

Justification

The use of low input alternative groundcovers for landscapes in the low desert southwest U.S. is gaining interest. Identifying locally acceptable groundcover that can be grown and managed with minimum amounts of water and low maintenance requirements will help the southwest green industry, golf courses, and landscape designers to save water, reduce energy, labor, and money.

Objectives

1. To evaluate the performance of Kurapia under varied rates of drip irrigation,
2. Create local research-based information about the feasibility of growing a new groundcover,
3. Enhance the turf and landscape managers' awareness about the characteristics of alternative groundcover.

Methods

White and pink flowered varieties of Kurapia were planted from a single 3.8-liter pot in plots measuring 3m by 3m on 13 May 2019. Both varieties were established and sustained during the first year with pre-existing overhead irrigation. In the second year, the two varieties were watered at three levels of drip irrigation: high – 80%, medium – 40% and low - 20% of ETo relative to bermudagrass. The experiment was established as a 2 x 3 factorial arranged in a randomized complete block design with four replications. Data were collected for Kurapia greenness, flower shedding, and growth rates. Digital image estimates of percent greenness were taken using a mobile phone application, Canopeo®. Green canopy cover values obtained using the Canopeo® app were compared with visual observations. Data were analyzed using JMP ver. 14.3 statistical software and means compared using Student's t-test.

Conclusions

- Both white and pink flower varieties of kurapia survived (100%) and successfully established under low desert Arizona conditions;
- The potential of Kurapia as a groundcover in low desert southwest is promising;
- Once established, Kurapia can be grown at low input groundcover irrigated with 40% of water typically applied to bermudagrass when using surface drip irrigation;
- Kurapia remained green throughout the year at low water, the desired aesthetic value during winter and reducing cost of overseeding.

Results

- Three months after planting, the white flower variety covered 98% of the plot area and measured 5.1 cm in height while the pink variety covered 72% plot area and measured 8.6 cm in height.
- During the second year, the quality of Kurapia was significantly declined when irrigated at 20% compared to the 40 and 80% levels.
- There was no significant difference in plant quality between the 40 and 80% levels of irrigation.
- Once established, Kurapia can be irrigated with 40% of water typically applied to bermudagrass when using surface drip irrigation under low desert Arizona conditions.

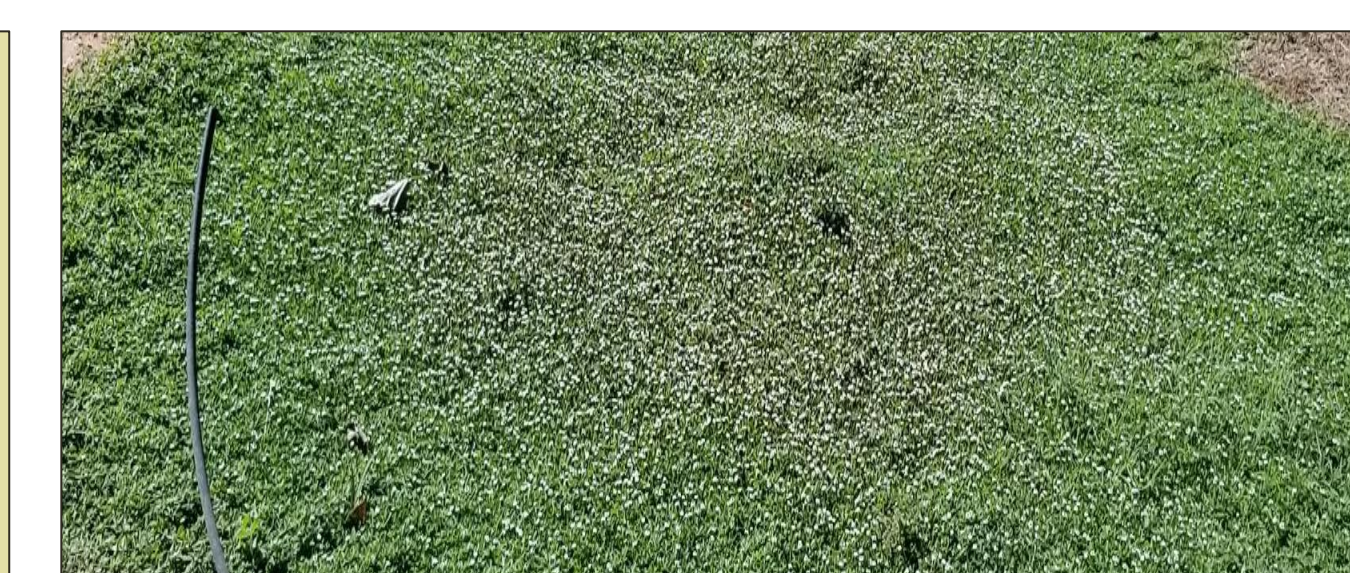
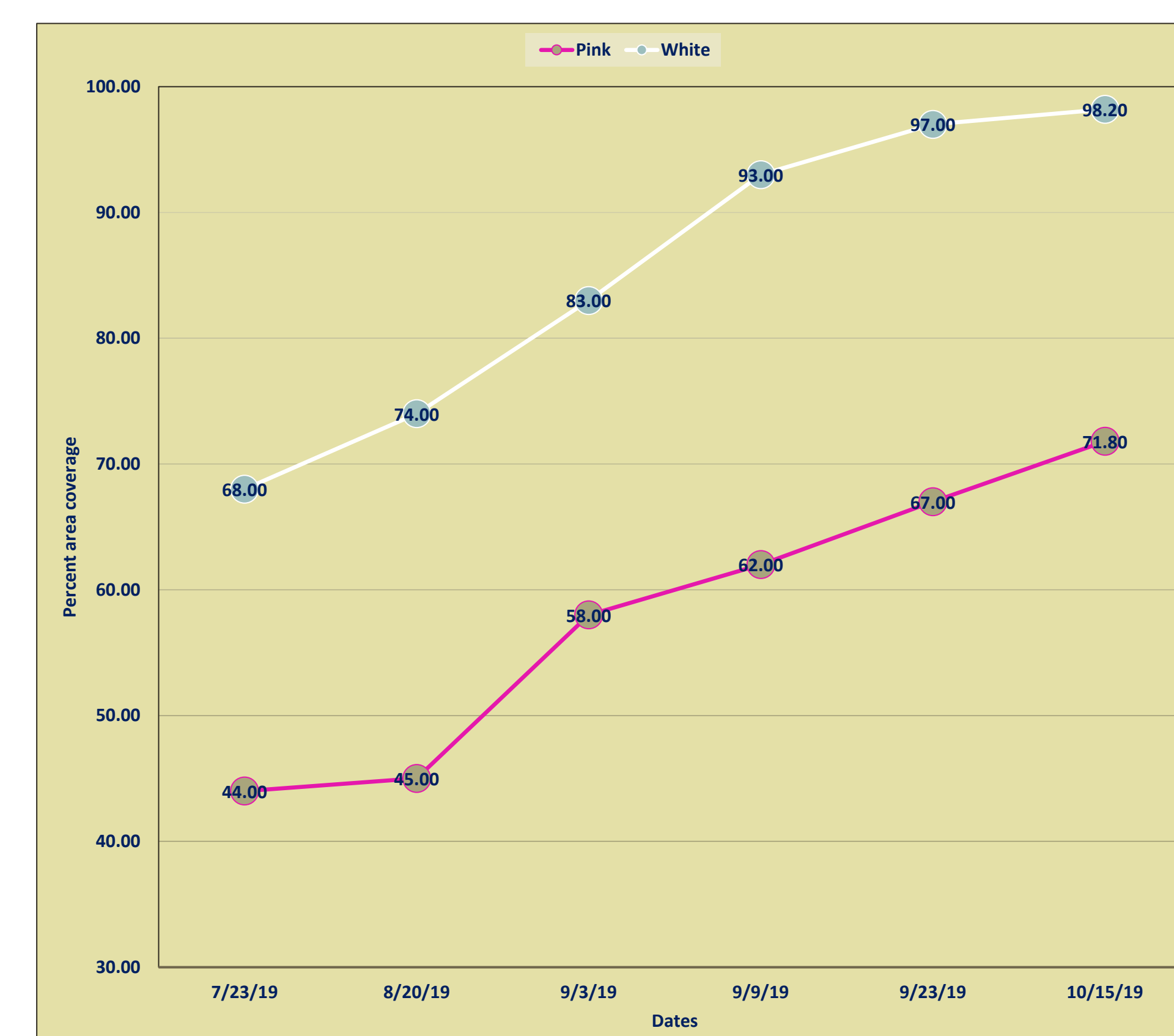


Figure 1. White and pink flowered varieties of Kurapia for surface area coverage (left) and height (middle) in Litchfield Park, AZ in 2019. The ability of Kurapia groundcover to suppress weeds and remain green compared to grasses at Phoenix, AZ in Feb 2019 (right).

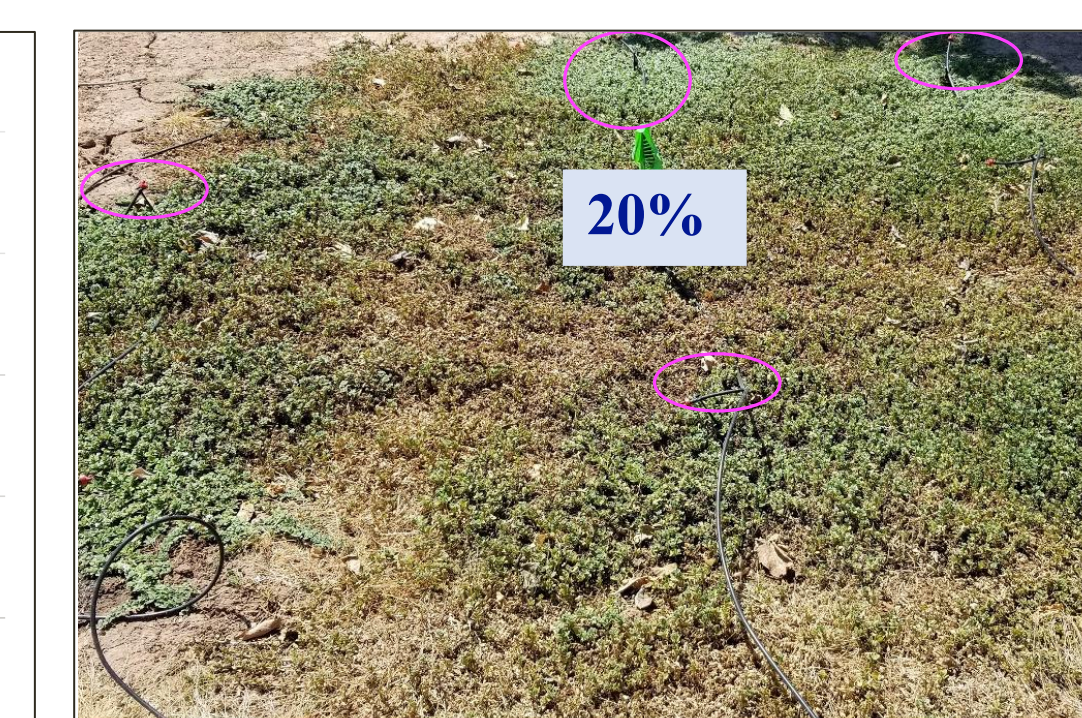
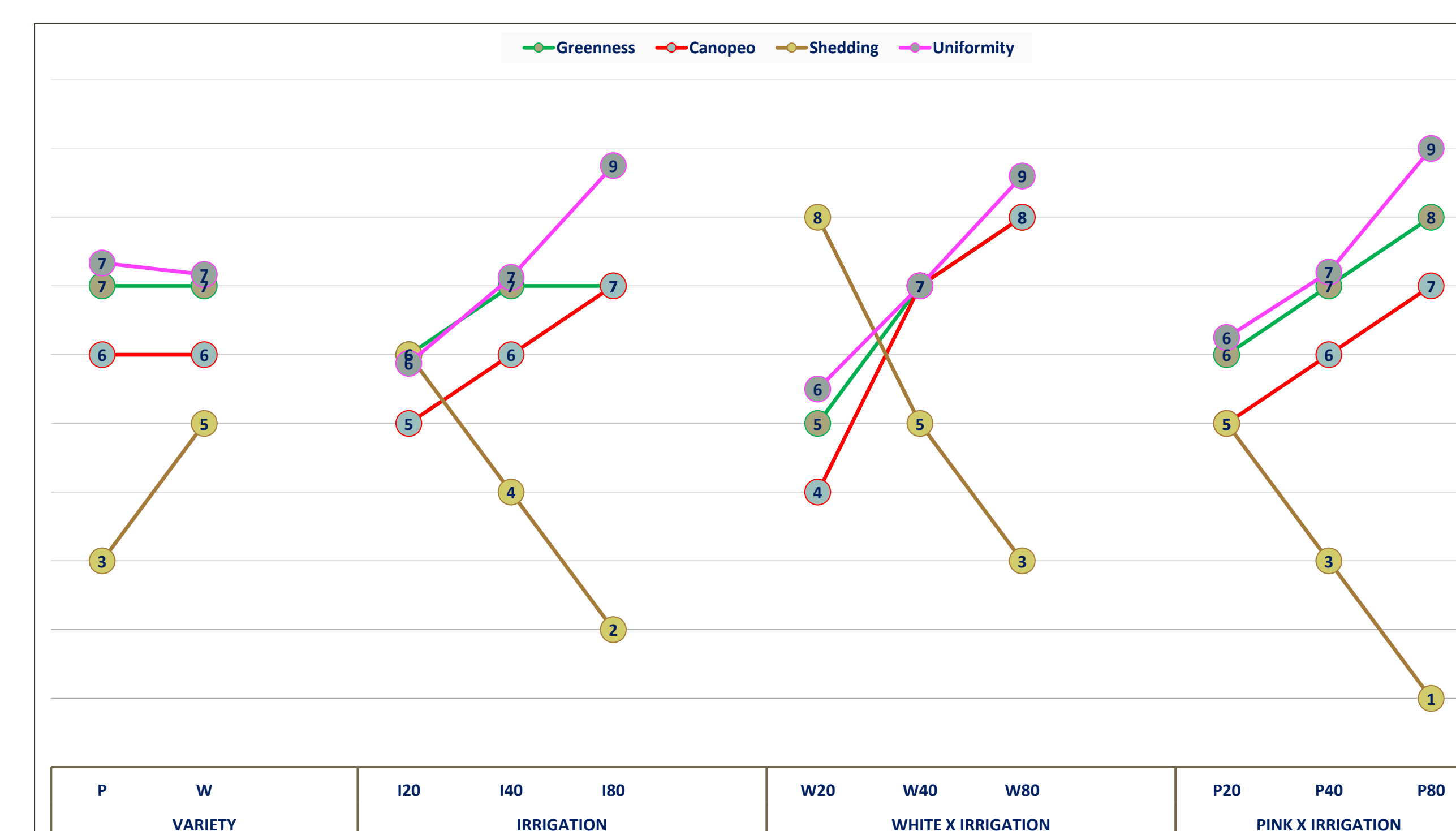


Figure 2. Greenness, quality, and flower shedding of Kurapia at irrigation rates of 20, 40, and 80%. Note: P-pink, W-white, I-irrigation (I20 = irrigation at 20% etc.). Following National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) procedure for Greenness (1 is brown or yellow, 5 is light green, and 9 is dark green), flower shedding (1 is 10% shedding, 5 is 50% shedding, and 8 is 80% shedding).

Acknowledgements

This project is supported in part by the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the United States Golf Association. The authors thank Kurapia Inc. for providing kurapia plugs to conduct this study. We also thank Wigwam Golf Club for providing the experimental sites.