

# Potassium solution hastens zoysiagrass germination dramatically

By MARK LESLIE

BELTSVILLE, Md. — Zoysiagrass seed is notorious for slow germination and growth, so scientists have devised a method to speed up the process and make seeding a more viable option for this turfgrass which is normally sodded.

The work by former National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) National Director Jack Murray and South Korean scientists has enabled the zoysiagrass seed to germinate 70 to 80 percent more quickly, according to

Murray's successor, Kevin Morris.

While some zoysiagrass seed is treated before being sold to superintendents, other seed is not — and it is crucial that it is treated, Morris said.

"Right now, the best treatment is a strong base solution of potassium or sodium hydroxide," he said. "Soak the seed in this 30-percent solution for 20-25 minutes. Wash the seed and you can dry the seed and it will germinate much better."

"Ungerminated seed will germinate at 10- to 20-percent in 30 days. Treated seed will germinate in about 14 to 21 days."

Saying that other substances are being tested, Morris added: "My guess is that people will be working on other treatments that are less costly and that won't leave a waste product to dispose of. Over time, it [treatment] will be tweaked."

Unlike other seed, zoysia needs light to germinate.

"After soaking the seed, lay it out and keep it moist under light for 24 to 48 hours and you satisfy the light requirement," Morris said.

If zoysia seed has not been light-treated, he recommended seeding it on

top of the ground uncovered, then rolling it to establish contact with the soil.

"You can use a clear plastic to enhance germination," he said.

Other rules of thumb:  
• Seed after the last frost in the spring but no later than mid-July.

• At time of planting, apply siduron to control weeds, followed immediately with a quick-release fertilizer and in two weeks with oxadiazon.

• During the first four weeks, shallow-irrigate frequently, then irrigate fewer times but more deeply.

## Bright future in tests being seeded

BELTSVILLE, Md. — Expectations are high as the next generation of zoysiagrass seed has been planted for the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program trials.

"We've got some finer, denser vegetative types in the new trials," said NTEP National Director Kevin Morris from his headquarters here. "Whether they will be faster-spreading or have better cold-hardiness, we don't know yet. Among the seeded types, most are improvements over Korean common. But they are not going to be the fineleaf dense types" breeders are striving to perfect.

"The experimentals are getting better each year, said Susan Samudio, head of JacklinGolf's zoysia breeding program.

## Par for the Course, school plan cited

The American Society of Association Executives has named two Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) programs to the Associations Advance America Awards honor roll.

GCSAA's weekly television show, "Par for the Course," and the Wakarusa Elementary School Business and Education Partnership were spotlighted in the national competition. The award recognizes significant contributions to society by associations in areas such as education, product and safety standards, professional standards and codes of ethics, research and statistics, international activities and community service.

"Par for the Course" was created in 1994 to increase public knowledge of the golf industry, specifically superintendents. The 30-minute production, is televised nationally on ESPN.

The Wakarusa Partnership is part of a school district-wide program that pairs local organizations and schools. Activities included enrollment in the Audubon International Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Schools, classroom mentoring in math, reading and computer skills and assistance with the annual Field Day sports activity.

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