

COLONIAL BENTGRASS BREEDING

DEPARTMENT OF SCIENTIFIC & INDUSTRIAL
RESEARCH -- NEW ZEALAND

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Principal Investigator

1987 Research Grant: \$10,000
(second year of support)

The goal of this project is to breed a Colonial bent cultivar for U.S. golf courses using New Zealand breeding materials, and doing the breeding work within New Zealand. Because of unfamiliarity with the golf scene in the United States, Dr. Rumball spent much time during a recent sabbatical in California visiting golf courses to better understand the concerns about high water usage and high maintenance costs. Although some promising bentgrass plants were collected in the U.S., most of the breeding material has been obtained from golf courses located in dry regions of New Zealand; courses that received no irrigation and low maintenance.

Over 1200 promising plants have been collected from over 70 golf courses. Each plant has been split into four pieces, two of which have been planted into a close-mown sward for observations on agronomic value. The other two pieces are growing without defoliation in a separate block to allow studies of flowering and seed production. We hope to identify plants that are dense and attractive under close mowing (especially in dry periods) and also flower at about the same time, and produce much seed. We should know with some certainty by February 1989 if this pragmatic approach is likely to succeed, but may have indications well before then.