JB Comments

Enhancing One's Professional Image

A key to enhancing the professional image of an individual in the turfgrass industry is the proper use of the language associated with the profession. There is a body of technical terms that is unique to the turfgrass profession, which distinguishes this profession. Also, effective communication among turfgrass professionals relies on the understanding and proper use of the turfgrass terminology that has evolved.

A cornerstone in appropriate terminology use is the full proper name of each turfgrass species. For example, a well-known national golf course architect recommended the temporary winter seeding of fairways that had been sprigged to Tifway hybrid bermudagrass but coverage had not been achieved before the onset of winter dormancy. Consequently, the recommendation was to stabilize the fairways against erosion until permanent coverage could be achieved via spring growth of the bermudagrass. The architect had "recommended rye" when he actually wanted annual ryegrass. Annual ryegrass is *Lolium multiflorum,* whereas cereal rye is *Secale cereale.* They planted the cereal rye and next spring the result was four-foot (1.2 m) high cereal rye and a total loss of the sprigged bermudagrass. The fairways had to be resprigged. This failure to use proper terminology was costly to the owners/investors of the golf course. The architect's reaction was that they should have known better. Actually the architect should have known better.

Another example is a sod grower in a northern cool-humid climatic region who wanted to plant an acreage of fine-leaf fescue for use in shaded environments. He directed his seed supplier to obtain "fescue." What he received was tall fescue (*Festuca arundinaceae*) rather than fine-leaf fescue (*Festuca rubra*). He planted the former. Evidently he could not even recognize the difference between the seeds of the two species. Upon discovering the error the next growing season following an autumn planting, the entire area had to be plowed up. Again a costly mistake! The sod grower should have specified the fine-leaf fescue desired either creeping red or Chewing's and then included the scientific name as either *Festuca rubra* or *Festuca rubra* var. *commutata.*

Another misuse of terms that is frequently used is shortening of names, such as bermuda when the correct term is bermudagrass. Bermuda is an island in the Atlantic Ocean. **There is also misuse of turfgrass cultivar names.** For example, use of the experimental number, such as "328" when the correct name to be used professionally is Tifgreen hybrid bermudagrass. Another is the use of "419," which was the original experimental number, but the correct name is Tifway hybrid bermudagrass.

In summary, the proper approach is to use the full common name plus the scientific name.

Updating Common and Scientific Name Changes

There have been some updates of both common names and scientific names of cool- and warm-season turfgrass species. These are summarized in the following table. The specific change involved is presented in boldface.

Scientific Name		Common Name	
Current	**Former**	**Current**	**Former**
Poa annua var. *reptans*	—	**creeping bluegrass**	annual bluegrass
Poa annua var. *annua*	—	**annual bluegrass**	annual bluegrass
Agrostis stolonifera	*A. palustris*	creeping bentgrass	—
Agrostis capillaris	*A. tenuis*	colonial bentgrass	—
Agrostis gigantea	*A. alba*	redtop	—
Cynodon dactylon	—	**dactylon bermudagrass**	common bermudagrass
Zoysia matrella* var. *matrella	*Z. matrella*	manila zoysiagrass	—
Zoysia matrella* var. *tenuifolia	*Z. tenuifolia*	mascarene zoysiagrass	—
Axonopus fissifolius	*A. affinis*	common carpetgrass	—

You will note two common name changes, specifically creeping bluegrass and dactylon bermudagrass. The introduction of cultivars of these two species has necessitated the name change. In addition, there are three scientific name changes within the *Agrostis* as well as two for *Zoysia* and one for *Axonopus.* In the case of the scientific name changes, these are the result of additional studies by grass taxonomists.