**NTEP SCHEDULES FIELD DAY, EDUCATIONAL FORUM**

BELTSVILLE, Md. — The National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) will conduct a turfgrass research field day at the research plots on the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center-West here from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Aug. 7. Topics will include discussion and display of NTEP tests of Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, tall fescue, fineleaf fescue, bentgrass, Bermudagrass, buffalograss, zoysiagrass; zoysiagrass/cool-season grass mixtures; low-maintenance performance of tall fescue, Kentucky bluegrass and zoysiagrass; organic fertilizer use on turfgrass; management of zoysiagrass/tall fescue mixture and overseeding of zoysiagrass. For information call Kevin Morris of Jennatte Wills at 301-504-5125.

# So. Illinois prof begins experiment on green

By K.C. JAEHNIG

Kenneth L. Diesburg is working with Illinois superintendents to develop a golf course putting green for research purposes.

Using a site at the Rend Lake Golf Course, Diesburg, a turf expert from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, plans to fill the practice green cavity with three kinds of soil, laid side by side and kept separate by large plastic sheets. He will plant three kinds of grass in each of those three soil strips. The goal: to see which combination will give Rend Lake the thickest, sturdiest, hardiest and fastest putting surface possible.

Diesburg has been working with the region's golf course superintendents since his arrival on campus seven years ago. This research green was their idea.

"We'd go to turf field days and see research plots that look fantastic, but there's no wear and tear on them," said Rend Lake superintendent James D. Ashby. "You can't simulate what ball marks will do, or spikes, or someone taking a divot out of a green when they miss a putt. Traffic is a huge problem for greens, and so is daily maintenance.

"Field plots may be mowed every two, three, even four days, but on a course you have to do it every day, which makes wear patterns from mowers. We want to see what happens to a green that is in daily play."

Work on the putting green began last fall when Belleville resident Joe Munie hollowed out the hole for free.

"He owns a business that specializes in golf course construction. We were lucky to get that contouring donated," Ashby said.

The rough grading created a 7,000-square-foot, 16-inch-deep "tub," elevated and sloped to make drainage easier. Diesburg lined the tub with heavy-duty plastic, creating three compartments as he went. Then, using 4-inch plastic pipe and gravel, he put in a separate drainage field for each compartment.

Grass planting was scheduled for June.

Diesburg will be testing mixtures of sand and peat as rooting media in two of the compartments. The third will contain a mix of sand and calcine clay.

"It's the same stuff they make kitty litter out of but fired at higher heat so it's harder and less dusty," Diesburg said.

The clay's molecular structure makes it drain better than peat, cutting down on grass disease. But it also holds water near the surface, where greens tend to dry out.

In his grass cultivars, he's seeking good color, speedy recovery, high leaf growth, shoot density and all-around hardiness.

"We're in a difficult climate zone for grass," Diesburg said. "We have cool springs, which are hard on warm-season grasses, and hot, drought summers, which make it hard on cool-season grasses."

Because the green will be a permanent golf course fixture, Diesburg will be able to track how it changes over the years. And as new products come on the market, he can adapt the green to test them — a strong selling point as far as Ashby is concerned.

"Right now, the big thing is the spikeless golf shoe," Ashby said. "We'd be interested in knowing how they might affect our greens."