



The plots at The Meadow Club will help demonstrate if new hybrids of bermudagrass can be successfully grown in San Francisco.

THE BERMUDAGRASS LINE IS MOVING NORTH IN CALIFORNIA

BY PAT GROSS | REGIONAL DIRECTOR, WEST REGION

For decades, it's been rare to see bermudagrass in the San Francisco Bay area. The mild climate there favors cool-season grasses such as perennial ryegrass, *Poa annua* and creeping bentgrass that stay green all year. Plus, many golfers didn't want to see what they've termed "devil grass" on their courses mainly because it turns brown when it goes dormant during winter.

With recent droughts and water restrictions in the Bay Area and throughout California, interest has shifted to using bermudagrass or zoysiagrass on tees, fairways and roughs due to the superior drought tolerance and low water use characteristics of these grasses. In an effort to move the bermudagrass line in California north, a USGA-sponsored research project at the University of California Riverside is working on breeding varieties of bermudagrass and other



For information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service Contact the Green Section Staff.

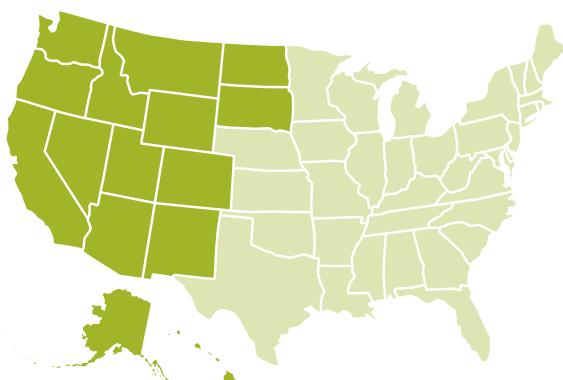
[Learn More](#)

warm-season grass species with better winter color retention. The project started in 2016 by evaluating and crossing six bermudagrass species and more than 500 accessions – i.e., unique plants – collected from across the country.

Currently, 12 experimental hybrids from earlier breeding work along with four standard bermudagrass varieties are being evaluated for performance and winter color retention in different climatic regions of California. Recent USGA Course Consulting Service visits in the Bay Area provided an opportunity to check on one of the research locations located 25 miles north of San Francisco at The Meadow Club in Fairfax, California.

Fairfax sits just 15 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean and provides a perfect setting to evaluate bermudagrasses under mild, northern California conditions. The 16 bermudagrasses were established in three replicated blocks. To make the project even more interesting, two varieties of zoysiagrass were sodded between the plots. The sod between the plots will provide further insight into the adaptation of zoysiagrass to that climate.

As expected, all the bermudagrasses and zoysiagrasses looked good at the end of a warm summer, but it will be interesting to see what they look like next January. A research summary of the [Improvement of Bermudagrass, Zoysiagrass and Kikuyugrass for Winter Color Retention and Drought Tolerance](#) provides further details on this project.



WEST REGION AGRONOMISTS:

Patrick Gross, Regional Director, pgross@usga.org

Larry Gilhuly, Agronomist, lgilhuly@usga.org

Brian Whitlark, Agronomist, bwhitlark@usga.org

[Information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service](#)

[Contact the Green Section Staff](#)
