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Once in a Lifetime Opportunity—GREENING UP the Games

The chance to be one of the primary suppliers of natural turfgrass for the London 2012 Games was a once in a lifetime opportunity and no one knows that better than **Andy Fraser**, Managing Director of County Turf of Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire, England.

County Turf was responsible for providing over 100,000 square metres of custom-grown turf for the Olympic Stadium. They also provided turf for the athletics warm up area next to the Stadium, landscaping areas in the Olympic Park, turfgrass for the Lords Cricket Ground where the archery competition took place, and Greenwich Park for the equestrian events. They delivered over 7,000 square metres of turfgrass at RAF Northolt to cover the stoned end of the runway for Typhoon jets that provided the air security for the 2012 Games.

Upon learning that County Turf had been selected to provide the turfgrass for the Games, Fraser commented, "The contract has been excellent news for County Turf as we have been able to safeguard existing jobs in a crucial time where the bulk of our business that is based in the building and housing markets has seen a large decline. Without special projects, such as the Olympic contract, redundancies would have been inevitable. Instead we can retain our experienced and dedicated staff for the ongoing benefit of the company for the medium to long term."

So how did County Turf get the opportunity to work with the Olympic Organizing Committee? Fraser said that back in July 2009 they were asked to tender by Hewitts Sportsturf based in Leicester to custom grow the infield turf to exact specifications including species content, soil particle size analysis and percolation rates of the root zone. County Turf had worked with John and Ryan Hewitt of Hewitts



Olympic cauldron with turfgrass visible in the background.

Sportsturf * many times before and they were delighted to win the prestigious contract.

Seeding began in August 2009 at a variety of County Turf's numerous locations that cover in excess of 566 hectares (1,400 acres).

When asked, what was the biggest challenge in meeting the requirements of the Olympic Organizing Committee, Fraser responded, "Security was obviously of paramount importance and unlike other stadium projects we have been involved in, it did require a lot more organization, over several months, to ensure all access passes were issued, not only for the contractors and delivery drivers, but also for all vehicles and additional information on the consignment itself.

"The delivery schedule was very tight (only 12 hours), meaning there was no room for error. Fortunately we are experienced in meeting tight schedules because of our previous stadium projects. It was business as usual rather than an over ambitious challenge.

Cont'd on next page

A Once in a Lifetime Opportunity (cont'd)

"When the Opening Ceremony concluded we had a twelve hour window to complete the installation of the whole infield area. We also had to build another specialist harvester to cope with harvesting all the turf in a twelve hour slot and operating two crews through the night. The transport to London took about 6 hours after security checks and we needed to keep the turf in the roll for a maximum of 8 hours to avoid heat damage. Blackened heat damaged turf that 4 billion people would see was not an option!"

To meet the monumental challenge presented to them, every County Turf employee was involved from preparation of the field, to the drilling, growing, harvesting and delivering of the turfgrass to various locations. In total a work force that included delivery drivers and laying teams numbered around 80.

Fraser said that everyone associated with the project felt a tremendous sense of personal pride. "It's unlikely that Great Britain will hold the Olympics again in the lifetime of most of the people involved at County Turf. To have been selected to provide the turf in the main focal point of the Olympic Stadium was a great honor and a credit to everyone involved. All the County Turf Staff are immensely proud to be a part of British and World sporting history and it was a real team effort from start to finish, stretching over a three year period. We have been involved at many prestigious venues but this project was the most challenging and the most rewarding," Fraser said.

TURFGRASS BLEND:

Specification called for a blend of grasses that were mainly 60% Ryegrass and 30% Smoothstalk with 10 % fescue.

FIELD PREP PRIOR TO INSTALLATION:

Soil prep prior to turf installation was handled by Hewitt Sports Turf. They constructed the whole Olympic Stadium bowl to include the tarmac of the running track. The infield grass area was constructed from the base upwards and finished with a 100 mm layer of Fibresand and then prepared to exact levels prior to receiving the turf.

TURFGRASS HARVESTED and DELIVERED:

In excess of 100,000 square metres of turfgrass was delivered to various venues consisting of 540 BIG ROLLS 1.25m plastic wrapped custom grown turf. Infield was 7000 sq metres. The driving distance from the turfgrass field to Olympic Stadium was 215 miles and required 18 truckloads.

INSTALLATION:

The turf was installed by Talbots Farm Landscapes Ltd., specialists in sports turf installation. Andy Fraser of County Turf and his Operations Director Chris Medley were onsite to help coordinate the process.

Fraser went on to add, "Our primary goal from the very start was to provide a perfect infield grass surface delivered and installed on time. We couldn't have possibly met the challenge of the London Games without the help and dedication of all our staff. Each and everyone worked tirelessly and through the night to help deliver the turf for the 'Greatest Show on Earth.'"

Our personal thanks to Andy Fraser of County Turf for sharing this information with our readers.

* See the June 2012 issue of *Groundsman* magazine to read an interview with John Hewitt about his involvement in the London 2012 Games.
http://www.iogmagazine.co.uk/2011_06/main/image/06_2011.pdf



Turfgrass installation at Olympic Stadium.
 Photos courtesy of Andy Fraser—County Turf.



TURFGRASS PRODUCERS INTERNATIONAL
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
 2013 TPI MIDWINTER CONFERENCE

Mark Your Calendar

TPI's Midwinter Conference in San Antonio, Texas February 11-15, 2013

Marriott San Antonio Rivercenter

We know you want to help but . . . PLEASE DON'T!

The internet can be a tremendous tool, especially when it comes to seeking helpful information. Unfortunately misinformation is abundant even in the most unlikely of places. The website eHow™ may provide a great deal of worthwhile information to consumers, but one contributing writer offered homeowners some advice that may do more harm than good.



Can I Put Sod on Top of Existing Grass?

“Sodding your lawn is a quick and easy way to replace struggling or dying turfgrass. Although more expensive than seed, sod can be applied to your lawn in a single day. Sod also requires much less care than sown seed. Most homeowners go to the expense - - - in both work and actual financial burden - - - of removing their lawns before applying sod. Sod, though, can be applied directly over existing grass.”

The author went on to write:

“Professional landscapers often apply sod directly over grass. The sod compresses the grass and limits its exposure to sunlight and water. This quickly kills the already existing grass in much the same way that a brick left on a lawn kills the grass beneath it. When the



Image created by Jim Novak

grass dies, it gives off nutrients that actually benefit the new sod above it. The main nutrient that the dead grass layer provides is nitrogen.”

“Applying sod directly over grass is advantageous because it requires less work. The lawn does not need to be treated with herbicide. Also, you do not need to till your yard. This often means less expense. This is particularly true if you are hiring people to sod your lawn. Typically, they charge for all of the steps, which can include hauling away your old lawn.”

After reading the article we contacted a few TPI turfgrass producers and asked, “Would you ever lay sod over an existing lawn?” Their responses appear on the following page.

We know you want to help but . . . please don't. (cont'd)

Can I Put Sod on Top of Existing Grass?



Laying sod over an existing lawn is asking for problems.



Laying sod over a prepared area is the proper way to go.

So, how did TPI members respond to the idea of laying freshly harvested turfgrass sod over an existing lawn without any preparation? Their responses were direct and to the point.

“This is not a practice that I have ever heard of working, I was always of the mindset that the decomposing of the grass would develop an acid or a slime which would cause problems; also the fact that you would have air trapped between the sod and the ground allowing the roots to dry out and die.”

Mike Blair — Green Velvet Sod Farms
Bellbrook, Ohio

“Not a good idea.”

Bob Weerts — Blue Valley Sod Farm
Winnebago, Minnesota

“Short answer...Nope! Heavy aeration and power raking can improve soil to soil contact but you'll still have a soil layering problem – the surface of the old lawn has a lot of organic matter and likely will not match the soil profile of the sod being installed. Water will never move through the profile with efficiency.”

Warren Bell — Biograss Sod Farm
Sandy, Utah

If you would like to read the **eHow™** article in its entirety click on the link below:

http://www.ehow.com/way_5662154_can-sod-top-existing-grass_.html

Linda Bradley of Turf Mountain Sod was very specific on addressing some wise precautions. You can't simply lay sod on top of grass without doing proper preparation. Among the things she pointed out:

“All sod must make soil contact to root ~ Therefore the existing grass / lawn must be extremely sparse or you will have to bring in dirt and put it on top before laying the new sod. Additionally the grade is extremely important - the water flow must be proper. No holding spots for water, and of course you never want the water to run towards the home or building. If you currently have weeds they can grow through the new sod. And the ground cannot be too hard or the roots will not penetrate -even if the roots are touching dirt / soil ~ this is whether there is existing sod or not ~ this is extremely important either way. We always recommend the top 2-3 inches to be loosened. Even when people overseed we recommend they 'scratch' the dirt w/ a hard tooth rake because the seed has to touch dirt to germinate.”

Linda P. Bradley — Turf Mountain Sod, Inc.
Hendersonville, North Carolina

Landscape Consultant's Opinion

When we contacted Bob Weerts he happened to be on the road. By chance, he received our message while he was talking to landscape consultant named Isaac Branham. Branham was inspecting a lawn problem for one of his customers (a nationally known restaurant chain). By sheer coincidence the problem he was looking into was a dying new lawn around one of the chain's restaurants. Corporate wanted to know what happened to the lawn. It appeared that a contractor had laid new turfgrass sod over the existing lawn weeks earlier and the entire job was a disaster. The new grass never rooted. The entire project would have to be redone. Weerts actually handed his phone over to Branham who agreed to speak to us. Branham commented that he couldn't believe someone would, just to save time and money, actually lay sod on top of grass without properly preparing the area. “If a client of mine wanted me to do something like this, as a professional, I would not take the job”, he said.

TurfSide-UP



We were a bit skeptical too, but . . .

If you put these ROCKS in your dog's water dish you'll put an end to lawn urine burn patches.

Over One Million **DOG ROCKS** sold Worldwide!

100% natural, proven hassle free prevention, a cure to canine lawn urine burn patches, no medication required and safe for all household pets.

Placed in a dog's water bowl with no change to the pH balance of the dog's urine, Dog Rocks will help prevent new urine burn patches from ruining your lawns. Dog Rocks have been selling in Australasia (Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea, and adjacent islands) since the late 1990s when their beneficial properties were discovered, tried, tested and then sold with great success. Dog Rocks are now available worldwide online and in stores across the vet, pet, garden centre and giftware markets.

Dog Rocks are a naturally occurring paramagnetic igneous rock. Dog Rocks absorb and retain some of the impurities found in water which contribute to burning lawns, grass and box hedge; there are no known harmful effects on dogs through the use of Dog Rocks. Dog Rocks are only intended for use as stated.

BACK ISSUES

Want to view a back issue of the TPI E-Newsletter? **IT'S EASY!**



TPI has archived all issues of the E-Newsletter going back to August 2008. If you missed an issue or if you want to re-visit a story that was featured some time ago, it's easy. Just follow the link below.

<http://www.turfgrassod.org/files/6/tpi-e-newsletter>

Mistakes Happen



CORRECTION: In the July/August issue of the E-Newsletter we mistakenly credited County Turf as the provider of the turf featured in the Opening Ceremony of the 2012 London Games. We have been advised of the error. If you know who was responsible for the Opening Ceremony's rural landscape, please let us know. - J. Novak (jnovak@turfgrassod.org)

Where in the world is TPI represented? EVERYWHERE!

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

Africa Lawns

Delmas Mpumalanga, South Africa

<http://www.africalawns.co.za/>



Based on Farm Geluk, just outside Delmas Mpumalanga, **Africa Lawns** produces top quality instant lawn. As a division of the Rossgro Group who was awarded the prestigious *Agricultural Writers SA Farmer* award in 2007, quality and professionalism are the pillars we build on.

Due to a need for the production and delivery of high quality instant lawn in our country, the sector has grown and we are proud to be involved in the local and international industry. With the necessary infrastructure created by people with a global vision, Africa Lawns continues to grow. Quality products, excellent service and competitive price structures are the deciding factors which lead to creating a loyal client base and the overall success in our business.

Founded in January 2006, this young company has grown up to rank among one of the top instant lawn producers in Southern Africa. We concentrate mainly on Kikuyu, Cynodon (Bermuda) and LM Berea type of grasses as they are characterized as the most common types for all functional uses.

As members of Turfgrass Producers International (TPI) as well as Turfgrass Producers South Africa (TPSA), Africa Lawns is consistently aiming to improve, empower and achieve our product's promise.



Owner **Jannie van der Schyf** (left) and the professional team of Africa Lawns.

A proud Member of
Turfgrass Producers International



MIND BOGGLING BUT TRUE

ARTIFICIAL TURF

Out of sight out of mind!

Earlier this month the Village Council of Highland Park, Texas, unanimously passed an ordinance prohibiting artificial grass in front yards; but with a town permit, the artificial turf is allowed on side yards and back yards, so long as the artificial turf is out of sight.

Town Council Member, Andrew Barr, was quoted as saying, "Plastic grass is not in keeping with the design and quality of design we want to have in our town." He added, "I certainly don't think we ought to have plastic trees, which might be the next step." Barr also said he was concerned about runoff. "Many of the village's homes and driveways have grown in size, leaving little permeable surface on some lots. Artificial turf would add to the surfaces that do not absorb as much water as natural grass. That could affect the stormwater system."

Comment:

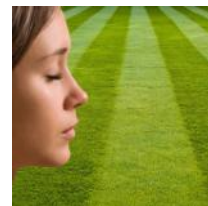
One would think that runoff would take place whether the artificial turf was or wasn't visible. Sort of reminds us of that familiar philosophical question . . . If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound? - J. Novak



NATURAL GRASS

Insight into the mind!

According to a 2009 British study with over 4,000 participants, the smell of cut grass is second only to the aroma of freshly baked bread in terms of making women feel happy and content -- it even beat out flowers, vanilla and that "clean baby" smell! "The distinct, organic scent of grass stimulates the brain's production of soothing, mood-elevating alpha waves," explains Elaine Wilkes, Ph.D., author of "Nature's Secret Messages".



Investigators have consistently reported that stress-reducing or restorative benefits of simply viewing nature are manifested as a constellation of positive emotional and physiological changes. Stressful or negative emotions such as fear or anger diminish while levels of pleasant feelings increase. Laboratory and clinical studies have shown that viewing nature produces stress recovery quickly evident in physiological changes, for instance, in blood pressure and heart

Elaine Wilkes, Ph.D., is a Natural Living Expert and author of the highly praised book, *Nature's Secret Messages: Hidden in Plain Sight*. A self-proclaimed "learning addict," Dr. Wilkes holds a Ph.D. in Naturopathy (alternative medicine), a master's degree in psychology and degrees in nutrition and communications, and is a LEED accredited professional.



Your not so average garden by a not so average gardener

Landscape architect Charles Jencks takes landscaping to a whole new level by creating surrealistic natural areas that seem to spiral and swirl with geometric wonder. His "Garden of Cosmic Speculation" is but one example of his work.

The garden, located at Portrack House near Dumfries, Scotland is private, but it is open to the public one day a year.

To see more of Janck's incredible work, click on the following link:

<http://www.charlesjencks.com/#!the-garden-of-cosmic-speculation>