



A SCOTTISH HERITAGE

History proves benefits of chewings fescue/creeping bentgrass combination

By VICKIE WALLACE

In cool-season climates, the concept of chewings fescue, creeping bentgrass fairways, tees and greens may sound new to some people. However, this combination has been used since golf was first made popular in Scotland and England, more than 100 years ago.

When the first golf courses were built in North America at the turn of the century, Scottish golf course architects brought with them the grassing concepts that were successful in Europe.

These grasses were used exclusively for tees, greens and fairways, because these species were and still are found growing naturally on many native links land sites in Great Britain.

It is no surprise that many of the golf courses built in cool season climates of the United States, from approximately 1890 through the 1930s, were seeded with a mixture of fescue and bentgrass. The most common formula was an 80/20 mixture by seed weight of Chewings fescue and bentgrass.

During the Great Depression there were few golf courses constructed, and it was not until the 1950s that a significant number of new courses were built. But at this time the fescue/bent combination seemed long forgotten, probably because there was no longer a direct influence from the old-time Scottish golf architects.

In the 1950s Penncross bentgrass and Merion Kentucky bluegrass were the new grasses to use for greens and fairways. Then in the 1960s, turf-type perennial ryegrasses were developed and introduced for use on fairways and tees.

Recently, the Scottish look has regained its popularity. Not because it is the only option for architects, but because the combination of chewings fescue and creeping bentgrass offers many benefits to the golf course superintendent for tees, greens and fairways. There are distinct advantages in using the two in combination.

One advantage is of particular importance for new golf construction as well as for courses that may be of high risk for "Take-all patch" disease. "Take-all patch" is a devastating disease and particularly damaging to creeping bentgrass.

Incorporating chewings fescue with creeping bentgrass alleviates the severity of the problem and/or can prevent extensive injury in high risk situations because the chewings fescue is resistant to the "Take-all patch" organism.

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Areas of high risk include disturbed soils newly seeded to creeping bentgrass which previous to construction had been mature forest or wooded vegetation.

Also susceptible to "Take-all" problems are turf areas where the soil is consistently moist and in which the pH of the upper portions of the soil are high due to amendments such as lime or nitrogenous fertilizers.

To prevent problems during construction, turfgrass managers should seed Jamestown II chewings fescue or a comparable variety at the rate of 100 pounds per acre with 20 pounds of Southshore or L-93 or a comparable variety for fairways and tees.

For greens construction, apply seed at the rate of 3 pounds of chewings fescue with one-half pound of creeping bentgrass per

1,000 sq. ft.

After time, the fescue can then be "managed out" of the area through various maintenance practices once the high risk concerns are alleviated or in check.

Not only does chewings fescue aid in the prevention of "Take-All Patch" disease, but it also can tolerate a fairway and greens height of cut.

Density is maintained when

the bentgrass may become stressed during periods of extended moisture stress.

Use of the chewings fescue/creeping bentgrass combination provides a turf which can tolerate a greater "low maintenance" approach to turf care because the fescue can survive and tolerate lesser amounts of both water and fertilizer and still provide an acceptable turf on which to play.

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