

1978 TURFGRASS SEED PICTURE
AND
THE VALUE OF IRRIGATION

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This paper will be divided into two parts. First, the value of irrigation and, second, my ideas on the turfgrass outlook for 1978.

The figures here are all pertaining to bluegrass production, namely, in the Spokane and Palouse area of Eastern Washington. If you had to sum up the value of irrigation in one word it would have to be consistency. How do you place a value on knowing that you will receive a crop yearly. Irrigation costs are considerable, and the rule of thumb is that a grower who has irrigated land expects a minimum of \$100.00 per acre on non-irrigated land.

There are basically 3 systems; a circle system, roller system, and hand line system. The circle system is the latest in automation and costs approximately \$300 per acre to install. One system will do approximately 160 acres less 20 or 30 acres of skips depending on the heads. In order to utilize this circle system you must have reasonably square fields.

The second most automated type is the roller system. It is very popular as it can be used on any shape fields. The cost of this system is approximately \$200 per acre.

Lastly, the old stand-by hand system, costs approximately \$150 per acre.

It is rather easy to drill a well out in the Spokane area as the entire area is over a sunken lake. Wells usually cost \$40-\$42 per foot and the average depth is 200 ft., or approximately \$800.00 per well. These wells are usually designed to handle 12 to 18 inch pipes.

On the average, most farmers irrigate their fields 3 or 4 times in the spring for a total of 12 to 14 days. In the fall, the fields are burned. They are then irrigated twice, once for 24 consecutive hours and then for 12 hours. This helps to revive the fields for future yields.

In spite of all of this, all records for seed yields per acre are held on dry land in the foot hills area. It just goes to show that under normal good growing conditions, you can't beat nature.

The following discussion on crops and prices of varieties for the coming Spring 1978 season, are my subjective ideas.

1. Kentucky Bluegrass. 98/80 Kentucky bluegrass will be in relatively short supply this year, while there should be adequate supplies of 85/80 Kentucky Bluegrass. One of the reasons for this is that the 98/85 is needed by the bluegrass producers to blend up the off-grade (low germ) bluegrass from last year. Prices will be in the \$1.30 to \$1.50 area this spring, but I would advise against any carryover. Drought produces light seed which often is low in germination.

2. Proprietary Kentucky Bluegrass Varieties. Lofts Seed Co. is directly involved in marketing three proprietary bluegrass cultivars, namely - Baron, Touchdown, and Majestic. For spring 1978, there will be no Touchdown, no Majestic, and fair supplies of Baron. Additionally, Fylking and Glade will be in adequate supply. Pennstar and Bonnieblue were wiped out. Pennstar has now disappeared from the market. There will be adequate supplies of Adelphi.

3. Turf-Type Perennial Ryegrasses. There are four varieties which we market - Yorktown, Yorktown II, Diplomat, and Derby. For the first time, there will be

adequate supplies of both Yorktown and Yorktown II. Diplomat is all sold out till new crop and we should have plenty of Derby. Pennfine is in short supply, as is Cert. Manhattan. Due to poor yielding capacity, the Cert. Manhattan is extremely expensive. There is much seed being marketed as Uncertified Manhattan. The quality generally is poor and it is often infested with both Poa annua and Annual ryegrass, which greatly detract from its turf quality.

4. Fine Fescues. There will be adequate supplies of all fine-leaved fescues except, perhaps, some of the more exotic varieties. Prices will be higher than last fall, but plenty of seed will be available.

5. Highland Bentgrass. The crop was very late. Up to now, the volume of export sales was less than last year. However, supplies are not plentiful.

6. Red Top was a near crop failure. Small quantities are available at prices of \$350 to \$400 per 100 lbs. It is mainly used in State bids.

7. Seaside Bentgrass is in very short supply and nearly unobtainable, even at record prices. Cost is in the \$5.00 per lb. neighborhood.

8. Emerald Bentgrass. This excellent variety is in adequate supply and would seem to make an excellent substitute for Seaside Bentgrass, where a creeping bentgrass is needed.

9. Astoria Bentgrass. An adequate supply is available at prices of \$1.50 to \$1.75 per lb.

10. Penncross Bentgrass is in adequate supply. Prices have remained the same since the crop and price are controlled by a growers group.

11. Annual and Perennial Ryegrasses. The only inexpensive seed is Annual Ryegrass, which is in surplus and depressed. There is plenty of Perennial ryegrass, except the prices are high - probably in sympathy with K-31 tall fescue.

12. Kentucky 31 and Meadow Fescue. There seems to be an inordinant demand for K-31 and prices doubled in the last 6 months. There is no Meadow Fescue at all. It was all exported to England at extremely high prices. We are looking forward to next fall when Beaumont Meadow Fescue, a new Michigan State turf-type Meadow Fescue, will be available for the first time. We appreciate the opportunity to work with Michigan State University on this new variety.