Getting the right mix

Penn State recommends ryegrass, Kentucky blue grass, fescues for our area

By MARSHA FLEEGER

Penn State agronomists recommend a mixture of Kentucky blue grass, fine fescue and perennial ryegrass for lawns in Pennsylvania, because those species do best in our climate.

Home owners should consider this mixture must be grown if they want their lawns to grow back after mowing.

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um Hunter. “The other two are a couple of weeks to germinate, and the ryegrass germinates and grows faster, so it looks like everything is growing all right and doing good.”

The rye grass also acts as a nurse crop and helps protect the Kentucky blue grass and fine fescue.

Hunter pointed out that it is important to get perennial ryegrass and not annual, which will not have to be planted every year.

For lawns that have a lot of shady areas and tend to be wet, Hunter said that a straight mix of fine fescue is the best option, and for lawns that get full sun exposure a straight blue grass would be the best option.

“If you choose to do a straight species,” Hunter said, “you might want to choose from one of the other three varieties of that species.”

Hunter has a neighbor who did that; he got three species of midnight blue grass, fescue and perennial ryegrass.

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“It’s a little bit of a hedge bet,” he said. “If one variety isn’t suited to your soil, hopefully the others will be.”

Hunter said that there are some real differences between the companies that make commercial lawn seed mixes — some do a good job, some do not.

“You have to really look out for the labels and see what you are getting,” Hunter said. “Some have too many seeds of a particular grass, which is not good.”

Hunter recommended reading labels for the vari-
eties of seeds and also the seedling rates, especially before starting to apply. The Penn State mix often has a seeding rate of four pounds per one thousand feet.

He recommends starting your lawn by planting a thousand foot area, until you become comfortable with the seed-
ing rate.

“Take two pounds and go long ways,” Hunter said. “Take the other two pounds and go cross ways, this helps avoid skips.”

Seed testing is always recommended before planting, according to Hunter, who said that seed tests are available at the Mercer County Extension Office and local Agways. They are mailed to Penn State and results come back in about a week.

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The Water Information System (WIS) — Spring and summer are synonymous with increased hours of sunlight, warm tempera-
tures and, often, an increased reliance on water to water recreational pursuits and lawns and gardens.

The Water Information Program states that 3.9 billion gallons of water are consumed in the Unit-
ed States each month and the average person uses 176 gallons of water per day.

Water conservation may be essential when the risk for water-related drought looms. Practicing your own conservation efforts can help ensure smart usage of local wa-
tersheds, lakes and reservoirs and help maintain those water sources for future years. It also helps that someone reduce his or her carbon footprint while saving people a little money along the way.

Explore these water-
saving tips to make smart use of water.

• Collect shower water in a bucket before you come inside the house or even outdoors.

• Check for leaks around the house. Fix any leaks. A few drops of food coloring in your toilet tank and see if it spreads into the bowl within a half-hour. If it does, that means a leak is present where water may be being wast-
ed.

• Keep a pitcher of drinking water in the refrigerator, so when you come inside from the heat you have a cold drink at the ready and you won’t have to run the tap to fill a glass.

• Install a lawn irriga-
tion system so that you can maximize the amount of water that gets to the roots. Arrange the sprinkler heads so they are spaced around driveways and sidewalks are not getting “watered” as well.

• Apply the mini-
num amount of fertil-
er required, as fertil-
er can increase water consumption.

• Aerate lawns and garden beds so the water reaches the roots rather than running off the soil surface.

• Employ rain bar-
rels to collect rain runoff.Rain bar-
rels can help to repurpose rain water rather than simply allowing it to wash into storm drains.

• Reduce reliance on sprinklers and hoses for summer recre-
eration. Instead, rely on pools and other devices that use recirculating pumps.

• Homeowners with pools can benefit from not maintaining the pool filters.

• Solar pool covers can warm up pool water naturally and also reduce the rate of water loss through evap-
oration.

• Irrigation systems can benefit from the nutri-
tent-rich water si-
phoned out of a home aquarium when cleaning the tank.

• The conservation guide Earth Easy says one way to cut down on water use is to turn off the shower after soaping up, then turn it back on to rinse. A five-
minute shower can use between 20 and 40 gal-

lons of water.

• Add organic mat-
ter to the landscape to increase water absorption and retention. Top dress areas as needed through-
out the season.

Water conservation ef-
forts can help homeowners 
maintain their lawns and gardens, protect the environment, and save:

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