RESEARCH NEWSFLASH

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Interseeding Bentgrass into *Poa annua* Superintendent Experiences

by Doug Brede, Ph.D.

This edition of the Jacklin Seed Research NewsFlash highlights three superintendent experiences with interseeding bent into Poa. You can find more information on interseeding in articles by Dr. Brede in the latest issue of Turf & Rec and Golfdom magazines.

Avondale Golf Course in Hayden Lake, ID, has long been the little brother to exclusive Hayden Lake Country Club, just across the fence. Over the years both courses had turned into *Poa annua*, owing primarily to an overactive sprinkling system. This past May, superintendent Tim Mack decided to interseed all 19 greens at Avondale with **Alpha** creeping bentgrass. Tim punched holes with a solid tine vertidrain, lightly topdressed and put down 1/2 lb. of **Alpha**. Later in the summer he put down additional **Alpha** during a verticut and a topdressing operation. After 4 months, Tim's practice putting green,

Alpha and T-1 are the first bentgrasses bred for interseeding

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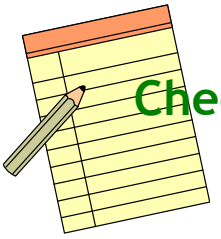
Tim Mack (right), superintendent at Avondale Golf Course, a semi-private course in Hayden Lake, ID, shows off his successful Alpha interseed to Simplot salesman, Bob Lee.



Checklist for Successful Interseeding

☑ Right time of year – Early summer (May, June, July) seedings work best. Autumn is the worst time. That's when *Poa* is germinating.

☑ Use *Poa*-competitive varieties – Don't try to match your existing bent variety when you interseed. Instead use **Alpha** or **T-1**, which are *Poa*-competitive.

☑ Don't skimp on the seeding rate – Research indicates that doubling the seeding rate doubles the catch of bentgrass. Recommended interseeding rates are 2 to 4 lbs. per 1000 ft^2, which is higher than rates normally used for bare-soil application.

☑ Watch your preemergence herbicides – Herbicides that limit *Poa* germination also prevent bent from sprouting. If you plan to interseed, lay off the herbicide for several months ahead of time.

☑ Plant seed into soil – Interseeding is only successful when you can get the seeds below the leaf canopy and into the greens mix. This can be done during aerification, topdressing or with specialized slicing equipment.

☑ Skip the PGR for a few weeks – Primo thickens up the shoot density of *Poa*, making it a slightly tougher competitor. Paclobutrazol is a good tool for reducing *Poa*, but don't use it until bent populations on the green reach 40+%.

☑ Adjust your sprinkler boxes – Remember, you're caring for seedlings. Reset your timer boxes to deliver three or four short bursts of water throughout the night, rather than one big shot ever other day.

☑ Mow without the catchers for a couple days – Drop the grass catchers and use a whip to disperse clipping for a few days after seeding. Otherwise you will be throwing away much of the seed you just planted.

☑ Plan to interseed more than once for 100% coverage – Even a good interseeding job will leave some voids on the green due to high or low spots that got missed. Plan to interseed repeatedly for two or three years for complete coverage.

Over the years, Columbia Point Golf Course in Richland, WA, had slowly become a *Poa annua* course. That is, until superintendent, Carl Thompson, turned things around with Alpha combined with PGR.

Interseeding, continued

which had been 100% *Poa annua*, had changed to 30 to 60% **Alpha**. **Alpha** (the dark green spots in the photo) germinated rapidly and began growing laterally and starting to coalesce.

Once greens get to 45 to 55% bentgrass, I recommend tweaking the management a little to favor the bentgrass. This might include:

- Longer intervals between irrigations to slightly stress the *Poa*.
- Cutting back or eliminating anthracnose treatments, which can selectively sting the *Poa*.
- Applying low rates of paclobutrazol PGR to stymie *Poa's* growth.

At a course further south, superintendent Carl Thompson at Columbia Point Golf Course in Richland, WA, credits a lot of his changeover to **Alpha** bent on paclobutrazol. Originally this course was seeded to older Jacklin Seed varieties: Glade fairways and Putter greens. But with time and traffic they had turned to *Poa*. When I visited the course in August, about 40 to 60% of the putting surface was **Alpha**. A population of **Alpha** could even be spotted on the heavily trodden practice green.

Toad Valley Public Golf Course in Runnells, IA, promotes itself as "a beautiful country setting with the convenience of the big city nearby." It has been family-owned since it was family-built in 1973. Not knowing much about golf construction, the family bulldozed pond bottoms up to become putting greens. Co-owner, Kelly George has been trying to grow grass on these clay mounds ever since.

Last year while Kelly was on a family trip, his assistant and crew were aerifying one of their worst greens, down by the creek. Remembering a small sample of **T-1** bent seed they'd gotten from local supplier, United Seeds, Kelly's assistant hand-sprinkled **T-1** on half the green as the aerifier punched its way across.

By summer 2006, course superintendent, Ron Stephan, was showing off his accomplishment to whomever stopped by. "We plan on focusing a lot of our time this year re-seeding the entire course. We are also going to spend some time rebuilding our tee boxes, with a few new additions for the ladies, too," he says.

Ron Stephan (left), superintendent at Toad Valley Public Golf Course in Runnells, IA, shows off his successful T-1 interseed to a sales staffer with United Seeds in Des Moines. Ron admits, "this wasn't your optimal seeding rate."

In the Sept. 2005 NewsFlash, we showed preliminary results of a research trial at Post Falls, ID, where we interseeded T-1 and Alpha into a stand of 100% *Poa annua* mowed at putting green height. Three seeding rates were tested (1, 2, or 4 lbs. seed/1000 ft²) from a May 2005 planting. Later, some plots also received a fall seeding, which was found to add negligible additional benefit. By the end of the trial, T-1 and Alpha plots had reached nearly 100% bentgrass cover, all without the aid of PGR's or herbicides. Graph shows progression of T-1 / Alpha ground coverage over time, at the three seeding rates.