

# In search of endophyte: Suichang endures in quest for best bents, bluegrasses

Continued from page 1

Kentucky bluegrass and bentgrass.

The search for an endophyte-carrying Kentucky bluegrass (*poa pratensis*) has been underway for about 10 years, Suichang said.

Suichang's mentor at Rutgers, Dr. Reed Funk, theorized that when European strains of *Poa pratensis* were first imported to the United States, the fragile endophyte died during the ocean voyage. If that were true,

endophyte-containing strains should still exist on the European continent, he predicted.

Researchers collected more than 1,000 samples in Europe. "But we didn't find any endophytes in the European samples," Suichang said.

Endophytes, particularly *Acremonium*, have been discovered in 20 other *poa* varieties, Suichang said. But researchers haven't succeeded in either inoculating or breeding the

endophyte-carrying characteristic into turf-quality Kentucky bluegrass.

"In a single winter, the endophyte is bred out," Suichang said. "Poas seem to have a non-aggressive, slow-growing endophyte. We still believe breeding



Suichang Sun

or inoculating endophytes from other poas into Kentucky bluegrass is a possible approach."

The search for native bluegrass species with endophyte infection continues, Suichang said.

Meanwhile, Jacklin is crossing endophyte-infected plants of neighboring *poa* species with Kentucky bluegrass in the hope of developing an endophyte-containing hybrid.

Suichang is also searching for an endophyte that Kentucky

bluegrass will not reject when inoculated.

The prospect of developing an endophyte-containing strain of bentgrass "should be particularly exciting for superintendents", according to former USGA agronomist Jim Connolly, now senior technical agronomist with Jacklin.

While at Rutgers, Suichang was involved with Funk's research on inoculating creeping bentgrass with endophyte. He plans to expand on Rutgers' research at Jacklin.

"The bentgrass they [Rutgers] planted last fall still has endophyte," Suichang said. "Potentially, the bentgrass research could have an even bigger impact because of Northern superintendents' preference for bentgrass greens."

## UGeorgia, PLCAA team to offer home correspondence study

MARIETTA, Ga. — The Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA) and University of Georgia are offering a home correspondence course leading to turfgrass professional certification.

The "independent study course," Principles of Turfgrass Management, is designed to help students "understand the principles of turfgrass establishment, growth, maintenance and troubleshooting; master modern turfgrass management practices and procedures; and become certified.

It covers 14 topics appropriate for all regions of the United States, including pesticide safety and integrated pest management.

Golf course maintenance employees are among those suggested as students, although there are no prerequisites for enrollment.

The \$275 course (\$225 for PLCAA members) carries 12 University of Georgia continuing education units.

Students can take up to a year to complete the course, which involves four open-book, mail-in examinations and two closed-book exams arranged at educational institutes near the students.

Dr. Keith Karnok of the University of Georgia is the course author. PLCAA has been assisted in producing the course by The Andersons, ISK Biotech, Lesco, Miles Specialty Products, O.M. Scott, PBI Gordon, Sandoz Agro, Sunbelt Seeds, Orkin Pest Control and Lawnmark Lawn Care.

More information is available from Community Learning Resources, Suite 191, Georgia Center for Continuing Education, University of Georgia, Athens, Ga. 30602; telephone 706-542-1756. PLCAA members should call 800-458-3466.

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