

TURF COMMS



V. 4, I. 2

MAR. 4, '88

PURPOSE: To pass on what we learn willingly and happily to others in the profession so as to improve turf conditions around the country.

PROFESSIONALISM

Professionalism, where is it at in the turf profession? The survey of the industry by the Turfgrass Council of North Carolina supplies a good clue. If you will accept as a measure the returning of questionnaires by industry segments than we have the following ranking.

% returned or degree of professionalism

Sod Producers - - - - -	82%
Golf Courses - - - - -	81%
Garden Centers - - - - -	50%
Airports - - - - -	28%
Institutions - - - - -	25%
Lawn Care Firms - - - - -	25%
Cemeteries - - - - -	21%
Landscapers - - - - -	21%
Parks - - - - -	19%
Schools - - - - -	18%
Athletic Fields - - - - -	11%

a telephone follow-up was conducted
of Sod Producers and Golf Courses

there were 11 Sod Producers vs 478
golf courses receiving questionnaires
making invalid the 1% difference be-
tween these two groups

These figures don't hold any surprises. Athletic fields wouldn't have accumulated so much artificial turf if turf professionals had been hired to maintain them in the first place.

Schools and athletic fields have made a fair amount of progress

TURFCOMMS is published at unpredictable intervals by the editor
and publisher:

Douglas T. Hawes, Ph D
Certified Professional Agronomist
Specializing in Golf Course
Maintenance Consulting

2408 Roundrock Trail
Plano, Texas 75075
(214) 867-0176

Subscription cost is \$10. Send checks to Doug Hawes at the above address.

in the last 10 years. They have done it by hiring more knowledgeable turf managers or by turning to consultants (Extension Service included). As always there remains much progress to be made.

I was reading the April, 1987 issue of the Lawn Institute's HARVESTS magazine when I came up with the above article idea. Why reading the April issue in January? Because like many of you I put things in piles during the busy season and then try to get the desk cleared at least once a year.

SCHOOL FAILURE

Here are some comments on the problems in our Nations school systems aimed at grades seven thru tenth. These are the grades most difficult to manage because of discipline problems. The grades where the students go thru the traumas of puberty. The years when students are constantly challenging authority.

A teacher in grade seven thru tenth often deserves combat pay. Yet we often do not find our highest paid teachers at these levels. When we do they are often teaching the easier to work with students in the accelerated courses. The highest paid teachers at these grade levels usually have the smallest number of students to teach. By reason of their tenure they have managed to grab those classes that are easiest to teach. This is their reward for sticking it out.

They are thus doubly rewarded - higher pay and small classes. Or, they have gained the better behaved, motivated students. Once in these favorable niches they stay for life.

The second problem with teaching at this grade level is the need on the teacher's part to be as good an entertainer as that which is seen on TV. In spite of a lot of snide remarks that that should be easy, it ain't. The experienced teacher may be able to pull this off. Most beginning teachers have too many other skills to acquire first.

I'm not suggesting any solution to the latter of the above problems. The solution to the first problem should lie easily in the hands of school principals and administrators. That is give the experienced teacher one reward not two. Allow him or her the choice within some guidelines of either higher pay or smaller class size.

This will give the young energetic teacher supporting a family the ability to earn a decent salary. It will allow the teacher at the end of his or her career the option of less stressful classes.

GARDEN CATALOGS

I suddenly realized that I had been receiving a lot of garden catalogs. Thus decided to do a brief review.

Catalogs received are: Burpee's, Hastings, Park Seed, Shepherd's, Smith & Hawken, Winterthur and White Flower Farm. None were requested. They come in alphabetical order from Conn., Del., Calif., So. Carolina, Georgia and Penn. Why from both coasts and none from Central U.S.?

Hastings and Park Seed catalogs are similar to Burpee.

Shepherd's has 79 pages and no colored pictures. It contains mostly vegetable seed; a lot of out of the ordinary stuff. For example - 12 different european salad greens, eight different basil, and mizuna are included.

Smith & Hawken's concentrates on "fancy" (my choice of word) equipment, furniture and accessories for the gardener.

Winterthur's has a "collection of rare plants and unusual gifts" (their choice of words). Their gifts have either an eighteenth century or an oriental flavor.

White Flower Farm's deals almost solely with perennial flowering plants. If you want to look or try something new and which is not available in your area I recommend their perennial flowering plants. They ship only plants of named cultivars and are expensive.

If you wish addresses of any of the above drop a line or a call. If you have a catalog you think worthy of a review send it or write a brief review for publication here.

DEATHS:

HAROLD E. HAWES - the editor's father, passed away after a long illness at age 76 on Feb. 6th. He was responsible for the editor's love of nature and learning; while serving as a model for many with his patience and good humor in the face of adversity.

IRENE A. MACDONALD - the editor's mother-in-law, passed away at age 89 on Feb. 16th after six months of heart problems. She spent a great deal of the last 26 years assisting in the raising of the editor's children. She earned their love as well as the editor's love and respect.

PUTTING GREEN CONSTRUCTION AND MIXES:
a series of letters and phone calls.

(continued from Vol. 4, Issue 1)

Proposal #1 would drain. It would not be water conserving. You can get away with 4 inches of sand over clay most of the time. Twelve settled inches of mix (sand) is needed over gravel however. Four inches of sand over "clay is better than old "clay" greens. This has been proven to me by years of sand topdressing on top of old "clay" greens. This approach does not give you perfect greens, but does dramatically improve growing conditions over what you had.

There will be some people that will argue that if you are going to do it - do it right. I hear their argument, but appreciate your need to try and do the best for less. CHANGE AND PROGRESS CAN ONLY BE MADE BY TRYING NEW APPROACHES. I also know the need to get it done and have experienced the lack of funds to do it "right".

Here is another closely related argument. - We know the USGA method works. We are not sure about alternative approaches. How many of us understand the soil physics well enough to make expensive decisions about inadequately tested techniques?

Definitely use Penncross seed irregardless of which method you use. Keep 25 to 50 pound on hand in cool storage always. Buy this year for next year and always buy certified. I do not see a time in the near future when you will be able to call your supplier in June thru September and get Penncross delivered before late October.

For all of the above mixes put a layer of 6 mil or greater plastic between "soil" mix and the surrounding clay. This will prevent dry weather wicking of the moisture out of the mix by the clay soil to be used for banks, collars, and aprons ("frogs hair"). This can be a real problem in both summer and some winters in your area.

Y.F.B.T., Doug. H.

March 1, 1987; Dear Joe,

I'm guilty of not having looked closely at your last page before writing a reply to your letter. Your drawings do explain one thing that needs commenting on. In drawing #3 you give the size and %s of the various sand fractions. That sand (10% .25 -.5 mm, 80% .5 - 1 mm, 10% 1 - 3 mm) is definitely a coarse sand.

It would not work underneath the four inches of 80-20 USGA mix. It would act very much like the pea gravel causing a perched water table. I do not think a "transition zone between the two

sands, made by first spreading a light layer of the 80-20 mix and raking it into the underlying sand." would be of any great help. You would end up with the top 6 inches staying too wet. You would not need the gravel underneath this combination. Just a little around the tile would be sufficient. That coarse sand would make good drainage material if the sand is at all round.

Your drawing #1 shows the 4 inch tile sitting underneath the 4 inches of USGA mix with clay loam soil between mix and the tile with its gravel envelope. The mix needs to be in contact with the gravel in the envelope. In other words cut the drainage trenches, place in tile and envelope then fill rest of trench with mix.

How about continuing this conversation. What does a good pea gravel cost you by the cubic yard? A 80-20 sand-peat mix that meets USGA mix? How big do you plan to make these greens? What does a sand meeting my specifications cost you per yard? Milorganite?

Y.F.B.T., Doug. H.

4/5/87 - called Joe.

He described several sands being used for construction in his immediate area. He will check out local sand by packing it, and the above two sands in 2 ft. columns of PVC pipe. Then pour water thru and compare infiltration rates. I might also suggest that he put Milorganite in the local sand at a rate of 1% by weight to roughly equal 200 lb. in upper 3 inches of 1000 sq. ft.. Also suggested he send me a pound or 2 of the local sand.

He agreed to be billed for phone call and advice but, reminded me again that his is a low budget club.

Early July, 1987; Dear Joe,

Your package arrived on my birthday. Everyone was wondering what the present was going to be. When I saw the return address I knew that 6 months of waiting and prodding had not gone in vain.

As I am off tomorrow for a 2 week trip I did not have a great deal of time to look at your samples. However, I will give you what I found.

(1) The locally available cheap masonry sand is excellent. It appears to be a quartz sand with a decent particle range and good percolation rate after compaction. Admittedly the tests were crude. You would probably think it drains too fast after compaction. You will probably find it difficult to establish turf on. But, once established the green should be excellent. Sand plus Milorganite or if you wish peat. Mix peat off site.

(2) Did not look at the commercially available topdressing mix. Will try to when I get back.

(3) The locally available pea gravel is fair to good. Size is okay, slightly smaller average would be better. Shape is less than the ideal round but, overall I assume as good as the area produces.

(4) The peat humus definitely appears to contain a fair amount of silt and/or clay. Don't feel it is what you want. I need to mix it with the soil and see how it does. I also need to ash it and see what is left.

(5) Sample plug from nursery - UGH!!!! What a terrible soil for a base.

Y.F.B.T., Doug. H.

July 25, 1987; Dear Joe,

As mentioned over the phone don't mix more than 10% by volume of the peat humus you sent with your local sand. Percolation rate is about 9 inches per hour with 10% peat by volume and drops to 2 inches per hour with 20%. That peat humus definitely has a lot of silt in it.

Good Luck with what ever you do. Remember more sand! and more potassium! for better turf.

Y.F.B.T., Doug. H.

August 15, 1987; Dear Joe,

Check arrived for services rendered. Thank you. You are very generous.

9/7/87; called Joe,

He has decided to put drain tile in as called for in USGA specifications. He will use local sand and has found a more satisfactory peat humus. Agreed to send some. He had sent a sample of it to his State Univ. for testing with his local sand. Will rototill in the peat humus trying for a depth of 8 inches. We spent quite a bit of time discussing the difficulties of having this come out uniform. Plans to do two greens. One in September to be sodded. The second to be finished in November and to be sodded.

9/12/87; received above peat humus. Testing shows it to be of the same properties as the first peat humus.

(to be finished in the next issue)