

Production Costs and Seed Prices for '75

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WHAT YOU PAY for seed and the quantity available to you may fluctuate as much as 180 degrees. That's what we learned on a trip sponsored by Lofts Pedigreed Seed, Inc. where we went directly to the grower, and followed a pound of seed from the field through the marketing chain of sales.

We all recognize that grass seed has gone up (and sometimes down) and therefore, price fluctuations do not surprise the readers of WEEDS TREES AND TURF. What may be surprising is that inflation is *only one* of the factors that will determine the price and quantity of seed for 1975. The price you pay for lawn seed this March is probably already decided or in the final stages of being firmed up right now. Through the ever present inflation cost, a good or bad crop, equipment and other costs, the price of seed is determined. Maybe it sounds too simple but the size and quality of the crops is such an important factor in determining price that we went directly to the source to learn of their problems and their thoughts for 1975. On our trip 26 sales and management people from Lofts Pedigreed Seed, Inc. visited six states and toured fourteen seed producing operations. Here are just a few of the comments we received from the people that produce and process the great majority of your specialized grass seed varieties in the United States.

Coeur D'Alene, Idaho. Rich Lawson and Earl Crow are two of the largest grass seed producers, and both agreed that in this area of the country, climate deter-

mines price as much as any other single factor. Rolling hilly terrain prevents the use of irrigation and a dry season such as experienced in 1973 can rob a crop of up to 75% of its normal yield.

University of Idaho. Dr. Ron Ensign. Some of the finest research test plots on chemical and mechanical methods for post harvest field burning are located at the University of Idaho. After each harvest, fields are burnt-off to remove the stalks and stubble, destroy weeds and diseases, and most importantly to stimulate better growth and seed production. Where poor burns were made in 1973, the quality of the grass for seed production was very poor. Non-burning laws are now going into effect in the seed producing states which is going to make it difficult to produce seed economically. Methods are being developed for chemical burning of refuse and other methods are being tried but none are as satisfactory as burning . . . or as economical.

Pelouse Seed Co. Cleaning and Processing Plant. There's more to growing seed than planting and harvesting. One of the most up to date processing plants in the country can be seen at this location. Cleaning, screening and separating grass seed is carried on at break neck speed but the final product is practically 100% free of weed and other unwanted foreign matter.

Koth Dun Paire, Washington. Washington State Field Seed Certification Inspector, Vern Propft, showed our group through the Paire area that is just south of Spokane. In this area because of low rainfall, irrigation is a must for maximum crop yields. But the generally good climatic seasons helps to make Washington one of the finest seed producing areas, yields often ranging between 1000-1500 lbs. per acre.

The Great Western Seed Company, Albany, Oregon, is a division of Lofts Pedigreed Seed, Inc. Assistant manager, Mr. C. M. Brownell, explained the requirements for a quality pack of seed. The extent of the equipment needed for the processing of grass seed is tremendous . . . separators, washers, screens, shakers, plus special air flow procedures are needed to assure that the end seed is pure and clean.

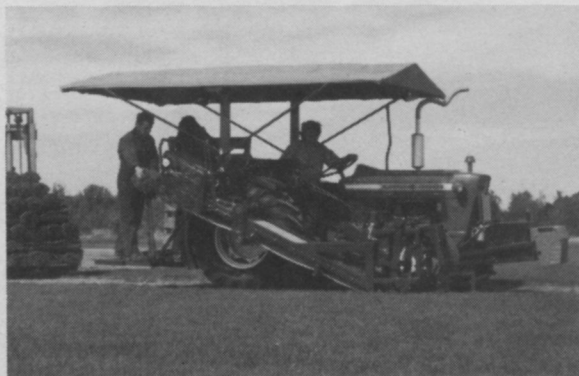
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The Loft's sales personnel listen attentively to one of the fourteen turfgrass seed producers as he tells them how he determines what the cost of his seed will be in 1975.

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ALCA (from page 25)

Everett Williams of Ford Tractor Operations, Caterpillar's Nick Humey and Bob King of International Harvester.

Environmentalists will also be represented during the meeting. Dr. Reuben Zubrow, professor of economics, University of Colorado, will speak on "The Crud Factor." The Florida Chapter of the Sierra Club will present its side in the continuing ecology problems of the host state. John Holm, a contractor from Fairbanks, Alaska, will describe some of the ways the Alaskan pipeline is affecting ecology in that state.

Many major equipment manufacturers will be at the ALCA Trade Exhibit, as well as producers of other products and services used by landscape contractors.

ALCA will present Environmental Improvement awards for the fifth year. These awards will be given to projects throughout the U.S. For the first time, awards will be presented in Maintenance and Erosion Control categories.

The program will also feature specialty sessions, allowing contractors to meet with each other to discuss their individual specialties, including irrigation, maintenance, erosion control, design/build and interior landscaping. Each group will be led by a landscape contractor who is known for his specialty.

For more information, including registration and hotel forms, write: Associated Landscape Contractors of America, 1750 Old Meadow Road, McLean, Va. 22101.

SEED (from page 41)

Turf Seed, Inc., Hubbard, Oregon. Mr. Dick Bailey is a seed grower and also producer of improved ryegrasses and fescues. On our visit Dick was sprigging bentgrass.

Chuck Curtis Farm. This farmer is one of the primary producers of Kingstown Velvet Bentgrass. Land preparation is one of this farm's major expenses. Test plots at the Curtis farm are maintained by Great Western Seed Company and show the remarkable differences in disease resistance within varieties of bluegrass, fescues and ryegrasses.

Mr. Paul Pugh, Oregon. Several innovations on farm equipment are incorporated on this farm. One such improvement is putting a ceramic covering on the fertilizer spinning wheels to reduce chemical corrosion and wear. Still another is a second cleaning and screening chamber on combines plus balloon-type tires for the wet harvest season.

Glen Smith Farm in Oregon. One of the finest producers of Baron Kentucky Bluegrass in the country. Mr. Smith expects yields of 1500 lbs. per acre and pointed out that this year his fields are about 100% weed free.

Mr. Clarence Vennel's Farm, Corvallis, Oregon. A 12,000-acre seed farm plus ten new combines, an air strip and modern seed processing plant is a most impressive sight indeed. Here seed is grown, processed and packaged all in one location.

Certainly, the lawn seed producer has his own brand of obstacles and on our trip we found that we can be proud that our U. S. seed producers are over-coming each problem with great ingenuity. With this ingenuity (and some help from decreasing inflation) seed prices in 1975 will be as low as possible.

WEEDS TREES and TURF