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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## 'MALLARD' CULTIVAR AWARDED BREEDER'S CUP BY THE TURFGRASS BREEDER'S ASSOCIATION

Improved drought tolerance and overall performance of cultivar expands future use of Kentucky Bluegrass within drought prone regions and across turf applications

MADISON, Ga. (January 31, 2012) – Pennington® Seed, Inc., one of the largest manufacturers and distributors of lawn, garden and turf care products, today announced that its 'Mallard' cultivar, a subset of the Kentucky Bluegrass species, was awarded the prestigious Breeder's Cup Award by the Turfgrass Breeder's Association. The award, which honors individuals for outstanding achievement in turfgrass breeding, was presented to lead breeder, Dr. Bill Meyer, director of the Turfgrass Breeding Project at Rutgers University, at the association's Annual Agronomy Meeting in San Antonio, Texas.

As part of a multi-year breeding project, Dr. Meyer has been working in conjunction with NexGen Turf Research, an internationally-recognized turf grass breeding and research institute, to develop cool-season turf grasses, including the Mallard cultivar. NexGen, which is owned and operated by Pennington Seed, conducted extensive field trialing of the new cultivar. Out of 49 cultivars, Mallard exhibited the best drought tolerance and remained green the longest period of time after water was withheld. Mallard's combination of improved turf quality, drought tolerance and disease resistance make it a unique, widely adapted, functional cultivar for the turf industry.

"Mallard's improved drought tolerance will be critical for the future use of Kentucky Bluegrass not only in stressful areas or regions with frequent water restrictions, but also to expand the range of applications where Kentucky Bluegrass can be grown," said Kenneth Hignight, director of research for NexGen Turf Research. "We're extremely proud of Mallard receiving this industry recognition. The cultivar is a direct result of our ongoing, collaborative work with Rutgers University, one of the nation's leading college turfgrass research programs, and other private enterprises."

Mallard offers tremendous performance with low managerial input and provides a rich, dark blue-green color for up to eight weeks without additional irrigation. These characteristics make the new



cultivar distinctive from other standard turf-type cultivars available and useful within many different turf applications, including athletic fields, golf courses, residential lawns, park settings and sod farms.

Mallard is ideally suited for the Northeast, North Central, Upper West and Mountain regions of the United States.

Pennington Seed has a long history of industry-leading product innovation and thought leadership within the lawn care and professional turf categories, particularly in the areas of turf quality, disease resistance and drought tolerance. In 2009, Pennington Seed became a founding member of the Turfgrass Water Conservation Alliance (TWCA) with several leading turf grass producers and NexGen Turf Research.

The TWCA, an independent, non-profit organization, was founded with the main goal of combating rising concerns over depleting water resources. The TWCA – working with state university systems and private enterprises – tests turfgrass cultivars for their ability to thrive while using limited amounts of water. A standardized testing methodology assesses the plant's response to drought stress by measuring the ability of the turf to remain green as the drought becomes more severe.

## **About Pennington Seed**

Founded in 1945 by Brooks Pennington, Sr., Pennington Seed, Inc. had humble beginnings as a small feed and seed store located in Madison, Ga., where the company is still headquartered today. Since the company's founding, Pennington Seed has grown into one of the largest manufacturers, producers and distributors of lawn & garden and turf care products in the world, with state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities, observation nurseries and quality control labs located across the country.

Pennington Seed is owned by the Walnut Creek, Calif.-based Central Garden & Pet Company, a leading innovator, marketer and producer of quality branded products for the lawn & garden and pet supplies markets. To learn more about Pennington Seed, visit <a href="www.penningtonseed.com">www.penningtonseed.com</a>. For additional information on Central Garden & Pet Company, including access to the Company's SEC filings, visit <a href="www.central.com">www.central.com</a>.

## **About NexGen Turf Research**

NexGen Turf Research, which is owned and operated by Pennington Seed, is an internationally-recognized turfgrass breeding and research institute that specializes in producing cool season turf-type grasses to fit a variety of marketing needs. NexGen has more than 2.5 acres of turf land and 135 acres of field trials in two locations within the Willamette Valley of Oregon, with facilities designed for the research and development of varieties using turf, single plant and seed selections. The facilities are equipped with greenhouses, warehouses, laboratories, seed cleaning equipment, a rain-out shelter and disease chambers. Turf plots also can be found in locations across the United States, with trialing



conducted using state university systems and private research enterprises. For additional information about NexGen Turf Research, visit <a href="https://www.nexgenresearch.net">www.nexgenresearch.net</a>.

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