



Chris Hartwiger



Patrick O'Brien



Dr. Wayne Hanna, right, and Dr. Brian Schwartz lead the turfgrass breeding program at the University of Georgia, Tifton campus.

ST-5 OFFERS BRIGHT SPOT

In the Shade

Plenty of news is coming from the University of Georgia, Tifton campus regarding current and future bermudagrass breeding developments. Recently, Dr. Brian Schwartz was hired as a plant breeder to work alongside noted turfgrass breeder, Dr. Wayne Hanna. Dr. Schwartz received his BS and MS from Texas A&M and recently earned a Ph.D. from the University of Florida where he conducted research on screening zoysiagrass germplasm for nematode resistance. We believe Dr. Schwartz will continue to work with zoysiagrass as well as assisting Dr. Hanna with other projects.

On May 4-5, the 63rd annual Southeastern Turf Conference will be in Tifton. Make plans to visit Tifton to meet Dr. Schwartz and Dr. Hanna, attend the field day and educational session, and view the ST-5 bermudagrass discussed below.

A new shade tolerant bermudagrass, experimental number ST-5, developed by Drs. Wayne Hanna and Kris Brauman will be licensed soon. Dr. Hanna is the turfgrass breeder who has released other popular turfgrass varieties, includ-

ing TifEagle and TifSport bermudagrass and TifBlair centipede. The ST-5 will be given a different name when it is officially released, but the name was not available at the time this article was written.

Over the past year, 15 acres of ST-5 foundation fields and two acres of breeder fields were established. Early next summer, the variety will be released to a few certified growers initially and the first commercial availability will be at the end of 2009. Supplies will be readily available by the 2010 season.

ST-5 is the first sterile triploid hybrid with improved shade tolerance. Research testing over the past 10 years demonstrates its excellent growth at 60 percent to 70 percent shade levels. It can tolerate up to 90 percent shade levels, but it will have lower density. Dr. Hanna believes ST-5 will be the most shade-tolerant turf commercially available.

Due to its semi-dwarf nature, ST-5 is not overly aggressive and it will tend to stay where planted and not encroach into nearby areas. ST-5 has both stolons and rhizomes and another unique feature

is the lack of dew on the leaves in the morning, like paspalum. It has excellent mole cricket non-preference resistance and lower nitrogen fertility requirements compared to Tifway and TifSport. Like most bermudagrasses, seed heads are produced during June in full sun locations, but this is the only drawback observed. Few to no seed heads are present in shady locations.

ST-5 will be popular for use at shaded rough areas, shaded tees, and shaded lawns. Fairway plantings are only advised for shaded sites initially, but this may change over time. Putting green tests at 5/32-inch are underway and it seems to produce a high quality surface. ST-5 should do well at shaded putting green sites with up to 60 percent to 70 percent shade. No other putting green bermudagrass ever has shown shade tolerance and this development will help many courses where shade around putting greens is a major issue.

Sod will be recommended rather than sprigs at shaded sites to ensure the ST-5 establishes well. Tests using sprigs at shaded sites didn't work as well as the sod for establishment, especially where there is



ST-5 testing has been a big success at the shaded tee, fourth hole at Pinehurst Course No. 3.

tree root competition.

Dr. Hanna's impact on the game of golf has been extraordinary and this new

shade tolerant bermudagrass variety will make a major impact on the game. ■

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