

&Golfdom

SOLUTIONS, IDEAS & OPINIONS

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LOCAL HEROES

Yamaha and *Golfdom* are partnering to pay tribute to superintendents around the nation who serve their profession as volunteer leaders of local chapter associations. Please join us in thanking these "local heroes."

BECAUSE OF THEM, OUR INDUSTRY IS A BETTER PLACE.

Monroe S. Miller

Blackhawk CC, Madison, Wis.
Editor of Wisconsin GCSA's *The Grass Roots*

The U.S. Postal Service has nothing on Monroe. Since he took over as editor of *The Grass Roots* in 1984, not only has he never missed a deadline, but the one-man editorial gang has won the GCSAA national award in his publication's category every year since 1985. Monroe, who has held every office in the state chapter, assumed the editorship after stepping down as president in 1984. "We needed to improve it, and I was willing to make the commitment," he says.

A Vietnam War veteran with undergraduate and graduate degrees in turfgrass management from the University of Wisconsin, Monroe has been superintendent at Blackhawk CC since Jan. 1, 1973.

"Monroe puts in more time than any of us just doing that publication," said Wisconsin GCSA President David Brandenburg Jr. of Rolling Meadows GC in Fond du Lac. "Wisconsin is such a big state, and that publication is the only contact some of us have. It keeps the group together."



Greg Searle

Cape Arundel GC, Kennebunkport, Maine
Maine GCSA Education and Monthly Meetings Chairman

Greg recently resigned as superintendent at the home club of the first President Bush (that's "41" to the locals), but he remains active in the Maine GCSA, which he has served in every capacity for 27 years, including president in 1984-85. While operating his new business, Super Turf Consultants in Kennebunkport, Greg is also a member of the chapter's board of directors and is in his sixth year on the USGA's Green Section Committee.

Having hobnobbed with 41's pals like the venerable Arnold Palmer, Ken Venturi, Fred Couples, Ben Crenshaw and Davis Love III, Greg pointed to "the friendships that last a lifetime — those with my colleagues" as his favorites. About the Maine GCSA, he said, "I can't say strongly enough how important that organization has been to me, personally and professionally."



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“We coordinate our efforts because we want people to walk off our course pleased with what we’ve done.”

JOEL RATCLIFF
SUPERINTENDENT
WORLD TOUR GOLF LINKS

Replica Courses Require Patience and Precision to Construct

Joel Ratcliff isn't only the certified superintendent of International World Tour Golf Links in Myrtle Beach, S.C. He also helped build the course along with a local construction company, which gives him an appreciation for what it takes to create a replica course.

“We recreated holes from 23 different courses when we built this facility,” Ratcliff says. “It wasn't easy to do because we only had seven feet of elevation change on the 236 acres of property. If you're going to recreate holes with severe undulations, you have to move some dirt.”

Move dirt they certainly did — 1.3 million cubic yards, to be exact.

“Everyone's talking these days about minimalist design,” Ratcliff says. “You can't adhere to that philosophy if you want to get a replica course right.”

Aside from the massive earth moving, the biggest challenge at World Tour was routing.

“You don't want to plop holes down simply because they fit,” Ratcliff says. “If you do that, then you ruin the overall flow of the course and leave your golfers feeling out of sorts.”

Once you've got the holes chosen and routed, the next challenge concerns what grasses to use. Obviously, the grass they grow at St. Andrews in the Scottish climate won't thrive in South Carolina's heat. To provide value to your golfers, however, you have to choose grasses that will most closely mimic the originals, Ratcliff says.

For International, Ratcliff chose L-93 for the greens and 419 bermudas elsewhere. While it's not authentic on some of the holes, it's close enough so the golfers get the experience they're looking for.

“You want to emulate the holes as closely as possible, but there are limits on what you can do,” Ratcliff says. “I believe most golfers walk off our course satisfied with their experiences. That's what keeps me and the owners happy.”

— Frank H. Andorka Jr., Managing Editor

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“If you woke up every day thinking about the history that's been made on the holes you're caring for, you'd be paralyzed,” Schafer says. “You have to think of it as No. 10 is just No. 10, which happens to emulate whichever famous hole it's patterned after.”

Schafer says he occasionally feels added pressure because the price of a round of golf at his course makes it a special-occasion course.

“This course is no one's home course,” Schafer says. “This is a course you play as a treat. I only have one chance to make a first impression. In the end, you can only do the best you can.”

Ratcliff, who also helped build World Tour, says his biggest challenge involves keeping up with all the renovations on the original courses that have contributed holes to his course.

“You finally get your holes to play like the originals, and the home course redesigns the hole to compensate for modern equipment,” Ratcliff says. “We won't be able to keep up indefinitely. If we tried to, we'd be tearing up holes all the time. Then people wouldn't want to play your course.”

Location, location, location

Often, a replica course's location differs radically in climate and topography from the areas where the original holes hail, Stephens says. While it may be easy to grow azaleas in April in Georgia, it's almost impossible to grow them in the middle of a scorching Houston summer.

“We want the holes to look as true to the originals as possible, but sometimes it's just not possible,” Stephens says. “You can't grow azaleas when it's 100 degrees outside and humid. That's when we have to explain to our golfers that it might not be a perfect replica.”

“We aim for Amen Corner to look perfect in April during Masters' week because that's when we'll get the most play on those holes,” he adds. “The rest of the year, we make it look as close as possible, but we have to make concessions to our climate.”

Schafer says his biggest challenge since joining The Royal Links 16 months ago was to change his mind about providing wall-to-wall green for his customers. After all, most European courses don't have triple-row irrigation systems.

Continued on page 66

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Ohio Turfgrass Foundation Research and Educational Center – 2000

Treatment	Rate	% Turf Density
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Fertilizer (46-0-0)	0.014 lb. N/1000 sq. ft.	72.00
Fertilizer (46-0-0) + Prospect Plus	0.014 lb. N/1000 sq. ft. + 48 oz./acre	77.00

Seeded on August 4, 2000 with G-2 creeping bentgrass at a rate of 2 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft. Density measurements were based on % cover taken visually on 10/4 (8 weeks after treatment)

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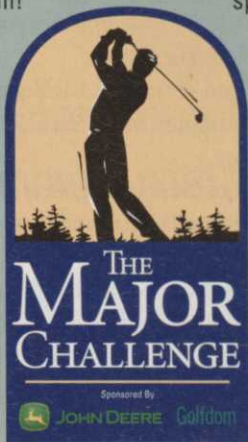
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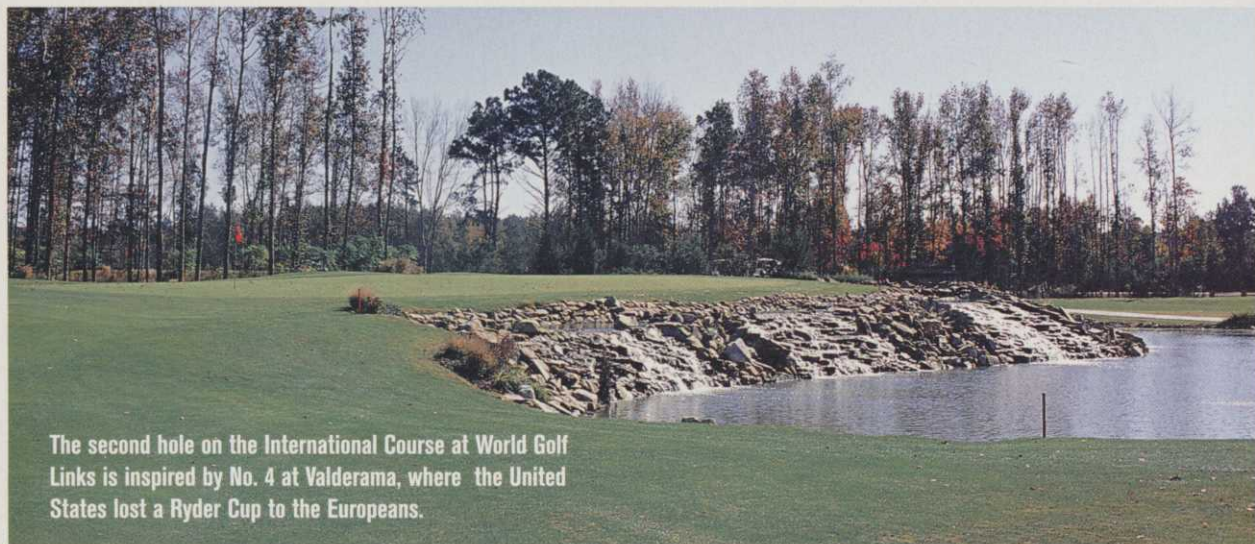
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The second hole on the International Course at World Golf Links is inspired by No. 4 at Valderama, where the United States lost a Ryder Cup to the Europeans.



“It’s been a lot of fun working on this project.”

TODD STEPHENS
SUPERINTENDENT
TOUR 18 HOUSTON

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“On this course, it’s the exact opposite of what you experience on other courses in this country,” Schafer says. “When you’re trying to replicate holes from Europe, particularly Scotland, you don’t have completely green turf. Therefore, to remain true to the originals, you have to allow for a lot more brown.”

Brown turf isn’t hard to create in Las Vegas, where summer temperatures often reach 120 degrees F, Schafer says.

Schafer says most of the course’s golfers are people who will never travel to Scotland to play Carnoustie or St. Andrews. His job, as he sees it, is to help them have the experience without the expense of traveling overseas. The pressure builds, however, because of the price tag.

“You have to take care of them from start to finish and make sure they enjoy their round,” Schafer says. “Otherwise, they’ll never come back.”

Ratcliff says it takes a complete team effort, from the pro shop to the crew member raking bunkers, to make replica courses successful.

“We coordinate our efforts as much as possible because we want people to walk off our course pleased with what we’ve done,” Ratcliff says. “That starts in the bag drop-off area and follows them around the course. We need to be attentive to our golfers’ needs even more than your average course because of the price of admission.”

Stephens says the green complexes at his course present the largest maintenance headaches for him. Most of the holes repli-

cated at Tour 18 have smaller-than-normal greens because the original courses don’t handle a high volume of golfers. Unfortunately, when 50,000 rounds parade through, it’s hard to keep the traffic from ruining them.

“The small greens present some problems, but they’re not insurmountable,” Stephens says. “You have to aerify more aggressively and be more vigilant about traffic wear, but the problems are manageable.”

Worth the work

Schafer says his job at The Royal Links is fun despite its challenges.

“It’s a constant learning experience, and I’m becoming a better superintendent as I meet each new challenge,” Schafer says. “I enjoy hearing golfers talk positively about the course when they come off the 18th green.”

Stephens says the steady flow of customers that continue to come to Tour 18 proves to him he’s doing something right.

“We don’t get a lot of negative comments,” Stephens says. “Most of our golfers think we do a good job of replicating the holes within reason. It’s been a lot of fun working on this project.”

“It’s our job to keep the course in exceptional shape year-round, and that’s the biggest challenge,” he adds. “We can’t ever lose sight of the fact that we need to provide as healthy turf as possible so our customers keep coming back. Sure it’s added pressure, but I can’t complain.” ■

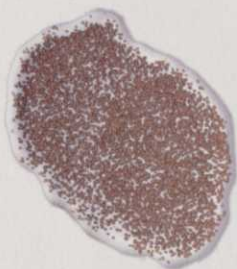
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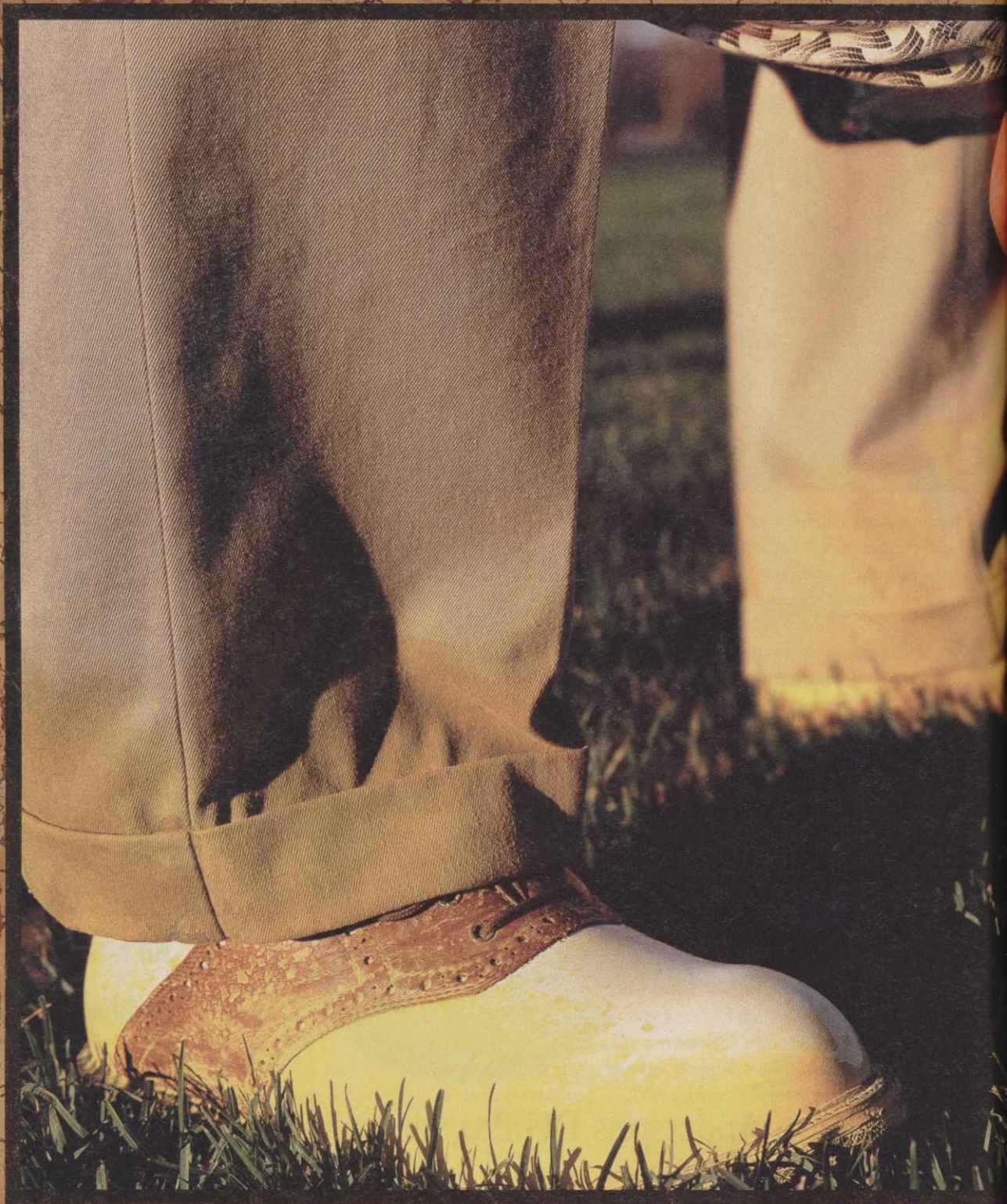


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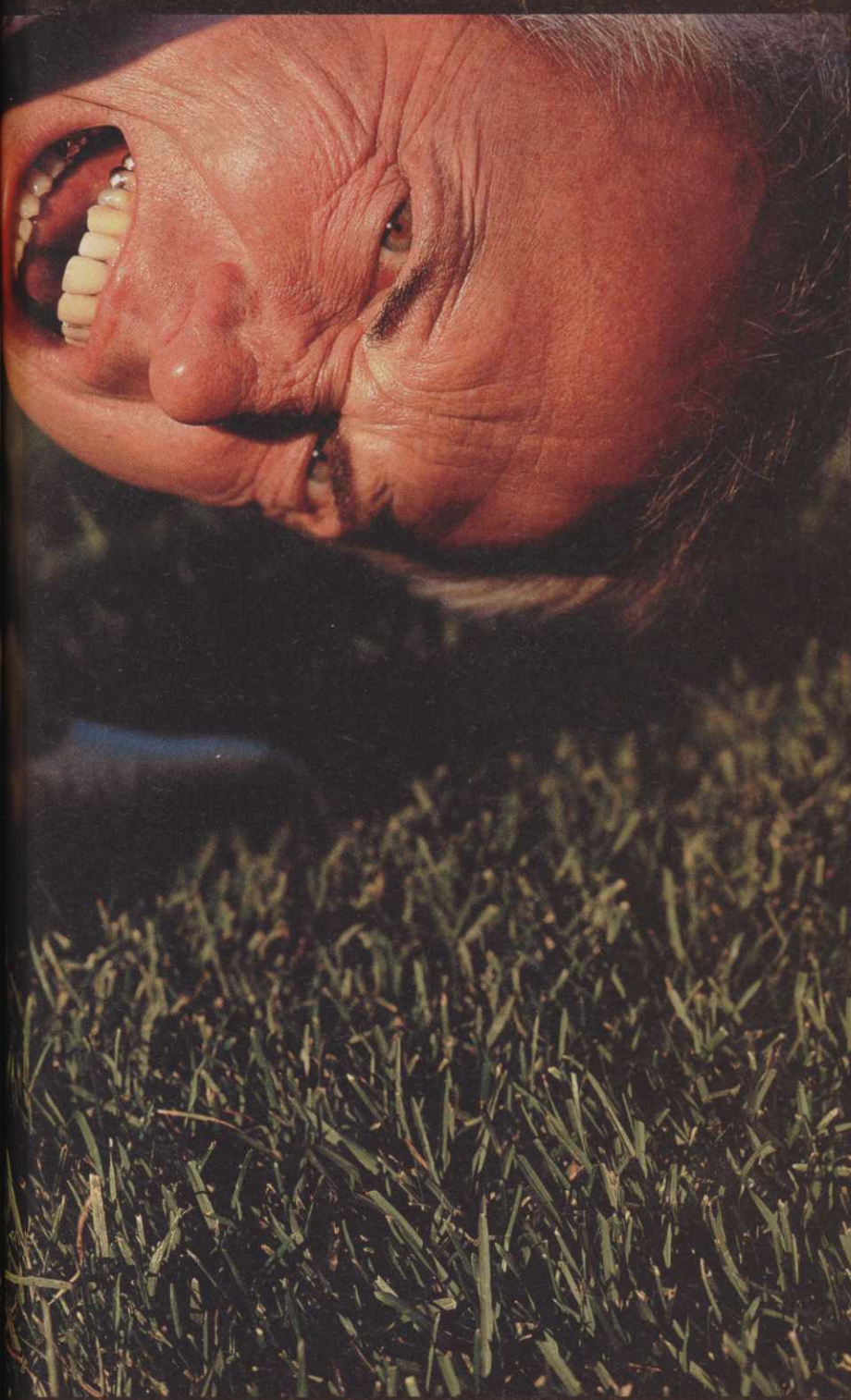
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The Rise and Fall of Endophytes

The excitement over the famous fungi has died down. Researchers, however, haven't given up hope that it may rise again *By Frank H. Andorka Jr., Managing Editor*

Endophytes burst on the turfgrass scene 20 years ago with fanfare usually reserved for rock stars or movie stars. Companies touted endophyte-enhanced turf as insect-repellent and stress-tolerant, and research backed it up. As a result, demand from golf course owners and superintendents lifted endophytes from relative obscurity to heights of fame over 10 years.

Like so many stars before them, however, endophytes found fame fleeting. After spending a decade on the lips of breeders and buyers alike, endophytes' fragility doomed them in the 1990s, sinking so low that they're hardly mentioned in marketing materials anymore. Despite setbacks, endophyte researchers still doggedly pursue new endophyte species and more sophisticated packaging, hoping to spark their comeback.

Research proves that endophyte-enhanced turfgrass (right) resists disease better than its unenhanced cousin (left), but does anyone care anymore?



PHOTOS: SEED RESEARCH OF OREGON

A rising star

Endophytes are symbiotic fungi that live between the cell walls in turfgrass leaves. In the early 1980s, research showed that endophytes caused a chemical reaction inside the plants that made them taste awful to insects. The prospect of producing turf that required less insecticides thrilled seed distributors.

"I was a distributor when endophytes first hit the market, and we were all excited about their potential," says Don Woodall, vice president of sales and marketing for Landmark Seeds. "We were sure the United States was headed in the direction of Europe, where you can't spray any chemicals in some countries. Had that happened, endophyte-enhanced turfgrass would have taken off because of the insect-repellent strategies."

Woodall says he remembers when he would field questions daily about whether the seeds he was selling contained endophytes. Companies listed the percentage of endophytes in their seeds prominently, and there were even TV spots designed to sell the importance of endophyte-enhanced turfgrass to consumers.

"There were only a few varieties at the time with endophytes, so you could charge a premium for the seed," says Leah Brillman, research director for Seed Research of Oregon, one of the earliest producers of enhanced products. "We worked hard to get the message out."

In addition, researchers like William Meyer, associate director of the Center for Turfgrass Research and professor of plant science at Rutgers University, say endophytes also increase turf's stress tolerance.

"We don't know why endophyte-enhanced turf performs better under stress, but it does," Meyer says. "There are many researchers out there looking for the answer."

Originally, breeders found two varieties in which endophytes produced the best results: fine fescues and perennial ryegrasses. Further research

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