

Turf Grass TRENDS



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How to use National Turfgrass Evaluation Program results

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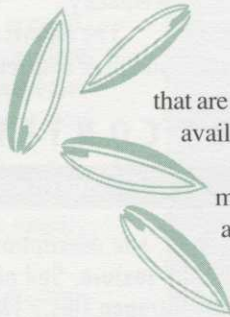
ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT decisions that turfgrass manager's must make is: which grass seed species and varieties to purchase and plant? A well-thought out and well-researched grass seed buying decision can dramatically improve the quality of a turf site, while reducing the time and expense of managing it. An ill-prepared buying decision can be a management disaster that haunts you, and those who follow you, for decades.

Unlike many decisions that a turfgrass manager must make, using incomplete and conflicting data, there is plenty of excellent, readily available hard information on which to base seed-buying decisions. The best source of this test data is the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP).

What is the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program?

NTEP IS A NON-PROFIT, cooperative effort between the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture's Beltsville Agricultural Research Center and the National Turfgrass Federation, Inc. Its goal is to coordinate and standardize the testing and evaluation of existing and promising new turfgrass varieties.

NTEP releases annual updates of the results of their ongoing evaluation programs for cool-season grasses: bluegrass, ryegrass, fine fescue, tall fescue, and bentgrass. These reports provide a wealth of information about many of the varieties of turfgrass



that are currently available and that may be available in the future.

The problem that confronts turf managers is that, unless you read the actual reports, the NTEP information seen in advertising is so heavily edited that it is difficult to decide whether one is buying a source of satisfaction or a source of trouble for years to come.

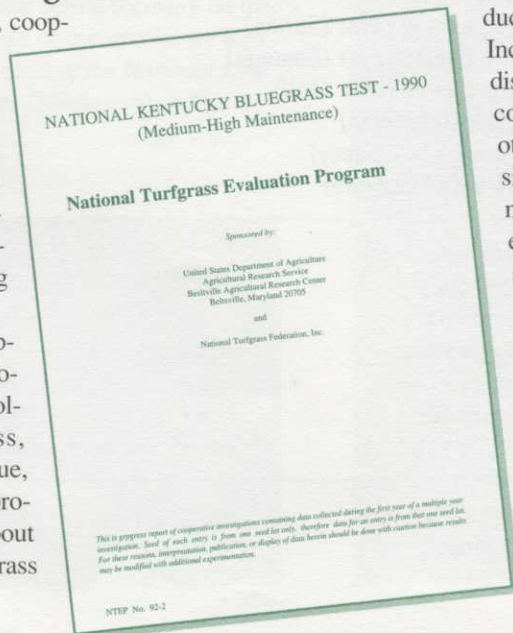
How should turfgrass managers proceed?

THE INFORMATION THAT SEED-SELLERS do provide in advertising can be helpful in making a good seed buying decision, if you use that information as the first step in a process. Since the information is readily available, gather as much of it as you can on all the species and varieties that apply to your situation—and ones about which initially you have no interest. The broader and deeper the scope of information that you gather, the better. Make a list of seed-sellers and the species and varieties they offer. Also, keep in mind that, if no local seller is available, most seed-growers will sell direct.

Next, list the attributes that you want to introduce to the sites you manage.

Include color, leaf structure, disease and insect resistance, competitiveness and any other factor that may be desirable. Compare the information that you have gathered against this list of desirable attributes. Keep in mind, rarely will one variety have all of these attributes, so it may be necessary to use mixtures of two or more varieties or species—to obtain all of the characteristics that you need.

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