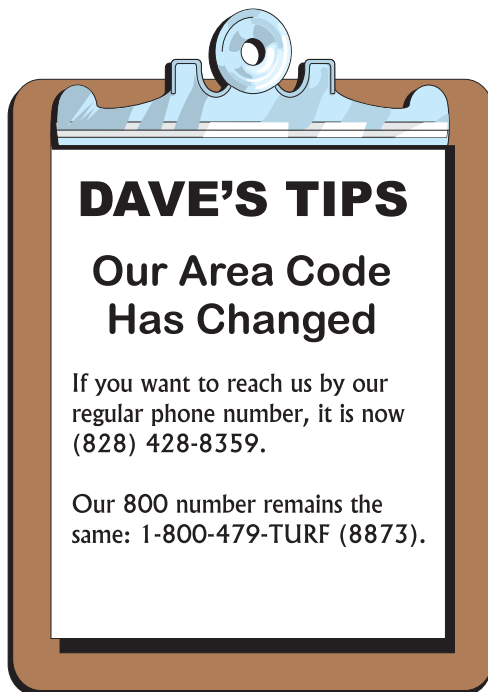




## FROM DAVE'S DESK...



This year marks a very important event. The milestone will take place in August when Piedmont Turf Farm celebrates its 10th anniversary. You may have noticed our current slogan, "Ten Years and Growing Stronger!" The old saying, "You've come a Long Way Baby," really applies to us. Who would have imagined when we started spraying for weeds, preparing a seed-bed for Fescue sod, and planting 40 acres in 1988 that we would have grown ten years later to a farm that harvests 160 acres of Fescue, Bluegrass, and Bermudagrass sods? Who would have imagined that our beginnings (including me and my parents who helped in planting, netting, mowing, and harvesting that first crop, as well as keeping the office operating) would have grown to 6 full-time, regular employees, including two truck drivers, and 4-6 part-time employees? Who would have imagined that the work of spraying, seeding, netting, and mowing carried out by one used tractor purchased in the fall of 1988 now requires 7 tractors to keep the farm operating? And who would have imagined that one harvester purchased in the spring of 1989 (and still in fine working condition) was joined by a similar model in 1996, and now in 1998 we've added a new BIG ROLL harvester. (More about this elsewhere in the Newsletter)

All this has been due to the faithfulness of YOU, our valued customers. You have made it all happen. We take great pleasure in striving to provide a quality product and serving you to the best of our ability. It has been a great ten years, and we look forward to serving you for many more. Thank you for your valued support of Piedmont Turf Farm.

## JUST FOR THE FUN OF IT

### Notable Quotables Capsule Sermons

- Mistakes are the usual bridge between inexperience and wisdom.
- Money was invented so that we would know just how much we owe.
- Be bold in what you stand for and careful in what you fall for.
- When you hold a conversation, don't forget to let go of it once in awhile.
- The trouble with most of us is that we would rather be ruined by praise than saved by criticism.
- Keep your temper nobody else wants it.
- Following the path of least resistance is the reason rivers and men go crooked.
- No rule of success will work if you don't.

## QUESTIONS I AM OFTEN ASKED...

**Q: Do you need to apply weed control chemicals to soil before installing sod?**

**A:** Sod that is of good strength and density is a very effective barrier against weedy plant development. The question here pertains to weed seeds that are in the soil on which the sod will be installed. According to Henry T. Wilkinson, University of Illinois, short of fumigating, there is no simple or quick way to kill these seeds. The sod itself is a better answer than pre-emergent herbicides. Sod will cover the weed seeds, reducing light, heat and oxygen required for weed seed germination. Water alone is not enough to bring the buried seeds up through the sod. If weeds appear, they are caused by one of two situations: the sod itself may contain weed seeds that have not yet germinated, have not been treated with a pre-emergent spray, and the grass is not dense enough to choke out the weeds, or the sod was incorrectly installed or improperly cared for after installation. Sod that is installed with gaps between adjacent rolls will allow

enough light and oxygen to permit weed seed germination. A more subtle problem is when sod shrinks after it is installed. This, too, causes gaps in which weed seeds can germinate. Sod is an effective barrier to weeds when it is both installed and cared for properly.

**Q: Why do annual bluegrass plants sometimes develop in sod after it is installed?**

**A:** In much of the cool-season growing areas of the world, annual bluegrass (Poa) is prevalent and a problem for both the sod producer and lawn care operators. Poa is a prolific seed producer and can produce its seed on very short stems thus escaping the mower. In short, you cannot get away from, or rid of, these seeds. However, Henry T. Wilkinson points out several weaknesses of Poa. It is shallow-rooted and some efforts to moisture-stress Poa are made in an attempt to weaken or kill it, but this is not very practical in mild, wet, environmental conditions. Also, Poa is not very competitive when mowed taller

than 5 cm (2 inches). In the United States and Canada Fescue or Bluegrass sod is mowed at about 5–6 cm (2–2½ inches) and Poa has a difficult time competing. Poa may not be seen at the time of the sod harvest but don't forget about those little seeds! If after installing, you lower the cut to 3cm, you can expect to see Poa appear. Add more fertilizer and irrigation to the lower cutting height and the speed at which Poa will contaminate the turf will amaze you! It only takes one little Poa plant to rapidly contaminate thousands of square yards of sod in a couple of years.

In our area, Poa is a winter annual with germination occurring in the Fall. Because of this a Fall application of pre-emerge herbicide can control the pesky weed. It will die out in the heat, but once again, don't forget the seeds!

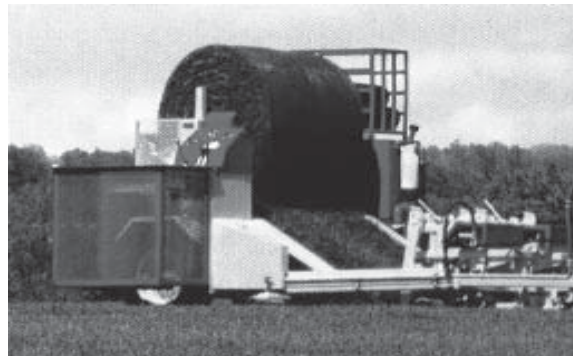
## BIG ROLL HARVESTER

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We can now provide you with a BIG ROLL of sod. Our new harvester will cut sod 42" by 52', that is 20 square yards of sod. It will cut from that size to a length as large as your machine can pick up. The standard size is 42" x 104', or 40 square yards. A tractor or skid steer with a special laying attachment is necessary to install BIG ROLL sod. We can provide you with the laying attachments.

BIG ROLLS have several advantages:

- They have fewer seams for a better looking finished job. With fewer seams, water evaporation is reduced.
- The bigger pieces of sod, due to weight, tend to move less than the smaller pieces of sod.



- Less physical labor is required to install the sod since a machine does the lifting.
- BIG ROLLS can also reduce the total labor needed for laying sod and this frees employees to perform other jobs.

We will be happy to help you get started laying BIG ROLLS. Just give us a call.

# New Turfgrass Techniques Are Helping with Difficult Problems and Special Needs at the Installation Site\*

Most people have experienced a drastic change in plans, leaving them totally unprepared. For example, it pours rain when they're expecting a large number of friends for a lawn party and cookout. What to do?

Now imagine it raining when the party involves millions of guests. And it rains and it rains.

This was the situation just before Super Bowl XXVII when promoters and investors were hosting a sell-out crowd and millions of television viewers. The playing surface at Rose Bowl Stadium, site of Super Bowl XXVII, had become a quagmire because of heavy rains and intensive use during final play-off competitions just prior to the bowl game. What to do?

What could have been a disastrous situation for quality play was avoided. Millions of viewers saw a football game contested on a rain soaked field made playable again with the help of some unique turfgrass sod and innovative technology.

## Meeting Special Needs at the Installation Site

New techniques of growing, harvesting and installing turfgrass sod has enabled producers to be innovative in solving special demands at an installation site. The following are three examples.

**1. Restoring the Rose Bowl football field** — The requirements for the field installation were thick cuts of sod and a speedy installation. These needs were met by using the "big-roll" harvester which has increased the size of a continuous piece of sod dramatically. These machines can cut sod 48" wide and 50' to 60' long. The 48" width can be center-cut during harvesting producing two 24" wide rolls simultaneously.

The large rolls enabled a faster installation. To solve the problem of wet, damaged areas throughout the playing surface and the sidelines, the harvester was adjusted to cut a very



thick sod which produced a very stable ground cover that would not break apart with intensive play. In addition to the thickness of the cut, the wider, longer rolls created fewer seams where problems might start.

The efforts produced a field that let players perform at a professional level the spectators expected.

## 2. Tackling the Cost Factor Related to Roadside and Landscape Erosion Control

— David Doguet (Crenshaw & Doguet Turfgrass, Inc., Austin, TX) decided to test the potential of a sod market segment that is tough to penetrate—the use of sod for highway

roadside erosion control. It's a tough market to crack because there are numerous erosion control methods offered that appear — on the basis of materials and installation — to be less expensive than sodding.

One of the solutions was to offer a sod cover other than the usual full-sodded area. There are various sodding techniques or configurations that can be used for soil control. Those using less sod than full coverage are methods that cut costs.

One method David Doguet calls the checker-board application in which half as much sod is used. The turf-grass propagates by stolonization, filling in the open areas.

Another method of sodding that saves on cost is the use of strips of sod — especially the big

roll method—placed horizontally on the slope. Again, the sod fills in through stolonization (see illustration).

**3. Soil Free Turfgrass Sod** — Turfgrass sod can be washed immediately after harvesting to remove nearly 100 percent of the soil from its roots. It is used for golf course greens built to USGA specifications and other areas where the potential for a serious interface problems might arise.

In addition, soil free sod ensures that grass can be successfully laid on a reinforced sand base surface — such as a golf putting green — without soil filtering through the sand, creating drainage problems.

These appear to be the greatest uses today, but the lighter, less dirty "washed sod" may also be appealing to those concerned with these attributes, such as older do-it-yourself homeowners.



\*An excerpt from "New Turf Developments to Meet Buyer Needs," a special publication of *Turf News* by Turf Producers International.

# THE REAL GRASS FACTS

## Putting Anti-Grass Claims Into Perspective\*

Is turfgrass a time- and money-wasting, landfill clogging, pesticide-addicted water hog, with absolutely no redeeming values in our society? That's exactly what some people would have everyone believe. Newspapers, magazines, bureaucrats, and television reports recite a litany of charges against turfgrass. But if these charges are inaccurate, then everyone involved in turfgrass has an obligation to learn the facts and help disseminate them as broadly as possible. Let's look at just one of these charges: **Turfgrass is "Addicted" to High Rates of Cancer-Causing Pesticides.** We frequently hear and read that suburban lawns are deluged each year with 70 million pounds of pesticides...pesticides that kill people, pets and wildlife and cause cancers and birth defects as they contaminate our water supplies.

**The Real Grass Facts** scientifically document that fear of pesticides in our environment are highly exaggerated, to the point of paranoia, in many cases simply because a pesticide can be detected. As scientific measurement has improved, we've advanced from being able to measure one part per million (1 minute in 2 years) to one part per billion (1 second in 32 years) to one part per trillion (1 second in 320 centuries). But simply because something can be measured does not make it deadly, or even serious for that matter.

Furthermore, only pharmaceuticals undergo more stringent testing than pesticides. For any pesticide to be used, it must have an EPA approval label. For pesticide manufacturers this means they will reject 20,000 potential products for each one labeled, they'll spend up to \$10 million in testing and it will take 8 to 10 years to obtain EPA approval. Compared to many other causes of death, pesticides rank beside food coloring, food preservatives, and prescription antibiotics, all at the

bottom of the list. On the other hand, smoking, alcohol, motor vehicles, and handguns still hold the top four positions. It's also interesting to note that several medicines we rub directly into our bodies, totally without concern, use the same active ingredients contained in pesticides used to control disease and insects in our lawns.

Former Surgeon General Dr. C. Everett Koop may have put this issue into perspective when he said, "By focusing on a hypothetical risk, like that from pesticides, not only do people find their anxiety levels elevated, but by focusing on a straw man, they also feel that they are doing something to improve their health. In so doing, they often neglect all the other things that they could be doing more readily, more legitimately and with greater effect, such as paying attention to smoking, alcohol, exercise, balanced diet and so on."

Still there is an issue with critics who point to the 70 million pounds of pesticides that are used annually on lawns. There is a need to ask how that amount is being used. The math is quite revealing.

According to EPA, there are 77 million U.S. Households. Twenty million of these households apply pesticides to their own lawns, while another 9 million use a professional lawn care

service. The other 48 million — two thirds of the total — do absolutely nothing with pesticide treatment.

Using the EPA's figures, we know that 25 million pounds of herbicide are applied by the 20 million do-it-yourself households. We'll use an average size yard of 10,000 square feet. That comes to 200 billion square feet of lawn being treated with 400 million ounces of herbicides, equating to less than two ounces of active ingredient per 1,000 square feet. This is actually less than most EPA approved herbicide label rates!

**Conclusions:** Turfgrass pesticides undergo extensive testing before they are allowed to be sold, and while they may not be "safe" from all danger, they are not a high risk product that people should fear. What's more, when used properly, pesticides strengthen and improve turfgrass performance so that it can provide all of the environmental benefits it is capable of. Weed, insect, disease infested/infected turfgrass is not as strong, viable or valuable as a properly maintained turf area,

\*Exerpts from a presentation by Doug Fender, Ex. Dir. of Turf Producers International for the North Carolina Turfgrass Conference in 1996 and printed in *North Carolina Turfgrass*, Fall 1996.

## INSTANT BEAUTY! INSTANT PLAY! INSTANT EROSION CONTROL!

That is what homeowners are telling us they like about turfgrass sod. Recent surveys have shown that the old standbys that focus on high quality, certified seed that requires minimal weed control and less water is no longer the reason consumers give for selecting sod. Rather, Instant Beauty says it all; there's no waiting for seed to germinate and plants to mature. Instant Play indicates that there is minimal time before the grass can be played on, and even for golf courses this is an important economic reason for selecting turfgrass sod. Instant Erosion Control means that soil run-off is avoided waiting for grass to mature. What better reasons does anyone have for using turfgrass sod? Oh what wisdom these consumers have!

