

THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE



Feds Cut Turfgrass

We regretted to hear the federal government cut funds for the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) from its 1997 budget. Although NTEP's work can (and should) continue through a privately funded group like the STMA, the drawback is that it will take time for another group to set up and function as well.

To our knowledge, the agency has been admirably achieving its objectives: "to develop and coordinate uniform evaluation trials of turfgrass varieties and experimental selections in the United States and Canada." Working with university and private industry personnel, the NTEP has produced and mailed 13 annual summary reports to approximately 1,800 individuals and companies. The reports targeted the following turfgrasses: Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, fine-leaf fescue, tall fescue, Bermudagrass, St. Augustinegrass, buffalograss, zoysiagrass and bentgrass (for golf course greens, fairways and tees). So far, the agency has issued final reports, containing data collected from 1990-93, for the three bentgrass tests and the fine-leaf fescue test established in 1989.

The NTEP's studies have already been used extensively by the turfgrass industry, and if the agency's work proceeds, the industry will continue to benefit from improved grasses and management systems that reduce pesticide, water and fertilizer use while maintaining acceptable quality.

If the NTEP is "budget-cided" and no one replaces it, a "dilemma" A.J. Turgeon describes will grow worse. In the fourth edition of *Turfgrass Management* (Prentice Hall, 1996), Professor Turgeon notes, "The development and commercialization of many new turfgrasses has created some confusion — commonly expressed as *varietal dilemma*. The amount of testing required to clearly establish the environmental adaptation and cultural requirements of each new cultivar often exceeds the resources available at university experiment stations. Furthermore, conclusions drawn from results at one location may not apply to conditions existing at sites located several hundred miles away. Thus, complete information on the performance characteristics of newer turfgrass cultivars is usually not available until many years after a cultivar has been introduced."

It would be a shame to see NTEP bite the dust before its many years of research could be released.

Since turf managers obviously can't count on government to support their needs, they better plan to do it themselves. Organization is the key, and in this issue, readers who don't belong to a turf organization have a golden opportunity to join one of the best, the STMA. Bound into the magazine is an application that takes little time to fill out and send in. The only part that'll make you wince is writing out the \$75 check for the membership fee, which for most people will be tax-deductible. But don't even think about it: "Just do it!" It's an investment in your future — your very immediate future. If you use your membership properly, you'll easily find yourself saving five times that amount during the year through STMA's various benefits.

EVENTS

CALENDAR

May

15-16 Environmental Landscape & Equipment Conference & Show. Sheraton Suites Hotel and the Los Angeles County Fairgrounds, Pomona, CA. Contact: (800) 877-3107 or (702) 736-5958.

21 Meeting of Florida Chapter of STMA. Joe Robbie Stadium, Miami, FL. Contact: John Mascaro, (305) 938-7477.

23 Tree Pruning Seminar: Management on a Tight Budget for Quality, Safety and Production. Sequoia Conference Center, Buena Park, CA. Contact: Ted Stamen & Associates, (909) 656-3431.

June

5 University of Massachusetts Turfgrass Research Field Day, sponsored by the UMass Extension and the Dept. of Plant and Soil Sciences. University of MA Turf Research Facility on River Road in South Deerfield, MA. Contact: Thom Griffin, manager, (413) 545-3066 or Mary Owen, extension educator, (508) 892-0382.

12-13 Groundskeepers Management Academy. Millington, TN. Contact: Floyd Perry, Grounds Maintenance Services, (800) 227-9381.

14-18 American Society for Plasticulture 26th Conference. Atlantic City, NJ. Contact: Cook College, Rutgers University, Office of Continuing Professional Education, (908) 932-9271.

July

25-27 Turfgrass Producers International Summer Convention and Field Days. Hyatt Regency, Sacramento, CA. Contact: Tom Ford, TPI, (800) 405-TURF or (708) 705-9898.

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.