

Bacteria strain toxic to *poa* discovered

■ Michigan State University plant pathologist David Roberts has discovered a strain of the bacteria *Xanthomonas* that is toxic to annual bluegrass, while harmless to other plants, animals and humans. So far, he has done most of his testing in the laboratory and greenhouse, with excellent results, he says. This summer marked the first time he field tested the bacterium. Results, he says, are mixed because of a lack of environmental control available in the lab. However, Roberts adds, "It's shown very good herbicidal activity in the field."

Roberts applied for a patent on the selective herbicidal bacterium about a year ago and as of August hadn't received the patent, often a time-consuming process. A number of people have volunteered sites to test the bacterium in various parts of the country but he has yet to make a decision on where further tests will take place. He also is taking offers from chemical companies to develop and market the bacterium once he receives the patent and obtains EPA approval for use.

A seed glut by 1990?

■ The factors seem to be in place. The housing market is slowing, slowing demand. But according to Barry K. Green II, vice president of Jonathan Green, 15,000 additional acres of bluegrass crop were planted by the industry in 1986. "More acreage was planted last year that won't yield this year. Next year it will yield." (Bluegrass fields take two years to produce seed.)

Combine this with the increased popularity and acreage of turf type tall fescues and the new dwarfs of these, plus more perennial ryegrass, and there could be "something of a glut" next year, Green says. In addition, he says researchers in Oregon are developing bluegrass varieties that yield exceptionally well. Green was informed by Rutgers University breeder C. Reed Funk, Ph.D., that upwards of 50 percent of improved bluegrasses in the field can be sterile, unable to reproduce, bringing yields down. The new bluegrasses, now in the first generation of development, will have a wider genetic window with a greater potential for pollination. Green expects the second generation of these new breeds to hit the market by the end of the decade as well. More seed. As a result, he sees the day when sod blend bluegrass seed will actually drop near or below \$2 a pound.

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