



Research on Fine Fescues – The Rest of the Story

June 2, 2015

The USGA is hosting the U.S. Open at Chambers Bay, Wash., an 8-year-old course with fine fescue tees, fairways and, yes, even putting greens. Although you may hear that American-focused research on fine fescue is limited compared to other turfgrasses, there is exciting new research underway.

Scientists at the University of Minnesota, Rutgers University, and the University of Wisconsin are working on a research project to improve fine fescues. These universities received a \$2.8 million grant from the Specialty Crop Research Initiative of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The goal of the project is to improve fine fescue traits while overcoming the barriers that limit turf managers from utilizing the grass. Fine fescues include creeping red, hard, Chewings, and sheep fescue. Fine fescue cultivars are drought tolerant, use less fertilizer and develop a deep root system. They will turn brown during periods of drought, but bounce back quickly when it rains.

The scientists recently met with each other at Oregon State University. They are just wrapping up the third year of a five-year project and are making excellent progress. The scientists also met with local farmers that produce fine fescue seed in Oregon.

The USGA is supporting extra studies to test mixtures of fine fescue cultivars for wear tolerance and divot recovery. Several fine fescues survived weekly traffic



A large cart traffic simulator is pulled over the fine fescue plots six times a week. Hard fescues and slender creeping red fescues were present in plots that performed best under simulated traffic stress.

applied with different devices that simulate traffic. Hard fescues and slender creeping red fescues were present in plots that performed best under traffic stress. Divot recovery has been slow for all fine fescue mixtures in the test. Fine fescues also are evaluated for heat tolerance and resistance to snow mold diseases.

The look and feel of the U.S. Open at Chambers Bay could become a major storyline in June. Fine fescues can provide a lower-maintenance grass for golf courses. However, before their widespread use on American golf courses, turfgrass researchers still have some work to do.

Additional Information:

[Adaptation and Management of Fine Fescues for Golf Course Fairways](#)

[Improvement of Low-input Fine Fescues](#)

[Finessing Fine Fescue](#)

[Northern Exposure: The 2015 U.S. Open at Chambers Bay](#)

[SCRI Fine Fescue Collaborative Research Project](#)

[Golf Course Turfgrass Reduction](#)