

BRIEFS



SEED RESEARCH HONORS FERRIN

CORVALLIS, Ore. — Seed Research of Oregon, Inc. (SRO) has presented Jim Ferrin of Granite Bay (Calif.) Golf Club its 1995 Golf Course Superintendent of the Year Award. A certified golf course superintendent, Ferrin was given the award for "his dedication to integrated pest management, turfgrass variety testing, and innovative cultural practices," according to SRO.



Jim Ferrin

MAINE HONORS LEWIS

ROCKPORT, Maine — Pat Lewis of Portland Country Club in Falmouth Foreside was presented the Distinguished Service Award at the Maine Golf Course Superintendents Association annual conference and show here in March. Lewis is a certified golf course superintendent and former president of the MGCSA. Greg Holder was given the Vern Putney Award and outgoing President Jim Hodge the Presidents Plaque.



Pat Lewis

AUDUBON CERTIFIES LORDS VALLEY CC

HAWLEY, Pa. — Lords Valley Country Club has been designated a "Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary," becoming the second course in the state and 62nd in the country to receive the honor. "The membership at Lords has enjoyed the diverse and prolific wildlife population of our club since the ... club was established," said superintendent Dennis Watkins. "The Audubon ... program has been a tool to help us protect, enhance, and develop a greater appreciation for our environment."

PASSIOS MOVES ON

NANTUCKET, Mass. — Charles T. Passios, former member of the board of directors of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, has been hired as superintendent at Nantucket Golf Club, construction on which began this spring. A certified golf course superintendent, Passios has been golf course manager at Hyannisport (Mass.) Club. The new course is being designed by Rees Jones.



Charles Passios

# USGA, supers confront concerns over unstable Bermudagrass

By MARK LESLIE

HOUSTON, Texas — Believing that "Bermudagrass greens are on the ropes," the U.S. Golf Association (USGA) Green Section, superintendents, university researchers and others are hoping for vast improvements — quickly.

Convening at Houston Country Club here, some 150 golf course superintendents heard USGA agronomists and university researchers explain that cultivars of hybrid Bermudagrass are becoming increasingly unstable and some sort of research must be done to solve the problem.

"If what was going on with Bermudagrass greens and fairways existed for bentgrasses, there would be

an eruption," said Green Section Southeast Region Director Patrick O'Brien. "It's amazing how it's not getting publicity because it's simply Bermudagrass."

A summary of the Houston meeting will be presented in May to the USGA Research Committee which will develop requests for proposals for projects dealing with the issues at hand, said Green Section National Director Jim Snow. "It may not require a lot of money — perhaps just defining what can be done and finding the people to do it."

"I'm encouraged. It was a good meeting that opened people's eyes about other peoples' viewpoints."

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# Significant advances in genetics foster nat'l conclave of scientists

By MARK LESLIE

EAST LANSING, Mich. — Geneticists are progressing at lightning speed in this "very, very new" area of turfgrass research, and to get scientists up to speed on these advances the U.S. Golf Association Green Section and Michigan State University (MSU) are hosting a Workshop on Biotechnology of Turfgrass here, Aug. 11-13.

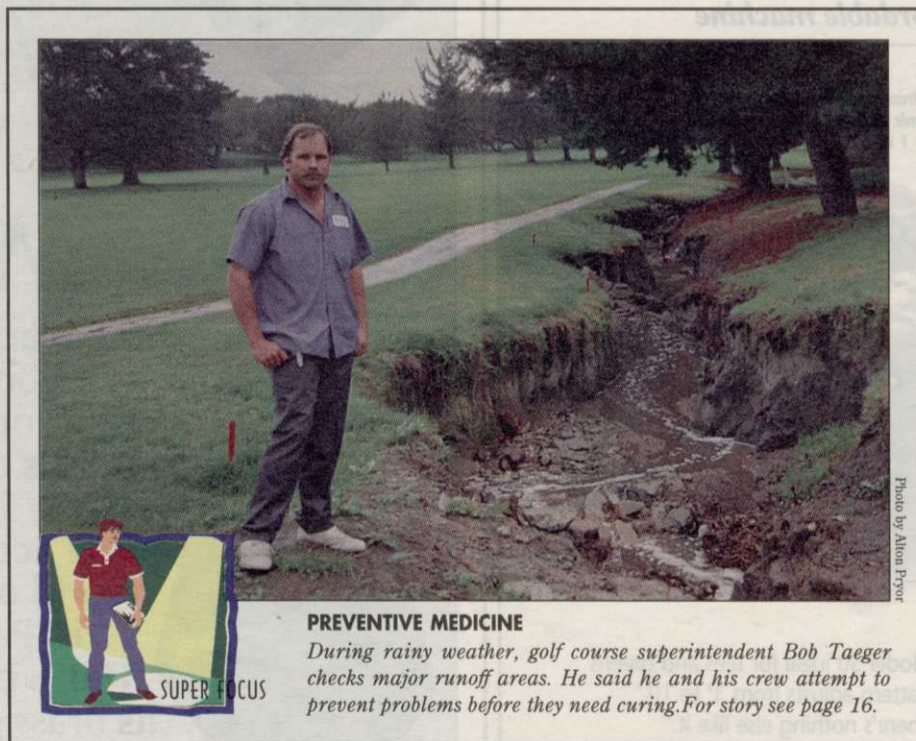
"This is the growth area where future significant changes will be made," said Dr. Michael Kenna, director of Green



Section research and workshop coordinator. "Whoever can learn the most the fastest and patent significant parts of it will be able to springboard into the future. That's the race."

Scientists from around the country have been invited to the conference, and 26 45-minute talks are scheduled. Ranging from molecular biology to gene cloning and *in vitro* culture and somaclonal variation, many of the subjects have never been discussed in a national or international workshop

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PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

During rainy weather, golf course superintendent Bob Taeger checks major runoff areas. He said he and his crew attempt to prevent problems before they need curing. For story see page 16.

Q & A



Dr. A. J. Powell  
Univ. of Kentucky

Ed. — This month we begin a continuing series of interviews with leading university professors and researchers affecting the golf course industry.

## UK's Powell shares transition zone turfgrass know-how

Andrew J. Powell, Ph.D, is a professor in the University of Kentucky Department of Agronomy. He has also taught and conducted research at the University of Maryland and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VPI and SU). Among his accomplishments are the release of Quickstand Bermudagrass, a new grass for the upper transition zone; and identification of Vamont Bermudagrass, a grass released by VPI and SU and historically the major turf used in the transition zone.

**Golf Course News:** With the increasing emphasis on prudent pesticide usage, are you seeing more courses converting to warm-season grasses in the transition zone? If so, why?

**Powell:** Yes, many perennial ryegrass courses are converting. They are determining that the risk of bermuda winter kill is less than perennial ryegrass summer die-back. Also, the cost of establishing bermuda may actually be less than the annual cost of their previous fairway fungicide program. Fungicides are seldom needed on Bermuda.

**GCN:** What are the warm-season Bermudagrass varieties that work well? Can you briefly describe their advantages and disadvantages?

**Powell:** For the upper transition zone, I would only consider Quickstand, Vamont or Midiron. Other new vegetation varieties such as Midlawn may also prove to do well, but we have little experience with them. In addition, the new seeded varieties such as Mirage,

Jackpot and Sundevil are much more winter hardy than previous seeded varieties, but it appears that they still lack some hardiness dur-

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# GCSAA sending team to first international tournament

LAWRENCE, Kan. — Six representatives of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) will travel to England in September as part of the Americas team to participate in the inaugural Hayter Challenge golf event. GCSAA President Bruce R. Williams also will attend as non-playing captain.

West Lancashire Golf Course in Blundellsands, Liverpool, and Fairhaven Golf Course in Lytham, St. Annes, will

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host the event Sept. 15-19. Sponsored by European equipment manufacturer Hayter, the tournament is designed to promote international relations and communications among golf course superintendent organizations. Plans call for the event to be held biennially at locations alternating between the United States and Europe.

The GCSAA representatives for 1996 are Vice President Paul McGinnis of Moon Valley Country Club in Phoenix, Ariz.; Secretary/Treasurer George Renault III of Burning Tree Club in Bethesda, Md.; Immediate Past President Gary Grigg of Royal Poinciana Golf Club in Naples, Fla.; Past President Randy Nichols of Cherokee Town and Country Club in Dunwoody,

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# USGA, researchers looking for solutions to Bermudagrass woes

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The increase in problems, O'Brien said, stems from Southern golfers "demanding playing conditions that bentgrass golfers are getting." Southern superintendents responded by cutting their Bermuda greens lower — to 5/32-inch height of cut on greens and 1/8-inch cut on fairways.

Bermudagrasses "were never meant to be exposed to this kind of stress," O'Brien

said. "By cutting shorter, we're noticing patches that disrupt the uniformity of the green and affect putting. These patches are a combination of genetic mutations and contaminations of other types of Bermudas."

In the 1960s and '70s, Bermudagrasses were cut at 1/4- or 3/16-inch and there were few problems, at least that could be seen, said Snow. "But by cutting lower, you see it. Either it was always there but not noticeable because of the



*Bermudagrasses 'were never meant to be exposed to this kind of stress.'*

— Patrick O'Brien  
USGA Southeast Region

higher grass, or cutting it down causes the problem."

Tifgreen and Tifdwarf — hybrids derived from Common Bermudagrass crossed with African Bermudas — have

been plagued by mutations almost since they were released by the University of Georgia's Dr. Glenn Burton as public varieties in the late 1950s, O'Brien said. Tifdwarf

was actually a mutation of Tifgreen that appeared just a few years after Tifgreen was introduced.

Now, Snow said, the question is: Why does it seem to be occurring more quickly and with greater frequency now than 20 years ago?

"It seems that since we've gone to lower cutting heights, these off-types have happened more quickly. Is it a genetic reason, or are there contaminants that exist all along but are more observable at the lower heights?"

The problem is exacerbated, O'Brien said, because little of the Bermuda sod or sprigs being grown is certified, and "most people are not even aware there is a difference."

In Georgia, for instance, less than 1,700 of the 12,000-plus acres of Bermudagrass sod and sprig is certified each year, according to the Georgia Crop Reporting Service.

"And, unfortunately," he said, "in a lot of states the certification programs are not closely monitored."

A more stable Bermudagrass is the final aim, Snow said, adding that research might scrutinize Bermuda from the angles of genetics and contamination, and answer the question of how to certify sod and sprigs as pure.

Some help may lie in the upcoming release of putting-green-quality Bermudagrasses, such as the University of Georgia's TW72, which will not be a public variety.

In the meantime, how do superintendents and golf course builders ensure they are getting the best Bermudagrass?

"You go to the nursery yourself, block off the area you want, be there when they cut the sod and follow the truck back to the golf course," Snow said. "The fact is, people just call sod companies, order X feet of Tifdwarf, and proceed in complete faith that they will get what they order. If you're concerned, take those extra steps and that will reduce the odds of imperfection."

"It comes down to house-keeping," Snow added, "both by the sod producers [by fumigating their fields more often] and the courses and superintendents themselves."

When the Bermudagrass problem is solved, O'Brien said, golf courses "will probably pay a lot more for these grasses because of inspection costs and growers needing to do a lot more to maintain their fields."

"If nothing happens, we will still have the problems — and those problems are all throughout the South."

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