

# Floods, herbicides conspire to threaten '96-97 seed supply

by TERRY McIVER / Managing Editor

Ten to 30 percent of the 1996-97 tall fescue and perennial ryegrass seed crop will be lost due to winter floods and residual herbicides which killed grass plants that sprouted during a fall warming spell. The shortage could frustrate what is expected to be high demand for turfgrass seed in the fall of 1996.

Unseasonably warm weather caused late-sprouting plants to be killed by herbicides that were intended to remove seed remnants from the 1995 harvest. Severe flooding in early February capped off an unfortunate turn of events in an industry that prefers its plagues one at a time. Older ryegrass fields—those planted to ryegrass for the past three or four years—took the most damage.

"Generally, the 'volunteer' seedlings—the worthless sprigs that sprout after the seed harvest—are all that need to be controlled

by field burning, or—since field burning has been limited—by herbicides," explains Dr. Jerry Pepin of Pickseed West. Under normal conditions, the herbicides will not kill the established plants.

"I'm sure everybody used the recommended rates, but the recommended rates are for a certain set of conditions. This year, the herbicides just

worked much more effectively."

Adds Dave Nelson of the Oregon Fine Fescue Commission: "[The shortage] could be 10 to 15 percent. We won't know until the harvest. It could well be 15 to 30 percent."

Mike Robinson of Seed Research of Oregon says he is seeing a three percent loss of crops to floods, but "there will be a reduction of at least 30 percent...on the perennial ryegrass fields...especially on the older fields" because of herbicide damage.

"Another concern," Robinson points out, "is that some of the fields continue to show increased damage—the chemical is still working."

According to Nelson, perennial ryegrass—and to a lesser extent, tall fescue—is sold out for the 1995-96 season. Additionally, says Nelson, some seed companies were unsuccessful in planting sufficient tall fescue and perennial ryegrass acreage in the fall, largely due to competition from high-priced wheat crops.

Tom Stanley, marketing manager for Turf Seed, says water overflowed the banks of the Willamette River by 20 feet or more.

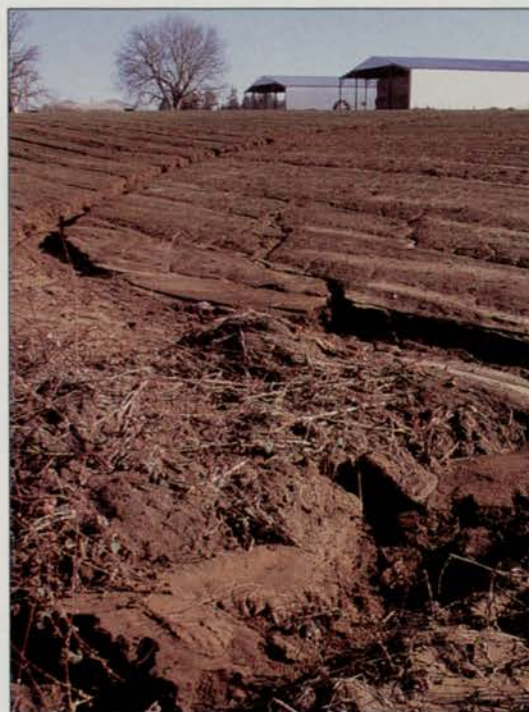
## Higher prices

"Because the Oregon seed industry had massive carry-overs for the last three to four years, they cut back acreage to reduce inventory," says Stanley. "Turf-type tall fescue prices have gone wild, and there's not going to be enough to go around." He believes that prices for tall fescue and perennial ryegrass next year will be 25 and 15 percent higher, respectively.

"We're going to be short for another couple of years," says Nelson, who suggests that green industry seed buyers get their 1996-97 orders in as soon as possible. □



**Pepin: Weather conditions a factor in control product efficacy.**



**Flooding through Oregon's Willamette Valley reduced portions of seed fields to bare ground.**



**Stanley: Seed prices are likely to rise.**



# Harsh winter means probable turf damage

Although the Blizzard of 1996 has gone, the amount of damage this extreme winter did to home lawns is still unknown.

Ohio State University turfgrass specialist Joe Rimelspach says you should be on the lookout for snow mold in lawns this spring, especially where snow has drifted or been piled up by plows.

Slimy, circular patches from two inches to a foot in diameter are the distinguishing mark of snow mold damage, Rimelspach says. Sometimes the patches overlap, creating the illusion of extensive damage. Patches begin as a light yellow-green color, become bleached white, and

progress to a tan or brown over time.

Though the damage is cosmetic, Rimelspach recommends lightly raking the dead patches to break up crusted grass and let air and light get to the crown. Fungicides rarely cure the problem, but affected areas should be treated in the fall so the snow mold does not occur again next season.

Other possible problems associated with hard winters, according to Rimelspach:

1) **Salt injury along streets, driveways and walks:** Check the base of the plants for growth once the rest of the lawn starts

growing. If the plant is dead, the only solution is to resod or reseed.

2) **Traffic:** The chances of long-term injury from foot traffic is minimal when the ground is frozen. But if it's covered with slush and then the ground freezes, turf crowns and stolens can be extensively damaged and the chance of recovery is usually poor.

3) **Ice cover:** Thick, clear ice is much more damaging than porous white ice because it seals out oxygen. Turf can survive periods of ice cover longer if it is cushioned by a layer of snow between it and the ice.

4) **Frost heaving:** Reduce heaving by mulching areas seeded in the fall. Roll the lawn just after heaving occurs to press turf roots back into the soil and reduce wind damage. □

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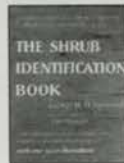
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## Dodger Stadium goes with 'Prescription' turf

The Los Angeles Dodgers will begin the 1996 baseball season at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles on the most advanced natural athletic turf system in operation today, according to The Motz Group, which owns the license on Prescription Athletic Turf (PAT).

The installation, which began in November, was due to be completed this month.

"The entire field has not been replaced since Dodger Stadium opened," notes Doug Duennes, director of operations for Dodger Stadium. "The new technology is extraordinary and we believe that it is time to make a change...that will be pleasing to both our fans and ballplayers."

On the surface, the new PAT system provides a level, bermudagrass playing field that is grown on pure sand. Below the surface, the system has a vacuum chamber connected to a drain line matrix that is laid over a water-tight plastic barrier. During heavy rains, water is forcibly extracted from the field profile. A computer controller and moisture gauges automatically track water levels and transmit data to a microprocessor that initiates drainage.

The system can also subirrigate the field when moisture readings drop below optimal levels.

"Given the arid climate of southern California, the system's water conservation technology is a very important asset for the Dodgers," says Joe Motz, president of The Motz Group, which also recently installed PAT systems at Joe Robbie Stadium in Miami and at the University of Virginia's new David A. Harrison III Field. □

## Expo 96 has ideas to 'grow your business'

The International Lawn, Garden and Power Equipment Expo (Expo 96) will feature a series of Professional Landscape Seminars, including an "Ask the Pros" panel, "Growing People Who Grow Your Business" and "Technology You Can Use to Grow Your Business." Total cost for the seminars is \$25.

The event will be in downtown Louisville, Ky. at the Commonwealth Convention Center. Free shuttle service will be provided from most Louisville hotels.

The annual trade show, scheduled for July 28-30th at the

## RISE gets new state government manager

Fred Langley has joined RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment) as manager of state government relations.

He works on a consultant basis to monitor and analyze state legislative and regulatory activities, testify on behalf of RISE, build coalitions and provide regular updates to members.

Langley was eastern region government relations manager for DowElanco and is an arbitrator for the American Arbitration Association. He is now available to address state pesticide issues of concern to green industry professionals: 17 Tidewater Farm Rd., Greenland, NH 03840; phone (603) 430-8907; fax (603) 430-8906; e-mail [langleyf@ix.netcom.com](mailto:langleyf@ix.netcom.com). □

## Trend toward total renovation on golf courses

The next few years will see many historic, established cool-season golf courses renovate their greens to the new elite creeping bentgrasses now entering the marketplace, believes Lofts Seed turfgrass breeder Dr. Richard Hurley.

Two cases in point are The Desert Inn in Las Vegas and Wilmington (Del.) Country Club. The Desert Inn course, which used Crenshaw bentgrass on greens and washed sod, wanted something to hold up to 250 rounds a day and the city's extreme heat. Dan Pierson at Wilmington renovated 18 greens by sterilizing the soil surface in early September, 1994, then sowing bentgrass seeds in the middle of the month.

Superintendents are discovering that they do not have to continue to put up with older greens that do not hold up as well against disease problems as the new, improved varieties, says Hurley. □

Kentucky Exposition Center, is free to pre-registrants.

New country music superstar Martina McBride will sing at the Expo's annual dinner/concert on Monday, July 29th. The Drifters—whose song "Under the Boardwalk" was one of the great hits of the early 60's—will also perform.

"With a bargain ticket price of just \$35 for the concert and buffet dinner, this is an outstanding opportunity to enjoy an industry event," says Dennis Dix, president and CEO of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, Inc.

To receive a free copy of the Expo 96 registration brochure, call (800) 558-8767—(502) 562-1962 in Kentucky. Fax number is (502) 562-1970. **LM**