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Uncertified seed: just as good?

The June 24th dedication of the Joseph Valentine Memorial at the Joseph Valentine Turfgrass Research Center, University Park, Pa., was a fitting climax to his long and distinguished career. This man brought recognition and distinction to the profession of golf course superintendent.

The memorial's location at Penn State recognizes Valentine's half century of service at Merion GC, his part in stimulating the turfgrass program in Pennsylvania and his untiring efforts to upgrade his fellow workers. His efforts in making Merion Kentucky bluegrass available to the public now is a part of turfgrass history.

This writer is grateful to Joseph Valentine for directing me toward turfgrass as a career. He was one, along with others, who urged the university to hire an extension agronomist in turf. It was my good fortune to have been chosen for that position in February, 1935. It was a genuine pleasure to work with Joe Valentine until his death.

Come to the Joseph Valentine Turfgrass Research Center and visit the Valentine Memorial.

Q—Just what is "certified seed"? We are urged to buy certified seed when available. Why should we insist on it? Isn't uncertified seed just as good? (Indiana)

A—Certification of seeds assures the buyer of genetic integrity. It is the only way to be sure of getting the variety that you want. Uncertified seeds are not regulated by certification agencies so that the buyer has no protection as to quality and impurities.

In each state there is a certification agency that officially keeps tabs on every lot of seed that is approved for certification. The grower must have complied with all requirements such as 1) planting foundation seed that has been approved by the certification agency, 2) maintaining varietal purity by not permitting other varieties to contaminate the lot, 3) processing to a high degree of purity in accordance with regulations.

Because of these precautions certified seed costs more to grow and process and, therefore, costs the consumer more.

When certified seed is available it is false economy to save a few pennies by using uncertified seed that could cost far more in weeds and varietal contamination.

Q—Along many highways in the East there is one grass that seems to be used more than any other. The blades are fairly coarse and, unmowed, it grows to a height of two to three feet. It seems to grow under a wide range of conditions of soils and climates. What can you tell us about this grass? (Ohio)

A-The grass that is widely used on highways is Kentucky 31 fescue. In the West Alta fescue, a grass very similar to Kentucky 31, is used. Both grasses are tall fescue, a rugged hardy grass extremely tolerant to chemicals and road salt. To be kept in the best condition these grasses must be fertilized annually with a high nitrogen fertilizer. They seldom receive ideal management, however. Then the turf thins and erosion sets in. It is becoming standard practice to include a rugged perennial legume in tall fescue seedings to furnish nitrogen to the grass at no extra cost and to reduce or eliminate mowing. (Continued on page 28)