



Favorite Varieties

By Monroe S. Miller, (with a little help from Rod Johnson)

I heard an excellent lecture this past winter given by Dr. Rich Hurley. He's the Director of Research for Lofts Seed Inc. and the perfect person to discuss new grass varieties that have reached our marketplace and are now available for our use.

I was listening closely because there seems little doubt that as the NOER Facility matures, it will play a bigger and bigger role in variety trials and evaluations. That is an exciting thought.

I was also paying particularly close attention because I do not stay as current on grass cultivar improvements as I do for, let's say, fungicides. Fungicides spell survival; variety differences are usually less critical.

I was listening closely because there has been such a huge introduction the past few years of different and new cultivars that I am sure I have missed a number of them.

And, as many of you know, Dr. Hurley is an especially good speaker with an easy style and very good slides to go with his lectures.

I have always liked Penncross creeping bentgrass, despite the criticism that it is too aggressive and tends to thatch up too quickly. Both have been minor problems in my experience.

Whenever I choose a specific Kentucky bluegrass, I select Midnight (terrific color) and Nugget (super winter hardiness) or a combination of the two.

On those rare occasions when I use a perennial ryegrass, I use NK 200 because of its supposed winter hardiness. Fortunately, I have resisted putting ryegrass on any important features. That winter hardiness, by the way, didn't hold up in my experience with NK 200.

Rich Hurley asked me why I was using a 40 year old bentgrass selection (Penncross was introduced in 1953). I had my reasons—all good, of course—but he then added there were varieties available with all the Penncross advantages, and more.

I knew that! Pat Zurawski did a variety experiment in our bentgrass nursery a few years ago and reported the results in *THE GRASS ROOTS*. Still, I stayed with the tried and true.

This all got me to thinking about what the favorite bents, blues and ryes being used on Wisconsin golf courses were. I also wondered if my colleagues were any more current on seed cultivars that I am. Sorry guys, you are not!

The following questions were asked by me at the USGA Green Section meeting at Westmoor Country Club and at the WGCSA spring business meeting in Fond du Lac. Rod Johnson asked them of individuals attending the Reinders Turf Conference in Waukesha.

1. Name your favorite bentgrass(es).
 - Penncross27
 - Putter3
 - Pennlinks..... 7
 - Penway.....1
 - Penneagle1
 - SR 1020 7
 - National3
 - Seaside1
 - Washington1
 - Toronto1

2. Name your favorite bluegrass(es).
 - Midnight8
 - Nasau3
 - Merit.....2
 - Glade1
 - Touchdown.....6
 - Nugget.....1
 - Park2
 - Baron.....4
 - Adelphi.....1
 - Monopoly.....1
 - Annual (!).....2
 - Blends - developed by Egon Herrmann, Olds Seed, Northrup King, Lesco, et. al. This was the choice of more than any single variety.....10

3. Name your favorite ryegrass(es).
 - Palmer 4
 - NK 2001
 - Yorktown II1
 - Manhattan II2
 - Fiesta3
 - Citation2
 - Derby.....1
 - Pennfine.....2
 - Dead (!)2
 - Blends - developed by those previously named, et. al. and also the largest choice5
 - NEVER use perennial rye3

There are several obvious conclusions from this very amateur survey. One is that we know more about the bentgrasses than we do about the blues and ryes. All responses to bentgrass questions were quicker, more specific and required no coaching.

Secondly, there is so much less interest in the blues and ryes that most of us tend to purchase blends including these two species rather than specific varieties. There were some interviewees who couldn't name any specific bluegrass or ryegrass variety.

The reason seems obvious to me—golf course superintendents are more interested in golf course features than in anything else. Those features—greens, tees and fairways—are most often closely cropped and new seeding or reseeding by necessity is bentgrass.

Another clear conclusion is that very few of our members like ryegrass. Some loathe it.

Compliments to the two wise guys who said their favorite ryegrasses were dead, and the other two smart alics who said their favorite bluegrass was annual!

Seems we have an opportunity to use grass varieties to give us an edge in various areas of our operations.

All we have to do is learn a little more. 🍀

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