

# Rain Dampens Seed Harvest: Yields Are Off One Third

By Bruce Shank, executive editor

A strange weather pattern called El Nino hampers drying and harvesting of seed in the field. Growers ask for disaster assistance.

**I** imagine you just finished mowing an overgrown lawn when it starts pouring. It rains for two solid weeks. But, you still have to pick up the clippings.

Now you know how the growers of turf seed in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho feel this year.

They face crop reductions of 30 percent or more in 1983 because it rained for two weeks after many acres of seed-laden grass were cut and left in the field to dry. Furthermore, next year's crop will also be affected.

Hardest hit were annual ryegrass, Linn perennial ryegrass, and some of the fine fescues. Tall fescue, perennial ryegrass and Kentucky bluegrass crops were also hurt by the wet weather during harvest. Bentgrasses were not hurt since they are later maturing grasses which had not yet been cut when the rain started falling.

All indications before the rain were that 1983 would be a bumper year. Some growers expected yields of 30-40 percent over 1982. Instead, they weighed their loads after combining to find 600 to 800 lbs. of seed per acre rather than 1,200 lbs. Much of the seed is darker in color from lying in the wet fields. Germination rates are down below 80 percent for some lots of annual ryegrass.



Field burning has been complicated by regrowth and matted straw in the fields after harvest.



Linn County Extension Agent Hugh Hickerson shows magazine staff shattered and germinated seed beneath the windrows.



Combines are jammed by windrows which are entwined with green regrowth.





Dave Doerfler, a member of the Silverton Hills Growers Association, explains the effects of the rain on his acreage and seed cleaning operation to Shank.

"This has been the wettest July on record," said Dave Nelson, executive director of the Oregon Seed Council. "Some growers in the Willamette Valley and the Silverton Hills lost entire fields because of the rain. Bad burns are common which will affect next year's production."

"Some seed growers will go under this year," states Hugh Hickerson, Linn County extension agent. "Many of the younger farmers are heavily mortgaged to buy land and get started. One bad year can wipe them out."

Seed growers in Oregon are asking for disaster assistance since

## Seed Supply Report

Listings are by cultivar name, company, and supply condition.

A represents supplies to be near surplus, B adequate, and C possible shortage.

### Kentucky Bluegrass

Adelphi, Adikes, A  
Admiral, International Seed, B  
America, Pickseed, C  
Aquila, Northrup King, C  
Banff, Pickseed, C  
Baron, Lofts, C  
Bensun, Warrens, A  
Birka, Burlingham, C  
Columbia, Turf Seed, B  
Eclipse, Garfield Williamson, B  
Enmundi, International Seed, B  
Enoble, International Seed, B  
Fylking, Jacklin, B  
Georgetown, Lofts, C  
Haga, Burlingham, B  
Merit, Full Circle, A/B  
Midnight, Turf Seed, C  
Mystic, Lofts, C  
Nassau, Lofts, B/C  
Nugget, Northrup King, C  
Parade, Northrup King, C  
Park, Northrup King, B  
Ram I, Lofts, C  
Rugby, Northrup King, B  
Scenic, International Seed, B  
Shasta, Turf Seed, C  
Sydsport, Burlingham, B  
Touchdown, Pickseed, C  
Vantage, International Seed, B

### Perennial Ryegrass

Agree, Lofts, C  
Allstar, Adikes, C  
Barry, Lofts, B  
Birdie, Turf Seed, C  
Birdie II, Turf Seed, C  
Blazer, Pickseed, B  
Citation, Turf Seed, B  
Cowboy, Lofts, C

Dasher, Pickseed, B  
Delray, Northrup King, B  
Derby, International Seed, B  
Elka, International Seed, C  
Eton, Northrup King, C  
Fiesta, Pickseed, B  
Gator, International Seed, B  
Goalie, Northrup King, C  
Manhattan, Turf Seed, C  
Manhattan II, Turf Seed, B  
NK 200, Northrup King, C  
Omega, Turf Seed, B  
Palmer, Lofts, B  
Pennant, Burlingham, B  
Pennfine, Northrup King, B  
Prelude, Lofts, B  
Repell, Lofts, C  
Yorktown II, Lofts, B

### Tall Fescue, Turf Type

Adventure, Warrens, C  
Brookston, International Seed, B  
Clemfine, Lofts, C  
Falcon, Burlingham, C  
Galway, Northrup King, C  
Houndog, International Seed, B  
Jaguar, Garfield Williamson, C  
Mustang, Pickseed, C  
Olympic, Turf Seed, C  
Rebel, Lofts, C

### Chewings Fescue

Adonis, International Seed, B  
Agram, Pickseed, B  
Atlanta, Northrup King, B  
Checker, International Seed, B  
Highlight, International Seed, B  
Jamestown, Lofts, B  
Shadow, Turf Seed, B  
Wintergreen, Northrup King, A

### Creeping Red Fescue

Dawson, Northrup King, B  
Ensylva, International Seed, B  
Fortress, Turf Seed, C  
Ruby, Northrup King, B

### Hard Fescue

Aurora, Turf Seed, C  
Reliant, Lofts, B  
Scaldis, Northrup King, B  
Spartan, Pickseed, C  
Tournament, Pickseed, B  
Waldina, Turf Seed, B

### Bentgrass

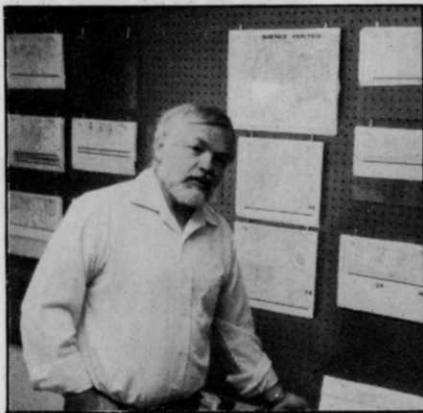
Astoria, Northrup King, C  
Bardot, Lofts, C  
Emerald, International Seed, B  
Highland Colonial, Northrup King, B  
Penncross, Tee-2-Green, B  
Penneagle, Tee-2-Green, B  
Seaside, Northrup King, B

### Other

Fults, Puccinellia distans, Northrup King, B  
Sabre, Poa trivialis, International Seed, C

### Overseeding Blends, Mixtures

CBS, Turf Seed, B  
Dixie Green, International Seed, B  
Futura Plus, Pickseed, B  
Marvelgreen, Lofts, B  
Medalist, Northrup King, B  
Oregreen, Turf Seed, B  
Ph.D., International Seed, B  
Showboat, International Seed, B



**Weather conditions** for field burning are provided twice a day by Oregon Seed Council Meteorologist "Irv" Tillung.

losses are estimated above 30 percent, the requirement set by the government to qualify for low interest loans.

More than 300,000 acres in Oregon are used for production of turf seed, primarily ryegrasses and fescues.

Carryovers from last year of Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass may help growers meet demand this year, but turf type tall fescues and some fine fescues will be in short supply.

The rain causes a series of production problems. Once the seed crop is cut and placed in windrows to dry, the moisture content of the seed is too high to process. The grower has to wait for the moisture content to drop to 12 percent before combining to pick up the seed. Rain slows the drying of the seed in the field, causes combines to jam when the seed is finally harvested, and encourages seed which has shattered and fallen to the ground to germinate. The regrowth makes the windrows difficult for the combines to pick up. The newly germinated grass is undesirable since only the parent grass produces the right genetic combination.

After the fields are combined, they are burned to destroy unwanted straw, harmful fungi, second generation seed, and to encourage branching of the parent grass during regrowth. The additional branches help produce more seed the following year.

If the farmers don't get a satisfactory burn they can try to burn

the fields a second or third time using propane torches at considerable expense. It appears likely that yields for next year will be down because of bad burns.

Doyle Jacklin of Jacklin Seed Co. in Post Falls, Idaho, estimates rain in his area has reduced Kentucky bluegrass yields by ten percent. He blames winter rains for causing fertility problems and another 20 percent loss in yields.

All seed companies report increasing demand for seed brought about by renewed construction and dramatically improved sales to sod growers. "Sod growers in many sections of the country sold out this spring and needed to replant quickly," said Jacklin. "Severe heat in the Midwest this summer should improve renovation business this fall." **WTT**



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