



A Look at 1994 Research

By Scott A. Mackintosh

Next on the tee, the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility. Yes it's time to tee up the research ball and whack it down the research fairway. Spring is springing and the season is underway. What an exciting time of year. As soil temperatures rise and the turfgrass begins to stretch its arms and legs after a long winter snooze, it's time once again to get outdoors.

While this past winter was certainly the coldest I have ever experienced, the turfgrass at the Facility came through the winter very well. Unfortunately, (from a research standpoint) there was no ice formation on the turfgrass. Therefore, there was no opportunity to observe the effects of ice removal from calcium magnesium acetate (CMA) applications. Nevertheless, I still intend to apply liberal to excessive applications of CMA on bentgrass and Kentucky bluegrass throughout the growing season.

As Dr. Kussow mentioned during EXPO-94, there is a substantial thatch layer forming on the lawn surrounding the O.J. Noer Building that will require immediate attention this spring. Interestingly, the Kentucky bluegrass sod was established on muck soil and is now growing on top of a clay loam soil

and it appears the roots have not significantly migrated out of the muck soil.

We all know that thatch is a partially decomposed layer of organic matter lying above the soil surface. Surprisingly, thatch is made up of a significant portion of the turf plant other than the leaves. Thatch usually forms on well maintained turf, i.e., excessively irrigated, optimum to excessive nitrogen, and pesticide applications. Eradicating the thatch problem, however, is not as easy as defining it.

Dr. Kussow has used thatch reducing agents with limited success. To reduce the thatch problem at the Facility we will use traditional control measures to enhance the environment for thatch decomposition. We will aerate to increase soil oxygen levels and expose more soil microorganisms to the thatch layer, apply moderate nitrogen, avoid excessive irrigation but maintain moist conditions and a soil pH from 6.0 to 7.0.

Dr. Koval will be installing an ornamental grass demonstration plot this year. Ornamental grasses have become a very popular choice of many superintendents across the country. Ornamental grasses are relatively low maintenance, offer unique aesthetic qualities to clubhouse grounds, waste

bunkers and golf tees. Certainly, they would look fantastic around anyone's home or business. Compared to traditional ornamentals such as Arborvitae, Hemlock and Taxus, most ornamental grasses need little upkeep other than a little fertilizer and water during the dry months. As an added benefit, once the ornamentals grow and increase in basal diameter they can be separated and transplanted to other locations.

Everyone who has visited the Facility knows how much, how new and how fortunate we are to be able to operate loaned turf equipment from our local industry. A special thanks to Hanley's, John Deere, Reinders and Wisconsin Turf Equipment. If it were not for them we would not be able to maintain the turf at our present level.

Thanks to the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association and the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association, research will begin on a native soil push-up green and a USGA spec sand green. Seeding should begin in mid-to-late April depending on the weather.

Don't forget the O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility is a information resource for anyone in the turfgrass industry. Call anytime at 608-845-6536. 🏌️

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