



### Sommer's Seed Forecast

**A**s word continues to filter from the fields of Oregon, producer of half the world's cool season grass, it becomes clearer that turf managers should consider buying fall supplies now. Particularly hard hit by a series of calamities this past year was perennial rye.

The popular overseeding grass suffered not only from flooding in Oregon's Willamette Valley, like many other species, but also from slug infestations and damage due to unusually effective, sometimes errant herbicides. As a result, individual farmers estimate losses

of perennial ryegrass ranging from three to 50 percent, adding up to an overall loss of about 20 percent.

Regarding perennial rye, a knowledgeable source in our area, Mike Sommer of Germain's Seeds, tells us, "Availabilities will be tight!" Besides the recent calamities, Sommer points out that "Increased usage has pressured the supply-and-demand axis. In the last three years, usage has risen from 131 million pounds in fiscal year 1991-92 to 174 million pounds in fiscal year 1994-95. Additional acreage has been planted to accommodate this growth, but there is very little to no carryover seed going into this fall."

The situation adds up, most industry sources agree, to higher prices this year for perennial rye. Some vaguely say "much higher," while others speculate about 15 percent higher.

Tall fescue prices also will probably rise this year. Flood damage from last winter, coupled with chronic short supplies of late, could drive tall fescue prices 25 percent above last year's.

Fine fescue seems less affected. Although losses occurred in some fields, most fine fescue is grown at elevations higher than the floods reached. If prices do not rise, limited supplies and high demand will at least keep prices for fine fescue strong.

For bentgrass, according to Mike Sommer, availabilities of proven varieties are adequate, and pricing should remain level. "New releases (such as the A and G Series from Penn State, Viper from ISI, and L Series from Lofts) will be available after harvest in limited quantities."

Common bermudagrass seems in good supply, and pricing has reached the lowest levels in years. Quality seed is limited, but quantity is there.

Sommer says, "Improved seed types (such as Mirage from ISI and Jackpot from Jacklin Seeds) are now available and performing well. New releases (such as Sultan and Princess from Seeds West) will be available in limited quantities after harvest."

For Kentucky bluegrass, supplies of elite varieties (such as Glade from Jacklin Seed, Midnight and Blacksburg from Turf Seed, and others) are limited at present, but a new crop is just around the corner. Generally, according to Sommer, "Availability and pricing should remain constant."

Sommer's overall forecast is that quality seed will be available at a premium; overall availability will be tight; and pricing will be at the highest levels in years due to demand far exceeding supply. In other words, he advises, "Contact your suppliers to make sure they have products reserved for you."

### July

**23** The 1996 Lawnmower-Man Open Golf Tournament. West Woods Golf Club, Arvada, CO. Contact: Colorado Sports Turf Managers Association's 24-Hour Hotline/FAX: (303) 438-9645 and leave a message, or call Troy Smith, Denver Broncos, at (303) 649-9000.

**24** Training with the Bears, a tour of the professional football team's new state-of-the-art training facility. Chicago Bears Training Facility, Lake Forest, IL. Contact: Midwest Sports Turf Managers Association, (847) 439-4727.

**25-27** Turfgrass Producers International Summer Convention and Field Days. Hyatt Regency, Sacramento, CA. Contact: Tom Ford, TPI, (800) 405-TURF or (708) 705-9898.

**28-29** OPE Technicians Certification testing (8 a.m., 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.). EXPO, Louisville, KY. Contact: OPE Technicians Certification, (512) 442-1788, fax (512) 442-1789.

**28-30** International Lawn, Garden and Power Equipment EXPO. Louisville, KY. Contact: (703) 549-7600.

### July-August

**31-1** PGMS/MAPA Summer Grounds Maintenance Conference. Will Rainey Harper College, Palatine, IL. Contact: Robert Getz, (708) 925-6350, fax (708) 925-6035.

**7-8** Penn State Turfgrass Field Days. Joseph Valentine Turfgrass Research Center and Landscape Management Research Center, Penn State Univ., University Park, PA. Contact: PA Turfgrass Council, (814) 863-3475, fax (814) 863-3475 or George Hamilton, Dept. of Agronomy, (814) 865-3007.

*Send announcements of your events two months in advance to: Editor, sportsTURF, 68-860 Perez Road, Suite J, Cathedral City, CA 92234. Fax: (619) 770-8019.*