

More on 'Variety Not Stated'

■ The discussion of seed labelling continues.

Bob Olinger of Olinger Seed Co., Akron, Ohio, took exception to an article appearing in *LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT* last November. It stated that purchasers of seed should be wary of "Variety Not Stated" (VNS) labelling.

"Half of the seed on the market is VNS," Olinger says. "That article casts quite a shadow on the common varieties. And any of the common-use grasses—if they're not premium—have to be labelled VNS."

Eliot Roberts, Ph.D., executive director of the Lawn Institute, finds himself partially agreeing with Olinger.

"If the seed is not a proprietary variety but it's grown with the standards of a proprietary, it's equivalent to a proprietary," says Roberts. "If Olinger puts high-quality VNS in his bag, he can do that. But another seedsman might put junk in the bag."

"We try," counters Olinger, "to handle all good quality seed. And I think all regional wholesale distributors carry similar lines. We kind of pride ourselves on our reputations."

Observes Roberts, "Although proprietaries are bred for better tolerances, there's always going to be a place for the common variety. Not everybody is interested in buying a Cadillac."

"But I really have to agree with your article: if you buy VNS, you really don't know what you're getting."

The bottom line? It's best to buy proprietary varieties. If you must buy VNS grass seed, make sure you're dealing with a reputable wholesale distributor.

Biotechnology to boom

■ Biotechnology will have a significant impact on agricultural markets during the next 10 years, say consultants at C.H. Kline & Co. Sales of biotechnology products are projected to reach more than \$2 billion by 1995 (compared to \$14 million currently). These products are also expected to eventually have an impact on the lawn and landscape market.

According to Kline's report, agricultural biotechnology will initially help evolve agricultural products, but holds the long-term potential to alter or revolutionize the animal health care, crop protection and seed improvement industries.

Current biotech sales include products in animal health therapeutics, disease diagnostics and micropropagated crop plants. By 1990, biotechnology-derived products will include genetically-engineered microbial insecticides.

American Cyanamid, Ciba-Geigy, ICI and Monsanto are active in these areas. Lubrizol, Sandoz, Hoechst, Merck and several other companies are also developing such products.

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