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Graff's Farms to offer new breed of turfgrass

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Graff's Turf Farms of Fort Morgan, the turfgrass supplier for the Colorado Rockies and Colorado Buffaloes, has recently planted out a new, unique bluegrass variety that eliminates the need to buy grass seeds.

The new grass called Bella Bluegrass is the world's first dwarf bluegrass that is propagated vegetatively, according to a news release from Graff's. This means that it grows from underground rhizomes and covers the ground more quickly and efficiently than other varieties, but doesn't produce viable seeds. "The seed industry is faced with many challenges right now and this keeps our options open and also keeps us progressive," said James Graff, co-owner and operations manager for Graff's Turf Farms. "It's getting harder to produce clean seed and that problem trickles down to the sod grower. Production costs rise so seed costs keep rising, with a vegetative turf we will know what to expect. We will have our own stock and have confidence in the purity and a constant grasp on the cost to expand or replace acreage."

Because it is a seedless variety, Bella's initial planting must be done using a sprigging machine. This process involves taking sod rolls and grinding them up, then dispersing the pieces evenly across a prepared field.

Sprigging is something that may seem foreign to northern turf producers who are accustomed to seeding their fields. But in the end, the future benefits alleviated any hesitation on the part of Graff's Farms.

"It was a big step for us because it is vegetative," said Graff. "This was not a quick decision. We have had several conversations with the Sod Solutions team for nearly two years. In the end, we are excited to be part of the Sod Solutions family and have the opportunity to grow another quality turfgrass we truly believe in."

Bella has other advantages that make it not only attractive to turf producers, but to consumers as well. It is a dwarf bluegrass, meaning it will only grow to between three and four inches in height. This amounts to 50 to 80 percent less mowing, according to the release. Bella has a dark, alpine color and a dense canopy that helps prevent weed growth, and is also heat tolerant and able to handle hot conditions with reduced irrigation.

Graff's expects Bella to be available for sale sometime in 2009 or early 2010.

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