# The Grass Seed Industry —An Oregon Empire

The commercial turfgrass industry today demands quality seed. Golf course superintendents, sod growers, park superintendents, and the professional responsible for factory lawns and similar areas expect seed to be weed free and viable.

The seed producing segment of the industry has made big strides in meeting this demand. A tour of the Williamette Valley of Oregon shows vividly just how far seed growers and processors go to guarantee that quality is maintained.

They grow a product to sell. And they are rightly proud of progress made to date.

Last month the Oregon Chewings Fescue and Creeping Red Fescue Commission along with the Oregon Orchardgrass Commission played host to a cross section of their distributors and the press. Guests were on hand for opening of Grassland '71 at Eugene and then were bussed throughout the heart of the Oregon turfgrass seed producing area.

# the budget scrapers

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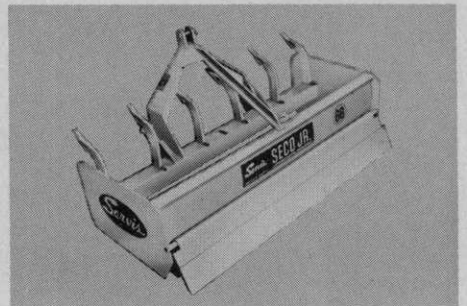
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## Seed Tour 'Personalities'
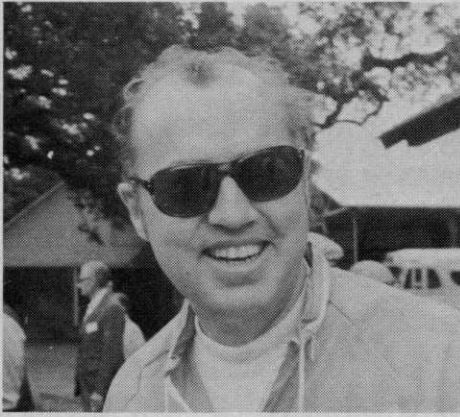


Roy Peterson, Peterson Seed Co.,
Savage, Minn.



W. Scott Lamb
Exec.-Sec., Chewings
Fescue Comm., Salem



B. H. Mangelsdorf
E. F. Mangelsdorf Bro., Inc.
St. Louis, Mo.



W. K. (Bill) Brawley
Brawley Seed Co., Mooresville, N.C.



Willard Hovde
Agway, Inc., Buffalo, N.Y.



S. A. (Stony) Jackson
Benton County Ext. Agent
Corvallis



W. Alan Hick
Northrup, King and Co.
Minneapolis, Minn.



Goldie Marcott, Grower
Sublimity, Ore.

Fields and processing plants were on the agenda along with the seed lab and certification operation at Oregon State University, Corvallis.

This certification program has become increasingly costly to growers. The ancient idea to $2 or $3 for testing samples is a thing of the past. The grower today will spend in excess of $50 for each sample for purity and germination alone. Special tests for seed weight, viability, x-ray, bioassay, variety, etc., will further increase the cost.

At the Corvallis seed lab, some 40 thousand tests are being made annually for 11- to 12,000 samples. Because of the stringent demands for quality and the big business that the seed industry has become, a laboratory seed analyst spends two years in the lab before becoming a competent independent analyst. This training begins after an intensive 3-week training period by a supervisor.

Today, Oregon is producing in excess of 300,000 acres of grass seed (both turfgrass and pasture grass seeds, the latter being mostly two dozen different varieties of orchardgrass). The state claims the title of "Grass Seed Capital of the World," and bases its claim on a $30 million yearly seed business. Industry leaders in the state estimate that 41% of the nation's grass and legume seeds are produced by Oregon growers. Legumes account for only about $5 million of the total.

Bulk of the production comes from the Willamette Valley. A whopping 83% of this is grass seed, with Oregon growers increasing seed stocks for the country's leading producers.

Big problem for growers concerns getting fields ready for certification. Once in production, the problem becomes one of keeping the stand clean to meet purity standards. New research at Oregon State University has pointed up the problem of volunteer-plants which grow from buried seeds of previous crops. A researcher at OSU, Te May Ching, was on hand at Grassland '71 to discuss findings.

Seeds of Oregon annual ryegrass persisted up to nine years. While viability was low, the results may render a field unsuitable for this variety for an extended period.
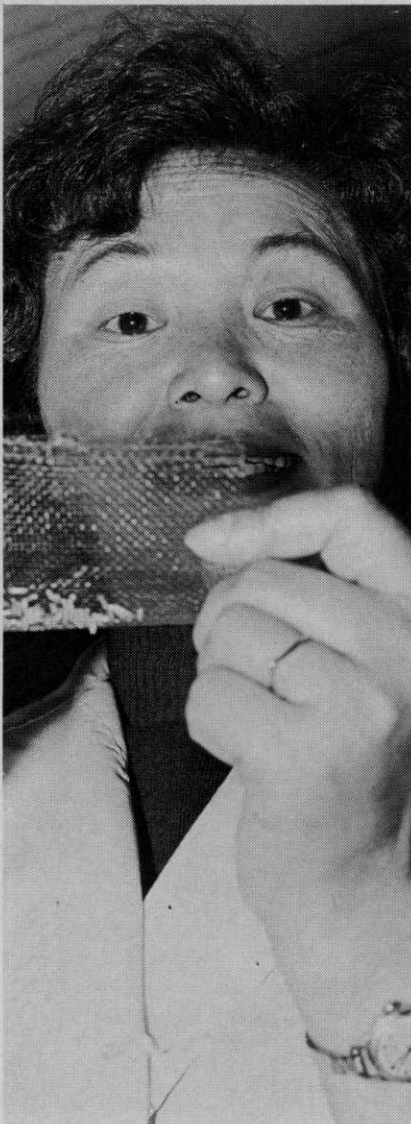
By contrast, no live seeds of Danish commercial orchardgrass, Alta tall fescue, or chewings fescue were recovered from soil in the third year.

Buried seeds of Newport Kentucky bluegrass showed no viability after the second year until the eighth year when a trace of viability appeared and was carried over into the ninth year.

Highland bentgrass seeds were more persistent than any of the other grasses, with viability averaging 9.5% in the ninth year. The accompanying table (Table 1) shows the current number of years a field must be free of a species in Oregon before being put into seed production.

Arrangements for the seed industry tour were made by W. Scott Lamb, executive secretary for the two commissions. He greeted seed distributors at Portland and oriented them to the Oregon industry.

OSU Researcher Te May Ching shows mesh enclosed seeds which are buried in a 10-year project to measure their ability to live. Project is in 9th year.

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