

Turfseed: get it while you can

Talk of boosting prices 'won't scare people,' says Pickseed's Pepin.

■ The hot, dry spring weather did a number on this year's seed crop, resulting in one of the lightest harvests in recent memory. The surplus of the past two years will be gone after this season, due to lower yields from the 1992-93 seed crop. Experts tell LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT that higher prices will be the rule for '92.

Pepin: Price hikes won't panic buyers.

The truth of the matter is that the seed industry needs this fiscal shot in the arm to help it recover from recent low prices. Fortunately, seed customers can absorb most price increases without much effect on the bottom line. "The increases won't scare people," says Dr. Jerry Pepin of Pickseed West. "By the time it reaches the end user, a 5 or 10 cent price hike will mean a 20 cent cost to a landscaper or superintendent."

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Here's the seed supply picture, based on comments from seed producers interviewed during LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT'S visit to seed county:

● **Perennial rye:** Some yields are "not even adequate." There was not enough moisture to nourish the seedheads, so the seeds are smaller; the count is up, but the weight's down.

● **Fine fescue** yields are down. "We have fields we probably won't even harvest, reports one source. "They're 1/2 to 3/4 of

average yields."

● **Common Kentucky bluegrass** supply is way down; prices should double or even triple.

● **Tall fescue** acreage is off by 15 to 20 percent. The KY-31 fescue crop will be high priced, which will bring the price of other fescues up with it. The crop yield is predicted to be half of last year's.

● **Creeping bentgrass:** No problem there; companies report plenty of inventory.

● **Proprietary bluegrasses** are in short supply. In some fields, the crop was ready three weeks early. "Proprietary bluegrass is the great leveler," says Keith Laxton, operations manager for Seed Research of Oregon. "Specific varieties will be up by 20 to 40 cents."

—Terry McIver



Seed buyers converged on parts of Idaho, Washington and Oregon in mid-June for the annual field days.

Photo courtesy Jacklin Seed Co.

New seed products

Kentucky bluegrasses—Jacklin Seed Co. recently gained name approval for **NuBlue**. Jacklin reports the variety has shown outstanding resistance to leaf rust, leaf spot, melting out, and pink snow mold. It has medium-dark green color, good early spring green-up.

International Seeds, Inc. also reports trade name approval for **Banjo**. The company reports good shade tolerance and brown patch resistance.

From Fine Lawn Research comes **Chateau**. Fine Lawn reports the variety ranked fifth out of 67 bluegrasses. Good shade performance, wear tolerance and disease resistance, says Fine Lawn.

Pickseed West, Inc. announces that **Bronco** has been granted a plant variety protection number by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. According to Dr. Jerry Pepin, Bronco is a unique bluegrass variety developed with the improved heat and drought tolerance, disease resistance and rapid establishment necessary for survival in the transition zone.

Fescues—**Rebel II**, from Lofts Seed, Inc., is the second generation of Rebel turf-type tall fescue that grows denser and darker than the original. Lofts reports improved drought and heat tolerance, and better resistance to heavy traffic.

Pennington Seed now offers **EnviroBlend**, a semi-dwarf tall fescue blend. The

company says Enviro's best feature is lower growth for less clippings, and superior drought survival.

Seed Research of Oregon has a new hard fescue, **SR3100**, and **SR 5100** chewings fescue. Both are dark green varieties, of the low growing, dwarf-type.

Confederate tall fescue is Turf-Seed's "summer survivor in the hot, humid South." Good brown patch resistance. It's a blend of Apache, Safari, Olympic II and Monarch. **Mowless** is a Turf-Seed dwarf tall fescue. It has a reduced rate of vertical growth and a very dark green color. "Mowless forms a fine, dense dark green turf," says Tom Stanley, marketing director, "and it has very good resistance to brown patch and leaf spot." The blend: Silverado, Eldorado, Tomahawk, and Monarch or 59D.

Perennial ryegrass—**Nomad** is new from Turf Merchants. Developed for use in golf course overseeding, Nomad maintains a lush green color at shorter heights.

Creeping bentgrass—International Seeds and Jacklin have released **C.E.O.**, a custom blend. It is composed of Cobra, Putter and Emerald. Formulations depend on climate conditions. It's recommended for bentgrass fairways and winter overseeding of dormant bermudagrass greens and tees.

—T.M.