



by Fred V. Grau

## ANSWERS TO TURF QUESTIONS

### What to use?

With the coming of spring and another season of planting, questions are being asked which indicate confusion and indecision concerning what to plant. This is especially true of the bluegrasses. Pennstar, an improved Kentucky bluegrass developed by Joseph Duich at Penn State, has joined Merion, Prato, Fylking, Newport, Windsor, Park, Cougar, Sodco and all the rest of the named varieties available. In addition, there are the common types, including South Dakota Certified Common. Where does each one fit? What are its limitations regarding climate, use, fertilizer requirements, tolerance to close mowing, susceptibility to pests and diseases and other factors? Hopefully each new variety will be superior in every respect, but can we safely assume this?

The trend is toward blends. The idea is that the strong features of certain components will mask the weak points of another. For example, Merion's superior leafspot resistance covers for varieties that are weak in this regard; Fylking with its resistance to stripe smut covers for Merion which is susceptible. Common bluegrass is notoriously susceptible to leafspot. To plant it alone for lawns or fairways without a strong leafspot resistant companion would be inviting disaster. But what should the blend contain in

Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, Ohio and all the way to Nebraska and Colorado?

It is of interest that when turf research begins to flower at the University of Nebraska, the number one goal apparently will be to solve the blend problem. In the meantime we shall hope to gather data from every bluegrass consuming state and experiment station to find more answers to the dilemma. Let us not forget that there are those bluegrasses reproduced by vegetative means only. Among them are Warren's A-10, A-20 and A-34. While this is neither the time nor the place to elaborate on their merits, they are in use and they do have a place. It will take more time to sort them out into their special categories but, so far, they stand alone and do not seem to lend themselves to blends with seeded bluegrasses.

Another big question is, "Should I include red fescue or ryegrass?" It would seem that red fescue has no place in a blend of elite bluegrasses that are maintained at a fertility level suitable for bluegrass. The fact remains that many bluegrass mixtures contain red fescue and ryegrass.

The new elite fine-leaf perennial ryegrasses (Pelo, NK-100, Manhattan and Pennfine) have a place in bluegrass blends especially in spring seedings where summer protection is needed. We've had excellent results from a simple Pelo-Merion-Fylking mixture for fairways. In some cases we will work Pennstar into the blend. If seed supplies are short, Prato can be added as an "extender."

The better turf varieties of bluegrasses tend to be poor seed producers which raises production costs and retail prices. Research has shown that with adequate nutrients in the seedbed, light rates of seeding can produce the desired turf density. So, when supplies of elite varieties are short, plant less seed and "beef up" the seedbed nutrients.

### No replacement foreseen

**Q**—Do you feel that, because of its tolerance to close, frequent mowing, Fylking bluegrass will replace Merion for fairways? (Minnesota)

**A**—We do not anticipate any "replacement" of Merion by Fylking, because both grasses are quite tolerant of close mowing and are compatible. In practice we find Merion and Fylking being used in about equal parts in blends with other varieties.

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