

By MARK LESLIE

**L**AS VEGAS, Nev. — While some Northern superintendents are anxiously battling *poa trivialis* takeover in areas of their golf courses, the rough bluegrass can be used to advantage, according to Arman Suny.

A former superintendent and turfgrass consultant who is currently general manager at Shadow Creek Golf Club here, Suny said: "In Palm Springs some of the best overseeded greens are with *poa trivialis*. It is a wonderful putting surface for overseeding. While it is 'a

## 'Use poa triv to your advantage' — Suny

weed,' it's not one I worry about. It doesn't affect the game of golf."

Indeed, Suny said *poa triv* can be a problem-solver for spots on a golf course where it is difficult to grow turf.

"It's a grass we probably don't use enough," he said. "There are probably a lot of places we could use it. It's a great short-day grower and Kentucky bluegrass is not. So you've got a grass that in the spring and even into the fall will flat out-grow

Kentucky bluegrass. It will start growing before the cool-season grasses do — ryegrass included. It's a much more aggressive spreader than ryegrass. It starts earlier, grows later and moves faster laterally.

"So, in places where you've got limited daylight, or a lot of early-season golf when there's not much sun, it's a viable grass to look at.

He said he has used *poa triv* in shade situations on collars. "Nobody notices," he said. "It's a

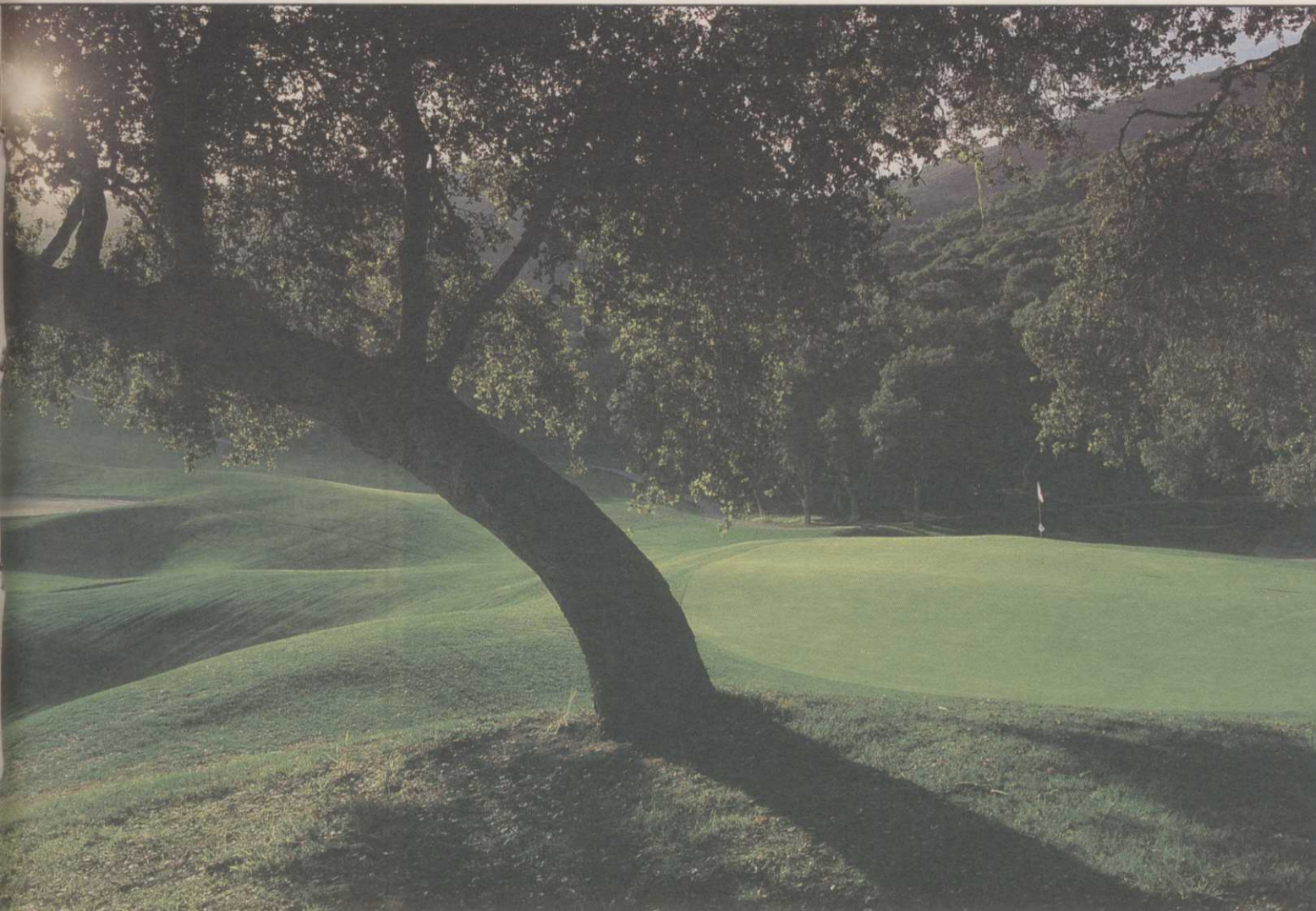
wonderful tool. If your percentage gets higher, you might have a problem with it on your greens."

Although superintendents have problems with *poa trivialis* dying in some parts of the country, "in other areas it will never, ever die out," Suny said.

Referring to one-time mentor Richie Valentine at Merion Country Club outside Philadelphia, he said: "Richie taught me some tricks. One was, if you have a terrible, shady

green or tee and you can't grow anything on it, you could put *poa triv* and Red Dot on it and just seed it once a month, and you could fake it pretty good. I had a green in Philly with *poa triv* and Red Top. It didn't putt like the rest of them, but it was green and nobody noticed. We had grass on it when nobody else ever could."

Sometimes, he added, superintendents decide there is a problem with a pure agronomic situation even though it doesn't affect the game of golf. "If it doesn't, who's got a problem with it?" he asked.



## Epidemic

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"The blue tag-certified seed basically says what's in the bag is that variety. If you saw what is allowable in terms of weed-seed and crop-seed percentages, you'd die."

Dale Kern, owner of Seed Technology, an independent seed-testing laboratory in Marysville, Ohio, said the solution to the problem lies in "the buyers setting the standards."

State regulators certify blue-tag bentgrass seed by testing 2.5 grams of seed per lot. But a seed lot can have as many as 55,000 pounds of bentgrass.

"That's okay for the homeowner," Kern said, "but when you're planting a whole golf course, it is a different situation."

Kern said superintendents might want seed tested at 100 grams per lot, or even more. "But that can get expensive," he said, noting that the cost for a 50-gram check is \$150.

"On certified sod-quality Kentucky bluegrass, they check 10 grams only looking for *poa annua*," he said. "For years we were running 100-gram samples. But that changed a couple of years ago. This year, we haven't had one request for a 100-gram test."

Terra Sod's Price said: "Quality control: A lot more seed testing needs to be done... The seed-testing labs did not have a lot of expertise in even identifying *poa triv* seed. Now the problem is pretty evident and seed technicians are becoming more aware of the difference between *poa triv* and bluegrass seed.

"Once they get a handle on that, I think they will begin to solve the problem... They obviously have to test more grams of seed. This lot [I bought] was 6,000 pounds. Ten grams of seed tested out of 6,000 pounds is suspect, to say the least."

And yet, as Hurley stated: "I'm not saying it couldn't come in with the seed. But if the conclusion is that there is a problem with *poa trivialis* because of the seed companies and seed farmers, that is grossly simplified and not looking at the big picture. The big picture is: It is all over the place and has been for centuries."

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