

Velvet Bentgrass— The Putter's Delight

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VELVET bentgrass, *Agrostis canina*, is widely acclaimed as the most exquisite of all sports turfs. Not only does the species have a superb appearance, but professional golfers have rated it the number one putting surface in actual test. Velvet bentgrass is well named, for golf greens of it are so dense and fine-textured as to be indeed like velvet.

The new Kingstown variety of velvet bentgrass results from a quarter century of breeding and selection at the University of Rhode Island. This stylish, highly uniform

cultivar, as true-putting as greens can be, stems from a single seed selected from a selfed plant of the Piper variety.

Unlike most of the creeping bentgrass greens grasses, which must be planted vegetatively from living stolons, Kingstown velvet bentgrass is available as conveniently handled seed bred remarkably true-to-type. Top quality seed is free of weeds and from crop. Wider use of velvet bentgrass can be anticipated, now that commercial supplies of Kingstown seed have become available. Seeding is economical, in that

only one pound of seed per thousand square feet is needed.

SPECIES ADAPTATION

Velvet bentgrass has undeservedly had a reputation for being hard-to-manage. We haven't found this to be so in Rhode Island. At Melody Hill, as on the research grounds at the University of Rhode Island, Kingstown velvet bent has proven dense, deep-rooting and reasonably free from afflictions without a lot of special care. It's not a heavy feeder, withstands reasonable drought and shade. Of course like any top bentgrass, Kingstown is deserving of knowledgeable attention.

The species is widely adapted to moist climates, and although tolerant of extremes does best where weather is steady (neither suddenly cold nor hot, and without desiccating winds).

Kingstown is rather particular about acid soil, and resents an alkaline pH.

Good drainage (aeration) is helpful.

Although it not difficult to adjust maintenance to Kingstown's needs, the cultivar can be expected to perform most satisfactorily east of the Appalachians from coastal Virginia northward, along the Pacific coast north from San Francisco, and in similar "maritime" environments around bodies of water such as the Great Lakes.

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The areas shaded in green represent the zone of greatest probable usefulness of Velvet bentgrass. It is available from Lofts Pdigreed Seed, Inc., Bound Brook, N.J.





Author (r) discusses Kingstown Velvet Bentgrass performance at Melody Hill Golf Course with Charles Mandeville, course superintendent. Golfers find the turfgrass especially true for those critical putts.

VELVET BENTGRASS (from page 20)

As with any golf green bentgrass, Kingstown should be mowed frequently, at least every other day at the height of the growing season. Mowing is customarily 3/16-1/4 inch tall for golf greens, a bit taller for lawns.

The grass should receive moderate, steady fertilization such as with slow-release ureaform products. A complete fertilizer containing about a half pound of nitrogen is suggested each few weeks, totaling three or four pounds of nitrogen annually. Light liming may help with thatch breakdown, but be careful to hold pH well on the acid side.

MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Disease and pest damage is apt to be superficial, but precautionary fungicidal sprayings should be undertaken with Kingstown the same as with any high quality golf green turf. Recommended rates should be carefully observed in applying chemicals to control disease.

Thatch is controllable by the usual practices or aerification, moderate fertilization and top-dressing (top-dress lightly and work the material into the grass, not always easy with so tight a turf).

Irrigation will be required if rainfall is not sufficient to supply about an inch of moisture each week during the growing season.

Melody Hill Golf Course, Harmony, Rhode Island, (pictured in the accompanying photographs) affords a specific case history of the

use of Kingstown velvet bentgrass.

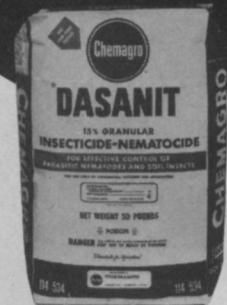
Melody Hill greens were seeded to Kingstown six years ago, and have proven eminently satisfactory. When time for Melody Hill expansion arrived, Charles Mandeville, owner and superintendent, insisted that the nine new greens be seeded to Kingstown. This was in spite of the more or less automatic inclusion of another bentgrass in architectural specifications.

Melody Hill greens are mowed at one-quarter inch three times weekly. They are aerified annually, in the autumn, and are lightly top-dressed, approximately on a monthly basis. Even in exceptionally dry summers the greens are watered only once per week. Fungicides are

This is the ninth hole at Melody Hill. Even from this distance, it's easy to see the outstanding putting surface. The uniform, fine-texture of Kingstown makes a turf that virtually free of graininess.



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applied only when disease is clearly a threat.

When visiting the Melody Hill golf course in August the greens were outstandingly beautiful. Mandeville assured us that this is the case most of the time. He concludes, "I highly recommend this greens grass — if you question its performance, ask the golfers — they will tell you how true the greens putt."