

Bermudagrass revolution

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"It's taken several years of breeding, but I think we're there in terms of our program and Charlie Taliaferro's program."

Jackpot (or J91-2 in the tests), discovered by Brede in a cemetery in the state of Washington, is "very similar to Tifway 419," he said. "It's a little darker. The leaves are a little shorter. It possesses the same cold and drought-tolerance. I wanted to come close to 419. It's been the standard for 30 years."

Brede said Jacklin's short-term goal will be to produce similar varieties to Jackpot for other companies, Brede said.

He predicted new varieties of seeded Bermudagrass will replace vegetative types, and older courses will overseed with them.

Brede and Taliaferro are trying to add more cold tolerance to Bermudagrass strains in order to grow it further north in the turf-grass transition zone.

"But I don't want to spend a lot of time trying to grow Bermudagrass in Minnesota. I want to grow it where it's supposed to grow," said Farmers Marketing's Richardson, who has perhaps sold more Bermudagrass than anyone in the world in his 40 years in the business.

VEGETATIVE PROGRESS

Meanwhile, Taliaferro is excited about the promise of the African Bermudagrass *Cynodon-Transvaalensis* he is developing for putting greens.

"We have identified several very promising types that are being widely nationally evaluated at this time," he said. "None of these Bermudagrasses are in the national tests, but we have plantings in Florida, Texas, and next year in several other states."

While believing better Bermudagrass cultivars can be developed for putting greens, Taliaferro feels their use will remain in the Deep South where bentgrass is poorly adapted.

"I do not feel at this point that it would be feasible or desirable to attempt to develop Bermudagrass cultivars for greens for the upper regions of the Bermudagrass belt or transition zone where bentgrass is better adapted," he said.

"*Cynodon-Transvaalensis*, however, has excellent cold tolerance. And we're looking at developing pure *Cynodon-Transvaalensis* cultivars and hybrids between the *Cynodon-Transvaalensis* and *Cynodon-Dactylon* for the transition zone," he said. "There is potential to develop *Cynodon-Transvaalensis* cultivars that would compete with and possibly be better than the traditional kinds of Bermudagrasses used on fairways in temperate regions."

He said OSU's research is "within four years of having some of the African Bermudagrasses released [in the marketplace] — if the valuations we're doing show they are truly worthy of release."

Pioneer in Bermuda research gives tips on care

Dr. Arden Baltensperger, retired professor at New Mexico State University and the father of Bermudagrass research, hailed the plant for its easy management, but nevertheless gave a few hints to golf course superintendents.

Speaking at the International Golf Course Conference and Show on Bermudagrass management, Baltensperger suggested:

- Use certified seed.
- Prepare a good seed bed. "Bermudagrass is tough, but not in the germination and seedling state," he said.

- Plant the grass only when the soil is 60 degrees or above. "The most common cause of failure is planting when the soil is below this temperature," Baltensperger said.

- Be cognizant of how the seed was processed. The seeding rate depends on if the seed was hulled, unhulled, hulled and coated, or unhulled and coated. Unhulled Bermudagrass yields 1.6 million seeds per pound and needs 1.5 to 2.0 pounds per thousand square feet. Hulled Bermudagrass yields 2.1 million seeds per pound and needs 1.0 to 1.5 pounds per thousand square feet.

- Bermudagrass is drought-tolerant but it needs adequate root-zone moisture to remain green in the summer. It will stay dormant and live for months.

- Most new varieties need four pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet during the growing season.

- Use pesticides sparingly.
- Seeding improved Bermudagrass is relatively rapid, inexpensive and very satisfactory for spring renovation and damage repair.

- On large areas, use a packer seeder.

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