

EDUCATION RECAP

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Midwest Research Field Day Rocks



On Wednesday, September 10, 2008, the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation (ITF) held its third biennial Midwest Research Field Day at the Midwest Golf House (Sunshine Course) in Lemont, Illinois.

Eight separate stations, each presided over by a turf professional, awaited. The 3-hole Sunshine Course looked like a giant outdoor science lab with various live experiments being conducted throughout. Attendees were in for a treat as the thoughts of each speaker and the visual presentation of their research fused together to create some truly amazing turf education.

The day started off with 10:30 a.m. registration at Midwest Golf House. Once inside, attendees were greeted, given name tags, and handed booklets detailing the day's events and research. They then made their way out to the course.

Over 200 people roamed the field and waited further instruction. The weather was exceptional (lower 70s and sunny) and the company friendly. Before long, we were divided into four groups and directed to our first research stop.

Randy Kane presided over the first research stop titled: *Influence of Mowing Height and Suppression Strategy to Control Moss on a Green*. The research objective was to "Determine influence of mowing height on moss development on a bentgrass putting green."

The silvery thread moss (*Bryum Argentium*) continues to be a troublesome problem on putting greens throughout the United States. And, because moss is difficult to remove once established, it's important to keep moss levels as low as possible.

The research predicted that "A lower mowing height will intensify moss problems on a golf green, because a thin canopy allows moss encroachment."

So what were the results? The mowing height did not have an effect on the health of the moss, but the plots mowed at 0.125" retained MORE moss while the mowing height of 0.156" favored bentgrass growth to fill in the moss plug. On August 12, 2008, plots mowed at 0.125" averaged 25.8% moss while

0.156" plots averaged 15.3% moss.

About twelve minutes into the first presentation, a loud blast made everyone freeze. It was Luke Cella, sounding his air horn, and reminding everyone that it was time to rotate. The speakers wrapped up their talks and answered any final questions. The groups then moved to their next stop.

Keith Rincker had a research stop titled: *Products to Suppress Disease and Influence Visual Quality on a Bentgrass Fairway in Chicago*. The research objective was easy: "Evaluate dollar spot disease control efficacy of various products."

As we all know, creeping bentgrass, commonly used for golf greens and fairways in the upper Midwest, is highly susceptible to dollar spots. In Chicago, dollar spot formation is a constant problem because environmental conditions of high humidity and cool to moderate temperatures continually exist.

Simple research question: "How well do fungicide products suppress disease development in summer and what is their impact on quality?"

The results showed that all fungicide products suppressed dollar spot to some extent. The best treatments were Tourney™ and Emerald®. The greatest effect on color was produced by Petro-Canada's PureSpray GREEN, which contains a green pigment.

Twelve minutes later, the air horn sounded and everyone rotated.

Dr. Derek Settle's research was titled: *Comparison of Foliar Fertilizers or Biostimulants for their Impact on Plant Health of a Green – USGA Product Testing Initiative*.

The research goal was to provide an unbiased assessment of organic products containing cytokinins in terms of their ability to improve visual quality when compared to traditional products. Cytokinin has been shown to improve shoot/root health of creeping bentgrass in controlled experiments.

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When rated on a weekly basis, all treatments with urea provided best bentgrass health as measured by visual quality and Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI). Intermediate bentgrass health, measured by visual quality and NDVI, was provided by Ultraplex™, Lesco®, and PanaSeá Plus®. These three products may be suitable as a stand-alone fertilizer for bentgrass on a USGA-constructed green.

BEEEEEEPPPP!!! – That stupid horn again.

Herbaceous Ornamental Display Beds at CDGA was the title of Richard Hentschel's research stop.

Herbaceous ornamentals (annuals & perennials) are becoming an important part of commercial landscapes. Including this plant material in public landscapes not only enhances the appearance of the place, but has also been shown to increase the ability to attract more commercial business traffic.

Here are some plant ideas to spruce up the golf course:

Ornamental Peppers: Offer a unique type of color and interest to the garden. Heights range from 6-12". They make excellent bedding plants for mass planting and in containers. All are virtually maintenance free. One liability of using the plant in public spaces is that the fruits are very spicy. The curious public (especially children) just has to see if they are edible, which they are, but they are very hot.

Petunia: A new class of petunia called Littletonia 'Sweet Pink' was displayed. This very dwarf cultivar has been shown to be an excellent front-of-the-border bedding plant. It is extremely low-growing, producing perfect small petunia flowers all season (comes in red and white). It is unique and would work well in containers where you want a petunia but don't want it to overtake everything.



Salvia: *Salvia coccinea* and *Salvia farinacea* offer excellent garden performance. *Salvia coccinea* offers pastel colors, taller plants, and more of a "wildflower" look. Color is more subdued and would be good for mass planting, where you want color with very little maintenance. *Salvia farinacea* are outstanding and dependable garden performers. Flowering all season, they need no deadheading.

Other speakers and research stops included the following:

- Kenneth Diesburg (*Southern Illinois Turf Applied to Northern Illinois: The Case for Zoysia*)
- William Sharp (*Weed Control during Kentucky Bluegrass Establishment*)
- Bruce Branham (*Controlling Annual Bluegrass during Creeping Bentgrass Establishment*)
- Tom Voigt (*Biosolids as Turf Fertilizers*)

Once the research presentations ended, the attendees

headed toward the giant white tent to eat some lunch. Cog Hill catered the event. Everyone took this time to relax and enjoy some pulled pork, potato salad, coleslaw, and cookies.

Open discussion and vendor displays followed lunch. During this time, one had the opportunity to ask any final questions and check out the following vendors:

- Arthur Clesen, Inc.
- Bayer Environmental Science
- Burris Equipments Company
- Central Sod Farms
- JW Turf, Inc.
- Prime Turf, Inc.
- Syngenta
- Valet U.S.A.

The event wrapped up around 3:00 p.m. The 2008 Midwest Research Field Day was officially over, but it will not be forgotten. The great turnout, the weather, the food, and the research made the day a great success and something worth remembering. **-OC**

