

President's Message



Bentgrass — Friend or Foe?

Past President Reed LeFebvre's message states it very accurately, "Bentgrass, next to the lottery, is the biggest gamble in Florida."

The problem experienced at The PGA Tournament and The USGA Amateur Tournament during the months of August and September indicate the fact that serious problems can quickly appear with Bentgrass greens when weather conditions and Mother Nature fail to cooperate.

There have been numerous problems throughout the Southeast with Bentgrass greens this past year and there will probably be more in the future, as we attempt to grow a Northern Bentgrass in the South, throughout the year.

Speaking as a Superintendent, I know that most Superintendents strive for perfection in their job of providing first class playing conditions for their members; and especially for USGA and PGA Tournaments. I am sure that Superintendents everywhere shared the gut-wrenched feeling of frustration that those Superintendents in charge of those tournaments experienced.

Congratulations and respect for those individuals who in spite of adversity carry on the job and see the fight through, keeping their cool and accomplishing their objective. Possibly it is because of working with nature that keeps most Superintendents "real and humble" people. Superintendents know from experience that even the best planned programs can be changed or completely destroyed at the whims of nature.

On October 8, 1987, The Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association sponsored a seminar on Bentgrass at the J.D.M. Golf Club. Tom Burrows and Marie Roberts are to be congratulated on the efficient, very successful planning of this major event, which attracted a large turnout of Golf Course Superintendents and Club Officials.

The speakers, all experts from throughout the US and Florida provided factual information as it relates to turf management for all turf, but more specifically growing Bentgrass in Florida.

I think everyone associated with turf management knows, or should know at this time, that excellent turf conditions do not just happen. Good clubs, in the north, as well as in the south, have a history of consistency in sound cultural management practices and have practiced them over a period of years.

I wonder if some people think that just planting Bentgrass is a "silver bullet" type approach to solving a problem which often relates to poor initial construction, improper soil conditions, drainage problems, etc.

Let us get "real" when we demand playing conditions like the course we played the other day (the one that was properly planned and constructed).

Let us think about proven, factual information that is available to everyone involved in the turf and golf business. The USGA Green Section, Federal and State Extension Services, agronomists, pathologists, soil scientists, plant breeders, entomologists, all offer to us factual information. Yes, we do still have a lot to learn about the causes of soil conditions and plant diseases; but we must listen to the experts and examine the facts before we make decisions about our turf programs.

This issue of The Florida Green is devoted to the bentgrass controversy that has developed in our state. Club officials will find this issue packed with factual, scientific information from the experts, on Bentgrass greens, as well as Bermuda greens and overseeding.

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either vegetatively or seed propagated, but few cultivars have been developed. Currently available is *Kingstown*, released by Rhode Island AES in 1963.

Redtop is a native of Europe that was used mostly before 1945 in quality turfs. It is a coarse-textured species whose name came from the color of the seed head, and is propagated almost entirely by seed. *Redtop* is used mostly in cool humid climates as it does not withstand high temperatures. It was used in cool-season turfgrass seed mixtures in the past to promote rapid development of cover, but studies have shown that it does no better than improved ryegrasses and fescues, and its use has declined rapidly. Its unsightly appearance and stubborn tenacity has made it more unpopular as a nursegrass, but it's fine for roadsides and drainage areas, and waterways for erosion prevention. It will grow in poorly drained, unfertile areas. Due to its limited use, few cultivars have been developed, and none are available.

Does Bentgrass Belong in the Sunshine State? Some mention it in the same breath as migraine headaches; others claim its "true putting" properties can't be beat. It is not a native of Florida and must be carefully pampered to coax it to adapt (much like this cool-season writer), yet we see it used on major tournament courses here. ARE THE GRASS BREEDERS LISTENING? ■

**Turfgrass Management*, A.J. Turgeon, Reston Publishing Company, Inc., Reston, VA. 1980

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Sources: *Turfgrass: Science and Culture*, James B. Beard, Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1973; *Turfgrass Management*, A.J. Turgeon, Reston Publishing Company, Inc., Reston, VA. 1980; *Turf Management for Golf Courses*, James B. Beard, Burgess Publishing Co., Minneapolis, MN. 1982.

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Be sure to read Mike Bailey's article as it relates to the amount of time some of the above mentioned procedures inconvenience the golfer.

Hopefully a "Phase II" Bentgrass Seminar will take place early next year and that a lot of interested club officials will be in attendance.

A special THANK YOU to all the members who answered their surveys, participated in the program and shared their time and talents to make this Bentgrass Seminar a success.

THANK YOU Carl McKinney for the use of your club and fine facilities, the hospitality extended by your club was as always — FIRST CLASS. ■

Dick Blake

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