



*Onsite test plots are valuable when deciding which turfgrass variety performs best under particular circumstances.*

## WORKSHOPS SHED LIGHT ON NEWER BERMUDAGRASSES

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For many years, Tifway 419 bermudagrass has been the predominant grass planted on tees, fairways and roughs on southern golf courses. Tifway was developed in the 1960s, but its sod has varied in quality over the years.

To provide consistent quality, many sod farms cleaned up their Tifway fields in 1996 and started over with new sprigs from a single source in Tifton, Georgia. However, golf courses soon discovered that certified Tifway bermudagrass lacked several desirable attributes including vigor and the ability to compete against common bermudagrass during winter months.

Celebration® bermudagrass gained a foothold on southern golf courses during the early 2000s. Its increased growth rate provided improved winter playing conditions and greater density than certified

Tifway. However, some golfers do not like its grain on fairways and uneven quality in rough maintained above 1.25 inches.

Now, newer bermudagrass varieties are gaining attention. Latitude 36™ and Bimini™ – a selection from a golf course in Naples, Florida – have both been receiving increased interest. USGA-sponsored workshops were recently hosted at The Loxahatchee Club in Jupiter, Florida, and Imperial Golf Club in Naples, Florida, to highlight more about the turf quality and maintenance requirements for these varieties. Similar workshops for Celebration bermudagrass have taken place at The Country Club of Naples (Florida) over the past three years.

As with earlier Celebration bermudagrass workshops, there were excellent discussions about important turf management topics. Several comparisons of the performance of Latitude 36 and Bimini to Tifway bermudagrass were made, including:

- **Color:** Both Latitude 36 and Bimini possess improved winter color retention in South Florida when compared to other varieties. Since Latitude 36 was developed to have improved cold tolerance, it may also have improved winter performance in southern regions.
- **Texture:** Latitude 36 has a very fine leaf texture, providing improved visual quality. Bimini isn't as fine textured as Latitude 36, but it can be mowed at similar heights.
- **Density:** Both grasses provide very good turf density. However, Latitude 36 has a much higher shoot count than Bimini, so it is more capable of producing an upright golf ball lie.
- **Growth:** Bimini has a faster growth rate than Tifway, which may help it better tolerate some stresses. A faster growth rate may also improve its competitiveness against other grasses such as common bermudagrass.
- **Traffic:** Both Latitude 36 and Bimini seem to provide good tolerance to traffic from golfers and maintenance equipment.
- **Challenges:** Encroachment onto putting greens is an issue associated with Latitude 36. The faster growth rate of Bimini may necessitate more cultivation – i.e., summertime verticutting, scalping and coring – but only time will tell whether these are insurmountable challenges.

Remember that there are no perfect turfgrasses. When deciding which variety is right for your facility, it is a good idea to visit golf courses with similar conditions to see how different varieties perform. Also, attend turf field days at local universities that are testing the varieties under consideration. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, plant several test plots of different varieties at your facility. Onsite testing helps gauge the growth and performance of different turfgrasses under the unique conditions at your site.

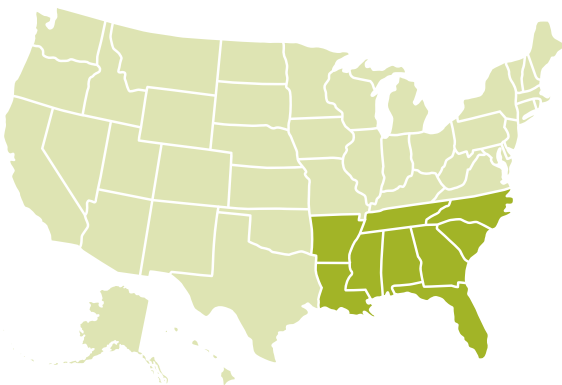
A special thanks to the golf facilities and superintendents that opened their doors and provided a candid



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conversation about their programs. Jim Sprankle at The Loxahatchee Club, Mike Hendricks at Imperial Golf Club and Bill Davidson at The Country Club of Naples have been a tremendous help to the golf course community.



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