



PRODUCT INFORMATION AND CULTURAL GUIDE

PRODUCT INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Kikuyugrass is a low growing, warm season perennial grass, native to tropical Africa. It spreads vigorously by both rhizomes and stolons. The stems and leaves are covered with fine hairs.

HISTORY

Kikuyugrass was originally introduced into Southern California from Australia for use as erosion control along ditches and banks. Its area of adaptation is along the California coast from San Diego to San Francisco and inland to the desert and mountains. It has been introduced into southeastern portions of the United States into Texas and along the Gulf Coast.

CHARACTERISTICS

Kikuyu is a valuable forage grass and is used extensively in Hawaii for forage uses. Kikuyu exhibits excellent drought tolerance, disease and insect tolerance and wear tolerance with a rapid recovery rate, which makes it an ideal candidate for golf and sports fields. As a warm season grass, kikuyu exhibits a greater tolerance to winter temperatures, especially along the coast. When compared to bermudagrass, kikuyu exhibits much better winter color and seldom goes completely dormant eliminating the need to implement a winter overseeding program. Kikuyu exhibits a quicker greenup rate than bermudagrass.

INVASIVENESS

In many cases, particularly on golf courses, parks and cemeteries, common kikuyu has been a dominant turfgrass species and rather than institute an eradication program, turf managers have developed maintenance programs to encourage kikuyu development. Because of its invasive characteristics, kikuyugrass is listed as a Federal Noxious Weed. However seed is sold and produced in California, Arizona and Texas with certain restrictions. Studies have shown that seeded kikuyugrass, particularly the variety AZ-1, is not as invasive as first thought and can be controlled with an herbicide management program.

CULTIVARS

WHITTET. In 1970 the cultivar 'Whittet' was released in Australia. It was developed particularly for forage uses but has been planted for turf use with success.

AZ-1. In 1999 Arizona Plant Breeders and Arizona Kikuyu LTD released the variety "AZ-1" which was developed from strains of 'Whittet'. Compared to Whittet, AZ-1 is less aggressive, grows lower at maturity and has smaller stolons. The shortness is due to a greatly reduced internode length. Because of its reduced growing height and shorter stolons, AZ-1 does not produce as much forage as Whittet making it an ideal cultivar for turf. AZ-1 also exhibits greener color. It is quick to establish from seed and when sown in the warm months can produce an established, mature turf in five weeks.

GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

Although kikuyu is native to tropical Africa it exhibits a broad range of adaptation. Coastal climates with moderate temperatures are most favorable. Along the west coast it ranges from north of San Francisco, south to San Diego and into Baja California. It will grow inland from Sacramento to San Bernardino and into the desert with irrigation.

SEED STANDARDS

AZ-1 Kikuyugrass (*Pennisetum clandestinum*)
95% Minimum purity, 85% Minimum germination, 180,000 seeds per pound



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CULTURAL GUIDE

The following recommendations include comments from golf course superintendents in Southern California who have had success in establishing and growing AZ-1 Kikuyugrass.

SEEDING RATES

Newport Beach CC: 1/2 pound to 1,000 square feet. Santa Ana CC: 1 pound to 1,000 square feet for seeding into existing turf, 1/2 pound if seeding into bare ground.

SEEDING METHOD

"Aerified to 1/2", followed seeding with a core destroyer and drag" (Deutscher). "Aerified with 5/8" tines on 2" centers at a depth of 1/2" "(Benedict). Drilled seeded in bare soil at a depth of 1" and got very good results. "Next time I won't go so deep, it may affect the germination rate" (Archbold). Recommend that seed be worked into top 1/2" of soil.

ESTABLISHMENT

For seeding, a minimum soil temperature of 60 degrees is recommended. Reports of germination and establishment have been excellent (Lover). "Summer and fall germination took place in 4 to 5 days" (Benedict). "Establishment and fill-in in one month" (Ramina).

MOWING HEIGHTS

Low mowing heights are key in reducing thatch buildup. Reported mowing heights range from 3/8" to 1/2".

GREEN COLLARS

Knifed around collar every two weeks during growing season (Lover). Use of a 12" barrier system around greens for common kikuyu (Ramina).

COMPETITIVENESS

"Overseeded AZ-1 into existing GN-1 Bermuda" (Benedict). "Once sufficient establishment of Kikuyu has been achieved we intend to eliminate the over-seeding of the fairways with ryegrass as kikuyu has shown itself to provide a much better surface than non-overseeded bermudagrass" (Deutscher). Recommend early fall seeding if the desired effect is for kikuyu to take over bermuda. With kikuyu having a longer growing season it will be able to establish itself more easily in dormant bermudagrass.

FERTILIZATION

Recommend use of 'Stover Seed Kikuyu Plus' fertilizers with trace elements. Available in 'Potable Water' and 'Reclaimed Water' formulations. Specification sheets on these products are available by calling our office or visiting our website at www.stoverseed.com.

SHADE TOLERANCE

Kikuyugrass is not considered a shade tolerant grass, however it exhibits a greater tolerance to shade than bermudagrass. Kikuyu has shown to be more tolerant of shade in inland valleys than along the coast. "Germinated in shaded area where Poa/Ryegrass only grew, common kikuyu and bermuda thinned out" (Michael).

SALT TOLERANCE

Kikuyugrass has shown an increased tolerance to salinity. Laboratory studies are currently being conducted to determine its level of salt tolerance. A USDA salinity lab has shown an 85% emergence with 25 Decicemens as irrigation water in sand tanks at University of California, Riverside.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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