



Winter Springs (FL) Parks and Rec use three different varieties of paspalum.

USING PASPALUM: ONE MANAGER'S PROS AND CONS

By Chuck Pula

In the City of Winter Springs we have three different varieties of paspalum, Aloha, Sea Isle 1 and Sea Dwarf.

All of these are grown in different soil material and have almost the same characteristic in growth except on how fast it grows. The bottom line is to get the soil to hold moisture and feed it lightly monthly. Also, a good irrigation program is crucial.

Paspalum pros

- Durable. Wearability is great but you still can't abuse this turf; it needs down time especially after a season of football and lacrosse.

- Don't have to mow this grass as much as bermudagrass. Our staff during the summer months only mows the turf once a week instead of twice.

- With a once a month fertilization program it will strip when mowed with reel mower.

- Salt can help with reducing the amount of weeds in the turf at a rate of 400 pounds per acre.

- Doesn't need as much herbicide as bermuda because of the salt application. It will require under half the amount of herbicides compared with bermuda.

- Paspalum will rebound quickly after effective treatment of any insect infestation, usually within 2 weeks.

- Paspalum grows well with under an inch height of cut. This chokes out weeds and the turf grows horizontal better than if the height is longer.

- Drought tolerance is good; it will not die as fast as bermuda in dry conditions. It doesn't shock (turn brown) as fast as bermuda.

- The roots grow more rapidly than 419. The roots can be twice as long as bermuda roots if grown in the same soil conditions.

- It really likes K-Mag fertilizer because we have applied this product and had great results in the greening and roots of the grass after applications. Every other month is a good application of Magnesium.



Chuck Pula

- Overseeded rye can be removed quicker with salt. The salt will diminish the rye grass within a week's time with 400 pounds per acre rates.

Paspalum cons

- Encroachment of bermuda is intense especially when a low fertilization program, which I define as every other month, is in place. The only way to get rid of this bermuda is Round Up or grow the paspalum over the bermuda and choke it out. Salt will slow the growth of the bermuda so the paspalum can take over but in large bermuda areas you need Round Up and/or cut out. Salt will slow the rate of growth because it burns the bermuda while leaving the paspalum unharmed.

- A good soil base is crucial for a recreational area when growing pas-

palum for recovery. A good soil base is an area that holds moisture and holds nutrients in the grass.

- Be careful with the cut worms; they can destroy a field but if you get to them quickly enough the paspalum will rebound quickly.

- Doesn't grow as good in sandy material. If you have a sandy soil, topdress with organic material.

- This variety likes to be aerated a lot and if you do not aerate you will have witches' broom or clumping as grass grows. At least four times a year should be sufficient.

- If you want it to be green then you need to water it as much as you would bermuda, at least ¾ inch of water twice a week. ■

Chuck Pula is the director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Winter Springs, FL.

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