TURFGRASS VARIETY UPDATE

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The parade of newly introduced cultivars of the cool season fine turf grasses continues. As these are available for observation, testing and evaluation, each additional year brings a new opportunity to detect weaknesses which may develop with the maturing of the plots and the varying environmental factors that will not be identical in any two seasons.

In addition, the establishment of lawns from a new cultivar provides a widened range of soil and other environmental conditions which may trigger reactions to stress conditions which have not as yet been observed in test plots.

One of the advantages of the free and extensive interchange of information on variety evaluation among commercial, federal and state experiment station workers in this field, is that a weakness in a given cultivar observed and reported at one location, alerts workers evaluating turfgrass in other states and frequently this shortcoming sooner or later will be expressed in other areas as well. This is well illustrated with the cultivar Nugget, where poor winter color and susceptibility to dollar spot and Fusarium roseum was detected in the Eastern States several years prior to their expression in Michigan.

The greatest numbers of new cultivars are being developed in Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass.

Since the introduction of Merion Kentucky bluegrass, nearly a score of improved cultivars have been released which have high levels of resistance to Helminthosporium leaf spot. With their widespread use, two additional major diseases and two minor diseases have emerged which may cause serious damage and which are difficult and expensive to control. Fortunately, until now at least, there are available cultivars which are less susceptible than others to these diseases.

The major diseases are Fusarium blight and stripe smut, and the minor diseases are powdery mildew and the rusts.

The cultivars which exhibit the highest levels of resistance to Fusarium blight and stripe smut as well as to leaf spot are:

Cheri	Touchdown	Sydsport
Adelphi	Parade	
Majestic	Baron	

It is suggested, where high management levels are to be used in maintaining the turf, that a blend of at least two or three of these will spread the risks of disease establishment and thus prolong the useful life of a high quality sward.

Cultivars particularly susceptible to Fusarium blight are Merion, Fylking, Pennstar and Nugget.

There are several improved perennial ryegrass cultivars now available which exhibit dark green color, moderate leaf width and relatively good winter survival in Michigan.

These include Manhattan, NK-200 and Yorktown. They blend well with Kentucky bluegrass and have relatively good wear tolerance.

A new cultivar of winterhardy turf type meadow fescue has been approved for release by Michigan State University. It has been named Beaumont after the

pioneer in human physiology research who did his work at Fort Mackinac. This is the first time a meadow fescue cultivar has been developed specifically for turf use. It survives well in mixtures with Kentucky bluegrass and is recommended for use in industrial lawns, parks, cemeteries and roadsides where high quality turf is not needed. It is not particularly wear tolerant, but does not require high maintenance expense. Seed is being increased in Oregon and supplies should be available in 1979.