

Getting to the roots of some problems...

Those are no ordinary test plots in the photo above. They're actually the "roof" of a unique laboratory known as a "rhizotron," a subterranean structure for studying root growth (above right) and the leaching of chemicals through the soil (note tubes leading to jugs at bottom of photo on left). These photos were taken at the University of Nebraska. At a May 21 FGCSA meeting in Naples, FTGA Awards Chairman Bobby Rehberg suggested that the construction of a rhizotron at the University of Florida would be a worthwhile project for the Florida turf industry. "We could make the boxes slightly bigger in order to study various types of green construction," Rehberg suggested. "With the grief we're getting about pesticides, nitrates and fertilizers, this would be a great way to get some hard data to counter some of that bad publicity." Nebraska's rhizotron, which cost \$140,000 to build, consists of two wings off a central control room. An older, less elaborate rhizotron at Ohio State University cost less, he said.

If overseeding gets you bent out of shape...

POA TRIVIALIS BY RICHARD HURLEY, Ph.D.

Poa trivialis is native to all of northern Europe, temperate Asia and North Africa. It was introduced to North and South America and Australia. Brought to the United States from Europe during the colonial period, it is best adapted for growth in moist, shaded areas from Newfoundland and Ontario, Canada, to North Carolina and west to Minnesota and South Dakota. It has been reported in Colorado, Utah and as far south as Louisiana. *Poa Trivialis* can be readily found on the West Coast from Alaska to California.

Poa trivialis is commonly known by its scientific name, but is also referred to as rough bluegrass, rough-stalked bluegrass, shade bluegrass, rough-stalked meadowgrass, and rough meadowgrass. *Poa trivialis* produces a moderately fine-textured, light-green, medium dense turf. It is a cool season, sod-forming perennial which spreads by creeping leafy stolons, and may be found growing in soils with a pH ranging from five to eight, with

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REDTOP BY A. DOUGLAS BREDE, Ph.D.

Somebody once said that history repeats itself. Many old-time turf managers will recall when professor Burt Musser at Penn State extolled the virtues of redtop in every turf planting during the 1940s and '50s. It offered quick establishment, fine texture and early spring transition.

As years passed, redtop use waned. But in the 1980s, with bentgrass prices on the rise, golf superintendents began re-experimenting with it.

"Superintendents like the qualities of bentgrass in overseeding," says Dr. Rich Hurley, vice president for research at Lofts Seed Co. "Redtop has the qualities of bentgrass but will establish quicker.

"The weakness of creeping bentgrass isn't in its rate of seed germination," says Hurley. "Bent actually germinates quite quickly. But the seedlings just sit there — they're tiny, little seedlings that don't contribute to the stand until late in the season. Redtop has

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Redtop has superior seedling vigor

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better seedling vigor, and the plants are more substantial. Redtop contributes to the stand early in the season."

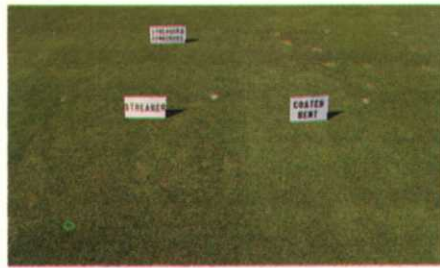
Redtop, being a close relative of bentgrass, mimics many of the qualities of bentgrass. It has 5 million seeds per pound, which compares quite closely to the 6 to 8 million per pound of bent. Redtop also has the soft, fine-textured leaf of bentgrass.

The big difference between the two comes in the spring. Following a fall overseeding, bentgrass produces one of the most luxurious late spring turfs in the overseeding business. Unfortunately, that's also about the time that the bermuda is staging a comeback. Redtop, on the other hand, prospers mainly in the fall and winter. As warm temperatures hit, redtop gives way to the bermuda.

In the 1984 National Dormant Bermudagrass Overseeding Test sponsored by the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program, redtop made the spring transition more readily than any other overseeding variety or blend except one.

Until recent years, the problem with redtop has been finding reliable seed.

Many times, golf superintendents have



JACKLIN SEED CO.

Al Dudeck and Bert McCarty at the University of Florida compared several overseeding mixtures during the winter of 1987-88. Mixtures of Streaker redtop with Penncross bentgrass displayed similar turf qualities during fall and early winter to that of Penncross alone. The summer 1988 issue of *The Florida Green* contained the data of this experiment.

discovered (after the fact) that their seedlot of common redtop was polluted with orchardgrass, or other undesirable crop plants.

Arden Jacklin, retired research director at Jacklin Seed Co., began working on the problems of common redtop in the early 1970s and several years later released "Streaker" redtop.

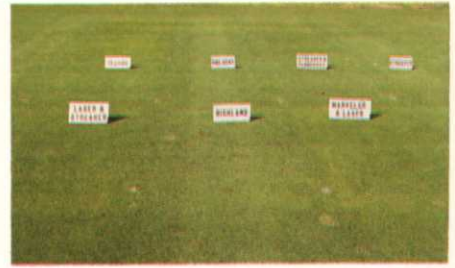
Streaker is sold as certified, which gives some assurance of varietal purity and integrity.

Farmers are paid a premium to ensure freedom from *poa annua* and seed of other crops.

Jimmy Ellison, golf course superintendent at Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club in Orlando, uses Streaker on his third nine.

"We use it in areas where we've had a lot of wear or thinning," says Ellison. "We go in with a two-to-three-pound rate of Streaker, and we'll see grass again real quick."

Hurley likes to see



JACKLIN SEED CO.

Addition of redtop to overseeding mixtures may offer finer texture, darker color, and easier spring transition than the use of perennial ryegrass or creeping bentgrass alone.

Streaker used as a component of overseeding mixtures.

"I'm a big fan of three, four and five-way combinations for winter overseeding," says Hurley, "because you don't know what kind of a fall and winter you're going to have. Florida can have highly variable conditions in the fall, winter and spring, from warm to cool, wet or dry.

"Having a redtop, a *poa trivialis*, a ryegrass and maybe a chewings fescue in the mix helps cover your bases. There's a lot of luck in getting a good winter overseeding catch, and a broad-based mix will sometimes help."

Redtop is used more frequently as a mixture component than straight. Its characteristics are best used to enhance the quality of other overseeding grasses.

Redtop also can be used as a "diluent" when overseeding bentgrass. If you would normally plant creeping bentgrass at 5 pounds per 1000 square foot, try planting a 50:50 mixture of about 2.5 pounds of bent and 2.5 pounds of redtop. This helps stretch your overseeding dollar, since redtop seed is much less expensive than creeping bent. Yet it retains the bent characteristics in the stand.

When adding redtop to perennial ryegrass, adjust the rate of the ryegrass down and include 10 to 15 percent redtop. For example, if you're using 30 pounds per 1000 square foot of ryegrass, reduce the rate to 25 pounds and add two to three pounds of redtop.

Like a bentgrass with no stolons

Even though redtop has been used for over 70 years, many people are unfamiliar with this species. Dr. Jim Beard's *Turfgrass Science and Culture* text says, "Redtop is one of the most widely adapted turfgrass species. It may behave as either a long-lived or a short-lived perennial, depending on the intensity of culture, soil and environmental conditions."

Redtop is a close relative of creeping bentgrass — both grasses are members of the *Agrostis* genus. Unlike creeping bentgrass, though, redtop has no stolons. Redtop creeps by means of strong rhizomes beneath the ground.

Redtop has the deep, slate blue-green color of creeping bentgrass. In the national test results from Florida, Streaker redtop scored an 8.3 in genetic color (with 9 equal to the darkest green), while most perennial ryegrasses scored in the 5.0 to 7.7 range.