BERMUDAGRASS BREEDING - VEGETATIVE

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
Tifton, Georgia

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The most significant accomplishment of our turf research program in 1989 was the discovery of a unique bermudagrass at the SCS Plant Materials Center, Quicksand, Kentucky when I spoke there at a Warm-Season Grass Symposium in the Kentucky mountains, March 7, 1989. The grass was dormant at that time but the enthusiasm of the people over its performance for them caused me to obtain sprigs and establish test plots this summer. They reported that it was very winter hardy, had been around for many years and had been referred to as Quicksand common. Its origin was not known. The rhizomes they sent me were labeled 9034348 bermudagrass. They told me they were planning to release it as a lawn grass.

We found this bermuda that I will call "Quicksand" [they will probably give it another name] to be very fine-stemmed, highly disease resistant, very vigorous and a rapid spreader. It is fertile and could be a better parent for making winter hardy triploid hybrids than the Berlin bermuda that we have used thus far.

Our Cynodon transvaalensis introductions were through heading before our "Quicksand" bermuda produced heads so no crosses could be made this year. I expect to make a lot of Quicksand x transvaalensis hybrids in 1990.

Increasing the winterhardiness of the Tifton turf bermudagrasses continues to be our major objective. Toward that end, we have a number of mutants and hybrids established on golf courses in the mountains in Blairsville, GA and Highlands, NC. We hope that the 1989-90 winter will be cold enough to kill most of them. I hope the plant physiologists working with turf will be able to develop an effective screen for winter survival that can be used to get this important information. It takes too long to wait for the right kind of winter in the South.

In my last report, I expressed the hope that the trend to cut golf greens at 1/8" could be reversed. We have some good looking mutants from Midiron and Tifton 419 that could make very satisfactory greens if they could be mowed at 3/16" to 1/4". Only true dwarfs like Tifdwarf can take the very close mowing the pros are demanding and they would look a lot better and satisfy most golfers if the cutting height could be raised.