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NTEP *Comings and Goings*

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Finding the NTEP info you need (part six of a series)

It seems that summer has gone by so quickly. The kids are back in school, vacations are over (for most of us), and hopefully, the weather will brighten in those regions where blistering heat and/or prolonged drought have lingered.

One great thing about late summer and fall is the start of fall sports. We love the smell, look and feel of real grass as we watch our favorite college and pro football teams. However, professional and amateur athletes in sports like football, soccer, field hockey and lacrosse benefit also from the safety provided by natural turf surfaces. In a recent [article](#) in SportsTurf magazine, I wrote about the best turfgrass cultivars evaluated for traffic tolerance in NTEP trials. Let me know, either via email or our Facebook page [f](#), what you think about our results!

If you need any help in finding any specific data or interpreting results, please feel free to contact us (301-504-5125, kmorris@ntep.org).

Here's to your team's success this year, on and off the field!



We have discussed various aspects of NTEP in past newsletters. We have also offered tips on using NTEP data and our web site. This time, we will take a little different approach and address questions we have received from users in identifying the best grass for their area, or to solve some particular problem they are facing.

Question: I have been battling [summer patch](#) disease in my lawn this year. I want to reseed with a resistant cultivar. What Kentucky bluegrasses tolerate summer patch the best? (Illinois)

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It's official - our newest Kentucky bluegrass test is



The characteristic 'frog-eye' symptoms of summer patch disease.

Summer patch is a disease that often takes 3 - 4 years to develop in trial plots. In addition, summer patch is not a problem in many locations.

off and running!



Tolerance of moderate to heavy shade is an important trait of Kentucky bluegrass

The 2011 NTEP Kentucky Bluegrass Test has been assembled and mailed to our [24 trial locations](#). Most locations will plant the trial this fall, with evaluations beginning in earnest in spring/summer 2012. The trial consists of [82 entries](#), most of which are experimental grasses.

Standard trials will be conducted at 11 locations; six locations using a medium maintenance level, with five utilizing a low maintenance level with no, or very reduced irrigation.

Ancillary trials will be planted at 13 locations to evaluate specific problems or traits. Ancillary trials include [summer patch](#) tolerance (2 sites), [salinity](#) tolerance, response to [organic management](#) (2 sites), sod strength, [shade](#) tolerance and [traffic](#) tolerance (6 sites).

More details on the trial parameters are available [here](#).



Traffic tolerance will be evaluated at six trial locations

New to this trial, NTEP will conduct DNA testing on each entry, so that all

Fortunately, NTEP has data from [our trial planted in 2000](#), as well as the [current trial](#) (planted in 2005).

The top entries in 2000 include 'Barrister', 'NuDestiny', 'PST-161', 'Arcadia' and 'Raven'. The top five entries for summer patch in 2010 are 'BAR VV 0709', 'Midnight', 'NuChicago', 'Alexa II' and 'Excursion'. Please keep in mind that 1) one of more of these entries may not be available commercially, and 2) there are many more entries that were statistically the same as these top entries. (See explanation of the LSD Value below)

Question: I am trying to grow grass in an area which receives only a few hours of direct sunlight each day. Which grass species and cultivars are the best in shade? (Indiana)



Growing grass in shade certainly has its challenges

Species such as chewing fescue and hard fescue are well known for their [shade tolerance](#). NTEP [data](#) collected over four years at three locations shows 16 cultivars that are statistically tied for the top, led by 'Oxford', 'Firely' and 'Spartan II' (all hard fescues).

Some Kentucky bluegrasses, have better than average shade tolerance. A five-year [trial in Illinois](#) showed 17 top cultivars (7.4 - 6.4), led by 'Brilliant'. Shade tolerance studies of [tall fescue](#) and perennial ryegrass have demonstrated much smaller performance differences among entries.

Question: I want to buy the best grass seed for my area. Which tall fescue seed variety is the most drought tolerant, with the least brown patch disease while being fine-bladed?

entries can be grouped according to their 'type' or classification. This information will help growers and consumers choose the best cultivar for their needs.

In addition, we have completed the 2005 National Kentucky Bluegrass Test with five years of data now available on our [site](#). A five year summary of all data collected on this trial will be published in coming weeks. Watch our web site, as well as our [Facebook](#) page for publication of the five year summary.

Stay tuned for more information!

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Fall - a great time to seed!!

Autumn is generally the best season for establishing cool-season grasses, such as Kentucky bluegrass, tall and fineleaf fescue and perennial ryegrass.

Start by using the NTEP web site to identify the best cultivars. Go to your NTEP state [page](#), click on the species and investigate data from different years. The best cultivars can be purchased at quality garden centers or even online.

When the best cultivars are chosen and purchased, a soil test is recommended to identify any nutrients needed. Generally recommended is a starter fertilizer. Lime or other products may be needed to adjust soil pH levels. Most grasses grow best in soil that is slightly acidic (pH=6.0-6.5).



Fall is the perfect time to seed, fertilizer and generally renew cool-season grass turf

Seeding must be conducted such that seed makes good contact with soil. In a new lawn or bare soil situation, seed/soil contact is accomplished by lightly raking in the seed and then cover with straw mulch. Rolling with a water filled drum also works well in making seed contact with soil.

In renovating an existing lawn, use a slicer-seeder (left below) or a power dethatcher (right below) to attain seed/soil contact. These units can be rented from many consumer/commercial rental centers. Excessive thatch (dead grass, grass blades, etc.) should be raked and removed. Irrigate to promote germination.



Brown patch in a tall fescue turf

To answer this question, we first must realize that no one grass possesses all of the great traits that we would like in a turf variety. Finding the best tall fescue for your area entails a visit to our [state web page](#) to locate data from your state and/or adjacent states.

Pertinent data collected in the states you select will be displayed in each table (here is an [example from North Carolina](#)). Since turf quality ratings encompass all the important parameters for turfgrasses, high turf quality rated grasses are the best overall choice.

Question: I want to replace my cool-season lawn with zoysiagrass. How do I choose between a seeded and vegetative variety?



Zoysiagrasses in the 2007 NTEP trial

The difference between seeded and vegetative zoysiagrass can be like night and day. Grasses that can be seeded are inherently more cost effective to establish. Seed costs are normally much lower than the cost of sprigs, plugs or sod, while establishment from seed is often times much faster than using plant parts such as sprigs (sod is an exception to this).

However, cultivars that can only be established with plants or sod often make a higher quality turf than seeded cultivars. Which to choose then, seeded or vegetative cultivars?

NTEP can help in the decision-making process. First, a



A power aerator (or one pulled by lawn tractor) can also be utilized where a good lawn is simply in need of thickening. Proceed by first spreading one-half of the seed to the lawn. Run the aerator (bottom left) two to four times over the lawn. Then spread the other one-half of seed to the lawn. Some of the seed that falls into the aeration holes will germinate, along with some of the seed that is covered by the soil cores (bottom right). Do not remove the cores, they will disintegrate over time.



Aeration and seeding is generally not recommended in turf areas with less than 75% grass cover.

Using the right seed, following the proper procedures and giving the right care, the seed on the left can produce the turf on the right!!



Thanks for reading again, in this issue, about what is happening at NTEP. If you have any questions, comments or suggestions, please feel free to contact me at 301-504-5125 or kmorris@ntep.org.

Sincerely,

Kevin Morris
Executive Director
National Turfgrass Evaluation Program

warm-season grass like zoysiagrass or bermuda must survive winter where it is planted. Second, seeded and vegetative cultivars often have very different attributes. Some vegetative entries are very dense, which is good for fine turf (say a golf course), but not for most homeowners.

Here is an [example](#) for zoysiagrass. Note Table 9A and 9B which show leaf texture data. The vegetative cultivars are much denser than the seeded ones. However, Tables 31B and 31C show the seeded cultivars with faster percent establishment.



Seeded zoysia can make a beautiful lawn

Using the LSD Value

The LSD Value is a tool showing whether two data points are *statistically* different. The LSD Value is at the bottom of each column of data - use it to determine true *statistical* differences. For instance in the example below:

Variety #1 6.0
Variety #2 5.5
Variety #3 5.3

LSD VALUE 0.5

The LSD figure of 0.5 indicates for any two data points to be *statistically* different, there needs to be *more than a 0.5* difference in the numbers. In the example above, Variety #1 and #2 are *not* statistically different, however, Variety #1 and #3 *are* statistically different. Therefore, if choosing between #1 and #2, they performed *statistically similar* and either one is acceptable. If choosing between #2 and #3, they performed similarly. Only #1 outperformed #3 in this example.



GET OUT AND ENJOY AUTUMN'S COLORS!

Using the LSD is essential for critical and analytical evaluations of performance differences in NTEP tests.

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