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## Grass Seed Production

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# AGRONOMY NOTES

SOILS • CROPS

Prepared by Department of Agronomy, College of Agriculture, University of Kentucky

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## GRASS SEED PRODUCTION

R.C. Buckner and Warren C. Thompson

Producing cool season grass seed crops has historically been a profitable venture on Kentucky farms.

When growing maximum yields of grass seed, the pH level should be maintained between 6.0 and 7.0, when the recommended rates of limestone are used, and when phosphate and potash are maintained at medium-to-high levels (based on a soil test). Similarly, grass should be grown in pure stands. Weeds and insects must be controlled to prevent yield reduction.

Following seed harvest, excess herbage should be removed, preferably by grazing. All cool season grasses can be grazed until growth stops in the late fall or early winter, and grazing can continue on tall fescue until March without reducing seed yields.

## RECOMMENDED VARIETIES AND NITROGEN FERTILIZATION

Tall Fescue: Varieties - Kenwell and Ky. 31

Topdress with 50 to 60 pounds of nitrogen during December. Later applications until March 1 give satisfactory yields, but not as high as will a December application. Nitrogen applied at this rate after March 15 causes lodging and excessive growth; this lowers seed yields.

Orchardgrass: Variety - Boone

Apply 40 to 60 pounds of nitrogen between February 15 and March 15. Earlier applications (before February 15) will allow moderate leaching; later applications (after March 15) encourages vegetative growth and lodging, thus lowered yields.

(To simplify information in this publication, trade names of some products are used. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not named.)

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Timothy: Variety - Clair

To get high yields of timothy seed, the same procedure is to be followed as for orchardgrass, except that nitrogen should be reduced to 30 to 40 pounds per acre.

Kentucky Bluegrass: Variety - Kenblue

Apply 30 to 35 pounds of nitrogen between November 20 and December 10, and 30 to 35 pounds of nitrogen again between February 20 and March 10. A single application can also be used, but the yields will likely be about 20 percent less with the single application than by the split (early and late winter) application. When using a single application, apply 30 to 40 pounds per acre of nitrogen from about February 20 to March 10.

OTHER PRODUCTION PROBLEMS

Weeds

Controlling weeds in seed-producing fields has been made easier in recent years by the introduction and use of farm chemicals. University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service Misc. 113E "Chemical Control of Weeds in Farm Crops in Kentucky" (revised annually), describes, in detail, conditions for spraying materials, concentrations, timing and the weeds that are controlled. (Copies are available at your local Extension Offices.)

Insects

Insect control is fast becoming a major problem in grass-seed-producing fields in Kentucky. A very good guide to identity and treatments to control insects is University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service Misc. 278D, "Insecticide Recommendations for Field Corn, Small Grains, Grain Sorghum, and Bluegrass". (This publication is also available at local Extension Offices.)

BUY CERTIFIED SEED

High quality seed is vital to producing a successful crop. A dependable source of seed is Kentucky-grown certified seed.

Research produces improved genetic materials that are best adapted to an area. Seed certification through field inspection and laboratory analysis guarantees a farmer that he is getting the superior material. Certification also insures high germination and freedom of excess inert materials, weed seeds, and other crop mixtures.

Certified Seed is a Good Buy!

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