

Kowalewski gives about 30 presentations a year

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It's not only schools that keep Kowalewski busy. He still works with golf courses, on which he focuses most of his research. He oversees graduate students who pursue turfgrass research projects.

One of his graduate students is studying alternatives to fungicides for a disease known colloquially as pink snow mold. It discolors putting greens and creates expensive headaches for golf course managers. Alternatives could include organic products or even simple cultural practices such as pushing a roller along the putting green every morning, which significantly trims down the disease, Kowalewski said.

Another student is comparing the costs and benefits of natural grass to artificial turf for sports fields. The student collects data in the field in Corvallis, Portland and Eugene on a

monthly basis, recording conditions and use characteristics. He's found, so far, that while synthetic fields provide more consistent playing surfaces year round, they can heat up 50 degrees warmer than the atmospheric temperature on a hot summer day.

Yet a third graduate student is expanding Kowalewski's work with public schools, developing practical low-maintenance landscape plans for schools.

Kowalewski isn't stopping there. Brimming with energy and ideas for outreach, Kowalewski gives about 30 presentations a year, including training budding master gardeners throughout the state. He's also developed a 48-minute video and extension bulletins on lawn care.

He plans to take on a fourth graduate student this spring who will look at how homeowners and college campuses can reduce water use on the turfgrass and landscapes.



Photo by Heidi Kowalewski
Inside the Bird's Nest stadium, Alec Kowalewski kneels on the grass he helped grow for the 2008 Olympics in Beijing.

Unique location produces top-quality spuds

By HEATHER SMITH THOMAS
For the Capital Press

Three generations of the Stoddard family have farmed near the tiny town of Grace in southeastern Idaho.

Frank Stoddard grew up near St. Anthony, Idaho, and served in World War II in the Pacific. After the war, he married his sweetheart, Donna, who grew up near Grace.

Their son, Curtis, was born in 1955 when the couple was farming near Idaho Falls.

"That fall, when my father, Curtis, was a couple months old, they heard about a 160-acre farm near Grace that was for rent," Jordan said. "They moved down here, and that's how our farm got started."

Curtis graduated from Brigham Young University in



Heather Thomas/For the Capital Press
Jane and Curtis Stoddard work the same Grace, Idaho, farm that Curtis's father, Frank, started back in 1955.

the late 1970s and returned to the farm.

"My 3 brothers and I are the third generation," Jordan said.

During the past half-century, the farm has expanded to growing 1,000 acres of seed potatoes and 3,000 acres of malt barley.

Stoddard Farms

Owners: Curtis Stoddard and sons Jeremy, Jason, Jordan and Justin

Location: Near Grace, Idaho, since 1956

Crops: Malt barley and seed potatoes

Acres: 4,000

The main varieties the Stoddards grow are Russet Burbank, Umatilla and Rang-

ers. "Grace is a seed management area. To grow any potatoes in this valley, they have to be certified as seed quality, regardless of whether they will be planted or eaten. They have to go through all the steps of

certification," Jordan said.

"We are in an enclosed mountain valley, isolated from a lot of disease. It can get down to 20 below zero, and that also helps eliminate potato diseases," Jordan said.

The four brothers spread the workload.

"Jason handles a lot of our office work. Jeremy does the hiring and interaction with employees during potato harvest and in the spring when we take the potatoes out of the cellars to send off for seed. We hire a lot of temporary help," Jordan said. "I generally manage the fertilizers and different herbicides."

The Stoddards have a little farm market in the fall, at which members of the public buy sacks of potatoes directly

from the farm. This is a way to sell any potatoes that fall outside the size requirements for seed potatoes.

"We sort all the potatoes in the spring, get the dirt out, and bag some for sale. Anything above 12 ounces counts against you, and there's also a low end," he said. "In order to be certified as Idaho Blue Tag, for seed, they have to be between those two size extremes."

The farm market started about 25 years ago.

"For a few weeks in the fall, we sell to anyone who wants them, for as long as they last," he said.

"This coincides with potato harvest which is our busiest time of year, but it's interesting to meet the people who come to get potatoes."

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