

# HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET

CORNELL

Cooperative Extension  
Nassau County



Nassau County  
Horticulture Program  
Eisenhower Park  
East Meadow, NY 11554  
516 228-0426

## *Poa Annua* Not the Apple (Green) of Everyone's Eye

By nature, annual bluegrass (ABG) or *Poa Annua*, is a winter annual, i.e. it forms seed in late summer and early fall. ABG has low heat and drought tolerance, therefore it is very susceptible to stress related diseases. The grass breaks dormancy early in the spring, and with a dry spring it has a very extreme tendency to flowering and seed production. This leads to a yellowed appearance in hot dry weather. Control of ABG should be during the late summer and early fall.

In the 1920s, ABG was not a problem. With the advent in the sixties and seventies of high nitrogen fertilization practices and the availability of automatic irrigation, ABG has become a big problem. Seed production can be as much as 3000 seeds per square foot! Another interesting fact is the seed type: 90 percent of the seed is transient, meaning that it is opportunistic and will sprout whenever and wherever. The other 10 percent is **persistent**, meaning that it requires a special set of conditions for germination to occur. Therefore this sneaky grass has money in the seed bank and really is very difficult to eliminate entirely. Although it can look very nice when well managed, its major faults are intolerance to winter, especially under ice, very shallow roots, and susceptibility to disease, particularly anthracnose. When you are managing ABG you need to bear in mind that its shallow roots are going to have higher nitrogen requirements related to root zone competition, and a high irrigation demand. You can suppress seedheads in spring simply by keeping soil moist as possible.

ABG does not tolerate ANY drop in moisture and predominates in disturbed areas. ABG problems (100 times more!) are also seen in areas with significant earthworm problems – however, the earthworms do so much good that in any situation short of a golf green, it would be better to deal rather than disturb the worm populations.

Because of the low oxygen requirements of its shallow roots, ABG is a champion survivor in compacted areas.

C-2-7 TTY reviewed RT 1/03

*Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities*

Cornell Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities. NYS College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, NYS College of Human Ecology, and NYS College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University, Cooperative Extension associations, county governing bodies, and U.S. Department of Agriculture, cooperating.