



A combine divides freshly cut grass plants into windrows, where they will remain for about two weeks before harvesting.

THE SEED SUPPLY

The bentgrass market is expanding faster than ever.

This year and next, the trend continues at a healthy pace.

by Jeff Sobul, assistant editor

Hheavy demand for Tee-2-Green's Penncross and Penn-eagle, long the dominant bentgrass varieties, has left the door open for new varieties from other companies. Though seed yields are up this year, demand is rising to out-match supply.

Despite the development by Penn State's Joe Duich of PennLinks for Tee-2-Green last year, the company has been unable to keep up with increased demand. "We have again increased the supply of Penncross by 50 percent, but demand continues to exceed our supply," laments Bill Rose, president of Tee-2-Green.

The result: a host of new varieties have appeared in the 1980s, mostly last year and this year, with more scheduled for next year.

What's new?

From 1986 through 1988, at least six varieties have been or will be released. Joining PennLinks last year

was SR 1020, from Seed Research of Oregon. Twenty thousand pounds of the variety were produced this year, to be divided among the company's 25 distributors. This will effectively keep commercial availability short. Seed Research also harvested a breeder field of another new variety, Providence (SR 1019), this year, and expects limited supplies in 1988.

Bluegrass giant Jacklin Seed Co. enters the bentgrass market this year with Putter, developed at Washington State University by Stanton Brauen.

"We have been expanding into all turfgrass markets the past several years," notes Doyle Jacklin, vice president and director of marketing. "We've been working on trying to get a bent for seven years.

"Seven years ago, we felt the demand for bents would be increasing, though not as much as it has."

International Seeds, Inc. also is producing a new variety. Called Cobra, it was developed in a cooper-

ative effort between the company and the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station. Certified and formation seed is available this year for regional testing and observation. The company expects to have limited commercial quantities of seed in 1988.

But it seems that it will be at least a year or two before production of new varieties will come close to catching up with rising demand.

Sources of demand

One cause of increased demand has been the jump in golf course construction. The first choice for greens and tees for these courses has been bentgrass. Domestic use of bents also has increased greatly. "More and more courses in the Midwest and East are using bentgrass when overseeding fairways instead of the traditional bluegrass/ryegrass mix," Jacklin explains. "Golfers are demanding lower cuts on the fairways and the courses are accom-

modating them with the bentgrass.”

Mike Robinson agrees.

“More courses in the South are overseeding with bentgrass in the winter and maintaining it year-round,” he says.

Early indications for the fall 1987/1988 seed crop were excellent. But Mother Nature decided to flex her muscles again this year by spewing forth heavier-than-normal rains in July and into August. A heavy harvest that was expected to begin two weeks early was delayed and expectations deflated some.

“There was a potential for a bumper crop,” says Tom Stanley of Turf-Seed. “Two inches of rain in mid-July with the seed in windrows probably cost us an extra five to 10 percent right there.”

Bluegrass

It seemed the hardest hit would be the bluegrass crop. Heavy rains in early to middle July in eastern Washington and Northern Idaho, where Jacklin Seed produces 40 percent of the U.S. bluegrass supply, threatened the crop.

However, reports Gayle Jacklin, “estimates are way above what we expected (because of the rain). The rain did not have as big an effect as we expected.” As of August 14, 90 percent of the Jacklin bluegrass crop was in the warehouse.

In general, Gayle Jacklin says, “proprietary bluegrass will be in somewhat short supply due to limited carryover and high demand for new improved bluegrass varieties.”

“We don’t have enough acres to produce seed to meet demand,” Doyle Jacklin adds. The company plans to add bluegrass acreage across the board for 1988.

The Madras area (central Oregon east of the Cascade Mountain Range) had “its best year ever” producing bluegrass, reports Steve Tubbs of Turf Merchants. The crop of Turf Merchants’ Gnome Kentucky bluegrass was excellent, but supplies are tight because demand exceeds the company’s ability to increase acreage.

“Some things are short if not already gone,” Tubbs explains. “If you haven’t got it booked already, you’re going to have trouble getting it. Basically, everything is sold. I could sell more if I had it.”

For most of Turf-Seed’s varieties, Stanley says, “we’re going to have more seed this year than last, but because of demand there will be shortages. We’ve committed all of our crop to distributors already.”

What is causing this high demand? “The last six years, the economy has been on a roll,” Stanley notes. “The



Seed remains on plants lying in windrows awaiting thrashing and transportation to cleaning facilities in Oregon.

strongest indicator we have is the housing market and new starts.” Increases in industrial and golf course construction also have added to the demand, both for seed and sod.

For other bluegrass varieties, availability seems to vary from region to region, variety to variety.

The highly-rated Adelphi will be hard to come by this year. “Early visual reports seemed to indicate that



Fine fescue is loaded for transport to cleaning facilities.

what appeared to be an excellent crop, as of June, may once again have been hit by ergot disease,” reports Bob Russell, president of J&L Adikes, a marketer of Adelphi.

Northrup-King product manager Joe Churchill also reports limited supplies of Adelphi. Overall, however, Churchill is more optimistic. “After three years of bluegrass shortages, we may finally be out of the woods. Here at N-K we’re cautiously optimistic. At the time of this report (mid-August), most bluegrass crops were coming in at close to normal yields.”

He reports that two new N-K varieties, Aspen and Trenton, will be released this fall. “Consequently, only limited supplies of these two varieties will be available. Additional acres of both are being planted to increase supplies in the summer of 1988.”

Supplies of bluegrass varieties from Lofts Seed should be adequate, agronomist Marie Pompei reports. “Princeton (104) will be offered to sod growers to use in blends,” she says. “It is one of the best Kentucky bluegrasses developed in the Rutgers University program under the direction of Dr. C. Reed Funk.”

Word from Larry Combs at Fine Lawn Research is that the company will have limited supplies of Chateau,

GRASS SEED AVAILABILITY CHART

Availability Key: **A**-surplus **B**-adequate **C**-limited

VARIETY MARKETER AVAILABILITY VARIETY MARKETER AVAILABILITY

Bentgrass

Exeter colonial	Pickseed West	B	PennLinks	Tee-2-Green	C
Kingstown velvet	Pickseed West	C	Pennway mix	Tee-2-Green	C
Penncross	Northrup King	C	Prominent	Seed Research	B
	Tee-2-Green	C	Putter	Jacklin	C
Penneagle	Tee-2-Green	C	SR 120	Seed Research	C
			V.I.P. mix	Turf Merchants	B

Kentucky Bluegrass

A-34 BenSun	Warren's	C	Gnome	Jonathan Green	B
Abbey	O.M. Scott	C		Turf Merchants	C
Adelphi	J&L Adikes	C	Harmony	Seed Research	A
	Northrup King	C	Huntsville	Jacklin	B
America	Pickseed West	C	Julia	Lesco	C
Aspen	Northrup King	C	Liberty	Gfld. Williamson	C
Banff	Pickseed West	B	Melba	Daehnfeldt	C
Baron	Lofts	B	Merion	Jacklin	C
Blue Ribbon	Normarc	B	Merit	Full Circle	B
Bristol	O.M. Scott	C	Midnight	Turf Seed	B
Bronco	Pickseed West	C	Monopoly	Peterson	B
Challenge	Turf Seed	B	Mystic	Lofts	B
Chateau	Find Lawn	C	Nassau	Jacklin/Lofts	A/B
Cheri	Jacklin	B	Nugget	Jacklin	B
Classic	Peterson	B		Pickseed West	B
Columbia	Turf Seed	B	Parade	Northrup King	B
Coventry	O.M. Scott	C	Princeton (104)	Lofts	C
Dawn	Lesco	B	Ram I	Jacklin/Lofts	B
Destiny	Jonathan Green	C	Rugby	Northrup King	B
Eclipse	Jacklin	B	Touchdown	Pickseed West	B
	Gfld. Williamson	C	Trampa	Daehnfeldt	C
Enmundi	Seed Research	C	Trenton	Northrup King	C
Fylking	Jacklin	B	Trueblue	Turf Merchants	B
Georgetown	Lofts	B	Victa	O.M. Scott	B
Geronimo	Jacklin	B	Wabash	Jacklin	B
Glade	Jacklin	B			

Common Bluegrass

Delta	Jacklin/ Normarc	A C	Park	Jacklin	B
Garfield	Jacklin	B	South Dakota	Jacklin	B
Kenblue	Jacklin/ Normarc	B	S-21	Jacklin	A
			Troy	Jacklin	B
Newport	Jacklin	A			

Rough Bluegrass

Colt	Pickseed West	B	Poa trivialis	Normarc	B
Laser	Lofts	C	Sabre	International	A

Turf-Type Tall Fescue

Adventure	Warren's	B	Pacer	International	B
Apache	Turf Seed	B	Rebel	Lofts	B
Arid	Jacklin	B	Rebel II	Lofts	C
Bonanza	Cenex	C	Richmond	Jonathan Green	B
Brookston	Turf Merchants	B	Safe	Jacklin	B
Chesapeake	O.M. Scott	B	Tempo	Normarc	B
Cimarron	Lesco	B	Thoroughbred	Pickseed West	C
Clemfine	Lofts	B	Titan	Seed Research	B
Finelawn I	Fine Lawn	B	(SR 8000)		
Galway	Northrup King	B	Trailblazer	Lesco	B
Hounddog	International	B	Tribute	Lofts	C
Jaguar	Gfld. Williamson	B	Trident	Seed Research	C
Jaguar II	Gfld. Williamson	C	Turfgem II	Turf Merchants	A
Maverick	Pickseed West	C	Water Saver	Normarc	B
Mesa	Jonathan Green	C	blend		
Monarch	Turf Seed	C	Wrangler	Lesco	C
Mustang	Pickseed West	B		Turf Merchants	C
Olympic	Turf Seed	C			

Fine Fescue

Banner	O.M. Scott	B	Logro	Jacklin	B
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Chewings Fescue

Agram	Pickseed West	C	Puma	Daehnfeldt	B
Enjoy	International	C	Shadow	Turf Seed	B
Estacada	Turf Merchants	C	Victory	Pickseed West	B
Jamestown	Lofts	B			

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just released to the market this year. Kent Wiley, president of Pickseed West, notes that his company's yields were down slightly because of the rain. Even so, bluegrass "should be in better supply than last year," he says.

Lesco director of research and development Art Wick expects bluegrass yields to be below normal as well, though exact figures were still unavailable at presstime.

Common bluegrasses from Jacklin will be in either adequate or near-surplus supplies. Rough bluegrasses will also be in good supply, except for Laser, a new variety from Lofts.

The fescues

Wick says that the latest trend in turf-type tall fescues (and all perennials, for that matter) is the dwarf or semi-dwarf cultivar.

"The dwarf is going to push tall fescue use further north," he says. "They'll provide for the transition zone and points north the density and color homeowners demand."

In addition, he says, "on dormant warm-season grasses, the dwarf is advantageous because it provides a more consistent playing surface because of growth rates."

Dave Nelson of the Oregon fine and



Tom Stanley says Turf Seed has committed all its crop to distributors already.



Lofts agronomist Marie Pompei says increased acreage can't keep up with rising demand.

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VARIETY	MARKETER	AVAILABILITY	VARIETY	MARKETER	AVAILABILITY
Creeping Red Fescue					
Dawson	Northrup King	B	Ruby	Northrup King	B
Ensylvania	International	B	Shademaster	Lesco	C
Flyer	Turf Seed	C	Virtus	Turf Merchants	B
Fortress	Turf Seed	B			
Hard Fescue					
Attila	Turf Merchants	A	Spartan	Pickseed West	B
Aurora	Turf Seed	C	SR 3000	Seed Research	B
Reliant	Lofts	B	Tournament	Pickseed West	C
Sara	Normarc	C	Waldina	Turf Seed	C
Scaldis	Northrup King	B			
Sheep Fescue					
Azay	Pickseed West	C	Bighorn	Turf Seed	C
Perennial Ryegrass					
Allaire	Jonathan Green	B	Manhattan II	Turf Seed	B
All*Star	Turf Merchants	A	NK200	Northrup King	B
Aquarius	Adikes/Jacklin	B	Nova	Seed Research	C
Barry	Turf Merchants	C	(SR 4031)		
Birdie II	Turf Merchants	A	Omega II	Gfld. Williamson	B
Blazer	Turf Seed	B		Turf Seed	B
Blazer	Pickseed West	C	Ovation	O.M. Scott	B
Caravelle	O.M. Scott	B	Palmer	Lofts	B
Citation II	Turf Seed	B	Patriot	Turf Merchants	B
Commander	Lesco	B	Pennfine	Turf Merchants	C
Cowboy	Lofts	B		Northrup King	C
Dasher	Pickseed West	C	Polly hybrid	Daehnfeltd	A
Dasher II	Pickseed West	C	Prelude	Lofts	B
Delray	Northrup King	B	Premier	Normarc	B
Derby	International	B	Regal	International	B
Diplomat	Lofts	C	Regency	Lesco	B
Fiesta	Pickseed West	B	Repell	Lofts	B
Fiesta II	Pickseed West	B	Rodeo	Turf Merchants	A
Gator	International	B	Sherwood	Jonathan Green	C
Goalie	Northrup King	B	SR 4000	Seed Research	B
Jazz	Pickseed West	B	SR 4100	Seed Research	B
Lindsay	International	C	Tara	Hubbard Seed	C
Loretta	O.M. Scott	B	Vintage-2/DF	Lesco	B
Manhattan	Normarc	B	Yorktown II	Lofts	B
Manhattan II	Turf Merchants	A			
Intermediate Ryegrass					
Agree	Lofts	C	3CN	Lesco	B
Annual Ryegrass					
Dalita hybrid	Daehnfeltd	A	Wilo tetraploid	Daehnfeltd	A
Tetragold	Normarc	B			
Winter Overseeding Blends/Mixtures					
CBS II (perennial ryegrass)	Turf Seed	B	Ph.D.	International	B
Champion (perennial ryegrass)	Seed Research	C	Profom	Gfld. Williamson	B
Dixie Green	International	B	Showboat	International	B
Double Eagle	Lesco	B	Signature Classic	Pickseed West	B
Double Eagle + Sabre	Lesco	B	Transtar	Lesco	B
Eagle	Lesco	B	Triathelawn	Turf Seed	B
Eagle 3	Gfld. Williamson	B		(tall fescue blend)	
Futura Plus	Pickseed West	B	Triple Play	Fine Lawn	B
Futura 2000	Pickseed West	B		(perennial ryegrass)	
Marvelgreen	Lofts	B	Vintage Plus	Lesco	B
Medalist series	Northrup King	B	V.I.P.	Turf Merchants	B
Par	Lesco	B	(rye blend)		
			Winter Turf	O.M. Scott	
			Blends: I, III, V, VII, VIII		
			Blend: IX		C
Wildflower Mixes					
18 varieties	Lesco	B	Regional mixes	Daehnfeltd	A/B
Pinto	Jacklin/Lofts	B			
Other					
Four Star	Jacklin	C	Survivor	Seed Research	B
Sod Blend			Tall Fescue Mix		
Fults saltgrass	Northrup King	B	Trophy	Seed Research	B
Patch Work (for bare spots)	Normarc	B	Tall Fescue Mix		
Reubens	Jacklin	B	Various Mixtures	Northrup King	B
Streaker	Jacklin	B			
Redtop					

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tall fescue commissions also sees benefit in the dwarfs. "The second generation, finer-leaved dwarfs could be competing with bluegrass or ryegrass soon. They may very well be competitive in the future because they have good disease resistance, are attractive, deep-rooted and lower maintenance than blue and rye. Dwarf varieties are appearing in greater quantity this year," he says.

Lesco introduced Trailblazer dwarf turf-type tall fescue last year, and Wick expects adequate supplies for this year, though he notes fescue crops will be slightly low due to the weather. Turf-Seed will introduce Monarch this year; Turf Merchants has Wrangler; and Mesa is a new variety from Northrup-King.

In general, the rest of the tall fescues are coming in a bit below normal, *continued on page 28*



Pickseed West research director Jerry Pepin reports good quantities of Fiesta II perennial ryegrass.



Pickseed West president Kent Wiley saw rains delay harvesting and lower yields for all varieties.



Bill Meyer has high hopes for Turf Seed's Monarch semi-dwarf turf-type tall fescue.



Jacklin's warehouse was stocked in June, but not with its own proprietaries. They were sold out. This year's crop faces the same fate.

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though better than last year. Again, the weather conditions in Oregon's Willamette Valley, the mecca of U.S. fescue and rye seed production, kept this crop from reaching full potential.

Much of the average crop of tall fescues was harvested before the heavy rains, Nelson says.

Most varieties of turf-type tall fescues are in adequate supply.

"Rebel II and Tribute are new varieties, so production has to catch up," Pompei says. (Tribute was named in honor of the late Peter S. Loft.)

Mustang tall fescue will be in good supply, but Pickseed West's other tall fescues, Maverick and Thoroghbred, will be limited.

On the whole, supplies of other fescue species should be adequate. "Fine fescue crops are average as well this year," Nelson reports. Low moisture in the spring had some affect on the crop.

New entries into the market this year include Flyer creeping red fescue from Turf-Seed. International Seed will introduce Longfellow chewing fescue for 1988.

Ryegrass

The ryegrass crop also felt the effects of the Valley's weather this year. "Yields are down some because of warm weather in May and June," explains Bill Meyer—10 percent or more.



Stan Brauen, Wash. St. Univ., says Jacklin's Putter bent compares favorably with Penncross.

Ideally, the spring months are supposed to be the wet ones, with a dry July and August for the harvest. "It just went the opposite this year," notes Wiley. "We expect to fulfill all our orders this year, but the total supply won't be sufficient to cover the demand."

Pickseed research director Jerry Pepin reports that 500,000 pounds of Fiesta II, a new variety, will be available this year.

International's Harry Stalford expects things to be tight for another two years before acreage catches up and demand slows down. "We don't want to overproduce, though."

Lesco's yields are down slightly as well. "It's not a surplus crop so prices



Lesco's Art Wick sees dwarf tall fescue as the next trend in turfgrass production.



Doyle Jacklin, Jacklin Seed, has been looking into proprietary bentgrasses for seven years.

will remain strong," notes Wick. (Was that a collective groan from the readers?)

Stanley agrees. "It seems the last few years we haven't had an average year," he says. Consequently, prices will stay the same. (At least they aren't rising.)

Pompei of Lofts also reports adequate supplies, though "Diplomat is being phased out of seed production."

"Excellent" crops of SR4000 and 4100 are reported by Mike Robinson at Seed Research. "The bad news is we're pretty well sold out.

"The whole Valley could be off some," he says. "From what I could see we weren't hurt too badly."

Part of the strain on ryegrass supplies is a demand increase caused by the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Under the program, farmers are paid not to grow food crop. Rather, they are asked to grow grass for 10 years.

The popularity of the program in the Midwest has added to the demand for common grass varieties and fescue, a popular forage grass for many years.

The program has siphoned off much tall fescue because seed growers realize a greater profit from selling to the government rather than regular seed consumers. With tall fescue supplies limited, the burden has fallen on the ryegrasses to make up for the deficiency, the reason for the heightened popularity of ryes in recent years.

A final note...

Supplies are short and prices are high; bad for buyers, good for growers and marketers. As a result, as if it hasn't been stated enough yet, call now for orders or it probably will be too late. Sounds a lot like last year. The good news is that an end is in sight to rising prices and low supplies, hopefully by the end of the decade. That is, of course, if Mother Nature cooperates.

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Harry Stalford, International Seed, notes wide yield variation from field to field of the same variety.