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HIGH PLAINS UNDERGROUND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HPWD supports research to determine best turfgrass varieties for semi-arid climates

For many years, people have wondered which turfgrass variety is best suited for semi-arid climates. A new research project by Texas Tech University, with funding from the High Plains Underground Water Conservation District (HPWD), is designed to answer that question.

“Water quantity and quality are becoming increasingly important issues in the region. There has been a great deal of research focusing on agricultural water conservation—but not as much pertaining to urban water conservation. We

believe that improved water conservation efforts in the urban landscape will provide greater water resources to all," said Dr. Joey Young of the Texas Tech University Plant and Soil Science Department (PSS).

Young and Dr. Glen Ritchie are co-principal investigators for the project.

At their April regular meeting, HPWD Board members approved $6,000 in grant funding for the research project, which includes purchase of sod with freight and management equipment.

"The High Plains Water District not only has a vested interest in agricultural water conservation—but urban water conservation as well. This is important research for our area. HPWD is excited to assist with the research," said Precinct One District Director James Powell of Lubbock.

Young said there are three primary objectives for the research:

1. Determine the precise amount of supplemental irrigation needed to sustain acceptable turfgrass quality in semi-arid climates.

2. Evaluate performance/survival of various turfgrass species under minimal supplemental irrigation.

3. Provide an educational site to guide homebuilders, realtors, organizations, and others in making turfgrass decisions.

The research plots, located at the 130-acre PSS Quaker Avenue Research Farm in Lubbock, will include both warm-season and cool-season turfgrass species.

Common bermudagrass, hybrid bermudagrass, Japanese lawngrass, Manilagrass, Buffalograss, Seashore paspalum, and Lady Bird Johnson native mix (Buffalo, Curly Mesquite, and Blue Grama) are the warm-season grasses to be tested.

Tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass are the cool-season grasses.

Young said a portion of the research test plots will receive water through subsurface drip irrigation buried to a depth of five inches. Other research plots will receive overhead sprinkler irrigation.

"The research will simulate homeowner turf management practices. This includes mowing heights of 1.25 and 3 inches as well as general fertilizer applications," Young said.

Although the first data from the project may be a year away, Young said there will be a field demonstration day later this summer on July 21, 2014 at the Texas Tech Quaker Farm.

Additional information about the research project will be featured in future issues of the HPWD newsletter*, The Cross Section.*

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