Seeds For Golf Courses

An expert's analysis of grass seeds which produce fine golf course turf. Origin and characteristics of the several varieties most generally sold by seed merchants

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Article III—Agrostis Canina—Velvet Bent and Agrostis Maritima—Seaside Bent

SOME years ago it was more or less the common practice to call Rhode Island bent, Agrostis canina. Due to the combined work of Hitchcock on the plant, and Hillman on the seed, everyone should now know that Velvet bent is Agrostis canina. Both the plant and seed are easily distinguished from those of the other species of Agrostis.

Velvet bent to many is the most interesting of all the bents although it plays the smallest role in the commercial field. This is due to the fact that the supply of seed is exceptionally limited. Until a few years ago even the smallest quantity of true Velvet bent seed could not be obtained on the market.

Velvet Bent Seed From Canada

DURING the last two years some exceptionally beautiful, as well as true Velvet bent seed has been obtained from two sources in Canada. We understand that there are one or two private parties in the United States who are producing Velvet bent seed, but these laboratories have never had the privilege of seeing either the plant or the seed.

Most of the Velvet bent found on our American courses is the result of planting South German Mixed bent seed which almost always contains a percentage of Velvet. Sometimes its presence is as low as 1%, sometimes as high as 18%. The average Velvet bent content in South German Mixed bent is about 5%.

Plant of Velvet Bent Very Delicate

THE plant of Velvet bent is more delicate than that of any of the other bents. In our opinion, it is the very best bent for putting greens. Unfortunately the supply is limited and the price so high, that very few clubs can obtain seed. A fair degree of success has been obtained from planting Velvet vegetatively, but this method is also expensive and tedious.

The seed microscopically is entirely different from the seed of other bent. The lemma is decidedly ribbed and of a dull, sugary appearance. The palea is wanting. These distinguishing characteristics are plainly illustrated by the accompanying drawing.

Agrostis maritima—Seaside bent

THIS bent has only recently made its debut in the commercial field. In 1924 Mr. Lyman Carrier, formerly of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, harvested the first seed crop in Coos County, Oregon, and has since marketed it under the registered name of Coos bent. Since then, several other parties have gone in for bent seed production and excellent seed from this and other areas in Oregon and Washington have appeared on the market.

Besides seaside bent, these two north-western states produce what is supposed to be a form of Rhode Island Bent (mentioned in the second article of this series). A great deal of this seed produced around Astoria, Oregon, has been marketed under the registered name Golfalawn. There is still some uncertainty as to its correct, botanical name. Professor Hillman is at present calling it Agrostis vulgaris var. stolonifera, which means a creeping form of Rhode Island bent.

Due to commercial rivalry there have been made some extravagant claims and some silly statements which have harmed rather than helped Pacific Coast Bent. Partly because of this there has been a lot of work done by official parties in an effort to give the truth to the ultimate consumer and Professor Hyslop's article in the "Seed World" of February 10, 1928 is worth repeating here. Space does not permit us to quote the entire article, so only the most interesting paragraphs will be given.
What Professor Hyslop Says

"Seaside Bent is the stronger creeper of the two Oregon Bents. It is one of the most vigorous stoloniferous creepers I have seen. The New Astoria Bent is also a vigorous stoloniferous creeper but does not creep so rapidly. It also spreads underground by root stalks or rhizomes, making a deep, reinforced sod. The leaves of this Bent in a dense sod are somewhat upright and I have observed no tendency for runners to come out on top of the turf.

"Both grasses are fine Bents. Seaside Bent is slightly wider leaved and the internodes on rapidly creeping isolated plants are longer than those of the New Astoria Bent. This difference is much less pronounced where stands are tense as in lawn or green. The statement in your August 26 issue that Seaside Bent is the coarsest of all the Bents grown in the Pacific coast for putting greens as well as fairways, but on the Eastern seaboard (except for strictly seaside course) there apparently is a preference for seed of South German Mixed bent and Rhode Island Bent because of the presence of Seaside Bent with the "Astoria Bent."

Seaside Bent Popular on Pacific Coast

Seaside Bent has been used with great success on the Pacific coast for putting greens as well as fairways, but on the Eastern seaboard (except for strictly seaside course) there apparently is a preference for seed of South German Mixed bent and Rhode Island Bent.
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for putting greens. Perhaps the higher price is one of the reasons why Seaside bent has not been generally used in the East.
The Western growers and merchants are very aggressive in their desire to spread their product, and we now hear rumors that every effort will be used to raise the present duty of 2 cents per pound to one as high as 50 cents per pound. Naturally any material advance of duty will put the Canadian and the German bent out of the running and leave the field clear for our domestic seed.
This article concludes the series on Bent. The next articles will deal with the various species of Poa among which we find that very useful grass—Kentucky Blue-grass.

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Your Grass Seed

Much of the Grass Seed that is sold today is supplied to the final, retail trade by large wholesalers. There are comparatively few houses that make their own importations, and of these few firms, Peter Henderson & Co. are an outstanding example.

We have always believed that there is a demand for the highest grade of Grass Seed—Grass Seed that could be depended upon, and the results have fully justified this belief.

Use Henderson Seeds for at least a portion of your course this year. Let us quote you on your requirements, and you will be surprised to find that the prices for seeds of Henderson quality are about the same as you have been paying, but with a vast difference as to results. An inquiry does not obligate you in any way.

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