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'Carbo load' fights winter kill

GOLF

The Everglades Golf Course Superintendents Association and Olde Florida Golf Club are establishing a test green for four new varieties of "ultradwarf" bermudagrasses.

The four varieties planted on the 2,500 square foot chipping green are FloraDwarf, Champion, TifEagle (TW-72) and MS-Supreme. Each variety will be planted in duplicate to insure the results can be validated.

Golfers are the driving force behind the project. As golfers demand faster, more uniform

greens, the existing varieties of bermudagrass cultivars for greens (Tifdwarf and Tifgreen) are becoming less acceptable. These two varieties were developed in the 1950s and 60s when golfers were happy with higher mowing heights.

Researchers are studying several new varieties of new dwarf bermudagrass hybrids that spread vigorously with little vertical leaf growth. All three varieties originated from Tifgreen. FloraDwarf and

Champion are both fine-textured mutations found on existing Tifdwarf greens. FloraDwarf was selected from a green in Hawaii and Champion was discovered in Texas. MS-Supreme was found as a fine-textured mutation on a Tifgreen (328) green in Mississippi. TifEagle is unique in that it is a mutation that was induced by gamma radiation from Tifway II, a common fairway turfgrass.

The existing green was being renovated as of mid-July. Basamid soil fumigant, donated by BASF, was used to kill the existing bermudagrass. The top six inches of greens mix were removed, and replaced by a mix from Golf Agronomic Supply and Handling. The new varieties will be planted in vertical strips later this summer, in equal amounts on the same date, and will receive

identical treatment. Aerification and vertical mowing will be done separately to reduce the risk of cross contamination. The project will officially run three years from the date of grassing.

The green will be mowed at about 1/8-inch, the preferred height for these "ultradwarfs."

Light, vertical mowing, and light, frequent topdressing will control thatch.

USGA Regional Director John Foy says this is an exciting time, but he urges caution.

"They are still unproven, and we must exercise caution to determine which ones are best suited for each location," says Foy. "It is side-by-side comparisons in a controlled test area, such as this, that will help determine that."

"TifEagle will require more thatch control than Tifdwarf to produce quality turf," adds the USDA's Dr. Wayne Hanna, developer of TifEagle. "However, with proper management, it will produce better quality and more dense turf at 1/8 inch than Tifdwarf."

"The test plots are going to be extremely valuable for our area," says Rick Tatum, superintendent of The Forest Country Club, Fort Myers.

"These new varieties are originating from areas all over the country, and by having them side by side in our climate, we will be able to determine which ones are best for our conditions."

Darren J. Davis is superintendent at the Olde Florida Golf Club, Naples, Fla. LM

Testing the 'ultradwarfs' for modern golf greens



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