

# Government and Dealers Tell Why Seed Prices Are Rising

**M**UCH OF THE SEED that is used on golf courses is imported. In a report recently published by the Division of Seed Investigations of the Bureau of Plant Industry, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, is given a table of imports of different seeds during the past two government fiscal years. From that report are quoted items that are of chief interest to the golf course trade. Naturally only a small part of the imports listed are used on golf courses but the figures serve to show the extent of the foreign grass seed import business as well as the relative amounts of the different grass seeds that are imported. Two of the interesting figures in the accompanying table are those of chaff of bent and fescue. No doubt much of this chaff is used for lawn mixtures but undoubtedly much of it finds its way to golf courses where purchases are made on the basis of "bargains" instead of on the basis of guaranteed purity and germination figures.

Three of the most important grasses used on golf courses in this country, namely, Kentucky bluegrass, redtop, and Bermuda grass, are not listed in the report. This is because seed of these grasses are produced in this country in sufficient quantities to supply the demand. The other commonly used grasses on golf courses—colonial bent, seaside bent and rye grasses—are also produced in this country in large quantities. The utilization by golf courses of large quantities of these home grown seeds is only one way in which the golf course business of the country directly helps the American farmer.

The importations of Italian ryegrass did not come from Italy, which might be expected from its name. The government records show that the Italian ryegrass importations were from the following sources:

- 11,200 pounds from New Zealand.
- 6,000 pounds from Denmark.
- 4,500 pounds from Great Britain (of Irish origin).
- 4,500 pounds from Ireland.
- 200 pounds from Netherlands.

Over 80 per cent of the perennial ryegrass importations originated in Ireland.

## Ky. Blue and Redtop Seed Reduced

Golf courses, especially those in the drought area, will probably use more seed of Kentucky bluegrass and redtop this fall than has been used in the past two years. Officials of clubs contemplating the purchase of seeds for fall planting or planting next spring will be interested in the reports of the seed crop of the most important fairway grasses on northern golf courses.

The Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the U. S. Dept. of Agriculture has estimated that the Kentucky bluegrass seed production in 1934 is about one-fourth that of last year. The production of Kentucky bluegrass in recent years is shown in the

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### IMPORTS OF GOLF TURF SEEDS

	July 1, 1933, to June 30, 1934	July 1, 1932, to June 30, 1933
Bent grass .....	58,700	51,900
Bent grass, chaff.. ..		2,700
Bluegrass, Canada. .	128,100	191,100
Carpet grass .....	2,000	800
Dogtail, crested... .	5,700	15,700
Fescue, Chewings.. .	1,077,000	919,900
Fescue, other .....	168,800	307,000
Fescue, chaff..... .		5,400
Meadow grass, annual, ( <i>Poa annua</i> )	2,000	4,600
M e a d o w grass, rough-stalked ( <i>Poa trivialis</i> ) .....	426,000	426,600
M e a d o w grass, wood .....	9,300	5,500
M i x t u r e s, grass (from Great Britain) .....	400	900
Ryegrass, Italian	26,400	42,300
Ryegrass, perennial	531,600	462,800
Yarrow .....	500	400

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table following. The figures represent bushels of rough, cured seed.

Year	Produced
†1934 .....	325,000
1933 .....	1,300,000
1932 .....	1,400,000
1931 .....	3,500,000
1930 .....	775,000
1929 .....	1,350,000
1928 .....	300,000
*1918-1927 .....	963,500

\*Average each year.

†Estimated.

The bluegrass seed crop was reported as being practically a complete failure in Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas. The long severe drought of spring is supposed to have been the chief cause of the reduction in the crop. Freezes, a cold spring, and insects, probably also helped in reducing the crop.

The yield of fancy or clean seed was expected by the Department of Agriculture to be even lighter than that of the 1933 crop, which was below average. The percentage of clean seed from rough seed is expected to be only between 30 per cent and 40 per cent.

### Bluegrass Surplus Gone

During the past two or three years there has been a large surplus of Kentucky bluegrass seed. A large share of this surplus was taken up by relief agencies of the Federal government. The seed was distributed among many Federal and State relief projects and otherwise disposed of. The result is that the large surplus of Kentucky bluegrass seed which has had a decided tendency to hold down the price of Kentucky bluegrass seed has practically been removed. The price of Kentucky bluegrass seed has been rising and it is likely that it will continue to rise. Golf clubs which are anticipating the use of any large quantity of this seed for fall or spring planting need not expect the price of this seed to be any lower than it is at present.

Dealers reported larger sales of Kentucky bluegrass seed this spring than those of last year. At the end of June the Department of Agriculture estimated that 150 carloads of the 1932 and 1933 crop seed were held by dealers and growers' pools. In addition approximately 80 carloads of 1930 crop seed was being held. The demands for Kentucky bluegrass for new plantings and for reseeding turf injured by

the recent drought have by this time very largely cut down on the amount of the crop held over from previous years.

According to the figures of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics the prices of Kentucky bluegrass are shown herewith. The figures represent the price per bushel for rough, cured seed paid to growers in Kentucky and in the Western (Missouri, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas) districts.

Year	Kentucky	Western District
1924 .....	\$1.65	\$1.75
1925 .....	1.75	2.30
1926 .....	1.20	1.25
1927 .....	.70	.90
1928 .....	1.25	1.75
1929 .....	1.20	1.20
1930 .....	1.40	1.70
1931 .....	.70	.65
1932 .....	.40	.40
1933 .....	.50	.60

The early prices paid this year in these districts indicate a decided increase over last year. The average price recently offered growers averaged 70 cents a bushel in Kentucky and \$1.35 in Missouri.

### Redtop Crop 20 Per Cent Smaller

The U. S. Bureau of Agricultural Economics recently estimated that the redtop seed production this year would be 20 per cent smaller than the crop of 1933. The hot dry weather, particularly in April and May, was held accountable for the reduced crop. New seedings this spring and last fall were seriously damaged or killed by the dry weather that followed. It is impossible to fully determine the effect of the hot dry weather on the yields of fancy seed until the crop has been completely threshed. It is estimated that about 200 carloads (15 tons each) of fancy seed will be produced in 1934 as compared with the following figures for 10 previous years.

1924—350 carloads
1925—200 carloads
1926—275 carloads
1927—600 carloads
1928—475 carloads
1929—250 carloads
1930—250 carloads
1931—600 carloads
1932—525 carloads
1933—250 carloads

The quality of the 1933 crop is said to be inferior to that of last year because the seed is thinner and the meadows were reported to be weedier, especially with yar-row.

The U. S. Bureau of Agricultural Economics estimated that the carry-over on July 1, 1934, was approximately 550 carloads of fancy seed. This did not include the 70 carloads purchased up to that date by the Federal Surplus Relief Corp. which is now said to have been completely disposed of. The carry-over figure is based on the production figures for 1927 to 1933 and an average annual consumption of 330 carloads for the past seven years. The Government estimate on July 1st indicated therefore that there was on hand in addition to the 1934 crop nearly a two years' supply of redtop seed. Therefore there should be an ample supply for everybody even though it is likely that there will be an increased demand this fall for redtop seed for reseeding areas injured by drought.

Recent reports indicate that the price of redtop seed is rising rapidly along with that of Kentucky bluegrass and other grasses of which there are smaller surpluses. The average price for redtop seed to the growers during the past 11 years was as follows:

1923—11c  
 1924—11c  
 1925—22c

1926—22c  
 1927—10½c  
 1928—12½c  
 1929—14¼c  
 1930—18¼c  
 1931— 6½c  
 1932— 3¾c  
 1933— 5¾c

**Golf Seed Dealers Comment**

Several of the seed companies in close touch with the golf club situation have favored GOLFDOM with their views. One of these large dealers who does not wish to be directly quoted says:

"In grass seed markets, everyone is going crazy, on account of the drought. The timothy crop is the shortest on record, and has gone up to 18 or 20c a pound, and it is our opinion that a lot of other things have gone up in sympathy with it. The bluegrass crop is also very short, and it is believed there is approximately 300 cars, or a year's supply, in new and old seed, chiefly in the hands of three or four people. The weight method of quoting seems to be going out of style, and they are quoting on a purity-germination basis only; 75 to 80 per cent in germination, 80 to 85 per cent pure. The market in a carload way is somewhere around 19 to 20c a pound, and it would probably reach the golf clubs around

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to you P. G. A. members on the successful marketing of the P. G. A. lines of golf balls.

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General Headquarters: First National Bank Building, Chicago

25c a pound. There is no use encouraging any of the clubs to ask for extra high quality, because it will not be obtainable. Just before the new crop, they persuaded the government to take over the entire 1931 crop of bluegrass, which the relief administration did. They already had money advanced on it, and took it over at approximately 7c a pound. This amounts to a year's supply itself, so the government is therefore holding a year's supply of bluegrass. It is not expected to come back into trade channels, but be used up on government projects.

"They also took over a number of cars of redbot at the same time. However, it is believed that there is at least two years' supply of redbot available, and they put the price up very sharply in sympathy with timothy and bluegrass, which was to be expected. The carload market on redbot today is approximately 15c. No one can make any predictions, of course, particularly as the drought in Europe has cleaned up European grasses. There is practically no Chewings available, and common Sheeps Fescue is selling at 30 to 35c in Europe. We believe the market will be practically bare of fancy grasses this fall, or at least by spring.

"There is only one thing plentiful that we know of, and that is ryegrass from Oregon, where they had a big crop, and suppose they will get the price-raising fever very soon themselves.

"We believe that markets will be stronger during the next 30 to 60 days, but whether they will recede a little during November and December remains to be seen. Bents are all practically in control of a few people out in the west, and will go just as high as the traffic will stand. Seaside creeping bent will reach the golf clubs at about \$1.00 a pound, Astoria possibly a little less. There is practically no New Zealand bent, and very little German bent, so anything can be expected."

### Spring Prices Probably Higher

Stump & Walter Co. is of the opinion that there is not much hope of expecting that seed price advance will come to a halt for some time. They report:

"While there apparently is no acute shortage in such grasses as fancy redbot and Kentucky bluegrass, nevertheless, with higher prices prevailing, especially on a grass such as timothy, which today costs more than either one of the first two grasses mentioned, it is natural to expect further rises in bluegrass and redbot, as they will be used in place of timothy, for we doubt if there is more than half of the normal consumption of timothy available today.

"Foreign grasses are even in a worse position than our domestic grasses; this is

particularly true of Chewing's fescue and the other fescues from Europe, all of which have been affected by drought and prices have advanced to points even higher than those reached during the pre-depression years.

"The bent grasses are also somewhat stronger in price than last fall and this spring; supplies are limited, crops have been fair, but with no carry-over, and with a good demand, it is very difficult to see where any lower prices will prevail.

"Bent grasses, fancy redbot and Kentucky bluegrass are still selling under prices it was necessary to get before the collapse of the grass seed markets.

"There is no telling what spring prices will be on golf course seeds; from present indications they certainly will be considerably higher than this fall, for with shortages in so many varieties, even though there may be a feeling that certain prices have advanced too rapidly, we do not see where there can be much falling off."

### How Golf Clubs Are Caught

Golf clubs unfortunately find themselves with a necessity to extensively seed just as prices are climbing. Some aspects of this condition come from O. M. Scott & Sons Co.:

"A great many greens have gone bad and fairways up until August 10 looked badly shot. Of course recent rains have done wonders. The unfortunate thing is that prices are advancing rapidly.

"There was a good sized carry-over of bluegrass and redbot but several million pounds of seed have been bought up for various governmental projects simply because the government had loaned more on the seed originally than it was worth and decided it was better to take it off the market. Immediately a short crop came along and prices began to advance.

"Chewing's fescue which we were selling last spring at \$18 per hundred pounds is wholesaling in New York today at 45 cents. Bluegrass has advanced from \$15 per hundred to \$25 and redbot from about ten to eighteen. These prices are necessarily discouraging some clubs that had good intentions. For instance we received an order from a club out of a clear sky for something like 3,500 pounds of seed. A letter from us crossed in the mail in which we quoted present prices. The greens chairman 'phoned to cancel the order saying that they simply didn't have the money. Of course there are plenty of clubs that will pay the price. High market levels do however cut down the buying of

"There doesn't seem to be much in sight to indicate lower prices for spring. In fact if there is a heavy seeding this fall the average club.

spring prices will be still higher as there is not much chance for decline until another crop is in the bag.

"We have had good business on bent seed. It has stayed fairly reasonable, as there was a rather good production."

### Peak Prices to Come

Fred Radway of New York believes there is no chance for increase in seed prices to be checked until the middle of 1935. He sizes up the situation by the following comment:

"Golf course seed market right now and for later fall delivery is so much higher than the average buyer realizes that it cannot be expressed easily in words. A hand to mouth local policy is advocated by those who hold the strings to the purse. Consequently where 2,000 pounds of bent were purchased a year ago, 200 pounds suffices and instead of Chewing's fescue 10,000 pounds, 1,000 pounds looks like a whole lot.

"Cablegrams come to our office about crop failures in France, Germany, Hungary and portions of Poland. Cables come in from New Zealand requesting us to resell our purchases and holdings of Chewing's fescue. This one market which opened at about 80/- some time ago, which roughly is 20c a pound, is between 140/- and 160/- today for import, which means between 50c to 60c per pound for first class or good grade Chewing's. This automatically means a 70c Chewing's fescue market at the golf courses, whereas in the past they have been paying around 30c only.

"I look for a healthy demand on a small scale at high prices for fall seeding and also for early spring season. \$1.00 and \$1.50 bent grasses are stylish again and I don't mean maybe. Personally I hate to see these high prices, as they retard business. But with our own Minnesota and Iowa timothy and hay crops nearly a double failure and drought conditions, what else could be expected? There can be no price relief until June or July, 1935 when new crops will start to trickle in.

"Even outside matters like yarrow, for which we used to pay \$1 a pound wholesale, costs us \$2 a pound today. The quicker golf courses purchase their immediate requirements, the less they will have to spend, because the peak of grass seed prices has not been reached yet. The relief will only come after next summer, provided there is not another drought."

### Jimmy McGonagill, Hagen Man, Is Blushing Bridegroom

DALLAS, TEX.—Jimmy McGonagill, L. A. Young Golf Co., southwestern salesman and formerly with that company at Chi-

cago and Detroit, recently was married to Miss Doris Robertson of Tyler, Tex.

All the dolls in Detroit and Chicago were running high fevers over Jimmy's nice boyish mugg, his lovely blue eyes, classic figure and "you all, honey" line of hooie, but getting nowhere with Doris' own true love. Now they can get back to work battling those typewriters while Doris and Jimmy are playing house in the dear little rose-covered cottage in the southland.

### Carl Hornkohl, Golfdom-Golfing Heavy Man, in New Job

CARL HORNKOHL, who has been in charge of GOLFDOM and *Golfing* circulation work since the start of these publications, resigned September 1 to join his father in the bakery supply business.

The Hornkohl youth has been associated with the Golfdom-Golfing publishers, in various enterprises, for 13 years. We signed him as fifteenth vice-president in charge of stamps, mailing and dirty work when he was a school kid.

Carl knows hundreds of pros, greenkeepers and managers, and many a night the kid left the padded cell at midnight or later, having spent extra hours trying to get jobs for fellows. He developed a marvelous command of the golf club situation and personnel location. In all the time he worked for this mob there never was an assignment he wouldn't eagerly accept and work out while the rest of us were bellyaching about having too much to do. The difficult position as end man upon whom the buck was passed, he filled in great shape. He was the greatest picker of racehorses we ever saw, having finished the last 10 seasons with a total of \$2.10 ahead.

The Illinois PGA, for whom Carl would drop everything or stay late in getting out notices and digging up dope, presented him with a traveling bag as he bade a formal farewell to the golf field.

His daddy has a great son and a great worker to help him with a rapidly growing business in the bakery field and the boy will make good there.

GREENS SHOULD be top-dressed at least 3 times a season, and since players object to playing over recently top-dressed greens, smart greenkeepers always plan this necessary maintenance operation for some Monday, the day of the week when play is least.