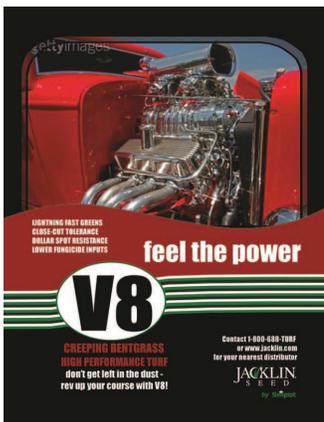




V8 Aces Ongoing NTEP Putting Green Trial

by Doug Brede, Ph.D.

Great news for **V8**! **V8** is our newest Jacklin creeping bentgrass release. The latest NTEP results hit the web showing **V8** in the top #1 slot for overall turfgrass quality across the large Location Performance Index (LPI) Group 1, which included Pennsylvania, Virginia, Kentucky, Indiana, Minnesota, Arkansas, Utah, and Washington state. In the smaller LPI Group 2 which included Massachusetts and Rhode Island, **V8** was ranked #2 across all bentgrass species. There were only two LPI groups in this latest trial result.



Why did **V8** perform so well? It was a well-rounded entry with good performance in a number of traits including disease. But its strongest feature was its turf density, particularly in the springtime, where it ranked a solid #1. Interestingly, in the same trait, **Alpha**, **T-1**, and **L-93** were all in the top 10 in spring density.

At last check, we still have **V8** seed available to sell. These results should go a long way towards making that happen. 🏌️

V8 putting green and T-1 tees and fairways at Chenequa country club in Wisconsin. Photo credit: Mark Grundman.



Annual Ryegrass in Retail Mixtures

by Doug Brede, Ph.D.



Even a small percentage of annual ryegrass in a seed mixture can produce such prodigious topgrowth that it can necessitate almost daily mowing just to keep up.

Annual ryegrass (also known as Italian ryegrass or *Lolium multiflorum*) is a coarse textured, light green, very upright winter annual used for almost 100 years in low-end or contractor mixes designed for the homeowner. Annual ryegrass does have one singular advantage: It has the fastest seedling emergence of any turfgrass species, blasting from the ground in just a few days and being ready for mowing within two weeks under favorable weather. Trouble is, that explosive growth wipes out companion grasses, leaving nearly bare ground 9 months later when the annual ryegrass flowers and dies.

Turfgrass researchers for the past 30 years have recommended against annual ryegrass for these very reasons. Nonetheless, it is still frequent in many packaged seed mixtures. The reason? Presently, wholesale seed of annual ryegrass costs one-third that of VNS perennial ryegrass, making it very tempting for bargain basement seed suppliers. Much of the seed is produced in Oregon's Willamette Valley, where annual ryegrass is endemic to the soil in some areas and germinates without even seeding a crop.

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Annual ryegrass, continued

In 2011, researchers at Jacklin Seed purchased homeowner and contractor mixtures from several big-box stores and planted replicated plots in Idaho, Ohio, and Maryland to see the quality (or lack of it) among these consumer products, many of which contained annual ryegrass. The graph below illustrates the turf quality associated with seedlots selected from these stores, ranging from 0% annual ryegrass content to 99%. From that data emerged an obvious straight-line relationship: Averaged over a year of ratings, turf quality plummeted with each increment of annual ryegrass that was added.

Seedling vigor was rated while the plots were establishing. Most of the plots containing annual ryegrass averaged 7.7 in seedling vigor, which was equal to our best perennial ryegrass check plot. Only two annual ryegrass plots rated slightly higher (less than one rating point higher). This discovery shows how unnecessary annual ryegrass is for soil stabilization of turf mixtures. Perennial ryegrass is more attractive and is nearly as fast to establish.



Annual ryegrass can be identified by its clasping auricles, membranous ligule, and purple sheath base. Its seedhead resembles perennial ryegrass but with a noticeable awn whisker at the top of each seed.

Unintentional mixtures

Because annual ryegrass is widespread in the Willamette Valley, it is sometimes a contaminant in perennial ryegrass seedlots. These mixed seedlots are difficult to market because there is no selective herbicidal control for annual ryegrass in cool-season turf. Kansas State University turfgrass researchers recommend the following manual control measures: "Plant certified seed that is free of annual

ryegrass. Existing clumps can be physically removed by hand or cut out with a shovel. Annual ryegrass does not persist when subjected to close mowing. Therefore, one strategy to reduce annual ryegrass would be to regularly mow at 2 inches or less."

Back in 1988, I published an article in *Agronomy Journal* summarizing three consecutive experiments on tall fescue/annual ryegrass mixtures, and what could be done to tame the aggressiveness of the annual ryegrass. In the experiments I looked at (1) the number of days you wait before the first mow, (2) your initial mowing height, and (3) the overall seeding rate of the plot in terms of pounds per acre. All plots were established at 20% annual ryegrass by seed count.

By tweaking the initial mowing practices, I was able to reduce annual ryegrass ground coverage at 60 days after planting from an average of 82% to as little as 46%. Waiting six weeks before initially cutting the



After the honeymoon: Three test plots of retail mixtures high in annual ryegrass that flowered and died nine months after planting, at Summit Hall turf farm near Washington DC. A few weeks later, those dead plots began filling in with weeds.

turf strongly favored the annual ryegrass, whereas tall fescue was favored by a single close clipping shortly after annual ryegrass emergence. The recommendation was: The sooner after planting and the shorter you can set your mower, the better for nipping the growth of annual ryegrass in the bud.

Although we normally don't think of mowing turf in the first week or so after planting, it is possible and practical to do if you allow the seedbed to slightly dry out for a day before you mow. 🍂

Retail lawn seed mixtures are not renowned for their turf quality. But add in a component of annual ryegrass and they get far worse. Here is a graph showing turf quality averaged over 12 months of eight homeowner seed mixtures found in box stores, and the impact annual ryegrass has on them. By comparison, a commercial Jacklin mixture in the same trial averaged 6.3 in turf quality. Plots were rated on a 1 to 9 scale, with 1 equal to miserable quality (see photo above). For each data point, the seed brand and purchase location of the eight lots are identified on the graph.

