

## Questions & Answers

If you have a question, comment or suggestion write us.

E-mail us a [elpene99@yahoo.com](mailto:elpene99@yahoo.com)

This question was posed to two agronomists. We received the following response:

**Question:** We aeravate, topdress and overseed our soccer fields in August. We do not have irrigation and do not have the luxury of being able to close our fields for the fall season when we overseed. Therefore traffic is a definite issue.

I like the idea of establishing some new improved aggressive varieties of blue grass. My concern over tall fescue is that the durability and drought tolerance benefits are lost because we cannot allow it sufficient time to establish. What deed would you recommend?

**Answer: Agronomist #1** – You apparently want to establish aggressive varieties of bluegrass which under sports field conditions are difficult to establish especially when the fields are in play. If you use a more aggressive large seeded grass to provide a nurse crop for the bluegrass my opinion is that tall fescue is a better choice than perennial rye grass. My rationale for this is as follows: tall fescue does not take much longer to establish than perennial rye grass in our area, also indicate it is much more disease sensitive than tall fescue. With the new brown patch tolerant tall fescue varieties, this enhances my preference towards tall fescues since brown patch under high nitrogen fertilization has been the minor Achilles' heel of tall fescue in this area.

Your question expresses concern about durability and drought tolerance benefits of tall fescue because of time constraints in terms of establishment time verses need to utilize the turf for athletic events. Again I don't feel ryegrass has a tremendous advantage in establishment time over tall fescue. Without knowing the exact circumstances of establishment time for your individual fields I can't judge whether a week to 10 days difference in growth rate between tall fescue and ryegrass will make a dramatic difference in the turfs ability to tolerate sporting events. Tall fescue is much closer to ryegrass in establishment time than it is to bluegrass, which is much slower to establish.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

If you were to select ryegrass as the "Nurse crop" for the bluegrass establishment you might need to incorporate fungicide applications on a timely basis considering your nitrogen application rates of 4-5 lbs. Per 1000 sq ft per year. Adding another layer of management to your turfgrass program may be difficult given manpower limitations and budget considerations. If your currently managing ryegrass without fungicides, you may be able to continue to do this.

**Agronomist #2** – Overall, I agree with #1. I would add that under a very short timetable (weeks) between overseeding/renovation and use of the field the advantage goes to perennial ryegrass in terms of a durable turf cover. However, tall fescue is certainly reasonable if the timetable is months between overseeding/renovation and use of the field. #1's discussion of longer-term disease and drought issues relative to perennial ryegrass and tall fescue are accurate. Important to get across is timeline. A short quick cover of turf is not likely to be durable in the long term. Allowing several months or more to establish or re-establish a field is going to produce a more durable field for the long term.

**Agronomist #3** – In response to the previous statements: The value of any seeding on fields under high use is questionable. I disagree that tall fescue is better than rye grass. Bluegrass has poor traffic tolerance during its first year of growth. When you over fertilize and over water you get into disease problems. I am not aware of a lot of diseases on rye grass.

**Remarks from this writer:** I have decided to try an 80% tall fescue and 20% aggressive Kentucky bluegrass with an 1/8 inch topdressing on both well trafficked fields and closed off area in August. Also, I plan to use perennial rye in the worn areas during the soccer season. State tuned for the results in the Spring.

I would like to hear your comments. Email me at [elpene99@yahoo.com](mailto:elpene99@yahoo.com) or write to STMANJ, PO Box 370. Annandale, NJ 08801

