

# PREFERRED TURFGRASS IN FAIRWAYS

by PAUL MAYES

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In the past three to five years there has been an increased interest for better quality fairway turf in Minnesota. Color, playability and height of cuts have been the major area of concern. With this in mind, we must consider what is necessary to achieve these important items.

In Minnesota most golf courses have a large population of poa annua in their fairways. Here at Midland is no exception. The poa is a high maintenance turfgrass if you are wanting to keep it disease and heat stress free. Insects also seem to desire this soft-leaf plant. The poa does not prefer low heights of cut. It is also a messy seed plant in the spring. The color is a "pale" green in spring and fall. Poa also does not like extreme cold as well as heat. There must be some other turf plant which is more reasonable to manage at cold or hot temperatures, drought tolerant, disease resistant and prefers low heights of cut.

Of course the answer we are looking for is bentgrass. It is drought tolerant, has less disease pressure, likes lower heights of cut and needs less fertility. But what kind is best for fairway turf? We have so many varieties to choose from. University studies show that Penncross or Penneagle are among the top of preferred types of bentgrass.

At Midland we decided to take a study of these two types of bentgrass to see which does do the best in fairways. With the experience of changing fairways from bluegrass to bentgrass in Indiana and Illinois, I decided to set up a turf experiment at Midland Hills. The Chicago area has been doing the change over for the past ten years at most clubs. At Midland we wanted to see what was available to us. We started with six plots. Each with a different mix of

bentgrass and ryegrass. We introduced ryegrass to some plots to see if playability would be different. Each plot was as follows: 100% Penncross, 100% Penneagle and 50-50 Penncross and Penneagle. We repeated this rotation and added pennfine ryegrass with it to give us six plots.

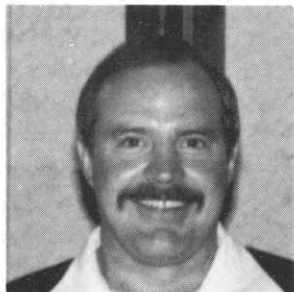
The process was to eliminate any other plant from competing with our desired turf type. Our procedure was as follows: Spray area with Roundup at one quart per acre, three days later aerate with 5/8" spoons, overseed with bentgrass at 1 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft. and ryegrass at 10 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft., verti-cut in two directions at 1/4" deep, drag, blow off debris, mow at preferred height, fertilized and apply a fungicide for algae and melting out. We kept the surface one inch moist at all times for 21 days. After that, normal irrigation was sufficient. Three days after seeding we noticed ryegrass breaking to the surface of the dead grass. Within a week it was a 1/4" high. The bentgrass started germinating in five days. We first mowed all plots at the three week day from seeding. At four weeks, tillers of bentgrass began to spread. At five weeks, the bentgrass was hunting for bare areas to fill in. Also at this time we were mowing at least twice a week at 1/2". In six weeks, the plots with ryegrass were playable. In seven weeks all plots were playable. In eight weeks we could not find a bare area in the plots.

Our evaluation is not complete at this time but we do wish to make some general views. The Penncross plot seems to be the most playable at this time. The ball "sits up" better and the turf is aggressive. The Penneagle plot is not as good. Penneagle grows more "upright" than Penncross. Therefore, the ball sits down in the turf more. Also horizontal growth is less so the healing of a divot takes longer. Color is about the same. The 50-50 mix is evaluated about the same as the Penneagle plot. The plots with ryegrass are the least desired. Ryegrass is tough to cut. The advantage of the ryegrass plots is darker color, earlier play and helps in erosion control during bentgrass germination. We wish to see how the ryegrass fairs through the winter and how

Continued

much area the bentgrass takes over.

Compared to poa fairways, all plots were more playable, had better color, and easier to manage at low heights of cut. I invite everyone out to Midland to see our plots. We are going to put the plots under severe stress next season to compare them to poa fairways.



## EDITOR'S CORNER

FRED ANDERSON, JR.

Congratulations to our 1985 M.G.C.S.A. Golf Champion John Nylund, Braemar Golf Course, who brought the Golden Valley Country Club to its knees. And that was some undertaking, especially with the "tough" pin placements and weather that

seemed to change almost every hole. So congratulations again, John. A job well done goes to Mike Olson, host superintendent, and your staff for the preparation of Golden Valley Country Club for our event. Also please thank the entire clubhouse staff for the use of facilities and the fine meal and service.

Thanks to Jack Kolb and staff from Turf Supply Company for providing our speaker, Mr. Tom Perkins, and his talk on "Growth Regulators." It's a topic we'll hear and read more about in our industry for years to come. And to last month's HOLE NOTES contributors Jerry Murphy, Somerset Country Club; Kerry Glader, St. Cloud Country Club; and Robert C. Shearman, Department of Horticulture, University of Nebraska.

John Nylund has an update on the vandalism done at Braemar this summer. The seven college students must each make a \$105.00 restitution payment. There were no other charges. Another reminder to send your "blue certification" seed tags to Kerry Glader. He'll collect and forward to the

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