



Captiva Research Report

June 2007

Summary

- Captiva St. Augustine was evaluated for commercial production under different production processes
- The observations were made in June of 2007. Twenty-four sod producers took place in the study

Results

- Due to shorter internode growth, Captiva was slower growing than other St. Augustines. However, 100% coverage was achieved in a reasonable period of time
- No report of southern chinch bug infestation was found in any of the plantings.
- Captiva exhibited a deeper, dark green color
- Less mowing was needed due to Captiva's slower rate of vertical growth
- Few disease problems were reported during the evaluation period

Captiva St. Augustine Research Report
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June 2007

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This report covers the commercial production of Captiva St. Augustine at participating sod farms. The goal of the commercial farm evaluation phase was to evaluate Captiva under the different production practices associated with each grower. In general, Captiva was well received and all growers appear to be interested in continuing to grow it for commercial production. Two avenues of acreage increase have been pursued. The majority have chosen to establish registered blocks which are planted on fumigated ground to increase the amount of future propagation material available to them. The others have chosen to plant production blocks to test the demand prior to committing large investments to Captiva. My observations are as follows:

Growth: At the beginning of this research my primary reservation was on the perceived growth and coverage of Captiva. Due to shorter internodes the growth from point A to B was slower than other cultivars. Weed control of open ground was a concern. However, near 100% coverage was achieved in what was considered as reasonable time. Fill in from plantings varied from 4.5 months using 12" to 15" spacing of plugs on sand to over one year with 4-5 feet spacing and bad environmental conditions. In most cases complete fill occurred within 6-8 months.

Insect Resistance: No report of southern chinch bug infestation has been reported in any of the plantings. However, I was called out to one location for possible infestation. This turned out to be another insect that is not a pest of St. Augustinegrass. It has been reported (Reinert, personal communication) that the resistance in Captiva did not hold up to the new strain of southern chinch bug reported in Texas. I got one call during the drought of spring 2007 to inspect a field with mite damage. The field was spotted with moderate damage by Banks grass mite. This mite has been previously reported to be a problem of St. Augustinegrass during extreme dry periods. The call was made on a Friday and I made the inspection on Monday. At the Monday inspection of the Captiva field, very few mites could be found. A Friday night rain event went a long way in reducing or eliminating the mite problem. (Overhead irrigation is recommended for the control of this mite.)

Color: Deep or darker green color is what most growers associate with Captiva. Many believe that Captiva held its color far longer after fertilization than other cultivars they were growing. Currently there are no data to support this observation, but plans are being made to study this claim.

Mowing: All participants indicated that leaf blades of Captiva did not elongate as fast as other St. Augustinegrass cultivars. This was especially evident during the winter months. The range of mowing heights ranged from 1 inch to three inches. The shortest mowing heights appear to slow ground coverage. In comparison to other farms that allowed for a tall mowing height.

Harvesting: Harvesting of sod mats was conducted at several farms in conjunction with the sprigging of new fields. All locations reported that harvesting was successful when Captiva achieved fill-in. All mats held together well and root growth throughout the mat was very good.

Disease Tolerance: Not many disease symptoms have been reported on Captiva. Gray leaf spot was minimal by all accounts. This reflects laboratory evaluations which indicated equal or lower potential for gray leaf spot development on Captiva. At two locations, small brown patch circles were observed in the field.

Shade Tolerance: No formal shade study have been conducted on Captiva. Antidotal information from landscape evaluations indicate that Captiva has some degree of shade tolerance and may be equal to the best shade tolerant St. Augustinegrass cultivars.