DNA fingerprinting pegs rogue cultivars

By LARRY KIEFFER

TAMPA, Fla. — Developing techniques to identify "off-types" of Bermuda-grass through DNA analysis has become a market-driven research project in Florida. Superintendents in the state increasingly face job insecurity as these off-types appear on their golf courses, particularly on the greens.

The objective is to find a reliable means of verifying a cultivar before it is planted. With his job on the line, the superintendent wants to make sure he is getting what his boss is paying for.

“We have found that DNA fingerprinting has proved to be a powerful tool for identifying off-types in Tifway Bermuda-grass,” said Dr. Phil Busey, one of four researchers with the University of Florida’s Institute of Food.

Continued on page 28

Biosolids gain favor

By MARK LESLIE

OGUNQUIT, Maine — Nutrient-rich, disease-suppressant “biosolid" compost is gaining support and becoming a player in the world of golf course design and maintenance.

Some took notice when Firestone Country Club used a biosolid compost to rebuild its greens two years ago. Others have watched as several courses in Ohio purchased the Kurtz Bros’ sludge compost product, Technigrow.

Now courses are contracting companies like Kurtz and Brown & Ferris Industries (BFI) to provide biosolids for the root-zone mix on greens in new course construction and renovation.

Continued on page 34
Red Hawk web page

Continued from page 1
tions, stock values and real-estate values, as well as photos of what is actually happen-
ing on the course or house lots right on the
web page. It's a great marketing tool."

Red Hawk is GVI's flagship project. The St. George area is being marketed as a
second Palm Springs, cooler in summer and hotter in winter than nearby Las Ve-
gas, Badger said. The company president
expects Red Hawk to draw most of its
members and homeowners from the Utah Front Range communities of Salt Lake City, Ogden, Provo and Logan as well as from
the surrounding states of Montana, Idaho, Colorado and Wyoming. Public play will be allowed until the course reaches 300
members, according to the company.

"We're looking at four other projects that are within a couple of hours of St. George by air," Badger said.

control of crabgrass,
goosegrass and other tough
weeds. Consistent control that lasts for
up to 26 weeks depending on the rate you
choose. For even more confidence and security,
Barricade keeps golf shoes and everything else
on your course stain-free. And since you're
applying as little as one-fourth as much active
ingredient, you'll reduce worker exposure and
lesen the environmental load. What's more, its
low water solubility means Barricade
will stay right where you put it, even on slopes
and hillsides. Choose from two different
formulations: on-fertilizer and sprayable.
Barricade really can provide the added confidence
and security you need. But only if you apply it.
For more details, talk to your authorized
Barricade distributor, Sandoz sales representative
or call 1-800-248-7763.

Minimum wage

Continued from page 39

his starting pay scale from $5.50 per hour to $7 to $7.50 per hour in order to attract better quality applicants and lower employee
turnover.

"We get around 20 applicants for job openings now," Sloan es-
timated. "We were only getting two to three before. Our choices
were much more limited. I'm glad the minimum wage is going up.
The jobs we ask people to do on a golf course aren't the easiest
in the world."

Across the border in Jackson, Miss., Countryside Club of Jackson
superintendent Stephen Harrall said the minimum-wage increase
would have little or no effect on courses in his area.

"If it had any, it would just be with the summertime help," he said. "But courses around here hire a lot of summer help from the
Mississippi State University Cooperative program. Alabama courses pay the $5.50 an hour plus room and board to work there.
We have to pay them at least $5.50 in order to compete.
The last thing the members want to hear is the course is in bad shape because we don't have enough people to maintain it."

Even in the poorer sections of the Northeast, laborers gener-
ally make above minimum wage.

"I start new people at $5 to $5.50 an hour, depending on ex-
perience and references," said Jim Hodge, head superintendent
at Val Halla Golf Club in Cumberland, Maine, and the state's representative to the Sep-
tember Golf Course Superinten-
dents Association of America
Chapter Relations Meeting. "If people return the following sum-
er, they can generally expect a raise."

"I don't think we'll have to raise our starting wages 50 cents just because the minimum went up that amount, though. People like
working here because they get to
play some golf, work outside
and are done for the day around 1 p.m. They like this a lot better than flipping burgers."

The issue was discussed at the
GCSAA's annual Chapter Rela-
tions Meeting. GCSAA media
spokesman Jeff Bolliq said a re-
cent survey noted that golf
courses typically pay well above
the minimum wage, i.e. an aver-
age $6.49 for greens crew work-
ers, $7 for gardeners and $8.56 for office assistants.

"We've gotten a lot of ques-
tions about it on our web site," Bolliq said. "One of the concerns
was that raising the minimum wage would have a trickle up effect that would cause golf
courses to raise wages on the
lower end. An increase in the
minimum wage could do that in
some cases."