

DISEASE ASPECTS

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Once again this year, the systemic fungicide Tersan 1991 and the nematicide Oxymal, along with a new nematicide, Dasanit, gave excellent control of the disease Fusarium blight. It should be pointed out however, that the most inexpensive way for a sod grower to prevent Fusarium blight symptoms from occurring is to not allow the sod fields suspected of having the disease to dry out.

The disease stripe smut is on the increase in Michigan especially in 'Merion' Kentucky bluegrass and I feel it will become the most important disease facing the sod industry over the next several years. We have started a chemical evaluation program in hopes of finding a satisfactory chemical control of this disease. One practice which would prevent this disease from becoming a problem would be to plant Kentucky bluegrass cultivars which are resistant to the disease. Some of the stripe smut resistant cultivars that appear adaptable to Michigan and are also resistant to Helminthosporium and Fusarium blight are Baron, Adelphi, Bonnie Blue, and Galaxy. The big problem, as I see it, is selling the public on these new cultivars, as people still have a strong desire for Merion in spite of all its problems.

The third item I would like to discuss is growing Kentucky bluegrass for shaded areas. I think the sod industry has a whole new area to move into. In the past we have been unable to grow Kentucky bluegrass sod in the shade because of the disease problems with powdery mildew and Helminthosporium. The suggested answer to this problem has always been to grow red fescue in the shade, but red fescue grown in dense shade is just as susceptible to powdery mildew and Helminthosporium as the Kentucky bluegrasses, not to mention the problem of trying to get a marketable red fescue sod. However, both Warren's A-34 and Nugget are excellent shade tolerant Kentucky bluegrasses which are resistant to powdery mildew and Helminthosporium and which will give an excellent turf cover even under dense shade, as we have observed in our shade studies.