

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



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

turfgrass breeder with the University of Georgia.

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.



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