

# JOY OF COOKING

By Tom Schwab, Superintendent  
O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility

Things have really been cooking around the Noer Facility this spring. So many plots are being redone that you wouldn't recognize the place. Nineteen of our seventy-seven irrigated plots are in one stage or another of being changed into new studies. Many other investigations have been installed away from the irrigated plots both on and off the Noer grounds. The UW-Madison turf group is really going to town.

It's been a fun and educational season thus far for me. Everyone is really pitching in to help the others out on different projects. Whether it's Wayne helping me analyze a study with statistics, Jeff bringing new ideas from Penn State, John sharing procedures from Michigan State, Amy sharing stories from her outreach activities, Gary showing us how to attract wildlife and beautify the facility with his work on the Audubon program, Randy Smith building a new putting green and sharing his life experiences, Doug overseeing the disease lab, my crew pitching in with labor on everyone's projects, or Audra giving input on WTA activities, the season has been a full one.

One different study I'm doing is analyzing a new product that claims to fix dog urine spots in lawns. The different part is I had to find some dog urine to set up a controlled study. With a couple phone calls, I found a laboratory supply outlet right here in Madison that sells the stuff; \$220 per gallon. And you thought you had to pay a ton for some of your products! Why should we test this product? The manufacturer claims it works and there is a need for it. Wisconsin is only one of three states in the country that may require a manufacturer to submit replicable university testing of a soil and plant additive (which is what this dog spot fixer is classified as) before the prod-

uct can be sold. Most states only require that the product is safe to use and then lets the buyer beware of whether or not it works. You would be amazed at the number of homeowner phone calls that we get each spring asking if there is a product that repairs dog urine damage in lawns. There seems to be a need for the product but it won't get this university's stamp of approval until the testing shows that it works.

Another product we're testing this spring is a lawn repair kit for bare spots. It's a mulch, seed and fertilizer combination. The kit makes many claims on the label. But once again the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection wants to see university research of those claims before it approves the product for sale. I can see us becoming quite busy with testing many other products like these in the future.

The biggest addition this spring is the new one-half acre plant pathology putting green. Randy Smith of Admire

Greenscapes just finished the construction of the green before Memorial Day and Jeff Gregg seeded it down over that weekend. Three-quarters of the surface is seeded with *Penncross* seed and one quarter is sprigged with *Poa annua*. Jeff will do fungicide trials on it and hopes to have information for you by field day. It should be interesting to see what he does after he grows it in. I imagine he will apply a variety of different plant protectants and then infect the turfgrass that he had just grown in a month earlier.

Dr. Kussow seeded down a new green this spring also. Its size is dwarfed by the other new green but the information that will be derived from the study will be just as grand. This green will investigate root zone organic supplement effects on putting green quality and biological properties.

Watch for some good information from our new assistant professor of horticulture, Dr. John Stier. He has me preparing two plots for *Poa*  
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*supina* investigations and another two plots for athletic field research. I'm not sure what those studies are going to be yet, but I know his credentials on both *supina* and athletic field turf from Michigan State University are impressive. It will be interesting to derive some Wisconsin information on those two subjects and John will be sure to do that.

Each member of the turf team has been conducting off-site studies this spring also. Wayne has fertilizer trials, Amy has salt tolerant turf studies, Jeff, Doug and Steve have fungicide trials and I've set up a couple turf species/mixtures demonstrations. I'm sure that there are other studies, but I can't keep track of them all. I just know that everyone is quite busy. You obviously won't be able to visit these off-site studies when you come to field day, but the 1997 Turf Research book that gets handed out

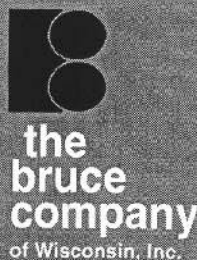
at the winter EXPO should be packed with information from all this work.

Another turf project that I've been helping with is seeding the new Madison Area Youth Soccer Association field complex. They hope to have 20 fields growing in by this fall. The fields will be made up of a few different mixtures to see which perform the best. The fields are very close to the Noer Facility so I hope we can get some research on them in the future. They probably will seed one field with a mixture to include *Poa supina* this fall so Dr. Stier will be able to add to his knowledge base on this variety. I'm learning some real-life experiences from this project. They are installing the fields with a limited budget and no irrigation system which is probably how most athletic field installations get done. The positive conditions are we slit seeded most of the fields in two directions, bought quality seed, and were able to add starter fertilizer. I hope they

can continue to add proper nutrition and that mother nature provides them good moisture.

The sod industry got a new study installed at Noer this spring also. Jeff prepared a large area to compare sod blends from Wisconsin sod producers that wanted to participate. He will look at these blends as they are laid on compacted soil and tilled soil.

Speaking of sod, I've been using much of the old stuff that we cut off these new plots to fix up areas where the new and improved summer field day trade show area will be this year (read Audra's article for more on field day 1997). We've got quite a few other areas to repair after all the activity that's been going on this spring but I've got a great crew that will be up to the task. The job of establishing new turf areas and studies will continue for a while and it's always fun and rewarding to successfully do that. Things are really cooking at Noer. ♣



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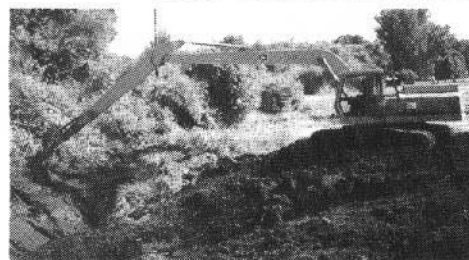
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