

FROM THE EDITOR: China's 'NTEP'

Dave Nelson of the Oregon Fine Fescue Commission, tells TGT nationwide variety trials similar to the US NTEP trials will soon begin in China, to help the Chinese benefit from US turf varieties, and as a way to soften price swings stateside. (Exports of turfgrass seed from Oregon to China now total 3-1/2 million pounds per year, says Nelson.)

"Nationwide variety trials will start in the spring of 1998, with national, regional and provincial universities in China taking part," says Nelson. "The China National Turf Variety trials will include 110 cultivars from about 30 seed companies." Included will be bermudagrasses, perennial ryegrasses, tall and fine fescues and a "sprinkling" of every other seed variety, says Nelson.

Total annual cost to the seed industry to support this program is \$150,000. This program, says Nelson, reflects the rapid growth of the Chinese economy and the investment of foreign capital. Aesthetically, says Nelson, the Chinese nation will benefit, too. As he describes it, it's a choice between "red clay or green grass." The China Institute of Turfgrass Science has done similar testing for about 10 years, says Craig Edminster of International Seeds, but adds that "this set of trials appears to be the best organized."

Nanjing Agriculture University and the China Agriculture University (CAU) and nine regional ag universities will hold also conduct variety trials. Training seminars for turf scientists begin in Beijing at CAU March 2. This is a US program, reminds Nelson, who sees this program as a great expression of confidence in the quality of US seed.

"I'm excited about the support the industry has given the program. Over time, we want to expand the market in China, to help take wild [domestic] price swings out of the production process. If we have a cold spring, in the Eastern US, we have a glut; prices fall and production is cut. If we can have seed overseas, we can take the peaks and valleys out," explains Nelson.

—Terry McIver, editor

TurfGrass TRENDS is published monthly. ISSN 1076-7207.

Subscription rates: One year, \$180 (US) \$210 (all other countries.)

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