

THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE



Tough Surf Turf

Southern-zone turf managers who have salty, watery sites where they cannot maintain bermudagrass might find relief in seashore paspalum. The often-ignored species recently came to attention through a chart Robert Carrow included in his 1994 report "Wear Tolerance of Sports Turf Areas." For warm season grasses, the chart showed only two species that rated "Excellent" for both "Wear Tolerance" and "Soil-Compaction Tolerance": hybrid bermuda, of course, and seashore paspalum.

Richard Duble, author of this issue's overseeding article, speaks favorably of the species both in the second edition of his book, *Turfgrasses: Their Management and Use in the Southern Zone*, and on his Texas A&M Internet site <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/plantanswers/turf/turf.html>. Duble describes the stolons and leaves of seashore paspalum as slightly coarser than those of common bermudagrass. He tells of a golf course, King's Crossing, in Corpus Christi, TX, that is covered with seashore paspalum except for the putting greens. "I was impressed with the appearance and playability of the grass," he says. "Perhaps most striking was the uniformity of the turf and the complete absence of other grass species." In another paragraph, he says the quality of the turf was "very good. It was evident that the grass produced the finest turf at mowing heights below one-inch. Studies conducted by Texas A&M University at College Station also suggest that the grass develops higher shoot densities at lower mowing heights."

In Argentina, Duble observed a native seashore paspalum, with finer leaves than our variety, that had been planted on golf greens and mowed twice daily at 1/8 inch: "Under that mowing regime seashore paspalum produced as fine a putting surface as Tifdwarf bermudagrass. But more important, the grass completely crowded out stands of hybrid bermudagrass..."

Seashore paspalum therefore seems aggressive and apparently is not a heavy feeder. "At low annual rates of nitrogen application, seashore paspalum maintains density better than bermudagrass," says Duble. He recommends less than four pounds a year; more nitrogen than that promotes scalping. If the species has a disease problem, Duble fails to mention it. But he does describe its tolerance for salty, wet sites. At the Texas golf course, he says, "Seashore paspalum was found growing along the edge of the water on several holes — water that often contained 4,000 or more ppm salts. It was also the only grass species found growing in saline outcroppings of soil along roughs and ditch banks. Its salt tolerance appeared to be great."

Standing up against cold and drought stress, the species is less tolerant than bermudagrass. The zone of adaptation of seashore paspalum, Duble believes, is similar to that of centipedegrass.

NTEP Re-funded

Because of species like seashore paspalum that deserve further study, we're glad to report that the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) is back in the money again. In response to its proposal to cut the NTEP from its 1997 budget, the USDA received literally a record number of complaints and has reinstated the NTEP's budget. Those who wrote or called, your voice was heard.

EVENTS

CALENDAR

August

20 Wisconsin Turfgrass Field Day, sponsored by the Wisconsin Turf Association in cooperation with University of Wisconsin Extension. O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility, Madison, WI. Contact: Audra Anderson, (608) 854-6536.

23-26 Florida Turfgrass Association 44th annual Conference and Show. Tampa Convention Center, Tampa, FL. Contact: (800) 882-6721 or (407) 856-5767.

29 Turf Rodeo, hosted by Florida Sports Turf Managers Association in conjunction with Florida Parks and Recreation Association. Rolling Hills Country Club, Ft. Lauderdale, FL. Contact: John Mascaro, (305) 938-7477.

31 At the Epicenter, a tour of the Rancho Cucamonga Quakes' baseball stadium hosted by Southern California Sports Turf Managers Association. Epicenter Stadium, Rancho Cucamonga, CA. Contact: Chris Bunnell, (619) 432-2421.

September

1-19 Groundskeepers Management Academy. Kissimmee, FL. Contact: Floyd Perry, Grounds Maintenance Services, (800) 227-9381.

26 17th Transition Zone Turfgrass Field Day. Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. Contact: Sandy Rhoads, (800) 818-2732 or (618) 536-7751.

September/August

29-3 Groundskeepers Management Academy. Peoria, AZ. Contact: Floyd Perry, Grounds Maintenance Services, (800) 227-9381.

Send announcements of your events two months in advance to: Editor, **sportsTURF**, 68-860 Perez Road, Suite J, Cathedral City, CA 92234. Fax: (619) 770-8019.