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Developing Salt-Tolerant Sod Mixtures for Use as Roadside Turf in Minnesota

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Research Project
Final Report 2014-46



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Roadsides present significant challenges to maintaining functional and sustainable vegetation due to the presence of multiple stresses that can be extreme. These stresses may include drought, heat, disease, and in cold-weather climates exposure to deicing salts used during winter road maintenance practices. Mixtures of cool-season turfgrasses can be used to create high-quality roadside vegetation that can withstand these stresses. The current specification for roadside turfgrass in Minnesota includes outdated cultivars and is in need of reassessment. The purpose of this research is to identify the best cultivars for use on roadsides in Minnesota and to create a suitable mixture of those cultivars that would maximize establishment and survival.

In the first part of this research, cultivars of cool-season turfgrass were assessed for their ability to establish and survive on roadsides in Minnesota. This was accomplished by visually assessing fall-seeded plots on roadsides for establishment and, subsequently, survival the following spring. Successful establishment and survival were related to edaphic characteristics; specifically, soil compaction and moisture. Several species were identified as promising for use on Minnesota roadsides.

In cold weather climates like Minnesota's, salt tolerance is a required trait of roadside vegetation due to the application of deicing salts in winter. As such, the same cultivars were directly assessed for salt tolerance in nutrient solution culture amended with sodium chloride to 4, 14, and 24 dS m⁻¹. Assessment of salt tolerance was accomplished using digital image analysis to quantify percent green tissue remaining following the different severities of salt exposure. Following exposure to the lowest level of salt stress, no significant differences were observed between cultivars in the trial. Following moderate salt stress, significant differences were identified between cultivars of turfgrass, including cultivars within species, specifically, between cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis* L.) and perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne* L.). However, under extreme salt stress no significant differences existed between cultivars within any given species, and trends among the mean tolerance of each species were dominant. Overall, cultivars of tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea* Schreb.) and slender creeping red fescue (*Festuca rubra* L. ssp. *litoralis*) retained the greatest amount of green tissue.

A plant community-level approach to seed mixture design and analysis was applied to mixtures of nine turfgrass species on roadsides with the additional requirement that each mixture contain more than two species. A single cultivar was chosen to represent each species based on the previous evaluations of roadside establishment and survival as well as direct evaluation of salt tolerance. Mixtures were established at two roadside locations and evaluated for green canopy cover and weed encroachment over two years. Data from digital image analysis and grid-intersect counts indicated that inclusion of tall fescue in the seed mixture significantly decreased the probability of retaining at least 60% cover after two years. In contrast, inclusion of hard fescue, sheep fescue (*Festuca ovina* L.), and slender creeping red fescue each increased the probability of retaining at least 60% cover. A 2:2:1 mixture by seed count of those three species, respectively, was predicted to produce the greatest percent green cover after two years of

exposure to roadside environmental stresses. That mixture was deemed best for establishment on roadsides in Minnesota.

In many roadside situations, it is desired to use sod for turfgrass establishment. Most sod grown in Minnesota is Kentucky bluegrass, which we have found to not be a superior option for winter survival when salt stress is a problem. Many of the top mixtures identified in our research contain higher amounts of fine fescues, which have traditionally been considered a grass that does not form a harvestable sod. In this study, 51 different mixtures of turfgrass were grown as sod at two locations for 22 months. A custom tensile tester was used to determine the maximum required load and work required to tear a sample of sod from each mixture. Results indicate that mixtures containing Kentucky bluegrass do not necessarily create stronger sod, as expected, and that mixtures containing strong creeping red fescue, hard fescue, Chewings fescue, and slender creeping red fescue can help to achieve acceptable sod strength.

Finally, these roadside grass mixtures must be able to withstand periods of drought. Each of the mixtures used in the above research was established in a trial planted under a movable rainout shelter. This shelter allowed the grasses to be evaluated for performance with no water inputs for 60 days in fall 2013. Data collection included digital images of the plots that allowed for quantitative assessment of browning during drought. Plots that included hard fescue in higher amounts performed best.

Taken together, we have determined that the fine fescue species should be the predominant component of roadside turfgrass seed mixtures when salt-tolerance and winter survival is deemed to be important. It is important to note that this project does not address other challenges in establishing and managing these lower-input grasses.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Salt on roads

Reasons for Application

In cold-weather regions, sodium chloride (NaCl) salt is applied to roads, sidewalks, and other impervious surfaces to aid in the removal of snow and ice during the winter. Before the 1940s, public roads in the United States were primarily maintained through plowing and the use of sand for traction control. At that time, salt was used only as an additive in sand piles to prevent them from freezing, and in 1940 the total sales of rock salt for use on roads salt was 149 million kg (Jackson and Jobbagy, 2005). Road salt was first included in routine road maintenance practices during the winter of 1941 in the state of New Hampshire; however, in the entire United States just over 4.5 million kg of NaCl rock salt were spread on all highways combined that winter (National Research Council (U.S.), 1991). By contrast, 2011 consumption of rock salt for roadway use was approximately 18 million Mg in the United States (Kostick, 2011).

The use of such extreme amounts of road salt has been supported by data suggesting that transportation safety is vastly improved by its use. Traffic accident rates during winter storms in New York, Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin have been found to be 4.5 times higher prior to salt application on multi-lane divided freeways and eight times higher on two-lane highways (Kuemmel and Hanbali, 1992). Moreover, those accidents occurring after salt application have lower associated injury rates by factors of about nine and seven for multi-lane divided freeways and two lane highways, respectively. These effects are not limited to the United States alone; rather, similar results have been observed in cold-weather regions of Germany (Hanke and Levin, 1988).

Application Methods

Application of sodium chloride road salt is typically conducted by means of mechanical spreading. In the 1950s and 1960s, application of small amounts of salt were made by shovelling it from the back of a truck onto the streets (National Research Council (U.S.), 1991). Thankfully, the state of the art in road salt application has changed drastically since then. The use of spreaders with attached spinners, also known as broadcast spreaders, has become the most common method of salt distribution from trucks (Wisconsin Transportation Information Center, 2005a). Although de-icing is currently the most commonly-used method to combat winter road conditions, anti-icing is quickly gaining use in suitable situations (Wisconsin Transportation Information Center, 2005b). Anti-icing is a process in which a small amount of liquid chemical is applied to the road prior to a winter storm event to prevent the bonding of ice to the surface.

Mode of Action

The mechanism by which salt helps to melt ice can be explained by its basic chemical properties. While the NaCl molecule itself is electrically neutral, it readily dissociates in water to form Na^+ and Cl^- . Those ions act to disrupt the cohesion of water molecules, effectively producing a lower overall freezing temperature for the solution as a whole. Increasing the concentration of sodium chloride in solution has the effect of depressing the freezing temperature for concentrations up to 23.31%. At that concentration, known as the eutectic point, the freezing temperature of the

solution is $-21.1\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ (Verbeek, 2011). In order for the salt to be effective, the concentration of ions in solution must remain sufficiently high so as to depress the freezing temperature of the solution below the surface temperature of the road. However, at concentrations above 23%, the addition of more NaCl has no effect due to the fact that the solubility limit of NaCl in water has been reached. As a result, the range of road surface temperatures at which the use of NaCl is practical for melting ice is limited on the lower end at approximately -9.4°C (Wisconsin Transportation Information Center, 2005a). However, alternative chemicals are available that are effective below that temperature.

Alternative De-icing Chemicals

A variety of alternative de-icing compounds have been used previously including calcium chloride (CaCl_2), magnesium chloride (MgCl_2), calcium-magnesium acetate (CMA), and a variety of alcohols, glycols, and other compounds (Blomqvist, 1998). These chemicals are often more desirable than NaCl for a variety of reasons. Both CaCl_2 and MgCl_2 both have eutectic points that occur at lower temperatures than NaCl; this property makes them suitable for application at temperatures lower than would be acceptable for NaCl. Despite their lower effective temperature the de-icing capacity of these chemicals is not necessarily comparable to NaCl. For instance, in early testing by the Federal Highway Administration, it was determined that nearly two times as much CMA may be required as compared to NaCl to produce comparable rates of ice melt (National Research Council (U.S.), 1991). Each of these alternatives may be used on their own, or in conjunction with NaCl, to improve overall deicing performance (Environment Canada and Health Canada, 2001). For example, pre-wetting salt with liquid CaCl_2 has been suggested as a method for reducing total salt applications on roadways (Gooding and Bodnarchuk, 1994).

Environmental Concerns

Among the primary motivations for reduction in total salt use and development of viable alternatives has been concern over the environmental impact of sodium chloride in the environment. Concentrations of sodium and chloride in surface waters in the United States have steadily increased in recent years. Kaushal et al. (2005) monitored changes in chloride concentrations in streams in the northeastern United States and showed strong increases. In New Hampshire, concentrations were observed to exceed 100 mg L^{-1} , on a seasonal basis, in some rural streams. In Minnesota, chloride concentrations in some lakes have reached levels as high as 386 mg L^{-1} and seasonal disruptions in stratification and overturn patterns have been observed (Novotny et al., 2008). The same study showed an average increase of 1.8% in the chloride concentration of lakes in Minnesota, which was strongly correlated with the amount of road salt purchased over the same period. Similarly, Mullaney et al. (2009) measured chloride concentrations in water samples from 100 basins in the east, central and west-central areas of the glacial aquifer system of the northern United States. In 15 of the samples, chloride concentrations exceeded the United States Environmental Protection Agency chronic exposure concentration recommendation for aquatic life of 230 mg L^{-1} . As noted by Jackson and Jobbagy (2005) some conclusions can be drawn from the data in these studies about the path by which the saline runoff reaches the surface or ground water. Equal amounts of sodium and chloride would seem to indicate a direct path while higher ratios of chlorine to sodium may imply a dominant path involving underground flow through soils where sodium would be inhibited by a cation exchange interaction with soil particles. This interaction with soils inevitably leads to an increase

in soil salinity due to high sodium concentrations wherever road salts are applied. The build up of sodium in roadside soils has been well documented. In Britain, sodium concentrations have previously been observed to reach levels of approximately 3000 mg kg^{-1} . Even higher sodium concentrations of greater than $10,000 \text{ mg kg}^{-1}$ were reported in Minnesota in soils sampled to a depth of 20 cm within one meter of the roadway on interstate highways during the month of December (Biesboer and Jacobson, 1994). Based on electrical conductivities of 1:5 soil-water extracts from the top 7.5 cm of soil on roadsides in Illinois, soluble salt concentrations of as high as 50,000 ppm have been observed (Hughes et al., 1975).

Vegetation

Effects of Salt on Vegetation

It is clear that increases in soil salinity and salt spray from roads can create serious challenges for growing vegetation on roadsides. Vegetation on roadsides is required perform a number of functions including erosion control and filtration of runoff water, as well as provide habitat for wildlife and aesthetic quality. However, effects of road salt can be particularly severe due to the magnitude of exposure or a general lack of tolerance among the established species.

A formal review of the mechanisms of salinity tolerance in plants, which is not within the scope of this review, is provided by Munns and Tester (2008) in which the authors describe what is referred to as a two-phase growth response. The first, referred to as the osmotic phase, occurs as salt levels increase outside the roots of the plant causing an increase in osmotic pressure and subsequent reduction in plant growth. The second phase, referred to as the ion-specific phase, can be described as a further reduction in growth and disruption of cellular processes resulting in senescence of plant tissues. Tolerant plants may be described as either salt includers, which are able to withstand high levels of sodium ions in plant tissues, or salt excluders, which may have ion uptake selectivity in favor of potassium or uptake of sodium which is subsequently stored in vacuoles or re-translocated into the soil (Rose-Fricker and Wipff, 2001).

Turfgrass as Roadside Vegetation

A vast number of species may be used in different situations on roadsides. Of particular importance is the use of turfgrasses as roadside vegetation. The use of turfgrass on roadsides first became of interest during the 1930s due to the construction of a number of large-scale highway projects including the United States Numbered Highway System and the autobahnen in Germany. Turfgrass on roadsides is required to function in the same ways as other roadside vegetation, but is typically implemented to avoid contrast with adjacent land and enhance visibility for drivers without the need for extensive mowing. Early attempts to provide a suitable grass mixture for roadsides resulted in overly complicated mixtures including between five and fifteen grasses, three to four legumes, and two herbs (Boeker, 1970). Since that time, grass mixtures for roadside have been improved and refined and some authors have noted the need for as few as four well-chosen species (Boeker, 1970). As noted by Duell and Schmidt (1974), this process was prompted by rising costs of maintenance and an increase in public awareness of environmental quality. In particular, as use of road salt increased, reports on the damage from salt spray and runoff became increasingly prevalent. Despite identifying some species as salt tolerant, Butler et al. (1974) concluded that there was great need for further research focused on salt-related plant problems.

Today, several states have specified turfgrass mixtures for roadsides specifically aimed at providing the basic services required of roadside turf as well as being salt tolerant so as to maximize persistence over time. These mixtures make use of several species, each of which has been evaluated for their respective tolerances to salt and other de-icing chemicals through both field and greenhouse trials. Unfortunately, the prescribed mixtures are often not based on results of designed experiments. It is the aim of the subsequent sections of this review to provide an overview of the literature relevant to the salt tolerance of each cool-season turfgrass species as used on roadsides in the northern United States and the relationship between the functional salt tolerance of each to its habitat of origin. A qualitative summary of the salt tolerance and roadside applicability of each of the major species discussed is provided in Table 1.1.

Kentucky Bluegrass

Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis* L.) is an apomictic, strongly rhizomatous, perennial grass thought to be native to areas of Europe and Asia. It was likely introduced to North America by early settlers who brought it as part of seed mixtures, hay, and bedding (Bashaw and Funk, 1987). As a species it is considered widely adaptable and tolerant of many stresses, a trait that may be attributable to its highly apomictic nature, and as a result is found to have circumpolar distribution ranging in latitudes from 30° North to above 83° North (Clausen, 1961). Once established, Kentucky bluegrass persists through extensive rhizome growth and is easily spread through seed dispersal. As a result, it is often found to occur on roadsides in the central and northeastern United States (Huff, 2003). Huff (2003) noted that this occurs despite the absence or small quantity of Kentucky bluegrass included in roadside mixes. Duell and Schmit (1974) explained that Kentucky bluegrass is typically a minimally aggressive component of roadside mixes and may be unable to survive on roadsides due to competition with taller species. They evaluated seven cultivars of common and turf-type Kentucky bluegrass, that is those that have not been bred for improved traits and those that have, for seed stalk production and color retention during summer drought on newly-established roadsides in New Jersey. Results of the study showed that common-type Kentucky bluegrass produced fewer seed stalks, but retained greater green color during summer drought than the newer, turf-type cultivars. The authors concluded that poor soil conditions and minimal management practices create unsuitable conditions for use of fine turf-type cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass. Still, Boeker (1970) recommended using Kentucky bluegrass in roadside mixtures in Germany at rates of up to 50% by weight, in combination with just three to four other species. However, other roadside trials in Germany later determined that the importance of Kentucky bluegrass in roadside mixtures was likely overestimated (Trautmann and Lohmeyer, 1980). Similarly, Butler et al. (1974) described the succession of roadside vegetation, indicating that Kentucky bluegrass is quickly replaced by quackgrass (*Agropyron repens* (L.) Beauv.) followed by weeping alkaligrass (*Puccinellia distans* (L.) Parl.) on saline roadside soils.

Data from these trials indicate that the salt tolerance of Kentucky bluegrass may be a limiting factor in the establishment of quality turf on roadsides. In light of the low salt tolerance generally associated with Kentucky bluegrass, Ahti et al. (1980) recognized the need to identify commercially available cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass that were suitable for roadside use. Using subirrigation with NaCl solutions ranging from 0.8% to 1.25% the authors evaluated the response of several cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass to salinization of the soil. Cultivars differed significantly in their salt tolerance 97 days after initial salt treatments with 'Nugget' being most

salt tolerant with several cultivars, including 'Merion' possessing equally poor salt tolerance. Hughes et al. (1975) examined the response of 'Merion' Kentucky bluegrass to the addition of 5,000; 10,000; and 20,000 mg kg⁻¹ NaCl to oven-dry soil in which plants were grown from seed. Respective reductions in biomass production of 21%, 40%, and 47%, as compared to non-salted controls, were observed. Several cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass were evaluated for salt tolerance by Greub et al. (1985) by applying 20 mL of 2.65 M NaCl solution to the soil surface of plants established in pots in a greenhouse. After three weeks, all Kentucky bluegrass cultivars had biomass productions of less than 50% the no-salt controls and, as a species, Kentucky bluegrass incurred more tissue damage than any other species in the experiment. Of the cultivars tested, 'Merion' and 'Newport' had the worst visual damage and 'Nugget' was the best despite showing severe chlorosis and mostly dead tissue.

Much research has been conducted in recent years to evaluate newer, fine turf varieties of Kentucky bluegrass for salt tolerance and roadside application. Rose-Fricker and Wipff (2001) evaluated entries from the 1995 National Turfgrass Evaluation Program for salt tolerance using nutrient solution culture amended with 10,000 mg L⁻¹ of a mixture of various salts. The observed significant differences between the entries indicated that cultivar 'North Star' was significantly better than all other entries in the trial with less than 35% damage after eight weeks in the salt bath. Cultivar 'Haga' exhibited the lowest salt tolerance with greater than 75% damage, but was not statistically different from several other entries. Koch et al. (2011) identified salinity tolerance differences between cultivars and experimental lines of Kentucky bluegrass and Kentucky bluegrass × Texas bluegrass (*Poa arachnifera* Torr.) hybrids using an overhead irrigation system. Response variables for their study included biweekly leaf clipping dry weights, weekly visual assessment of percent green canopy, as well as root and shoot dry weights at the conclusion of the study. Results indicated that breeding efforts have resulted in some improvement of salinity stress within the species but concluded that further testing of Kentucky bluegrass germplasm for salinity tolerance was necessary. Friell et al. (2013a) evaluated 13 cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass amongst 61 other entries for salt tolerance in nutrient solution culture. Salt was applied as a 5 M NaCl amendment to the nutrient solution culture and digital image analysis was used to assess tissue damage as the salinity level was increased. In that study, like the others, significant differences were observed between the entries; however, these results extended only until the salinity of the nutrient solution was increased to 14 dS m⁻¹. At that level, cultivars 'Park' and 'Diva' had the greatest salt tolerance with less than 50% tissue damage observed, while cultivar 'Moonshine' had the lowest salt tolerance.

It remains a question, however, whether or not results like those discussed above are applicable to roadside conditions. Brown and Gorres (2011) observed 'Diva' to persist well on roadsides in New England, but only in amended soils. Furthermore, comparison between cultivars was not possible as it was the only cultivar of Kentucky bluegrass included in that trial. No significant differences were observed by Friell et al. (2012) between cultivars established on roadsides in Minnesota, although the authors noted the possibility that those results may have been attributed to poor establishment from seed in the harsh roadside environment. Indeed, germination of Kentucky bluegrass seeds has also been shown to be inhibited by even small amounts of salt in soil solution. A greenhouse study by Liem et al. (1985) showed a significant decline in the germination rate of Kentucky bluegrass seeds in concentrations as low as 5 g L⁻¹. Tarasoff et al.

(2007) also observed a decline in the germination rate of Kentucky bluegrass from 60% to 0% as osmotic potential of the solution surrounding the seeds was lowered from 0 to -2 MPa.

Taken together, evaluations of the applicability of Kentucky bluegrass to roadsides have produced mixed results. Generally, greenhouse studies have indicated a potential to increase salt tolerance in the species through continued breeding. However, field trials have resulted in poor establishment and persistence on roadsides. The ability for Kentucky bluegrass to succeed in low-fertility soil environments seems to be low and may limit the ability for roadside establishment (Duell and Schmit, 1974). Furthermore, previous authors have implied that the importance of Kentucky bluegrass in salt tolerant mixtures is likely restricted to its sod-forming ability (Butler et al., 1974).

Perennial Ryegrass

Perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne* L.) is a bunch-type grass native to south and central Europe, northern Africa, the Middle East, and southwest Asia. First cultivated in England, perennial ryegrass is described as an obligate outcrossing species that takes on a continuum of forms which can be found around the world (Terrell, 1968). It is adapted to a wide range of soil types, including a wide range of pH, but will not tolerate extreme heat, drought, or cold (Beard, 1973; Thorogood, 2003). Ryegrasses are best known for rapid seed germination and establishment, and are often used as nurse grasses for the establishment of Kentucky bluegrass (Christians, 2011). For this reason, it is often used on home lawns, parks, golf courses, general landscaping areas and roadsides (Thorogood, 2003).

Perennial ryegrass was included in early roadside grass mixtures, but was not included in the simplified mixtures recommended by Boeker (1970). He did recommend its use in areas particularly prone to erosion, but at no greater rates than 1-2 g m⁻². Although used extensively on roadsides in Sweden prior to 1963, it was later replaced by more desirable species (Langvad and Weibull, 1970). Duell and Schmit (1974) noted that some cultivars may be sufficient for roadside use but later found that, without mowing, all cultivars disappeared within 2 to 3 years of establishment. Similar decline of the species has been noted on roadsides in Germany (Trautmann and Lohmeyer, 1980). Researchers in France have also concluded that perennial ryegrass significantly interfered with the growth of minor species in mixtures and that its use should be restricted to sites requiring late seeding or possessing serious erosion potential (Henensal et al., 1980).

Nevertheless, perennial ryegrass is still found on roadsides today in many parts of the world (Humphreys, 1981; Ross, 1986; Tikka et al., 2000; Thorogood, 2003; Akbar et al., 2006). Measurements of the accumulated sodium levels in the leaf tissue of perennial ryegrass on roadsides in Britain have shown a marked increase over those collected from a non-saline pasture site nearby indicating salt tolerance in the species is necessary for successful roadside establishment (Davison, 1971). Similarly, Liem et al. (1985) measured sodium concentrations in perennial ryegrass live plant matter and found concentrations next to the road to be 0.452 mmol kg⁻¹ as compared to 0.161 mmol kg⁻¹ in tissue collected 30 m from the road, two days after road salt was applied.

In light of observations like these, research into the salinity tolerance of perennial ryegrass has continued. On average, it is widely considered to have only medium salinity tolerance, tolerating soil solution extract electrical conductivities (EC_e) of 4-8 dS m⁻¹ (Marcum, 1999). Plants grown

for 28 days in pots showed no significant change in shoot dry tissue weight, but did show significant reductions in root dry tissue weight of 30.5% and 40.3% when exposed to 4 g L⁻¹ or 8 g L⁻¹ NaCl solution, respectively (Spencer and Port, 1988). As with other species, common types have often been observed to possess greater salt tolerance than some newer turf-type cultivars. Following weekly application of 20 mL of 2.65 M NaCl solution for three weeks, common type perennial ryegrass was found to have a 25% reduction in shoot biomass production, while cultivar 'NK 200' produced a 35% reduction. These corresponded to a 34% and 59% reduction, respectively, in dry crown and root material (Greub et al., 1985). However, newer breeding lines have shown improvement over old cultivars, such as 'Linn'. Improvement has largely been attributed to an ability to accumulate up to 37% less Na⁺ in crowns and 42% less Na⁺ in young leaves while maintaining a K⁺/Na⁺ ratio 1300% higher (Krishnan and Brown, 2009). One year old plants of cultivars and entries from the 1999 National Turfgrass Evaluation Program perennial ryegrass trial showed significant variation when exposed for nine weeks to 17,000 mg L⁻¹ of a mixture of various salts in a nutrient culture system (Rose-Fricker and Wipff, 2001). Entry PST-2A6B showed the greatest salt tolerance with 84% of plants surviving, but those plants had only approximately 30% green tissue by the end of the trial. Worst among the entries was the cultivar 'Wilmington' which had just 25% of plants survive, but was not statistically different from several other cultivars in the trial based on visual ratings alone. Hughes et al. (1975) examined the response of perennial ryegrass to the addition of 5,000; 10,000; and 20,000 mg kg⁻¹ NaCl to oven-dry soil in which plants were grown from seed. Respective reductions in biomass production of 5%, 17%, and 44%, as compared to non-salted controls, were observed. That trial, however, did not evaluate the effects of salt on germination when sown in soil from actual roadsides. When grown in soils collected 6 m of the roadway, germination rates of perennial ryegrass increase to 87% as compared to 57% for soils taken 0.6 m from the roadway (Spencer and Port, 1988). Friell et al. (2013a) evaluated 16 cultivars of perennial ryegrass in nutrient solution culture and identified significant differences after exposure to salt concentrations as high as 14 dS m⁻¹ with 'JR-522' and 'Accent II' retaining more than 60% green tissue while 'Affirmed' retained the least green tissue with under 40%. Cultivar differences may also play a role in the ability for perennial ryegrass to germinate in saline conditions like those found on roadsides. An inverse relationship between salinity and germination percentage has been demonstrated; however, some data suggests that regardless of cultivar, germination rates above 50% may be expected for salt concentrations up to 10,000 mg L⁻¹ (Rose-Fricker and Wipff, 2001). Taken together, indications of this data are that significant progress has been made in terms of salt tolerance by enhancing the selectivity of ion uptake in tolerant cultivars (Krishnan and Brown, 2009).

Humphreys (1981) noted the relative importance of foliar salt spray to saline soils on roadsides and thus compared 20 cultivars in a greenhouse study using overhead irrigation techniques. Application of 0, 17, and 68 g m⁻² of salt applied with 0, 430.5, and 861 ml m⁻² water resulted in no significant differences in leaf damage, but did show differences in growth rate sensitivity with slower growth being associated with increasing salt and drought. In a controlled field study, Koch and Bonos (2011a) made use of overhead irrigation to apply 0.5 L of 10 dS m⁻¹ salt solution to individual plants, three times a week for a total of 70 applications over two years. Visual assessment of percent green tissue was performed for the 23 cultivars and entries in the study and it was found that entry RKS retained the greatest amount of green tissue after two years at over 60% while 'Fiesta III' retained the least with less than 40%. In recent years, true roadside trials including several cultivars of perennial ryegrass have been performed with each

resulting in good establishment performance for the species but subsequent decline following winter months in the absence of soil amendments (Brown and Gorres, 2011; Friell et al., 2012). Of all cultivars tested, however, 'Accent II' and 'Headstart II' showed the greatest promise for successful roadside establishment.

Roadside establishment of perennial ryegrass has continued in recent years despite a plethora of recommendations to the contrary. If the species is to be implemented on roadsides, the need for significant improvement in its salt tolerance and overall ability to persist will need to be met through continued breeding. Furthermore, an understanding of its role in the succession of vegetation on roadsides will play a key role in understanding the limitations of its application, which may be restricted to early germination of a short-lived cultivar for erosion control (Boeker, 1970).

Tall Fescue

Tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea* Schreb.) is perennial bunch-type grass that may or may not have short rhizomes, although rhizomes are normally absent with the primary exception being spaced plants grown in sandy soils (Terrell, 1979; Gibson and Newman, 2001; Meyer and Watkins, 2003). Native throughout Europe, North Africa, west and central Asia, and Siberia, it was introduced to the United States due to its importance as a pasture grass and is well-adapted to most of the eastern half of the country and parts of California and the Pacific Northwest (Gibson and Newman, 2001; Meyer and Watkins, 2003).

A number of characteristics make tall fescue well-adapted to roadside conditions including the abilities to thrive in soil pH ranging from 4.7 to 8.5, survive better in compacted soils than other cool-season grasses, and grow in alkaline and saline soils (Meyer and Watkins, 2003). Moreover, it has the best drought and heat resistance of the cool-season turfgrasses (Fry and Huang, 2004). Despite these useful adaptations, limited research has been conducted using tall fescue on roadsides. It was included in early seed mixtures described by Boeker (1970), but not recommended for use in the authors simplified species mixtures, and Duell and Schmit (1974) commented that its implementation on roadsides was largely attributable to the Soil Conservation Service.

The information that is available on the roadside establishment of tall fescue indicates that it holds great promise despite early indications that improvements in the species were necessary for successful implementation. In the 1970s, tall fescue mixed with Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis* L.) established on roadsides in Illinois was often succeeded by quackgrass (*Agropyron repens* (L.) Beauv.) which was later replaced by weeping alkaligrass (*Puccinellia distans* (L.) Parl.). In France, outstanding drought tolerance of 'Ludion' tall fescue led Henensal et al. (1980), to recommend it for use on roadsides despite observations that it maintained just average vegetative cover. This observation may be attributable to the fact that despite the more recent development of turf-type tall fescues which have superior density, the bunch-type growth habit of the species requires that the area be overseeded should significant stand losses occur (Fry and Huang, 2004).

The salt tolerance of tall fescue is well established. It can be found in salt marshes throughout Britain (Gibson and Newman, 2001), and a number of greenhouse trials have indicated that tall fescue possesses significantly greater salt tolerance than many other turf species. When grown for ten days in one-third strength Hoagland solution amended with sodium chloride of increasing

strengths up to an electrical conductivity of 17.7 dS m^{-1} , tall fescue was found to be the most salt tolerant of the cool-season turfgrasses (Kobayashi et al., 2004). Bañuelos and Beuselinck (2003) grew tall fescue in pots of soil with EC_e of 1.8 and 7.0 dS m^{-1} , irrigated with water of EC 1.3, 2.7, and 6.4 dS m^{-1} . The authors observed no visual damage to leaf tissue despite elevated concentrations of both Na^+ and Cl^- in the tissues, but concluded this was likely due to frequent clipping. Bowman et al. (2006a) demonstrated that differences in salinity tolerance between cultivars ‘Monarch’ and ‘Finelawn I’ were only evident at high nitrogen fertility levels when grown in a nutrient culture solution amended with 0, 40, 80, or 120 meq L^{-1} of an 8:1 molar ratio mixture of NaCl and CaCl_2 . Under a high nitrogen condition, clipping dry weight was reduced by as much as 50% while reductions of less than 20% were observed under the low nitrogen condition. Following 5 weeks of weekly application of 20 mL of 2.65 M NaCl solution, Greub et al. (1985) found that dry shoot biomass of ‘Kentucky 31’ tall fescue was reduced by just 17% as compared to a no-salt control. That same cultivar was found to be exceptionally tolerant, relative to other turfgrasses, to approximately 5 months of spray treatments using solutions of increasing salt concentration (Cordukes, 1968). Clipping yield was reduced by 48% and visual quality was assessed as a 5 out of 10, with 10 being most stressed. Friell et al. (2013a) evaluated differences between 12 cultivars of tall fescue in nutrient solution culture and found that, although the species had superior salt tolerance to all other cool-season grasses in the trial, no significant differences existed between cultivars.

Despite the abundance of greenhouse trials, few roadside trials have assessed the salt tolerance of the species. Brown and Gorres (2011) found that tall fescue was among the best species for establishment and persistence in both amended and non-amended soils in Rhode Island. After 21 months, cultivar ‘Tarheel II’ showed significantly better performance than other cultivars in the trial on soils amended with biosolids or compost; however, no significant differences were observed between cultivars on non-amended soils. The authors concluded that, as with other species, tall fescue offered no clear superiority of any cultivar in non-amended soil, indicating little or no advantage to selection of newer fine turf cultivars. Friell et al. (2012) evaluated 13 cultivars of tall fescue, among 61 other turfgrass cultivars, on roadsides in Minnesota where sodium chloride was known to cause problems with establishment. Cultivars ‘Grande II’, ‘Jaguar 4G’, ‘Wolfpack II’, and ‘SR 8650’ were among the most persistent cultivars after the winter salting season; however, few significant differences existed between cultivars.

Further research into the roadside salt tolerance of tall fescue is needed. Existing data indicates potential for faster establishment and better persistence on roadsides than many other cool-season turfgrass species. Its salt tolerance in greenhouse settings has been well established; although, few trials have evaluated differences between cultivars of tall fescue for their salt tolerance. Those which have indicate no significant differences exist between cultivars, despite overall agreement that salt tolerance exists within the species. Furthermore, additional information regarding the germination of tall fescue seeds under saline conditions could prove useful in breeding and selection of cultivars improved for salt tolerance.

Fine Fescues

The fine-leaved fescues, or fine fescues, are a taxonomically complex group of species that are typically classified into one of two complexes known as the red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) complex and the *Festuca ovina* complex. The *Festuca rubra* L. *sensu lato* complex, native to Europe, has widespread distribution throughout Asia, North America, and Europe (Ruemmele et al., 2003).

The species commonly used as turfgrass that belong to this complex include strong creeping red fescue (*Festuca rubra* ssp. *rubra* Gaudin), slender creeping red fescue [*Festuca rubra* ssp. *litoralis* (G.F.W. Meyer) Auquier.], and Chewings fescue (*Festuca rubra* ssp. *commutata* (Thuill.) Nyman). Species in this complex, with the exception of Chewings fescue, are typically rhizomatous, although the wide variety of settings in which they are found including beaches, sand dunes, coastal rocks and cliffs, saltmarshes, gravel bars, meadows, boreal grasslands, and roadsides, has led to high variability within the species (Pavlick, 1985). These grasses are adapted to shade, drought, and sandy soils with pH from 5.5 to 6.5 (Beard, 1973). The second complex, *Festuca ovina*, includes the turfgrasses hard fescue (*Festuca trachyphylla* (Hack.) Krajina), sheep fescue (*Festuca ovina* L.), and blue fescue (*Festuca glauca* Lam.) which are widespread in Asia and in Europe, where they are native, and are also known to be highly polymorphic (Watson, 1958). The grasses in this complex are also shade and drought tolerant. Moreover, sheep fescue will tolerate a wide range of soils conditions including low fertility and tolerance of coarse soils with pH from 4.5 to 6.0 and hard fescue will tolerate a greater amount of water (Ruemmele et al., 1995).

As stated by Pavlick (1985), many of these species have seen significant use on roadsides, possibly due to their incredibly adaptive nature. In Nova Scotia, Canada, red fescues are found commonly growing on roadsides, but are also found in open pastures close to the coast, on beaches, and in the upper zone of salt marshes (Roland and Smith, 1966). Boeker (1970) recommended the use of both *Festuca rubra* and *Festuca ovina* in roadside mixtures due to their adaptation to a large range of soil and moisture conditions, widespread distribution, and the ability for *Festuca rubra* to recolonize gaps in the canopy via its rhizomatous growth habit. Duell and Schmit (1974) evaluated several species and cultivars of fine fescues for roadside performance as determined by assessing retention of green color during drought and spring green up. Of the cultivars evaluated, 'C.P. Shade' strong creeping red fescue and 'Alaska Station' sheep fescue provided the best color during drought and 'Ruby' strong creeping red fescue provided the best spring color. Overall, the authors noted that sheep and hard fescues were notably late in spring recovery and the creeping red fescues were slightly better than the Chewings fescues. Henensal et al. (1980) found that mixtures including slender creeping red fescue and hard fescue were best for roadsides in France, but noted that a lengthy drought adversely affected all fescue species.

Together, these results have confirmed that many species of fine fescues are particularly well suited to roadsides under a variety of conditions. One condition of particular interest, however, has been that of alkaline or saline soils. Research on the salt tolerance of fine fescues has provided variable results, possibly due to the taxonomic difficulties associated with the species. Differences between unclassified species or ecotypes within the *Festuca rubra* complex have been noted in plants collected from the lower and upper regions of salt marshes and adjacent non-saline highlands (Hannon and Bradshaw, 1968). Populations of *Festuca rubra* have been found to have widely varying salt tolerances elsewhere as well, and the genetic heritability of the trait was explored by Ashraf et al. (1986) and by Venables and Wilkins (1978) who determined that salt tolerance was a highly heritable trait in *Festuca rubra*. Observations such as this have led some authors to attribute greater or lesser degrees of salt tolerance of species within the complex to their habitat of origin (Humphreys, 1982). Typically the ranking of salt tolerance in the species is given as *Festuca rubra* ssp. *litoralis* > *Festuca rubra* ssp. *rubra* > *Festuca rubra* ssp. *commutata*. This ranking has been confirmed by a number of trials in both roadside and

greenhouse environments. Following subirrigation with NaCl solution in a greenhouse setting for 71 days, 'Dawson' and 'Golfrud' slender creeping red fescues received ratings of 2.4 and 2.5, respectively, on a scale where 1 represented ideal turf and 9 represented all dead tissue (Ahti et al., 1980). That same study judged several cultivars of strong creeping red fescue to be moderately salt tolerant but deemed hard fescue and Chewings fescue to be not salt tolerant.

Physiological adaptation to saline environments in the red fescues has been demonstrated elsewhere as well. Venables and Wilkins (1978) showed high correlation between the salinity of the soil from which plant material was collected and root growth when those plants were grown in nutrient culture solution amended with sodium chloride. Furthermore, plants from all soils showed growth increases in response to the addition of up to 100 mM NaCl. Humphreys (1981) evaluated several ecotypes and cultivars of all three species of red fescue in both field and greenhouse settings. In that study, spray treatments of three different salt levels in three different amounts of water were applied to five ecotypes and three commercially available cultivars of red fescue. Applications were made three times per week for four weeks, and dry weight of green and dead tissue were recorded. Significant differences were recorded between the entries in the trial with some coastal ecotypes producing 22% green tissue at the end of treatments as compared to 'S.59', which produced the highest percent green tissue of all commercial cultivars with 8%. Field trials in the same experiment also showed that the coastal ecotypes far outperformed the commercial cultivars in terms of tissue survival under ocean salt spray stress. The level of variability observed in previous salt tolerance trials has also been observed in newer accessions from breeding programs where salt tolerant lines have accumulated 43.8% and 73.8% less Na⁺ in crowns and new leaves, respectively, as compared to salt sensitive lines (Krishnan and Brown, 2009). The authors of that study concluded that, as with other grasses, the salt tolerance of red fescues likely lies in its ability to exclude Na⁺ from the xylem stream. From results such as these, it is clear that there exists significant potential to improve the salt tolerance of red fescue, and possibly other fine fescue species, through incorporation of germplasm from salt tolerant ecotypes into breeding programs.

Despite the encouraging observations noted above, other authors have recommended against the use of red fescue on roadsides due to its inability to maintain green color following 5 weeks of salt treatments applied as 20 mL of 2.65 M NaCl solution, 3 times weekly (Greub et al., 1985). It should be noted, however, that the 'Ruby' strong creeping red fescue used in that study produced just a 7% decrease in dry shoot mass as compared to a no-salt control indicating that it likely remains a viable option from a functionality standpoint. That is, it may still maintain ground cover and provide functional erosion control.

It is clear that ongoing evaluation of new cultivars for salt tolerance and roadside use is imperative. Introduction of salt tolerant cultivars is one of the most efficient ways to improve turfgrass growth in salt-stressed conditions (Qian et al., 2001). Therefore, researchers have evaluated recent breeding progress for salt tolerance on roadsides and in greenhouses by comparing commercially available cultivars for salt tolerance during germination and vegetative growth. Evaluation of the germination potential of roadside grasses is important in that establishment of turfgrass sod is not always economically or practically feasible. In those cases, establishment of seed mixtures must provide an equivalent turf quality. However, salt tolerance during germination appears to be governed by a different mechanism than during vegetative growth (Rose-Fricker and Wipff, 2001). Liem et al. (1985) compared germination percentages of seeds of several grasses including 'Moncorde' and 'Mary' Chewings fescues and 'Biljart' hard

fescue. In each case, germination rates greater than 75% were obtained in solutions containing NaCl concentrations up to 10 g L⁻¹; however, significant reductions were observed at 20 g L⁻¹. Rose-Fricker and Wipff (2001) germinated seeds of ‘Discovery’ hard fescue, and ‘Seabreeze’ and ‘Dawson’ slender creeping red fescues in solutions of increasing salinity. ‘Seabreeze’ attained 74.93% germination at salinity levels as high as 15,000 ppm while ‘Discovery’ had no germination at the same salinity, indicating differences between species in germination ability under saline conditions. Interestingly, ‘Dawson’, which is considered to be salt tolerant during vegetative growth, also had low germination percentages at 15,000 ppm salt indicating not only that significant differences can exist within fine fescue species, but that the cultivars used in seed mixes may not be equally well-suited for establishment as sod in saline soils. Brown and Gorres (2011) evaluated several cultivars of both *Festuca rubra* ssp. *rubra* and *Festuca rubra* ssp. *litoralis*, among other grasses, on roadsides in Rhode Island. The authors found that although *Festuca rubra* L. entries as a whole outperformed other species in non-amended soil, there was no clear advantage to the use of improved cultivars over common type and that low fertility was the main cause of lack of turfgrass persistence on roadsides. Friell et al. (2013a) evaluated several cultivars of strong creeping red fescue, slender creeping red fescue, sheep fescue, Chewings fescue, and hard fescue in nutrient solution culture and observed that all cultivars of slender creeping red fescues provided excellent salt tolerance. Although no significant difference between cultivars was found, ‘Sealink’ and ‘Seabreeze GT’ slender creeping red fescues had the greatest percentage of green tissue following exposure to 24 dS m⁻¹ salinity and all cultivars maintained greater than 50% green tissue. In that study, Chewings fescue was found to be not salt tolerant, but several cultivars of sheep fescue and blue-hard fescue as well as ‘Beacon’ hard fescue were found to be moderately salt tolerant. When the same cultivars were evaluated on roadsides, however, ‘Shoreline’ slender creeping red fescue, ‘Navigator’ strong creeping red fescue, and an advanced population of sheep fescue were among the most persistent in areas where exposure to sodium chloride was known to be a problem in the establishment of quality roadside turfgrass (Friell et al., 2012).

A significant amount of research has been performed to evaluate and improve the salt tolerance of fine fescues for roadside use. Species in the *Festuca rubra* complex, and specifically *Festuca rubra* ssp. *litoralis*, are generally considered to have superior salt tolerance to those in the *Festuca ovina* complex; however, sheep fescue, in particular, has shown promise as a suitable roadside turfgrass. The body of literature regarding the salt tolerance and roadside establishment of species in the *Festuca ovina* complex is considerably more limited than that for the *Festuca rubra* complex, indicating that further efforts to expand it may be useful. This is especially true in light of the fact that blue, sheep, and hard fescues are all known to have exceptional low maintenance characteristics and show promise for roadside establishment (Henensal et al., 1980; Ruummele et al., 1995; Watkins et al., 2011; Friell et al., 2012).

Bentgrasses

The genus *Agrostis* contains approximately 200 species, five of which have been adapted for turfgrass use, including creeping bentgrass (*Agrostis stolonifera* L.), velvet bentgrass (*Agrostis canina* L.), colonial bentgrass (*Agrostis capillaris* L.), dryland bentgrass (*Agrostis castellana* L.), and redtop bentgrass (*Agrostis gigantea*) (Warnke, 2003). Another minor *Agrostis* species, Idaho bentgrass (*Agrostis idahoensis* Nash) has also been developed in recent years for turf use (Brede, 1999). Of these grasses, three species are thought to have particular adaptation to roadside use and a potential for increased salt tolerance. *Agrostis stolonifera*, is highly stoloniferous, is

primarily adapted to cool, humid regions, and, despite being adapted to moderately acidic soils, is generally considered to have good salinity tolerance (Warnke, 2003). Native to western Europe where it can at times be found in the upper regions of salt marshes and in adjacent non-saline fields, *Agrostis stolonifera* was first introduced to the United States as a component of a mixture known as South German Mixed Bentgrass (Duich, 1985). *Agrostis capillaris*, has a variable growth habit often exhibiting weakly stoloniferous and rhizomatous growth habits (Hitchcock and Chase, 1951; Fry and Huang, 2004; Christians, 2011). It is native to Europe and temperate Asia, and was introduced to the United States by immigrants from England (Madison, 1971). However, taxonomic classification of this species has proven difficult in part due to differences between European and North American naming (Hitchcock and Chase, 1951). *Agrostis idahoensis*, has only recently been introduced for use as a turfgrass. Exhibiting a bunch-type growth habit, it is native to North America and is found in mountain meadows at medium to high altitudes throughout the western United States (Brede and Sellmann, 2003). The first commercially available cultivar of Idaho bentgrass, 'GolfStar', was introduced in 1999 and was bred from accessions collected from a heavily polluted river basin growing alongside redtop bentgrass with which it shares many characteristics (Brede, 1999). It is perhaps due to this habitat of origin that Idaho bentgrass is considered to have considerable adaptation to low maintenance, alkaline, saline, and heavy metal-impacted sites (Brede and Sellmann, 2003).

There exists a long history of using *Agrostis* species on roadsides in both Europe and North America. Early seed mixtures in Germany included both *Agrostis alba* and *Agrostis tenuis* Sibth. (Boeker, 1970). Boeker (1970) recommended the use of *Agrostis tenuis* at a minimum of 10% by mass in seed mixtures for roadsides, and noted that the species was capable of increasing its relative proportion over time during the succession process. Langvad and Weibull (1970) pointed out that until 1963, *Agrostis tenuis* was also one of the species generally used on roadsides in Sweden. The extensive use of these grasses in low-maintenance mixtures was likely due to their ability to form a short, dense canopy and in some cases an adaptation to wet, acidic soils (Duell and Schmit, 1974; Shildrick, 1980). Henensal (1980) found that *Agrostis tenuis* performed very well on roadsides in France, except under prolonged drought conditions. However, Trautman and Lohmeyer (1980) found that multiple *Agrostis* species did not fare well on roadsides in Germany, and were in significant decline within six years of establishment.

Clearly, there is disagreement in the literature as to the applicability of *Agrostis* species in creating sustainable roadside vegetation. In part, the questionable success of those species on roadsides may be attributable to variable tolerance to alkaline soils, and thus the salt tolerance of the species. *Agrostis stolonifera*, for example, may be well-adapted to salt exposure as it can be found growing in the upper levels of salt marshes and brine-flooded pastures (Hannon and Bradshaw, 1968; Venables and Wilkins, 1978). However, even in populations collected from sites such as these, significant variation in salt tolerance has been observed and may be determined, in part, by the presence or absence of suitable selective pressures (i.e. saline soils) which can lead to the evolution of a salt tolerant population (Ashraf et al., 1986). This is evident in the results of modern breeding programs where significant variability between and within species has been demonstrated. Liem et al. (1985) observed that the effect of de-icing salt on seed germination was significant for both *Agrostis stolonifera* and *Agrostis capillaris*; however, the effect was seemingly much greater for *Agrostis capillaris* with germination dropping below 25% in 10 g L^{-1} NaCl solution. Greub et al. (1985) also showed *Agrostis stolonifera* to be more salt tolerant than *Agrostis alba* when, after five weeks of weekly irrigation with 20 mL of 2.65 M

NaCl solution, 'Seaside' creeping bentgrass was visually assessed to retain 35.6% more living green tissue as compared to *Agrostis alba*. This type of diversity was also observed by Marcum (2001) in a comparison of 35 *Agrostis* cultivars. In that study, *Agrostis stolonifera* was found to be more tolerant than *Agrostis canina* which was more tolerant than *Agrostis capillaris*; however, only a single cultivar of each of the latter two species were tested in the experiment. Nonetheless, the range of tolerances even within the *Agrostis stolonifera* species was such that, after growing for 10 weeks in a nutrient solution amended to 8 dS m⁻¹ with 75% NaCl : 25% CaCl₂ (w/w), root dry weights ranged from 59 g to 170 g. That level of diversity in the genus *Agrostis* led the author to conclude that there exists significant potential for breeding more salt tolerant cultivars of bentgrass.

Field and roadside experiments have further demonstrated the applicability of *Agrostis* species to saline environments. Foliar application of a 10 dS m⁻¹ saline solution over the span of two years showed significant differences in new cultivars of *Agrostis stolonifera*, *Agrostis capillaris*, and *Agrostis canina* (Koch and Bonos, 2011a). That study also showed creeping bentgrass to be more salt tolerant than either colonial or velvet bentgrass. The authors of that study noted that field based methods for salinity tolerance screening correlate well with greenhouse methods, but have the additional benefit of including confounding factors such as heat and drought stress. Furthermore, this method of screening may be more applicable for roadside application as the majority of salt exposure may occur when soils are frozen or plants are dormant and foliar salt spray is the predominant form of salt exposure. Indeed, other authors have concluded that the major limiting factor for persistence of turfgrass on roadsides is fertility, not salinity, and that differences between cultivars on roadsides are irrelevant in terms of persistence (Brown and Gorres, 2011). Some evidence would suggest, however, that differences between cultivars of *Agrostis stolonifera* do exist when established in saline soils on roadsides and that the importance of proper cultivar selection can be demonstrated on saline roadsides even where no difference exists in greenhouse screenings for salt tolerance (Friell et al., 2012, 2013a). Those same studies found *Agrostis idahoensis* to be unsuitable for roadsides despite its reputation for adaptation to alkaline and low-maintenance sites.

A great amount of variation exists in *Agrostis* species for both their salt tolerance and roadside applicability. *Agrostis alba* and *Agrostis capillaris* have both been used extensively, previously, in roadside applications to produce a low-growing, dense turf capable of preventing soil erosion. However, new evidence suggests that *Agrostis stolonifera*, and specifically 'Seaside', 'Seaside II', and 'Mariner' cultivars, may have greater salt tolerance than the other *Agrostis* species and may be well-suited for roadside use. Due to the highly diverse salt tolerance and the compatibility of many of the *Agrostis* species, there is significant potential for improved salt tolerance within the genus in the future.

Alkaligrass

The name alkaligrass is a generic one that has been assigned to species of the genus *Puccinellia*. In particular, the species weeping alkaligrass [*Puccinellia distans* (Jacq.) Parl.], seaside alkaligrass [*Puccinellia maritima* (Huds.) Parl.], and Lemmon alkaligrass [*Puccinellia lemmoni* (Vasey) Scribn.], and Nuttall alkaligrass [*Puccinellia airoides* (Nutt.) Wats & Coult.] have been examined for their turfgrass characteristics. Nuttall, weeping, and Lemmon alkaligrasses were determined by Fults (1972) to have the greatest value for turfgrass use. Alkaligrass typically takes a cespitose form, but may have spreading stolons which root at the nodes. Due to the

polymorphisms observed taxonomic classification of species within the genus can be difficult (Gray and Scott, 1977). However, the genus is often typified by the species *Puccinellia distans* (Hitchcock and Chase, 1951). Considered to be halophytes, distribution of species in the genus is typically restricted to salt marshes and saline soils in coastal regions and to altitudes lower than a few meters above sea level (Gray and Scott, 1977).

This adaptation to saline environments has generated great interest in the use of alkaligrasses for roadside vegetation. The invasion and distribution patterns of *Puccinellia distans* on roadsides due to road salt use in Britain have been previously described (Scott and Davison, 1985). Moreover, *Puccinellia distans* has been found growing along highways in Illinois where salt had destroyed other vegetation, and it has been noted that the ability of alkaligrass to withstand large amounts of soluble salts for extended periods of time may have great importance in road salt-affected areas where standing brackish water may occur in roadside basins on frozen ground (Butler et al., 1974). To that end, much research has focused on evaluating the applicability and salt tolerance of alkaligrasses for use on roadsides. Sanks (1971) noted that *Puccinellia distans* incurred minimal visual damage when treated for 8 weeks with NaCl solutions for an effective application rate of 38.2 tons lane-km⁻¹. Furthermore, Hughes et al. (1975) observed that after 8 weeks of NaCl solution applications at equivalent rates of up to 65,131 kg ha⁻¹ NaCl, forage yield of *Puccinellia distans* was reduced by just 23% as compared to a minimum of 40% for other species tested. Friell et al. (2012, 2013a) evaluated four cultivars of alkaligrass, representing both *Puccinellia distans* and *Puccinellia maritima*, on roadsides and in nutrient solution culture. The authors observed that on highway roadsides, alkaligrass incurred no visual damage following winter road salt application and, in nutrient solution culture, maintained nearly 50% green tissue after prolonged exposure to salinity levels as high as 24 dS m⁻¹. Ahti et al. (1980) found that 'Fults' weeping alkaligrass remained green, healthy, and vigorous after 90 days exposure to subirrigation with a 0.8% NaCl solution, but did not identify the maximum salt stress that the alkaligrass could withstand. It is often the case, however, that an extended time of exposure can provide a more sensitive indicator of stress tolerance, indicating that the authors of that study likely provided a better estimate of the salt tolerance than others (Munns and Tester, 2008). Greub et al. (1985) made five weekly applications of 20 mL of 2.65 M NaCl solution which caused just a 10% and 9% decrease in shoot dry matter yield for *Puccinellia distans* and *Puccinellia airoides*, respectively, but resulted in a 21% increase for *Puccinellia lemmoni*, indicating that some species of alkaligrass may have a significant competitive advantage for growth in saline soils.

Despite the demonstrated advantage from growth in saline soils, alkaligrass is not considered to be an obligate halophyte; rather, its lack of presence in non-saline areas is likely due to lack of competitive ability over non-halophytic species in those areas (Macke and Ungar, 1971). Indeed, other studies have indicated that exposure to other stresses such as mowing, low fertility, and drought cause significant decline in stand quality for alkaligrass (Watkins et al., 2011). A number of authors have speculated that one of the main advantages of alkaligrasses is prolific seed production, which allows them to colonize disturbed soils quickly (Butler et al., 1974; Biesboer et al., 1998). Furthermore, alkaligrasses have been found to have exceptional seed germination and seedling survival rates in saline conditions (Macke and Ungar, 1971; Hughes et al., 1975; Tarasoff et al., 2007).

Alkaligrass may have great value for use as a roadside turfgrass due to its above average tolerance to soluble salts in soil. However, a lack of tolerance to other stresses as well as a

relative shortage of cultivars for any given *Puccinellia* species may indicate need for further development through focused breeding programs as well as evaluation of its adaptability for roadside sod establishment.

Other Turf Species

Two other turfgrass species, prairie junegrass [*Koeleria macrantha* (Ledeb.) Schult.] and tufted hairgrass [*Deschampsia cespitosa* (L.) P. Beauv.], have been evaluated for roadside use in recent years. Much of the increased interest in their implementation stems from evaluations of their potential as a low-maintenance turfgrass species. *Koeleria macrantha* is a bunch-type grass with widespread distribution throughout Europe, North America, Asia, and parts of Africa, extending to as far north as 62° in parts of Asia (Dixon, 2000). It is described by Hitchcock and Chase (1951) to be a constituent of native pasture land throughout the western United States but can also be found in open woods and on sandy soils. Taxonomic classification of species within the genus *Koeleria* has proven difficult with some species being confused by unique naming conventions used for North American and European populations. It is generally thought that *Koeleria macrantha* is in fact the correct taxonomic classification for the species found to be widespread on both continents (Arnou, 1994). *Deschampsia cespitosa* is a dense bunch-type grass species with circumboreal distribution showing phenotypic adaptation, with differentiation often occurring along both latitude and elevation gradients (Percy and Ward, 1972; Davy, 1980). Often an active colonizer of disturbed sites, *Deschampsia cespitosa* is found to dominate habitats including those with moist but not flooded soils, bogs, salt marshes, poorly drained flats and basins of higher elevation forests and often on nutrient poor soils (Hitchcock and Chase, 1951; Rothera and Davy, 1986; Chambers, 1989; Barbour and Billings, 2000). The species is self-incompatible and races of several different ploidy levels have been found (Davy, 1980; Rothera and Davy, 1986). Perhaps the most notable characteristic of the species, however, is a demonstrated tolerance to multiple soil contaminants which, along with its ability to colonize disturbed sites, indicate promise for successful establishment in contaminated soils, such as those found on roadsides (Cox and Hutchinson, 1980).

Both species have been evaluated for their potential as low-maintenance turfgrasses under a number of conditions and shown promise as low-input species (Watkins et al., 2011). Still, evaluations of these species salt tolerance and adaptability for roadside use have been limited. One species of *Deschampsia*, *D. flexuosa* (L.) Trin., was in use on German roadsides as of 1968, but to what extent is not clear. Recently, Brown and Gorres (2011) evaluated *Deschampsia cespitosa* on roadsides in Rhode Island, USA and found it had poor persistence in non-amended soils. Moreover, the authors concluded that the species was not adapted to roadside use and offered no advantage over traditional roadside species. Wang et al. (2011) drenched pots of turfgrass in NaCl solutions of 0, 5, 10, 15, or 20 g L⁻¹ for 20 min. each week for 5 weeks and measured electrolyte leakage, tissue dry weight, and visual quality ratings to assess differences in salt tolerance between populations of *Koeleria macrantha*. Their results showed superior salt tolerance of the improved European varieties 'Barkoel' and 'Barleria' and indicated the possibility for improvement in the native North American populations. Friell et al. (2012) evaluated one cultivar and one ecotype of both *Deschampsia cespitosa* and *Koeleria macrantha* on roadsides in Minnesota, USA at locations where exposure to NaCl was a known problem for the establishment of turfgrass. The results of that study agreed with Brown and Gorres (2011) in that none of the entries were found to persist well on roadsides in non-amended soils. A greenhouse evaluation of the same cultivars and ecotypes found that after extended exposure to

NaCl solutions up to 24 dS m⁻¹, all entries lacked sufficient salt tolerance to be suitable for roadsides; although the results of that study also found the Minnesota population of *Koeleria macrantha* to be less salt tolerant than the improved European cultivar ‘Barkoel’ which is in agreement with Wang et al. (2011) and indicates potential for improvement within the North American populations.

Overall, evaluation of *Deschampsia cespitosa* and *Koeleria macrantha* for salt tolerance and adaptation to roadside use is lacking. To date, however, results of all existing studies are in general agreement that neither species is well-adapted to roadside use and that both lack sufficient salt tolerance to be of use in regions where exposure to road salt is a known impediment to establishment of turfgrass as sustainable and functional roadside vegetation.

Species Mixtures

It is clear from the results of the studies discussed above that each species has unique attributes that make it more or less well-adapted to roadside environments. However, as noted by Duell and Schmit (1974), cultivars and species that appear to be promising in the early stages of evaluation may not be the best for long-term vegetative cover, which is one of the requirements for construction of what the authors referred to as “the complete highway.” This is, in part, because roadsides present significant challenges to growing turfgrass due to stressful conditions that can be unique in both form and magnitude. These stresses may include salt exposure, drought, low fertility, disease, or exposure to contaminants in runoff water. It is likely a mixture that is capable of taking advantage of the unique tolerances of each species will produce the most sustainable and functional stand of turfgrass for roadside vegetation.

It is well documented that multi-species assemblages are needed to maintain a high-functioning ecosystem (Tilman et al., 2001; Zavaleta et al., 2010; Isbell et al., 2011). Indeed, this concept extends to turfgrass communities (Watschke and Schmidt, 1992). Furthermore, it is clear that turfgrass species mixtures can provide several advantages compared to single species plantings. Mixtures of Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis* L.) and perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne* L.) have been shown to produce greater ground cover, higher shoot density, and faster green-up in the spring than either species planted alone (Brede and Duich, 1984a). Dunn et al. (2002) reported that mixtures including tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea* Schreb.) often provided superior turf quality as compared to blends of only tall fescue varieties or only Kentucky bluegrass varieties, an observation which they attributed to superior disease resistance of the mixture as compared to either component species. The same study also reported superior resistance to the disease dollar spot caused by *Sclerotinia homeocarpa* in mixtures of perennial ryegrass, Kentucky bluegrass, and tall fescue. Interestingly, they noted that resistance declined over time due to the superior competitive ability of perennial ryegrass, which was the species primarily affected by the disease. As tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass declined and were displaced by perennial ryegrass over time, disease severity increased. Such results are indicative of the fact that constituent species proportions are often among the most influential factors governing species mixture performance.

Shildrick (1980) evaluated mixtures of perennial ryegrass, timothy grass (*Phleum pratense* L.), Kentucky bluegrass, strong creeping red fescue (*Festuca rubra* ssp. *rubra*), Chewings fescue (*Festuca rubra* var. *commutata*), and colonial bentgrass (*Agrostis tenuis* L.) and observed that the proportions of each component species in the mixture largely determined its overall wear tolerance when subjected to “football-type” wear. Similarly, Shildrick (1982) also identified

significant differences in sod strength and sod quality between mixtures of creeping bentgrass (*Agrostis stolonifera* L.), colonial bentgrass, Chewings fescue, slender creeping red fescue (*Festuca rubra* ssp. *litoralis*), and Kentucky bluegrass with varying proportions of each species.

Brede and Duich (1984b) observed significant reductions in visual shoot size classification when mowing began more than three weeks after seeding for mixtures of Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass that contained less than 75% Kentucky bluegrass by seed count. Furthermore, mixtures cut at 3.8 cm required at least 95% Kentucky bluegrass by seed count in the mixture in order to produce a turf stand containing equal proportions of Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass shoots at two months after seeding. Conversely, turfgrass stands mowed at 1.3 cm required just 50 to 75% Kentucky bluegrass seed in the mix to produce the same result. It is difficult to say, however, where in that range the true necessary proportions lie given that only three proportions of Kentucky bluegrass were included in the set of mixture compositions. Similarly, Stier et al. (2005) evaluated seed mixtures of Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass in varying proportions from 25% to 95% Kentucky bluegrass by weight. Mixtures containing 95% Kentucky bluegrass resulted in a greater amount of that species in the final botanical composition as compared to all other mixtures. Final compositions for the 95% Kentucky bluegrass mixtures ranged from 40% to 70% Kentucky bluegrass but mixtures containing 25% Kentucky bluegrass never produced more than 15% of that species in the sward composition. They also observed that when common types of Kentucky bluegrass were used, no more than 10% of the resulting sward was Kentucky bluegrass regardless of the initial seed proportions. Unfortunately, the study was limited in scope to athletic field applications and traffic simulation was applied to all of the plots. The authors stated that since many athletic field managers overseed, short-term competition may be more relevant than long-term competition. For roadside vegetation, however, long-term studies are of the utmost importance and although mowing is not often scheduled on an agronomic basis, it is certain that analogous relationships exist between seed count, mowing height, and timing of mowing in roadside ecosystems.

In a longer-term evaluation, Hsiang et al. (1997) analyzed the population dynamics resulting from interspecies competition in mixtures of tall fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, and a sub-mixture of Chewings fescue and strong creeping red fescue over four years under non-wear conditions. Although not performed on roadsides, the trial was conducted in what the authors referred to as low-maintenance cultural conditions, which consisted of irrigation to prevent drought stress and nitrogen applications ranging from 50 to 100 kg ha⁻¹. The authors found that tall fescue generally decreased from its initial seeding ratio while perennial ryegrass generally increased from its initial seeding ratio when measured four years after establishment. The fine fescue mix and Kentucky bluegrass, however, appeared to increase or decrease to a stable equilibrium proportion of 24% for fine fescues and 42% for Kentucky bluegrass.

In a field trial of a mixture containing Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, and colonial bentgrass in a 10:3:2 ratio, respectively, perennial ryegrass was found to decrease from 33% to less than 5% while Kentucky bluegrass increased from 22% to approximately 50% of the sward after 4 years when seeded at 48 kg ha⁻¹ (Engel and Trout, 1980). These results verify that even moderate competition can significantly delay the establishment of Kentucky bluegrass in a mixture. The same study showed that increased total seeding rates increased competition and further delayed the establishment of the Kentucky bluegrass.

Larsen et al. (2004) found that when Kentucky bluegrass, slender creeping red fescue, and perennial ryegrass were sown together, the per cent of total tillers recorded for each species were

31.4%, 57.7%, and 11.5% for slender creeping red fescue, perennial ryegrass, and Kentucky bluegrass, respectively. This was despite a species composition in the seed mixture of 30% slender creeping red fescue, 40% perennial ryegrass, and 30% Kentucky bluegrass, by mass.

Juska and Hanson (1959) found that during the first four years of a five year study, 'Merion' Kentucky bluegrass planted in monoculture provided the best turf quality as compared to other monocultures and mixtures of Kentucky bluegrass, tall fescue, red fescue, and colonial bentgrass. During the fifth year, however, quality of the Merion monostand declined due to disease. As a result, the polyculture of red fescue and Merion provided the highest quality turf over the 5-yr period. Such results are the basis of the argument for greater biodiversity in vegetative swards and the push to establish turfgrass mixtures rather than monocultures.

With this in mind it is clear that evaluation of species mixtures should play an important role in identifying vegetation suitable for roadsides. Unfortunately, most previous mixture experiments rely on selection of evenly-spaced or convenient proportions of component species and identify the best mixture entry in the trial. This provides little or no predictive ability regarding what the optimal species mixture is, should it not be one of the mixtures tested. Designs for mixture experiments have been well defined and should be used to achieve experimental results that provide for prediction and optimization of overall mixture performance as a function of species composition with respect to desirable traits (Scheffé, 1963; Bondari, 2005).

Table 1.1. Qualitative summary of salt tolerance and general roadside performance of turfgrass species discussed in the literature review, based on consensus of existing literature.

Species	Scientific Name	Salt Tolerance ^{†,‡}	Roadside Performance ^{†,‡}
Kentucky bluegrass	<i>Poa pratensis</i>	-	-
perennial ryegrass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>	0	--
tall fescue	<i>Festuca arundinacea</i>	+	+
slender creeping red fescue	<i>Festuca rubra</i> ssp. <i>litoralis</i>	++	++
strong creeping red fescue	<i>Festuca rubra</i> ssp. <i>rubra</i>	+	+
hard fescue	<i>Festuca trachyphylla</i>	0	++
sheep fescue	<i>Festuca ovina</i>	0	++
Chewings fescue	<i>Festuca rubra</i> ssp. <i>fallax</i>	--	-
creeping bentgrass	<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	+	0
colonial bentgrass	<i>Agrostis tenuis</i>	0	+
redtop bentgrass	<i>Agrostis alba</i>	-	+
alkaligrass	<i>Puccinellia</i> spp.	++	-
prairie junegrass	<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>	-	--
tufted hairgrass	<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>	-	--

[†] (--)- Very poor; (-)- Poor; (0)- Moderate; (+)- Good; (++)- Very good

[‡] Ratings based on a qualitative overview of existing literature, as described in this review. See text for citations.

CHAPTER 2: ESTABLISHMENT AND SURVIVAL OF 75 COOL-SEASON TURFGRASS CULTIVARS ON MINNESOTA ROADSIDES

Introduction

Cool-season turfgrasses have been used in adverse environments such as roadsides with limited success. Many extreme stresses, including drought, heat, compaction and poor soil conditions due to the construction process are often present and may contribute to the poor performance of turfgrasses on roadsides. In cold-weather climates, exposure to sodium chloride from road de-icing practices also presents a significant challenge to the establishment and maintenance of high quality turfgrass. Turfgrass that is sown in the fall often does not survive until the following spring, and it is commonly thought that salt exposure plays a major role in the extensive turf death observed. Sodium concentrations of greater than 10,000 mg kg⁻¹ were reported in Minnesota in soils sampled to a depth of 20 cm within one meter of the roadway on interstate highways during the month of December (Biesboer and Jacobson, 1994). Turfgrasses planted in that type of roadside location must not only withstand the unsuitable growth conditions, but they must do so while also surviving the perennial application of de-icing salt.

Although salt tolerance is a vital characteristic of roadside turfgrass in areas subject to de-icing salt exposure, it has been shown to be interdependent with other growth factors. For example, Bowman et al. (2006a) demonstrated that the effect of sodium chloride (NaCl) and calcium chloride (CaCl₂) on tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea* Schreb.) leaf growth is less severe with reduced nitrogen availability. Moreover, Brown and Gorres (2011) evaluated several cultivars on roadsides in Rhode Island. The authors rejected the hypothesis that exposure to de-icing salt was primarily responsible for death of turfgrass on roadsides and concluded that soil fertility was the determining factor for long-term persistence. They found that although *Festuca rubra* L. entries as a whole outperformed other species in non-amended soil, there was no clear advantage to the use of improved cultivars over common type. Such results suggest that overall roadside performance of turfgrasses should not be predicted by an evaluation of salt tolerance alone, and must be evaluated on roadsides under realistic management, environmental, and edaphic conditions that more closely represent the intended application.

Most previous roadside turfgrass research has evaluated species and cultivars for roadside performance with respect to their ability to withstand many of the other abiotic stresses present on roadsides, but not necessarily in the presence of exposure to de-icing salts. Boeker (1970) recommended the use of both *Festuca rubra* and *Festuca ovina* in roadside mixtures due to their adaptation to a large range of soil and moisture conditions, widespread distribution, and the ability for *Festuca rubra* to recolonize gaps in the canopy via its rhizomatous growth habit. Henensal et al. (1980) found that slender creeping red fescue, hard fescue, and colonial bentgrass (*Agrostis tenuis* Sibth.) were best for roadsides in France, but noted that a lengthy drought adversely affected all species. Duell and Schmit (1974) evaluated several species and cultivars of fine fescues for roadside performance as determined by assessing retention of green color during drought and spring green up. Of the grasses evaluated, 'C.P. Shade' strong creeping red fescue and 'Alaska Station' sheep fescue provided the best color during drought and 'Ruby' strong creeping red fescue provided the best spring color. Overall, the authors noted that sheep and hard fescues were notably late in spring recovery and slender creeping red fescue and strong creeping red fescue (*Festuca rubra* L. ssp. *rubra*) were slightly better than the Chewings fescues [*Festuca*

rubra ssp. *fallax* (Thuill.) Nyman]. In that same study, the authors evaluated seven cultivars of common and turf-type Kentucky bluegrass for seed stalk production and color retention during summer drought on newly-established roadsides in New Jersey. They showed that common-type Kentucky bluegrass produced fewer seed stalks, but retained better green color during summer drought than the newer, turf-type cultivars. The authors concluded that poor soil conditions and minimal management practices create unsuitable conditions for use of fine turf-type cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass.

To overcome these challenges, turfgrass breeders strive to continuously improve germplasm such that plants are able to better tolerate several biotic and abiotic factors. For example, newer breeding lines of perennial ryegrass have shown improved salt tolerance over old cultivars, such as 'Linn'. Improvement has largely been attributed to an ability to accumulate up to 37% less Na⁺ in crowns and 42% less Na⁺ in young leaves while maintaining a K⁺/Na⁺ ratio 1300% higher (Krishnan and Brown, 2009). Moreover, several studies have demonstrated remarkable performance of numerous species and cultivars under a wide variety of reduced water and fertility conditions (Diesburg et al., 1997; Dernoeden et al., 1998; McKernan et al., 2001; Watkins et al., 2011).

In light of results such as these, it is important to evaluate the existing germplasm of cool-season turfgrasses for the ability to establish and persist in roadside environments where several stresses may occur concurrently or sequentially. Only once high-performing cultivars and species are identified can suitable roadside turfgrass be established and maintained. Therefore, the objective of this work was to evaluate a wide variety of cultivars and selections of cool-season turfgrass for their ability to establish and persist on roadsides in Minnesota. This was to be accomplished by visually assessing establishment following late summer sowing of 75 cultivars of cool-season turfgrass on roadsides in Minnesota, and subsequently visually assessing survival the following spring.

Materials and Methods

Locations

Plots were established during August and September of 2010 at two locations in the metropolitan area surrounding Minneapolis, MN, USA. The selected research sites were: (1) Larpenteur Ave. along Roselawn Cemetery (Roseville, MN, USA) and (2) I-94 at MnROAD research facility (Albertville, MN, USA). Sites were chosen to represent distinct salt application levels, traffic volumes, runoff drainage patterns, and soil types based on information provided by the Minnesota Department of Transportation. An additional sites was also established along I-35W in south Minneapolis, however, the site was destroyed by activities associated with road sign installation. The Roseville site was split into two sections: 1) main plot – the area opposite the sidewalk from the road measuring 1.52 meters wide by 4.57 meters deep, and 2) boulevard – the 1.52 m by 0.91 m area between the sidewalk and the road. Data for these two locations was collected separately and they were treated as distinct experimental sites due to differences resulting from the presence of a curb and storm drains on the street to which all runoff water was designed to drain, sidewalk maintenance practices, and proximity to the road. As a result, there were a total of three data sets collected and analysed in this experiment.

The portion of Larpenteur Ave. along Roselawn Cemetery is a four-lane residential street, which carries a total estimated daily traffic volume of 13,700 vehicles, and Interstate 94, which runs

along the MnROAD research facility, is a four-lane divided highway that carries an estimated daily traffic volume of 63,000 vehicles (Minnesota Department of Transportation, 2010). Mean temperatures for Roseville and Albertville, MN were 17°C and 16°C, respectively, during the establishment period of August through October, 2010. Those temperatures are similar to the 1961 to 1990 regional average of 15.5°C for those three months. Precipitation during that same period totalled 34.7 cm and 33.27 cm for the Roseville and Albertville sites, respectively, as compared to the 30-year regional average of 21.7 cm. At the Albertville and Roseville sites, 21% and 23% of that precipitation fell during the first two weeks after seeding. Sunlight levels varied throughout the year and across locations, although all plots received direct sunlight for the majority of the day. The Albertville site was north facing with an approximately 1:6 slope. Both sections of the Roseville site were primarily flat. Although salt application records were not available from the Minnesota Department of Transportation for the winter of 2010, both roads were regularly salted before, during, and after winter storm events at a minimum standard application rate ranging from 11.4 to 56.8 kg lane⁻¹ km⁻¹ with the Albertville site receiving a greater volume annually.

Turfgrass Cultivars and Selections

Treatments in the trial were cultivars and selections. Trial entries were selected based on input from turfgrass breeders and published data from previous trials throughout the northern United States (Rose-Fricker and Wipff, 2001; Biesboer et al., 1998; Duell & Schmit, 1974; Boeker, 1970; Butler et al., 1974). In total, 75 cultivars, representing 14 species of turfgrass, were included in the trial (Table 2.1). Species included Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, tall fescue, tufted hairgrass [*Deschampsia cespitosa* (L.) P. Beauv.], prairie junegrass [*Koeleria macrantha* (Ledeb.) Schult.], creeping bentgrass (*Agrostis stolonifera* L.), alkaligrass, Idaho bentgrass (*Agrostis idahoensis* Nash), hard fescue, sheep fescue, Chewings fescue, slender creeping red fescue, and strong creeping red fescue.

Site Design and Establishment

Each site was arranged as a randomized complete block design with three replications. Plots at the Albertville site were 1.52 m by 5.48 m. Seeding rates (Table 2.2) were chosen for each species based on suggested rates (Christians, 2011). Because purity for the Minnesota ecotype of prairie junegrass was known to be low, the bulk seeding rate was increased to approximate the same effective seeding rate as the European cultivar ‘Barkoel’, based on breeder suggestions. This resulted in a range of seeding rates for that species only, as reflected in Table 2.2.

Site preparation began with a single application of glyphosate (Roundup Weather Max, Monsanto Co., St. Louis, MO, USA) on existing vegetation at a rate of 7.68 L ha⁻¹. Seedbed preparation began one week after glyphosate applications. Seeding dates for the trial were 18 August and 24 August 2010, for the Roseville and Albertville sites, respectively. At the Roseville site, the seedbed was prepared by roughing the surface using an Infield Rascal (ABI Inc., Osceola, IN, USA) pulled behind a utility vehicle. The device uses steel tines to drag the surface of the soil, thereby pulling out plant tissue and loosening the top 1-2 cm of soil. Loosened plant tissue was left on the surface of the soil to act as mulch. At the Albertville site, the soil was too soft to support the weight of the vehicle so seed bed preparation was accomplished by hand. Stones larger than 2.5 cm in diameter were removed by hand and the top

1-5 cm of soil was loosened by hand using a garden rake. A starter fertilizer (10-18-22) was applied to all sites at a rate of 271.1 kg ha⁻¹ prior to seeding.

Sowing was done by hand and plots were hand raked lightly with garden rakes to ensure good seed to soil contact. SeedAide Aero Mulch (Profile Products LLC, Buffalo Grove, IL, USA) was applied at 3360 kg ha⁻¹ and watered in after seeding at each site. Subsequent maintenance included occasional mowing at only the Roseville site and no regular irrigation at either location.

Soil Characterization

Following seeding, soil samples were collected to a depth of 0.15 m. Samples were collected from every fourth plot in a zigzag pattern at 1.52 m increments from the road. Samples from each replicate were bulked together for analysis. Bulk samples were analyzed for pH, organic matter, and saturated paste extract electrical conductivity (EC) as well as extractable phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium, and sodium (2, 3). Chloride was not analyzed because, as an anion, it is highly transient in soils. Soil textural analysis was also carried out for a bulk sample at all sites. Analysis was done at the University of Minnesota Soil Analytical Laboratory using standard procedures.

Twenty-four hours following a saturating rain event, soil compaction at each site was assessed using a Clegg Impact Soil Tester using a 0.5 kg missile (LaFayette Instrument Company, LaFayette, IN). The device is operated by dropping a weight with an enclosed accelerometer onto the soil surface. The peak deceleration is recorded and higher deceleration values indicate more compacted soils. Water holding capacity was assessed at the same time by measuring volumetric water content (VWC) of the soils at field capacity using a FieldScout TDR300 soils moisture sensor (Spectrum Technologies, Aurora IL). Three measurements were taken with each device within each replicate and averaged. Measurements were taken at positions where no vegetation had been established. Mean soil compaction and field capacity VWC are summarized in Table 2.3.

Data Collection and Analysis

In fall 2010, establishment of turf plots was assessed visually. Each plot was assigned a rating on a 1-9 scale with 9 representing complete establishment of a dense turf canopy, and 1 representing less than 10% of the area seeded had been established. A rating of 6, or 62.5% of full scale, was considered to be acceptable establishment. Evaluation of establishment took place at the Roseville site on 6 November, 2010 and at the Albertville site on 28 October, 2010.

On 27 April, 2011 and 13 May, 2011 the Roseville and Albertville sites, respectively, were visually assessed for survival of each entry. Survival was determined by visually estimating the proportion of existing turf tissue that was established and actively growing in the fall, and which remained alive and healthy in the spring. Ratings were assigned on a 1-9 scale with 9 representing complete survival of all previously established turfgrass and 1 representing complete death of all existing turfgrass. As with establishment, a rating of 6, or 62.5% of full scale, was considered to be acceptable survival of the turfgrass plot. Evaluation of plots in this manner provided for separation of the effects of establishment and survival.

Data from all three locations were combined and analyzed for differences in establishment and survival performance as measured by the visual assessment ratings. Analysis of variance was

performed using R (R Development Core Team, 2012), with subsequent means separation by Fisher's protected least significant difference (LSD) at the $\alpha=0.05$ level. Data were analyzed for significance of effects of site, replicate, and treatment. Treatment means differing by greater than the LSD value were statistically different from one another. Using this analysis, it was possible to determine if significant differences existed between cultivars and selections in their ability to establish and survive on Minnesota roadsides.

Results

Establishment Results

Analysis of variance of the combined data set of visual establishment ratings from all three sites (Table 2.4) showed a significant effect ($p=0.038$) of experimental site; thus, the treatment differences at the three sites were subsequently analyzed separately. Mean establishment ratings in the boulevard section at Roseville were not statistically different from those at Albertville; however, both of those sites were statistically different from the main plot section at Roseville according to means separation by Fisher's protected LSD ($\alpha=0.05$). Mean visual establishment ratings for those sites were 4.7, 4.6, and 3.3 for the boulevard at Roseville, Albertville, and main plot at Roseville, respectively. Data from the boulevard at Roseville did not show a significant effect of replicate at the $\alpha=0.05$ level but did show significant differences ($p<0.001$) between cultivars (Table 2.5). The main plot section at Roseville had significant effects ($p<0.001$) of both replicate and cultivar (Table 2.6). The Albertville site (Table 2.7) also showed significant effects of replicate ($p=0.005$) and cultivar ($p<0.001$).

Means separation (Table 2.8) using Fisher's protected LSD ($\alpha=0.05$) showed that in the boulevard section at Roseville, perennial ryegrass cultivars 'Apple GL' and 'Caddyshack II' shared the highest mean rating of 9 for establishment, but were not statistically different from 21 other cultivars in the trial at that site. Of the 23 entries in the top statistical grouping, 14 were cultivars of perennial ryegrass. Fourteen cultivars shared the lowest mean establishment rating of 1, but were not different from 12 other cultivars in the trial at that location. Of the 26 cultivars in that lowest statistical grouping, 13 were Kentucky bluegrass cultivars while just three were cultivars of one of the fine fescue species.

Means separation by Fisher's protected LSD ($\alpha=0.05$) of the cultivar treatments in the main plot section at Roseville (Table 2.9) showed that perennial ryegrass 'Caddyshack II' had the highest mean rating of 9 for establishment at that site. However, it was not statistically different from 10 other entries. All 11 entries in the top statistical grouping at that site were cultivars of perennial ryegrass. The lowest statistical grouping at that site contained 42 cultivars, 23 of which shared the lowest overall mean rating of 1. That list of cultivars comprised several different species, but contained all four cultivars of alkaligrass and 13 cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass. Also at that site, all three replicates were statistically different as determined by Fisher's protected LSD ($\alpha=0.05$). Replicates 1, 2, and 3 had mean ratings of 3.21, 2.41, and 4.36, respectively.

The means separation results by Fisher's protected LSD ($\alpha=0.05$) of the data from Albertville (Table 2.10) showed that perennial ryegrass cultivar 'Gray Fox' had the highest mean establishment rating of 7.7, but was not statistically different from three other cultivars, all of which were perennial ryegrasses. The second statistical grouping at that site also contained primarily perennial ryegrass cultivars, but also comprised several cultivars of tall fescue including 'Grande II', 'Coronado TDH', 'Kentucky-31 (E+)', and 'SR8650'. 'Dawson E' had the

lowest mean establishment rating of 1.7 but was not statistically different from seven other cultivars, including four cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass. At the Albertville site, replicates 1 and 2 were statistically similar with means of 4.77 and 4.70, respectively. Replicate 3 was statistically different from the other two, however, with a mean establishment rating of 4.47.

Survival Results

Analysis of variance of the combined data set of visual survival ratings from all three sites (Table 2.11) showed a significant effect ($p=0.001$) of experimental site; thus, the treatment differences for the three sites were subsequently analyzed separately. Mean survival ratings in the boulevard section at Roseville was not statistically different from the Albertville site; however, both were statistically different from the main plot section at Roseville according to means separation by Fisher's protected LSD ($\alpha=0.05$). Mean visual survival ratings for those sites were 2.78, 2.77, and 1.96 for the boulevard at Roseville, Albertville, and main plot at Roseville, respectively. None of the three sites showed a significant ($p<0.05$) effect of replicate, but all did show a significant effect of cultivar (Tables 2.12-14).

In the boulevard section at Roseville (Table 2.15), 'Shoreline' slender creeping red fescue had the highest mean survival rating of all cultivars in the trial of 7.3. However, using means separation by Fisher's protected LSD ($\alpha=0.05$) it was shown to be not statistically different from 14 other entries in the trial at that location. Of the 15 entries in the top statistical grouping, there were two cultivars of alkaligrass, three slender creeping red fescues, five strong creeping red fescues, two sheep fescues, one hard fescue, and one Chewings fescue. There were 15 cultivars that exhibited no survival and had mean survival ratings of 1. However, those 15 were not statistically different from 38 other entries in the trial.

Means separation by Fisher's protected LSD ($\alpha=0.05$) of the data from the main plot section at Roseville (Table 2.16) showed that 'Shoreline' slender creeping red fescue had the highest mean survival rating of 6 but was not statistically different from 14 other entries in the trial at that location. That top statistical grouping contained at least one cultivar of each of eight different species. There were 40 cultivars that all shared the lowest mean survival rating of 1 at that site, indicating there was no survival for any of the plots of those cultivars. Moreover, those 40 were statistically different from just 10 other trial entries at that location.

Finally, means separation by Fisher's protected LSD ($\alpha=0.05$) of the visual survival ratings at Albertville (Table 2.17) revealed that 'Fults', 'Oceania', 'Salton Sea', and 'Salty' alkaligrasses all shared the highest mean visual rating of 9 for survival at that site indicating complete survival of all turfgrass cover following the winter. Those four entries were all statistically different from all other entries in the trial. The second statistical grouping contained eight cultivars, of which 'ASR 050' slender creeping red fescue had the highest mean rating. There were 19 cultivars that shared the lowest mean rating of 1 at that site. Furthermore, those 19 cultivars were statistically different from just 25 others in the trial.

Discussion

The objective of this work was to evaluate a wide variety of cultivars and selections of cool-season turfgrass for their ability to establish and persist on roadsides in Minnesota. This objective was accomplished by visually assessing establishment following late summer sowing of 75 cultivars of cool-season turfgrass on roadsides at three locations in Minnesota, and subsequently visually assessing survival of turfgrass the following spring. Through that process,

we were able to identify significant differences between cultivars for their performance in terms of establishment and survival on Minnesota roadsides.

Significant differences of mean establishment ratings were observed between sites in this trial. The boulevard at Roseville had the highest mean establishment rating followed by Albertville, which was statistically the same. The main plot at Roseville had the lowest mean establishment across all treatments. Differences between soil physical characteristics at the site may explain some of those observed differences. Mean soil compaction, as measured using the Clegg Impact Soil Tester, was highest in the main plot at Roseville. Furthermore, soil moisture at field capacity was lowest at that site. Soil electrical conductivity and sodium concentrations, which are known to affect germination of many species (Liem et al., 1985; Tarasoff et al., 2007; Spencer and Port, 1988; Rose-Fricker and Wipff, 2001), did not display the same relationship and thus do not appear to play a role in the mean establishment of the plots at each site. This may indicate that soil structure and the ability to retain moisture in the soil are the most important factors for successful establishment of cool-season turfgrasses on roadsides in Minnesota. In the main plot section in Roseville and at Albertville, there appeared to be no relationship between mean establishment rating and compaction or soil moisture; however, differences among replicates were much smaller than those between sites. In addition, no other consistent relationships were observed between mean establishment rating and soil properties among replicates exhibiting significant differences.

In the boulevard at Roseville, main plot at Roseville, and Albertville, 61%, 100%, and 100%, respectively, of the cultivars in the top statistical groupings for mean establishment ratings were cultivars of perennial ryegrass. This result was not entirely unexpected, as perennial ryegrass is known to germinate quickly in a wide range of soil moisture conditions and establish rapidly on roadsides (Wright et al., 1978; Boeker, 1970). The results of this experiment support those of previous studies which have concluded that perennial ryegrass would be well-suited for roadsides where rapid establishment of acceptable quality turfgrass cover is required (Trautmann and Lohmeyer, 1980; Henensal et al., 1980; Boeker, 1970).

In contrast, of the entries sharing the lowest mean rating for establishment in the boulevard and main plot sections at Roseville, 50% and 61%, respectively, were cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass. The same was true of 50% of the cultivars in the lowest statistical grouping at Albertville. Kentucky bluegrass is well-adapted to moist, well-drained soils (Beard, 1973) but germination of seed is slow and decreases rapidly with increasing soil water tension (Tarasoff et al., 2007). As a result, it seems likely that establishment of those cultivars was reduced due to the lack of irrigation and the occurrence of a 27-day period of no precipitation which began approximately 4 weeks after seeding.

Alkaligrass cultivars did not exhibit acceptable establishment (mean visual rating of 6 or higher) at any of the three sites. However, they did all receive higher mean establishment ratings at Albertville. Alkaligrass is native to Europe and Asia and is often found in saltmarshes where it thrives in moist, saline soils. Previous research has shown that although alkaligrass is capable of limited germination in arid conditions, it is more likely to germinate and survive in the presence of moist conditions and is not affected during germination by increased concentrations of sodium (Tarasoff et al., 2007). Given this information, it is likely that the ability of the soil to hold more moisture increased the ability for alkaligrass to establish at Albertville, while not being affected by the increased levels of sodium at that site.

Species and cultivars that were observed to establish well did not necessarily survive the winter while those that had weak establishment sometimes had the greatest proportion of turfgrass survive. Differences among sites for mean survival rating followed in the same order as for establishment with mean survival ratings being greatest in the boulevard at Roseville followed by Albertville and the main plot at Roseville. It is possible that strength of establishment in the fall may play a role in the survival of turfgrass through the winter at the level of site. Some differences among sites may be explained by the topography and construction of the roadsides. Runoff water from the road at Albertville was allowed to run directly off the road and down the inslope of the roadside. As stated previously, salt application rates were not available from the Minnesota Department of Transportation, but were known to be higher at Albertville due to higher traffic volumes and speeds. In contrast, the curb at Roseville kept runoff water from directly running onto the plots. Instead, exposure to de-icing salt at Roseville was dependent on spray from passing cars or salt bouncing off of the road during application. The cultivars and species that performed well at the Albertville site were distinct from both of the other two sites at Roseville, as evidenced by the significant effect of site in the analysis of variance of the combined data. Specifically, alkaligrass cultivars exhibited complete survival while most other trial entries had significantly lower mean survival ratings ($p < 0.05$).

All four cultivars of alkaligrass were observed to have complete survival at Albertville. That was not the case in either section at Roseville. Other authors have previously stated that autumn drought, such as that experienced in the autumn of 2010, may be critical to the survival of alkaligrass (Gray and Scott, 1977). As noted previously, the ability for the soil at Albertville to retain moisture was greater than at either of the other sites. Greater water availability during the fall drought may have increased the vigor of alkaligrass cultivars going into winter and, thus, led to greater survival. The pattern of winter death observed at Roseville is more consistent with the observations of Biesboer et al. (1998) where alkaligrass was observed to behave more like an annual grass on Minnesota roadsides and persist only by virtue of prolific seed production. It is clear, however, that in the presence of mowing, seed production is not possible. At locations like Roseville where mowing is a routine practice, it is likely that alkaligrass will quickly die if established in areas where irrigation is not present.

‘Shoreline’ slender creeping red fescue had the highest mean survival rating in both the main plot and boulevard section at Roseville. The species is capable of withstanding many of the abiotic stresses present in roadside environments, and is found in a wide range of environments (Pavlick, 1985). ‘Shoreline’ slender creeping red fescue was also in the second statistical grouping of cultivars at Albertville and had the third highest mean survival rating of all cultivars at that site, aside from the alkaligrass cultivars. This seems to be a good indication that it is capable of producing acceptable survival across a wide range of roadside environments. Interestingly, ‘Shoreline’ is the progeny of several crosses of germplasm from an English seaside ecotype with European and North American selections. It was selected for in a wide range of environments including Missouri, California, and Oregon (Seed Research of Oregon, 2013). This breeding history may give some indication of why that cultivar tolerates the variety of stresses encountered in a roadside environment including poor soil quality, drought, and exposure to de-icing salt.

Two other species, hard fescue and sheep fescue, had cultivars in the top statistical grouping at both Roseville sites and the second statistical grouping at the Albertville site. Both species are well-adapted to poor soil conditions (Beard, 1973) and have been recommended for use

previously on roadsides (Boeker, 1970; Duell and Schmit, 1974; Henensal, 1980). ‘Beacon’ hard fescue and ‘Marco Polo’ sheep fescue had the highest mean survival ratings for cultivars in their respective species across all study sites. Sheep fescue 67135, which is an advanced breeding population from the University of Minnesota turfgrass breeding program, had the highest mean survival rating for a non-cultivar selection. The mean rating for each of those three trial entries was highest in the boulevard at Roseville and lowest in the main plot at Roseville, with the exception of entry 67135, which was lowest at Albertville. This again follows the same general trend as establishment and survival among those sites. Yet, with the one exception of ‘Beacon’ hard fescue in the boulevard at Roseville, none of those three entries were in the top statistical grouping for establishment at any site. With such consistent survival results for those entries across all sites despite generally unacceptable establishment (mean rating less than 6) it may be expected that ‘Beacon’, ‘Marco Polo’, and 67135 may provide persistent, functional roadside turfgrass if acceptable establishment can be achieved.

Conclusions

In this experiment, we evaluated a wide variety of cultivars and selections of cool-season turfgrass for their ability to establish and persist on roadsides in Minnesota. Seventy-five cultivars and selections of cool-season turfgrass were established at three locations and visually assessed for fall establishment and subsequently for survival the following spring. Significant differences among sites were identified for both establishment and survival, and significant differences among replicates were identified for establishment at two of the trial locations.

Mean establishment rating was related to soil compaction and field capacity VWC at each site. Mean survival rating by site followed the same trend; however, good establishment of cultivars within sites was not a guarantee of survival the following spring. Site differences appear to account for some of the variation in cultivar performance and suggest that different cultivars should be used depending on site management, environmental, and edaphic characteristics. Sites with higher anticipated salt loads may benefit from the use of cultivars of alkaligrass, given sufficient soil moisture can be maintained. All cultivars of alkaligrass had equal mean survival ratings at Albertville where salt loads were known to be highest. Sites where maintenance during establishment will not be a priority, but where survival is still desirable, will benefit from the use of one or more of several cultivars of fine fescue species. Some of these cultivars include ‘Shoreline’ slender creeping red fescue, ‘Beacon’ hard fescue, ‘Marco Polo’ sheep fescue, as well as several cultivars of strong creeping red fescue.

In this experiment we were not able to address the method or timing of salt exposure to plants in runoff water during the spring. Those factors may be critical in determining to what extent salt plays a role in observed turf death, as different species and cultivars will de-acclimate from winter at different rates. Although relative salt application rates on the road, as given by the department of transportation, did not appear to be related to mean survival rating at each site, direct evaluation of salt tolerance in these cultivars will be helpful as they will be used in areas where salt is known to be applied.

Cultivars identified as performing well in this trial may be used to guide the decisions of public works employees and turfgrass breeders in the implementation and improvement of roadside turfgrasses and may be used for the creation of roadside turfgrass species mixtures.

Table 2.1. Cultivars and selections included in the roadside salt tolerance trial.

Cultivar or Selection	Species[†]	Cultivar or Selection	Species
Fults	AK	JR-522	PR
Oceania	AK	Silver Dollar	PR
SaltonSea	AK	Minnesota (ecotype)	KM
Salty	AK	Barkoel	KM
Bighorn GT	BHD	67135	SH
Little Bighorn	BHD	Marco Polo	SH
TCP	CH	ASR 050	SLCRF
Mariner	CBG	Dawson E	SLCRF
Providence	CBG	Seabreeze GT	SLCRF
Beacon	HF	Sealink	SLCRF
SR 5130	CH	Shoreline	SLCRF
Golfstar	IBG	Cardinal	STCRF
Argos	KBG	Celestial	STCRF
Arrowhead	KBG	Epic	STCRF
Brooklawn	KBG	Florentine GT	STCRF
Diva	KBG	McAlpin	STCRF
Dragon	KBG	Navigator	STCRF
Jumpstart	KBG	OR1	STCRF
Langara	KBG	PSG 5RM	STCRF
Midnight	KBG	PST 8000	STCRF
Moonlight SLT	KBG	Shademaster III	STCRF
Moonshine	KBG	SR 5250	STCRF
Orfeo	KBG	Corona	TF
Park	KBG	Coronado TDH	TF
Right	KBG	Dynamic II	TF
Accent II	PR	Endeavor II	TF
Apple GL	PR	Gazelle II	TF
Arctic Green	PR	Grande II	TF
Brighstar SLT	PR	Jaguar 4G	TF
Caddyshack II	PR	JT-158	TF
Citation Fore	PR	Kentucky-31 (E+)	TF
Fiesta III	PR	Mustang 4	TF
Grand Slam II	PR	SR 8650	TF
Gray Fox	PR	Tar Heel II	TF
Gray Goose	PR	Wolfpack II	TF
Harrier	PR	Humboldt Bay (ecotype)	DC
Headstart II	PR	SR 6000	DC
JR-521	PR		

[†] AK, alkaligrass; BHD, blue hard fescue; CH, chewings fescue; CBG, creeping bentgrass; HF, hard fescue; IBG, Idaho bentgrass; KBG, Kentucky bluegrass; PR, perennial ryegrass; TF, tall fescue; KM, prairie junegrass; SH, sheep fescue; DC, tufted hairgrass; SLCRF, slender creeping red fescue; STCRF, strong creeping red fescue

Table 2.2. Seeding rates for the turfgrass species included in the roadside trial.

Species	kg ha⁻¹	lb A⁻¹
fine fescue	244.1	217.8
tall fescue	341.7	304.9
Kentucky bluegrass	73.2	65.3
perennial ryegrass	390.5	348.4
tufted hairgrass	97.6	87.1
prairie junegrass	146.5 – 195.3	130.7 – 174.2
creeping bentgrass	48.8	43.5
alkaligrass	195.3	174.2
Idaho bentgrass	146.5	130.7

Table 2.3. Soil chemical and physical properties for sites in the roadside turfgrass cultivar trial.

Replicate	Roseville [†] (Boulevard)			Roseville [‡] (Main Plot)			Albertville [§]		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
pH	7.7	7.5	7.4	7.4	7.2	7.0	7.8	8.1	8.0
Organic Matter, %	4.9	5.8	6.6	4.8	4.2	4.0	4.2	3.6	3.2
P (Bray), mg kg⁻¹	55	68	60	75	56	71	89	75	65
P (Olsen), mg kg⁻¹	39	37	--	--	--	--	65	55	47
K, mg kg⁻¹	159	150	204	228	174	213	175	157	163
Saturated Paste EC, dS m⁻¹	0.7	0.6	0.9	0.9	0.7	0.7	1.2	1.1	1.2
Ca, mg kg⁻¹	2966	2547	3720	2014	1899	1798	2677	2636	2879
Mg, mg kg⁻¹	185	168	192	243	249	226	280	256	300
Na, mg kg⁻¹	106	15	38	187	94	37	302	299	385
Compaction m s⁻²	816.6	878.7	859.1	980.0	980.0	1097.6	715.4	748.1	630.5
Field Capacity Volumetric Water Content, %	29.9	33.1	31.8	28.7	25.9	25.6	35.9	36.2	40.1

[†] Soil texture at Roseville Boulevard was 63% sand, 17% silt, 20% clay

[‡] Soil texture at Roseville Main Plot was 51% sand, 26% silt, 23% clay

[§] Soil texture at Albertville was 40% sand, 31% silt, 29% clay

Table 2.4. Analysis of variance of combined establishment rating data from the three experimental sites of the roadside turfgrass cultivar trial.

Source	DF	MS	Pr(> t)
Site	2	146.54	0.0384
Replicate within Site	6	24.89	< 0.001
Cultivar	74	40.998	< 0.001
Cultivar x Site	148	3.284	< 0.001
Residuals	444	1.425	

Table 2.5. Analysis of variance of establishment rating data for the boulevard section at the Roseville site in the roadside turfgrass cultivar trial.

Source	DF	MS	Pr(> t)
Replicate	2	0.92	0.605
Cultivar	74	23.0582	< 0.001
Residuals	148	1.831	

Table 2.6. Analysis of variance of establishment rating data for the main plot section at the Roseville site in the roadside turfgrass cultivar trial.

Source	DF	MS	Pr(> t)
Replicate	2	71.804	< 0.001
Cultivar	74	17.031	< 0.001
Residuals	148	2.079	

Table 2.7. Analysis of variance of establishment rating data for the Albertville site in the roadside turfgrass cultivar trial.

Source	DF	MS	Pr(> t)
Replicate	2	1.95	0.005
Cultivar	74	7.47	< 0.001
Residuals	148	0.37	

Table 2.8. Mean establishment ratings in the boulevard at Roseville for each cultivar or selection in the roadside turfgrass cultivar trial.

Cultivar or Selection	Species^s	Mean^{†,‡} Rating	Cultivar or Selection	Species	Mean Rating
Apple GL	PR	9	67135	SH	5.667
Caddyshack II	PR	9	Seabreeze GT	SLCRF	5.667
Citation Fore	PR	8.667	Corona	TF	5.333
Grand Slam II	PR	8.5	Wolfpack II	TF	5
Coronado TDH	TF	8.333	Little Bighorn	BHD	4.667
Gray Goose	PR	8.333	Epic	STCRF	4.333
Silver Dollar	PR	8.333	PST 8000	STCRF	4
Tar Heel II	TF	8.333	Florentine GT	STCRF	3.667
Accent II	PR	8	Humboldt Bay	KM	3.333
Arctic Green	PR	8	Jaguar 4G	TF	3.333
Grande II	TF	8	SR 5250	STCRF	3.333
Fiesta III	PR	7.667	Shademaster III	STCRF	3
Headstart II	PR	7.667	Celestial	STCRF	2.667
JR-521	PR	7.667	Fults	AK	2.333
JR-522	PR	7.667	Midnight	KBG	2.333
Kentucky-31 (E+)	TF	7.333	Moonshine	KBG	2.333
Navigator	STCRF	7.333	Diva	KBG	1.667
Shoreline	SLCRF	7.333	Langara	KBG	1.667
Beacon	HF	7	Moonlight SLT	KBG	1.667
Brighstar SLT	PR	7	Salty	AK	1.5
Cardinal	STCRF	7	Brooklawn	KBG	1.333
GrayFox	PR	7	Park	KBG	1.333
PSG-5RM	STCRF	7	Providence	CBG	1.333
Dynamic II	TF	6.667	Argos	KBG	1
OR1	STCRF	6.667	Arrowhead	KBG	1
Sealink	SLCRF	6.667	Dawson E	SLCRF	1
JT-158	TF	6.5	Dragon	KBG	1
ASR 050	SLCRF	6.333	Golfstar	IBG	1
Harrier	PR	6.333	Jumpstart	KBG	1

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Table 2.8. Continued.

Cultivar or Selection	Species§	Mean^{†,‡} Rating	Cultivar or Selection	Species	Mean Rating
SR 5130	CH	6.333	Minnesota	KM	1
SR 8650	TF	6.333	Mariner	CBG	1
Bighorn GT	BHD	6	Oceania	AK	1
Endeavor II	TF	6	Orfeo	KBG	1
Gazelle II	TF	6	Right	KBG	1
Marco Polo	SH	6	Salton Sea	AK	1
McAlpin	STCRF	6	SR 6000	DC	1
Mustang 4	TF	6	Barkoel	KM	1
TCP	CH	6			

[†] Data collected Nov 6, 2010. Three replications of plots were rated on a 1-9 scale (1 = less than 10% establishment, 6 = acceptable turf cover, 9 = complete dense turf cover) for establishment of seeded turfgrass.

[‡] LSD = 2.18

[§] AK, alkaligrass; BHD, blue hard fescue; CH, Chewings fescue; CBG, creeping bentgrass; HF, hard fescue; IBG, Idaho bentgrass; KBG, Kentucky bluegrass; PR, perennial ryegrass; TF, tall fescue; KM, prairie junegrass; SH, sheep fescue; DC, tufted hairgrass; SLCRF, slender creeping red fescue; STCRF, strong creeping red fescue

Table 2.9. Mean establishment ratings in the main plot at Roseville for each cultivar or selection in the roadside turfgrass cultivar trial.

Cultivar or Selection	Species^s	Mean^{†,‡} Rating	Cultivar or Selection	Species	Mean Rating
Caddyshack II	PR	9	Beacon	HF	2.667
Citation Fore	PR	8.333	Corona	TF	2.667
Accent II	PR	8	Florentine GT	STCRF	2.667
Brighstar SLT	PR	8	PST 8000	STCRF	2.667
Grand Slam II	PR	8	SR 5250	STCRF	2.667
Gray Goose	PR	8	Bighorn GT	BHD	2.333
Arctic Green	PR	7.333	Epic	STCRF	2
Fiesta III	PR	7.333	Little Bighorn	BHD	2
Gray Fox	PR	7	Marco Polo	SH	2
JR-521	PR	7	Jaguar 4G	TF	1.667
JR-522	PR	7	Celestial	STCRF	1.333
Headstart II	PR	6.667	Fults	AK	1.333
Apple GL	PR	6.333	Humboldt Bay	DC	1.333
Silver Dollar	PR	6.333	Shademaster III	STCRF	1.333
Shoreline	SLCRF	5.667	Argos	KBG	1
Harrier	PR	5.333	Arrowhead	KBG	1
Navigator	STCRF	5	Brooklawn	KBG	1
ASR 050	SLCRF	4.667	Dawson E	SLCRF	1
Cardinal	STCRF	4.667	Diva	KBG	1
67135	SH	4.333	Dragon	KBG	1
McAlpin	STCRF	4.333	Golfstar	IBG	1
Tar Heel II	TF	4.333	Jumpstart	KBG	1
TCP	CH	4.333	Minnesota	KM	1
Mustang 4	TF	4	Langara	KBG	1
OR1	STCRF	4	Mariner	CBG	1
Wolfpack II	TF	4	Oceania	AK	1
Grande II	TF	3.667	Midnight	KBG	1
SR 8650	TF	3.667	Moonlight SLT	KBG	1
Coronado TDH	TF	3.333	Moonshine	KBG	1

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Table 2.9. Continued.

Cultivar or Selection	Species§	Mean^{†,‡} Rating	Cultivar or Selection	Species	Mean Rating
Dynamic II	TF	3.333	Orfeo	KBG	1
JT-158	TF	3.333	Park	KBG	1
Seabreeze GT	SLCRF	3.333	Providence	CBG	1
Sealink	SLCRF	3.333	Right	KBG	1
Endeavor II	TF	3	Salton Sea	AK	1
Gazelle II	TF	3	Salty	AK	1
Kentucky-31 (E+)	TF	3	SR 6000	DC	1
PSG 5RM	STCRF	3	Barkoel	KM	1
SR 5130	CH	3			

[†] Data collected Nov 6, 2010. Three replications of plots were rated on a 1-9 scale (1 = less than 10% establishment, 6 = acceptable turf cover, 9 = complete dense turf cover) for establishment of seeded turfgrass.

[‡] LSD = 2.32

[§] AK, alkaligrass; BHD, blue hard fescue; CH, Chewings fescue; CBG, creeping bentgrass; HF, hard fescue; IBG, Idaho bentgrass; KBG, Kentucky bluegrass; PR, perennial ryegrass; TF, tall fescue; KM, prairie junegrass; SH, sheep fescue; DC, tufted hairgrass; SLCRF, slender creeping red fescue; STCRF, strong creeping red fescue

Table 2.10. Mean establishment ratings at Albertville for each cultivar or selection in the roadside turfgrass cultivar trial.

Cultivar or Selection	Species§	Mean^{†,‡} Rating	Cultivar or Selection	Species	Mean Rating
Gray Fox	PR	7.667	Epic	STCRF	4.667
Apple GL	PR	7	Mariner	CBG	4.667
Citation Fore	PR	7	PSG 5RM	STCRF	4.667
Harrier	PR	7	Florentine GT	STCRF	4.333
Caddyshack II	PR	6.667	Little Bighorn	BHD	4.333
Grande II	TF	6.667	Marco Polo	SH	4.333
Gray Goose	PR	6.667	McAlpin	STCRF	4.333
JR-521	PR	6.667	Navigator	STCRF	4.333
JR-522	PR	6.667	Shademaster III	STCRF	4.333
Arctic Green	PR	6.333	67135	SH	4
Brighstar SLT	PR	6.333	Golfstar	IBG	4
Coronado TDH	TF	6.333	Salty	AK	4
Fiesta III	PR	6.333	SR 5130	CH	4
Grand Slam II	PR	6.333	SR 5250	STCRF	4
Headstart II	PR	6.333	Celestial	STCRF	3.667
Kentucky-31 (E+)	TF	6.333	Fults	AK	3.667
Silver Dollar	PR	6.333	Humboldt Bay	DC	3.667
SR 8650	TF	6.333	Oceania	AK	3.333
Corona	TF	6	Salton Sea	AK	3.333
Dynamic II	TF	6	Diva	KBG	3
Endeavor II	TF	6	Barkoel	KM	3
Tar Heel II	TF	6	Argos	KBG	2.667
Wolfpack II	TF	6	Brooklawn	KBG	2.667
Accent II	PR	5.667	Jumpstart	KBG	2.667
Gazelle II	TF	5.667	Midnight	KBG	2.667
JT-158	TF	5.667	Moonlight SLT	KBG	2.667
Mustang 4	TF	5.667	Moonshine	KBG	2.667
Sealink	SLCRF	5.667	Park	KBG	2.667
Jaguar 4G	TF	5.333	Right	KBG	2.667

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Table 2.10. Continued.

Cultivar or Selection	Species§	Mean^{†,‡} Rating	Cultivar or Selection	Species	Mean Rating
Cardinal	STCRF	5	Arrowhead	KBG	2.333
OR1	STCRF	5	Langara	KBG	2.333
PST 8000	STCRF	5	Orfeo	KBG	2.333
Seabreeze GT	SLCRF	5	Providence	CBG	2.333
Shoreline	SLCRF	5	Dragon	KBG	2
TCP	CH	5	Minnesota	KM	2
ASR 050	SLCRF	4.667	SR 6000	DC	2
Beacon	HF	4.667	Dawson E	SLCRF	1.667
Bighorn GT	BHD	4.667			

[†] Data collected Oct 28, 2010. Three replications of plots were rated on a 1-9 scale (1 = less than 10% establishment, 6 = acceptable turf cover, 9 = complete dense turf cover) for establishment of seeded turfgrass.

[‡] LSD = 0.975

[§] AK, alkaligrass; BHD, blue hard fescue; CH, Chewings fescue; CBG, creeping bentgrass; HF, hard fescue; IBG, Idaho bentgrass; KBG, Kentucky bluegrass; PR, perennial ryegrass; TF, tall fescue; KM, prairie junegrass; SH, sheep fescue; DC, tufted hairgrass; SLCRF, slender creeping red fescue; STCRF, strong creeping red fescue

Table 2.11. Analysis of variance of combined survival rating data from the three experimental sites of the roadside turfgrass cultivar trial.

Source	DF	MS	Pr(> t)
Site	2	49.76	0.001
Replicate within Site	6	1.91	0.618
Cultivar	74	18.95	< 0.001
Cultivar x Site	148	4.39	< 0.001
Residuals	444	2.59	

Table 2.12. Analysis of variance of survival rating data for the Roselawn Cemetery boulevard site in the roadside turfgrass cultivar trial.

Source	DF	MS	Pr(> t)
Replicate	2	0.56	0.813
Cultivar	74	9.85	< 0.001
Residuals	148	2.71	

Table 2.13. Analysis of variance of survival rating data for the Roselawn Cemetery main plot site in the roadside turfgrass cultivar trial.

Source	DF	MS	Pr(> t)
Replicate	2	1.69	0.584
Cultivar	74	5.46	0.002
Residuals	148	3.14	

Table 2.14. Analysis of variance of survival rating data for the Albertville site in the roadside turfgrass cultivar trial.

Source	DF	MS	Pr(> t)
Replicate	2	3.48	0.165
Cultivar	74	12.41	< 0.001
Residuals	148	1.91	

Table 2.15. Mean survival ratings in the boulevard at Roseville for each cultivar or selection in the roadside turfgrass cultivar trial.

Cultivar or Selection	Species§	Mean^{†,‡} Rating	Cultivar or Selection	Species	Mean Rating
Shoreline	SLCRF	7.3	Mustang 4	TF	2.0
Navigator	STCRF	6.7	Shademaster III	STCRF	2.0
McAlpin	STCRF	6.5	Tar Heel II	TF	2.0
ASR 050	SLCRF	6.3	Accent II	PR	1.7
67135	SH	6.0	Citation Fore	PR	1.7
Cardinal	STCRF	6.0	JR-521	PR	1.7
Seabreeze GT	SLCRF	6.0	Kentucky-31 (E+)	TF	1.7
Marco Polo	SH	5.7	Langara	KBG	1.7
OR1	STCRF	5.7	Silver Dollar	PR	1.7
SR 5130	CH	5.3	Dawson E	SLCRF	1.5
Beacon	HF	5.0	Wolfpack II	TF	1.5
Oceania	AK	5.0	Apple GL	PR	1.3
PSG 5RM	STCRF	5.0	Arctic Green	PR	1.3
Salty	AK	5.0	Corona	TF	1.3
SR 8650	TF	4.7	Coronado TDH	TF	1.3
Bighorn GT	BHD	4.5	Diva	KBG	1.3
Grande II	TF	4.5	Gray Fox	PR	1.3
SaltonSea	AK	4.5	Headstart II	PR	1.3
PST 8000	STCRF	4.3	Jaguar 4G	TF	1.3
SR 5250	STCRF	4.3	Jumpstart	KBG	1.3
Humboldt Bay	DC	4.0	Midnight	KBG	1.3
TCP	CH	4.0	Orfeo	KBG	1.3
Grand Slam II	PR	3.5	Argos	KBG	1.0
Fulfs	AK	3.3	Arrowhead	KBG	1.0
Sealink	SLCRF	3.3	Brighstar SLT	PR	1.0
Epic	STCRF	3.0	Brooklawn	KBG	1.0
Gazelle II	TF	3.0	Caddyshack II	PR	1.0
Little Bighorn	BHD	3.0	Dragon	KBG	1.0
Moonlight SLT	KBG	3.0	Golfstar	IBG	1.0

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Table 2.15. Continued.

Cultivar or Selection	Species§	Mean^{†,‡} Rating	Cultivar or Selection	Species	Mean Rating
Dynamic II	TF	2.7	Harrier	PR	1.0
Gray Goose	PR	2.7	JT-158	TF	1.0
Providence	CBG	2.7	Minnesota	KM	1.0
Celestial	STCRF	2.3	Mariner	CBG	1.0
Fiesta III	PR	2.3	Park	KBG	1.0
JR-522	PR	2.3	Right	KBG	1.0
Moonshine	KBG	2.3	SR 6000	DC	1.0
Endeavor II	TF	2.0	Barkoel	KM	1.0
Florentine GT	STCRF	2.0			

[†] Data collected April 27, 2011. Three replications of plots were rated on a 1-9 scale (1 = complete death, 9 = no visible injury) for survival of existing turfgrass plant tissue.

[‡] LSD = 2.66

[§] AK, alkaligrass; BHD, blue hard fescue; CH, Chewings fescue; CBG, creeping bentgrass; HF, hard fescue; IBG, Idaho bentgrass; KBG, Kentucky bluegrass; PR, perennial ryegrass; TF, tall fescue; KM, prairie junegrass; SH, sheep fescue; DC, tufted hairgrass; SLCRF, slender creeping red fescue; STCRF, strong creeping red fescue

Table 2.16. Mean survival ratings in the main plot at Roseville for each cultivar or selection in the roadside turfgrass cultivar trial.

Cultivar or Selection	Species§	Mean†,‡ Rating	Cultivar or Selection	Species	Mean Rating
Shoreline	SLCRF	6.0	Brooklawn	KBG	1.0
Fults	AK	5.7	Caddyshack II	PR	1.0
67135	SH	5.3	Citation Fore	PR	1.0
Cardinal	STCRF	5.3	Corona	TF	1.0
Navigator	STCRF	4.7	Coronado TDH	TF	1.0
Beacon	HF	4.0	Dawson E	SLCRF	1.0
Bighorn GT	BHD	4.0	Diva	KBG	1.0
PSG 5RM	STCRF	4.0	Dragon	KBG	1.0
PST 8000	STCRF	4.0	Endeavor II	TF	1.0
SR 5250	STCRF	4.0	Gazelle II	TF	1.0
McAlpin	STCRF	3.7	Golfstar	IBG	1.0
OR1	STCRF	3.7	Grande II	TF	1.0
SR 5130	CH	3.7	Grand Slam II	PR	1.0
Celestial	STCRF	3.3	Humboldt Bay	DC	1.0
Headstart II	PR	3.3	JR-521	PR	1.0
Accent II	PR	2.7	JR-522	PR	1.0
ASR 050	SLCRF	2.7	JT-158	TF	1.0
Jaguar 4G	TF	2.7	Jumpstart	KBG	1.0
Seabreeze GT	SLCRF	2.7	Minnesota	KM	1.0
Wolfpack II	TF	2.7	Kentucky-31 (E+)	TF	1.0
Epic	STCRF	2.3	Langara	KBG	1.0
Florentine GT	STCRF	2.3	Mariner	CBG	1.0
Gray Fox	PR	2.3	Midnight	KBG	1.0
Harrier	PR	2.3	Moonshine	KBG	1.0
Marco Polo	SH	2.3	Mustang 4	TF	1.0
Gray Goose	PR	2.0	Oceania	AK	1.0
Little Bighorn	BHD	2.0	Orfeo	KBG	1.0
Shademaster III	STCRF	2.0	Park	KBG	1.0
SR 8650	TF	2.0	Providence	CBG	1.0

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Table 2.16. Continued.

Cultivar or Selection	Species§	Mean^{†,‡} Rating	Cultivar or Selection	Species	Mean Rating
Brighstar SLT	PR	1.7	Right	KBG	1.0
Dynamic II	TF	1.7	SaltonSea	AK	1.0
Fiesta III	PR	1.7	Salty	AK	1.0
TCP	CH	1.7	Sealink	SLCRF	1.0
Arctic Green	PR	1.3	Silver Dollar	PR	1.0
Moonlight SLT	KBG	1.3	SR 6000	DC	1.0
Apple GL	PR	1.0	Tar Heel II	TF	1.0
Argos	KBG	1.0	Barkoel	KM	1.0
Arrowhead	KBG	1.0			

[†] Data collected April 27, 2011. Three replications of plots were rated on a 1-9 scale (1 = complete death, 9 = no visible injury) for survival of existing turfgrass plant tissue.

[‡] LSD = 2.86

[§] AK, alkaligrass; BHD, blue hard fescue; CH, Chewings fescue; CBG, creeping bentgrass; HF, hard fescue; IBG, Idaho bentgrass; KBG, Kentucky bluegrass; PR, perennial ryegrass; TF, tall fescue; KM, prairie junegrass; SH, sheep fescue; DC, tufted hairgrass; SLCRF, slender creeping red fescue; STCRF, strong creeping red fescue

Table 2.17. Mean survival ratings at Albertville for each cultivar or selection in the roadside turfgrass cultivar trial.

Cultivar or Selection	Species§	Mean^{†,‡} Rating	Cultivar or Selection	Species	Mean Rating
Fults	AK	9.0	Corona	TF	2.0
Oceania	AK	9.0	Endeavor II	TF	2.0
SaltonSea	AK	9.0	Florentine GT	STCRF	2.0
Salty	AK	9.0	Tar Heel II	TF	2.0
ASR 050	SLCRF	6.3	Barkoel	KM	2.0
Mariner	CBG	6.0	Dragon	KBG	1.7
Marco Polo	SH	5.3	Gray Goose	PR	1.7
Shoreline	SLCRF	5.3	SR 6000	DC	1.7
Seabreeze GT	SLCRF	5.0	Apple GL	PR	1.3
Sealink	SLCRF	5.0	Arrowhead	KBG	1.3
Beacon	HF	4.7	Citation Fore	PR	1.3
Grande II	TF	4.3	Gazelle II	TF	1.3
Cardinal	STCRF	4.0	Jaguar 4G	TF	1.3
Epic	STCRF	4.0	Jumpstart	KBG	1.3
McAlpin	STCRF	4.0	Midnight	KBG	1.3
TCP	CH	4.0	Moonlight SLT	KBG	1.3
Celestial	STCRF	3.7	Orfeo	KBG	1.3
Little Bighorn	BHD	3.7	Park	KBG	1.3
OR1	STCRF	3.7	Accent II	PR	1.0
SR 5250	STCRF	3.7	Arctic Green	PR	1.0
67135	SH	3.3	Argos	KBG	1.0
Bighorn GT	BHD	3.3	Brighstar SLT	PR	1.0
Navigator	STCRF	3.3	Caddyshack II	PR	1.0
Shademaster III	STCRF	3.3	Dawson E	SLCRF	1.0
SR 5130	CH	3.3	Diva	KBG	1.0
Coronado TDH	TF	3.0	Dynamic II	TF	1.0
Humboldt Bay	DC	3.0	Fiesta III	PR	1.0
JT-158	TF	3.0	Golfstar	IBG	1.0
Providence	CBG	3.0	Gray Fox	PR	1.0

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Table 2.17. Continued.

Cultivar or Selection	Species§	Mean†,‡ Rating	Cultivar or Selection	Species	Mean Rating
PSG 5RM	STCRF	3.0	Harrier	PR	1.0
Grand Slam II	PR	2.7	Headstart II	PR	1.0
PST 8000	STCRF	2.7	JR-521	PR	1.0
SR 8650	TF	2.7	JR-522	PR	1.0
Wolfpack II	TF	2.7	Minnesota	KM	1.0
Brooklawn	KBG	2.3	Moonshine	KBG	1.0
Kentucky-31 (E+)	TF	2.3	Right	KBG	1.0
Langara	KBG	2.3	Silver Dollar	PR	1.0
Mustang 4	TF	2.3			

† Data collected May13, 2011. Three replications of plots were rated on a 1-9 scale (1 = complete death, 9 = no visible injury) for survival of existing turfgrass plant tissue.

‡ LSD = 2.23

§ AK, alkaligrass; BHD, blue hard fescue; CH, Chewings fescue; CBG, creeping bentgrass; HF, hard fescue; IBG, Idaho bentgrass; KBG, Kentucky bluegrass; PR, perennial ryegrass; TF, tall fescue; KM, prairie junegrass; SH, sheep fescue; DC, tufted hairgrass; SLCRF, slender creeping red fescue; STCRF, strong creeping red fescue

CHAPTER 3: SALT TOLERANCE OF 74 TURFGRASS CULTIVARS IN NUTRIENT SOLUTION CULTURE

Introduction

Turfgrass is often subject to significant salt stress as a result of poor water quality, insufficient leaching, or exposure to environmental contaminants. Establishment of salt tolerant turfgrass cultivars can help mitigate the effects of salts in irrigation water or the soil environment.

Although a multitude of screening methods have been used under greenhouse conditions to evaluate turfgrass salt tolerance (Greub et al., 1985; Marcum, 2001; Rose-Fricker and Wipff, 2001; Pessaraki and Kopec, 2008; Qian et al., 2007; Koch et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2011), few have included enough entries to allow for ranking of cultivars within several different species. A variety of field screening techniques have been used to successfully identify differences between cultivars (Biesboer et al., 1998; Koch and Bonos, 2011a; Brown and Gorres, 2011; Friell et al., 2012) and are capable of capturing the wide range of simultaneous stresses experienced in the field that are not readily replicable in a greenhouse environment. However, it is often desirable to perform screenings for salt tolerance under controlled conditions in order to avoid confounding effects of weather, disease, or other environmental factors often present in a field setting. Koch and Bonos (2011b) showed that results of multiple greenhouse screening methods correlated well with those used under controlled field conditions. Moreover, Bowman et al. (2006a) demonstrated that reduced nitrogen concentrations lessened the effects of salt on leaf growth for tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea* Schreb.) indicating that greater control over nutrient status provided by greenhouse environments can help create a more sensitive screening than some field-based methods.

Using nutrient solution culture, Rose-Fricker and Wipff (2001) observed differences in salt tolerance, as determined by a visual assessment of leaf damage, between cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis* L.) and between cultivars of perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne* L.). Despite its thoroughness, this study was carried out over a decade ago, and new germplasm and cultivars have been introduced since its publication that are in need of thorough salinity tolerance screening. More recently, Koch et al. (2011) identified salinity tolerance differences between cultivars and experimental lines of Kentucky bluegrass and Kentucky bluegrass × Texas bluegrass (*Poa arachnifera* Torr.) hybrids using an overhead irrigation system. Response variables for their study included biweekly leaf clipping dry weights, weekly visual assessment of percent green canopy, as well as root and shoot dry weights at the conclusion of the study. Results indicated that breeding efforts have resulted in some improvement of salinity stress within the species but concluded that further testing of Kentucky bluegrass germplasm for salinity tolerance was necessary. Wang et al. (2011) used the unique approach of drenching grasses in saline water for 20 min. each week and measuring electrolyte leakage, tissue dry weight, and visual quality ratings to assess differences in salt tolerance between populations of prairie junegrass (*Koeleria macrantha* (Ledeb.) Schult.). Their results showed superior salt tolerance of the improved European varieties and indicated the possibility for improvement in the native North American populations.

While visual assessment methods provide for rapid data collection, they are less desirable than the quantitative data. Unfortunately, many quantitative methods such as determination of dry clipping weights, electrolyte leakage, and root mass or viability can be time consuming. In recent years, digital image analysis has proven to be a useful tool for rapid quantification of

turfgrass cover and color (Richardson et al., 2001; Karcher and Richardson, 2003). Adaptation of this methodology to a greenhouse environment has been shown to provide a quantitative method of evaluation for salt tolerance trials in a controlled environment. Dai et al. (2008) identified significant differences in tolerance to sodium chloride (NaCl) among experimental lines of annual bluegrass (*Poa annua* L.) using change in percent green canopy tissue as measured by digital image analysis. Koch et al. (2011) also used digital image analysis in their assessment of Kentucky bluegrass and Kentucky bluegrass × Texas bluegrass hybrids discussed above. Both studies found digital image analysis to be a useful method for quantifying salinity stress in turfgrass.

Given the salinity tolerance differences observed between experimental lines, populations, and cultivars in many of the recent studies, it is important to directly evaluate the existing germplasm of cool-season turfgrasses for differences in salt tolerance during vegetative growth. The objective of this research was to quantitatively evaluate the relative salt tolerance of cool-season turfgrasses using nutrient solution culture in a controlled environment. This was to be accomplished using digital image analysis to quantify the amount of green turf tissue remaining when plants were subjected to salt stress.

Methods and Materials

Experimental Setup

Six replications of 74 cool-season turfgrasses (Table 3.1) representing 14 species (tall fescue, slender creeping red fescue, hard and blue hard fescues [*Festuca trachyphylla* (Hack.) Krajina], strong creeping red fescue [*Festuca rubra* L. ssp. *rubra*], alkaligrass [*Puccinellia* spp.], tufted hairgrass [*Deschampsia cespitosa* (L.) P. Beauv.], perennial ryegrass, sheep fescue [*Festuca ovina* L.] creeping bentgrass [*Agrostis stolonifera* L.], Kentucky bluegrass, prairie junegrass, Chewings fescue [*Festuca rubra* L. ssp. *fallax* (Thuill.) Nyman], and Idaho bentgrass [*Agrostis idahoensis* Nash]) were seeded in 10.16 cm x 10.16 cm square pots of silica sand. Trial entries representing cultivars, experimental lines, and ecotypes, were selected based on input from turfgrass breeders as well as published data from previous trials in the northern United States (Rose-Fricker and Wipff, 2001; Koch and Bonos, 2011a; Brown and Gorres, 2011; Friell et al., 2012). Seeding rates (Table 3.2) were chosen for each species based on suggested rates (Christians, 2011). Because purity of the Minnesota ecotype of prairie junegrass was known to be low, the bulk seeding rate was increased, based on breeder recommendations, to approximate the same effective seeding rate as the European cultivar 'Barkoel', resulting in the range of seeding rates for that species shown in Table 3.2. Plastic screen was placed in the bottom of the pots in order to allow root growth through the bottom while containing the sand within. Trial entries were established in a greenhouse for 12 wk, beginning in fall 2010, and the experiment was repeated during summer 2011 with a 14-wk establishment period. During establishment, pots were watered daily to field capacity, fertilized with a dilute fertilizer solution (Table 3.3) every other day, and clipped weekly to a height of 5 cm.

Following establishment, two large tubs were each filled with 760 L of half-strength Hoagland solution (Hoagland and Arnon, 1950) amended with 5.3 mg L⁻¹ EDTA-chelated iron. The tubs were continuously aerated, and nutrient solution within each tub was cycled from one end to the other through an external pump at a rate of 5800 L h⁻¹. Three replications of each cultivar were suspended in each tub in a randomized complete block design. The submerged portion of the pot

was 5 cm deep with the top of the pot situated approximately 7.5 cm above the surface of the nutrient solution. During the first run of the experiment, a number of pots representing several cultivars were removed due to severe infection by *Cladosporium spp.* While in the tubs, pots were clipped every 7-10 days to a height of 5 cm and received supplemental lighting, which provided 16 hours of light exposure per day with a maximum of $1418 \mu\text{mol m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$ photosynthetically active radiation. Plants were allowed to adapt to the nutrient culture growth conditions for four weeks before salt exposure began.

Salt exposure was initiated by supplementing the nutrient solution with 5 M NaCl solution such that the electrical conductivity (EC) of the solution reached a specified level. Solution EC was ramped at a rate of $2 \text{ dS m}^{-1} \text{ d}^{-1}$ to 4 dS m^{-1} , 14 dS m^{-1} , and 24 dS m^{-1} successively, and held at each of the three levels for two weeks. This salinity exposure profile was chosen to approximate previous measurements of soil salinity within one meter of roadways in Minnesota during late fall and early spring (Biesboer and Jacobson, 1994). Between the specified salinity levels, the nutrient solution was drained and replaced, and the salinity level increased at a rate of $2 \text{ dS m}^{-1} \text{ d}^{-1}$ from the previous level to the next specified level. Pots remained in the tubs throughout the entire course of the salt exposure sequence and each data set was treated as a single observation at the end of a nested experiment. The total salt exposure for each nested experiment represented the sum of the magnitudes and exposure times prior to the data collection date, as diagrammed in Fig. 3.1.

Data Collection and Analysis

Digital images were collected following the 4-wk adaptation period of each experimental run, and at the end of each subsequent 2-wk period of specified EC for a total of four data sets. Images were collected using a custom light box designed to fit over the pots. The box was designed to provide a solid color frame around the pot so as to distinguish between the background and the turf tissue. Pictures were analyzed for percent green tissue using a custom image processing script written using Image Processing Toolbox (MATLAB, 2011).

The design of the experiment allowed for comparison of cultivars within each data set collected, but not for comparison among the four data sets. Thus, the data sets collected following each of the 2-wk 4 dS m^{-1} , 14 dS m^{-1} , and 24 dS m^{-1} exposure periods were treated as independent single-observation experiments, the unique salt exposure profiles for which were defined by the magnitudes and exposure times experienced prior to the data collection date. Salt exposure following collection of a data set was not relevant to the analysis of that data, and the results of each analysis played no role in the analysis of future data sets. Data collected after the 4-wk adaptation period was used to examine the effects of growth in the nutrient solution culture and to verify that no significant differences existed between the cultivars at the start of the salt exposure profile. Data from both experimental runs were analyzed together and modeled with a linear mixed effects cell means model using the *lme* function in the *nlme* package in R Project for Statistical Computing (R Development Core Team, 2012). Each model contained a single fixed effect term for cultivar. Grouping levels for the experiment were experimental run, tub within run, and replicate within tub; all of which were treated as random variables. Using linear mixed effects models, random effects are characterized as distributions and, thus, are not testable in a traditional ANOVA sense. Confidence intervals for each estimated fixed effect mean were determined at the $\alpha=0.05$ level using the *intervals* function and are calculated using the standard error of the estimates.

Results

Analysis of the data collected following the 4-wk adaptation period (Data Set 1, Fig. 3.2) showed that no entries were significantly different from one another after growth in the nutrient solution culture for four weeks. This indicated that no initial differences existed between the entries' green tissue percentages, and comparison of salt tolerances could be made based using absolute values. Similarly, no entries were significantly different from one another in the data set collected following the 2-wk sustained exposure to 4 dS m⁻¹ (Data Set 2, Fig. 3.3).

Data collected at the point in the salt exposure profile just after the sustained 2-wk exposure to 14 dS m⁻¹ (Data Set 3) indicated significant differences among cultivars (Fig. 3.4). Results from this data set showed more significant differences among entries within the Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass species than any other data set. Perennial ryegrass 'Affirmed' retained significantly less green canopy tissue than 'Accent II' with 44.2% and 65.5%, respectively. Both 'Affirmed' and 'Citation Fore' were significantly lower than entry JR-522, which provided the greatest salt tolerance of all perennial ryegrass entries at that point. Kentucky bluegrass 'Moonshine' was observed to retain significantly less green tissue than both 'Diva' and 'Park'. Of all Kentucky bluegrass cultivars, 'Park' provided the greatest percentage of green canopy tissue with 56.4%. No other significant differences existed within species. Although the experimental design and analysis did not allow for significance tests of differences between species means, there was a clear trend of tall fescue cultivars possessing the greatest salt tolerance as is reflected in the species groupings in Fig. 3.4. The overall mean percent green tissue across all tall fescue entries in the data set was 80.6%. Tall fescue 'Wolfpack II' had the highest mean percent green tissue to that point in the salt exposure profile, with 82.9% green tissue followed by 'Grande II' and 'Endeavor II' with 82.6% and 82.3%, respectively. Idaho bentgrass and Chewings fescue provided the lowest mean salt tolerances by species and the Minnesota ecotype of prairie junegrass was the lowest entry overall in the data set with 27.8% green tissue.

Data collected after the 2-wk sustained exposure to 24 dS m⁻¹ (Data Set 4) also showed significant differences between entries (Fig. 3.5); however, no significant differences existed between entries within species. Overall, slender creeping red fescue entries had the highest mean percent green tissue with 52.8%. Slender creeping red fescues 'Sealink' and 'Seabreeze GT' were the best of that species with 55.1% and 55.0% green tissue, respectively. Neither of those two entries was significantly different from 'Jaguar 4G' tall fescue, which maintained the highest mean percent green tissue in the trial after the full salt exposure profile, with 56.6% green tissue. Although alkaligrass entries performed similarly to those of several other species including blue hard fescue, strong creeping red fescue, and perennial ryegrass in Data Set 3, they had a higher overall mean than each of those species with 63.5% green tissue in Data Set 4. Moreover, all cultivars of alkaligrass were statistically significantly better than both cultivars of Chewings fescue, which had an overall species mean of 3.5%. Perennial ryegrass and Kentucky bluegrass cultivars were observed to perform much worse relative to the other species after the full salt exposure profile (Data Set 4) than in the previous results (Data Set 3) with overall species means of just 15.9% and 11.3%, respectively. Of the Kentucky bluegrass entries, 'Park' maintained the highest percent green tissue with 15.8%, and perennial ryegrass JR-522 led all entries of that species with 23.4% green tissue remaining. 'Radar' Chewings fescue was the worst overall entry after the full salt exposure profile with a mean of just 3.3% green tissue.

Discussion

This trial was conducted to quantitatively evaluate the relative salt tolerance of cool-season turfgrasses using nutrient solution culture in a controlled environment. Use of digital image analysis allowed for a more accurate measure of salinity tolerance during vegetative growth than visual rating methods used in previous studies (Marcum, 2001; Rose-Fricker and Wipff, 2001; Pessaraki and Kopec, 2008; Wang et al., 2011; Koch and Bonos, 2011b). In both the data collected following the 2-wk exposure to 14 dS m⁻¹ (Data Set 3) and that at the end of the 24 dS m⁻¹ exposure (Data Set 4), tall fescue and fine fescue entries outperformed those of other species in the trial while cultivars and ecotypes of Kentucky bluegrass and prairie junegrass were among the least salt-tolerant. These results generally agree with previous trials in both greenhouse (Alshammary et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2011) and field settings where NaCl exposure due to application of road salt is a problem (Brown and Gorres, 2011; Friell et al., 2012), although tall fescue was not observed to perform as well in roadside trials. In addition to establishment, weather, disease, and other field phenomenon not captured by greenhouse experiments, a number of other factors may explain differences between greenhouse and roadside evaluations of salt tolerance. Bowman et al. (2006a) showed that decreased nitrogen status reduced differences in salt tolerance between cultivars of tall fescue. They further demonstrated that salinity and nitrogen status in a nutrient solution culture system played a role in limiting nitrogen uptake by tall fescue plants (Bowman et al., 2006b). Their results may explain differences between observations in the field and the nitrogen-replete greenhouse environment. Also, formulation of an appropriate nutrient solution to simulate road salt exposure is complicated by the use of a variable mix of sodium, magnesium, and calcium chlorides on roads as well as the variety of anti-caking agents and corrosion inhibitors used in the treatment of the salt.

Despite tall fescue entries performing best at the two highest salt levels, cultivars of several other species were observed to be not statistically different from them. Alkaligrass cultivars 'Salton Sea', 'Salty', 'Fults', and 'Oceania' were all not statistically different from the top-performing cultivar for data taken after the 14 dS m⁻¹ or 24 dS m⁻¹ exposure periods. The same four cultivars were found to be tolerant of road salt applications when established on roadsides (Friell et al., 2012). Biesboer et al. (1998) found alkaligrass to be highly persistent on roadsides where damage due to NaCl was known to be a problem, but attributed its success to fast growth and prolific seed production. While these may be factors in its success on roadsides, results from this trial agree with others (Alshammary et al., 2004) which have shown that alkaligrass is physiologically adapted to be tolerant of exposure to NaCl.

Numerous fine fescue entries performed well following both the 14 dS m⁻¹ and 24 dS m⁻¹ exposure periods. 'Seabreeze GT', 'Sealink', 'Shoreline', and ASR050 slender creeping red fescues were the top-performing fine fescue entries following both of those salinity exposure periods, and were not significantly different from the best entry after either. 'Shoreline' slender creeping red fescue has also been observed to survive extremely well on roadsides where exposure to NaCl is a problem (Friell et al., 2012) and, as a species, slender creeping red fescue has been shown to be salt tolerant in other trials (Torello and Symington, 1984; Rose-Fricker and Wipff, 2001). While few studies have ranked cultivars within the species, Brown and Gorres (2011) concluded that in low-fertility, un-amended roadsides soils there was no clear advantage to the use of improved cultivars over common creeping red fescue (*Festuca rubra* L.) due to overall poor persistence. Results presented here indicate that under extreme, prolonged salt exposure (Data Set 4) differences between cultivars within a species are not statistically

significant and that the trends among the species mean tolerances are most dominant. Taken together, results of the two studies indicate that under extreme stress, cultivar selection is of little importance relative to species selection. Results of this study confirm the ranking of red fescue species suggested by Humphreys (1981) with entries of slender creeping red fescues performing better than those of strong creeping red fescue or Chewings fescue. Interestingly, entries of Chewings fescue, which were previously found to persist well on roadsides where de-icing salt is applied (Friell et al., 2012), were among the worst entries in the trial. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is the confounding effect of growth in a fully saturated media as opposed to the variable moisture levels of soils in the field. Data collected following the 4-wk adaptation period prior to salt exposure indicated no significant differences existed between entries in the trial. Although this type of culture system has been used previously to test for salt tolerance, the possibility remains that certain species or cultivars are more negatively impacted than others over time by growth under those conditions.

Despite having one of the lowest species averages in the trial, entries of Kentucky bluegrass were found to be significantly different from one another in Data Set 3, following the 14 dS m⁻¹ exposure period. Using an overhead spray exposure system, Koch et al. (2011) found Kentucky bluegrasses ‘Diva’ and ‘Langara’ to have very good salt tolerance. Results of this trial also show ‘Diva’ to be among the best of the Kentucky bluegrass entries with only ‘Park’ retaining a higher percent green tissue. However, ‘Langara’ retained much less green tissue despite not being significantly different from any other entry of that species. This discrepancy indicates that, as suggested by Koch et al. (2011), consideration of foliar exposure is likely an important aspect of relative salinity tolerance assessments.

The two entries of prairie junegrass performed significantly differently following the 14 dS m⁻¹ exposure level. Improved European cultivar ‘Barkoel’ retained a much higher percentage of green tissue than the Minnesota ecotype, although with just two entries in the trial it is not clear if the difference is an effect of breeding efforts or a difference in the habitat of origin. However, the results agree with those from Wang et al. (2011) who previously found European cultivars ‘Barkoel’ and ‘Barleria’ to possess greater salt tolerance than several native North American populations of prairie junegrass, including that from Minnesota. Together, the results indicate some potential for improvement of salt tolerance in the North American prairie junegrass populations

Conclusions

Quantitative evaluation using digital image analysis proved to be a valuable tool for quickly assessing differences in salt tolerance between cool-season turfgrasses grown in nutrient solution culture. Using that technique, no significant differences among cultivars were observed after 4 wk growth in a nutrient solution culture system. After a minimal salt exposure sequence ending at 4 dS m⁻¹, no significant differences existed between any trial entries. Following a moderate salt exposure sequence ending at 14 dS m⁻¹, significant differences existed between trial entries as well as between some entries within species. In particular, those species that retained some of the lowest overall means for percent green tissue, such as Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass, showed the greatest number of differences between entries within the species. Following the most prolonged salt exposure, which ended at 24 dS m⁻¹, differences between entries within species were not significant and trends among the mean tolerances of species were most important. Based upon these results, it can be concluded that turfgrass professionals should

consider the level of salt exposure expected when deciding which species to use and whether or not improved cultivars can provide improved salt tolerance. Cultivars of tall fescue performed best at the highest levels of salinity, followed closely by creeping red fescues and alkaligrass. Cultivars of Chewings fescue, Idaho bentgrass, and Kentucky bluegrass were the least salt tolerant. Results of the study generally agree with previous assessments of salt tolerance of the same species and cultivars; however, limitations of the nutrient solution culture system should be considered when conducting future assessments. Many of the cultivars that performed well in this trial had not previously been evaluated for salt tolerance and performed better than other, older cultivars. This indicates that improvements are being made in cool-season turfgrass germplasm for salt tolerance and the results of this trial may be used to guide turfgrass breeders in their future efforts. Cultivars identified as performing well in this trial may also be used by turfgrass managers for the implementation and improvement of turfgrasses for salt-affected areas and may be used for the creation of salt-tolerant turfgrass species mixtures.

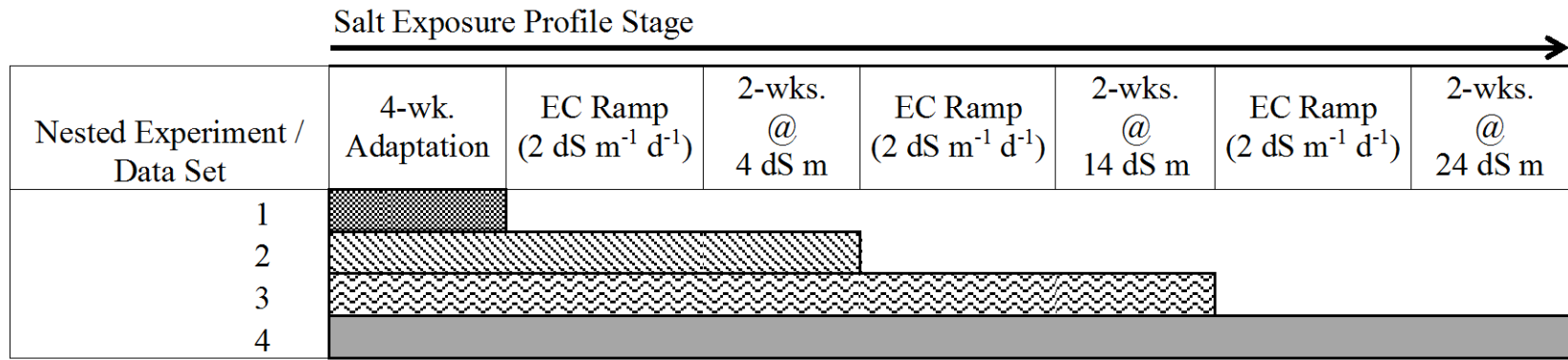


Figure 3.1. Salt exposure profile stages experienced by pots for each nested experiment. Pots experienced exposure to each stage as indicated by horizontal bars before data was collected and analyzed as an individual experiment. Data set 1 was used to confirm no differences existed prior to increasing salt exposure.

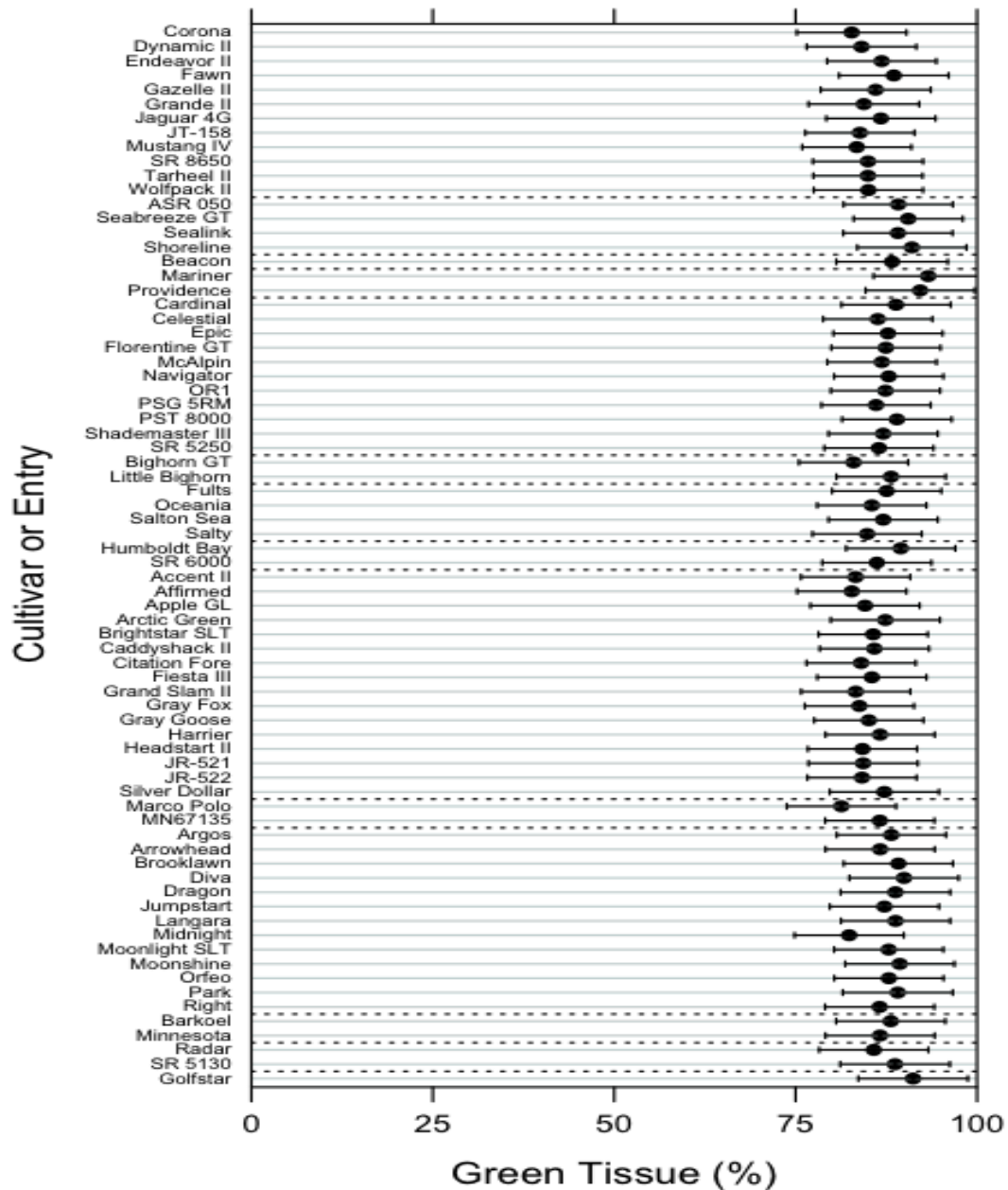


Figure 3.2. Cultivar effects and 95% confidence intervals on percent green tissue following 4-wk adaptation stage of salt exposure profile (Data Set 1). Species are separated by dotted lines. From top to bottom, species are: tall fescue, slender creeping red fescue, hard fescue, creeping bentgrass, strong creeping red fescue, blue hard fescue, alkaligrass, tufted hairgrass, perennial ryegrass, sheep fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, prairie junegrass, Chewings fescue, and Idaho bentgrass.

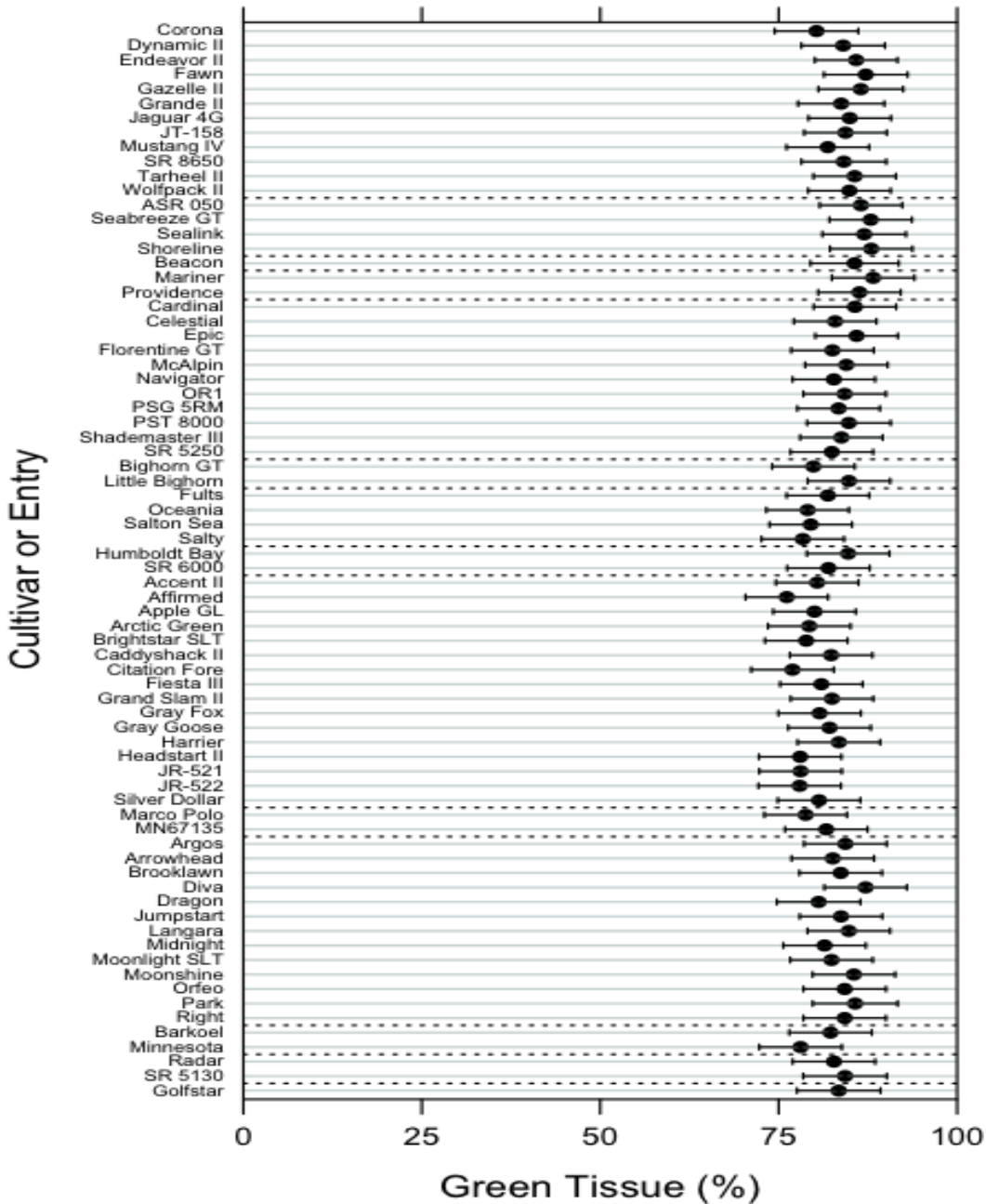


Figure 3.3. Cultivar effects and 95% confidence intervals on percent green tissue following 4 dS m⁻¹ stage of salt exposure profile (Data Set 2). Species are separated by dotted lines. From top to bottom, species are: tall fescue, slender creeping red fescue, hard fescue, creeping bentgrass, strong creeping red fescue, blue hard fescue, alkaligrass, tufted hairgrass, perennial ryegrass, sheep fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, prairie junegrass, Chewings fescue, and Idaho bentgrass.

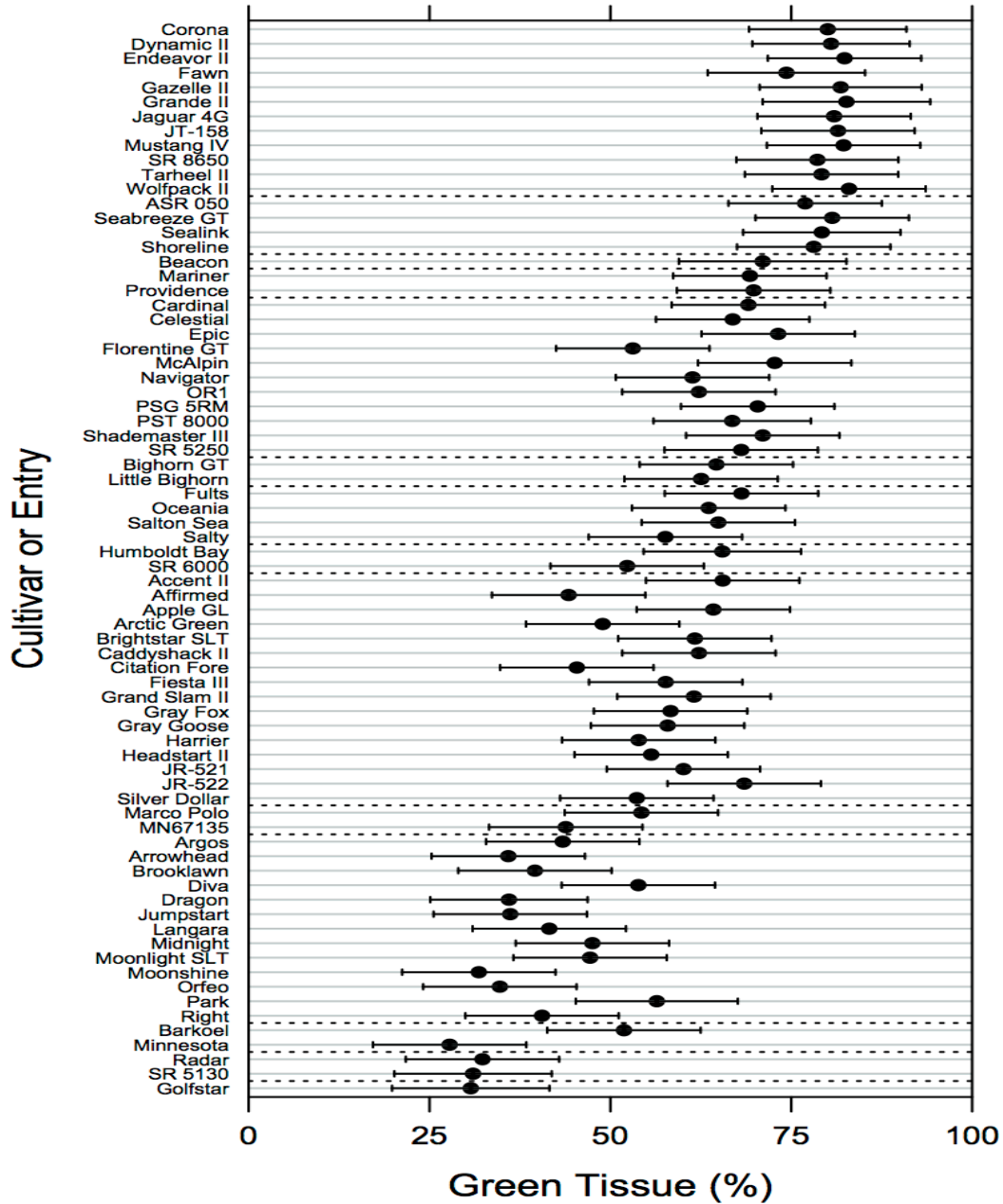


Figure 3.4. Cultivar effects and 95% confidence intervals on percent green tissue following 14 dS m⁻¹ stage of salt exposure profile (Data Set 3). Species are separated by dotted lines. From top to bottom, species are: tall fescue, slender creeping red fescue, hard fescue, creeping bentgrass, strong creeping red fescue, blue hard fescue, alkaligrass, tufted hairgrass, perennial ryegrass, sheep fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, prairie junegrass, Chewings fescue, and Idaho bentgrass.

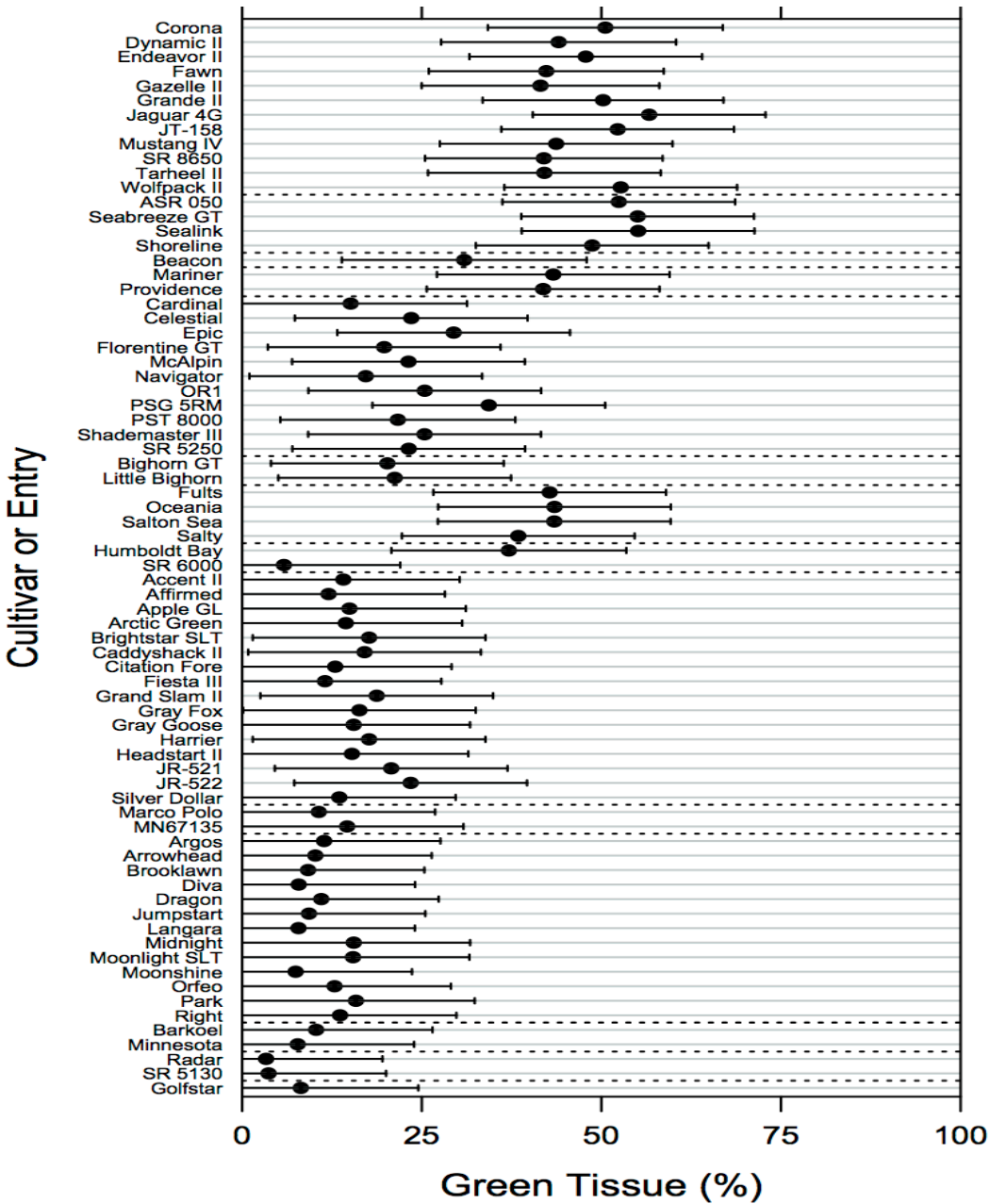


Figure 3.5. Cultivar effects and 95% confidence intervals on percent green tissue following 24 dS m⁻¹ stage of salt exposure profile (Data Set 4). Species are separated by dotted lines. From top to bottom, species are: tall fescue, slender creeping red fescue, hard fescue, creeping bentgrass, strong creeping red fescue, blue hard fescue, alkaligrass, tufted hairgrass, perennial ryegrass, sheep fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, prairie junegrass, Chewings fescue, and Idaho bentgrass.

Table 3.1. Cultivars and entries included in the greenhouse salt tolerance screening.

Cultivar or Entry	Species[†]	Cultivar or Entry	Species
Fults	AK	Grand Slam II	PR
Oceania	AK	Gray Fox	PR
Salton Sea	AK	Gray Goose	PR
Salty	AK	Harrier	PR
Bighorn GT	BHD	Headstart II	PR
Little Bighorn	BHD	JR-521	PR
Mariner	CBG	JR-522	PR
Providence	CBG	Silver Dollar	PR
Radar	CH	Marco Polo	SH
SR 5130	CH	MN67135	SH
Humboldt Bay (ecotype)	DC	ASR 050	SLCRF
SR 6000	DC	Seabreeze GT	SLCRF
Beacon	HF	Sealink	SLCRF
Golfstar	IBG	Shoreline	SLCRF
Argos	KBG	Cardinal	STCRF
Arrowhead	KBG	Celestial	STCRF
Brooklawn	KBG	Epic	STCRF
Diva	KBG	Florentine GT	STCRF
Dragon	KBG	McAlpin	STCRF
Jumpstart	KBG	Navigator	STCRF
Langara	KBG	OR1	STCRF
Midnight	KBG	PSG 5RM	STCRF
Moonlight SLT	KBG	PST 8000	STCRF
Moonshine	KBG	Shademaster III	STCRF
Orfeo	KBG	SR 5250	STCRF
Park	KBG	Corona	TF
Right	KBG	Dynamic II	TF
Barkoel	KM	Endeavor II	TF
Minnesota (ecotype)	KM	Fawn	TF
Accent II	PR	Gazelle II	TF
Affirmed	PR	Grande II	TF
Apple GL	PR	Jaguar 4G	TF
Arctic Green	PR	JT-158	TF
Brightstar SLT	PR	Mustang IV	TF
Caddyshack II	PR	SR 8650	TF
Citation Fore	PR	Tarheel II	TF
Fiesta III	PR	Wolfpack II	TF

[†] AK, alkaligrass; BHD, blue hard fescue; CBG, creeping bentgrass; CH, Chewings fescue; DC, tufted hairgrass; HF, hard fescue; IBG, Idaho bentgrass; KBG, Kentucky bluegrass; KM, prairie junegrass; PR, perennial ryegrass; SH, sheep fescue; SLCRF, slender creeping red fescue; STCRF, strong creeping red fescue; TF, tall fescue

Table 3.2. Species and seeding rates used in the salt tolerance screening.

Species	Seeding Rate (kg ha⁻¹)	Seeding Rate (lb A⁻¹)
fine fescue	244.1	217.8
tall fescue	341.7	304.9
Kentucky bluegrass	73.2	65.3
perennial ryegrass	390.5	348.4
tufted hairgrass	97.6	87.1
prairie junegrass	146.5 – 195.3	130.7 – 174.2
creeping bentgrass	48.8	43.5
Idaho bentgrass	146.5	130.7
alkaligrass	195.3	174.2

Table 3.3. Analysis of greenhouse fertilizer used during establishment of turfgrasses in silica sand.

Nutrient	Concentration (mg L⁻¹)
nitrogen	200.0
phosphorus	22.0
potassium	83.0
iron	2.5
magnesium	0.75
boron	0.10
copper	0.05
manganese	0.28
molybdenum	0.05
sulfur	114.0

CHAPTER 4: COOL-SEASON TURFGRASS SPECIES MIXTURES FOR ROADSIDES IN MINNESOTA

Introduction

Roadsides present significant and unpredictable challenges to maintaining vegetative cover due to stressful conditions that can be extreme. Drought, low fertility, disease, ice cover, and exposure to road salt are just a few examples of the many stresses placed on roadside vegetation. Moreover, the mid-continental position of locations like Minnesota results in a highly variable environment including a wide range of temperature, humidity, and soil moisture conditions. These conditions necessitate vegetation with a distinct set of plant community characteristics that must be considered when identifying proper vegetative cover.

Turfgrasses are typically implemented on roadsides to avoid contrast with adjacent land use, prevent erosion, and enhance visibility for drivers without the need for extensive mowing. Their use as roadside vegetation first became of interest during the 1930s due to the construction of a number of large-scale highway projects including the United States Numbered Highway System and the Autobahnen in Germany (Hottenstein, 1969; Weingroff, 2013). However, no single species of turfgrass possesses a superlative tolerance to all of the concurrent stresses experienced by roadside vegetation. It is well documented that multi-species assemblages are needed to maintain a high-functioning ecosystem (Tilman et al., 2001; Zavaleta et al., 2010; Isbell et al., 2011). Watschke and Schmidt (1992) reviewed the literature showing that, indeed, this concept extends to turfgrass communities. It is therefore likely that a mixture capable of taking advantage of the unique tolerances of several species will produce the most sustainable and functional roadside turfgrass.

Selection of the proper species proportions for use on roadsides, however, has been troublesome. This is, in part, because, most previous mixture experiments have not been conducted in a roadside environment and have not used cultivars chosen based on their ability to establish and survive on roadsides. Most trials of cool-season turfgrass species mixtures in the current literature have evaluated the effects on sward composition of treatments such as golf cart or foot traffic, mowing frequency and height, and fertility regime. These factors, while important in other contexts, are not entirely relevant in roadside ecosystems. Moreover, such practices are neither easily specified nor often followed in roadside vegetation maintenance practices. Those mixture trials have largely shown that significant changes in performance can be generated by altering mixture species proportions (Engel and Trout, 1980; Shildrick, 1980, 1982; Brede and Duich, 1984a, 1984b; Hsiang et al., 1997; Dunn et al., 2002; Larsen et al., 2004); although, most entries in those trials were selected based on mixtures that were convenient or commercially available.

Fortunately, the roadside turfgrass mixture work that has been done has provided strong indications as to which species may be useful in that environment. Many early attempts to provide a suitable grass mixture for roadsides resulted in overly complicated mixtures including between five and fifteen grasses, three to four legumes, and two herbs (Boeker, 1970). Since that time, grass mixtures for roadsides have been improved and refined to use as few as four well-chosen species (Boeker, 1970). Some basic principles for creating cool-season turfgrass mixtures for roadsides were laid out by Blaser (1963) who concluded that seed mixtures should not contain any species with aggressive seedlings such as ryegrasses or cereals, and found that all

mixtures containing tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass performed well in roadside trials. Henensal et al. (1980) conducted a roadside study of polystands in a clay soil outside of Paris, France in what was described as a marine climate, altered to some extent. The authors reported that including more than 10% perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne* L.) in the mixture impeded growth of all species in the mixture and that performance over time was generally poor. Moreover, they noted that polystands consisting of ‘Dawson’ slender creeping red fescue, ‘Biljart’ hard fescue [*Festuca trachyphylla* (Hack.) Krajina], and ‘Tracenta’ colonial bentgrass (*Agrostis capillaris* L.) performed best and concluded that, in that environment, roadside mixtures should be based on those three species. Butler et al. (1974) identified individual species as being salt tolerant, but did not evaluate mixtures and concluded that there was great need for further research focused on salt-related plant problems. Brown and Gorres (2011) evaluated the effect of soil amendments on several monocultures and one experimental species mixture from the Rhode Island Department of Transportation on roadsides in Rhode Island. The mixture performed similarly to monostands of strong creeping red fescue (*Festuca rubra* L. ssp. *rubra*) for turf cover throughout the entire study and across several soil amendments.

It is clear that there is further need for studies aimed at identifying the best cool-season turfgrass mixture for roadsides. Nevertheless, focus has largely remained on single-species performance under the multitude of stresses present on roadsides. Today, several states have specified turfgrass mixtures for roadsides with the goal of providing basic ecosystem services required of roadside turfgrass such as providing safe driving conditions, preventing soil erosion, and filtering runoff water. In addition, it is ideal that the mixtures should maximize persistence over time. Those mixtures make use of several species, but given the demonstrated difficulty in the design and analysis of roadside mixture trials, they are seldom based on results of recent, designed experiments. The need exists for more quantitative, *in situ* evaluations of mixture performance. That includes the need to specify a method for identifying superior turfgrass species mixtures. Such a method should: 1) systematically define mixtures to be included in the trial, 2) quantify the effect of each species on the success of a mixture including any synergisms or interferences with other species that may be present, and 3) identify the best possible mixture composition based on the quantitative effects of each species.

In the present study we have taken a system-level statistical approach, similar to that suggested by Friell et al. (2013b), which allowed us to identify a best mixture of cool-season turfgrass species for roadside establishment in Minnesota, USA based on carefully designed entries and quantitative measures of survival. We selected cultivars based on their ability to establish and survive on roadsides in Minnesota (Friell et al., 2012) and direct assessments of their salt tolerance during vegetative growth (Friell et al., 2013a). While our results are applicable under the environmental conditions of the study, our approach is generalizable such that the wide range of stressful conditions and maintenance practices, which cannot be consistently well defined on roadsides, may be accounted for at any given location. Ultimately, implementation of this novel approach to cool-season turfgrass seed mixture experimentation provided a sound methodology by which to accomplish the objectives of our study: 1) assess the performance of several mixtures of cool-season turfgrass for survival on roadsides in Minnesota, 2) quantitatively evaluate the influence of individual species on the survival of turfgrass mixtures on Minnesota roadsides, and 3) identify a suitable mixture of cool-season turfgrass species for Minnesota roadsides.

Methods and Materials

General Approach

First we identified mixtures of cool-season turfgrass that performed well on roadsides in Minnesota. We then quantified the extent to which individual species were responsible for the superior performance. Finally we used that information to define the best possible turfgrass seed mixture for roadside environments like those in the study.

The mixtures included in the trial were designed using an extreme vertices simplex design (Snee and Marquardt, 1974). Extreme vertices designs systematically identify mixtures to be design points in a trial based on the total number of species in the trial and the constraints placed on proportion of each species. Each of those mixtures, in effect, becomes a treatment for the experiment and is seeded into a plot. Given a large number of species included in the trial, the set of identified treatments is likely to exceed the physical space available for the trial. In such a case, a design optimization algorithm is used to select a subset of the design points that allow for the greatest amount of information to be gained from the experiment. In this type of experiment, the overall seeding rate is held constant so as to avoid confounding the effects of total seeding rate with effects of individual species seeding rate.

The response data were examined in three ways. First, the effects of mixture, time, and weed cover on percent living ground cover were assessed using linear mixed effects modelling. The purpose of this was simply to identify any obvious trends in mixture performance and provide a check for the results of the second and third analysis steps. Second, logistic regression was used to quantify the extent to which the presence or absence of a species in an applied seed mixture increased or decreased the long-term success of the plot. This allowed for the identification of species that may be considered important to the success of a plot. Finally, a polynomial function specifically designed for simplex experiments (Scheffé, 1963) was fit to survival response data. The fitting was done in a least squares sense, using the species proportions as the independent variables. Fitting the polynomials was equivalent to carrying out multiple linear regression with the intercept term forced to be equal to zero. The resulting regression equation defined a response surface for the survival of all possible mixtures in the design space, from which, the best possible mixture was predicted.

Study Sites

The experiment was conducted at two sites in the metropolitan area surrounding St. Paul, MN, USA. The selected research sites were: (1) Larpenteur Ave. along the University of Minnesota campus (St. Paul, MN, USA) and (2) County Highway 14 (Centerville, MN, USA). The experiment was conducted at two separate sites, which were chosen to represent two of the many different types of roadsides where mowed turfgrass would typically be used in Minnesota. The sites were both established in fall 2011, and maintained through spring 2013. The Larpenteur Ave. site was located in the area between the curb and the sidewalk adjacent to the road on the south side of a four-lane divided urban street. The Highway 14 site was located in the area between the curb and a bicycle trail adjacent to the road on the west side of a two-lane suburban road. Both sites received full sun during the day and were not shaded. Temperatures in the top two inches of soil at those sites may regularly exceed 35° C during sunny summer days.

From late fall to early spring, sodium chloride road salt is applied to the roads during snow and ice storms as needed. Salt is typically scattered from the back of a snow plow truck through an

auger mechanism. Minimum recommended salt application rates for sections of road such as these range from 11.4 to 45.4 kg lane⁻¹ km⁻¹, but may be significantly higher depending on local road and weather conditions (Minnesota Local Road Research Board, 2012). Vegetation is exposed to the salt either because it may scatter onto the plot area during application, or be dissolved in runoff water during spring thaws. However, at both locations a curb prevents much of the road runoff water from reaching the plots.

Mixture Design

Nine species of cool-season turfgrass were identified as constituent species for the roadside turfgrass mixture experiment including creeping bentgrass (*Agrostis stolonifera* L.), Kentucky bluegrass, alkaligrass, strong creeping red fescue, slender creeping red fescue, hard fescue, sheep fescue (*Festuca ovina* L.), tall fescue, and Chewings fescue (Table 4.1). A single, commercially-available cultivar was chosen to represent each species in the trial. Cultivars were selected based on previous assessments of their ability to establish and survive on Minnesota roadsides and direct assessment of their salt tolerance during vegetative growth in a controlled environment (Friell et al., 2012, 2013a).

Seed mixtures of those species were systematically designed as an extreme vertices simplex using the *Xvert* algorithm of Snee and Marquardt (1974) as implemented in the SAS software function *adxxvert*. Constituent species seed proportions were limited to 40% of the total mixture, by seed count, so as to force the inclusion of more than two species but not require so many species so as to make the mixtures overly complicated, as described by Boeker (1970). In addition, a minimum of 5% was required for inclusion as a constituent species in the mixture. Species proportions were specified as percent of total pure live seed (PLS) in the mixture and the overall total seeding rate was fixed at 2 PLS cm⁻², which is a generally accepted total density for seeding a closed-canopy turfgrass sward. Average 1000-seed weight and germination percentage were determined for each species, and viability-adjusted seed weight was used as a proxy measurement to provide the correct PLS count for each mixture.

Available space at the roadside sites allowed for the inclusion of 51 mixtures in the trial. Of the mixtures defined by the algorithm, 50 were selected (Table 4.2) and used as treatments in the experiment and the rest were discarded. Those 50 mixtures were chosen using a D-optimality criterion with *proc optex* in SAS software, and each was assigned a treatment number for identification. A mixture representing the currently specified salt-tolerant mixture for the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) was also included in the trial. For that mixture, species proportions from MnDOT road construction standards were used with each species represented by its respective cultivar used in this trial. That mixture was not assigned an identification number; rather was identified by the name “MNDOT” in the trial.

Experiment Design and Establishment

Plots were laid out in a randomized complete block design with three replications at each site. The replications ran parallel to the road, and each plot was defined to be 1.52 m parallel to the road by 0.91 m perpendicular to the road. Plots at both sites were sprayed with a broadleaf herbicide [a.i. Triisopropanalaminium Salt of 2,4-Dichlorophenoxyacetic Acid; 1-methylheptyl (4-amino-3,5-dichloro-6-fluoro-2-pyridyloxy) acetate; Triethylaminium Salt of 3,5,6-Trichloro-2-Pyridinyloxyacetic Acid] at a rate of 4.77 L ha⁻¹ and with glyphosate at a rate of 7.72 L ha⁻¹ to eliminate existing vegetation. Soil was tilled to a depth of 15 cm and smoothed using hand rakes.

Dead plant material was left on the surface of the plots. Starter fertilizer was applied to provide 26.8 kg N ha⁻¹, 21.3 kg P ha⁻¹, and 49.0 kg K ha⁻¹ to help ensure good establishment. Soil samples were collected to a depth of 10.16 cm at points 45.7 cm away from the curb and every 19.6 m along the length of the experiment. Soil samples were bulked together by replication, and submitted to the University of Minnesota Research Analytical Lab for analysis of pH, organic matter, and saturated paste extract electrical conductivity (EC) as well as extractable phosphorus and potassium. Soil texture was also analysed for a bulk sample from each experimental site. In April 2012, soil samples were collected again in the identical way, bulked together by replicate, and analysed for extractable calcium, magnesium, and sodium, using standard procedures (Table 4.3).

Each of the 51 seed mixtures was randomly assigned as a treatment to a single plot in each replication. Seed was applied to plots by shaking mixtures in jars and hand seeding followed by light raking. Both sites were covered using Futerra erosion control blankets (Profile Products, LLC., Buffalo Grove, IL, USA) and water was applied by a water truck as needed during establishment. Following establishment, no additional fertilizer or water was applied at either site.

Data Collection

Percent green ground cover was used as a measure of mixture performance. To assess the percent green ground cover, digital images were collected of each plot at both roadside test sites using a 0.91 m x 0.91 m x 0.91 m custom-built light box containing 16 fluorescent lights during the weeks of April 22, June 17, July 15, August 19, and October 28 in 2012. Pictures were taken from 0.91 m above the ground and stored for later analysis. In addition, weed cover was visually assessed on a 1-9 scale with 1 representing complete weed coverage, 9 representing no weeds present in the plot, and 6 representing approximately 33% weed cover.

In June 2013, a final data collection was made using a grid-intersect method wherein a 9.14 cm x 15.24 cm grid of 100 points was overlain on each plot and grid intersections located on living turfgrass plant tissue were counted. The total proportion of points counted for each plot was used as a measurement of mixture performance. The grid intersect method was chosen for the final data collection because of extensive death of turfgrass in a majority of the plots which resulted in a sparse pattern of surviving plants and extensive weed encroachment. Due to difficulty in distinguishing among the five different fine leaf fescues, species identification was not recorded for the plants counted in each grid.

Data Analysis

Digital images were analyzed for percent green ground cover using a custom script written in Image Processing Toolbox (MATLAB, 2011). By quantifying the percent of the ground area covered in green plant tissue, we were able to assess the relative performance of the mixtures in the presence of several roadside stresses. The resulting data set was analyzed using R Environment for Statistical Computing (R Development Core Team, 2012). Percent cover data from both locations were combined and arcsin transformed. Data from the first two dates (hereafter, 2012 spring data) were analyzed together using a linear mixed-effects model for repeated measures in R, and data from the final three dates (hereafter, 2012 summer data) were analyzed together in the same way. Pooling of data into two seasonal groups was done in order to

isolate data collection dates representing spring survival from those that occurred during extreme heat and drought.

For each of the spring and summer data sets, a full model was created including main effects for weed cover, time, and mixture, as well as all two-way interactions. Site and replication were used as random effects, which are characterized as distributions in a linear mixed effects model, and are therefore not testable in a traditional ANOVA sense. Variable selection for the fixed effects was carried out using backward elimination with a model containing all three main effects as the smallest acceptable model. The term for weed cover was included as a covariate in the full models to account for the fact that the method of digital image analysis used, which is based exclusively on image hue information, is not capable of distinguishing between green weeds and green turfgrass. Thus, it was desirable to control for weed cover statistically. Where a better fit was achieved, a weighted variance was used and was created as a function of the fitted values using the *varPower* function in R. Comparisons of sequential models were made using Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC). In the resulting regression equation, positive regression coefficients indicate an increase of percent green turfgrass cover as a result of the mixture while negative values indicate a decrease in percent green turfgrass cover. Using this method of analysis, the relative magnitudes of the regression coefficients were used to rank each mixture in the trial as to its ability to successfully maintain green vegetative cover. Confidence intervals at the 95% level were calculated using the standard error for the estimates for each mixture coefficient. Mixtures that performed well were compared against the results of later quantitative analyses.

For the spring 2013 grid counts, data from both locations were combined and the proportion of intersects with surviving turfgrass plants in each plot was used to threshold the data. Plots that retained 60% or greater survival were designated as successful and assigned a 1, while those with less than 60% survival rate were designated as failures and assigned a 0. The threshold level of 60% was chosen both because that level of cover is likely to retain a high level of functionality and because it is consistent with the often-used 1-9 scale where 6, or 62.5% of full scale, is considered acceptable in turfgrass research (Skogley and Sawyer, 1992).

A generalized linear model was fit to the thresholded binomial response data including terms for site, replication, and the inclusion or exclusion of each species. Species inclusion was a categorical variable with the value of 1 if the species was in the seed mixture applied to that plot and 0 if it was not. The model was fit using the *glm* function in R. The thresholded grid count data analysis allowed us to quantify the effect of including individual species in the mixtures on the log-odds of retaining 60% or greater living turfgrass cover. Log-odds is defined as $\log[p/(1-p)]$ where p is the probability of 60% or more of the intersects in a plot having a living turfgrass plant beneath it. Positive and negative coefficients for each term reflect an increase or decrease, respectively, in the probability of a plot meeting those criteria due to the inclusion of each species in the planted mixture.

The third analysis allowed us to quantify the effect of the proportion of each species in the mixture on the survival rates of plants in the roadside turfgrass mixtures. For the analysis, the proportion of grid intersects with surviving turfgrass plants from the combined 2013 grid count data were arcsin transformed and modeled using zero-intercept multiple linear regression. A full model of all main effects and two-way interactions of species proportions in the seed mixture was created and backward elimination was carried out to determine the best model using AIC as a model comparison metric. The data for the current MNDOT standard mix was removed from the data set prior to this analysis since its species proportions were outside of the allowed range

for all other mixtures in the trial. The resulting regression equation defined a response surface for the percent survival of all possible mixtures in the design space. From it, the best possible mixture was predicted by identifying the combination of species proportions that maximized the value of the function.

Results

The final model for the 2012 spring image data contained fixed effect terms for all three main effects as well as a *weed* × *week* interaction term. Mixture 5, which had a regression coefficient of 0.176, was found to have the largest effect on increasing the arcsine transformed percent green ground cover in the spring of 2012 (Fig. 4.1); however, it was statistically different from just 10 other mixtures in the trial based on the 95% confidence intervals. It, along with the next two best performing mixtures, mixture 8 and mixture 24, which had regression coefficients of 0.167 and 0.158, respectively, contained the maximum 40% of slender creeping red fescue. Mixture numbers 29, 30, 31, 32, and the MNDOT standard mixture had the lowest regression coefficients in the trial during that period. Each of those entries were found to decrease the arcsine transformed percent green ground cover with slopes of -0.053, -0.063, -0.003, and -0.014, respectively.

The final model for the 2012 summer data contained all three main effect terms, and was modeled using a weighted variance as a function of the fitted values. Separation of the regression coefficients for each mixture term using their respective 95% confidence intervals (Fig. 4.2) showed mixtures 17, 10, and 5 to have the three largest regression coefficients of 0.123, 0.112, and 0.093 in summer 2012. The standard MNDOT mixture had the third lowest regression coefficient of all trial entries during that time of -0.067.

Logistic regression of the thresholded grid count data revealed significant effects of including some species, but not others (Fig. 4.3). Of particular note was the coefficient on the term for inclusion of tall fescue, which decreased the overall log-odds by 1.78 and was significant at the 99% confidence level. Strong creeping red fescue also produced a decrease in the log-odds of success of -0.238, but was not significant ($p=0.73$) at the 95% confidence level. All other species produced increases in the log-odds of success, the largest of which were slender creeping red fescue, hard fescue, and sheep fescue. Slender creeping red fescue increased the log-odds of success by 1.049, but was not significant at the 95% confidence level ($p=0.1$). Log-odds of success were increased by inclusion of hard fescue and sheep fescue by 0.95 and 0.96, respectively, and both estimates were significant at the 90% confidence level ($p=0.09$ and $p=0.07$).

Through multiple linear regression of the arcsin transformed grid count survival proportions onto the seed mixture species proportions, we quantified the effect of each species proportion on overall mixture performance. The final model (Table 4.4) contained a single interaction term for slender creeping red fescue × alkaligrass interference. The model had a residual standard error of 0.2461 on 290 degrees of freedom and adjusted R^2 of 0.806. The analysis revealed that the strongest effects on survival percentage were seen as a result of including hard fescue, sheep fescue, and slender creeping red fescue for which the regression coefficients were 0.85, 0.67, and 0.65, respectively. Each was significant above the 99% confidence level. Conversely, tall fescue had no significant effect on increasing the proportion of surviving turfgrass plants, and Chewings fescue had a small effect with a coefficient of 0.247, which was significant above the 99% confidence level. Based on these results, the best possible mixture for the roadside sites, within

the maximum 40% PLS constraint would comprise 40% hard fescue, 40% sheep fescue, and 20% slender creeping red fescue.

Discussion

Throughout the data, it is possible to find evidence of each of the mixtures in the trial doing well at one point, as evidenced by the lack of many significant differences in the mixture comparisons. This is in large part due to the previous work that has been done which allowed us to design mixtures that all had promise for success on roadsides. There were some, however, that consistently out-performed others. Through our analysis we were able to determine which mixtures those were and the extent to which each species was responsible for the superior performance. This represents a significant step forward in the design and analysis of roadside and other turfgrass mixture experiments.

Each of the top three performing mixtures in spring 2012 (5, 8, and 24) contained the maximum allowed 40% slender creeping red fescue. The species has long been suggested for use in roadside mixtures (Boeker, 1970). It has been reported to have superior salt tolerance to other fescue species, including other *Festuca rubra* L. subspecies, which is attributable to its evolutionary history and habitat of origin (Hannon and Bradshaw, 1968; Humphreys, 1982) and has been demonstrated previously in salt spray and roadside trials (Humphreys, 1981). More importantly, Brown and Gorres (2011) and Friell et al. (2012) showed several cultivars of slender creeping red fescue to have higher mean survival rates on roadsides than most other species, including in Minnesota. With this in mind, it is not surprising that mixtures with the highest mean green ground cover contained a considerable percentage of the species. However, it is important to note that other mixtures contained 40% slender creeping red fescue as well and did not perform as well. This fact indicated that either the remaining species in the successful mixtures performed well relative to those in the less successful ones, or interactions among the included species played a significant role in their success or failure.

Interestingly, the worst three mixtures in the spring of 2012 (29, 30, and 31) each contained 40% alkaligrass, which has previously been suggested to be naturalized on some highways, and persistent on some roadsides (Butler et al., 1974; Friell et al., 2012). Although our mixture experiment results do not seem to agree with those observations, they are in agreement with previous work in which alkaligrass has not performed well under other low-input management similar to roadsides (Watkins et al., 2011). In fact, alkaligrass has been suggested for use only as a cover crop on some roadsides due to its lack of competitiveness in mixtures (Biesboer et al., 1998). The fact that alkaligrass may do well as a roadside cover crop, and at times as a monoculture, but not as a significant component of a mixture highlights the importance of evaluating turfgrass species mixtures, rather than individual cultivars, where mixtures are to be used in the final application.

Results of the summer 2012 analysis showed a different ranking of the mixtures, than the spring months. Many of those changes may reflect the intense heat and drought experienced during the summer of 2012. During the three-month period of August-October 2012 precipitation totals were 8.15 cm. The average high temperature for the month of July was 32.2 °C and an overall average temperature of 26.8 °C, which is 3.5°C above average, making it the second hottest month on record in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area for the period 1873-2012 (Minnesota Climatology Working Group, 2012). Moreover, mowing did not cease during that time as the plots were under the control of the University of Minnesota grounds crew and it was

not possible to request specific maintenance practices. Mowing during times of heat and drought stress is known to cause undue damage to the turfgrass plant (Parr et al., 1984; Liu and Huang, 2002) and may be responsible for a large proportion of the failed plots observed, particularly at the Larpenteur Ave. location where mowing occurred more frequently. Those conditions are representative of the intense stresses experienced by roadside vegetation.

Each of the top three mixtures from the summer 2012 period (17, 10, and 5) included 40% of one of hard fescue, sheep fescue, or slender creeping red fescue, or 40% of more than one of these species. Sheep fescue has been recommended for use on roadsides due to its drought tolerance (Duell and Schmit, 1974), and all three species have been found to have overall good adaptation to low-input and roadside conditions (Henensal et al., 1980; Watkins et al., 2011; Friell et al., 2012). Sheep and hard fescues are known to be especially drought tolerant (Ruemmele et al., 1995) which explains their ability to persist despite just 18.8 cm of precipitation between 18 June and 28 Oct. 2012.

Three of the five mixtures with the highest mean green cover percentages during that period contained 20% or more of tall fescue. Tall fescue is known to possess rooting characteristics that make it well-adapted to avoid or tolerate drought stress (Huang and Fry, 1998), both alone and in combination with heat stress (Jiang and Huang, 2001) or mowing (Richie et al., 2002). Although these traits may have contributed to the superior performance of those mixtures, not all mixtures containing large proportions of tall fescue seed performed well. One possible cause of this may be a decrease in the proportion of tall fescue in the some mixtures, relative to the seed mixture, during germination and establishment as a result of intraspecies and interspecies competition or environmental stresses. Hsiang et al. (1997) observed such decreases when tall fescue was seeded above 25% by weight in mixtures under athletic field conditions; although, species dynamics are likely to be somewhat different under roadside conditions.

The results of the logistic regression analysis demonstrate the importance of selecting species for use on roadsides that can withstand several different stresses. The winter of 2012-2013 resulted in significant turfgrass death, which is likely attributable to ice and snow cover. Tall fescue, in particular, is known to be susceptible to ice damage. Laboratory tests have shown 33 d to be the average period of ice encasement which results in 50% death of forage-type tall fescue plants (LD₅₀) (Gudleifsson, 2010). The greater than 90 d of ice cover experienced during the winter of 2012-2013 was well above the 33 d LD₅₀ and disproportionately harmed tall fescue, which likely resulted in the negative regression coefficient for that species.

The change in the apparent importance of tall fescue in the mixtures from summer 2012 to spring 2013 was a result of long-term fluctuation in environmental conditions. This demonstrates the necessity for including multiple species in a mixture with each species possessing a unique stress tolerance. Furthermore, it indicated that species used in the ideal seed mixture should be based on the final grid count data because those data were collected following exposure to several different stresses including salt, ice, drought, heat, and mowing.

The identified best possible mixture contained 40% hard fescue, 40% sheep fescue, and 20% slender creeping red fescue, which was in agreement with the species compositions of many of the mixtures that had performed consistently well during the earlier analyses. It is interesting to note that the only interaction term in the model was for slender creeping red fescue × alkaligrass. Those two species are found to coexist at equilibrium in nature except under drought stress when slender creeping red fescue typically outcompetes alkaligrass (Gray and Scott, 1977). The lack of

precipitation during summer 2012 likely led to this interference term and a decline in alkaligrass when planted with slender creeping red fescue. From the present data, it is not possible to say whether a better mix exists with proportions outside of the 5-40% restricted range defined during the design of the experiment. However, it may be possible to further simplify the identified optimal mixture. Sheep fescue and hard fescue are very closely related species (Ruemmele et al., 2003) and breeding history of the sheep fescue cultivar 'Marco Polo' used in this experiment suggests that it may be the progeny of a hard fescue × sheep fescue cross (National Grass Review Board, 2010). With this in mind, it may be possible to replace one species with the other to further simplify the mixture.

Conclusions

Mixtures of fine fescues performed well in the roadside turfgrass species mixture trial. Those mixtures that contained Kentucky bluegrass or creeping bentgrass in combination with large proportions of alkaligrass, did not perform well. However, in some cases the inclusion of these species in a mixture dominated by fine fescues produced a quality turfgrass sward.

Inclusion of tall fescue in mixtures was found to significantly decrease the probability of maintaining 60% survival after two years. Conversely, inclusion of hard fescue and sheep fescue increased the probability significantly. A response surface method incorporating multiple linear regression was used to successfully identify a theoretical best possible mixture, within the constraints of the experimental design. The results indicate that seed mixtures containing 40% hard fescue, 40% sheep fescue, and 20% slender creeping red fescue have the best chance for survival on roadsides. These results can be used by public works officials to implement and improve roadside turfgrass mixtures, and may be helpful to turfgrass breeders interested in breeding mixtures of turfgrass.

Future work on turfgrass mixture evaluations should include similar quantitative assessments of individual species contributions to overall mixture performance. Based on the results of this work, such experiments may include fewer species, but should be broader in the ranges of those species' possible mixture proportions. Further work towards describing the competitive interactions of fine fescue species can be useful in understanding the results achieved here. Although the cultivars used in this experiment have been previously evaluated for establishment and survival on Minnesota roadsides, comparison of our findings with results using other cultivars and in other locations will be useful in determining the extent to which our results may be generalized.

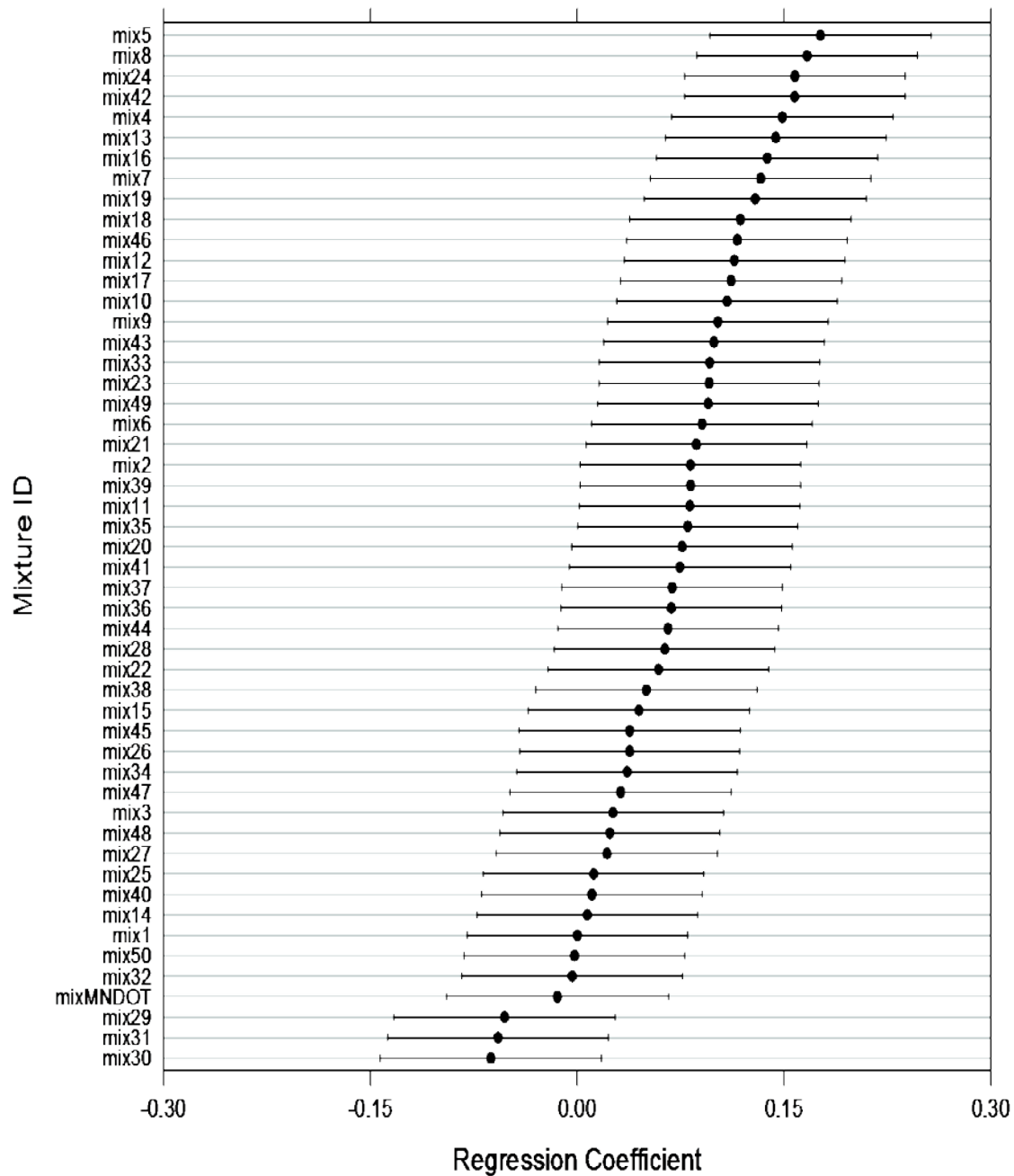


Figure 4.1. Regression coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for the effect of each mixture term in the model of arcsin-transformed ground cover for spring 2012 observations in the roadside turfgrass mixture experiment.

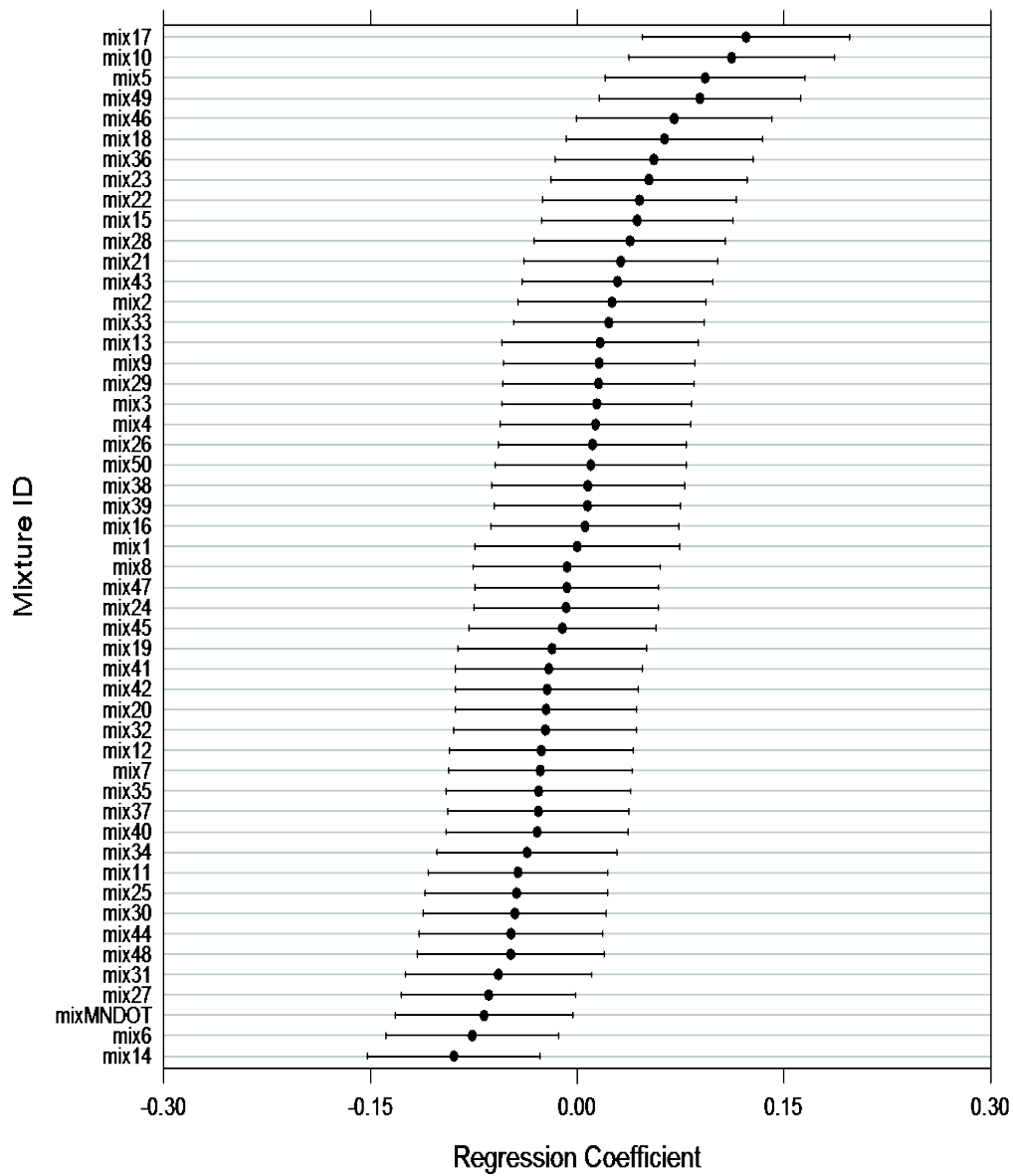


Figure 4.2. Regression coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for the effect of each mixture term in the model of arcsin-transformed ground cover for summer 2012 observations in the roadside turfgrass mixture experiment.

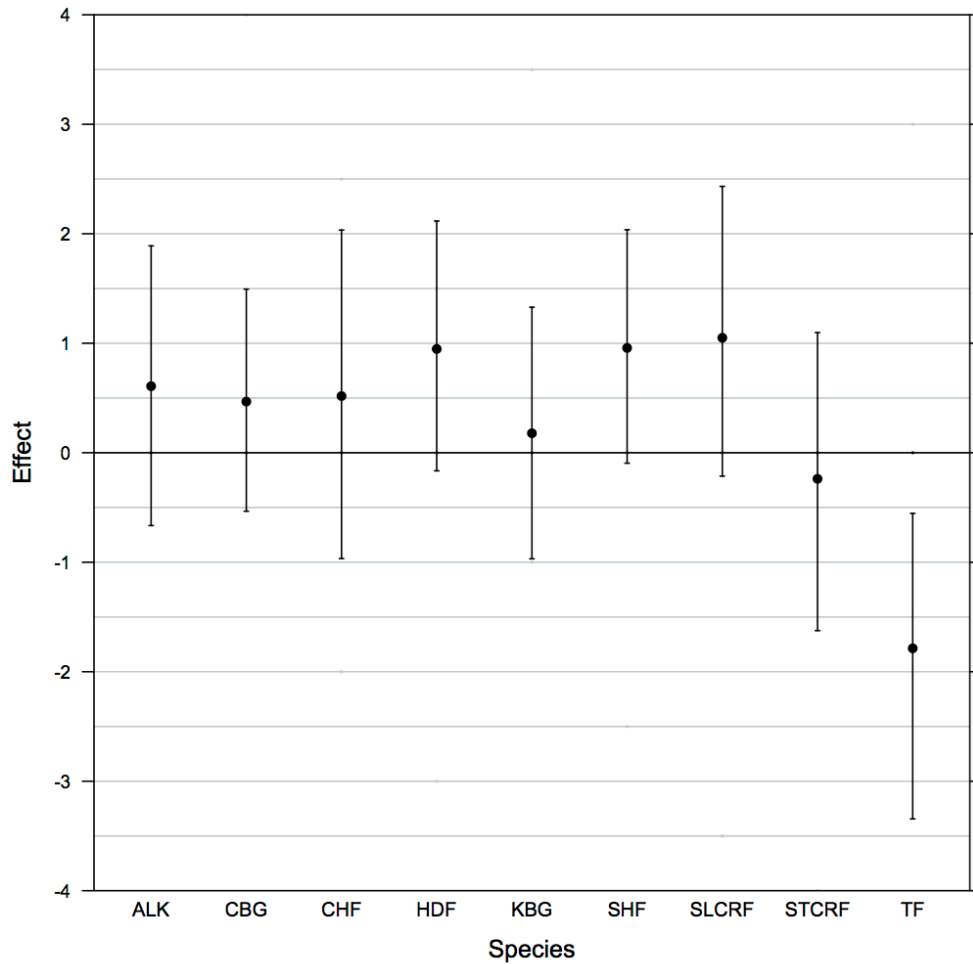


Figure 4.3. Regression coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from the model of grid count data showing the effect on log-odds of retaining greater than 60% survival based on inclusion of individual species in the roadside mixture experiment including alkaligrass (ALK), creeping bentgrass (CBG), Chewings fescue (CHF), hard fescue (HDF), Kentucky bluegrass (KBG), sheep fescue (SHF), slender creeping red fescue (SLCRF), strong creeping red fescue (STCRF), and tall fescue (TF).

Table 4.1. Species and cultivars included in the roadside turfgrass mixture experiment.

Species	Cultivar
<i>A. stolonifera</i>	‘Mariner’
<i>P. pratensis</i>	‘Moonlight SLT’
<i>P. distans</i>	‘Salty’
<i>F. rubra</i> ssp. <i>rubra</i>	‘Navigator’
<i>F. rubra</i> ssp. <i>litoralis</i>	‘Shoreline’
<i>F. trachyphylla</i>	‘Beacon’
<i>F. ovina</i>	‘Marco Polo’
<i>F. arundinacea</i>	‘Grande II’
<i>F. rubra</i> ssp. <i>fallax</i>	‘Radar’

Table 4.2. Constituent species proportions, based on pure live seed count, that were included in the roadside turfgrass mixture experiment.

Mixture ID	Species†								
	STCRF	ALK	KBG	CBG	SHF	HDF	SLCRF	TF	CHF
1	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.40	0.40
2	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.40	0.20
3	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.40
4	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.40	0.20	0.00	0.20
5	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.40	0.20	0.00
6	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.40
7	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.40	0.40	0.00	0.00
8	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.20
9	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.20
10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.00
11	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.07	0.40	0.40	0.07	0.00	0.00
12	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.40
13	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.40
14	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.40	0.00	0.20	0.20	0.00	0.00
15	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.40	0.00
16	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.40	0.00	0.00
17	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.07	0.00	0.40	0.07	0.07	0.00
18	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.07	0.40	0.00	0.07	0.07	0.00
19	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.40
20	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00
21	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.07	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.40
22	0.00	0.07	0.07	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.07
23	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00
24	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00
25	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.40
26	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.20	0.00
27	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.20
28	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.20	0.00
29	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.10	0.10	0.00	0.00

(continued on next page)

Table 4.2. Continued.

Mixture ID	Species†								
	STCRF	ALK	KBG	CBG	SHF	HDF	SLCRF	TF	CHF
30	0.00	0.40	0.20	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
31	0.00	0.40	0.40	0.07	0.07	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.00
32	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.40
33	0.12	0.00	0.00	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.40	0.00
34	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.40	0.00
35	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.00
36	0.20	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.20
37	0.20	0.00	0.40	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
38	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
39	0.20	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00
40	0.33	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.00
41	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.20	0.00	0.00
42	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00
43	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.20
44	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.00
45	0.40	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.07	0.07	0.00
46	0.40	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00
47	0.40	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.00
48	0.40	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.40
49	0.40	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.20	0.00
50	0.40	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
MNDOT	0.00	0.20	0.60	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.00

†STCRF, strong creeping red fescue; ALK, alkaligrass; KBG, Kentucky bluegrass; CBG, creeping bentgrass; SHF, sheep fescue; HDF, hard fescue; SLCRF, slender creeping red fescue; TF, tall fescue; CHF, Chewings fescue

Table 4.3. Soil physical and chemical properties for sites in the roadside turfgrass mixture experiment.

Soil Property	Site					
	Centerville [†]			Larpenteur [‡]		
	Rep 1	Rep 2	Rep 3	Rep 1	Rep 2	Rep 3
P (Bray), mg kg ⁻¹	59	64	78	53	52	50
P (Olsen), mg kg ⁻¹	35	36	49			
K, mg kg ⁻¹	100	91	93	172	148	137
Organic Matter, %	1.1	1.4	2.1	4.7	4.5	5.5
pH	8.2	7.9	7.8	6.8	6.6	6.5
Saturated Paste EC (Establishment), dS m ⁻¹	2.4	2.3	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.5
Ca, mg kg ⁻¹	3244	3055	2836	2921	2790	2512
Mg, mg kg ⁻¹	114	126	467	174	164	180
Na, mg kg ⁻¹	450	468	514	292	292	291

[†] Soil texture at Centerville was 55% sand, 18% silt 27% clay

[‡] Soil texture at Larpenteur was 45% sand, 28% silt, 27% clay

Table 4.4. Marginal effects summary of multiple regression of final grid count data onto seed mixture species proportions.

Species †	Coefficient	Std Error	Pr(> t)
STCRF	0.426	0.080	2.00e-07
SLCRF	0.648	0.092	1.82e-11
HDF	0.853	0.080	< 2e-16
SHF	0.667	0.082	2.11e-14
CHF	0.247	0.082	0.00298
TF	0.018	0.082	0.81967
KBG	0.570	0.081	2.32e-11
CBG	0.466	0.083	4.60e-08
ALK	0.600	0.098	3.61e-09
SLCRF × ALK	-1.004	0.626	0.11016

† STCRF, strong creeping red fescue; ALK, alkaligrass; KBG, Kentucky bluegrass; CBG, creeping bentgrass; SHF, sheep fescue; HDF, hard fescue; SLCRF, slender creeping red fescue; TF, tall fescue; CHF, Chewings fescue

CHAPTER 5: SOD STRENGTH OF TURFGRASS MIXTURES FOR ROADSIDES

Introduction

Sod production is a very important part of the turfgrass industry and is most often the beginning of the turfgrass stand for much of the residential, commercial and roadside construction sites. From a residential and commercial property standpoint, sod provides many benefits such as an immediate lawn that can be used more quickly than when established from seed. Sod also provides instant value to the property which will take much more time when established from seed. Soil stabilization and erosion control are also very important in a residential and commercial property, but can be far more important in a roadside construction setting. Krenitsky et al. (1998) evaluated both natural and man-made erosion control materials on a sloped roadside and suggested that sod (natural), straw (natural) and jute (man-made) were the only products to effectively reduce both runoff and sediment losses when used at construction sites. Furthermore, sod reduced runoff significantly more than straw and jute compared to bare soil; runoff was decreased by 61%, 25%, and 16% for sod, straw and jute respectively. On newly constructed roadsides, quick germinating species are often used as a natural control for erosion and runoff. However, many species used for quick roadside establishment have proven to be invasive such as smooth brome (*Bromus inermis* Leyss), bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus* L.), reed canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea* L.) and crownvetch [*Securigera varia* (L.) Lassen] (Harper-Lore, 2011). A successful sod installation can provide an instant erosion and runoff control and a stand that has low weed pressure.

In the upper Midwest, Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis* L.) dominates the turfgrass industry for its ability to provide a high quality turf (Fry and Huang, 2004). The rhizomatous growth of Kentucky bluegrass and its ability to knit and transport well have also made it a champion of the sod the sod production industry (Christians, 2011; Fry and Huang, 2004). Other grasses such as tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea* Schreb), creeping bentgrass (*Agrostis stolonifera* L.) and fine fescue (*Festuca* spp.) all have the ability to produce sod, but are often perceived as being weak sod producing species. There is also much less overall demand for these species making it unrealistic for sod production in vast quantities. There is currently only one sod farm in Minnesota producing creeping bentgrass sod and no sod farms producing tall fescue sod. Until recently, no fine fescue sod was being produced in Minnesota. A collaborative effort between the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association, the University of Minnesota and the sod producers of Minnesota has resulted in the development of a series of salt tolerant grass mixtures (MNST-2 and MNST-12) that are comprised primarily of fine fescues. This has allowed for a predominantly fine fescue sod to be produced and harvested for the first time in Minnesota.

Fine fescues are not traditionally used for sod production because of their bunch-type growth habit and are generally only used in mixtures with Kentucky bluegrass or if netting is used to hold the sod together (Christians, 2011). The bunch type growth habit of fine fescues are perceived to have poor sod making capabilities resulting in a sod with low strength and an inability to be transported successfully. Because fine fescue sod production is lacking, there is also very little information on fine fescue sod production and management when transplanting.

In sod production, the strength of sod is very important in order to withstand the pressures of harvest, transporting, handling and installation (Burns and Futral, 1980). Shildrick (1982), found that the rhizomatous grasses Kentucky bluegrass and strong creeping red fescue (*Festuca rubra* ssp. *rubra* Gaudin) were responsible for improved sod tearing strength. Ross et al., (1991) ranked grass species in order of strongest to weakest in terms of sod tearing strength as *Poa pratensis*, *Festuca* ssp., *Lolium perenne*, and *Agrostis* ssp. It was also determined that mixtures of *Festuca* ssp and *Poa pratensis* had lower tearing strength than if *Poa pratensis* was used alone and that slender creeping red fescue (*Festuca rubra* ssp. *litoralis* (G.F.W. Meyer) Auquier) provided greater strength in a mixture than Chewings fescue [*Festuca rubra* ssp. *fallax* (Thuill.) Nyman](Ross et al., 1991). Hafenrichter et al., (1979) discussed that hard fescue [*Festuca trachyphylla* (Hack.) Krajina] is a heavy root producer with a high root-to shoot ratio indicating their ability to produce sod strong enough for production. This initial data indicates that some of the perceived weakness of some of the grasses not historically used for sod production may in fact be fairly good sod producers. It also point to the fact that obtaining a correct seed mixture will provide the best success. The objective of this study was to evaluate tensile strength and work required to tear sod of mixtures of nine species of cool-season turfgrass.

Materials and Methods

Plot Establishment and Maintenance

Three replications of 51 mixtures (Table 4.2) of nine turfgrass species were established at two locations in the metropolitan area surrounding St. Paul, MN: 1) Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station (Rosemount, MN) and 2) University of Minnesota (St. Paul, MN). Each location was designed as a randomized complete block with three replications of 3 m x 3 m plots. Mixtures contained between three and six species. Species proportions were restricted to between 5% and 40% of the total mixture by pure live seed count with the exception of the standard MnDOT mixture, which contained 60% Kentucky bluegrass as specified by MnDOT construction standards. Species included in the mixtures included Kentucky bluegrass, tall fescue, creeping bentgrass, weeping alkaligrass (*Puccinellia distans* (L.) Parl.), slender creeping red fescue, strong creeping red fescue, Chewings fescue, hard fescue, and sheep fescue (*Festuca ovina* L.). Each species was represented by a single cultivar chosen based on the results of previous project phases (Table 4.1).

Plots were seeded on Sept. 4 and Sept. 6, 2012 at the Rosemount and St. Paul sites, respectively, at a rate of 2 pure live seeds cm⁻². Starter fertilizer was applied at seeding so as to provide 36.5 kg N ha⁻¹, 20.9 kg P ha⁻¹, and 8.3 kg K ha⁻¹ and wood fiber seeding blankets were used to cover each site. A second fertilizer application was made at the same rate three weeks after seeding. For the remainder of the trial, fertilizer was applied monthly during the months of May through November so as to provide 14.6 kg N ha⁻¹, 0 kg P ha⁻¹, and 3.9 kg K ha⁻¹. Irrigation was applied at seeding and as needed thereafter to prevent wilting of the turf canopy. During the spring of 2013, plots were treated with dithiopyr (Dimension 2EW, Dow AgroSciences, 1.75 L ha⁻¹) and sulfentrazone, 2,4-d, mcpp, and dicamba (T-Zone, PBI-Gordon Corp., 4.67 L ha⁻¹) to control existing and germinating weeds. During the spring of 2014, plots were treated with dithiopyr (Dimension 2EW, Dow AgroSciences, 1.75 L ha⁻¹) and 2,4-d, mcpp, and dicamba (Trimec Bentgrass Formula, PBI-Gordon Corp., 4.67 L ha⁻¹) to control existing and germinating weeds.

In fall of 2013, plots were sprayed with a combination of trifloxystrobin & triadimefon (Tartan, Bayer Product 6.13 L ha⁻¹) and chlorothalonil (Daconil 2787 18.35 L ha⁻¹) as a preventative fungicide to control snow mold. Plots were mowed every 7-20 days during the growing season at 7.6 cm.

Data Collection, Processing, and Analysis

On July 16-17 and July 23, 2014, sod was harvested at the St. Paul and Rosemount sites, respectively, using a Turfco KisCutter sod cutter (Turfco Manufacturing, Inc., Blaine, MN). At the St. Paul site, replicates one and two were harvested and tested on July 16, and replicate three was done the following day due to time constraints. Sod samples were approximately 22.9 cm wide, 71.1 cm long, and had 1.9 cm soil thickness. Sod tensile strength was tested using a custom-built tensile testing device. The samples of sod were mounted on the device by clamping each end between two boards such that each was securely held by a 29.8 cm x 29.8 cm area with 10.8 cm between the two clamped sections. The unit applied a tensile load to the sod via a Firgelli Automation FA-240-S-12-6 electric linear actuator (Firgelli Automations, Bellingham, WA). Tensile load was measured via an Omega LC703-300 load cell (Omega Engineering Inc., Stamford, CN). The total distance that the sod had been stretched was recorded using a Unimeasure LX-PA-15 string potentiometer (UniMeasure, Inc., Corvallis, OR). All data was collected at approximately 2.8 Hz and stored using an Arduino Uno programmable microcontroller (Arduino Project, www.arduino.cc).

Tensile load was plotted versus separation displacement, and the maximum tensile load (MTL), as well as the area under the load-displacement curve were recorded. The area under the curve is a quantitative measure of the required work to tear (WTT) the piece of sod. Sod MTL and WTT data from both sites were combined and subjected to analysis of variance with subsequent means separation by Fisher's protected LSD ($\alpha=0.05$).

Results

Analysis of variance of the MTL data (Table 5.1) showed a significant ($p<0.05$) effect of site, replicate within site, and mixture. Mean MTL and 95% confidence intervals were 219.2±13.1 N at the St. Paul and 488.2±22.48 N at the Rosemount site. However, there was no significant mixture × site interaction. Therefore, the data was left as a single data set for the analysis. Subsequent means separation using Fisher's protected LSD (Table 5.2) revealed that Mixture 48 was the strongest mixture with a mean MTL of 507.7 N, but was not statistically different from 11 other mixtures in the trial. Mixture 30 had the lowest mean MTL of 142.8 N, and was not statistically different from three other mixtures in the trial including the MNDOT standard mixture, which had mean MTL of 219.3 N.

Analysis of variance of the WTT data (Table 5.3) showed significant effects of site, replicate within site, mixture, and mixture × site interaction. Therefore, data from the two sites were analyzed separately for the effects of replicate and mixture. Mean WTT and 95% confidence intervals were 8.94±1.09 N-m and 23.06±1.51 N-m at the St. Paul and Rosemount sites, respectively.

Analysis of variance of the WTT data from the St. Paul site (Table 5.4) showed significant effects of both replicate and mixture. Mean WTT for replicates one and two were statistically the same with means of 9.33 N-m and 9.76 N-m, respectively. Replicate three was statistically different from the other two with a mean of 7.71 N-m required to tear each piece of sod. Subsequent means separation of the St. Paul data (Table 5.5) using Fisher's protected LSD revealed that Mixture 13 required the greatest mean amount of work to tear each sample of sod with a mean of 16.57 N-m. However, that mixture was not significantly different from 12 other mixtures in the trial. Mixture 30 had the lowest overall work required to tear each piece of sod with a mean of 3.32 N-m, which was not significantly different from the mean value for 29 other mixtures in the trial.

At the Rosemount site, analysis of variance (Table 5.6) revealed no effect of replicate, but a significant effect of mixture. Means separation by Fisher's protected LSD (Table 5.7) showed Mixture 32 to have the highest required work to tear each piece of sod with a mean of 38.86 N-m, which was not significantly different from 14 other mixtures in the trial. Mixture 30 required the least amount of work to tear each sample, with an average of 8.21 N-m, which was not significantly different from 16 other mixtures in the trial.

Discussion

The objective of this work was to evaluate tensile strength and work required to tear sod of mixtures of nine species of cool-season turfgrass. Mixture 48 was found to require the highest mean load to tear each sample of sod. That mixture contained 40% Chewings fescue, 40% strong creeping red fescue, and 20% alkaligrass. However, just two of the top 16 mixtures were seeded with any alkaligrass. Conversely, all of the weakest five mixtures were seeded with at least 20% alkaligrass, by seed count. Alkaligrass has primarily a bunch-type growth habit, and has been shown to not compete well with other turfgrass species, especially slender creeping red fescue, under dry conditions (Gray and Scott, 1977). With this in mind, it is likely that mixtures that included alkaligrass were subject to thinning as the alkaligrass died out, thus creating a weaker sod.

Of the top ten strongest mixtures, seven of them contained strong creeping red fescue, six of them contained hard fescue, five of them contained slender creeping red fescue, and four of them contained Chewings fescue. Those four species were seeded in more of the ten strongest mixtures than any of the other species in the trial. Slender creeping red fescue and strong creeping red fescue are both known to have rhizomatous growth habits, which may have contributed to the increase in strength of the sod seeded with mixtures containing those species. However, just three of the ten strongest mixtures were seeded with any amount of Kentucky bluegrass, which also has a rhizomatous growth habit. This result contrasts with Ross et al. (1991) who found Parade Kentucky bluegrass to have a higher ultimate tensile strength than both Frida Chewings fescue and Waldorf Chewings fescue and also found Fylking Kentucky bluegrass to be stronger than Dawson slender creeping red fescue in addition to Frida and Waldorf. Moreover, Hurley and Skogley (1975) found sod containing mixtures of Kentucky bluegrass and Chewings fescue to be weaker than sod of Kentucky bluegrass alone. One possible reason for the discrepancy between our results and those of previous studies is the length of time for which the sod was grown before harvest. In those studies, sod was harvested after 12 and 7

months, respectively. In our study, sod was allowed to mature for 22 months. Those extra months may have given the slower-growing fine fescue species time to develop stronger root and rhizome systems, thus producing a stronger sod. Interestingly, the standard MnDOT mixture contained 60% Kentucky bluegrass, but produced the 3rd lowest maximum tensile load in the trial.

Work required to tear a piece of sod provides slightly different information than the maximum force required, although the two are related in many ways. From a handling perspective, the work required to tear the piece of sod provides more relevant information since simply applying the maximum required load one time with no increase in relative displacement will not separate the two halves of a piece of sod. Rather, a sustained tensile load applied over a distance is required to tear the sod apart.

At St. Paul, eight of the top ten mixtures contained hard fescue while just one of the bottom ten contained any hard fescue. Hard fescue has been shown to produce as much as 87% of its root mass in the top 7.6 cm of soil (Brown et al., 2010). It is likely that such extensive root production near the surface increases the extent to which the sod is netted together, thus increasing the work required to separate the two halves. Conversely, just one of the top ten mixtures contained alkaligrass, sheep fescue, or tall fescue. Tall fescue, in particular, may have led to a weak sod due to the fact that the vast majority of those plants were killed during the winter of 2012 due to ice and snow cover. Tall fescue is known to be susceptible to ice damage. Laboratory tests have shown 33 d to be the average period of ice encasement which results in 50% death of forage-type tall fescue plants (LD₅₀) (Gudleifsson, 2010). The greater than 90 d of ice cover during the winter of 2012-2013 was well above the 33 d LD₅₀ and significantly reduced tall fescue populations, based on visual observations.

At Rosemount, slender creeping red fescue, strong creeping red fescue, and Chewings fescue were again included in more of the ten strongest mixtures than any of the other species in the trial. Also, alkaligrass was again included in the least of them. Chewings fescue was not included in any of the weakest 13 mixtures. That species has been shown to produce excessive levels of thatch under various conditions (Ruemmele et al., 2003). It is likely that thatch also acts as a netting agent to help hold the two halves of the sod sample together, thus increasing the work required to tear the sod.

Conclusions

Fifty-one different mixtures of turfgrass were grown as sod at two locations in St. Paul and Rosemount, MN. A custom tensile tester was used to determine the maximum required load and work required to tear a sample of sod from each mixture. Results indicate that mixtures containing Kentucky bluegrass do not necessarily create stronger sod, as expected, and mixtures containing strong creeping red fescue, hard fescue, Chewings fescue, and slender creeping red fescue can help to achieve acceptable sod strength. Those same species tended to produce sod that required the most work to separate the two halves of the sample as well. The standard MnDOT mixture produced sod that required low maximum tensile load and minimal work required to tear the sod in half. Further work is necessary to positively determine the mechanisms by which sod strength is conveyed by each species. However, using the fescue species named above in the MnDOT mixture will help to improve strength and overall utility of the salt tolerant sod. It is important to note that while the composition of the seeded mixtures was known, the

final proportions of each species was often quite different by the time sod was harvested. Developing an understanding of why these changes in grass community composition occurred should be the focus of future research projects.

Table 5.1. Analysis of variance of sod ultimate tensile strength data from both sites in the sod strength trial.

Source	DF	MS	F	p-value
Site	1	5533950	232.37	0.00011
Rep in Site	4	23815	2.46	0.047
Mix	50	18992	2.99	2.90E-08
Mix X Site	50	11361	1.17	0.22
Residuals	200	9687		

Table 5.2. Means separation by Fisher's protected LSD ($\alpha=0.05$) for sod ultimate tensile strength (MTL) data from both sites in the sod strength trial.

Mixture ID	Mean MTL (N) ^{†, ‡}	Mixture ID	Mean MTL (N)
48	507.70	38	360.00
41	464.40	2	357.00
5	457.40	49	353.50
45	438.50	1	345.40
4	431.40	33	341.00
32	431.30	26	337.20
14	431.30	40	334.40
43	430.80	27	331.10
47	419.00	8	329.70
35	417.60	39	320.50
13	409.40	44	315.10
18	397.00	37	312.60
11	391.10	34	311.70
9	389.80	29	306.00
7	386.80	20	305.60
21	386.10	50	300.10
17	385.60	28	299.10
12	383.70	22	286.40
19	382.00	46	281.00
15	381.80	10	276.80
36	380.10	23	256.40
16	378.60	24	246.50
25	377.30	MNDOT	219.30
42	374.20	31	206.40
6	367.80	30	142.80
3	361.00		

[†] LSD = 112.05 N

[‡] Data collected July 16-17, 2014 at St. Paul and July 24, 2014 at Rosemount

Table 5.3. Analysis of variance of sod work to tear (WTT) of combined sites data in the sod strength trial.

Source	DF	MS	F	p-value
Site	1	15249.4	175.4	0.00019
Rep in Site	4	86.9	2.25	0.065
Mix	50	104.2	2.7	5.42E-07
Mix X Site	50	55.5	1.44	0.043
Residuals	200	38.6		

Table 5.4. Analysis of variance of sod work to tear (WTT) data from the St. Paul site in the sod strength trial.

Source	DF	MS	F	p-value
Rep	2	59.83	4.8	0.01
Mix	50	22.72	1.82	0.0056
Residuals	100	12.46		

Table 5.5. Means separation by Fisher’s protected LSD ($\alpha=0.05$) for sod work to tear (WTT) data for the St. Paul location in the sod strength trial.

Mixture ID	Mean WTT (N-m) ^{†, ‡}	Mixture ID	Mean WTT (N-m)
13	16.57	28	8.647
48	16.3	29	8.617
41	12.72	3	8.352
35	12.34	34	8.323
7	11.84	38	8.119
47	11.83	36	8.058
15	11.63	17	7.961
43	11.46	24	7.772
11	11.46	27	7.612
12	11.31	46	7.143
32	11	44	7.074
6	10.87	25	7.008
42	10.82	40	6.94
26	10.81	8	6.866
16	10.79	MNDOT	6.407
18	10.76	49	6.317
1	10.6	31	6.303
45	10.34	37	6.093
4	10.28	20	6.029
5	10.02	23	5.835
2	9.115	39	5.599
14	8.973	50	5.221
21	8.88	22	4.944
19	8.85	10	4.002
9	8.728	30	3.322
33	8.66		

[†] LSD = 5.72

[‡] Data collected July 16-17, 2014

Table 5.6. Analysis of variance of sod work to tear (WTT) data from the Rosemount site in the sod strength trial.

Source	DF	MS	F	p-value
Rep	2	96.87	1.54	0.22
Mix	50	143.47	2.28	0.00025
Residuals	100	63.03		

Table 5.7. Means separation by Fisher's protected LSD ($\alpha=0.05$) for sod work to tear (WTT) data for the Rosemount location in the sod strength trial.

Mixture ID	Mean WTT (N-m) ^{†, ‡}	Mixture ID	Mean WTT (N-m)
32	38.86	10	22.86
41	38.21	27	22.73
37	35.53	12	22.63
45	35.49	40	22.54
4	35.08	34	22.34
48	30.09	42	22.22
19	30.05	15	21.68
14	28.83	13	21.11
5	28.79	47	21.06
25	28.44	1	20.12
11	28.01	6	19.17
9	27.62	22	18.68
43	26.84	44	18.34
36	26.65	50	18.12
49	26.39	39	17.89
2	25.86	28	17.47
35	25.73	29	17.09
8	25.17	46	17.02
21	24.98	20	15.13
38	24.68	23	14.22
17	24.48	26	13.78
18	24.42	24	13.77
16	24.19	31	9.542
33	24.14	MNDOT	8.904
3	23.91	30	8.21
7	22.95		

[†] LSD = 12.86

[‡] Data collected July 24, 2014

CHAPTER 6: ACUTE DROUGHT TOLERANCE OF TURFGRASS MIXTURES FOR ROADSIDES

Introduction

In order to survive and persist over multiple years, salt-tolerant roadside turfgrass mixtures will need to survive periods of drought. In Minnesota, these drought periods tend to be no more than 2-3 weeks in duration. Results from our roadside turfgrass research are suggesting that these mixtures should be primarily made up of fine fescue species (*Festuca* spp.) (see previous chapters in this report). Although it is generally accepted that fine fescues can stay green longer during drought than other cool-season grasses, it is not known the extent to which they can survive under periods of extended drought in Minnesota. Information about short-term drought survival of these grasses will help us identify the best possible mixture to use on sites where water is expected to be limiting.

Recent research on fine fescues has been focused on management under low levels of inputs (fertilizer, water, pesticides, mowing) (Watkins et al. 2011; Watkins et al. 2014). These studies, along with cultivar evaluation trials (see <http://turf.umn.edu/research/cultivarevaluation/>) have indicated that of the primary fine fescue species, hard, Chewings, and slender creeping red fescue all perform best during the summer in Minnesota when supplemental irrigation is not applied. Minner and Butler (1985) found that after an extended drought period in Colorado, most fine fescue cultivars were unable to recover to an acceptable level; however, several entries of hard fescue and Chewings fescues did perform at a level that indicated better drought tolerance than most other entries. Although fine fescues may not be suitable for areas with extended drought (Minner and Butler, 1985), they should be able to adequately survive acute drought periods of 60 d or less. The objective of this research was to test a series of turfgrass mixtures designed for use on roadsides for performance during an acute (60 d) drought.

Material and Methods

Plot Establishment and Maintenance

Three replications of 51 mixtures (Table 4.2) of nine turfgrass species were established under an automated, mobile rainout shelter at St. Paul, MN. The experiment was designed as a randomized complete block with three replications of 1 m x 1 m plots. Each species was represented by a single cultivar chosen based on the results of previous project phases (Table 4.1).

Plots were seeded on Sep 13, 2012 at a rate of 2 seeds cm⁻¹. Starter fertilizer was applied so as to provide 48.83 kg N ha⁻¹ and 40.52 kg K ha⁻¹, and wood fiber seeding blankets were used to cover the area. A second fertilizer application was made three weeks after seeding at a rate of 36.62 kg N ha⁻¹, 21.49 kg P ha⁻¹, and 8.44 kg K ha⁻¹. Irrigation was applied at seeding and as needed thereafter to prevent wilting of the turf canopy. In fall 2012, plots were sprayed with preventative fungicides to control snow mold. Plots were mowed every 7-14 days during the growing season at 5.1 cm.

Data Collection and Analysis

From Aug 30 to Oct 16, 2013 (47 days), the trial area was subjected to a controlled drought. To withhold water, the rainout shelter moved over the turfgrass plots during a precipitation event. After the drought, a recovery period was conducted from Oct 17-Oct 31, 2013 (15 days). The plots were no longer protected by the rainout shelter and precipitation was allowed.

Digital images were collected for each plot on the first date of the drought period, the last date of the drought period, and the last date of the recovery period. A custom-built light box was utilized. Images were analyzed for percent green tissue using a custom script written in Image Processing Toolbox (MATLAB) to identify the percent of the ground area covered in green plant tissue (referred to hereafter as green cover). This type of analysis is commonly used in turfgrass environmental stress studies as green tissue indicates healthy, actively growing turf. Data for each date were subjected to analysis of variance with subsequent means separation by Fisher's protected LSD ($\alpha=0.05$).

Results and Discussion

The objective of this trial was to determine if there were differences for acute drought stress tolerance between various salt-tolerant turfgrass seed mixtures. Analysis of variance showed that there were significant differences for green cover between mixtures at the beginning of the drought period and after recovery from drought (Tables 6.1, 6.3); however, there were no significant differences in green cover at the end of the 47-day drought period (Tables 6.2, 6.4).

Based on our analysis, the most informative data was taken at the conclusion of drought recovery. Of particular interest is that only five mixtures performed worse than the MNDOT mixture. The poorest ten performers all had no hard fescue and at least 20% alkaligrass. The lack of hard fescue in poor performers is not surprising as it continues to reinforce our previous findings that hard fescue inclusion is generally a net positive for roadside salt-tolerant turfgrass mixtures. The fact that alkaligrass resulted in poor green cover at the end of the recovery period is also not surprising since we have continually seen that this species performs very poorly in most turfgrass situations. The top statistical grouping at the end of the recovery period consisted of 40 mixtures; therefore, it is difficult to draw conclusions from these mixtures.

A number of mixtures showed a significant increase in green cover between the end of the drought period and the end of the recovery period. The top performing mixtures for this increase (defined here as a greater than 8% increase in green cover) were mixtures 5, 10, 11, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 25, 27, and 35. These mixtures were characterized by having at least 40% fine fescue species. Conversely, there were some mixtures (22, 31, 38, and 39) that showed a decline in green cover between the end of the drought period and the end of the recovery period. These mixtures each contained no more than 20% fine fescue species; with the exception of mixture 39, they also each had at least some alkaligrass, Kentucky bluegrass, and creeping bentgrass. One explanation for the decline in some of these mixtures could be a decline in quality in the creeping bentgrass, which has very vigorous stolons that often result in high levels of thatch. High amounts of thatch could result in reduced turf performance resulting in a decrease in green tissue. Another possible reason for this decline could be due to the presence of alkaligrass in all of the mixtures. We have observed a decline in quality and persistence of alkaligrass over time in our trials.

Conclusions

Roadside grasses experience a number of different stresses throughout the year. One of the most important of these stresses is drought. In the current study, fifty-one mixtures of turfgrass were evaluated for drought tolerance for 47 days under a rainout shelter. We found no differences between mixtures at the end of the drought period; however, there were significant differences after a 15-day recovery period. Mixtures that ranked lowest after the recovery period all had significant amounts of alkaligrass and lacked hard fescue. The fine fescues, and hard fescue in particular, may be important components of these mixtures when planted at sites where water is severely limited.

This study was conducted in the fall of 2013, which was quite wet and cool compared to a typical fall. These weather conditions certainly affected our results. Further evaluation of these mixtures at different times of the year may give more definitive results. Caution should be also taken when interpreting these results since the trial was performed at a single location in a single year. Nevertheless, our results continue to point to the usefulness of fine fescues in turfgrass mixtures for roadsides in Minnesota.

Table 6.1. Analysis of variance of percent green cover of seeded turfgrass mixtures in the salt tolerant drought trial at beginning of 47-day drought period.

Source	Df	MS	p-value
Rep	2	508.73	< 0.001
Mix	50	364.34	< 0.001
Residuals	100	18.56	

Table 6.2. Analysis of variance of percent green cover of seeded turfgrass mixtures in the salt tolerant drought trial at end of 47-day drought period.

Source	Df	MS	p-value
Rep	2	816.68	< 0.001
Mix	50	66.53	0.5023
Residuals	100	67.07	

Table 6.3. Analysis of variance of percent green cover of seeded turfgrass mixtures in the salt tolerant drought trial at end of 15-day recovery period.

Source	Df	MS	p-value
Rep	2	1764.11	< 0.001
Mix	50	96.46	< 0.001
Residuals	100	26.95	

Table 6.4. Means separation ($\alpha=0.05$) of percent green color data from seeded turfgrass mixtures in the salt tolerant drought trial. Mixtures are listed in order by green cover after recovery.

Mixture ID	Green Cover	Green Cover	Green Cover
	(%)	(%)	(%)
	Before drought	After drought	Recovery
2	86.17	83.15	90.54
35	87.50	81.91	90.53
20	79.78	79.62	90.40
1	79.14	82.39	89.21
32	74.76	83.71	89.12
41	80.31	85.44	88.88
7	82.51	81.41	88.59
19	81.35	80.25	88.45
21	77.92	74.29	88.27
43	81.91	81.03	88.03
29	65.57	81.58	88.01
4	82.97	84.00	87.58
17	88.67	77.33	87.43
14	86.15	81.11	87.42
9	78.16	80.45	87.33
12	75.22	80.19	87.30
24	70.45	81.93	86.98
11	84.77	78.49	86.89
34	76.79	77.91	86.81
46	80.63	82.65	86.80

(continued on next page)

Table 6.4 (cont.)

Mixture ID	Green Cover	Green Cover	Green Cover
	(%)	(%)	(%)
	Before drought	After drought	Recovery
16	82.03	77.97	86.76
45	77.94	84.11	86.55
36	79.80	83.48	86.18
27	76.98	75.39	86.06
33	85.67	83.69	85.93
49	76.17	78.41	85.35
47	84.14	80.40	84.62
42	74.14	80.50	84.48
15	89.02	82.31	84.37
6	83.38	80.56	84.32
18	81.80	77.30	84.28
8	72.10	77.58	83.88
44	72.13	77.76	83.87
10	86.19	74.95	83.66
5	71.08	71.26	83.36
28	75.36	79.88	83.23
37	84.49	80.01	83.09
13	85.18	78.21	82.85
26	59.12	76.29	82.46
22	74.08	83.73	82.25
3	74.98	72.92	80.24

(continued on next page)

Table 6.4 (cont.)

Mixture ID	Green Cover	Green Cover	Green Cover
	(%)	(%)	(%)
	Before drought	After drought	Recovery
30	71.14	76.37	80.21
23	70.45	76.32	79.66
25	51.49	70.49	79.65
38	64.71	80.70	78.78
MNDOT	64.25	73.78	76.83
48	57.93	74.55	75.41
50	53.71	69.82	74.82
40	46.52	64.25	70.05
31	57.24	71.52	67.87
39	42.40	65.61	63.37
LSD_{0.05}	6.98	NA	8.41

CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

We have shown that fine fescues should be used in high proportions in roadside turfgrass seed and sod mixtures in Minnesota. Our research was conducted both on roadsides and in controlled conditions. Although this project provided a solid base of knowledge on the best turfgrasses to use on roadsides in cold climates, there are a number of research questions that remain to be answered. One of the primary concerns we have observed in field plots along roadsides is mixtures that contain high percentages of fine fescues tend to not establish as quickly as those mixtures with high proportions of Kentucky bluegrass. We have also observed that fine fescue sod roots much more slowly than does Kentucky bluegrass sod. In order to overcome these challenges, future research should identify best management practices for the establishment of both sod and seed mixtures that contain high proportions of fine fescue, with a focus on water management during establishment. Other research topics that should be addressed include wear and traffic tolerance of these grasses (including resistance to damage from repeated mowing patterns and aggressive mower turns especially when these grasses are used in a residential setting), tolerance to alternative road de-icing materials, and tolerance of ice cover.

The fine fescues possess many characteristics that make them useful in a changing climate where water resources are becoming scarcer. They need less water once established, require fewer pesticides and do not have high fertilizer requirement needs. One limitation of these grasses is heat stress tolerance. In most summers in Minnesota, this is not a major issue; however, during extreme heat, fine fescues planted along roads may experience temperature levels that result in turf loss. Turfgrass breeders should focus their attention on improving this trait in the fine fescue species so that these grasses can be utilized in higher temperature environments. Although the fine fescues use less water than other cool-season turfgrasses, we still do not know how long they can go without water under hot summer conditions. This is yet another opportunity for further study.

We have recommended to MnDOT the inclusion of fine fescues in the salt-tolerant sod mixtures that are specified for roadsides. Results from this project have informed the composition of MNST-12, which is the mixture designation that is part of the Sod Quality Assurance Program, an effort that is the result of close collaboration between the Minnesota Sod Growers, MnDOT, the Minnesota Crop Improvement Agency, and the University of Minnesota. This effort is still in its early stages and we are hopeful that our work, combined with future research efforts, will result in sustainable roadsides that function well, are aesthetically pleasing, and protect the environment.

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