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NEWLY RELEASED PANTERRA TURFGRASS 'DWARFIEST' OF THE DWARFS

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OVERTON - Panterra, a newly released turfgrass variety, promises greener grass for home gardeners, golfers and soccer moms.

Panterra was developed by Dr. Lloyd Nelson, the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station plant breeder who was behind the successful release of Axcella, another turfgrass, in 2001.

Panterra has all the advantages of traditional winter ryegrass turfgrasses with none of the disadvantages. Panterra creates a thick, deep green winter lawn, and because it was the most "dwarfish" of the dwarf annual ryegrasses, it required less mowing during the winter and spring, saving time and money spent on maintenance of lawns and athletic fields. Panterra was also hardier and stood up to athletic cleats and the associated wear much better than older ryegrasses. Better even, it dies off in mid- to late May in much of Texas, therefore not competing with bermudagrass turf.

To develop Panterra, Nelson began with germplasm from Axcella. Nelson selected for richer color and shorter plants.

"The main idea of the dwarfishness is to have a variety you don't have to mow as often," Nelson said.

This extra dwarfishness should make Panterra a good choice for homeowners, he noted.

In much of Texas, winter turfgrasses are used to overseed bermudagrass lawns or athletic fields to provide a green lawn during the cold period of the year.

Ideally, the ryegrass will die off before bermudagrass comes out of dormancy in the late spring. Many ryegrass varieties used for overseeding were not developed as turfgrass, but for forage production.

Many annual forage ryegrasses, Gulf for example, grow too fast, requiring mowing twice a week or more in the spring. Perennial ryegrasses last too long, continuing to grow into late June and early July, crowding out bermudagrass and leaving thin or bare spots in summer lawns.

Panterra is a true annual such as Gulf and TAM90 ryegrasses. Like Gulf and TAM90, Panterra will typically begin to die out in mid to late May, just when bermudagrass lawns are beginning to green up.

"Panterra's early maturity should allow an easy transition from the winter grass to the warm season grass and put an end to brown or bald spots in home lawns and soccer fields," Nelson said.

Winter hardiness? Panterra would likely not survive winter in the High Plains, but for most of the rest of Texas, the turfgrass should be well suited. In tests at the Overton Center, the ryegrasses remained green and hardy at temperatures as low as 15 degrees Fahrenheit.

In agronomic circles, Nelson is well known for developing TAM 90, among the most widely grown forage varieties in Texas and the South. Nelson is currently working on several ryegrass lines with improved turf and forage production characteristics.

Seed production and marketing of Panterra has been contracted to Barenbrug USA, Inc. Barenbrug is a world leading research, sales and marketing company focused on wholesale sales through distribution companies. If you are interested in finding your local Panterra distributor, please visit the Barenbrug website at www.barusa.com.