

IN THIS ISSUE

- TPI Commentary — WaterSense, common sense and nonsense
- Pine Island NY rolls out the welcome mat to TPI
- Tip of the Hat - Fred Pittillo of North Carolina
- Artificial turf presentation generates Interest
- Current economic challenges create some opportunities
- A poppy, an eagle, a patriotic ribbon and a heartfelt "Thank You"
- Access photos of TPI Conferences & Conventions
- Where in the World is TPI Represented? EVERYWHERE! - ECOturf in Christchurch, England
- WaterSense - Keep Up The Momentum - WRITE! Inform your congressional representatives and get them involved.
- Close-up look at MSU's Spartan Stadium



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TPI Commentary

WaterSense, common sense and nonsense - - makes little sense

In the July issue of the TPI E-newsletter we presented a detailed overview of the proposed EPA WaterSense Program as it pertained to outdoor specifications. At the that time we took issue with two components of the guidelines that were troubling. The first had to do with a proposed restriction that suggested that turfgrass would be limited to no more than 40% of a landscaped area. The second issue had to do with the proposal that a WaterSense home cannot have turfgrass on slopes exceeding 4:1 or as stated in section 4.1.3 of the proposed specifications:

Plantings other than turfgrass shall be installed on slopes in excess of four feet of horizontal run per one foot vertical rise (4:1).

Here-in lies a problem that caught the eye of TPI Board Trustee **Gary Wilber** of Oakwood Sod Farm in Delmar, Maryland. Gary pointed out that the slope ratio presented in the EPA Water-Sense proposal is

indicated as (4:1) which would suggest a four foot drop over a one foot area rather than a one foot drop over a four foot area as described in Section 4.1.3.



A ratio of 1:4 would suggest a one foot drop over a four foot horizontal area.



A ratio of 4:1 would suggest a four foot drop over a one foot horizontal area.

Few people would argue that a slope that drops four feet over a one foot expanse is acceptable because it would be a bit of a cliff. But who would agree that a slope that drops a mere one foot over a four foot expanse presents any problem at all?

This illustrates the need for clarification in the proposed specs and that is why **Turfgrass Producers International** and other coalition stakeholders are working through the National Turfgrass Federation to demand the EPA set aside its WaterSense landscape specifications until they can clarify such issues, better understand the environmental benefits of turfgrass, speak with knowledgeable green industry representatives and talk to leading turfgrass specialists.

The real question is: What are the folks at WaterSense really proposing? Is their ratio of 4:1 wrong or is their definition of the intended ratio wrong?



NOTE: WaterSense update appears on pages 8-9



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Pine Island, NY Rolls Out the Welcome Mat to TPI!

Although the TPI Summer Convention & Field Days in New York is one year away (July 26-30, 2010) the citizens of Pine Island wanted to extend a warm welcome to Turfgrass Producers International.

The following letter was received from Sue Wilk, President of the Pine Island Chamber of Commerce and was distributed at TPI's recent Summer Convention & Field Days in East Lansing, Michigan.

July 23, 2009

Dear Members of
Turfgrass Producers International,

I am writing to you to relay how much the Pine Island Chamber of Commerce and the citizens of the hamlet of Pine Island are looking forward to your visit in July 2010.

Once you arrive at Chip Lain's Pine Island Turf Nursery in Pine Island you will see the beautiful, lush area that we call home and have come to love. Perhaps you will not want to leave!!!

Best wishes for a successful convention this year and we await your arrival in 2010.

Sincerely,
Sue Wilk
President
Pine Island Chamber of Commerce

COVER PHOTO:

TPI's current president, **Chip Lain** (left) of Pine Island Turf Nursery and past president **Randy Graff** (right) founder of Graff's Turf Farms were featured on the cover of the Spring 2009 issue of *The Pine Island ONION Quarterly*.

Photo: Leonard DeBuck of DeBuck's Sod Farms, Pine Island, NY.



International Turfgrass Producers Plan 2010 Meeting in Pine Island

Hundreds of people from all over the world will converge on Pine Island for one day in the summer of 2010 when the hamlet will be the venue for the Turfgrass Producers International Summer Convention Field Day.

The visitors will be among about 800 people from 30 countries expected to attend a week-long sod grower's convention in New York City July 26-31. The field day in Pine Island on Thursday, July 29, will be hosted by Chip Lain of Pine Island Turf Nursery, Inc., who is Vice President of the worldwide organization.

Thirty five acres of his sod farm, at 1081 County Rte 1, will be dedicated to demonstrations of the full range of equipment used in all aspects of turfgrass farming. There will also be vendor booths and local businesses will be invited to participate.

Apart from the international attendees, the field day event will also draw hundreds of sod farmers from throughout the United States, who will be interested in the cutting-edge equipment on show.

The president of the worldwide organization, Randy Graff of Colorado, came to Pine Island in March to visit friend Chip Lain and fellow sod farmers Leonard DeBuck, Kevin Shuback, and Tommy Shuback who will be helping to host the event.

Attendees will arrive on about 15 buses. They will be given breakfast at a local sod farm and a barbecue lunch at Pine Island Turf, then return to New York late afternoon.

The Pine Island Chamber of Commerce is already planning to start sprucing up the hamlet in anticipation of the influx of visitors. Chip Lain says that volunteers will be needed to help make this huge event in Pine Island a success.

Attendance at the convention is expected from China, Japan, India, the Middle East, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, Argentina and almost every country in Europe including Turkey, Russia, Finland, Poland and Bulgaria.

Sod Factoids:
Today's improved turfgrass varieties are very effective in reducing pollution. Turfgrass traps and removes dust and dirt from the air. 2,500 square feet of lawn absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and release enough oxygen for a family of four to breathe.

The Pine Island Onion Quarterly • Spring 2009 Edition • page 1

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A TIP OF THE HAT to - Fred Pittillo Named North Carolina "Southeastern Farmer of The Year"

Fred W. Pittillo's Turf Mountain Sod farm in Hendersonville, NC grows cool season fescue, bluegrass and bentgrass turf varieties on about 1,200 acres in the mountains of western North Carolina. He raises turfgrass sod on about 400 acres of rented land and 800 acres of owned land. He produces, delivers and installs sod for customers in an area from Raleigh, NC to Knoxville, TN., and from Atlanta, GA., to Bristol, VA.

As a result of his accomplishments as a turfgrass producer, he has been selected as the 2009 NC winner of the Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year award.

Pittillo now joins nine other state winners from the Southeast as finalists for the award. The overall winner will be announced on Tuesday, Oct. 20, 2009 at the Sunbelt Ag Expo farm show in Moultrie, GA.

Pittillo's son, Wayne, and their daughter, Linda Bradley, are both involved in the sod business, as is Linda's husband, David.

Our sincere congratulations to Fred, his family and staff.



TurfSide-UP



You read it right., "Park On Grass -Get Toad". Instead of towing your car or giving you a parking ticket, the local Park Police suggest they will do you one better, they're going to give you a toad . . . or so we were toad . . . uh, told.

Artificial Turf Presentation Generates Interest

The presentation given by **Dr. Guive Mirfendereski** at TPI's 2009 Summer Convention in East Lansing, Michigan regarding artificial turf generated plenty of interest on the part of attendees. In response to inquiries members can visit Dr. Mirfendereski's website at: <http://synturf.org/>.

Synturf.org is a national and international forum dedicated to information regarding the environmental and health risks associated with artificial turf fields.

The site grew out of the need for a clearinghouse of information about the environmental and health aspects of artificial turf, particularly about matters not readily available from promoters and sellers of artificial turf systems. The site is not affiliated with any manufacturer, seller or promoter of artificial turf fields, nor with any grower, seller or promoter of natural Turfgrass sod or grass products and services. The site does not compensate for articles or submissions made to it. All work associated with the site is entirely volunteered by concerned and civic-minded individuals. The expenses of operating this site is defrayed by Dr. Guive Mirfendereski and any such contributions the site may receive from persons or institutions committed to the site's continuing work.

If you are interested in making non-tax deductible contribution to Synturf.org please make a check payable to Guive Mirfendereski, 24 Carleton Street, Newton, MA 02458 USA

Guive Mirfendereski speaks about Synthetic Turf
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKbymSACtkM>



Did You Know?

"A healthy 10,000 square-foot lawn can absorb more than 6000 gallons of rainwater without noticeable runoff."

Environmental Benefits of Lawns

Jay Deputy
Department of Tropical Plant and Soil Sciences
CTAHR Popular Press
(Turf Management)
PP-11, April 2009



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Current Economic Challenges Are Creating Some Opportunities

According to AMERICAN EXPRESS® OPEN SMALL BUSINESS MONITOR Survey



A recent survey of small business owners by American Express found that a distinct group (37%) says that the current economic environment actually creates opportunities for their business. Among these opportunistic business owners, two-thirds have a positive outlook on the economy, half plan to make capital investments and just over one-third plan to hire. Nearly all of these glass-half-full entrepreneurs (92%) say that managing through the recession has made them a better business owner, compared to 77% overall.

The survey suggested that when times get tough, the tough get creative and find new ways to tap resources and manage costs. Some examples presented in the survey included:

- Instituting hiring freezes (48%)
- Bartering for new products or services (45%)
- Refusing to take a salary (30%)
- Having a family member work pro bono (27%)
- Renegotiating leases and supply contacts (25%)
- Cutting benefits (16%)

Survey Methodology

American Express OPEN Small Business Monitor, released each spring and fall, is based on a nationally representative sample of 727 small business owners/managers of companies with fewer than 100 employees. The anonymous survey was conducted via telephone by Echo Research from February 24-March 9, 2009. The poll has a margin of error of +3.6%.

For more information go to:
<http://home3.americanexpress.com/corp/pc/2009/mtr.asp>

As for the economy . . .
 It's a matter of perspective.



Half Full



Half Empty



Down Size



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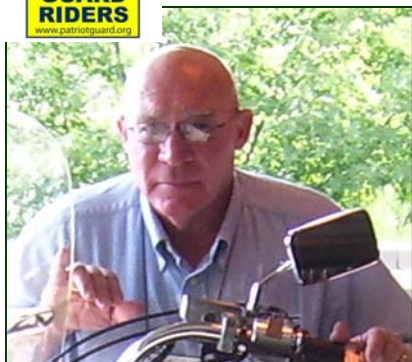
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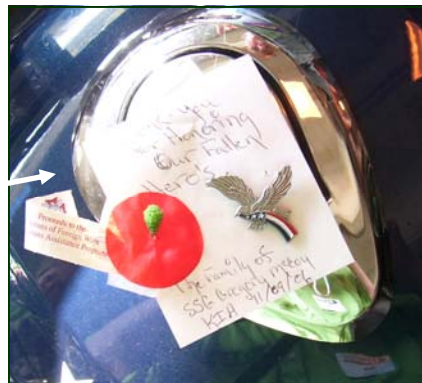
Rick Antisdell, district manager for Trebro Manufacturing rode his motorcycle to this year's TPI's Summer Convention & Field Days in East Lansing, Michigan.

He parked his motorcycle, which features the insignia of the Patriot Guard Riders (PGR), in the hotel parking lot. Upon returning to the motorcycle later that day he found someone had left a personal note which read:

**Thank You for Honoring Our Fallen Hero's
The Family of
SSG Gregory McCoy
KIA 11/09/06**

A few days later someone else left a patriotic ribbon taped to his bike as a sign of thanks.

For the benefit of those of you who may not be familiar with the Patriot Guard Riders, they are a diverse group of riders from across the nation. They come from different social, and ethnic backgrounds, yet they all have one thing in common besides motorcycles. They have an unwavering respect for those who risk their lives for America's freedom and security.



The PGR's mission is to attend the funeral services of fallen American heroes as invited guests of the family. Each mission has two basic objectives:

- Show sincere respect to fallen heroes, their families and their communities.
- Shield the mourning family and their friends from interruptions created by any protestor or group of protestors.

They accomplish the latter through strictly legal and non-violent means.

When asked how he got involved in the PGR, Rick responded, "I was one of the fortunate ones who returned from Vietnam, and in some small way, the PGR provides me with an opportunity to show my thanks and appreciation to our service men and

women who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Many times these funerals are during the weekday and at times it's inconvenient for me to get away from work, but my company has been very good about letting me off to show my respect for those protecting our way of life."

Upon returning from Michigan, Rick learned that SSG Gregory McCoy was from Webberville, Wisconsin. He was one of two soldiers killed when a roadside bomb exploded near their vehicle in Baghdad, Iraq, on November 9, 2006. He served with the 410th Military Police Company, 720th Military Police BN, 89th Military Police Brigade. SSG McCoy was 26 years old.

Rick has no idea who left the note and ribbon on his motorcycle, but he was deeply moved by both gestures.

If you would like to know more about the Patriot Guard Riders you can visit their website:

<http://www.patriotguard.org/>



Access Photos of TPI Conferences & Conventions!

Did you know that candid photos of past TPI Conferences & Conventions & Field Days are available for viewing and downloading? Visit <http://www.tpiphotos.smugmug.com/> to see photos from previous events along with photos from the 2009 TPI Convention & Field Days which are still in the process of being posted. In the near future photos will be accessible directly from the TPI website.

Sample photo series from 2009 TPI Summer Convention & Field Days—East Lansing, Michigan (Michigan State University)



Where in the world is
TPI represented?
EVERYWHERE!

An on-going series featuring photos and copy
from TPI member websites.

Christchurch, England

<http://www.thisiseco.co.uk/turf.asp>



ecoTurf was launched in 2003 and, due to its key features of being hard wearing and drought tolerant, has proven an enormous success. The blend we use makes our product singularly attractive and of a high quality suitable for all landscaping applications.

The strong sward and root system makes the turf easier to lay whilst the soil/compost blend ensure the turf has a good nutrient base in which it can establish quickly and strongly.



Our turf is grown locally on 400 acres of sandy loam soil which offers excellent drainage allowing us

to cut virtually all year round. Because we grow on the compost we produce, our turf operation is totally sustainable and environmentally friendly, without causing any soil erosion, as well as producing a stronger and better quality product.

We offer next day service for either collection or delivery in the local area and have access to a wide range of delivery vehicles allowing us to cater for all requirements. Our customer base covers the full range from general public through landscapers and sports suppliers such as golf courses and we are always happy to offer advice on ground preparation and turf laying.

ecoTurf director and shareholder **Hugh Dampney** (right) and his son **Gavin** touring Van Aken Sod & Tree Farm during the 2009 TPI Midwinter Convention & Field Days in East Lansing, Michigan, USA.



PENALTY CALLED on AstroTurf

Agrees to get the lead out and pay \$170,000 in civil penalties, grants and attorney fees

AstroTurf has agreed to reformulate its products, replace lead-tainted fields and playground surfaces installed over the last five years and pay thousands in fines, according to a settlement announced by the California Attorney's General's Office.

"As schools and daycare centers replace grass with artificial turf, extreme care must be taken to minimize lead exposure," California Attorney General Jerry Brown said in a statement.

In a lawsuit filed in September, 2008 California claimed the U.S. arm of FieldTurf Tarkett, AstroTurf and the Beaulieu Group "knowingly and intentionally exposed individuals within the State of California to lead" in violation of Proposition 65, a ballot initiative approved two decades ago that mandates warnings on any toxic substances.

Lead, a carcinogen that's also known to harm brain and nervous system development in children, was found in levels of more than 5,000 parts per million — several times the threshold thought to be safe — in tests conducted by the California Attorney General's Office and the public interest



group Center for Environmental Health.

As part of the settlement (that only applies to California installations), AstroTurf will cut the presence of lead — which was used by the manufacturer to keep the colors vibrant — to 50 parts per million by June 2010, well below federal standards.

The company is also barred from selling its current stock of turf that doesn't meet the current federal standards and it must notify customers who have had AstroTurf installed over the past five years. Those customers can have their turf tested and replaced if lead is found.

AstroTurf, which did not admit to any wrongdoing in the settlement, will pay \$170,000 in civil penalties, grants and attorney fees.

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Update on EPA WaterSense

Kirk Hunter reports that calls and emails to Congress on the EPA's proposed outdoor water use efficiency criteria, which included a 40% cap on turfgrass have apparently been heard.

(See July 2009 E-Newsletter "Would a 60% DROP in turfgrass sales get your attention? IT BETTER!")

In a recent update Hunter reported that TPI has been actively involved in working with the National Turfgrass Federation (NTF) to identify members of Congress that would sign on to a letter outlining the concerns of a 40% limit on turfgrass and other issues in the Water Sense new homes specs draft.

TPI is also working with the coalition to identify a 'Champion' in each house, i.e. a member willing to take the lead on this issue and challenge EPA on the lack of science in the draft.

TPI has heard from contacts within the EPA that Water Sense personnel have been called to Capitol Hill to explain their actions to Congressional staff. This would suggest that the efforts of TPI, its members and coalition members to contact Congress are working however, more letters are needed to heighten awareness and maintain the current interest and momentum.



Kevin Morris of NTF comments, "The funding for the lobbying effort is short of cash – the National Turfgrass Federation (NTF) member organizations have contributed but this effort is costing about \$5000 per month (strictly for the lobbyist and expenses – NTF has no staff – all time is donated). Therefore, we need funding for about the next six months of work (\$30,000 total). In addition, NTF is working on other initiatives, like a national turfgrass survey, funding for turf research and a potential turf demonstration project that would also serve to restore much needed turfgrass on the National Mall in Washington, DC."

As an active contributor and member serving on the Board of NTF, Hunter encourages TPI members and state and regional associations to offer their financial support to NTF through additional donations and to continue to address the WaterSense issue with their congressional representatives. Hunter also reports that there have been 1200 contacts thus far, but that is only about 2.2 contacts per congressional representative, on average. He encourages everyone to continue their effort to make their feelings known to their state's senators and representatives.

See additional information on how you can "keep up the momentum" on the following page.

National Turfgrass Federation

(Top left going clockwise)

Kevin Morris, National Turfgrass Federation (NTF)

Tom Delaney, Professional Landcare Network (PLANET)

Kris Kiser, Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI)

John Farner, Irrigation Association (IA)

Bill Behan, John Deere

Mike Kenna, United States Golf Association (USGA)

Mark Schmidt, John Deere

Clark Throssell, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA)

Brian Horgan, University of Minnesota

Kirk Hunter, Turfgrass Producers International (TPI)

Photo taken by Kirk Hunter.



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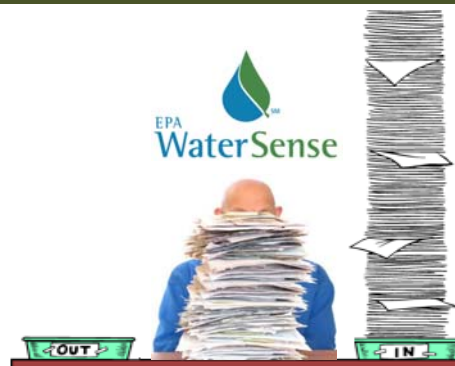
Send letters to Washington - - inform your congressional representatives.

TPI is encouraging everyone to continue to write letters to their congressional representatives. The following link to PLANET (Professional Landcare Network and a member of the National Turfgrass Federation) provides an easy method to construct and send a letter to members of Congress:

<http://www.congressweb.com/cweb4/index.cfm?orgcode=pln>

Consider the following talking points:

- Limiting turfgrass to only 40% of a landscaped area as an option in WaterSense will have dramatic economic consequences on numerous businesses including producers, manufacturers, laborers, and retailers and cost jobs in all green industry-related segments of the workplace.
- This program, as written, will have a negative impact on businesses that produce and install turf on new home sites.
- Lower income jobs which employ less skilled workers will be among the first jobs eliminated which disproportionately will affect minorities and those with the greatest need to generate income to support their families.
- Even though WaterSense is 'voluntary', municipalities and communities will use this program to make mandatory turfgrass restrictions under the pretense that such a restriction will save water.
- Water conservation can be better achieved through consumer education, 'smart' irrigation technology, and utilizing the proper grass species, without jeopardizing jobs and businesses.



Getting Congressional Representatives Involved

Please ask your congressional representatives to consider signing a letter similar to the following:

September XX, 2009

Lisa Jackson
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Ms. Jackson:

It has recently come to my attention that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a revised draft specification on May 8, 2009, that proposes to establish water efficiency criteria for new homes under the WaterSense program. While I strongly support efforts to improve water efficiency, I am troubled by the approach the Agency is taking on the outdoor elements of the specification. Therefore, I ask you to redirect your efforts, rather than proceeding with the current approach.

Specifically, the two landscape alternatives - the 40% turf limitation and the water budget - are not based on science. Rather than improving the water efficiency of new home landscapes, I believe the specification may lead to water-inefficient landscapes. Further, I anticipate that the specification will lead to the loss of many of the valuable ecosystem services provided by healthy, well-maintained landscapes with an appropriate blend of turfgrass and other plants. And finally, not only is the present approach inappropriate environmentally, it will lead to less employment for landscape maintenance businesses operating throughout the country. I therefore urge you to remove these provisions. By emphasizing remaining elements of the draft specifications your agency can continue to drive water efficiency inside and outside of new homes.

As it relates to the outside criteria, I recommend the Agency focus on the deployment of best technology solutions through WaterSense approved products and, when practical, the use of certified irrigation professionals for installation and audit. It will also be essential to educate all stakeholders including homebuilders, landscape contractors and consumers in the selection and management of appropriate turfgrass and plants for a given location, and for their care, utilizing best management practices for water use. Enlist the greenscape industry, including irrigation professionals, landscape contractors, sod producers, nurseries, horticulturists, and others to drive messages and results. Finally, I recommend working with USDA and universities to further develop research leading to appropriate water use for turfgrass and landscapes.

I applaud the Agency for striving to improve the water efficiency of new homes. In order for this effort to be successful, it is critical that the WaterSense for New Homes Specification is based on sound science, preserves and enhances the ecosystem services through healthy, well-maintained landscapes, leverages the potential of WaterSense products and services, and delivers knowledge about efficiency through expanded partnerships with the greenscapes industry.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Sincerely,
Senator X or Congressman Y



Close-Up Look at Spartan Stadium

Michigan State University's Amy Fouty takes TPI guests on a very special tour

When Turfgrass Producers International (TPI) held its 2009 Summer Convention & Field Days on the campus of Michigan State University those in attendance had an opportunity to visit Spartan Stadium and meet with **Amy Fouty**, CSFM. Fouty is MSU's athletic turf manager and she's responsible for the Spartan Stadium field, the football practice complex and oversees the athletic field construction for the intercollegiate athletic department.



Amy Fouty, CSFM, Athletic Turf Manager for Michigan State University addresses TPI members during their tour of MSU's Spartan Field.

During their visit Fouty explained that natural grass replaced artificial turf in Spartan Stadium in 2002 after a 33-year absence. She added that the field is comprised of a unique square turfgrass module system based on designs by MSU turfgrass management program professors and students.

The Spartan Stadium modular system is the second generation of modules used by MSU in an athletic field project. The first generation of Hexagon shaped modules was originally developed for use in the Pontiac Silverdome during the 1994 World Cup.

The new playing surface, planted in May of 2001 at MSU's Hancock Turfgrass Research Center is comprised of a blend of nine varieties of Kentucky bluegrass and is made up of 4,800 modules.

Fouty says caring for the field is a year-round job and one in which she takes exceptional pride of ownership. While her primary commitment is to provide a safe and playable field, she is also environmentally conscious and takes a progressive, yet fundamental, approach to turf management.

The field is aerated three times a year disrupting 30% of the surface area and fertilizer is used sparingly. When application rates are calculated across the 75,000 sq.-ft. football field for a year, it amounts to about 4 lbs. of nitrogen, one pound of phosphorus and 10 lbs. of potassium per 1,000 sq. ft.

How well is the field cared for? They have never had to replace a single module since they were installed in '02 which is testament to the progressive approach to turfgrass management that is practiced at MSU. ESPN.com's Mel Kiper Jr. ranked Spartan Stadium No. 8 on his list of the nation's most scenic venues. In 2005, the natural grass playing surface in Spartan Stadium earned Collegiate Football Field of the Year honors from the Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA).



TPI members get a close look at the modular field of MSU's Spartan Stadium, regarded as one of the best maintained natural turfgrass fields in the nation.

Chinese officials were so impressed with the success at Spartan Stadium that they called upon Michigan State University's renowned turf scientists to build and manage over 5,000 modules of Kentucky bluegrass for the 2008 Olympics in Beijing's National Stadium.

During her address Fouty said that today's turf managers are gaining valuable technical knowledge at some of the nation's top universities and community colleges, instead of having to learn everything by trial and error. "Where there were once self-taught field staff maintaining sports fields there are now a growing number of sports turf professionals who have college degrees in turfgrass management and master's degrees in sports administration."