

# THE SEED REPORT

Although yields are about average for most grasses, demand is high.

Carryover from last year's harvest is light. It all adds up to a tight, but not too tight, seed market for late 1986 and early 1987.

by Ken Kuhajda, managing editor

**D**on't expect too much of a bargain from your local seed supplier this fall. And you might want to make a visit as soon as possible. Seed marketers are saying that high demand and mediocre supply, coupled with little carryover, will result in a quick-moving seed crop for late 1986 and 1987.

However, the good news is that price increases should be minimal. Yields look only slightly below average. Bluegrass and fine fescue appear to be in the shortest supply.

Perennial ryegrasses and tall fescues are reported at near normal levels. The bentgrass crop looks good but, again, little carryover may result in a quick sell, thereby resulting in a shortage.

## Just about normal

The fragile seed crop—so heavily dependent on Mother Nature, so precariously waving in the winds of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho—was subjected to an average weather year in most areas.

A cold, early winter hurt the crop in the Willamette Valley area of Oregon where some 60 percent of the world's seed (mostly fescue, ryegrass, bentgrass, and forage grass) is grown.

In eastern Washington and northern Idaho, where much of the world's bluegrass is grown, an unusually hot spring hurt yields.

But overall it was a pretty uneventful weather year which is good



A field of Olympic tall fescue is swathed on a farm in Oregon's Willamette Valley, where some 60 percent of the world's grass seed is grown.



Kentucky bluegrass is combined in a field near Spokane, Wash. Most of the world's bluegrass seed is grown in eastern Washington and northern Idaho.





After a field is harvested, it is burned to stimulate growth for the next year.

news for seed growers. It's also good news for the seed buyer.

### The positive side

During visits to seed country, WEEDS TREES & TURF discovered that tall fescues and perennial ryegrasses should be adequately available although a small carryover and high demand may result in a quickly-moving supply.

"The perennial ryes look real good," says Harry Stalford, product manager for International Seeds. "There's been a lot of demand put on turf-type perennial ryegrass the last few years. We're pretty much sold out of our varieties of turf-type perennial ryes for 1986."

International's Big Three—Derby, Regal, and Gator perennial ryegrasses—are reported in limited supply because of high demand.

Kent Wiley, president of Pickseed West, notes: "The perennial ryes are down quite a bit from last year but they're close to average. Last year was an above-average year." He predicts a slight rise in the price of perennial ryes.

Pickseed markets Blazer, Dasher, Fiesta, and Jazz perennial ryegrasses.

Tom Stanley, marketing manager at Turf Seed Inc., reports adequate supplies of Citation II, Birdie II, and

Omega II, and limited supplies of Manhattan II.

"With the Manhattan II, although production is up, demand keeps the supply tight," says Stanley.

### A versatile turf

As the up-and-coming tall fescues continue to grow in popularity, they're being grown in more fields. That means a good supply—average to slightly below average this year. Demand is high.

"The tall fescue crop looks average, maybe less than average in some areas," reports Dave Nelson of the Oregon Tall and Fine Fescue Commissions. "There wasn't much of a carryover so we were pretty well cleaned out last spring. I think you'll see slightly higher prices but no dramatic increases."

Northrup-King product manager Joe Churchill is a little more optimistic. "There should be adequate supplies available due to a very good harvest," he says.

Churchill rates Northrup-King's Galway turf-type tall fescue as perhaps showing a surplus. Only Galway and Adventure turf-type tall fescue, marketed by Warren's Turf Nursery, are projected to show a surplus, according to a WT&T survey of more

than 20 seed companies. The questionnaire covered all varieties of all grasses and most were rated as adequate or limited in supply (see chart).

Loft's Marie Pompei says Rebel II, a turf-type tall fescue and rising star, is available in limited supply but the price should be stable.

Jacklin Seed, Post Falls, Id., markets Arid turf-type tall fescue, and company president Doyle Jacklin is cautiously optimistic.

"It's availability is low because demand is high, but the yield is right where we projected," he says. "We just wish we had more seed."

A turf the green industry may see more of is dwarf turf-type tall fescue. Lesco Inc. vice-president of research and development Art Wick says Lesco's Trailblazer dwarf is available in limited supply. He predicts a growth in popularity.

"Trailblazer has a significantly reduced overall growth habit," reports Wick. "Its mature growth height, if not mowed, is 40 to 50 percent lower than the growth height of other turf-types. Under mowing conditions, it shows a slower vertical growth rate."

Wick says Trailblazer appears closer in texture to Kentucky bluegrass than other turf-type tall fescues, shows a darker green color, and estab-



## TURFSEED AVAILABILITY

### AVAILABILITY KEY

A = surplus B = adequate C = limited

## SEED REPORT from page 17

lishes a tight turf.

### The bad news

It's no secret throughout the Willamette Valley that this year's crop of fine fescue is down, perhaps as much as 50 percent in some cases.

"Fine fescues are way below average, maybe 60 to 65 percent of average," reports Pickseed's director of research Jerry Pepin. Adds Pickseed's Wiley: "You're looking at higher prices because the supply is less."

Notes International Seeds' Stalford: "Fine fescues are pretty short. Chewings and the reds—they've had a pretty bad year." Seedmen say hard fescues are also in short supply.

Demand for fine fescues doesn't appear to be as intense as it is for some of the other grasses. Prices shouldn't rise dramatically even in light of the shortage.

Curiously, the newer fields of fine fescue seem to be producing more, Wiley says.

Nelson of the Oregon Fine Fescue Commission cites a dry but not bone-dry period in May and early June as perhaps contributing to the short crop of fine fescue. He notes the fine fescues are also off significantly in Canada.

Demand for Jacklin's Logro fine fescue is not high, and the seed is available in adequate supply, reports Jacklin. "We just don't have that much demand as opposed to the demand for tall fescues and perennial ryegrasses," he says.

### Blue bluegrass producers

Jacklin Seed is perhaps best-known as one of the world's leading producers of Kentucky bluegrass seed, a favorite turf for home lawns, sports fields, golf courses, and commercial landscapes in most cool-season areas.

Unfortunately, look for less of it on your distributor's shelves than in past years. And what you do see will be higher priced than last year.

Reports indicate a 10- to 14-day hot spell in late spring (during pollination) in eastern Washington and northern Idaho—where most of the world's bluegrass seed is grown—took a toll on the proprietary varieties.

There is a chance that many proprietary bluegrasses may be sold out by early fall.

"Overall, we're down about 40 to 50 percent," reports Jacklin. "This makes three years in a row for us. The irrigated proprietaries are down by one-third. With the lack of carryover and demand way up, I just don't know if we'll have enough seed to see us through the season, which means you'll see more of the

### KENTUCKY BLUEGRASS

VARIETY	MARKETER		AVAILABILITY		
A-34 Bensun	Warren's	C	Harmony	Seed Research	B
Adelphi	Jacklin, Adikes	C	Holiday	Cenex	C
America	Pickseed	B	Huntsville	Jacklin	C
Aspen	Northrup King	C	Julia	Lesco	B
Banff	Pickseed	B	Liberty	Garfield Williamson	C
Baron	Lofts	B	Merion	Jacklin	C
Blacksburg	Turf Seed	C	Merit	Full Circle	B
Bronco	Pickseed	C	Midnight	Turf Seed	C
Challenger	Turf Seed	C	Mystic	Lofts	C
Cheri	Jacklin	C	Nassau	Jacklin	B
Columbia	Turf Seed	C	Nugget	Jacklin, Pickseed	B/C
Dawn	Lesco	C	P-104	Lofts	C
Eclipse	Jacklin/Gf. Wms.	C	Parade	Northrup King	C
Enmundi	Seed Research	C	Plush	Cenex	C
Fylking	Jacklin	C	Ram I	Jacklin	B
Georgetown	Lofts	B	Rugby	Northrup King	C
Geronimo	Jacklin	C	Sydsport	Burlingham	C
Glade	Jacklin	C	Touchdown	Pickseed	C
Haga	Burlingham	C	Wabash	Jacklin	C

### PERENNIAL RYEGRASS

All-Star	Jacklin/Adikes	C	Manhattan II	Turf Seed	B
Belle	Burlingham	B	NK 200	Northrup King	C
Birdie II	Turf Seed	B	Omega II	Gf. Wms./Turf Seed	B/C
Blazer	Pickseed	B	Palmer	Lofts	B
Citation II	Turf Seed	B	Pennant	Burlingham	C
Cowboy	Lofts	B	Pennfine	Northrup King	B
Dasher	Pickseed	B	Prelude	Lofts	B
Delray	Northrup King	B	Premier	Normarc	B
Derby	International Seeds	C	Regal	International Seeds	C
Diplomat	Lofts	C	Regency	Lesco	C
Eton	Northrup King	C	Repel	Lofts	C
Fiesta	Pickseed	B	SR 4000	Seed Research	C
Gator	International Seeds	C	SR 4031	Seed Research	C
Goalie	Northrup King	B	SR 4100	Seed Research	C
Jazz	Pickseed	B	Vintage	Lesco	B
Magnum	Adikes	C	Yorktown II	Lofts	B

### TURF-TYPE TALL FESCUE

Adventure	Warren's	A	Maverick	Pickseed	B
Apache	Turf Seed	B	Mustang	Pickseed	B
Arid	Jacklin	C	Olympic	Turf Seed	B
Bonanza	Adikes	B	Pacer	International Seeds	B
Cimarron	Lesco	C	Rebel	Lofts	B
Clemfine	Lofts	B	Rebel II	Lofts	C
Falcon	Burlingham	C	SR 8000	Seed Research	C
Galway	Northrup King	A	Tempo	Normarc	B
Hounddog	International Seeds	B	Trailblazer (dwarf)	Lesco	C
Jaguar	Garfield Williamson	B/C	Trident	Seed Research	C

### FINE FESCUE (CHEWING AND RED)

Agram	Pickseed	B	Koket	Burlingham	C
Checker	International Seeds	B	Logro	Jacklin	B
Dawson	Northrup King	B	Novorubra	Burlingham	C
Ensylva	International Seeds	B	Ruby	Northrup King	B
Flyer	Turf Seed	C	Shadow	Turf Seed	C
Fortress	Turf Seed	B	Victory	Pickseed	B
Jamestown	Lofts	B			

### HARD FESCUE

Aurora	Turf Seed	C	Spartan	Pickseed	B
Reliant	Lofts	C	SR 3000	Seed Research	C
Sara	Normarc	C	Tournament	Pickseed	B
Scaldis	Northrup King	B	Waldina	Turf Seed	C

### BENTGRASS

Emerald	International Seeds	C	Pennston	Normarc	C
Exeter	Pickseed	C	Pennway	Tee-2-Green	C
Penncross	Tee-2-Green	C	Prominent		
Penneagle	Tee-2-Green	C	Creeping	Seed Research	B
			SR 1020	Seed Research	C



common varieties used."

Jacklin's early pollinators—among them Nassau and Ram I—did fairly well while later pollinators—including Eclipse, Adelphi, and Glade—did poorly.

Common Kentucky bluegrass seed did poorly, Jacklin says. He predicts a yield less than 50 percent of average in both areas.

Michael J. McCarthy, agronomist at E.F. Burlingham & Sons, reports limited availability for the company's two proprietaries—Sydsport and Haga. He cites hot spring weather as the reason.

Pickseed's Wiley notes limited supplies of his company's five Kentucky bluegrass varieties (America, Bronco, Banff, Nugget, and Touch-

down) but says production will be stepped up in 1987.

Northrup-King's Churchill reports a limited supply of Aspen (a new variety), Parade, and Rugby. "Extremely cold temperatures last fall caused some winterkill, plus extremely hot and dry weather in June inhibited pollination and seedhead development," says Churchill. "Both weather extremes have had an adverse affect on this year's bluegrass crop."

Churchill says Aspen, a sister variety to Adelphi showing improved heat and drought tolerance and better disease resistance, will be available in the fall.

John Zajac, vice-president of Garfield-Williamson, says another newcomer, Liberty Kentucky bluegrass,

will be available in limited quantities this fall.

### The bentgrasses

Unlike its Kentucky bluegrass cousin, the creeping bentgrass crop appears to be adequate.

Reigning bentgrass marketing champion Tee-2-Green Corp. of Hubbard, Ore., reports a good crop. Says president Bill Rose: "Production is up 50 percent but we don't know how demand will be."

Rose says the bentgrass outlook recently fell from "excellent to good" but is still positive.

Rose says Tee-2-Green plans to find out the size of the growing bentgrass market by creating a surplus.

## Pirates on the high seeds

Anyone purchasing turfseed should be on the look-out for "pirated" products, according to some seed producers. Too much illegal seed is reaching the green industry, say legitimate companies, who are doing everything they can to discourage the crooks.

It's not a small amount of seed that's involved. Industry experts say perhaps more than a million pounds are being sold fraudulently.

"Pirated turfgrass seed has shown up in plain seed bags, with the claimed variety stenciled on," notes Dr. Richard Hurley of Lofts Seed, Inc., Bound Brook, N.J. "Legitimate seed producers and marketers package their product in a 'designer' bag, complete with variety logo, company name and Plant Variety Protection number. And legitimate bags will carry an analysis tag and a blue certified tag as proof of content."

In the case of "pirated" seed, not only is the turfgrass professional not receiving what he's paying for, but royalties to the nation's land-grant colleges (which develop improved varieties) are being denied.

"Many of our friends in the industry—the end users who are also very discouraged with the substitutions—are helping us by providing information about the illegal seed," says Tom Stanley, marketing manager for Turf Seed Inc., Hubbard, Ore., a company that will prosecute anyone selling bogus varieties of their seed.

Stanley says more education is needed to stop the thievery.

"I don't think a lot of people know what's going on here. Some people have no idea they're buying bogus seed."

Anyone who thinks they've been sold bogus seed should contact their state seed control official, says Stanley.

New technology will help snuff out the bootleggers. A new gene mapping technique developed by Native Plants, Salt Lake City, will allow researchers to positively identify seed varieties through DNA sequencing. This process, far more reliable and consistent than electrophoresis, may be the industry's foremost means for keeping seed pirating to a minimum.

"These tests will stand up in the court of law, and we intend to prosecute those found guilty of the illegal sale or



Legitimate seed carries a blue certified tag as proof of content.



Richard Hurley of Lofts says new technology will help stop the bogus seed sellers.



Turf Seed marketing manager Tom Stanley notes buyers must be aware of the bogus seed problem.

misrepresentation of patented varieties," says Hurley.

"But, until the problem is solved, seed buyers can protect themselves and the industry," Hurley continues. Although bootleggers are becoming more professional in their packaging techniques, buyers should "be sure the seed is packaged in a logo bag, has the blue certified tag and an analysis tag. Anything else may be illegal and a misrepresentation."

In other words, *accept no substitutes.* □





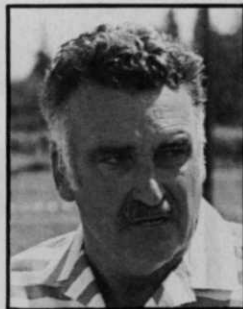
**Doyle Jacklin, Jacklin Seed, reports yields of Kentucky bluegrass at 50 percent of normal.**



**Dave Nelson, Oregon Fine and Tall Fescue Commissions, says tall fescues are adequate in supply.**



**International Seeds' product manager Harry Stalford says the fine fescues are short in supply.**



**Bill Rose, Tee-2-Green president, reports a healthy crop of the bentgrasses.**



**Kent Wiley, Pickseed West, reports an adequate supply of perennial ryegrass seed.**

"We're going to have a surplus. It's just a matter of whether it's this year or the year after," he reports. "Nobody knows the size (of the market). I've talked to a lot of people and they don't know."

Tee-2-Green sells about twice as much Penncross bentgrass as Penn-eagle. Pennway is another variety.

Pennlinks (PSU 126), "the Cadillac of putting greens," according to developer Dr. Joe Duich of Penn State University, should be available late this year.

Pennlinks 126 will be marketed by

Tee-2-Green. More than 100 acres of the new variety, 13 years in development, were harvested in July and August.

Pennlinks can withstand a lower mower height and grows more upright, notes Rose. It is gray/green in color for contrast.

Other bentgrass marketers note an adequate to limited supply of the seed.

Seed Research of Oregon president Mike Robinson says a new variety—SR1020—will be available to golf courses for testing purposes this fall.

Turfgrass blends, report most seed-

men, should be in good supply throughout the season.

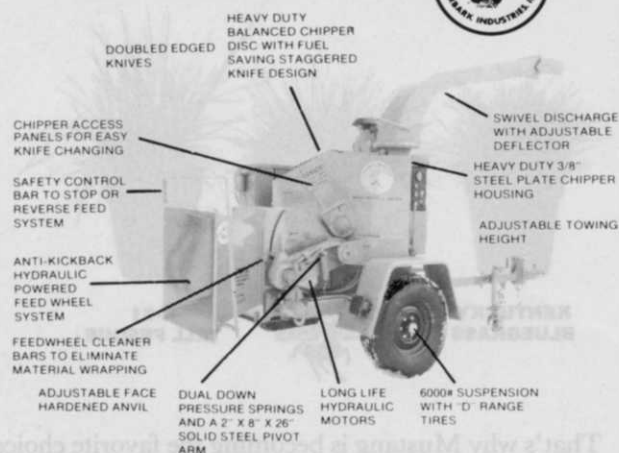
#### And finally...

You've heard it before, but it should be repeated: buy early. Seed supplies, in general, are adequate but a still-thriving economy is putting a lot of stress on supplies.

You may want to visit the distributor who has been the most reliable over the years, who typically receives the most of the seed you desire. The chances are greater that he'll have the seed you need.

**WT&T**

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