

# UNDERSTANDING WHAT A SEED TAG MEANS TO YOU

By Jim Gavigan, CSFM

What is in the bag of seed I am buying? Am I getting the best for my dollar? Are there things in the bag I do not want?

All these questions can be answered by understanding what is actually on a seed tag and what it means to me.

Let's go over what components make up the seed tag.

- Shippers name and addresses required on all seed labels
- Lot number – location where seed was blended, year of production, sequence of blend
- % Purity is the % by weight of the bag for each component
- Component is the cultivar or specie of seed ( see below referring to BLUE TAG )
- % Germ is the % germination of each component, most producers will max out at 90-95% to allow for regulatory testing variances
- Origin indicates the US state or country grown
- Other Ingredients
  1. Other Crop Seed indicates % content of seed from Ag. crop not listed on components
  2. Inert Matter indicates % content of chaff, stem or other product not listed as seed
  3. Weed Seed is the % of seed not defined by component or crop %
- Noxious Weeds indicates any seed found that are defined as noxious by state or federal law
- Test Date is the month and date of last germination test
- AMS Number indicates that the seed labeler is registered with the USDA agriculture marketing

Now let's look at how all this impacts your decision making process!!

First off we need to know if the seed we are buying is still as viable as the tag says. If the test date does not fit into the required time line for sale, BE WEARY. Each state has their own time line of how long a seed product can be sold. If it falls outside of that timeline it needs to be recertified in order to be sold. Buying old seed can affect the % germination.

Next we need to know if the % purity meets our needs for the blend of seed specified in a specification.

Blending Turf type tall fescues, Perennial rye and Kentucky bluegrass in the wrong %'s will lead to problems down the line of different species out growing and over growing your desired mix.

Choosing the proper components is critical for success. This refers back to % purity because we need to know the proper mix of different specie to meet our needs. Next we need to know if the cultivars we are choosing are best suited for our unique growing environment. Always research your needs by using the National Turf Evaluation Program ( NTEP.ORG ) to be sure you are choosing the proper cultivar to withstand the inherent problems in your field or environment. Also refer to the RUTGERS TURFGRASS PROCEEDINGS for data pertinent to each cultivar under New Jersey conditions. Remember choosing the right cultivar can reduce or eliminate problems down the road in the future and reduce or eliminate the need for expensive pesticides. Here is where the need for

BLUE TAG CERTIFIED seed comes in. BLUE TAG CERTIFIED is an assurance by an official agency that the seed meets the 3 requirements of being certified

1. The seed variety has proven unique and stable over several years of reproduction
2. The seed in the bag was harvested and cleaned under supervision of an official agency and varietal integrity was maintained
3. The seed in the bag has met certain minimum official standards for purity, germination, crop, weed and inert matter

The % germ or germination will lead us to the PURE LIVE SEED calculations. (See below for explanation of calculations)

It is critical to understand exactly what NOXIOUS WEED means. Many states list weeds that are more of a contaminant to agriculture than turf as NOXIOUS WEED. Therefore, in many states, turf contaminants such as *Poa annua*, *Poa trivialis* and orchardgrass do not have to be listed on the seed tag as noxious. In NJ, Pa., De. And Md. UNDESIRABLE GRASS SEED must be listed as NOXIOUS WEED.

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Now, let's take a look at the actual copy of a seed tag label to go over PURE LIVE SEED calculations:

Product: SUPERIOR ATHLETIC MIX

LOT NUMBER: M123-7-482 Item: 083201

% PURITY	COMPONENT	% GERM	ORIGIN
29.55	BILTMORE TALL FESCUE	90	OR
24.89	PADRE TALL FESCUE	90	OR
24.63	MAGELLAN TALL FESCUE	90	OR
13.8	LAKESHORE KENTUCKY BLUEGRASS	88	OR
5.98	EXCURSION KENTUCKY BLUEGRASS	88	WA

#### OTHER INGREDIENTS

		NOXIOUS WEEDS
0.02	OTHER CROP SEEDS	NONE FOUND
1.33	INERT MATTER	
0.00	WEED SEED	

DATE TESTED: 07/08

IN CA/NY/NH/NJ/PA/MN SELL BY: 10/09

NET WEIGHT: 50 LBS

SHIP TO:

DC

AMS 635

#### PURE LIVE SEED CALCULATION

All purity percentages on the seed label are based on the bulk weight of the seed product. The PURE LIVE SEED (PLS) content is defined as the percentage of purity x the percentage of germination. To figure the PLS on the bag, each component should be calculated separately, than added together.

Component	Purity	Germination (%)	Pure Live Seed (%)
Biltmore	29.55	90	26.6
Padre TG	24.69	90	22.22
Magellan TF	24.63	90	22.17
Lakeshore KB	13.8	88	12.14
Excursion KB	5.98	88	5.26
Total PLS (%)			88.39

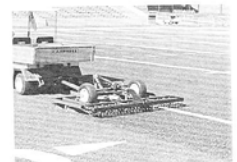
A 50 pound bag of this seed contains 44.20 pounds of PLS (50 lbs x 0.8839)

Jim Gavigan, CSFM is a Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM); and member of the SFMANJ Board of Directors

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