



'Nugget' Kentucky Bluegrass

Poa pratensis

**Uses: Residential Turf and Lawns
Throughout Alaska**

Background Information

"King of the pasturelands", Kentucky bluegrass is used throughout North America for turf, pasture, and beautiful lawns.

According to the USDA (1948) *Poa pratensis* is believed to have its origin in the Old World. Possibly brought to the new world by early colonists, it is now widespread throughout North America.

A weed to some, the characteristic of *Poa pratensis* to spread by underground rhizomes makes it desirable for turf and lawns.



Map from Hultén, 1968.
Used with the permission of Stanford University Press.

Distribution

Poa pratensis grows along roadsides throughout much of Alaska. Hultén (1968) classifies it as an introduced weed.

Growth

Kentucky bluegrass forms sod, is a perennial, and is a cool-season grass.

It is a long-lived grass. Some fields of *Poa pratensis* can be traced as having lived for 60 years (USDA, 1948).

Before mowing, Kentucky bluegrass can reach about 2 feet high. Its open, light brown flower/seed head produces much seed.

Cultivar: 'Nugget'

Plant Introduction Number: 562649

'Nugget' Kentucky bluegrass is a cultivar developed by the Alaska Agricultural Experiment Station and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The original seed for 'Nugget' parents comes from Hope, Alaska. (Hodgson, et al., 1971).

Released in 1966, 'Nugget' is for residential turf and lawns. It has high winter resiliency.

It is a semi-dwarf grass with high tolerance for close mowing and natural infestations of powdery mildew.

Because of its vigorous rhizome growth, 'Nugget' ends up producing a dense, dark green turf.

'Nugget' Kentucky Bluegrass is recognized in breeder, foundation, registered, and certified seed classes.

Breeder and foundation seed is maintained by the Alaska Plant Materials Center.

Registered and certified seed is available through the Alaska Seed Growers, Inc.

Interesting Note:

'Nugget' is apomictic. This means that it is self-fertilized or that seed formation occurs without external fertilization.

This also means that this cultivar stays very true to its genetics.



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'Nugget' for turf and lawns:

Many Alaskans enjoy beautiful lawns. To create such a lawn the grass needs to be able to grow under the extreme conditions Alaskan climate produces. After comparing many varieties, with trials spanning many years, 'Nugget' shows the best potential for Alaska lawns (Hodgson, et al., 1971).

'Nugget' has rapid germination and vigorous seedling development. It is winter-hardy and withstands close mowing. 'Nugget' comes from introduced plants. It can become a weed in the wrong places.

For lawns and turfs, 'Nugget' is ideal. The characteristics needed for turf composition are inherent in 'Nugget'. With 'Nugget' for a turf, the grass is a beautiful blue green which does not freeze in winter. Mowing does not harm it. Weeds find it difficult to survive in this tightly woven sod.

'Nugget' is also resistant to natural infestations of powdery mildew and other fungi (Hodgson, et al., 1971).



Poa pratensis seed
~1,389,840 seeds per pound

To produce 'Nugget' Kentucky Bluegrass

Seed yields can be ~ 1000 pounds per acre (Hodgson, et al., 1971).

Plant 'Nugget' in the spring after break-up. Since it lives a long time, make sure there is enough space for cultivation between rows.

Growth is fast in the spring and fall. Irrigation helps it to grow and stay green in the summer. Normal farm equipment works fine for its production. Field burning in the spring helps its production.



The Plant Materials Center
does not recommend
'Nugget' for use in
revegetation, other than for
landscaping.

'Nugget' Kentucky Bluegrass
production at the Plant Materials
Center in Palmer, Alaska.



'Nugget' plant characteristics

Wetness Tolerance	good
Acidity Tolerance	fair
Seedling Vigor	fair
Yield Potential	moderate
Longevity	long
Seed Production	low
Drought Resistance	fair
Winter Hardiness	high
Root System	sod
Palatability	good

References

Hultén, E. 1968. *Flora of Alaska and Neighboring Territories*. © by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Jr. University, Stanford University Press, Stanford.

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