



Art Dunn, Paul Voykin, Tom Tomashek.

GRASS PROBLEM SOLVED BY ACCIDENT

The state Highway Department has found a grass that heavy winter salt spreadings can't kill. Department officials have named it alkaligrass because it seems to thrive on heavy doses of salt.

For years, the Highway Department has been concerned because trees, shrubs, and grasses along major expressways could not withstand the heavy spreadings of salt used to keep the expressways free of snow and ice.

Origin Is Uncertain

The department is not sure where the alkaligrass came from, but it was first discovered in 1969 near U. S. Hwy. 45 and Int. Hwy. 55. It then spread to become the major cover between U. S. 45 and Summit. Some of the grass also is found on the Kennedy Expressway and the Tri-State Tollway.

Highway Department architects believe the grass may have started growing from some contaminant in the sod used to establish the original turf. When the turf, which looks almost like Kentucky Bluegrass, survived the salty winter, the state asked the University of Illinois to look into the matter.

Confirm Its Hardiness

Four researchers at the university's Agricultural Experiment Station confirmed that the grass was indeed hardy, and it was their research that disclosed the grass was started accidentally.

But tho the grass is hardy and may provide the answer to keeping the expressways green, the state still has a problem; it can't find anyone who sells the seed.

So for the last two years, the state has been propagating its own seed supply and now is thinking about patenting the grass in the name of the state and university.

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