

August 2010

Lean, Mean and Green; Introducing Bandera Texas Hybrid Bluegrass

One of the most noticeable trends in recent years has been the growing demand for environmentally friendly, economical, low-water landscapes. Fescues have emerged as a variety of choice, since they are both attractive and drought-tolerant. Their sensitivity to wear and tear, however, has resulted in very limited options for high-traffic applications- until now.

Bandera is a second-generation Texas bluegrass hybrid from Pickseed that combines the strong heat and drought tolerance of Texas bluegrass with the excellent turf characteristics and uniformity typical of Kentucky bluegrass. It is a strong spreader that produces an extraordinary amount of rhizomes, resulting in outstanding traffic tolerance. Its heat and drought tolerance make it a good fit for mixing with tall fescue and for blending with other bluegrasses. Pickseed bluegrass blends featuring Texas hybrids are currently being used in the World Cup Soccer fields in South Africa.

Bandera makes an excellent mix partner with tall fescue. The tremendous rhizome formation and spreading ability of Bandera are a perfect way to add spreading ability, damage repair, traffic tolerance and sod strength to tall fescue. It also demonstrates strong heat and drought tolerance, as well as resistance to rust and summer patch diseases. The result is an attractive, functional, heat-tolerant turf that uses less water and has excellent spreading ability.

Bandera looks similar to turf type tall fescue and mixes well with it. As NTEP data shows,



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Bandera has a medium density, a medium- to broad-textured leaf blade and a medium-green genetic color- all great matches with tall fescue. At Rutgers, Bandera demonstrated superior for wear tolerance (see attached data table.) Bandera mixes in with tall fescue, but is not so dense and aggressive as to crowd it out of the turf surface. The match is so good that most people will not even know the Bandera Texas bluegrass is there.

Blending Bandera with tall fescue will also enhance the overall disease resistance of the turf.

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Bandera Rhizome Production

Tall fescue is susceptible to Brown patch and Pythium while Bandera is very resistant to both diseases. Texas hybrid and Kentucky bluegrass can get various patch diseases, particularly in summer. Tall fescues do not get these patch diseases. It is recommended to use 5 to 10% Bandera seed by weight for best results. This will broaden genetic diversity and disease resistance and greatly increase spreading ability and wear tolerance.

For value and improved drought tolerance, using a 3-way blend of Crest, Mercury and Bandera makes a solid, genetically diverse, water saving general purpose bluegrass blend. The three varieties are very different genetically but match up well in appearance. This combination is ideal for sports turf, sod production and for high quality home and commercial lawns.



Dr. Jerry Pepin