

# USGA, GCSAA, NTEP Join Forces

*To Administer On-Site Golf Course Testing for Grass Varieties*

The United States Golf Association, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program are combining resources to manage a new national research project that will evaluate grass varieties (also known as cultivars) on actual golf course settings.

"On-site testing of turfgrass cultivars is not a new concept," said Robert C. Shearman, Ph.D. NTEP executive director. "However, the joint sponsorship of on-site putting green trials is new. Golf course superintendents have been asking for some time to have information that bridged the game between small-plot university trials and their end-use needs."

Practice putting greens built to USGA specifications at 16 different golf courses across the nation, featuring bermudagrass and/or bentgrass varieties, will be monitored to provide data for golf course personnel in the building and maintenance of facili-

ties. The northern locations will integrate bentgrass cultivars, and far-south venues will employ bermudagrass varieties. Both will be used in transition zone climates.

The USGA originally funded variety testing research on golf courses in the 1930s and '40s. Testing then moved to university research settings in the late 1940s. While this research has been the backbone of the turfgrass industry, there was a void of actual on-site testing for those in the golf industry. The USGA / GCSAA / NTEP project will use the combined efforts of superintendents, university researchers and USGA Green Section staff for monitoring and evaluation. Annual reports will be filed over a five-year period, with an evaluation of the program for possible continuation with the same or different grass varieties.

"The greatest gains in turfgrass research have and will continue to come from universities," said GCSAA

Director of Research Jeff Nus, Ph.D. "But this project allows us to do 'real world' testing and replicate actual conditions in order to provide the best data to those in the golf course maintenance profession. Golfer expectations and golf course conditions have changed so much in the last three decades that we need to study cultivar performance based on the conditions demanded by today's golfers."

Because traffic is an important factor in cultivar performance, all of the putting greens constructed for the project will be used as actual practice greens at the respective facilities. Preliminary work has begun on the construction of greens at some locations, while sponsors/companies have entered the various bentgrass and bermudagrass cultivars to be considered by researchers for use in the trials study. The list of cultivars to be included in the test will be determined later this fall.

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