TURFGRASS SEED *Availability*

It's a good report from turfseed marketers coast to coast: prices right, quantities sufficient.

■ The 1992-93 seed harvest will be sufficient to meet demand, thanks to cooperative weather. Apart from some minor supply differences among producers, there's enough seed to go around.

Weather conditions in Oregon were troublesome at first, starting with more winter cover than usual, followed by excessive early spring rain.

"The Willamette Valley has received unprecedented spring moisture in 1993," say Skip Coville and Dan Walters from International Seeds, Inc. production division. At one point, seven inches of rain fell in four days.

"The situation is vastly improved over last year," says Bill Rose, president of Turf Seed, Inc. Most of its seed has been sold, but Rose says there was some unexpected carryover.

"Acres have been severely adjusted, (there are 20,000 fewer tall fescue acres), inventories are down and we are looking at a brighter new year."

The cultivars—Bluegrass production in the Willamette Valley is limited due to burning regulations. Supplies of some favorite varieties will be in scarce. Burning the fields after harvest is necessary for a good crop the following year. A good crop of fine fescue is expected, and there's a good supply of hard fescue. Rose says Turf Seed's bentgrass supply is "excellent, with plenty of Pennlinks, Penneagle and Penncross."

To the northeast, Glenn Jacklin of Jacklin Seed Co., Post Falls, Ida., reports a good crop of proprietary bluegrass. "We thought the common crop was going to be a big crop this year, but as it turned out, it's a little bit below what we anticipated. It will be an average, maybe below average crop, about 500 to 600 lbs. per acre. It's been a good year for irrigated proprietaries all across the board. We'll have a big crop of Glade and the main varieties." Skip Allert of Jacklin blamed the low yield of commons on the extended snow cover and late field burning.

Rain has been more of a factor in Idaho's seed yield than in Oregon's. Rain persisted from mid-June through swathing time. Jacklin had his fingers crossed for the '93 crop, but was actually more concerned over the 1994 yield, due to possibility of poor field burns.

Jacklin called the company's ryegrass crop "slightly below normal." Tall fescue should be in adequate supply.

Growers everywhere were concerned over the outbreak of stem rust on fine fescue. Mike Robinson of Seed Research of Oregon, Inc., said the problem was anticipated, and the rust was treated in time.

'Burning' problems—All seed producers continue the search for viable alternatives to field burning, to meet the stricter regulations, effective in 1997. Additionally, Oregon State University is in the middle of a three-year program, testing whether vacuuming and propane burning can clean fields as effectively as flame burning.

—Terry McIver

SEED AVAILABILITY*

Species	Status
Bentgrass	Good
Bermudagrass	Fair
Kentucky bluegrass, common	Fair
Kentucky bluegrass, proprietary	Good
Fine fescue	Good
Hard fescue	Good
Tall fescue	Good
Perennial ryegrass	Good
Zoysia	Fair to good

*Subject to change due to weather

RESEARCH *news*

■ **Doug Brede** of Jacklin told a crowd of field day visitors about company research into plant biotechnology.

Biotechnology differs from conventional plant breeding in that it manipulates plant genes at the cellular level, rather than the whole plant. The process is producing new germplasm and otherwise elusive genetic combinations.

Bill Meyer, Turf Seed Inc.: The company is attacking disease and insect problems in turf. Its North Carolina research farm is breeding for brown patch resistance in tall fescue, the most serious disease of the species. Another goal is stem and crown rust resistance in perennial ryegrass.

Dr. Rich Hurley of Lofts says industry hasn't, so far, been able to breed brown patch resistance into creeping bentgrass, "but we're trying to develop varieties that have some degree of improvement." Disease resistance is more pronounced in Lofts' newest perennial ryegrasses which, Hurley says, are also more temperature tolerant. They'll be used increasingly in the transition zone, he believes.

Kenneth Hignight, lead plant breeder

SEED QUALITY *compromise*

Bill Rose, president of Turf Seed, Inc. compares annual ryegrass plots with high quality turf.

■ Turf-Seed President Bill Rose says three long-standing practices in the seed industry hurt growers and end-users:

1) Seed imported by species;

2) Seed sold without a variety name ("Variety Not Stated," or identified by species);

3) Low-quality seed sold to homeowners. Annual ryegrass is exceptional for soil stabilization and everyday ground cover, but it's unsuitable for most home lawns.

The solutions, says Rose:

● Require all seeds to be named. European regulations require all seed to be certified. Rose suggests all seeds—certified or not—be named. Consumers would then know what they're buying.

● Eliminate VNS as a seed identifier. "This," says Rose, "is a simple but damaging way for seed growers or seed companies to avoid buying or marketing seed. This seed has no home, and results in lower prices for everyone."

●Eliminate annual ryegrass from mixes advertised for home lawns or quality turf.

The Lawn Institute's Jim Brooks advocates a program to require that mixtures with less than 5 percent annual ryegrass qualify for the Institute's "Seal of Approval."

for Advanta (owned by Vander Have Oregon) says the company geared up to pursue an intensive program in tall fescue research, specifically to achieve high (near 100 percent) endophyte levels.

At Seed Research of Oregon. **Dr. Leah Brillman** says endophytes will some day be "typed" according to certain characteristics. "Some are stronger than others, and they transfer better to the seed," and Brillman is trying to isolate those that transfer best under normal conditions, and which stay viable in long storage.

Dr. Fred Lederboer of Turf Merchants: "We're working on placing endophytes in as many tall fescue and perennial ryegrasses as possible." Lederboer also reports improvements in the company's **Bonzai** dwarf tall fescue and its perennial ryegrasses.

Dr. Steve Johnson of ISI reports the company will release **Houndog II** in the fall of 1994. Houndog II is an endophyte-enhanced, heat and disease resistant, turf-type tall fescue.

—T. M., with additional reporting by Ron Hall

NEWEST SEED *products*

■ Here's a sampling of new varieties available in varying degrees this year:

● **Kentucky bluegrasses—**From Jacklin Seed come **NuStar** and **NuBlue.** NuStar has excellent density and moderate seeding vigor, with intermediate maintenance. NuBlue is very dense with above average drought tolerance and superior resistance to necrotic ring spot.

Wildwood, from Lesco, is a low-growing variety with a dark green color and medium to fine leaf texture. It shows early spring green-up and resistance to leaf spot, dollar spot, stripe smut, leaf rust, powdery mildew.

This season only limited amounts of Lofts' new billbug-resistant Kentucky bluegrass, **Eagleton,** are available. "We really don't know the mechanism (causing resistance)" says Dr. Rich Hurley, but he knows it's not endophytic. Two other new premium varieties of Kentucky bluegrasses from Lofts, **Preakness and Belmont,** are also in limited supply, says a company spokesperson.

● **Fescues—Confederate,** a tall fescue blend from Turf Seed, Inc., shows improved summer turf performance with improved brown patch and leaf spot resistance. Confederate is a blend of Safari, Olympic II, Apache and Monarch.

SR 8300, from Seed Research of Oregon, displays a semi-dwarf growth habit, medium to fine leaf texture, rapid tillering, and heat and drought tolerance and relative freedom from leaf spot and stem rust.

●**Perennial ryegrass—APR,** from International Seeds, Inc. and Rutgers University, is available in small quantities in fall of 1993. This endophyte-enhanced variety provides significantly improved resistance to warm season diseases and good traffic tolerance.

Cutter, from Pickseed West, ranked number one in drought tolerance and tied for second in overall quality, genetic color, winter color and pythium resistance.

Prism is new from Zajac Performance Seeds. Prism is very dense, with a dark green color and low growth habit. Prizm is fine-bladed, with improved resistance to leaf spot, brown patch, and red thread.

●**Creeping bentgrass—Lopez,** from Fine Lawn Research, is a fine bladed, dark green variety, top-rated in the NTEP trials. Resistance to brown patch and dollar spot, leaf spot and take-all patch is a plus.

● **Bermudagrass—**from O.M. Scotts comes **Sonesta,** a drought and heat resistant variety, rated number one in the NTEP. Sonesta needs less moisture, and grows at low mowing height.

● **Zoysiagrass—**most notable is the "Zen line," from Turf Merchants, composed of four varieties: Zen 100; Zen 200CS; Zen 300CS; and Zen 400CS. Only 300CS and 400CS are available, in limited quantities, in 1993.

—TM, Ron Hall