

a voice
for the natural
landscaping
movement



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Celebrating natives
plant and natural
landscapes
since 1979.

The Grapevine

By Maryann Whitman

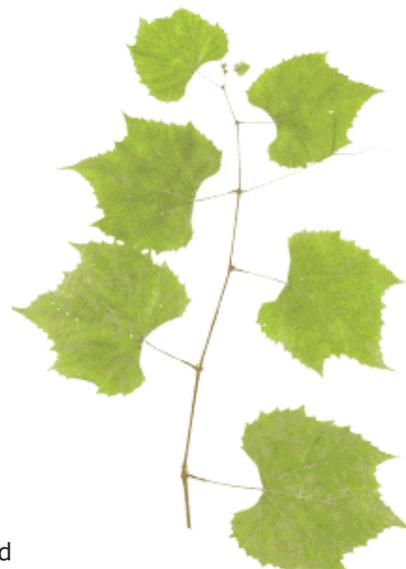
**Traditional American lawn on the way out?
Roundup-Resistant Bentgrass Creeping Your Way?
How about an odorless, bugless, and waterless lawn?**

We Are Not Alone

"The field of landscape design is changing, becoming more sensitive to the environment. The traditional American lawn – just 'mow, blow and go,' using chemical fertilizers and lots of water to keep it green – is being gobbled up by plantings of ornamental grasses; native plants are replacing bulbous shrubs." This is the assessment of the landscape architects interviewed by Newsweek and printed in the March 1, 2004 issue (pp 62-63).

Monster in the Making?

Roundup-Ready Creeping Bentgrass (*Agrostis stolonifera* L.) Creeping bentgrass, by best estimates, was brought to this continent in the mid-1700s for use as a forage plant. A facultative wetland inhabitant, spreading by seed and underground rhizomes, it has become established throughout the Great Plains and into California. Besides providing forage it has also been recognized as useful in lawns and especially in golf courses.



Recognizing an opportunity, Monsanto created a genetically modified version of this plant that can withstand applications of glyphosate (Roundup). Using such a grass, golf course managers can count on being able to grow monocultures – a highly desirable faculty.

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has responsibility under the Plant Protection Act (1990) to prevent the introduction and or dissemination of plant pests into the United States or interstate introduction/dissemination.

With Scotts Co. (manufacturers of Ortho, Miracle-Gro, Roundup and Turf Builder products), Monsanto has submitted a request to APHIS for a determination of unregulated status for Roundup-Ready Creeping Bentgrass, arguing that this *Agrostis* does not present a "unique plant pest risk." They note that "the agronomic consequences of volunteer [modified] creeping bentgrass would be minimal because the plants are easily controlled by mechanical means or by [application of] one of a number of other currently registered herbicides."

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You Heard It Here First

Odorless, bugless, and, best of all – waterless grass. Orange County, the Astrolawn company, and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California are trying out synthetic lawns at several locations and so far, reports the Los Angeles Times, suburbanites love them. A “soft, supple virtual lawn” is expensive at \$6 to \$7 a square foot, and at first the green blades shine with a disturbing sheen. But the sheen fades, and more than one homeowner reports that Astrolawn feels like the real thing. If the experiment succeeds, the water district says it will pay homeowners a rebate for installing waterless lawns.

Maryann is Editor of the Wild Ones Journal, and comes to the position with an extensive background in environmental matters of all kinds.