

Southern and Northern Overseeding Update

Southern overseeding: If possible, overseed Bermudagrass when the soil temperature (4 inches below the soil surface) is between 72° and 78°. This is the ideal temperature for both Bermudagrass and the overseeding cool season grass. Ryegrass is by far the most important species used, with *Poa trivialis* a distant second. Fine fescues and bents also have a very small usage. The most important grasses are discussed below.



Annual Ryegrass: Has been used for decades in low cost overseeding operations. The turf quality, color and texture are poor and transition is fast and ugly, but the cost is low.

Perennial ryegrass continues to be the most versatile and valuable grass, being used for greens, tees, fairways and sometimes roughs. The overseeded turf quality and color is outstanding. Transition can be difficult due to the heat tolerance and persistence bred into new varieties. Chemicals such as Revolver, Manor, TranXit, and Monument can help with a smoother transition but their cost is high. There are many excellent varieties available; however the increasing cost for perennial rye is cutting back usage. Elite overseeding blends such as Futura 2000 and Futura 3000 are ideal for most uses.

Intermediate Ryegrass: Unfortunately many older, commonly available varieties (Froghair, Midway, Transtar, etc) have reverted back to nearly annual ryegrass in performance. Since they were never carefully bred and stabilized they have reverted to annual ryegrass after several generations of seed increase. They have a low cost and establish quickly, but their turf quality, color and texture is similar to annual ryegrass.

Transitional ryegrass: PICKSEED's great new Transitional ryegrasses (The only crosses between annual and perennial ryegrass that are true hybrids, stabilized and certified eligible) are finding increased usage. These grasses continue to improve with each new breeding generation. The very newest and best transitional ryegrasses such as Transist 2400 and Transist 2600 approach the turf quality and color of good perennial ryegrass varieties. Their transition characteristics are excellent, but they can get temporarily "growthy" and "stemmy" while transitioning out in late spring. They are often successfully blended with perennial ryegrass in blends such as PICKSEED's Futura 2500. They also make excellent "Nurse" grasses in northern areas. When mixed with fine fescue, tall fescue or bluegrass; the Transitional ryegrass will establish quickly, but depart within 12 months leaving behind the perennial grasses.

Turf-type annual ryegrasses (like Panterra, Axcella, etc) are somewhat improved over annual ryegrass, but not nearly as good as Transitional ryegrasses in color, texture and quality. They do establish fast and transition quickly in the spring but often get very stemmy and exhibit rapid growth at the time. Their turf quality and color is slightly improved over annual ryegrass. They are sometimes mixed with perennial ryegrass. Their cost is lower than that perennial and similar to Intermediate ryegrass.

Poa trivialis is used almost only on greens and tees. Its good establishment, fine leaf texture and tolerance to greens cutting heights make it an excellent overseeded grass for these purposes. *Poa trivialis* is becoming more



expensive, and recent problems with Rapid blight and salt tolerance are limiting its usage. It is sometimes mixed with Chewings fescue or bentgrass, with good results to improve salinity tolerance and Rapid Blight resistance. The transition ability of *Poa trivialis* is good, but the newer varieties are persisting longer than desired.

Blends and mixtures are used in most overseeding applications. There seems to be no limit to the various combinations being used. For most fairway, roughs, sports turf or fine turf applications combinations such as Futura 2500 or Futura 3000 are excellent. For greens and tees *Poa trivialis* is used in blends with other varieties or mixed with bentgrasses or fine fescues.

Northern Overseeding: Overseeding is necessary to thicken turf that has been damaged by traffic, disease or damage of any kind. Perennial ryegrass is a great overseeder. Generally apply seed of the overseeded grasses at half the new planting seeding rate. Use straight perennial ryegrass blends such as Futura 3000, or mix in bentgrass or bluegrass with the overseeding mix. For quicker results, mixes with Transitional ryegrasses like Transist 2400 can be used. The Transist 2400 can be mixed with perennial grasses insuring quick results but leaving behind perennial grasses such as bentgrass, fine fescue, bluegrass or perennial ryegrass.

Divot Mixes: For quick repair on bluegrass or bermudagrass fairways, ryegrass should be included in the divot mix. Divot mixes are usually a mix of sand (sometimes with

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green dye and with fertilizer too) plus seed. Perennial rye is commonly used and transitional ryes work well too for very rapid repair. Including seed of the perennial grass on the tee and fairway, such as bluegrass, bentgrass or even seeded Bermudagrass, is a good practice. That ensures quick results but with a long term payoff in thickening the base perennial grass too.

For creeping bentgrass fairway repair, use of chewings fescue with the bentgrass seed is an important part of the battle against *poa annua*. Multiple studies have shown that repair of divots using just a sand or sand/soil mix can take weeks during which time the open ground is susceptible to *poa annua* invasion. Using creeping bentgrass seed alone in this mix decreases the time for repair, but the best option for rapid repair is a mix of chewings fescue and creeping bentgrass. The chewings fescue germinates quickly to fill the hole while the bentgrass fills in. In addition, the chewings fescue blends well with the creeping bentgrass so the appearance and quality of the surface is enhanced.

Summary: Overseeding is a critical practice everywhere and a key to successful management. Today's turf manager has a variety of high quality seed products available. There are many overseeding options and many roads that lead to success. This report has attempted to cover some of the products and factors leading to a correct overseeding decision based on individual budgets, goals, desires and needs.



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