



New Shade Tolerant Bermudagrass Arriving Soon

By Chris Hartwiger and Patrick O'Brien, agronomists, Southeast Region

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A new shade tolerant bermudagrass, experimental number ST-5, developed by Drs. Wayne Hanna and Kris Braman will be licensed soon. Dr. Hanna is the turfgrass breeder at the University of Georgia Tifton Station who has released other popular turfgrass varieties, including TifEagle and TifSport bermudagrass and TifBlair centipede.

Over the past year, 15 acres of ST-5 foundation fields and two acres of breeder fields were established. Early next summer, the variety will be released to a few certified growers initially and the first commercial availability will be at the end of 2009. Supplies will be readily available by the 2010 season.



ST-5 testing has been a big success at the #4 shaded tee at Pinehurst Course #3.

ST-5 is the first sterile triploid hybrid with improved shade tolerance. Research testing over the past 10 years demonstrates its excellent growth at 60 to 70% shade levels. It can tolerate up to 90% shade levels, but it will have lower density. Dr. Hanna believes ST-5 will be the most shade-tolerant turf commercially available.

Due to its semi-dwarf nature, ST-5 is not overly aggressive and it will tend to stay where planted and not encroach into nearby areas. ST-5 has both stolons and rhizomes and another unique feature is the lack of dew on the leaves in the morning, like paspalum. It has excellent mole cricket non-preference resistance and lower nitrogen fertility requirements compared to Tifway and TifSport. Like

most bermudagrasses, seed heads are produced during June in full sun locations, but this is the only drawback observed. Few to no seed heads are present in shady locations.

ST-5 will be popular for use at shaded rough areas, shaded tees, and shaded lawns. Fairway plantings are only advised for shaded sites initially, but this may change overtime. Putting green tests at 5/32 inch are underway and it seems to produce a high quality surface. ST-5 should do well at shaded putting green sites with up to 60 to 70% shade. No other putting green bermudagrass ever has shown shade tolerance and this development will help many courses where shade around putting greens is a major issue.

Sod will be recommended rather than sprigs at shaded sites to ensure the ST-5 establishes well. Tests using sprigs at shaded sites didn't work as well as the sod for establishment, especially where there is tree root competition.

Dr. Hanna's impact on the game of golf has been extraordinary and this new shade tolerant bermudagrass variety will make a major impact on the game.

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