

## GRASS ROOTS

By Hal G. Dickey, North American Plant Breeders

*A new commentary on the turf seed industry to appear periodically. Hal Dickey is active in turf seed associations and follows seed trade news carefully as part of his job at North American Seed Growers.*

**Turf Seed Yield Losses** resulting from the wet September weather in the Pacific Northwest may carry over into next year's production. Growers are worried about increased disease risks in fields which didn't get burned. In Oregon where the normal burn would have been slightly more than 250,000 acres of grass seed fields, the wet conditions and harvest delays resulted in 100,000 acres not getting burned.

Field burning destroys seeds which have fallen on the ground. On the unburned acreages, weed infestations have therefore been more severe this winter and their control far more difficult than usual. Heavy crop residues and regrowth interfered with the effectiveness of normal herbicide applications. Weeds and volunteer crop seedlings

must be controlled, of course, for a field to qualify for certification.

The autumn harvest reductions will cost Oregon's grass seed industry seven to ten million dollars in lost sales, according to estimates by the state department of agriculture. The September rains caught some of the later maturing perennial ryegrasses in the field. But worst hit were the bents, the majority of which move into export. Against expectations, the Penncross harvest was said to be about 70% normal.

**PGMS Dues Policy Shift** announced at the Professional Grounds Management Society's recent annual convention in Indianapolis is proving controversy in some quarters. The new ground rules would require members of local chapters, of which there are now fourteen, to pay dues simultaneously to the national group. Adding local-only members to the roster of present dues-paying national members would result in 960 members, roughly double the national level of recent years, it was explained. As set by the national board of directors, the combined dues will be \$60.00 per year, \$15.00 of which will be rebated to the local chapter. "We surveyed the chapters and found



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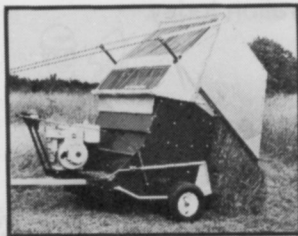


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their local dues average \$15.00," said Allan Shulder, PGMS executive secretary from Pikeville, Maryland.

Mr. Shulder answered questions at the October meeting of the Kansas City PGMS. Of 130 members in that chapter, he estimated that possibly ten belong to the national. Reminding his audience that he came to Kansas City two years ago and personally assisted in getting that chapter organized, Mr. Shulder said the national program and image enhances the effectiveness of the local groups.

Critics argue that \$60.00 dues will drive away many local members. "Half of our group consists of managers, officials, etc., who may be only indirectly involved with grounds management or have other areas of responsibility," one chapter officer told me.

Shulder said that ambitious national-level projects and inflation have forced PGMS to seek additional funds, which can best be raised by broadening the membership structure.

Key projects said to be nearing reality are an Apprenticeship Program for trainees and a Certification Program for professional grounds managers. If approved by the government, the work-study project would make federal training funds available to enrolled apprentices. The certification procedure, to be administered

through local PGMS chapters, would consist of a test of the applicants' knowledge of the principals of ground management, the equipment, materials, financial management, environmental considerations, etc., as well as the filing of a Site Inventory. This would detail the facilities, vegetative species, operational programs and resources for which the applicant may presently be responsible.

**How Many Turfgrass Varieties** are you looking at these days? Visiting the Western Washington experiment station this fall, we found Dr. Roy Goss and his colleagues planting the last of their turf plots. They had put in 55 varieties of bluegrass, 45 perennial ryegrasses and 43 fine fescue cultivars. These plots comprise the Northwest Regional trial site at Puyallup and Dr. Goss pointed out that this region limits its entries to varieties on the market or whose commercial introduction is regarded as eminent.

Dr. Bill Daniels of Purdue University did an inventory of the turfgrasses in all their tests and observation plots. In bluegrass, he counted sixty named ones and fifty experimentals. Their perennial ryegrass entries consist of 32 named varieties, plus 20 experimentals. Finally, there are 78 fescues, including 60 red and chewings types, as well as some tall fescues with potential turf application.

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