



The Turf World's Greatest Weed

By Steve Kammerer, regional director, Southeast Region | May 5, 2017



Characteristics such as winter color retention and vigor in a specific environment are important considerations when selecting a bermudagrass variety.

More and more golf courses are considering renovations and regrassing with improved turf varieties on tees, fairways and rough. Where warm-season turfgrass is grown, bermudagrass is often the preferred option. Many bermudagrass varieties have been developed over the years and choosing the right one for your golf course requires careful consideration.

There are advantages and disadvantages to all of the different bermudagrass varieties used on golf courses. [The University of Georgia, Tifton](#), developed Tifton 419 bermudagrass as Tifway in 1960. This grass delivered better color, cold tolerance, wear tolerance and a tighter growth habit than common bermudagrass. Many golf courses still utilize this bermudagrass in new plantings and renovations despite being developed more than 50 years ago.

Since the early 2000's, [USGA-funded research](#) has led to the development of several newer bermudagrass varieties. For instance, Latitude 36™ was developed at [Oklahoma State](#)

[University](#) for even greater cold tolerance than Tifway. This variety is increasing the northern range of bermudagrass into Colorado, Nebraska, Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Maryland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. It is also being used on golf courses in South Florida where winterkill is not a concern. Is it the best bermudagrass for South Florida? Does it offer advantages not provided by Tifway or Celebration® in the warm climate of South Florida? Time will tell, just as it will for the early adopters of [TifTuf™](#) bermudagrass.

The USGA agronomists and members of the USGA Turfgrass and Environmental Research Committee visited the University of Florida Plant Science Research and Education Unit in March of 2017. In test plots there, some differences were apparent between TifTuf, Tifway, Celebration and Latitude 36 in color retention and coverage following planting 8 months earlier. These differences could be seen as desirable or undesirable depending on location and intended use. Celebration can be a great fairway grass under the appropriate management practices, but planting a less aggressive variety like Latitude 36 in the approach or fairway adjacent to an ultradwarf bermudagrass putting green may be more desirable.

When evaluating different bermudagrasses, or any grass for that matter, talk to as many people as possible and tour courses that have used the grasses. Important questions to ask include: How long have they been using a specific variety? What are the positives and negatives? How does the variety respond to herbicides, plant growth regulators, shade, drought and traffic? Conducting extensive background research to select the bermudagrass that best fits your specific needs will help deliver the best long-term solution for your golf course.

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