

Danner Internships placing students in mainstream

FRANKLIN, Tenn. — Two years ago Nashville businessman Ray Danner created a turfgrass internship at the Little Course at Aspen Grove to help train future leaders in golf course maintenance.

This summer Jim Akin, a sophomore majoring in turf and ornamental horticulture at the University of Tennessee, served as the second Danner Turf Intern. His experience included building a new

chipping green at the Little Course, which installed a newly invented flat plastic drain tile. He was also responsible for monitoring all turfgrass test plots, making all needed applications and doing any specialty maintenance to these plots.

The Little Course at Aspen Grove is a nine-hole short course, where 56 different varieties of grasses are being studied in real-life playing conditions. Under the su-

pervision of Joseph Kennedy, the superintendent at the Legends Club of Tennessee and the Little Course, college interns spend a summer working at the Little Course.

Michael Schuhmann, then a sophomore studying agronomy at Mississippi State University, worked the summer of 1997. After returning to MSU for classes, this past summer Schuhmann interned at Augusta National Golf Club.

You're not helping out the golf community if your new grass doesn't help lower the pesticide output.'

— Skip Lynch, SRO

Bentgrass trials

Continued from page 18

Hurley said the greatest impact on reduced fungicide use may occur on new or totally renovated fairways seeded to the most disease-resistant creeping bentgrass varieties. Interseedings of improved varieties into existing stands of turf will not modify the existing population of plants significantly over a short period of time, but may take repeated interseedings over five years to significantly shift the plant population, he added.

"The exception," he said, "would be use of a 'total kill' herbicide, or a growth regulator prior to seeding a more resistant variety."

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Bentgrass breeders are expectant about future bentgrasses, and even those already in the pipeline.

In fact, Seed Research of Oregon's SR-1119 is "bullet-proof," according to Lynch.

A product of the original Providence breeding program at the University of Rhode Island, it is quick to establish ("Green Hills Country Club in the San Francisco area was seeded the first week in June and opened for play the first week in August."), was bred to resist dollar spot and brown patch ("Frankly, I don't think [URI Prof.] Bridgett Ruelle has ever had a disease in her 1119 plots.") and has taken the performance of Providence and moved it into the Carolinas and Tennessee.

Tea-2-Green, meanwhile, hopes to "capture the ability of Penncross to keep its roots in the heat of the summer" and transfer that characteristic to a new cultivar, Rose said.

"Biotech is close and that will be a big change," he added. "It's a new frontier we're involved in."

Conservatively, Rose predicted superintendents would have to wait five years before the fruits of this work reach the marketplace.

At Lofts, the ongoing breeding program has new materials in the mix. "It's always difficult to tell what your new material will do," said Hurley. "Will we go further south? Of course you try to breed for heat tolerance. But remember, these are still cool-season grasses. Physiologically, they're C3 grasses. The warm-seasons are Bermudagrass and zoysia, which are C4. The internal makeup is different. A cow is a cow and a sheep is a sheep. You can breed for greater heat tolerance, but there are limitations as to how far you can take it."

Meanwhile, Lynch said, "You're not helping out the golf community if your new grass doesn't help lower the pesticide output."

"The hot ticket," he added, "is if someone can work out how to put endophyte into bentgrass. Some are trying to infuse endophyte with a gene gun. Some are inserting it into plants, but that is short-lived."

"We favor good old-fashioned crossbreeding. That would be the most stable way to do it."

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