

SPORTS AND COMMERCIAL TURF MANAGEMENT PROGRAM REPORT

David M. Gilstrap
Department of Crop and Soil Sciences
Michigan State University

PROGRAM AND TEACHING UPDATE

Seventeen recruits joined the two-year program in Sports and Commercial Turf Management during this academic school year giving us a total enrollment of 33 students. Low unemployment overall and particularly within the green industry continues to make it difficult to recruit a large number of students into the program. For instance, I was able to garner nine new students as a result of 1999's Open House. In 2000, the same function led to only two students entering the program even though I had increased the advertising budget by 30%.

Historically, courses taken by students in the Institute of Agricultural Technology have not been considered to be undergraduate-level courses. Accordingly, the university has numbered them as 000 level courses. However, many turf courses have been offered concurrently to both two- and four-year students. This has been done in order to maximize efficiency of faculty and facilities. However, this has not been fair to the two-year students who pass the same course as the four-year students but do not receive the same credit. This is particularly a problem with those two-year students who wish to go on for their baccalaureate degree.

Through the continued efforts of the Turfgrass teaching faculty, the Directors of the college, and the Provost, this disparity has finally been alleviated. Beginning this Fall Semester, 10 courses will be renumbered to the one or two-hundred level. A key revision is the separation of the former course entitled Management of Turfgrass Pests into two courses, Management of Turfgrass Weeds and Management of Turf Insect and Disease Pests.

RESEARCH UPDATE

Kentucky Bluegrass Height-of-Cut Study

The third year of this study has been completed with the only change in protocol being an increase in nitrogen-application rate from 2 lbs N per 1,000 sq. ft. to 4 N per 1,000 sq. ft annually. This resulted in an appreciable shortening of the mowing interval since these Kentucky bluegrass plots are maintained according to the "one-third rule". The experimental protocols for this study as well as some of the results have been discussed on Pages 19-21 of the 70th Annual Michigan Turfgrass Conference Proceedings (Vol. 29).

During last year's field day, I conducted a survey of those on the Sports and Commercial Turf Management tour asking each of them to complete a form indicating their height-of-cut preference. Most of the more than 300 people that took the survey liked the plots that were mown at three inches. This mirrored the results of a similar survey in 1998 with almost 250 participants.

Irrigation-Fertility-Species (IFS) Study (with Thom Nikolai, Dr. Kevin Frank, and Dr. Paul Rieke)

We have just completed the second full year of a study looking at the interaction of three irrigation regimes, three lawn species, and nine fertility regimens. Without prolonged drought stress this past summer, differences were difficult to distinguish among the plots with regards to light-daily irrigation, deep-weekly irrigation, and rainfall only. Annual bluegrass infestation increased dramatically in perennial ryegrass plots receiving daily-irrigation when compared to those irrigated weekly. Dr. Kevin Frank has assumed the role of lead scientist on this study, and he will report the results as they become analyzed and available. Please refer to Dr. Frank's article in the proceedings, *Irrigation and Fertility Effects on Three Turfgrass Species*, for additional information.

Mowing Heights Effects on MSU's Integrated Program for Managing NRS (with Dr. Joe Vargas, Jr.)

The 1980s research for non-fungicide management of Necrotic Ring Spot did not test the effects of different mowing heights. In a plot area that has shown uniformly severe NRS symptoms, we core cultivated in May and daily irrigated with 0.1 inch of water at 2 p.m. from May through October. Also throughout most of the growing season, we applied 6.5 pounds of nitrogen primarily in a slow-release, natural organic form. Treatments were four mowing heights: 2, 2.5, 3, and 3.5 inches actual heights-of-cut, all mown weekly throughout the growing season. There were no symptoms of necrotic ring spot, probably because of the lack of prolonged heat this past summer. Next spring we will inoculate the plots with *Leptosphaeria korrae*, the causal fungus of NRS, and continue the experiment.

OUTREACH UPDATE

Probably due to the temporary vacancy in our extension-specialist position after Dr. Rieke retired and before Dr. Frank was hired, I had opportunities to make many more outreach presentations than in past years. I welcomed and enjoyed these interactions and look forward to more of them in the future. I can be reached at gilstrap@msu.edu or 517-355-0207.