UCal Riverside's turfgrass research bearing results

RIVERSIDE, Calif. — The 2-year-old University of California, Riverside Turfgrass Research Advisory Committee (UCRTRAC) is already impacting the golf industry and general turf and sod interests in Southern California.

UCRTRAC supports turf research to improve playing surfaces for golf, baseball and other sports; preserve the environment; increase the efficient use of inputs; develop unbiased information on cultivars and products like fertilizers, pesticides and equipment; decrease operating costs; and stay abreast of innovation. Member organizations represent golf course superintendents, professional golfers, sod producers, general turfgrass interests, and UCR researchers with expertise in turf improvement, physiology, and culture.

"A golf course is a living organism with many dynamic features. Maintaining it for optimum performance, manicured appeal and sensitivity to environmental concerns requires a working marriage between agronomics and business interests," said John Martinez, superintendent at Southern California Golf Association (SCGA) Members' Club in Murrieta and an UCRTRAC delegate. "Supporting scientific research makes good business sense because research can reduce operating expenses for maintaining quality turf, while at the same time improving playing conditions for our members."

"Research can strengthen environmental compliance and cost effectiveness by elucidating the impacts of fertilizers and pesticides and fine-tuning the need for specific inputs," he added.

The organization's cultivar evaluations, environmental and management studies, and product testing can improve the playability and visual quality of playing surfaces.

"When you're talking about a regional golf industry with expenditures of more than $385 million for maintenance, equipment and capital expenses in Southern California, the savings associated with research and education can be significant," said UCR turfgrass research agronomist Robert Green. "Our intent is to be of service to the turf industries in Southern California, and one of the benefits of our research and education is that we can improve the bottom line for our UCRTRAC industry clientele."

"The more long-term research on turf physiology, biochemistry and genetics complements the short-term projects and leads to long-term progress for the industry," added Green, the principle investigator on 24 research projects.
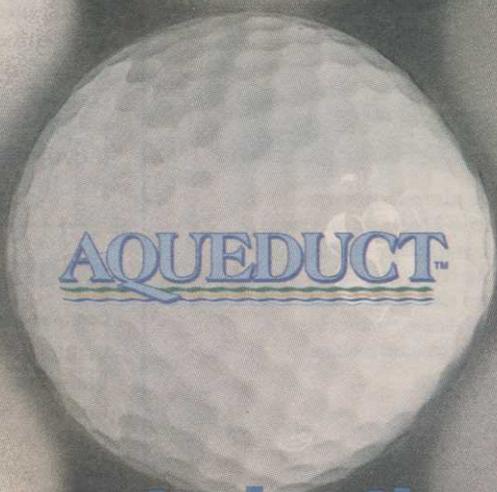
Dr. Vic Gibeault, Extension environmental horticulturist said support from the UCRTRAC member organizations has added new dimensions to UCR's Turfgrass Research Program and "has made possible additional projects with end-user needs as their focus."

The Southern California golf industry is one of the largest in the world. The region's 10 counties have 464-1/2 18-hole equivalent golf courses, according to the National Golf Foundation (NGF). More than $385 million is spend annually on golf course maintenance, equipment and capital expenses in Southern California.

Ten to 11 percent, or 2 million, of Californians play golf, according to the NGF. In the region, golfers play, on average, 53,000 rounds of 18 holes at each course yearly, which equates to more than 24.6 million rounds of golf per year in Southern California.

UCRTRAC member organizations include the Southern California Golf Association; California Golf Course Superintendents Association (GCSA); GCSA of Southern California; San Diego GCSA; Hi-Lo Desert GCSA; California Sod Producers Association; Professional Golfers Association, Southern California Section; Southern California Turfgrass Council; Southern California Turfgrass Foundation; United States Golf Association; and UCR.