

Lawns of the future start in Washington

What will northern climate lawns look like in 2030? If they get their start in Washington, they're likely to be greener, less thirsty and as cozy as ever. Researchers and breeders at Washington State University are developing drought tolerant varieties of our favorite turfgrasses that will provide the same environmental benefits of carbon sequestration, cooling effects, and erosion control, while also thriving on less water.

WSU is also working to license a new no-burn Kentucky bluegrass variety, called Matchless. "This was a way to keep the fields in production for many years," WSU grass breeder Michael Neff told growers earlier this year. "These are perennial grasses. Once you have the field established, you can go in and harvest every year until the harvest starts to drop down." The burning removes excess plant material, and increases yield the following year. Burning also helps control pests and weeds, but it was banned in much of Washington due to air quality concerns. This in turn, limited how turfgrass growers managed their crops. With the new no-burn variety, growers can make longer-term decisions that are good for the soils and air.

Research funds from the Washington Turfgrass Seed Commission are also being used to study how Kentucky bluegrass genes respond to vernalization, the process of boosting flower development. As winters continue to change in our northern climates, this research becomes more critical to keeping seed supply consistent and our lawns healthier.

As Washington turfgrass seed growers continue to improve their crops, these benefits impact our lawns, parks, and sports fields. Real grass continues to be the best choice for families, pets, athletes, and the environment.

Sources:

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