of improved lawns and sports turf through the use of turf grass varieties, and in promoting the important role the turfgrass industry plays in helping to protect and enhance our environments."

The administrative headquarters will now be in Marietta, Ga. The new address is The Lawn Institute, 1509 Johnson Ferry Road, NE, Suite 190, Marietta, Ga. 30062; 404-977-6402.
Soil laboratory tests will be standardized nationwide

By PETER BLAIS

The U.S. Golf Association Green Section plans to use the year-long work of Dr. Norm Hummel to standardize laboratory testing procedures on soil samples for golf course construction, hopefully ridding the industry of inconsistent lab results and helping ensure quality construction.

The USGA plans to adopt the testing procedures and seek their approval from the American Society of Testing and Materials this summer, according to Green Section National Director Jim Snow. The Green Section Advisory Committee discussed Hummel's recommendations June 8. Snow declined to discuss the specifics of the new testing procedures until "a couple loose ends" are straightened out in late June or early July.

"I'd rather not say something now when we're not sure exactly how they will read," he said. Developers have long been frustrated by sending identical soil samples to different labs and getting different results.

"No one has overseen testing procedures for soil samples," Snow explained, "so individual laboratories evolved their own techniques. That's why builders can send off the same soil sample to different labs and get different numbers."

Once the testing procedures have been adopted, the Green Section will begin sending out blind tests once or twice yearly to make certain soil laboratories are using the standardized tests. If the results are far different than expected, the Green Section will work with the laboratory to correct its procedures.

Snow said about eight labs are doing only golf course soil testing, while another eight would like to either become involved or currently test golf course samples as part of their overall business.

"We'll encourage builders to use experienced labs employing the standards, Snow said.

Snow said the Green Section will also make available soil-testing equipment that can be used to test soil mixes on site, making it unnecessary to send samples to a lab.

"Many builders don't have time to take samples and send them to a lab," Snow explained. "That has caused problems. For instance, some courses have ended up with half as much organic material in their soil mix as they wanted. Others have had twice as much."

Unlike laboratory equipment, on-site test apparatus measures weight rather than volume, Snow said. It costs less than $1,000 or can be borrowed from regional Green Section offices as part of their Turf Advisory Service.

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Left, insect damage in perennial ryegrass. Right, endophytic ryegrass resists insect pests.

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No one has overseen testing procedures for soil samples, so individual laboratories evolved their own techniques. That's why builders can send off the same soil sample to different labs and get different numbers.

— Jim Snow, USGA Green Section

Continued from page 15

least 80 percent organic material and a fiber content of 20 to 50 percent.

"Compost is becoming more readily available throughout the country and is being used in golf course construction," Hummel noted. "Finely ground bark, rice hulls, sewage sludge and other organic waste products can be acceptable if composted to the curing or stabilization state. The use of compost will have a precautionary note because of the variability of different products."

"Returning infiltration rates to the specifications. The USGA would recommend two sets of numbers — a normal range for the favored grass species in that geographic area and an acceptable range in unusual circumstances, i.e. poor water quality or a cool-season grass used in a warm-season climate."

"Returning fertilizer recommendations out of the Green Section's "Tips for Success" and into the USGA specifications.

"Everyone I've worked with has been very cooperative and felt the specifications review and standardization of lab procedures needed to be done," said Hummel, who will return to his Cornell post in July.

Hummel said he was surprised at his historical review of the scientific literature that led to some of the USGA specifications. For example, no research was done to support the use of the choker layer, he said.

"It seemed to be an arbitrary decision that it should be there," Hummel said. "I worked and served a purpose, so it became an accepted part of the specs."

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