

Colonial Bentgrass: The Best Choice for Fairways in Wisconsin

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Over the past couple of years I have been conducting research to see if there is any inherited snow mold resistance in currently available cultivars. But, what I have found from my studies and other observations on our plots at the Noer and elsewhere in the state, is that colonial bentgrass has several advantages over creeping bentgrass or fine fescue as a fairway turf.

Through the snow mold resistance studies, I found that colonial bentgrass does perform better than creeping bentgrass (Figure 1.). But, fine fescues seem to be almost completely resistant to snow mold (Figure 2.). However, even though fine fescue is significantly better than the bentgrasses against *Typhula ishikariensis*, they both received unacceptable levels of damage.

Yet, fine fescues tend to thin out due to the mowing height (1/2" – 3/4") that is commonly used on fairways in Wisconsin. Results also showed that fine fescue is usually

**Figure 1. Damage Rating (%) Means
1999 Seeding Stevens Point (March 2000)**

	M.niv.	T.inc.	T.ish.	Natl.
Creeping Bentgrass Means	12.7	73.7	74.7	12.6
Colonial Bentgrass Means	9.2	12.1	53.3	8.2
p-value	0.282	0.000	0.000	0.015

*Types of inoculation M.niv., *Microdochium nivale*; T.inc., *Typhula incarnata*; T.ish., *Typhula ishikariensis*; Natl., Natural or none.

**Figure 2. Damage Rating (%) Means
1999 Seeding Land O' Lakes (April 2000)**

	M.niv.	T.inc.	T.ish.	Natl.
Bentgrass Means	27.4	71.1	62.2	27.8
Fine Fescue Means	3.6	7.2	37.5	4.2
p-value	0.000	0.000	0.002	0.000

*Types of inoculation M.niv., *Microdochium nivale*; T.inc., *Typhula incarnata*; T.ish., *Typhula ishikariensis*; Natl., Natural or none.

overrun by *Poa annua* after the first growing season. In my research plots, the fine fescue plots contained as much as 50% *Poa annua* after the first year. This was true especially when no soil fumigant was used. Figure 3

(page 17) illustrates the *Poa annua* invasion a little over a year after seeding. Every pathogen resulted in significantly more *Poa annua* invasion in fine fescue in comparison to any of the bentgrasses. This is highly unaccept-



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able, as *Poa annua* is even more susceptible to the snow molds than any of the turfgrass varieties tested.

Another benefit that I think any superintendent will find pleasing is the resistance that colonial bentgrass has to dollar spot. After this past year I think that any one would find this a welcome relief. At the Noer I have Bardot Colonial Bentgrass planted next to Crenshaw Creeping Bentgrass and they were as different as night and day. At field day any one that

heard my talk on dollar spot control got a first hand look at how resistant colonial bentgrass is. The Crenshaw plot probably had around 75% damage, whereas the colonial bentgrass plot had not a single spot.

About the only downfall that I see with colonial bentgrass is its susceptibility to brown patch. But, the last time I looked at the weather, we might only find that we have about a month worth of good brown patch weather in Madison. When you compare that to the ideal weather for dollar spot and

snow mold you are looking at the entire year that you could be battling these diseases.

If you are considering a colonial bentgrass, here are some of the top cultivars that I have evaluated: Bardot, Tiger, and SR 7100. I know that Highland is a colonial bentgrass in most people minds, but actually it is a dryland bentgrass, and hasn't performed all that well in my studies.

Colonial bentgrass is an under-used amenity turfgrass. It has an upright growth habit that would provide for a better lie, but it probably wouldn't help me much with my game. It has proven to meet the challenge of the toughest diseases in Wisconsin, and would greatly reduce your requirement for fungicide application on fairways. So if you are planting a new fairway or thinking about renovations on some, colonial bentgrass in the fairway turf to look into. ♣

**Figure 3. *Poa annua* Invasion Rating (%) Means
1999 Seeding @ Land O' Lakes (Sept. 2000)**

	M.niv.	T.inc.	T.ish.	Natl.
Bentgrass Means	2.8	5.2	17.6	3.6
Fine Fescue Means	31.4	27.5	35.3	27.7
p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

*Types of inoculation M.niv., *Microdochium nivale*; T.inc, *Typhula incarnata*; T.ish, *Typhula ishikariensis*; Natl., Natural or none.

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