

BUYING SOD, CHECK CULTIVARS

Sodding a lawn bypasses seedling care and so provides a mature turf quickly. But preparation of the soilbed should be as carefully undertaken for sod as for seeding. Sod cannot be laid on hard, packed ground, and be expected to thrive. These Kentucky bluegrasses make serviceable sod alone or blended: Adelphi, Arboretum, Baron, Birka, Bonnieblue, Edmundi, Fylking, Glade, Majestic, Merion, Nugget, Plush, Ram I, Sydsport, Touchdown.

FINE FESCUES FOR SHADE

Cultivars in the fine fescue group - Banner, Highlight, Koket, Ruby, among them - are well suited for persistence in shaded locations where soils dry out, as is typical of habitat under trees. When selecting a seeding mixture for a shady lawn, see that a goodly proportion of fescue is included, as well as whatever Kentucky bluegrasses and perennial ryegrasses are wanted for less strigent habitat.

NEW RYEGRASSES, REAL LAWN DANDIES

The flood of new perennial ryegrass cultivars offers real opportunity for improved planting and renovation of lawns. Never before has it been so easy to get a good - and a good-looking - grass cover in so short a time.

Perennial ryegrasses are standouts for quick sprouting. A new seeding becomes a carpet of green in just a few days if kept moist and warm (about room temperature). In cool weather you could even pre-sprout ryegrass seed indoors, by moistening it and keeping it in a plastic sack for a couple of days before drying it enough for sowing. However, this bother is seldom merited since ryegrass starts so quickly outdoors anyway, especially at this time of year when soils are residually warm.

Then there's the stepped-up attractiveness of the modern perennial ryegrass. It's had to pass muster at some of the most fastidious turfgrass "beauty pageants", where the judges have been the nation's most critical plant breeders with the proverbial hearts of stone. So ryegrasses are no longer tough and stringy nobodies, showing "gray hair" each time mowed. The new cultivars are denser, lower-growing, and catch fewer diseases than does their not-so-highly-thought-of common counterpart.

Some of the perennial ryegrasses you'll be hearing a lot about are: Blazer, Citation, Derby, Diplomat, Fiesta, Manhattan, NK-200, Omega, Pennfine, Regal, and Yorktown II. Manhattan and Pennfine are chiefly responsible for bringing acclaim to the modern perennial ryegrass, and extending its range of hardiness nationwide. Most of the others are also multi-clone polycrosses (i.e. produced by interplanting several bloodlines), some utilizing Rutgers germplasm such as helped create Manhattan (collected mostly in Central Park).

The Lawn Institute

Nutrient deficiencies, weeds, diseases, thin turf, insects.

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