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Using Seeded Bermudagrass for Turf

Breeding achievements within the cool season grasses have somewhat overshadowed the breeding successes in the warm season grasses, particularly in Bermudagrass. In the last 20 years, solid gains have been made in improving the turf quality and the usage of the seeded Bermudagrasses. PICKSEED breeders have been working on seeded Bermudagrasses at our Arizona facility for many years. What follows is a discussion of some available varieties and how best to use them as improved turfgrasses.



Where and why to use seeded Bermudagrasses:

Obviously in the Deep South the seeded Bermudagrasses are a great choice as they have excellent adaptation. However these varieties can be used well into the transition zone. They will go dormant in the winter but will provide outstanding turf cover during the hot summer months. Usually elite blends such as PICKSEED's Futura Heat three way blend of SR 9554, Transcontinental and Savannah are used.

Benefits of seeded Bermudagrass:

- Seeding provides easier, cheaper and faster establishment than sprigs.
- Seeding is much more convenient and flexible.
- The new seeded varieties equal the quality of vegetative varieties.
- Overseeding and quick repair is much easier.
- Seed can be stored, sprigs cannot.
- Seeding uses much less water than sprigging.
- Seeded varieties generally require less intensive maintenance than sprigging types

How to Best Use Seeded Bermudagrass: Seed in April or May when soil temperatures approach 65° F or higher, prior to warmer summer weather. A seeding rate of 4-6 lbs per 1000 sq ft of coated seed is recommended for new stands. Use a reduced (50%) seeding rate for overseeding. Germination can be expected in 5-7 days under good conditions. Cooler conditions will slow germination and establishment. A mowing height of from 3/8 to 2 inches is recommended.

Use a three way blend like Futura Heat for maximum adaptation and genetic diversity. PICKSEED's Futura Heat for 2009 contains about 50% SR9554, 25% Transcontinental and 25% Savannah. In the future other high quality cultivars may be used if appropriate. The seed is coated to improve establishment and to make planting easier. These three varieties were picked for compatibility, performance and availability. Their color, texture and density are very compatible and make an excellent match. They have better winter hardiness than most other varieties so this blend can be used in the transition zone as well as the Deep South.

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Transcontinental have been excellent. It has displayed top turf quality, an excellent dark green color, a fine leaf texture and very good turf density. Being a good seed producer, it has the quality of a sprigged variety but is available at a great price.

Savannah is a three clone variety also developed in North Carolina. It is a dark green lower growing variety that forms a dense aggressive turf and spreads rapidly. Savannah has improved winter survival and is well adapted to the transition zone. It has above average spring green up. Savannah is adapted throughout.

Futura Heat is ideal for upgrading common Bermudagrass lawns and for filling in weak or worn areas. It makes an excellent turf surface for lawns, sports fields, and sod production and for golf course tees and fairways.

SR 9554, developed by the SRO / PICKSEED research team from selections made in Europe and the Pacific Northwest, comprises 50% of the Futura Heat seed blend. This variety combines rapid establishment and growth with long stolon length with shorter internodes which means it spreads rapidly while still forming a dense turf and quickly repairing worn or damaged areas. SR 9554 has a vibrant dark green color combined with improved turf quality, medium fine texture and excellent turf density.

Transcontinental was developed in North Carolina and is an excellent performer in the transition zone and has improved winter survival. The NTEP scores for



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