

Specialists Review New Grass Varieties

In Brief:

New grass varieties are important to the turf industry. A feature of special interest at the recent Midwest Regional Turf Conference at Purdue University, Lafayette, Ind., was a review of new variety characteristics and promotion ideas by a panel of seed industry representatives. The material presented constitutes the highlights of data from each panelist.

0217 Brand Fylking

Jacklin Seed Company, Dishman, Washington, and Hogg & Lytle Seeds, Oakwood, Ontario, Canada, have been granted the exclusive right to produce and market the new patent variety Fylking Kentucky bluegrass by its Swedish developers. 0217 brand Fylking produces a turf with good color, density, hardiness, and at the same time a dwarf type which stands extremely close mowing. Fylking has a short leaf sheath, moderately prostrate leaf blades, and a fairly slow rate of vertical growth. It is recommended for golf tees and aprons and for general turf use on lawns and industrial sites. It shows resistance to both leaf spot and stripe smut. This grass which is becoming well-known was brought to this country some 10 years ago by Arden Jacklin, president of Jacklin Seed, and after extensive testing was introduced 2½ years ago to the commercial market. To date, seed distribution has been largely to professionals such as golf course superintendents and sod growers.

Sales representative and agronomist for Jacklin Seed, Doyle Jacklin, in discussing the introduction of Fylking, stated that \$300,000 in promotional expenditures will normally be expended in the first year's introduction and the following three years in putting a new variety on the market. This heavy expense, he believes, will act to limit the number of new Kentucky bluegrass va-

rieties to be successfully released and merchandised, both now and in the future. Jacklin pointed to Fylking as an example. He listed such requirements as breeding or selection of a variety which is unique and reproduces true to type; the increase of the variety for seed testing stocks; the distribution of seed samples to a representative group of testers; the compilation and evaluation of test data; a program for marketing procedure; and others. Registration of a brand is also desirable to protect and promote the investment. In short, Jacklin stated that five and possibly 10 years of investment will be necessary even before evaluation.

Once released, promotion, advertising, and marketing programs are necessary to establish the new grass in the industry. In the case of Fylking, Jacklin stated that it was first introduced to sod producers and professional turf men, with promotional material being made available. Even though seed has been multiplied and made available at a rapid rate, Jacklin said the Company is still unable to fully supply the retail trade. Limited supplies for this trade are just becoming available and will not be generally available until late summer this year.

Prato

Northrup-King & Company representative, Howard E. Kaerwer, discusses that company's relatively new variety, Prato. This is a vari-

ety developed in the Netherlands and extensively used in Europe and now in the United States, he said. Prato can stand short mowing and is dense. Internodes are short and rhizome buds are plentiful.

Northrup-King started screening special bluegrass varieties 18 years ago and selected Prato Kentucky bluegrass for use in the upper U.S., Kaerwer stated. It has shown a good history of performance, he said, and produces a heavy, plump seed, numbering about 1.2 million per pound. Establishment is similar, he said, to new varieties now being introduced. Prato produces short, prostrate seedlings, and develops an extremely tough sod. It has multi-leaves at the tillers and leaves develop close to the ground. No seed heads are produced in turf, which is a valuable asset during June.

Prato, Kaerwer continued, is reasonably free of leaf spot and is mildew resistant. It is moderately susceptible to rust and has little resistance to stripe smut, but still is superior to Merion in this respect. Though not particularly adapted to the hot climates, Kaerwer said that Prato is doing well in trials in California.

Fertilizer requirements for Prato are at a lower level than Merion. However with water and fertilizer, it develops a heavy, dense turf but goes dormant quickly if water is shut off. The variety has been developed for short mowing, Kaerwer said, and is commonly mowed at a ½-inch height in Europe. It can be mowed up to a 2-inch height, but recommendations are for ¾ to 1¼-inch mowing heights. It is compatible with other grasses such as Fylking, Park and Delta, though it is competitive, according to Kaerwer. Prato also does well with Ruby red fescue (a creeper) and is being used in the Eastern U. S. with the fine leaf ryegrasses, NK 100 and Pelo, he stated. Prato exhibits a broad leaf when first established (similar to Merion) but leaves later become more narrow and Prato produces an extremely fine textured turf. Seed is available, Kaerwer said, and is being further multiplied.

Warren's A-Series

Ben O. Warren, Warren Turf Nurseries, Palos Park, Ill., in reviewing the A-series of grass varieties developed by his company, presented a selection new to growers

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and turf specialists alike. This was A-29#S-6, a promising low cut bluegrass. This specific selection, Warren stated, tolerated $\frac{3}{8}$ - to $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch mowing over a 5-year test period. Normally, the tendency, he said, is for outlaw grasses such as crabgrass and annual bluegrass to compete with low-mowed Kentucky bluegrasses. But such has not been the case with the new A-29 selection. Much is yet to be done, Warren said, to determine whether to develop A-29 vegetatively or via the seed route.

Warren also discussed A-10, A-20, and A-34. The theory behind the complete series, he said, is the fact that in selection work, a variety which fits all situations and locations cannot be found.

For example, A-10 is adaptable to the Ohio River Valley area, which is the southern range of the bluegrass area. Northern grasses really don't fit this area, Warren stated, but A-10 can stand the hot humid summer of St. Louis, yet still has some merit in more northern areas. It is a very dark green at all levels

of fertility, and has a more narrow leaf than average. Though is not as dense as some bluegrasses, Warren stated. Resistance to disease is fair and it has good resistance to hot area diseases. *Fusarium zoseum* resistance has been good in St. Louis and similar areas where franchise growers have been selling the selection as plugs. His company is going somewhat slow on A-10 at the moment because of minor disease weaknesses.

For shade areas, A-34 seems the best answer at the moment. It is easy to both grow and transplant. Problems have been apparent only when areas range to 90% shade or more. For turf areas with 65- to 70% shade, A-34 is superior, Warren said. This selection has also been doing well in sunlight areas in California.

Warren's A-20 is a good grass for all areas, Warren pointed out. Disease resistance is good; in fact, he stated that it is as good or better than Merion for four key diseases. The company currently has one million yards of this sod in the mid-west for sale this year. Plans are to promote A-20 on the East coast beginning this year. Test data, including growth data at Rutgers, indicate that the grass is adaptable for the area.



Paul Florence, Scotts

Windsor

Discussing Scotts' turf program was Paul Florence, manager of Windsor sod culture and marketing. He said that Windsor was a single clone selection made from a pony pasture in central Ohio, in 1949. This selection was entered into Scotts Bluegrass Development Program and propagated into selection and performance plots for evaluation and comparison with other turf

Hardi-Gardens, Inc., which only months ago began a nation-wide franchise program, recently announced it will establish 60 franchised garden centers in Texas, bringing the total of committed centers to 165.

Four centers are open in the company's Nashville headquarters; stores in newly franchised areas will start to open in early Spring, according to the company.

The garden centers carry over 15,000 items of living stock and feature a complete line of name-brand lawn and garden items, from plant foods to patio furniture.

"One of the beauties of our franchise plan is that the franchise need not have a special horticulture background to operate a Hardi-Gardens center," said company President Francis Galloway. "We offer a comprehensive course in garden center management and actual on-the-job training in one of our Nashville outlets. It greatly simplifies the horticultural and management aspects of the business."

Hardi-Gardens Establishes 60 Franchises in Texas



Hardi-Care, a new franchise concept developed by Hardi-Gardens, Inc., is currently providing complete landscape services for Nashville industrial and residential customers. Jack King (in dark suit), manager of the pilot Nashville operation, consults with servicemen Paul Bauman (foreground) and Don Martin, at work in a residential patio garden.

Conference Panelists



H. E. Kaerwer, Northrup King & Co.; Doyle Jacklin, Jacklin Seed Co.; Ben Warren, Warren's Turf Nurseries; Laurel Meade, Agricultural Alumni Seed Improvement Association.

varieties. Research data, Florence said, have consistently rated Windsor superior in (1) disease resistance, including the common bluegrass diseases such as leaf spot, rust, dollar spot and striped smut; (2) drought tolerance; (3) color; (4) turf density; (5) texture; (6) close mowing, performing well at clipping heights as low as $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch; and (7) chemical tolerance, including the phenoxy herbicides, the mercurial fungicides and the chlorinated hydrocarbon pesticides.

In 1960, Florence stated, Scotts offered contracts to professional seed producers in the Pacific Northwest to produce Windsor seed. These producers were, and still are, paid a premium for seed meeting the contractual specifications.

Limited quantities of Windsor seed became available and test marketing at retail was initiated in 1962 under Scotts brand, "Gold Label Classic," a bluegrass blend. As the seed producers increased their acreage and yields, Windsor was marketed in a broader geographic area and in several additional Scott brands including pure variety.

The market place, Florence stated, determines the success of any new product. Last year, he said, Scotts spent several million dollars promoting lawn products to the consumer in the United States and in Europe. Windsor was an integral part of that program and as a result, sold over 3 million pounds of Windsor bluegrass seed in 1968. Windsor bluegrass was made available to the professional sod producer for the first time in 1964.

Scotts has developed a sod grower licensing program designed to

support the professional sod grower with technological assistance in production and marketing. The licensed grower is provided marketing assistance thru his co-op advertising fund, designed to broaden the Windsor market, and stimulate the sod market in general. Selling aids, Florence pointed out, include signs, banners and promotional literature.

Sodco

Sodco is a new dwarf variety of bluegrass developed at Purdue University. It was discussed by Laurel Meade, Agricultural Alumni Seed Improvement Association, West Lafayette, Ind., the organization which will promote and develop the variety in the market.

Meade said that the Foundation group owns and operates 500 acres of land in the area and also has a research farm in Florida. Foundation seed for Sodco was made with a trial University planting in the fall of 1968. A few thousand pounds were produced, he said, and will be expanded as rapidly as possible. The Purdue Research Foundation has applied for a patent for the new variety and has assigned distribution rights to the Association. Meade said that this latter group is working under a contract with Western seed producers to produce seed.

Sodco, according to Meade, grows slowly and low. It is resistant to striped smut. Leaf nodes are close together and the leaf blades have a horizontal growth habit. Whereas common bluegrass varieties are cut at one and a half to 2-inch heights, Sodco may be cut three-quarters of an inch to an inch in height, Meade said. This can bring

about a "manicured" look to lawns. Because it does not have to be cut frequently, thatch is reduced. However, Meade stated, there are some shortcomings. Sodco is not designed to withstand heavy play use or traffic. It is more a "picturebook" grass. It will do best, Meade believes, on front lawns with little traffic and on golf course fairways which receive excellent care and management. Sodco has been tested at several state agricultural experiment stations in the United States.

Warren's A-20 Bluegrass Has Five-Year Guarantee

Warren's Turf Nurseries recently announced that its new disease-resistant bluegrass, A-20, is guaranteed to grow within five years of the date of planting. The sod, however, must be planted and maintained in accordance with instructions specified by the company, according to Robert Warren.

The new bluegrass has proved to be rust and mildew resistant, as well as resistant to stripe smut and leaf-spot, says Warren. Its thick growth retards weed invasion, the firm contends. A-20 will survive close mowing to $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch and is therefore good for home putting greens and croquet courts, says Warren.

Dark green in color, A-20 Bluegrass makes a dense carpet-like turf but does not develop thatch as readily as most bluegrasses, the company says.

A-20 must be planted from sod or plugs; it is not available as seed. It is not guaranteed against damage by insects or traffic.