They asked for it in their first-ever "listening session," and they got it — lots of suggestions to improve the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP). The "listeners" seeking feedback on the NTEP program were NTEP Policy Committee members and Executive Director Kevin Morris.

In a classic example of "be careful about what you ask for, you might get it," the audience of 52 people, most of them either seed marketers or turf trial sites across the United States and Canada, where species and their many suggestions to either broaden NTEP's varieties (the tall fescue trials have more than 170 entries) or improve its rating system, came up with a long list of suggestions to either broaden NTEP's scope or improve its rating system.

The question that everyone left the room with was: How many of these suggestions can (or should) NTEP professionals use the NTEP results to implement? The suggestions offered at the two-hour session held during the GCSAA Conference and Show in February will give NTEP policy members a lot to talk about when they next convene in June, especially since most of the audience seemed pleased with the program in general, and nobody suggested wholesale changes.

The NTEP, of course, is North America's unbiased source for information about turfgrass performance.

This information is compiled from trial sites across the United States and Canada, where species and their many varieties (the tall fescue trials have more than 170 entries) are evaluated and their characteristics compared one against the others. Green industry professionals use the NTEP results to select the most appropriate turfs for the sites they establish and maintain.

The rating process drew its fair share of comment at the meeting. Evaluators at each location rate give each individual trial entry numerical ratings in categories such as color, spring greenup and density, among others. The ratings are based on visual inspection, which is admittedly subjective.

Several in the audience also sug-

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United acquires Nu-Gro
United Industries, which operates Spectrum Brands, will acquire the Nu-Gro Corp., based in Brantford, Ontario. The combined companies will have sales of about $750 million with more than 1,800 employees in the United States and Canada. The transaction should be completed in May.

"I see this acquisition as a strong and positive venture for both Nu-Gro and United," said Mark Barbera, Nu-Gro’s vice president and general manager.

Noer group approves studies
The O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research Foundation recently approved funding for the following research projects: "Microbial Control of the Black Cutworm in Turfgrass using a Naturally Occurring Baculovirus," "Seasonal Biology and Pro-Active Management of Mound-Building Nuisance Ants on Golf Putting Greens" and "Developing Water-Saving Irrigation Scheduling Indices from Bentgrass Fairways."

Coldwell creates golf division
Coldwell Banker Commercial/Nicholson Williams Realty has created a new Golf Course Sales Division. Heading up the division is Charles Smith, and Kathy Bissell. "Coldwell Banker Commercial Nicholson Williams Realty has identified a growing niche in the commercial real estate market, one that’s particularly hot in the South," said George Slusser, president of Coldwell Banker Commercial.

Course can use Merit donation
The First Tee of San Diego at Colina Park Golf Course recently received a donation of a year’s worth of Merit Insecticide from Bayer Environmental Science. Bayer made the donation in celebration of the ten-year anniversary of Merit.

"We are happy to receive the donation of Merit from Bayer," said Doug Sparks, superintendent at Colina Park. "We have problems with black turfgrass athenius, white grubs, and cutworms in turfgrass, as well as aphids, whitefly, thrips, and mealybugs in ornamental plants."

Other suggestions included:
• Including species such as seashore paspalum, the new hybrid bluegrasses and, perhaps, ornamental grasses in NTEP testing.
• Establishing trials using effluent and saline water for irrigation.
• Expanding and improving testing for traffic tolerance.
• Testing for insect and disease tolerance.
• Installing additional trial sites in the West and Southwest.
• Separate trials for colonial and velvet bentgrasses.

Also, Morris noted that the onsite bentgrass greens and bermudagrass trials have run their course (apparently the end of their five-year trials), and there doesn’t seem to be much interest from the seed companies to re-establish them.

Hall is editor-in-chief of Landscape Management magazine.