

January 2009

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Knee Jerk Reactions Can Be a Bit Wobbly

Are concerns regarding applied nitrogen and phosphorus to turfgrass lawns and golf courses valid? Recent studies suggest such accusations may not have a leg to stand on.



The results of several research studies* regarding nitrogen and phosphorus usage on lawns and golf courses provided some interesting conclusions including the following:

NITROGEN

Nitrogen losses from surface runoff in a well established turf were insignificant ...even with a 10% slope and frequent intense rainfall (1).

Thirty percent of applied nitrogen was leached from a mixed-species mulched ornamental planting. In contrast, very little applied nitrogen (less than 2%) was leached from a mature Saint Augustinegrass sod (1).

PHOSPHOROUS

Nutrient losses via surface runoff were similar between a nonfertilized prairie and a fertilized turf – fertilizer was either an insignificant source of phosphorous in runoff or turf has less inherent phosphorous losses from natural sources than prairie (3). Greater phosphorous leaching occurred from a mixed-species landscape than from established turf (2).

WATER QUALITY

Water in a stream was cleaner when it left a golf course in both North Carolina and Indiana than when it entered the property (4).



Agronomy graduate student from Purdue University draws a water sample from a golf course as part of the research team that studied how wetlands can filter water from commercial areas.

BUFFERING

A university of Florida study indicates the importance of management practices rather than plant species for reducing nitrogen leaching from residential land use (1).

* References

- (1) Erickson et al., Crop Science, 2005 and 2008
- (2) Erickson et al., Crop Science, 2005
- (3) Steinke et al., Crop Science, 2007
- (4) Reicher, 2000; Ruffy et al., 2007



We would like to thank Tom Tracy, Executive Director of the Virginia Turfgrass Council for sharing this information with us. For more information about VTC visit their website: <http://www.vaturf.org/>

See research results on golf course pesticide use on page 8



By Randy Graff

TPI past president, George Brandt, is gifted in forecasting the future. In his presidential letter of January last year he said "2008 is sure to have it's share of surprises..." Well, 2008 has had more than it's share of surprises. It was like jumping off a cliff and wondering how long before you hit the bottom. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac both being government supported lending institutions were on the verge of failing, asking the government for seven hundred and fifty billion dollars. Then there was the AIG fifty billion dollar bailout followed by the big three auto makers asking for help to the tune of twenty five billion dollars.

My question is, when does the turf industry get in line for our portion and how much should we ask for?

Seriously though, all of the above mentioned facts along with unpredictable weather and the high costs of production, fuel and fertilizer are a few of the reasons our market is where it is today. The turf industry all over the world is a mixed bag. Australia and other parts of the world seem to have a steady market. Canadian growers are seeing a twenty per cent downturn. The U.S. market is all over the board. The northeast is experiencing about a twenty to twenty-five per cent decrease. The southeast is reporting about seventy to seventy-five per cent down. The Midwest, sixty to seventy per cent and the western

TPI's President's Perspective—2009

Where We've Been . . . Where We're Going . . . And How Do We Get There

states, forty to fifty per cent down.

There is a bright spot in the country though. Parts of Texas and Oklahoma seem to be having a good market at the present time.

In today's market we are all looking for bright spots. Something we can attach ourselves to so we have hope to keep going.

Maybe we need to turn off our radios and televisions and try not to listen to all of the negativism being fed to us. Our nightly news, no matter what channel you watch is mostly gloom and doom. Just to give you an example, take the ten o'clock news the Saturday after Thanksgiving (November 27th). It was reported that Denver (Colorado) area merchants were thrilled with a three per cent increase in sales over last year's sales on the biggest holiday shopping day of the year in the U.S., (also known as Black Friday). It was also noted that historically if Black Friday sales were up, Christmas sales would be comparable. By the eight o'clock news the next morning, a local business analyst reported that if you consider the three per cent sales increase and three per cent inflation, our state's economy is still flat. Talk about Mr. Toad's Wild Ride. The media successfully gets you up and excited that things could be looking up again only to turn around and cut you and your hope off at the knees.

So much for 2008. Farewell and good riddance to all of its "surprises"! Since we know where we've been in 2008, let's take a look at where we're going in 2009.

One thing we know for sure, on January 20th the United States will have a new president, new senate and congress. That in itself brings new optimism for our country and the world. Over sixty percent of the people in this country voted for Barack Obama with the hope for change.

For those of you who know me, and for my wife who is tired of listening to my rantings, you may want to sit down to read the rest of this.

As shocking as this sounds, I am quickly becoming an Obama fan. All Americans, myself included, are desperately hoping for change. America will have a president who will control the house and the senate and any decisions he makes should facilitate a change quickly and hopefully for the better.

This will be equally of great interest and importance in the turf industry worldwide. Yes, there are certain factors that will and will not bring change immediately or in the future. Uncontrollables like weather will always be a factor. But today, the price of fuel is considerably lower. Interest rates are at an all time low. Fertilizer prices have gotten to a point that may make it feasible to use again.

No matter who you are, or what part of the world you are in, I challenge each and every one of you to embrace the power of positive thinking.

(cont'd)

TPI's President's Perspective—2009 (cont'd from page 2)

"The challenge is to position yourself to see the wave coming and jump on it when it gets here."

Embrace the potential to see where we are going as an industry and the contribution we make to the world around us. Let's not lose sight of the fact that we produce a product that purifies water, produces oxygen, removes atmospheric carbon, decreases surface temperatures and generally makes life better. There's

appears to be a growing market for us to tap."

Betsy McGill, Executive Director Florida Sod Growers Cooperative observes that short-term growers who saw sod as quick money are exiting the market and inventory statewide is adjusting to more manageable levels. She goes on to add that the correction should result in a healthy supply of quality product from committed producers when the market rebounds.

Of course, embracing the power of positive thinking often requires turning over a few rocks so you can keep everything in perspective. The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) reports that while the economy may be losing forward momentum; they suggest the inflation situation is looking better because the explosion in global oil prices which reached record proportions in July has dropped considerably.

Gayle Jacklin of Jacklin Seed by Simplot offers a candid look to the year ahead and beyond. Gayle goes so far as to predict, among other things, that more turfgrass sod producers will be emphasizing and growing more conservation style sod in place of the high input grasses that are native to Europe and not the US. Gayle sees a possible shift to production of regional native grasses and believes traditional and conservative turfgrass will prevail over novelty or niche type grasses.

Chris Claypool, Jacklin Seed by Simplot's General Manager offers some interesting insight regarding the international market and suggests those with patience will win because the markets will turn around. Chris mentions that international investors and producers will most likely buy land and actually expand their turfgrass sod farm operations.

The National Golf Foundation (NGA) continues to lower its expectation of new golf courses with its second forecast of the year predicting few openings. NGF President and CEO Joe Beditz attributes the decline to the housing market in particular and the overall economic situation.

Although our northern neighbors in Canada have fared somewhat better than those of us in the U.S., Claus Zander of Zander Sod in Kettleby, Ontario reported that another 10 to 20 percent drop in 2009 demand wouldn't surprise him.

Western Canada Turfgrass Association (WCTA) Executive Director Bob Wick provides quite a detailed outlook. Reporting a more competitive Canadian dollar, that makes his country's exports more attractive, is offset by the drop in new home demand which he forecasts will stop completely in 2009. He added the construction and preparations for the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver has helped booster an otherwise bleak economy. Wick provides a very extensive report with comments on a number of areas ranging from government and labor availability, to environmental concerns and pesticide issues.

The January/February 2009 issue of *Turf News* offers a wide variety of perspectives for the coming year. How it will all play out is anyone's guess, but all in all, what I see happening is a psychological momentum.

The challenge is to position yourself to see the wave coming and jump on it when it gets here.

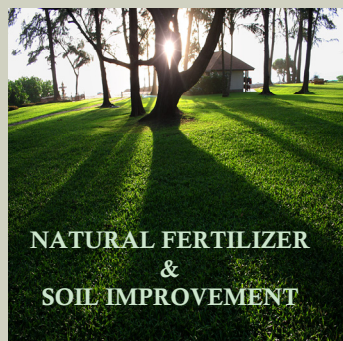
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Be sure to see the January/February 2009 issue of *Turf News* for the economic forecasts and industry perspectives provided by other industry professionals.

plenty to be positive about. Throughout the January/February 2009 issue of *Turf News* you can read comments from manufacturers, producers, suppliers and a broad range of green industry professionals who speak candidly yet identify some of those "bright spots" I alluded to earlier.

Jeff Walters of Stillwater Leasing Company suggests we stay abreast of changes and start accomplishing more with less. Dr. John Cisar, University of Florida comments that the "greening" of America has special opportunities for turfgrass producers. He states, "providing green spaces in urban areas has the potential to impact water storage and provide environmental benefits and

Interesting Fact:

**NATURAL FERTILIZER
&
SOIL IMPROVEMENT**

Every individual plant of Kentucky bluegrass produces about 3 feet of growth a year. The average lawn produces about 233 pounds of clippings every year for every 1,000 square feet of turf area. Leaving these clippings on the lawn and allowing them to decay and decompose in place is the equivalent of three applications of lawn fertilizer.

This process also builds up humus, keeps soils microbiologically active and, over time, improves soils physically and chemically. Grass is the most effective plant available for reconditioning the soil. An extremely important function of turfgrasses is soil improvement through organic matter additions derived from the turnover of roots and other plant tissues that are synthesized in part from atmospheric CO₂ via photosynthesis.

A high proportion of the world's most fertile soils have been developed under a vegetative cover of grass. (Gould, 1968*)

Gould, F.W. 1968. Grass Systematics. McGraw-Hill, New York.

Source: Maryland Turfgrass Survey - 1996
An Economic Value Study



News from The Lawn Institute

Your Contribution Can Make A Difference

Artificial turf, water restrictions, fertilizer leaching and pesticide restrictions have all been in the news lately. Many of the anti-turfgrass positions held by individuals and/or environmental activist organizations are based on misconceptions, misinformation or mistruths related to these issues. Who is determining fact from fiction? What are you doing to ensure the turfgrass industry continues to thrive in today's environmental economy? More importantly, what can you do to help our industry provide and disseminate research and information that is valid, reliable and accurate? Your chance to be involved is here and the time is now!



You can ensure the future of your industry by supporting **The Lawn Institute**. A donation of as little as \$2 per acre of turfgrass sod in production (the suggested minimum) will help support your Foundation. Your contribution will not only benefit the turfgrass industry, it will benefit you, your family and the business that provides your livelihood. For more information please contact **The Lawn Institute** at info@TheLawnInstitute.org

A TIP OF THE HAT

To **Bob Weerts** and everyone at Blue Valley Sod, Inc. in Winnebago, Minnesota for their *Holiday By the River* Blue Earth County Sod event last month. Blue Valley entertained kids with parents in the military. In keeping with the spirit of the holidays they had an outdoor festival with music, hot cocoa, refreshments, Santa and even a fireworks display. They also gave away trees to those with family members in active service.



OH DEAR! The event was especially eventful for Tom, Aniolowski, his wife Joanna and their daughter Ashlyn. As they were returning to their car in the parking

area they heard someone yell "DEER!" All of a sudden a deer bolted toward Tom and his daughter knocking them both down.

The next thing Joanna remembers was seeing her husband getting back on his feet and petting the somewhat startled deer. Fortunately no one was hurt.

The story was aired on one of the local radio stations . . . probably as a lead-in to that holiday favorite, "Grandma Got Run Over By A Reindeer".



Bob Weerts helps a family select a complimentary tree during Blue Valley Sod's "Holiday By The River" festivities.

Since 1973, Blue Valley Sod, Inc. has been growing and shipping sod throughout the Midwest. They have more than 1,500 acres of growing capacity on sod farms in Blue Earth, Faribault and Aitkin counties in Minnesota. Our thanks to Bob for sharing this story with us.

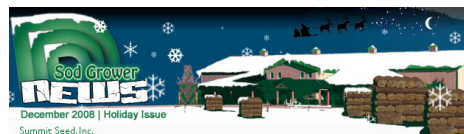
The Benefits of Turfgrass Just Think About It!

- Cools the Air
- Produces Oxygen
- Filters Air & Reduces Pollution
- Captures & Suppresses Dust
- Recharges & Filters Groundwater
- Reduces Storm Water Runoff
- Controls Soil Erosion
- Retains and Sequesters Carbon
- Assists Decomposition of Pollutants
- Restores Soil Quality
- Enhances Community Pride
- Offers a Natural Playing Surface
- Provides a Safe Playing Surface
- Helps Reduce Injuries
- Promotes Outdoor Activity & Exercise
- Improves Physical & Mental Health
- Relieves Stress
- Lowers Allergy Related Problems
- Dissipates Heat
- Cools the Environment
- Reduces Glare
- Diminishes Noise Pollution
- Minimizes Nuisance Pests
- Compliments Overall Landscaping
- Preserves Natural Wildlife Habitat
- Increases Property Values
- Reduces Home Cooling Costs
- Provides a Low-Cost Ground Cover
- Serves as a Fire Barrier
- Improves Visibility & Deters Crime
- Boosts Human Productivity



SEED PRICES ARE DOING WHAT?

The following appeared in the December 2008 issue of *SOD GROWER NEWS* published by Summit Seed, Inc. in Manteno, Illinois.



Bluegrass Seed Will Cost More In 2009

Projections that prices could increase by nearly dollar a pound were incorrect; it's more likely they will increase more than a dollar; a great deal more for the 2010 sod seed plantings. Depending on the variety, prices for 2009 will increase 15 to 20 percent. But, when prices will be really jumping is after the new crop seed harvest fall 2009. Elite Kentucky bluegrass prices for 2010 are projected to increase 60 to 70 percent. These projected price increases are based on actual signed contracts with seed growers to produce the seed. At the time of the contract signings seed growers had alter-

native crops that were more profitable than producing Bluegrass. If the higher prices had not been contracted, the seed would not have been produced.

Supply and demand does work. In this situation it was the increased demand for the grower's acre of ground to produce Bluegrass seed or an alternative crop. At the same time the demand for Elite Kentucky bluegrass was low due to the poor housing market. Thereby; Kentucky bluegrass seed production has been greatly reduced to compensate reduction in consumption.

The 2010 Kentucky bluegrass price is expected to be the peak in prices. As most of you know many agriculture commodities prices collapsed this summer. This collapse occurred after the contracts were signed at record setting prices. The good news is Kentucky bluegrass prices are expected to start a decline by 2011 season.

The currents of the market are moving in many directions. Ag commodities prices

were increasing while the demand for elite Kentucky bluegrass seed was decreasing; thereby reducing the Bluegrass seed production. Now, by the so called experts the housing market is projected to start to turn by 2010. Sod producers have been very conservative with sod inventories; and rightfully so. Farms have been limiting replanting and in some cases, not planting harvested acreage at all.

Who really knows what or when anything is going to happen, but with even a small increase in sod acres planted in 2010 this may lead to a very tight supply of Elite Kentucky bluegrass seed. What is worse, having to pay a higher price for your seed or not having seed to plant when the housing market recovers?

Our sincere thanks to Summit Seed for permission to reprint this information.

For more information about Summit Seed and to subscribe to their informative newsletter visit their website at: www.3dsod.com

Tampa, Florida UPDATE

as of 12/16/09

(See related commentary on the right)

GOOD NEWS FOR TAMPA TURFGRASS PRODUCERS

Recognizing the devastation a new round of water restrictions meant for area landscapers and turfgrass producers, the Southwest Florida Water Management District has backed off a ban on replacement restrictions on turfgrass sod in select counties.

Following a meeting with industry representatives the water district's governing board agreed that homeowners can plug and resod their lawns and water the new turf.

Richard Owen, the water district's deputy executive director stated, "We met with the turfgrass sod industry and believe we've come up with a solution that will continue to save water while allowing the sod industry to remain in business."

The ban, enacted by the water agency in late October, required homeowners to wait until summer to plant new grass. Turfgrass sod sellers, already reeling from the collapse of the home building industry, feared they would have to shut down entirely.

Under the rules, sod for replacing lawns or for new construction can be watered daily for the first 15 days. From days 16 through 30, even numbered addresses can water lawns Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday; odd numbered addresses can water Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

Other rules -- including one-day-a-week watering and shortened hours to run ornamental fountains -- remain in effect.

For more information visit:
www.WaterMatters.org/drought.

REBUTTAL TO - Tampa's Emergency Water Restrictions Which Includes a Ban on Turf Renovation and Replacement

Tampa, Florida is enforcing tightened water use restrictions for the establishment of turfgrass and low volume irrigation in response to extreme water shortage conditions in Tampa and surrounding communities. Among the restrictions:

"All turfgrass renovation, including turf replacement, not scheduled prior to October 28, 2008 must be postponed until after June 30, 2009. There is no irrigation establishment allowance for replacement turf during this period."

Tampa Rules Jeopardize Sod Industry

By BETSY MCGILL

Special to the Tribune

The Tampa Tribune

Published: December 2, 2008



Betsy McGill - Executive Director
Florida Sod Growers Cooperative

It's never been more important for Floridians who share in the benefits and beauty of our green spaces to care for them wisely.

When it comes to lawns, turfgrass sod growers are always working to help our customers understand how to select

the right grass for their landscapes and maintain it properly. That includes following the rules about watering. But Tampa officials looking for ideas to address water supply issues in the city have enacted new restrictions on lawns that go too far and will have serious unintended consequences.

Water authorities are essentially banning Tampa homeowners from planting new sod until June 2009, a move that could do more harm than good for both the environment and the economy.

A healthy lawn provides environmental benefits year-round. Grass helps reduce carbon emissions, cool the air, save on energy costs, control erosion and improve water quality.

To maintain that healthy lawn, periodic sod replacement may be necessary. The time frame for the restriction couldn't be worse, since it

eliminates the optimal growing time of the cooler spring months when turf can take root more quickly with the least amount of water. By delaying new plantings, grass could take longer to establish and require more water. And deferring renovation or replacement now can result in bigger problems requiring more fertilizers or other costly maintenance later.

The dire economic impacts also can't be ignored. Jobs and long-time businesses would be jeopardized, triggering a chain reaction impacting sod growers, agriculture suppliers, turf installers, lawn maintenance companies and their employees. In the current economic downturn, some businesses wouldn't make it through spring. Even homeowners trying to sell in a down market would be restricted from creating a landscape that invites buyers.

For the environment and the economy, we can't afford a ban on turfgrass even on a regional basis. The more responsible move: Water authorities should enforce existing limits on irrigation and measure the effectiveness before enacting new rules, especially measures that could have other consequences while not achieving significant water savings.

We support water conservation and welcome the opportunity to work with the Tampa Water Department and Southwest Florida Water Management District to revisit this idea and create a solution that is sustainable for everyone.

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Betsy McGill is the executive director of the Florida Sod Growers Cooperative.

Florida Sod Growers Cooperative



TurfSide-UP



The above image appears on the website of Western Sod located in Tempe, Arizona. They get an "A" for creativity. By the way, Bull's-Eye Bermuda is known as BOBSod in Arizona. Western Sod was founded in 1972 and was acquired by West Coast Turf in 2000.

Do You Know Who To Call?

Any number of rules and regulations can impact your business; such as water restrictions, landscape ordinances, cash for grass incentive programs, shipping regulations, property appraisals, environmental concerns, misinformation, taxation, etc. The need to communicate to public officials is often a must, but do you really know who you need to communicate to? Who is in charge? Who is the key decision-maker? It's not a matter of Red and Blue, it's really a matter of Green - - Green as it relates to your business, your livelihood, your profitability.

Tip O'Neal, the 55th Speaker of the United States House of Representatives (1977-1987) once said, "All politics is local". Do you know your elected officials?

The list to the right may prove helpful; if not today or tomorrow, perhaps next week or next month. When the time comes - know who to call.



President of the United States
U.S. Senators
U.S. Congressmen
Governor

State Cabinet:

Agriculture Commissioner
 Attorney General
 Chief Financial Officer
 State Senator
 State Representative

Board of County Commissioners

Chairperson
 Commissioners

County Constitutional Officers

Clerk of the Court
 Property Appraiser
 Supervisor of Elections
 Tax Collector

School Board Members

Chairperson
 Board Members
 Public Defender
 District Attorney
 City/Town Mayor
 City/Town Council or Commissioners

Have You Ever Wondered?

Synthetic Turf Can Get Really **HOT** . . . But Does it Get **HOT** Enough to Cook An Egg?

We've all heard the expression, "It's so hot you could fry an egg on the sidewalk!" Is it possible? According to The American Egg Board, eggs only need to reach between 144° and 158°F before they are considered "cooked". They need to maintain a temperature of 158°F to become firm. When you consider the surface temperature of a synthetic turf field has been recorded **as high as 200°F** *one might wonder, could you actually cook an egg on a synthetic turf field?

Once you crack the egg on a sidewalk or on a synthetic field, the egg will immediately cool the surface. Pavement and synthetic turf are

poor conductors of heat, so lacking an additional heat source from below or from the side, the egg will not cook evenly. Although you may not be able to cook an egg on a **HOT** synthetic turf field, you most certainly could "suffer thermal burns" at such high temperatures according to the NYC Health Department in a report released May 2008. Eggs aside, the public needs to be careful when surface temperatures get above 115°F.

* "Synthetic Surface Heat Studies"
 C. Frank Williams and Gilbert E. Pulley -
 Brigham Young University



You may not be able to fry an egg on synthetic turf but the NYC Health Department reports people can suffer dehydration, heatstroke and thermal burns at field temperatures above 115°F.

Brigham Young University study: <http://cahe.nmsu.edu/programs/turf/documents/brigham-young-study.pdf>
 NYC Report: http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/eode/turf_report_05-08.pdf



GreenCare for Troops is a nationwide outreach program coordinated by Project EverGreen that connects local lawn and landscape firms with men and women serving our country in the armed forces who are away from home.

To date, Project EverGreen has signed up more than 7,000 military families and over 1,900 green industry professionals and volunteers to assist in this effort. The cost to manage the GreenCare for Troops Program is underwritten by Cub Cadet Commercial.

For more information contact:

<http://www.projectevergreen.com/gcft/>

Study Finds Golf Course Insecticides Pose Little Danger to Players

Common turf applications scored well below par for EPA standards



New research from the University of Massachusetts Amherst shows residues of two widely used insecticides picked up by golfers during a typical golf game do not pose a health risk. Results were published in the July 2008 issue of the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*.

"After extensive monitoring, estimated exposures to golfers following full

applications of two turfgrass insecticides used throughout the northeastern United States were 19 to 68 times lower than levels set by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency designed to protect human health," says John Clark, a professor of veterinary and animal sciences who specializes in toxicology. Additional researchers on the project include Raymond Putnam of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Jeffrey Doherty of the Massachusetts Pesticide Analysis Laboratory.

The results of the study, which represents a worst case scenario, show estimated exposures to golfers following full rate and full course applications of carbaryl and chlorpyrifos were substantially below current U.S. EPA values designed to protect human health.

To view the research results in their entirety go to: <http://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/jf800359b>

Golfer Exposure to Chlorpyrifos and Carbaryl Following Application to Turfgrass

Raymond A. Putnam, Jeffery J. Doherty and J. Marshall Clark

J. Agric. Food Chem., 2008, 56 (15), pp 6616-6622

Publication Date (Web): July 4, 2008 (Article)

DOI: 10.1021/jf800359b



landscapeontario.com
Green for Life!

Landscape Ontario Announces 'Green for Life' Website

Landscape Ontario, one of North America's premier horticultural trade associations is comprised of 2,000 plus members. They have announced plans to launch a new consumer website in spring 2009 that will showcase hundreds of award-winning member designs to help inspire consumers to better use their outdoor living spaces.

The intent of the website is to reinforce Landscape Ontario's mission to raise awareness for the environmental, economic, and lifestyle benefits of gardens

and green space. One of their goals is to talk with consumers about the real benefits of spending more time outside.

For more information about 'Green for Life' please contact Denis Flanagan at Landscape Ontario, 800-265-5656, ext. 303 or dflanagan@landscapeontario.com or Lee Ann Knudsen at Landscape Ontario, 800-265-5656, ext. 314 or lak@landscapeontario.com.

"From cooling our cities to removing pollution and improving our quality of life, green space makes a difference."

Landscape Ontario