

## HOW TO BUY GRASS SEED

By George A. Davis

After buying grass seed for 52 years, one reaches some very definite conclusions which embraces some old cliches, such as "Caveat Emptor" (Let the buyer beware!) You can't get something for nothing or a bargain is usually worth what you pay for it. What I'm saying is - Long experience trains one when buying seed to buy only from reliable sources because almost never are two lots identical. Let's take each category by itself:

### PURITY

The purity of any seed is determined by trained technicians in State, University, or Commercial laboratories where they have all of the necessary equipment and knowledge to obtain the highest accuracy. They separate the pure seed in a measured quantity from chaff, crop, and weed seeds, thus giving the per cent of pure seed. Next, they separate the chaff, crop, and weed seeds, and give the percentage of each by count and weight.

### CROP AND WEED SEEDS

Crop seed is seed other than the one being tested and consists of more than one variety. For example: If you are testing Kentucky Bluegrass, you might find such crop seed as Canada Blue, Merion Blue, or some other variety. If any other one variety is greater than 5% of the seed being tested, then it officially becomes a mixture and is not considered a straight seed, the count or percentage of each other variety is given by the analyst in the test. Poa Annua and Bent are usually given by count per pound when so requested, thus giving the presence or absence of either seed.

Next the percentage of weeds are given in the total mixture - which is then broken down by the analyst into the number of each variety of weed seed that would occur in one pound. There are three kinds of weed seeds - (1) allowable, (2) noxious, and (3) secondary noxious. Most states allow up to 2% of weeds in a mixture or 2 lbs. per 100 lbs. of seed. Certain noxious weeds are not allowed in almost all states. Each state lists its own noxious and secondary noxious weeds. Most states allow secondary noxious if written on the tag. These weeds are usually annuals and not a serious hazard when used for ornamental purposes where the grass is continually mowed, such as, a lawn, golf course, or park. Many states now treat Poa Annua as a noxious weed and prohibit any seed containing Poa Annua from being sold in their state and will remove it from being sold. This is where judicious buying by the supplier comes in and naturally, seed that has Poa Annua is cheaper than

seed that is Poa Annua and Bent free. All purchases should specify in the contracts that the seed you purchase must be Poa Annua and Bent free if this is your desire. Any other seed not of the type purchased is considered by experts who want a pure variety as a crop or a weed seed, such as Poa Annua which is considered a noxious weed in some states but not in Illinois.

### GERMINATION

To get the percent of germination, 100 seeds are put on a germination tray and placed in a germination cabinet that has high and low temperature controls resembling Mother Nature. Then it is incubated for the usual time allotted for the different varieties of seed and the percent of live seed is thus determined. For instance, if 11 seeds do not produce a hair root, the germination is 89% of live seed.

### HOW CHEAPER SEED IS OBTAINED

Some shippers have been known to buy some good lots of seed on the basis of 85% pure, but tests show a 92 purity and 89 germination. They then blend some cheaper seed showing 78 pure and 71 germination at a much cheaper price. By blending the two, you get 85-80 and a cheaper price of say 5 cents under market and sell it as first grade seed. The weed content in the first lot could be .05 or 5 hundredth of 1% and the second lot could be .55% or 55th hundredth of 1% so that the mixed seed would show 85 purity, 80 germination, .30 weeds, and it might contain Poa Annua and Bent. The crop seed would be figured the same way. Here you have a bargain seed.

### SEEDING IN THE FALL

If seeding in the fall, the best seed to use is a high grade, high purity, high germinating seed with low weed content of the seed harvested in the previous year because new crop seed reaches its best germination in the following January or February of the next year, such as 76 crop will germinate better in January or February because of the natural curing process.

The best known way of buying seed is know your seedsman and his reputation as a buyer of the highest grades available on the market. Believe it or not, there are some who sell the best by test but lose out on a price basis which is not the best way to purchase seed. Buyers should ask the seller for a laboratory test showing lot number and name of seed on each type of seed purchased. Good seed sellers should be able to furnish this information to the buyer, especially if a fairly large quantity of seed is involved.

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