USGA Update

Long-Range Planning for Florida Greens

By Todd Lowe
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Many recent visits throughout the region have focused on long-range planning projects such as putting-green regrassing, tee leveling, and bunker refurbishment. These are important projects that should be undertaken at some point for successful golf courses in our region; and we enjoy assisting golf courses by sharing our knowledge and insights.

A particularly important issue with many courses is selecting the proper turfgrass for putting greens. Tifdwarf has been the standard for Florida putting greens for nearly 40 years, but advancements in turfgrass genetics now allow improved putting conditions.

The ultradwarfs have a finer leaf texture, increased shoot density, and are able to tolerate lower heights of cut compared to Tifdwarf. This in turn provides significantly better playing conditions consistently. TifEagle and Champion are the most common ultradwarf bermudagrasses in the region, but Mini-Verde is a new variety that provides similar playing conditions.

These newer grasses often require increased grooming, aeration, and sand topdressing to maintain high standards. There are no set guidelines for ultradwarf putting green management, and the intensity is governed by the expectations at each particular course. There must be a commitment by the course to provide the necessary maintenance practices to achieve the expected performance standards.

There are a variety of construction techniques for golf course putting greens, but no technique has received as much research and scrutiny as the "USGA Recommendations for a Method of Putting Green Construction." Drainage is particularly important for Florida golf courses as they receive more rainfall than other regions, particularly heavy rainfall with frequent summer thunderstorms.

A new technique that has been implemented on some golf courses is "no-till" construction, where new turfgrass sprigs are planted directly into the existing putting green following herbicide treatments. This method is less expensive and disruptive than reconstruction; but there is significant apprehension with no-till construction concerning reduced drainage and genetic purity. Time will tell whether the no-till method is a viable alternative.

Regardless of bermudagrass variety or construction method, a good growing environment is vital to provide quality putting greens throughout the year. No grass or construction method can overcome problems caused by lack of sunlight or airflow, inadequate surface area, inadequate entry or exit points, improper surface drainage or irrigation coverage/quality. These are important factors that must be addressed prior to renovation for the project to be successful. For more information, refer to the article at: http://www.usga.org/turf/articles/management/greens/helping_your_greens.html.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for help in evaluating each of these factors with your next project.

Hanna Receives TPI Membership Award At 2006 Mid-Winter Conference

Internationally renowned turfgrass breeder Dr. Wayne Hanna was awarded the Turfgrass Producers International Honorary Member Award at the 2006 TPI Midwinter Conference in Savannah, Ga., Feb. 14-17.

Dr. Hanna, famous for his breeding work throughout a 30-year career with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service, is now retired, but continues to work full-time as a professor and turfgrass breeder with the University of Georgia.

Wayne Hanna, Ph.D.
USGA Turfgrass Breeder, retired

The TPI Foundation's Honorary Member Award is presented to individuals who have improved the turfgrass industry in a significant way. It is the highest honor the organization can bestow. Hanna joins 23 previous recipients over the last 33 years. Ben Copeland, Sr., a past president of TPI who has known Dr. Hanna for 32 years, introduced him and praised his "tremendous contribution to the turfgrass industry throughout his career," noting that "he has been responsible for the breeding and release of TifSport and TifEagle bermudagrass and TifBlair centipedegrass, which are all the leading warm-season turfgrasses."

Dr. Hanna's achievements are well known to the industry. His TifSport bermudagrass, which he released in 1996, is a grass to consider for golf course fairways, tees and roughs. As Dr. Hanna recalls, "My main goal was to develop a new variety that was superior to Tifway 419. We wanted a grass with superior color, cold-hardiness and disease resistance. We concentrated on turf density, turf strength and turf quality, and we wanted TifSport to be able to tolerate frequent lower mowing heights."

You can see TifSport in action at venues as varied as the Redskin's FedEx

Field in Landover Md., the Georgia Governor's Mansion, and the lush fairways of the Sunset Course at Mirasola Golf Club in Palm Beach Gardens, home of this year's Honda Classic.

TifEagle bermudagrass, which Dr. Hanna released in the spring of 1998, is the third generation of bermudagrass varieties developed exclusively for golf greens at the Coastal Plains Experiment Station in Tifton, Ga. While Tifdwarf had been the warm-season standard for putting greens during the last three decades of the 20th century, TifEagle was bred to meet the challenges faced by today's golf superintendents and the expectations of a new generation of golfers. It can tolerate the intense management program necessary to deliver the putting speed and consistency even club players have come to expect. Traditional grasses, and even many of the new superdwarfs, can't stand up to the physical stress of the lower mowing heights and frequent verticuttings required to control thatch build-up. TifEagle recovers quickly from mechanical injury, has excellent color, and is extremely cold hardy, drought tolerant and disease resistant.

Dr. Hanna has another legacy, perhaps just as important as his meticulous breeding work. From the beginning, he has insisted that stringent oversight protocols be established for all of his new grasses. TifSport, TifEagle and TifBlair are patented varieties that can only be sold as certified sod, sprigs or seed (TifBlair), and only by licensed sod producers who are required to become members of carefully monitored growers associations. In short, Dr. Hanna has made sure his grasses are grown, inspected and sold under a rigorous set of rules and guidelines designed to promote ongoing purity and uniformity. This concern for the maintenance of varietal purity was a major factor leading to the development of the International Turfgrass Genetic Assurance Program (ITGAP), the first-of-its-kind effort to maintain the integrity of certified varieties in international turfgrass markets.

Dr. Hanna is currently working on a new shade-tolerant bermudagrass, which he hopes to release in 2007.

GCSAA Update

Kuehner Picks Winners in GCSAA Elections

In this year with a slate of very strong and qualified candidates, it is amazing that the FGCSA voting delegate, Dale Kuehner, CGCS, was able to handicap the field so accurately. Kuehner's recommendation to support Pat Finlen and Sanford "Sandy" Queen was prophetic as they emerged as winners of the two director seats out of five candidates. See election results below.

Meanwhile, Sean A. Hoolehan, certified golf course superintendent at Wildhorse Resort and Casino in Pendleton, Ore., was elected the 70th president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America at the association's annual meeting, Feb. 10 in Atlanta.

The annual meeting was among the activities conducted during the 2006 GCSAA Education Conference, Feb. 6–11. The conference is the education complement to the Golf Industry Show held Feb. 9 – 11.

Elected vice president was Ricky D. Heine, CGCS, general manager and director of grounds at The Golf Club Star Ranch in Austin, Texas, while David S. Downing II, CGCS at Rivers Edge Golf Club in Shallotte, N.C., was elected as secretary/treasurer.

Two new directors were elected to the board: Patrick R. Finlen, CGCS, director of golf maintenance operations, Olympic Club, San Francisco, Calif.

Sean Hoolehan, CGCS elected president of GCSAA in Atlanta.

Sanford G. Queen, CGCS, manager of golf course operations, Overland Park (Kan.) Golf Club

Those remaining on the board and fulfilling their terms include Mark D. Kuhns, CGCS, director of grounds, Baltusrol Golf Club in Springfield, N.J.; James R. Fitzroy, CGCS, director Wollaston Recreational Facility/Presidents Golf Course, North Quincy, Mass; and our own Robert M. Randquist, CGCS, director of golf course and grounds, Boca Rio Golf Club, Boca Raton.

Timothy T. O'Neill, CGCS at the Country Club of Darien (Conn.), also remains on the board as immediate past president.

Methyl Bromide Topic discussed in Atlanta

A special meeting of GCSAA staff, including CEO Steve Mona, GCSAA directors, industry officials and a delegation from Florida including Dr. Bryan Unruh and FGCSA members met Feb. 11 to discuss the methyl bromide issue and the possibility of re-submitting a critical-use exemption application. The group achieved a consensus to

work together to address the two main EPA objections to previous applications (1) No evidence of a significant market disruption if golf doesn't have MeBr and (2) the technical feasibility of some alternatives to MeBr. A task group will be formed to coordinate efforts to submit a more compelling application.

Environmental Study to Begin This Spring

Editor's note: *Given the growing trend for counties and municipalities to consider a patchwork of individual ordinances to deal with perceived problems with fertilizers and pesticides, it behooves every golf course to participate in the GCSAA's series of baseline data surveys to solidify and document the true scope and nature of what we do on golf courses. Make it a point to go out of your way to support this data collection effort. It's only your job and golf course at stake.*

Despite a growing database available to aid the golf industry in making decisions, GCSAA is aiming to fill a significant void by embarking on a project this spring that will evaluate golf course environmental performance.

This multi-year project, the Golf Course Environmental Profile, is designed to collect information that will ultimately allow golf course superintendents and others to become better managers, help facilities operate more efficiently and lead to GCSAA developing more valuable programs and services. Such information will include details about playing surfaces, natural resources, environmental stewardship efforts and maintenance practices. The project is being funded by the Environmental Institute for Golf, thanks in large part to a grant from the Toro Foundation.

"Organizations such as the USGA Green Section, GCSAA, universities and private industry have funded and administered research that has be invaluable for the game," said outgoing GCSAA President Timothy O'Neill, CGCS. "We know that golf courses are compatible with the environment, but we also know that there are gaps in the data, especially in the collection of aggregate golf course information. We believe the data will be helpful on many fronts."

The most glaring absence comes in collective golf course performance data. Existing data is limited and not complete, uniform or centralized. GCSAA officials contend that this multi-year initiative will not only benefit superintendents and golf facilities, but communities and golfers as well.

Blue Tag Rebate Program Nets Donation to FGCSA

The PGA National Golf Club turned in their blue seed tags from their 2005 seed purchases from Turf-Seed,

...Thousands of dollars could have been dispersed to the FGCSA if the courses were better informed of this program.

Inc. earning a $788 rebate check for the FGCSA Research Fund. Unfortunately that was the only club in the state to take advantage of the Blue Tag program last year.

Greg Freyermuth of Turf-Seed said, "We feel that there were several thousands of dollars that could have been dispersed to the FGCSA if the courses were better informed of this program."

The program was advertised in the FGCSA Green Sheet last fall and Freyermuth made a presentation to the FGCSA at the spring board meeting in Naples last year. Distributors are also aware of the program and should be bringing it to the attention of the golf-course customers.

Turf-Seed and Tee-2-Green pledge to contribute 50 cents for every Turf-Seed variety or mixture blue tag and/or $1 for every Tee-2-Green PennPals variety or mixture blue tag turned in.

The blue tags are sewn on the bag to signify that each seed is certified. The tags must be removed from the bag and sent to Turf-Seed, Inc. with the name and location of the golf course. These funds are distributed to the state chapter to be used for research endowments and educational advancements.

"I would like to look into some way we could promote this program more vigorously," says Freyermuth. It has been in place for 10 years now.

FGCSA President Craig Weyandt agreed that we must come up with a way to create more awareness of this program, which is an easy way to benefit the industry.

If you have any questions about the program, contact Greg at 407-257-7325 or email at greg@turf-seed.com.

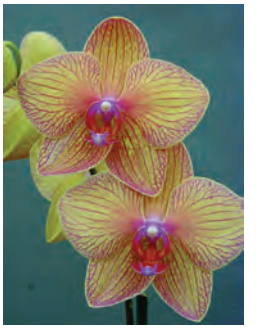
Terminator Meets Caddy Shack

New propane-oxygen injection systems like the Rodenator Pro units shown here have become very popular for controlling moles and other rodents on golf courses around the country. Oxygen mixed with propane is heavier than air and sinks into the rodents' tunnels and dens. When it's ignited it produces an expanding force traveling at 5,000 feet per second. The concussion collapses the tunnel network and produces first-pass kill rates up to 90 percent. The exterminator then follows up with trapping to get the surviving stragglers.

Plants of the Year

The first in the Plants of the Year series for 2006. The plants selected for this program have been found to be good performers in the Florida environment and require less maintenance and inputs. Here are two specimens for your consideration. Go to www.fngla.org for more information and suppliers who carry these plants.

Common name: African Blue Basil
Botanical name: *Ocimum kilimandscharicum X O. basilicum purpurascens*
Hardiness: Zones 8-10
Mature height and spread: 24-36 in.
Classification: annual, herb
Landscape use: Herb garden or as a fragrant ornamental
Characteristics: Developed by crossing camphor basil (*O. kilimandscharicum*) with purple basil (*O. basilicum purpurascens*), this herb prefers full sun and moist soil with erect purple blooms with a soft extruding flower. Its fragrant leaves can be used for culinary purposes.



Common name: Phalaenopsis Kaleidoscape
Botanical name: *Phalaenopsis* Baldan's Kaleidoscope 'Golden Treasure'
Hardiness: Zones 10-11
Mature height and spread: 15 in. and up
Classification: Tropical foliage
Landscape use: Accent plant for baskets, typically used indoors
Characteristics: Noted for its stunning coloring and abundant blooming, the flowers have red lips, reddish purple striping and a pale yellow background that starts as strong yellow and lightens as the bloom matures. This Phalaenopsis produces multiple flower spikes as it matures.