

# NORTHERN MINNESOTA GRASS SEED GROWERS NEWSLETTER

July 8, 2008

## GENERAL CROP CONDITION

### Rainy and Windy

This week saw shots of rain to most of the region, and wind that has flattened more than a few fields in the countryside.

### Ryegrass

The majority of early fields have completed flowering, and the later fields are either flowering or just about complete. At this time last year, the majority of ryegrass fields were in the seed filling stage.

### **Fall Seeded Ryegrass**





## **Bluegrass**

This week has the early bluegrass fields almost ready to be opened up, and the later fields continuing to fill seed with plenty of moisture and cooler conditions.



At this time last year the early fields of bluegrass were being combined this week with later maturing bluegrass varieties beginning to be swathed.

## **PEST MANAGEMENT**

### **Ryegrass**

**Rust has not yet been found in ryegrass in any fields in 2008.**

There were samples that were submitted for testing 2 weeks ago, but were not found to be rust. So we will continue to monitor.

If you have what looks like rust in your ryegrass please contact your agronomist and the University of Minnesota. When rust is first observed on ryegrass, be sure to let us know. A student, John Frelich is hired to monitor this season and will be making a few trips north this summer as part of his work.

Send samples to:

Eric Watkins  
305 Alderman Hall  
1970 Folwell Ave.  
St. Paul MN 55108

If and when rust is identified in the region, the two main strategies for rust control would be:

- 1) Spray a fungicide as soon as it can be scheduled or,
- 2) Continue to scout your ryegrass fields for rust

A fungicide will provide two to three weeks of protection depending product and rate. After pollen shed, ryegrass should be swathed in approximately three to three and one-half weeks. A fungicide applied now has the potential to protect the ryegrass plant from rust infection until swathing.

If the decision is to continue to scout for rust it is **important to scout your fields every couple of days**. If conditions are favorable, this fungal disease can “explode” in just a few days.

What does rust look like? The first link is leaf rust in wheat.

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Main/docs.htm?docid=9915>. The second is for stem rust in wheat.

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Main/docs.htm?docid=9910>. The third is for crown rust in oats

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Main/docs.htm?docid=9919>. Rust in ryegrass looks similar to rust in cereals.

The three links below are pest updates from the U of MN and the MN Dept of Ag. These reports are updated regularly during the summer months. The first link is for vegetable crops, second link is the MN Dept of Ag Pest Survey and the third is a crop report from the U of MN in Crookston.

<http://www.vegedge.umn.edu/mnfruit&vegnews/Vol4/vol4n1.htm>

<http://www.mda.state.mn.us/plants/pestmanagement/pestsurvey.htm>

[http://nwroc.umn.edu/Cropping\\_Issues/croppingissues.htm](http://nwroc.umn.edu/Cropping_Issues/croppingissues.htm)

## **CROP MANAGEMENT**

### **Insects**

Grasshoppers have been sprayed in several areas of the region, but the rains over the weekend appear to have lessened the numbers significantly.

## Ryegrass Growing Degree Days (GDD)

Ryegrass GDD units have been tracked since the 2005 season. A base temp of 32 degrees F has been used for ryegrass (T-Base =32 F). The GDD information presented in the table below is year to date data, through and including July 5, for the years 2005 to 2008.

<b>Year</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>08 vs. 07</b>
March	6	90	53	35	-84
April	202	322	529	448	-120
May	508	746	749	641	-238
June	800	926	925	933	-126
July 1-5	163	188	172	164	-25
Total	1,749	2,337	2,517	2,274	-588

The 2008 season continues to track cooler than any year since 2005. Year-to-date GDD has the 2008 season -588 behind the 2007, -768 behind 2006 and -521 behind 2005. As of last week, the 2008 season was **18.6 days** behind the three year average. This week we are **19.0 days** behind the three year average.

Spring and fall seeded ryegrass are heading and shedding pollen. Ryegrass typically sheds pollen in the mid-morning. At times it can look like dust blowing from vehicles driving on gravel roads.

Continue to scout for grasshoppers as they like the stubble of spring seeded and no till fall seeded ryegrass into wheat stubble. Last week several fields were sprayed.

Check ryegrass fields for rust. We have soon accumulated enough GDD for leaf and stem rust. In 2006 & 2007, leaf and stem rusts were detected at approximately, 1950 GDD. The model would suggest that rust may be in the area later this week. Field scouting will determine actual presence of this disease and the level of infection.



# **SUMMER FIELD DAY**

## **Tuesday, July 1st, 2008**

The annual Forage and Grass Seed Tour was held on Tuesday July 1, 2008 at the U of Minnesota - Magnusson Research Farm. Many thanks to Farmers Union West Plant for sponsoring this event. Attendance was 70 this year, and a great program and event.

Speakers included:

Donn Vellekson, Nancy Jo Ehlke & Don Wyse; U of M Research on Grass Seed Production  
Maggie Mangan; Native Plant Polyculture Biomass Production  
Peter Gillitzer; Dedicated Herbaceous and Woody Biomass Crop Production  
Derek Crompton; Hail Study in Bluegrass and Ryegrass





## **Grass Seed News Stories for June, 2008**

**The Associated Press June 28,2008**

EUGENE, Ore. (AP) — If air clear of the smoke from burning fields is a good thing for the Olympic athletes in town for 10 days, it ought to be a good thing for the people who live in the Eugene region year-round, environmentalists argue.

They've asked Gov. Ted Kulongoski to ban burning **grass-seed** stubble after the Olympic Track and Field Trials, which begin Friday at Hayward Field.

Farmers agreed to suspend burning stubble during the trials.

"It's not fair to protect only elite athletes," said Charlie Tebbutt, staff attorney at the Western Environmental Law Center in Eugene. "Those of us who live here the rest of the time deserve the same protection."

The request revives a long controversy over the effect of the smoke on the residents of the upper end of the Willamette Valley, especially those with asthma or other respiratory disease.

Twenty years ago a cloud of smoke drifted over Interstate 5 causing a traffic pileup that left seven dead.

Since then, farmers have reduced the number of **acres** they burn to clear fields of stubble and to reduce weeds and pests. They burned 250,000 **acres** a year in the 1980s, and now the number averages about 50,000 **acres** annually.

But burning remains the best option for many growers to prepare their fields, said John Byers, head of the smoke management program for the state Department of Agriculture. He said it is common for the state to stop issuing permits during major festivals.

Kulongoski wants to end field burning but not immediately.

"He will introduce legislation to reduce the practice" and plans a task force to look at alternatives, said spokeswoman Anna Richter Taylor said.

**Grass** growers say their good deed has left them open to more restrictions.

"'No good deed goes unpunished' I guess is the category that goes into," said Dave Nelson, executive secretary of the Oregon **Seed** Council.

"We were asked by Olympic organizers in Eugene and the county government if we would voluntarily not burn during the trials," Nelson said. "We agreed. Absolutely."

"We're trying to be good guys, and they poke an arrow in us," Nelson said.

#### [The Southern Willamette Valley Bean and Green Project](#) Dan Armstrong, Mud City Press

##### Project Background and Description

Introduction: The Southern Willamette Valley Bean and Grain Project is a step-by-step, ground-level endeavor aimed at the transformation of agriculture in Lane, Linn, Benton, and Lincoln counties at the south end of Oregon's Willamette Valley, an area containing roughly 700,000 acres of farmland, approximately 400,000 acres of which is used for cropland. This region which once produced a wide variety of food crops is now dominated by farms growing fescue and rye grass for the global grass seed market. A historically hearty regional food system is now focused on ornamentals and utilizes less than twenty percent of its cropland acreage for food. In these changing times of rising food and fuel prices, it is imperative to bring more balance and diversity to Willamette Valley agriculture. The Bean and Grain Project seeks to do just that by converting good-sized parcels of grass seed acreage into plots for organic beans, grains, and edible seeds as a critical first step to reinvigorating the regional food system.

Harry MacCormack, co-founder of Oregon Tilth and owner of Sunbow Farm in Corvallis, Oregon, provides the vision and inspiration for the Southern Willamette Valley Bean and Grain Project. MacCormack has farmed in the south Willamette Valley for forty years, developing organic farming techniques, establishing the first organic farm certification program, and experimenting in the field with a wide variety of grains, legumes, and edible seed crops.

... Bioregional Setting: The bio-region defined by the Willamette River watershed has the capacity to be one of the most bountiful in the United States. The Willamette Valley is a hundred mile long, two-million acre stretch of prime farmland bordered by a dense, eco-rich coniferous forest. The climate is mild; wet in the winter, dry in the summer. It is excellent for raising livestock and farming, with soil particularly suited for a wide variety of grasses and legumes. There is tremendous flexibility in what can be grown and the way that the various field crops can be rotated for the health of the land. With the potential to grow more than two hundred different food crops and being home to a variety of fish and other wildlife, the Willamette River basin is essentially a garden valley.  
Mud City Press

Historical Agricultural Picture: In the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, Willamette Valley agriculture produced a wide array of grains, fruits, and vegetables. At times wheat represented almost a third of what was harvested. Barley, oats, snap peas, and sweet corn were also significant crops. Tomatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, potatoes, onions, cucumbers, peaches, raspberries, strawberries, hazelnuts, and squash fill out the mix. Prior to 1980, Willamette Valley farmers were providing more than half of what the valley residents were eating. Though there were items which did not grow in the valley and the population was about half of what it is today, the region did have the agricultural capacity and food system infrastructure to feed itself.

Current Agricultural Picture: Beginning about 1983, as wheat prices eased off what were then record highs, Willamette Valley farmers began a steady trade-off of wheat acreage for ornamental grasses to produce grass seed which is then shipped all over the world for suburban lawns and golf courses. Grass seed is now the valley's most important cash crop. Sixty percent of all the

acreage that was harvested in the Willamette Valley in 2006 was for grass seed. That was over 500,000 acres. At the same time, less than 30,000 acres of wheat were harvested in the valley, down from a record high of 270,000 acres in 1982.

In other words, high-value Oregon cropland is being used primarily to grow a non-edible luxury item instead of food. Globalization has enabled specialized and long distant markets while at the same time diminishing food crop diversity at home. The net effect is that the Willamette Valley populace is now eating less than five percent locally grown food.  
(16 June 2008)

<b>Manitoba Forage Seed Association</b>	
<a href="#">Home</a>	<a href="#">Back To Calendar</a>
<a href="#">Article Library</a>	<b>2008 Summer Tour</b>
<a href="#">General</a>	10 Jul 2008 - 10 Jul 2008
<a href="#">Grass Seed</a>	The summer tour is being hosted in the Interlake Region. Topic include
<a href="#">Industry Scholarship</a>	Herbicide Tolerance trials on grass/legume seed fields; innovative
<a href="#">Leafcutting Bees</a>	equipment; producer grass/legume seed fields; Western Grass Seed
<a href="#">Legume Seed</a>	Testing plots; sweeping technique, insect identification - economic
<a href="#">Upcoming Events</a>	thresholds and Ramp Calibration Strip Technology. For more information
<a href="#">Forage Seed Links</a>	contact:
<a href="#">Contacts</a>	Heather McBey 204-376-3309 <a href="mailto:hmcbey@forageseed.mb.ca">hmcbey@forageseed.mb.ca</a>
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The next edition of the newsletter is scheduled to be released on July 16, 2008.

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