

TALL FESCUES FIND A HOME IN K.C.

Move over zoysiagrass, superintendents are discovering the benefits of tall fescues.



Improved tall fescue varieties, with their deep-rooted, low maintenance characteristics, seem a natural for golf courses in the transition zone.

Everything is up to par in Kansas City where several new and up-and-coming golf courses are reaping the benefits of improved turf-type tall fescue varieties.

Because Kansas City lies in the transition area, superintendents have traditionally used both cool- and warm-season grasses. Zoysiagrass, a native of the area, is a fixture on area courses because it can be mowed to less than 1/2 inch. However, at an elevation of nearly 1,000 feet in an area that has been known to undergo a severe winter or two, zoysiagrass doesn't fare well in the chilly months. Superintendents have found that tall fescue, a pasture grass that had been adapted to home lawns, was too coarse for any part of their course but rough and unruly areas. Kentucky 31 and Fawn were their early choices, but because of their lighter green color, coarse, uneven texture and disease susceptibility, they were not included in the playing areas of better courses.

As tall fescue breeding produced finer-leafed, darker green and more disease-resistant varieties, a closer look at this promising turfgrass was warranted. These improved tall fescue varieties, with their deep-rooted, low maintenance characteristics, seem a natural for golf courses in the transition zone that have limited water and upkeep budgets.

...Here I come

If Kansas City was not the only area to employ tall fescue in great quantities, it may have the highest concentration of courses using it.

Harold Vance, owner and designer of Teetering Rocks, an executive par three at Royaltown, Mo., has had tall fescue on nine fairways for three years. The second nine holes, which will open next year, will be seeded with Turf Gem, a blend of Apache, Bonanza and Finelawn tall fescues, between ryegrass tees and creeping bentgrass greens.

Lee Miller, superintendent for Smiley's Sportland Executive Course in Overland Park, also due to open in 1989, specified Turf Gem blend on 18



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fairways. Miller mowed the new growth at two inches in August, reduced the cut to one inch later in the fall and plans to reduce playing height to $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch by the spring of 1989. At that time, he'll overseed with a blend of Monarch, Bonanza, Arid and Falcon.

A destination course in the works is Deer Creek, also in Overland Park. Deer Creek, designed by Robert Trent Jones II, is intended to be a world class, richly detailed, tree-lined 18-hole course set into an upscale residential development.

Larry Hanks, vice president for golf course operations for North Star Development Co. and spokesman for Deer Creek, says he researched courses in the area and found that tall fescues did survive the hot, dry summers with limited maintenance. He also found tall fescues do well in shade and high-wear areas.

Hanks and Don Zelfer, owner of Mr. Turf Sod Co., and Leon Williams of Williams Lawn Seed in Maryville, Mo., agreed to seed the roughs at Deer Creek with Triathalawn tall fescue blend. The preparation and seeding were done by the Mr. Turf team.

Fertilization, seeding and mulching began in mid-August with one application of Lilly 6-24-24 Sure Grow. Triathalawn was broadcast seeded around trees. A Brillion seeder was used for the accessible open areas and the seed was distributed at a rate of 350 lbs. per acre. Seeds were covered with straw and then hydro-mulched.

Quick establishment

The seed blend established quickly. Seedlings were two inches high in the irrigated areas after two weeks.

The fairways were sodded with Meyer zoysia and the greens were seeded with Penncross creeping bentgrass.

There is still some detailing that needs to be addressed before the course opens next summer, but the tall fescue roughs are established and looking good. And that's one big particular they won't have to worry about.

In the future, tall fescues will have a more aggressive growth habit with reduced vertical growth, producing a denser turf. These new varieties will be more competitive in mixtures with other species, allowing their attributes to be incorporated without taking over the tall fescue.

The dwarf growth habit of tall fescue, combined with improved disease resistance and endophyte enhancement, will provide a more attractive, healthy turf adapted to a wider range of use. **LM**