

## The Label's the Clue to Lawngress Seed

Packages of every product on store shelves have a brand name. This name is descriptive of how the marketer wants to portray the product. It sometimes is on target and other times is slanted to make you think that what is enclosed is better than it is, or even different than it is.

When looking at turfgrass seed packages, the brand name is in large letters, often superimposed over a color picture or graphic. That picture of a gorgeous lawn makes you feel that this seed is used, that type of lawn will result. It's not always that simple.

A very important part of the lawn seed package is the label. This is often inconspicuous. This label lists lawn grasses included in the blend or mixture. The species with the delicate, fine leaves make a nicer looking turf than can be had from coarse field grasses. A package of entirely fine textured grasses will be superior to one with coarse kinds included. You must know the difference.

Fine textured lawn grasses for the cool humid regions include Kentucky bluegrasses, fine or red or Chewings or hard fescues, Colonial bentgrasses, perennial turf type ryegrasses, turf type tall fescues, and some specialty grasses used in mixtures for shady or salty or low maintenance areas.

It is important these days to look for the **named** varieties on the seed label. A **named** Kentucky bluegrass, a **named** fine or red or Chewings or hard fescue, a **named** perennial turf type ryegrass, a **named** turf type tall fescue, a **named** Colonial bentgrass. These names identify the new improved varieties which have been developed to have traits which are superior to the common types. They are more attractive, more disease and insect resistant, and will give more value for the money spent. When the varieties are not named, they are assumed to be the common types which are the older and less desirable types of turfgrasses.

Annual ryegrass is a frequent component of inexpensive seed mixtures. It sprouts quickly but generally does not survive into the second year, and if it does, it becomes coarse and clumpy. A small amount of annual ryegrass can be useful as a companion grass where quick cover is needed to protect a newly seeded slope. The percentage of each ingredient is listed on the label and its germination percentage given.

The germination percent is listed for each grass and gives a guarantee that the claimed amount of seed will sprout in a standardized test. The germination percent is used to prevent old and improperly stored seed from being marketed as high quality seed. The figures vary according to the kind of grass, where it was produced and other environmental factors.

Another item seen on the label is the weed seed content. Few packages of lawn seed contain enough weed seed to be of much importance because the soil itself is full of weed seeds — as many as one per square inch ready to grow. When you plant grass seed and weeds come up with the grass seedlings, the source of these unwanted seeds, like crabgrass, is from the soil. Timothy, orchardgrass and other field type grasses have no place in a lawn. When present in lawn seed, they are identified as "other crop seed". Inert matter refers to material other than live seeds which may be carried in a mixture or blend. Most seed processing machinery now eliminates dust, empty hulls, immature seeds and stem fragments but a small percentage of inert material may remain.

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