

Impact of One Visionary Thought on the UW Turfgrass Research!



By Dr. Geunhwa Jung, Department of Plant Pathology, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Our field day on August 12, 2003 was very impressive and successful. Our research reputation is rapidly growing every year. I heard nothing but good comments such as excellent organization and coordination, researchers' great enthusiasm, groups of active participants, and most of all, a variety of ongoing and new research projects. The weather was another bonus.

This year's field day was special for me because of someone's visionary idea in the area of turfgrass breeding, which will impact the course of UW-Madison turfgrass research history. I would like to introduce you to the person playing a pivotal role in turfgrass breeding. His name is Dr. Mike Casler, formerly in the Dept. of Agronomy and now a scientist at USDA-ARS, U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center, UW-Madison. The story goes back to seven years ago when Dr. John Stier was newly hired as a UW-Madison turfgrass management specialist. One important conversation between these two scientists involved the hope of changing the history of the UW-Madison turfgrass research program and reaping benefits for the Wisconsin turfgrass industry in the future.

What a historical moment that was! Furthermore, a few years later the Plant Pathology Department hired me as a turfgrass pathologist who had formal training on breeding and genetics of disease resistance using molecular techniques. The central disciplines of plant breeding are agronomy, plant pathology, entomology, soil science, and horticulture. Knowledge provided by a number of scientific disciplines is needed for developing new cultivars.


Furthermore, because of the ini-

tial foundational work of the bentgrass breeding at the UW-Madison, the USGA funded a three year research project called "Midwest Bentgrass Breeding Consortium" led by Dr. Mike Casler as a leading principal investigator along with Drs. Chris Williamson and Geunhwa Jung at the UW-Madison, Dr. Andy Hamblin at the University of Illinois, and Suleiman Bughrara at the Michigan State University.

At the field day it was a daunting experience for me to see how the vision germinated from the seed is now growing bit by bit. I am confident that the UW-Madison turfgrass program will be different from yesterday and keep making positive spins. Many thanks to the Wisconsin industries' active and persistent participation to support the UW-Madison research. As results of the team development, I am confident that the turfgrass industry will

greatly benefit from research results.

I was very excited at the field day because I had the privilege to introduce to you our first genetic bentgrass population planted at the O.J. Noer. Briefly, we are trying to understand the mechanisms of host (bentgrass) and pathogen (dollar spot in this case) interaction using DNA techniques and advance a step-by-step progress of developing disease resistant creeping bentgrass cultivars. Even though the project that I presented represented Nanda Chakraborty's Ph.D. research (one of my Ph.D. graduate students), the whole project was initiated and will continue to be lead by the group of UW-Madison researchers.

With someone's visionary ideas, the UW-Madison turfgrass research program is now balanced and will continue to grow and grow. Again, thank you for your patience and support. 



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