

Shortages of proprietary Kentucky bluegrasses, bentgrasses, and turf-type tall fescues are very likely this coming spring.

Don't Wait for Spring To Buy Turf Seed

by Bruce F. Shank, executive editor



A familiar sight in Oregon seed country—windrowing fine fescue.

Buy enough seed to meet your needs through next summer and store it, advise seed company representatives following this summer's harvest. Local shortages of proprietary Kentucky bluegrass, bentgrass, and turf-type tall fescue seed are very likely.

Kentucky bluegrass

You might be wondering how Kentucky bluegrass could go from an oversupply the past two years to a potential shortage of nearly all proprietary varieties in one harvest.

The people who are closest to the bluegrass situation are the Jacklin brothers, located in the midst of Kentucky bluegrass production in eastern Washington, western Idaho, and northern Oregon.

"The poor burns from last fall are the primary reason," explains Doyle Jacklin of Jacklin Seed, Post Falls, ID.

"We anticipated crops would be down 40 percent, but it turned out to be more like 70 percent.

Jacklin said ergot contributed to 10 to 15 percent of that reduction.

"The burns were good this year, though, and '85 should be a good year unless we get a real hot June which is when pollination occurs."

Last fall, seed producers knew the Kentucky bluegrass seed yield would be relatively poor, but they felt the overstock in their warehouses would easily cover them.

The surpluses built up during the recession caused the price of proprietary Kentucky bluegrasses to fall. As a result, it was less favorable to produce, and farmers started plowing under bluegrass fields for more profitable crops in 1983.

Rains during the harvest season of 1983 made it very difficult to burn the

stubble off the fields following combining. "Poor burns hurt a process called vernalization which has a great impact on the amount of seed an individual plant produces," explains Bob Peterson of E.F. Burlingham.

"Although new Kentucky bluegrass plantings were down because of the surplus," says Jay Glatt with Turf Seed Inc., "fields planted in 1983 were not affected by bad burns. As a result, some of the newest proprietary bluegrasses with expanding production were not hurt by bad burns." Midnight and Nassau were two new Kentucky bluegrasses mentioned as saved during interviews. Adelphi and Glade were already sold out to distributors by September. Steve Tubbs at Turf Merchants said supplies of Fylking and Merit should still be adequate.

Good news turned into bad when orders from sod growers started pouring in last fall and this spring. The overstock started shrinking rapidly. "Any named bluegrass will be relatively short until 1985," says Larry Vetter of Northrup King.

A hail storm in northern Minnesota knocked the Park Kentucky bluegrass crop down a third, according to Vetter. "Common Kentucky bluegrass is probably down 25% overall this year."

Tall fescues

Improved turf-type tall fescues are short mainly because production has not built up to demand. "There is a continuing increase in use and consumption of turf-type tall fescues, even in Canada," Pickseed's Kent Wiley points out. "We have not had rain in more than 60 days. The lawn around our office is tan and dormant, except for our tall fescue plots which remain green and attractive. Most seed companies have already sold their entire tall fescue production for this year to seed distributors."

Tubbs at Turf Merchants says that

SEED HARVEST STATUS*, LISTED BY PROPRIETARY AND COMPANY NAMES
 *A indicates possible surplus; B indicates adequate supply; C indicates supply limited.

KENTUCKY BLUEGRASSES

| | | | | | |
|------------|---------------------|-----|---------------|----------------------|-----|
| Adelphi | Adikes, Jacklin, NK | B | Merion | Merion Assoc. | B |
| America | Pickseed | C | Merit | Full Circle | B |
| Aquila | Northrup King | C | Midnight | Turf Seed | B |
| Arboretum | Mangelsdorf | B | Monopoly | Pioneer Hi-Bred | B |
| Banff | Pickseed | C | Mystic | Lofts | C |
| Baron | Lofts | B | Newport | | |
| Bayside | Jacklin | C | Nassau | Jacklin/Lofts | B |
| Bonnieblue | Burlingham | C | Nugget | Jacklin | A |
| Bristol | Scott | B | Parade | Northrup King | B/C |
| Challenger | Turf Seed | C | Park | Northrup King | B |
| Cheri | Jacklin | C | Plush | FFR Corp. | C |
| Columbia | Turf Seed | B/C | Ram I | Jacklin/Lofts | C |
| Eclipse | Jacklin, others | C | Rugby | Northrup King | B/C |
| Enmundi | Seed Research | C | Scenic | International | C |
| Fylking | Jacklin | A | Sydsport | Burlingham | C |
| Georgetown | Lofts | C | Touchdown | Pickseed | C |
| Geronimo | Jacklin | C | Vantage | Scott, International | B |
| Glade | Jacklin | C | Victa | Scott | B |
| Haga | Jacklin | C | Wabash | | |
| Majestic | Burlingham | C | Warren's A-34 | Warrens | C |

PERENNIAL RYEGRASSES

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|---|--------------|------------------------|---|
| Agree-Intermediate | Lofts | C | Goalie | Northrup King | B |
| All Star | Adikes, Jacklin | A | Jackpot | Jacklin | C |
| Barry | Turf Merchants | B | Linn | | A |
| Belle | Burlingham | B | Loretta | Scott | B |
| Birdie II | Turf Seed | C | Manhattan II | Turf Seed | B |
| Blazer | Pickseed | B | NK200 | Northrup King | C |
| Caravelle | Scott | B | Omega | Turf Seed | B |
| Citation | Turf Seed | B | Omega II | Turf Seed | C |
| Citation II | Turf Seed | C | Palmer | Lofts | A |
| Cowboy | Lofts | B | Pennfine | SPIC | A |
| Dasher | Pickseed | B | Pennant | Burlingham | B |
| Derby | International | B | Prelude | Lofts | A |
| Delray | Northrup King | B | Premier | Normarc, Seed Research | B |
| Diplomat | Lofts | C | Regal | International | B |
| Elka | International | C | Repell | Lofts | C |
| Eton | Northrup King | B | Tara | Hubbard Seed | C |
| Fiesta | Pickseed | B | YorktownII | Lofts | B |
| Gator | International | C | | | |

CREEPING RED FESCUE

| | | | | | |
|---------|---------------|---|----------|---------------|---|
| Dawson | Northrup King | B | Ruby | Northrup King | B |
| Ensylva | International | B | Fortress | Turf Seed | C |
| Flyer | Turf Seed | C | | | |

CHEWINGS FESCUE

| | | | | | |
|-----------|---------------|---|-----------|-----------------|---|
| Agram | Pickseed | B | Jamestown | Lofts | B |
| Allianta | Northrup King | A | Koket | Burlingham | B |
| Banner | Scott | B | Shadow | Turf Seed | B |
| Highlight | International | B | Waldorf | Pioneer Hi-Bred | B |

TALL FESCUES

| | | | | | |
|------------|--------------------|---|------------|---------------------|---|
| Adventure | Warrens | C | Jaguar | Garfield Williamson | B |
| Alta | | A | K-31 | | A |
| Apache | Turf Seed | C | Marathon | Hubbard Seed | C |
| Astro | Green Seed Co. | C | Maverick | Pickseed | C |
| Bonanza | Cenex | C | Mojave | Mid-Valley | C |
| Brookston | Turf Merchants | C | Mustang | Pickseed | B |
| Clemfine | Lofts | B | Olympic | Turf Seed | B |
| Falcon | Burlingham | C | Rebel | Lofts | B |
| Finelawn 1 | Fine Lawn Research | B | Tempo | Normarc | C |
| Galway | Northrup King | C | Willamette | Willamette Seed | C |
| Houndog | International | C | | | |

HARD FESCUES

| | | | | | |
|---------|-----------|---|------------|---------------|---|
| Aurora | Turf Seed | B | Scaldis | Northrup King | B |
| Biljart | Scott | A | Tournament | Pickseed | B |
| Reliant | Lofts | B | Waldina | Turf Seed | B |

BENTGRASSES

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|---|-----------|--------------------|-----|
| Bardot Colonial | Lofts | C | Penncross | Tee-2-Green | B/C |
| Emerald | International Seeds | C | Penneagle | Tee-2-Green | B/C |
| Exeter Colonial | Pickseed | B | Prominent | Seed Research Inc. | B |
| Highland | Highland Com. | C | | | |

OTHER

| | | | | | |
|------------------------|----------|---|----------------------|------------|---|
| Azay Sheep Fescue | Pickseed | B | Fuils, Puc. distans | Lofts | B |
| Beaumont Meadow Fescue | Lofts | C | Sabre, Poa trivialis | Int'l Seed | C |

WINTER OVERSEEDING MIXTURES

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|-------------|---------------|---|-------------|---------------|---|
| CBS | Turf Seed | B | Marvelgreen | Lofts | B |
| Dixie Green | International | B | Medalist | Northrup King | B |
| Futura Plus | Pickseed | B | PhD. | International | B |

buyers are willing to pay three times more for improved turf-type tall fescue than K-31.

Bentgrasses

A poor bentgrass seed crop in 1983 caused serious local shortages. Penncross and Penneagle were hit hard. Tee-2-Green offered a bentgrass blend called Penway to solve emergencies until the '84 crop came in. Seed companies started promoting other proprietary bentgrasses such as Prominent and Emerald to golf superintendents.

"Bentgrass growers are getting above average yields," says Glatt. Tee-2-Green started filling backorders on August 15 as promised in a promotional campaign this past spring. "There will be no surplus this year," Glatt said.

Fine fescues

Growers of fine fescue are being hit from both sides according to Dave Nelson of the Oregon Fine Fescue Commission. Bad burns have lowered their yields while the export market, a major user of fine fescue, has dried up because of an unfavorable exchange rate caused by the strong U.S. dollar.

"The farmer is getting less than 30 cents per pound for fine fescue, the lowest it has been in years," says Bob Riches, a fescue grower in Silverton, OR. "We also face competition from Canada creeper imported into the U.S."

Perennial ryegrass

Better than average perennial ryegrass crops are being attributed to new varieties of perennial ryegrass with increased rust resistance and new fungicides used by seed growers.

Concentration on better yielding varieties and rust resistance by researchers is paying dividends as long as rain doesn't hamper harvest. Pennfine is approaching surplus quantities whereas the supply of most new perennials will be adequate. Second and third generation perennial ryegrasses are now increasing in production.

Some growers infer that perennial ryegrasses are reaching the status of Kentucky bluegrasses with too many varieties and a good supply of each. They feel the same thing might happen to the turf-type tall fescue market as more companies enter the market.

Bottom line, according to Bob Peterson is, "By spring, you may not find what you want. Buy now." **WT&T**