

# Purchasing Quality Turfgrass Seed: Consumers Advised To Read the Label

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Purchasing quality turfgrass seed for reestablishing lawns or establishing new lawns is critical to the future success of the lawn. Several key words often seen on bags of lawn seed are common indicators of what turfgrass species the bag contains.

Seed bags that contain the phrase "quick green" or "fast grass" often contain annual ryegrass. Annual ryegrass is just that

— an annual. Annual ryegrass germinates rapidly and will grow throughout the summer but in almost all instances will die in the winter and leave the area bare the following year. In some cases, annual ryegrass may survive for a second year, but normally this is not the case. The normal use of annual ryegrass is as a cover or nurse crop for the desired turfgrass species.

Another keyword often observed on seed bags is "tough" or for "high traffic areas." These phrases often indicate the bag con-

tains tall fescue. Tall fescue is a very drought-tolerant, deep-rooted grass whose use in Michigan is slowly increasing. Establishing an entire lawn of tall fescue should give good results, but homeowners should use caution when reseeding small areas in a Kentucky bluegrass lawn. It's wise to try a small area first, because one of the biggest differences between tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass is the leaf blade width or texture. Most of the new improved tall fescues have narrow leaf blades that are not much different from those of Kentucky bluegrass, but others may not blend with the existing bluegrass at all.

The most common descriptions of turfgrass seed relate to sun and shade conditions. The shade mix is usually composed of Kentucky bluegrass and some combination of fine fescues (hard, chewings, or sheep fescue). All of the fine fescues have very fine leaf blades and perform well in shaded environ-

ments. The sunny mix is usually composed of Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, and creeping red fescue.

## Tips for Reading a Seed Label

To choose quality turfgrass seed, you need to understand the

## Sample Seed Label

XYZ Lawn Mixture			
Pure Seed	Cultivar	Germination	Origin
75%	Mackinac Kentucky bluegrass	90%	Michigan
23.25%	Traverse City perennial ryegrass	87%	Michigan
1%	Inert Matter		
0.50%	Other Crop		
0.25%	Weed Seed		
Noxious Weeds: None			
Test Date: 11/07			

information presented on the seed label. The seed label — or tag, as it may be referred to — is usually found on the back of a bag of seed. The label contains valuable information, including the cultivars, purity, germination percentage, crop seed, weed seed, inert material, noxious weeds, and date tested.

**Cultivars:** The simplest tip is to look for specific cultivar names, not only "Kentucky bluegrass" or "tall fescue." Named cultivars are superior in many traits to the common types.

**Purity:** The percent by weight of the particular cultivar seed. For our example, Mackinac Kentucky bluegrass has a purity of 75%.

**Germination:** The percent of pure seed that germinates under ideal conditions. Simple guidelines are never to purchase seed with less than 70% germination. A higher germination percentage is better.

**Crop:** "Crop" is the seed of any other commercially grown grass crop. Crop could include grasses

such as orchardgrass, timothy, clover, or bentgrass. High quality turfgrass seed should contain no other crop seed or, at the most, 1%.

**Weed:** The percent by weight of weed seed. This is any seed that is not pure or crop seed. Ideally, seed should contain no weed seed, but some weed seed always seems to find its way through the screening process, so look for a value less than 1%.

**Inert:** The percent by weight of material other than seed. This might include chaff, corn cobs, sand, or soil. Look for a value less than 4%.

**Noxious Weeds:** These are weeds that are particularly difficult to control and are declared noxious by some states. It is illegal to sell seed that contains noxious weeds. If noxious weeds are present, they must be listed by name.

**Date Tested:** This is the date the seed was tested. Look for seed that was tested within the previous 12 months.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### That Unpleasant Odor May Not Be Hydrogen Sulfide

To the Editor:

This is in reference to your article "Board Continues To Tackle Sewer Dilemma," which appeared in your May 15 issue, in which some problems are attributed to hydrogen sulfide, characterized as "corrosive sewer gas." Evidently this issue is behind a lawsuit with a New York insurance company having to do with corrosion damage of sewer components.

Contrary to your article, the unpleasant odor around the pumping stations is not, in fact, hydrogen sulfide, although this is a somewhat common misconception when talking about human waste, because the odor does vaguely resemble hydrogen sulfide. I notice that some Internet sites even make the same mistake.

The so-called sewer gas is actually 3-methyl indole, also known as skatole. This is an aromatic amine with the molecular formula C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>9</sub>N. It is created by the digestion of protein by mammals. As can be seen, it does not contain any sulfur. It also is not particularly corrosive.

On the other hand, hydrogen sulfide is corrosive and extremely toxic, having a toxicity on the order of that of hydrogen cyanide. A concentration of only 800 parts per million of hydrogen sulfide causes instant death.

If the odor actually was due to hydrogen sulfide, corrosion would be the least of our problems.

So, looking at the issue logically, rather than only scientifically, if human waste contained a significant amount of hydrogen sulfide, then we would kill ourselves whenever we went to the bathroom.

Bruce F. Caswell  
Dearborn

*Editor's note: Brevort Township Supervisor Edward Serwach provided the following response to Mr. Caswell's letter:*

*The issue has nothing to do with a lawsuit with the New York bonding agency. That lawsuit is related to the company that walked away from the sewer project and left unfinished work.*

*Highly knowledgeable Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) inspectors have been on site to test, and they have diagnosed the odor as H<sub>2</sub>S (hydrogen sulfide) gas.*

*It is our understanding that the gas is a result of the breakdown of waste within the sewer lines; the gas builds up when there is insufficient movement of the material in the lines. This is treated by flushing the lines as part of system maintenance.*

*The hydrogen sulfide odor has been present since the installation of the system. The original odor was at the lift station, where metal equipment components became extremely corroded by the hydrogen sulfide in a short period of time. The township created an underground bypass at the lift station to completely enclose the process and contain the gas.*

*This spring, H<sub>2</sub>S corrosion was in the manhole at the lagoon, which is a sequestered location that is not open to the public.*

*The DEQ has advised all people working with the H<sub>2</sub>S gas that concentration of the gas can be lethal and therefore trained personnel must follow all regulations and be cautious when entering the manhole.*

*The DEQ continues to monitor the situation.*

## The St. Ignace News

and Les Cheneaux Islands Weekly Wave

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The quotation under the flag of *The St. Ignace News* on Page 1 is from the 10 triads written by Dr. Fred Newton Scott, creator and teacher of the first continuous course in journalism in the United States at the University of Michigan in 1890. The 10 triads are chiseled on the parapet of the Detroit News Building at 615 Lafayette Boulevard, Detroit. They were headed "Ideals of the Press" or "The Newspaper in a Free Society," and serve as a reminder of what a free press means to us.

## St. Onge Retains City Council Seat

Incumbent Jason St. Onge will keep his seat on Mackinac Island City Council following a recount vote Thursday, May 22. The two-vote difference in the May 6 election between Mr. St. Onge and Anneke Myers was confirmed, although each received one additional vote. Mr. St. Onge won the recount with 188 votes and Mrs. Myers received 186.

A total of 344 Island voters cast ballots in the election.

For the recount, ballots were delivered to the Mackinac County Courthouse in St. Ignace in a

sealed container Thursday morning by Island Clerk Karen Lennard. The recount was supervised by County Clerk Mary Kay Tamlyn and attended by Mr. St. Onge and Mrs. Myers.

County canvassers participating in the recount were Dorothy Paquin, Gerry Huyck, Kathy Wells, and Donna Harju. Each candidate was allowed two observers. Representing Mr. St. Onge were his brother, Eric St. Onge, and Prentiss "Giz" Brown III. Mrs. Myers was represented by Mary Dufina and Joan Slater.

## WWII Display To Be in Sault Mon.

The traveling bus display "Behind Barbed Wire: Midwest POWs in Nazi Germany" will visit the Chippewa County Historical Society parking lot near the northeast corner of Portage Avenue and Ashmun Street Monday, June 2, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. in Sault Ste. Marie. The event is free, and is co-sponsored by the society and American Legion Post 3.

Donations will be accepted. Veterans may also visit the Chippewa County Historical Society's displays, share their stories of World War II by recording their memories at the historical

society, and enjoy a cook-out that day. For more information, call (906) 635-7082.

Chippewa County Historical Society's dinner theater fundraiser, "Dinner with the John Johnstons," will take place Saturday, June 28, at 6 p.m. at the Crow's Nest at Cislser Center at Lake Superior State University. Tickets are \$20 and must be purchased in advance at the Chippewa County Historical Society Gift Shop, Soo Theater ticket office, or the Chamber of Commerce. For more information, call (906) 635-7082.

## Baby Bottle, Food Warmer Recalled

A baby bottle and food warmer made by Munchkin has been recalled.

The bottle and food warmers can overheat, posing a fire hazard. Munchkin has received nine reports of units overheating, several of which ignited, causing damage to countertops. No injuries have been reported.

This recall involves the "Munchkin Deluxe Bottle and Food Warmer with Pacifier Cleaning Basket 2-in-1 Design," model 13301 and lot number TP-1487. The product is used to warm food and bottles of various sizes. The set includes a main basket, a lift-out basket, an adapter ring, and a measuring cup. "Munchkin" is located

on the front of the warmer and "TP-1487" is located on the bottom. Only warmers bearing lot number "TP-1487" are included in this recall.

The warmers have been sold at various retailers nationwide from June 2007 through April 2008 for about \$20.

Consumers should stop using bottle and food warmers with lot number TP-1487 immediately and contact Munchkin to receive a free replacement.

For additional information, contact customer service toll-free at (866) 619-8673 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Pacific Time Monday through Friday, or visit the firm's Web site at www.munchkin.com.

## St. Ignace News Policies

### Letters:

All responsible letters will be considered for publication and may be edited. They must be signed and a telephone number must be included for verification. Personal thank-you notes, personal attacks against other people, form letters, and letters promoting political candidates are not accepted, although letters for or against ballot proposals are welcome.

### Obituaries:

The St. Ignace News maintains a policy of not charging for obituaries and we do often add information or rewrite them for clarity and reader interest. Obituaries that the family wants published exactly as submitted can be placed in the newspaper for \$75. Photographs are welcome at no charge.

### Weddings:

Weddings with photographs are published without charge within 45 days of the ceremony. After 45 days, a photograph can be included for \$35.00.

### Internet:

The complete edition of The St. Ignace News is available online at [stignaceneews.com](http://stignaceneews.com).

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## MICHIGAN POLITICS

By George Weeks



### Washington, Lansing Fail Great Lakes Waters

For those concerned about the Great Lakes and waters that feed them, it's a time to be wary of the ways of Washington and Lansing.

In competition on Capitol Hill for return on federal tax dollars, fresh water gets short shrift compared to farm subsidies. In Lansing, it's an uphill struggle to keep an adequate lid on export of Great Lakes water.

There were these developments on those two waterfronts last week:

- Lieutenant Governor John Cherry, testifying Wednesday on behalf of reauthorization of the Great Lakes Legacy Act that has fallen below promised levels of funding, urged Congress to quadruple annual funds to states for cleaning up toxic sediments in waters feeding into the lakes.

The next day, Congress — overriding a President George W. Bush veto for only the second time — enacted a bloated \$290 billion farm bill that gives generous new subsidies to farmers.

The action underscored who has election-year clout in Congress, which has only appropriated \$126.5 million of the \$270 million that it had authorized for clean-up of contaminated Great Lakes areas that, as Cherry testified, "include communities and the rivers that run through them that helped win our nation's wars and fueled our economic prosperity in the 20th century."

Cherry, who had a strong environmental record while a state senator, is now being thrust into increasing public face-time during term-limited Governor Jennifer Granholm's second term, in advance of Cherry's likely 2010 gubernatorial bid.

- In Lansing, there's debate about whether Michigan can say "no" to large water withdrawals, including by those who export huge amounts in small containers.

Yes, we can say no, insists Michigan Director Cyndi Roper of East Lansing-based Clean Water Action, who is among those whose voices under the dome are politically faint, compared to well-funded interests pushing for commercialization and privatization of our water.

At issue: the state Senate passed legislation related to the

Great Lakes Compact that is weaker on withdrawal of groundwater for bottling than action by the House. Said Roper in a *Detroit Free Press* commentary:

"The Senate legislation requires only those pumping more than 2,000,000 gallons per day to ask permission on that water use. Compare this to Minnesota's permission trigger, which is 10,000 gallons per day, or Wisconsin's, at a million gallons. Both states have created a system to allow public input and oversight at levels up to 200 times more protective than the Michigan Senate approved. Michigan's senators thumbed their noses at the public's rights to have a meaningful voice in decisions about massive water withdrawals."

Late last week, with further legislation pending in the House, Roper sent e-mail missives to environmentalists urging them to "inundate lawmaker offices demanding they fight for our water and stand up to the corporate interests wishing to seize control of our water."

Traverse City attorney Jim Olson, advocate of the Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation's (MCWC) long legal fight against Nestle's bottling operation in Mecosta County, called the Senate action "the great give-away of Michigan's water, 25% of it! Other countries, private investors, will be thirsting to get their taps into Michigan. It'll be like the Oklahoma Gold Rush, only this time it's the Michigan Water Rush."

Olson says MCWC and others are "holding fast to the principle that water in Michigan, because it is the source of all streams, lakes, and most of inflow into the Great Lakes, is subject to a public trust. This means the state owns the water and must protect and manage it for citizens, not privatize or hand over control to private interests for profit as the primary purpose of a water project."

Water — a public trust, not a product. A quaint, but correct, notion.

*George Weeks retired in 2006 after 22 years as political columnist for The Detroit News. His weekly Michigan Politics column is syndicated by Superior Features.*