

Understanding Bentgrass Performance —

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modified soil greens) and to date has scored well in our trials at the Noer Facility.

Another excellent performer in the NTEP trials was Putter, a selection from the state of Washington. It performed in the top 10% of all trials with respect to quality and demonstrated exceptional seedling vigor with moderate levels of thatch. It has been promoted as a dark green selection with take-all patch resistance. However, results from the fairway/tee study did not reveal a significant difference between the creeping bentgrass varieties relative to take-all patch, and Putter scored in the lower 50% on genetic color. Still, it performed better in the two green trials relative to color and overall quality, which begins to suggest site specificity for this variety.

Middle of the Pack

Cobra, SR1020 and National all scored in the middle of the pack in the fairway/tee trial. However, we have found SR1020 to be more susceptible to dollar spot than other comparable varieties. Seed research may have recognized this fact early in development and introduced a blend of SR1020 and Providence sold as Dominant. SR1020 is the #1 selling grass in Australia, and with Providence make up the most widely used of the new bentgrasses. Currently, we are not recommending pure strands of SR1020 because of the limitations with dollar spot.

The "Penn" series performed from the middle of the pack with Penncross and Penneagle entering the top 5 best fairway/tee varieties for overall quality. Also, Pennlinks ended up in the middle of the pack on both greens trails. In general, these grasses are still reliable and remain valuable "stand by" species, should other varieties not be available.

Sleepers

Several varieties that I would classify as having great potential are Regent for fairway/tee quality turf. This variety demonstrated exceptional density that did not translate into high thatch accumulation levels. Regent was the top variety in the modified soil (sand-based) green trial over the 5-year period. Other varieties worthy of further look are Viper and 18th Green. Both varieties are the darkest green and finest leaf texture in the trials, which can provide both an aesthetic and functional benefit. One could speculate that excellent genetic color, taken in concert with some demonstrated wear tolerance, could result in lower N rates for color without compromising wear tolerance. Interestingly, Viper did accumulate the highest thatch levels in the one location where it was measured.

Schizophrenic Variety

An interesting trend appeared with Pro/Cup, a selection handled by Scotts. This variety was at the top of the fair-

way/tee list and native soil green trial with Providence. However, it was right in the middle of the pack on the modified (sand-based) green. It is moderately aggressive, dark green selection with good brown patch resistance.

Pro/Cup demonstrates a point that I have attempted to imply throughout this discussion. With the availability of new varieties developed in a wide range of environments, we may now have specialist bentgrasses that are ideal in specific locations for specific needs.

Southern Man

The increased demand for bentgrass playing surfaces in the southern United States, as far south as Miami, has prompted breeders to develop improved heat and drought tolerant bentgrasses. Currently, the two premier selections that dominated the 1994 market were Cato and Crenshaw, from the Southern Man Dr. Milt Engleke. The research conducted with these varieties is very impressive, including data on rooting, response to high temperature, and species capacity to adjust to drought stress conditions. These varieties were not included in the last round of NTEP trials, but were planted in the latest trial. I expect to have more to say about these varieties, as we learn if there are trade-offs in our cooler region for the improved heat tolerance. Stay tuned.

Decisions, Decisions . . .

One of the challenges of having more bentgrasses to choose from is how to decide which is best. One way is to read articles like this where the habits of the grasses are discussed. A much better way is to review the results of the NTEP trial from 1990-1993 that was recently completed for fairway/tee and green (modified and native soil) situations. A still better way is to see them growing at the Noer Facility (which you are always welcome to visit) and then look at the NTEP results. However, the best way would be to plant some on your golf course. Set aside an area and plant a nursery, or maybe a new chipping green, or better still a new tee. Conducting your own research will provide you with first hand experience not only with quality but also with management.

—Grass Roots

National Convention Hospitality Night

We will have our annual MGCSA hospitality night in San Francisco the evening of Saturday, February 25. We have contracted the Red and Blue fleet for a four hour cruise on the Bay. There will be food provided with a cash bar and a disc jockey. There will be ample room inside as well as outside on this ship to see some of the attractions that make San Francisco famous. Hope to see you and the family there. The cost per person will be \$15.00. We will be sending a monthly meeting notice to pre-register for this cruise in January.