

Turfgrass Research Update

The game of golf has been played in one form or another for about 500 years, with the first permanent course being established in the early 1400's. Research and development of turfgrasses and its care is still in its infancy. The first turf plots were established in Michigan around 1880. From these early evaluations of species and mixtures, work continued and by the late 1920's there were a dozen sites where turf work was being done by the USDA, state agricultural experiment stations, and the USGA Green Section. Other countries such as England, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa also began turf programs in the late 1920's and early 30's. These early efforts were the ground work for the major advances of the 1950's. Major advances in equipment, turf cultivators, pesticides and fertilizers have brought turfgrass cultural to the point where it is considered a major industry.

During the late 1970's an increased public awareness of agricultural practices and their impact on the environment, and rapidly increasing maintenance budgets resulted in a re-evaluation of where turfgrass culture was headed. In 1982 the United States Golf Association established a Turfgrass Research Advisory Committee. The purpose of this committee was to develop, coordinate, and oversee a ten year research program that will lead to at least a minimum of 50% reduction in water use and a 50% reduction in golf course maintenance costs based on 1980 figures.

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America was invited to participate on the committee in 1983. The GCSAA has become an active, full partner in this long range research effort. These two organizations now lead the way jointly, to improve turfgrasses for golf, to lower maintenance costs and to conserve water and other essential resources in the management of all turfgrasses. To accomplish the goals and objectives outlined above, the committee realized there was a need for basic, fundamental turfgrass research. From this basic work, the next 50 years of growth and development of the industry will be generated. Since 1982, the Research Committee has funded 22 research proposals at 17 colleges and universities across the country. Over the past four years, the USGA Executive Committee has placed

\$1,279,600.00 in support of this effort. For 1986, \$465,718.00 has been approved for the continuation of this effort.

The goals and objectives of this long range program are centered around five major projects. They are:

- 1) The USGA Turfgrass Information File- to provide a computer data base of all published information on turfgrass research and maintenance. This project is located at Michigan State University Libraries and to date contains over 8,000 references. This storehouse of information is available to anyone with an interest by simply calling, (517) 353-7209.
- 2) Stress Mechanisms
- 3) Cultural Practices
 - a) Soil Compaction
 - b) Management
 - c) Water
 - d) Rooting
 - e) Pathology
- 4) Turfgrass Breeding—I
 - a) Zoysiagrass
 - b) Native Grass
 - c) Poa annua
 - d) Bluegrass/Ryegrass
- 5) Turfgrass Breeding—II
 - a) Bermudagrass
 - b) Bentgrass

If you would like more information on these research programs, please contact Mr. Bill Bengeyfield, National Director, USGA Green Section, P.O. BOX 3375, Tustin, California 92681. ■



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