

Picking a turfgrass is a key

RIVERSIDE, Calif. — Turfgrass researchers at the University of California Riverside are advocating a new philosophy in selecting and irrigating turf that will significantly increase water conservation and reduce irrigation costs.

Based on the results of a four-year study published in a recent issue of *California Agriculture*, UCR investigators say that it is now an obsolete practice to select one grass and one irrigation schedule for an entire area, such as a golf course, park or home lawn.

"In areas receiving little or no wear, there is no need for irrigation regimes that support recuperative ability from heavy foot traffic," observes Dr. Vic Gibeault.



Musser receives promo donation

CLEVELAND — The H.B. Musser International Turfgrass Foundation recently received a donation from Lesco, Inc. that represented the latter's redemption of Certified Blue Tags through Turf-Seed Inc.'s Blue Tag promotion program. Above, Lesco vice chairman Robert Burkhardt (left) presents MITF president Frank Dobie with a check for the donation. Dobie is superintendent at The Sharon Club in Sharon Center, Ohio.

"We have shown that irrigation water can drop to 20 percent of normal for these grasses, and they still look green, have a uniform appearance and give adequate

ground cover in non-use areas.

To conserve water, turf types and irrigation schedules should vary and be determined by use patterns.

One half of the 1.4 million acres of turf used on golf courses, parks and home lawns must be maintained with optimum irrigation water for grass to recuperate from wear and tear. The other 50 percent of the turf receives minimal foot traffic because it is located near clubhouses, along fairways or in remote places of the park or lawn.

This is the first time researchers have identified which grasses respond well to severe irrigation cut-backs in California.

Bermudagrasses and seashore pasaplum performed best in the UCR study. Two species of saltbrush, buffalograss, and two varieties of Phalaris also gave comparatively good cover and quality under irrigation stress in low-traffic areas.

"Most people just understand the amenity value of turf," Gibeault continues.

Water scarcity in California led to the search for attractive grasses with low water needs. □

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