

TURFGRASS TRENDS

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TURFGRASS SEED RESEARCH

Major Developments In Turfgrass Breeding

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Turfgrass breeding is a rapidly evolving technology, not unlike computers in how fast it's changing. Over the past ten years, plant breeders have been pumping out an array of advanced turfgrass varieties that make older varieties pale by comparison. Substantial improvements in endurance, playability, appearance, and stress and pest tolerance have been incorporated into each successive generation. Superintendents are confronted with the paradox of when to climb on board: "Do I invest in this year's best grasses or hold out for next year's model?"

In this article I'd like to update you on all the latest advancements in turfgrass breeding so you'll be an informed buyer, able to pick the right moment to take the plunge into the latest grasses. Secondly, I'll give you a glimpse of what the future holds, so you'll know whether it's better to buy now or hold out for something else.

Bentgrasses

Getting golf course superintendents to agree on the single most important feature in a creeping bentgrass variety is nearly impossible. Everybody has their own views of what traits are admirable to have in a bent.

Here is a sampling of possibilities (4):

- **True putting** - It should produce a clean, smooth putting surface, free of bobbling as the ball rolls.
- **Uniformity** - The grass shouldn't segregate into patches over time.
- **Complete ground coverage** - Nothing fouls the game of golf faster than bare spots on a putting green.
- **Pest resistance** - No grass gets spared as pest pressures become heavy enough. What's

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN TURFGRASS BREEDING

- Bentgrasses for greens
- *Poa annua* var. *reptans* for greens and fairways
- Kentucky bluegrasses below one inch for fairways
- Endophyte pest resistance
- Bioengineering

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