

## **\*Water Warden Grass Seed Blend Passes Test of Time**

By Tom Krupicka

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It was almost three years ago to the month that a new blend of grass seed was introduced to the public, proclaiming to be tougher, more disease resistant and, once established, require 75 percent less water than its perennial ryegrass cousins to keep it green during our long, hot and dry summers.

It is with great pleasure that I report that Water Warden has lived up to its claims. This summer I have heard countless reports from customers who have planted the Water Warden blend of grass seed, which consists of Starfire Tall Fescue, Southern Comfort Tall Fescue and Corgi Tall Fescue.

Starfire is a new-generation tall fescue bred for improved overall turf performance, with emphasis on spring greenup, genetics and winter color. It provides a dense, dark-green turf all year.

In National Turfgrass Evaluation Program 2002 Traffic tests in Mead, Neb., Starfire ranked in the top 15 percent of 126 entries. It has reduced vertical growth; dark-green color. improved resistance to brown patch, leaf spot and pythium blight, and is endophyte enhanced. Endophytes are a part of the grass's immune system that help it fight off insects and diseases and reduce the need for herbicides to control unwanted weeds and weedy grasses.

Southern Comfort is a new tall fescue variety with numerous improvements. Due to its natural dark-green color year round, Southern Comfort continues to look great with substantially less fertilizer. It forms a dense lawn that helps crowd out unwanted weeds and unsightly grasses, and has excellent heat, shade and drought tolerance.

Corgi is an excellent new tall fescue variety. It has the lowest plant height of any new commercial variety ever measured at the DLF International Seed Research station. DLF International Seeds is based in Halsey and makes up more than 21 percent of the global grass seed market.

Corgi's unique growth habit gives it high turf density, fine leaf texture and reduced growth. Unlike many other dwarf tall fescues, Corgi has the ability to perform in areas where brown patch and other diseases are prevalent. Corgi is also endophyte enhanced.

One customer has said he has only watered twice this summer. His lawn is only one year old and to this day remains lush and green!

It was just a few short years ago that 100 percent of our lawn seed sales consisted of perennial rye and hard fescue blends. Today more than 90 percent of our grass seed sales are of the Water Warden tall fescue blend.

The claim to fame of the Water Warden blends is that, once established, the roots grow deeper into the earth, allowing it to gather water from a larger, deeper range and reducing the need for irrigation or rainfall.

Perennial ryegrass lawns require about 1 inch of irrigation or rainfall per week during the hot summer months to remain green. Water Warden only requires 1 inch of water each month for the same effect.

Another benefit to the Water Warden varieties is they are well adapted to grow in either full sun, part sun, part shade or heavily shaded areas. It's ideal for overseeding after thatching has been done, and is excellent for a new lawn as well.

Seeding recommendations for the Water Warden blend are 9 to 10 pounds per 1,000 square feet for new lawns, and 4 to 5 pounds per 1,000 square feet for overseeding. As of this spring, Water Warden is available in roll-out ready turf.

Water Warden, dubbed the water conservation grass, got the attention of thousands of homeowners here in the valley wanting a lush, green lawn without a mortgage payment of a water bill. That is exactly what the Water Warden blend has delivered.

*Tom Krupicka has been involved in the retail and wholesale garden and nursery industry since 1977. He and his wife, Annette, have owned and operated Tom's Garden Center in Albany since 1989, and are active supporters of gardening in the Willamette Valley.*

**\*Note: Water Warden is one of our Major League specialty blends.**