



Your Action Needed!

What can golf course superintendents do to help?

To maintain access to needed pesticides, user groups are working with industry to ensure that EPA implements the new law fairly and objectively by using the best scientific methodology and data, and the most accurate information about pesticide use. EPA officials have not been responsive to pleas from industry, but they will listen to Congress.

Call or write your member of Congress. Ask them to urge EPA to:

- **preserve** as many valuable pest management protection tools as possible;
- **use "data-call-ins"** to obtain the information necessary to accurately evaluate the safety of pesticide products;
- base decisions on **actual pesticide use**; and
- establish and communicate **uniform policies** for consistent FQPA implementation.

Editor's Note: To meet their agenda, latest reports have EPA canceling all tolerances for organophosphates! Your local chapter external vice president has been given a Congressional Contact Kit to help you join in the grassroots campaign. Dow AgroSciences reps are also assisting chapters with the letter-writing campaign. The GCSAA and a Florida coalition of pesticide user groups are working with a national coalition of manufacturers and other users to alert Congress to the impracticalities of EPA's approach. Get involved!

Turf Talk

What Do Golfers Really Want?

BY KEVIN DOWNING, CGCS

*Willoughby Golf Club and
FSGA Board Member*

What do golfers really want when they play? Birdies, pars, a quality tee shot, a trouble shot that skips nicely up the approach onto the green?

What about a good, consistent putting surface? Whether you are a middle handicapper or a scratch player, golfers are affected by the condition of the playing surface more than any other sport.

The individuals responsible for conditioning the turf at the golf courses throughout our state are commonly called golf course superintendents or course managers. The decisions these turf managers make on a daily basis can have a tremendous impact on your enjoyment of golf.

As a matter of fact, the selections of turfgrass varieties for overseeding or bermuda foundation planting stock vary so much that these varieties could affect green speed in excess of two feet. With this type of diversity, it becomes apparent that golf course superintendents need to be aware of golfers' needs and golfers need to realize that grass solutions on golf courses are not always simple decisions.

In the early 1950s, bermudagrass putting surfaces were very coarse and probably not much better than a good tee of the 1990s. Varieties came along in 1956

that improved the putting quality quite a bit and then great strides were made in 1965 with the introduction of a variety called Tifdwarf.

Golfers who have played in Florida for any length of time are probably familiar with Tifdwarf, but most of them are probably unaware of its origin. No, it did not come from the shelves of Home Depot, and it is not available in a burlap bag at your local feed store.

Actually, Tifdwarf is a "mutated clone" that came from a Tifgreen putting surface at the Florence Country Club in South Carolina.

The original Tifgreens were developed by an artificial crossbreeding of two types of bermudagrass, creating a sterile triploid hybrid. That's enough botany for now, but the key item to remember is that the grasses for Florida golf courses come from vegetative parts rather than seed. The pure act of growing and planting vegetative grasses can cause a multitude of problems for putting surface consistency.

A number of years ago, you either chose Tifdwarf or Tifgreen and went from there, but now there are more flavors in the candy store and we surely hope they all taste good.

A little-known fact is that of the six or seven vendors who sold Tifdwarf throughout Florida in the last 25 years, each strain was slightly different and they adapted to site situations with unique



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characteristics. Some of these dwarfs would be more acceptable to overseeding while others might denser and less susceptible to algae formation during inclement weather patterns.

Obviously, all dwarfs were not created equal and the problem was intensified when the state of Florida dropped the Turfgrass Certification Program in 1985 in the wake of a cost cutting campaign.

As players, we all want surfaces that look like a pool table with no blotches or imperfections. Unfortunately, sometimes bermuda greens can look like a bad hair day for Dennis Rodman of the Chicago Bulls. The imperfections of older Tifdwarf greens might not putt poorly, but boy they look ugly! No offense, Dennis.

The search for a better grass for southern greens has been brewing for some time, but only in the last few years have we begun to make some headway. Four new selections have been released recently which include Floradwarf, Champion, M.S. Supreme and, most recently, TifEagle.

Some of these grasses have come from

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the private sector while a few have come through the more traditional channels of university releases.

Some of the concerns about the new "ultra-fine" bermudagrasses will be worked out when superintendents and researchers become more familiar with the growth habits of these new varieties.

Since the new bermudagrasses have not been thoroughly evaluated in replicated green trials, a number of questions still need to be answered regarding stress and pest tolerances over a wide range of locations.

The United States Golf Association, in cooperation with the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program, is sponsoring on-

site testing at a variety of locations throughout the Southeast. These tests will be beneficial for accurately evaluating putting green grasses under a wide range of environmental conditions.

In cooperation with the Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association, the Florida State Golf Association will continue to monitor developments in this area and will be supportive through the Cal Korf Turfgrass Fund. Hopefully, as time progresses, golf turf in Florida will continue to get better which might make the game more enjoyable for all of us.

Reference: Foy, John. "The Hybrid Bermudagrass Scene," *USGA. Green Section Record*, Nov/Dec 1997.

Editor's Note: Kevin submitted this article for publication in the Florida State Golf Association newsletter. We thought we might print it here to let you know that we are trying to bridge that gap between superintendents and the golfing public. That is one of the goals that came out of the FGCSA Strategic Planning Session last November.

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