

Picking A Winner

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As fall approaches, many golf course superintendents may be preparing for a fall seeding project. In order to increase the chances of seeding success, it is important to use the best turfgrass variety possible for your situation. Improved species and variety selection can reduce or even prevent many problems common to turfgrass managers.

There are several different turfgrass species and within those species hundreds of different varieties to choose from. The number of varieties available to turfgrass managers in Minnesota is quite high. Being able to select the best variety from such a large number of options is not as hard as it may seem.

The first step in this process is finding an unbiased source of information. The National Turfgrass Evaluation Program website (www.ntep.org) contains vast amounts of data on almost every commercially available turfgrass variety. The NTEP trials are conducted throughout the country and at various management levels. In addition to overall turfgrass quality, varieties are typically evaluated for characteristics such as color, density,

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establishment, winter hardiness, drought tolerance and disease resistance.

If you look at several years of NTEP data, you will see that most turfgrass varieties (with the exception of many Kentucky bluegrasses) tend to decline in performance relative to other varieties from test to test. Variety A may have been the best perennial ryegrass in the NTEP trial in 1990 while it ranked near the bottom of the test in 2000; therefore, it is important to look at the most recent data available. High quality Kentucky bluegrass varieties tend to maintain their quality for many years, so using an older variety that has performed well in the past is usually not a problem.

Another great place to find relevant data is the University of Minnesota turfgrass science website (www.turf.umn.edu). Data is available in the research section under 'cultivar evaluations.' Each winter, we update the site to include the most recent growing season's results. We have also added links to data from other universities in our region. As our program continues to grow we will continue to add more extensive variety evaluations.



The TROE center currently has the NTEP trials for bentgrass (putting green and fairway/tee), perennial ryegrass and fine fescue. We will be planting the 2005 NTEP Kentucky bluegrass trial this fall.

Finally, you should avoid using a variety solely because you have had luck with it in the past – that doesn't mean it is your best option. Another important tip that most of you already know is that you should never use VNS (variety not stated) seed; this type of seed often results in a very low quality turf.

Spending a couple of minutes at the computer doing some simple research prior to putting in a new seeding will save a lot of headaches once your turf is established.

