

GRASS VARIETIES

By

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MANY professional men in green-keeping these days like to know exactly what species of grass are contained in the mixtures supplied to them by their seedsmen—and rightly so. In fact they like to order their seed to a specific prescription either composed by themselves or recommended to them by an advisory organisation like the one at Bingley. Best results are obtained from using a seeds mixture which is specially designed to suit particular conditions.

Species and Variety

It is not enough, however, just to specify the *species* of grass (Perennial ryegrass for example). The *variety* (S.23 or Kent Indigenous or whatever else) is almost equally important. The plant breeders and selectors have been quite busy in recent years and there is often a wide choice of variety

Perennial Ryegrass

To take Perennial ryegrass first. This is a grass which is usually included in mixtures for fairways and sometimes for tees—perhaps something like 20 per cent of the whole seeds mixture. There are about 20 varieties (of those now commercially available) which are useful in sports turf. Some of the best are S.23, S.101, New Zealand, Kent Indigenous, Brabantia, and Sceempter (two Dutch varieties) and Melle (Belgian)—all good, dwarf, persistent varieties of Perennial ryegrass. At the other end of the scale, varieties like Irish commercial will not last long in regularly mown turf

Timothy

Those who like to use Timothy in three seed mixtures with or instead of Perennial ryegrass have the choice of two good persistent varieties, S.50 (British) and King (Dutch). Unfortunately the price (upwards of 12s. a lb.) limits the use of these excellent varieties.

Browntop

Most of the browntop available is either the Oregon variety or Dutch—Holfior for example. New Zealand browntop is now practically extinct.

Browntop and Chewings' fescue form, of course, the basis for seeds mixtures used on putting greens in Great Britain.

Chewings' Fescue

There are good varieties of Chewings' fescue also, including Oregon. When using this variety in the finest turf, Oregon Grade 1 (crop free) should be stipulated since Oregon Grade 2 can include impurities like Perennial ryegrass. The Dutch variety Highlight is probably the most highly regarded at the present time and Brabantia is also very good.

Creeping Red Fescue

Reliable varieties of creeping red fescue include S.59, Canadian, Brabantia, Oasis and Golfrood (the last three being Dutch). Some creeping red fescue varieties suffered a good deal from Dollar spot disease in trials at Bingley. Always bear in mind the fact that no variety of true creeping red fescue will persist long in turf which is mown at putting green height. Because of this dislike for close mowing creeping red fescue is a grass which is more useful for fairways than for greens and tees.

Crested Dogstail

Fifteen to 20 per cent of crested dogstail makes a useful contribution sometimes to mixtures for fairways and tees. The New Zealand variety is the most reliable but Irish and Dutch are also available at a slightly lower price.

Smooth Stalked Meadow-Grass

With the selection of some really successful varieties, smooth stalked meadow-grass is becoming more and more popular in mixtures for fairways and tees. The grass is strong, hard wearing and will

thrive even in dry, sandy conditions. It has its weaknesses, however, being slow to establish, rather susceptible to *Holminthosporium* leaf spot and intolerant of very close mowing. There are several good varieties. Prato, a Dutch selection, is one of the best, though in rather short supply at present and Campus (Dutch) and Cambridge (British) are also very worthy of mention.

Take advice When in Doubt

Choosing the best mixture for a particular golf course can be quite a complicated business in view of the varieties available, and it is easy to go wrong unless one is familiar with all the different possibilities in the way of species of grass and their varieties. Take good advice therefore if in any doubt. When you order the seed ask the seedsman for a certificate indicating trueness to variety and country of origin, together with percentage purity and germination figures for the seed. Finally, always deal with a reliable seedsman, one with a good name whom you can trust.

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