



FROM DAVE'S DESK:

It is most important to us to have an on-going dialogue with our customers. We very much appreciate your patronage and

believe it is good business practice on our part to keep you informed of the latest information about sod and particularly about Piedmont Turf Farm and its products. We regret that we have not been able to launch this Newsletter earlier in the year, but pleased that we can remedy the situation now.

During the first six months of the year, we were looking for good bottomland for sod production in order to meet your sod needs. Happily, we found another farm so that we are doubling our acreage. We hated to disappoint some of you over the past few months when our sod was in short supply, or even worse, when we were unable to make deliveries in a timely manner. We're working to take care of both needs now.

The increased acreage will, first of all, give us time for crop rotations. Soil that has been in sod production for many years needs to be reconditioned by returning organic matter back to the soil. Green manure crops such as soybeans plowed back into the soil do this just fine and result in a better quality sod on well-used bottomland. Also, the additional land will make it possible to increase our acreage of Fescue (75 A more in 2000), to grow some Certified Tifway 419, and to plant other varieties of warm season grasses to be ready for market in a couple of years.

We have been unable to fill many Bermuda orders this spring and for that we are sorry. We

over-seeded the Tifway with Ryegrass and sold it this past winter: Spring weather has been cool and not very conducive for Bermuda to grow well.

And because I'm no miracle worker and can't do all of this by myself, I want to give grateful credit to all our skilled staff and team members, who have contributed significantly to this operation. We were fortunate also to have Martin Slutsky join our team in mid-July as sod production manager and take over the day-to-day responsibilities of production and harvesting. This will allow me to turn my attention to getting the second farm into operating condition. I will still be talking to you on the telephone and taking your orders, so I am not far away.

Enclosed with this Newsletter is a pamphlet on 'Watering New Turfgrass Sod' compiled and published by Turf Producers International, a not-for-profit association. It is being made available to you with permission to reprint as needed for your customers.

'We Are Always Growing' becomes our theme after celebrating eleven years in the business. You can see that it is an appropriate slogan as we grow in product potential with new land and by 'growing' our Piedmont Turf production and delivery team.

We look forward to strengthening relationships and successful associations with you, our customers.

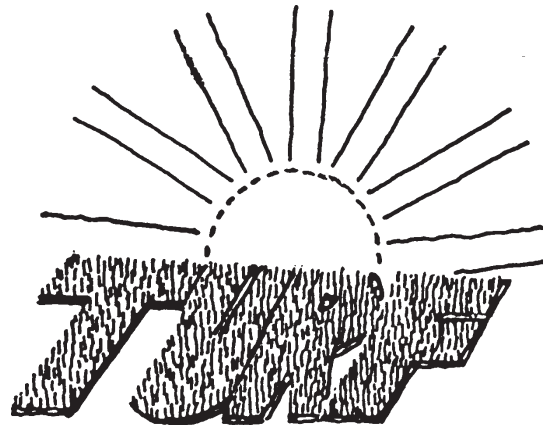
Summer Diseases of Turf:

High heat and humidity provide the right environment for fungus diseases Such as Pythium and Brown Patch. I'm sure you have heard of them. You may even have seen them and not known what they were or what to do about them. And you don't have to be in the Piedmont area of North Carolina very long before homeowners want you to tell them how to get rid of those spots. So let's talk about identification of summer diseases in Tall Fescue and their control.

(1) **Brown Patch** is a disease of the lower leaves and crown; the grass blades turn brown in ever-enlarging circles. It is further identified by tan lesions on the leaf blade with a reddish brown margin. Piedmont Turf maintains a preventive spray program for Brown Patch on all sod leaving the farm. The spray program protects the sod from the disease for up to two weeks. You too, or your customer, can treat the symptoms of the disease by spraying with fungicides DICONIL 2787 or CHIPCO 26019. When you see brown patches and if concerned about them — spray!

(2) Yet another summer fungal disease is **Pythium Blight**. If conditions are just right, good management practices and fungicides will not guarantee the battle will be won against Pythium Blight. Prompt action before the disease develops 'too much energy' is the watchword for control. In other words, be alert. Pythium can kill grass in a day or two. It is identified by the tan lesions on the grass blades. In addition, a white, cottony mycelium down within the leaf canopy is noticeable, but only early in the morning; it disappears when the day heats up. Piedmont Turf treats Pythium with a combination of DITHANE and SUBDUE. Other fungicides recommended for control of Pythium are BANOL and FORE.

Both diseases flourish under hot, humid conditions with nighttime temperatures remaining at 70°F or higher. When the weather is hot and humid, normal activities such as mowing, foot-traffic, or driving on the turf will add to its stress. And fertilizing the turf too late in the spring creates a more favorable medium for both fungal diseases. Use preventive treatments to minimize the damage of disease. Water the grass in daytime hours so that grass blades have a chance to dry out



before nighttime arrives. In general, it is best to water in the morning hours. Newly installed sod with its high moisture requirements is very susceptible to Brown Patch, so these precautions should be observed.

It should also be noted here that DITHANE, which is recommended for treatment of Pythium, is also effective on Brown Patch. So, if you are in doubt about your identification of the disease, use DITHANE. That way you will not lose your grass due to misidentification of Pythium. However, none of the fungicides recommended for Brown Patch will control Pythium.

For further information check with your County Extension Agent.

The Lighter Side

Author Dorothy Parker probably had the sharpest tongue of any of the Algonquin Round Table. On one occasion, a celebrity opened a door for her, intoning, "Age before beauty," and Miss Parker entered first, replying, "Yes, and pearls before swine."



Harry Truman's prescription for living to an old age: "Don't eat or drink too much, be circumspect in all things, take a two-mile walk every morning before breakfast, and pick the right grandparents."



Meet Martin Slutsky...

Martin joined our Team in mid-July and is responsible for the day-to-day operations of sod production and harvesting. We are pleased to have him aboard. Martin graduated in Turf and Horticulture from CVCC and we had the pleasure of working with him during an internship on this farm in 1993-94. After graduation he held positions with golf course and lawn maintenance organizations. Martin and I are both pleased that he has returned to the sod production industry. Stop by when you are in our area and make yourself known to him. He is looking forward to meeting you.

QUESTIONS I AM OFTEN ASKED...

Q: Is it a good idea to lay turf on top of old, worn out turf?

A: No, this is not a good idea, even if you completely kill the old turf first. Turf forms a dense layer of organic matter, and to put new sod on top of it creates a layer that has lots of air in it. Water will not readily move through the old sod layer and your sod will remain wet for long periods of time. Rolling will not help, because it merely reduces the porosity in the old sod layer. There are still too many large pores and the old sod will expand as it absorbs water. In addition root rotting diseases are a very serious hazard. Root rotting fungi live in the organic material in the soil. By laying sod over sod, an organic layer that is dark, wet and cool is created, perfect for fungi. This provides an excellent chance for a root disease to savagely kill the new turf within a year. Proper soil preparation is the most important part of a successful sod installation and establishment: Don't cut corners!



Q: Is thick cut sod better than thin cut sod?

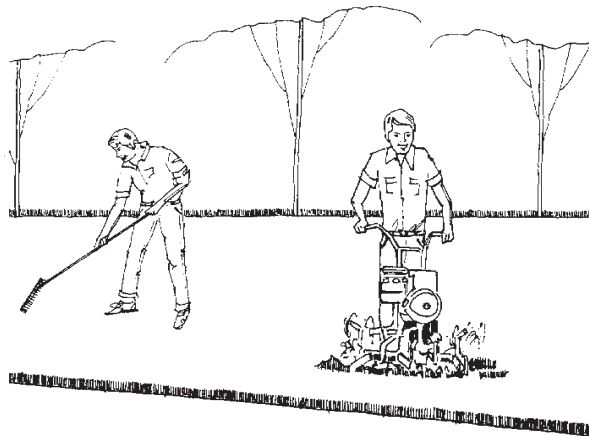
A: Since new roots are generated from the crown of the grass plant, and not from old cut roots, it makes sense that thin-cut sod (0.5 inches) has better rooting ability than thick-cut sod (1.5 inches). Increased weight associated with thick sod may mean increased machinery breakdown for the grower, highway overload fines, reduced truck carrying capacity, and quicker disappearance of topsoil. With $\frac{3}{4}$ inches of soil on sod there is about 100 tons per acre of soil. Do you want to handle about 100 tons of soil when 50 tons per acre can have the same or a better result? In addition, topsoil has value and that additional soil is a giveaway at the rate of about \$1,000 per acre. Thick cut sod can be beneficial in an athletic field where immediate play is going to occur. However, thick cut sod can never correct poor management practices and in most instances thin cut sod is superior.

Q: What is the best suggestion for establishing turf during hot weather?

A: This is a difficult task for even the experienced landscaper, but it can be done. The best suggestion is to control the heat and moisture carefully. It is imperative that the soil be pre-watered before the turf is installed. Both heavy watering 48 hrs. prior to installation and watering immediately prior to installation will prevent many later problems. Watering cools the soil, thus preventing shock to the turf, and it allows the turf to cool itself, thus preventing it from going into dormancy. After the turf is installed, it needs to be watered in the early morning. Avoid watering it frequently during the day because, in hot, humid weather very wet grass blades allow disease to kill the grass. Turf installation in the summer is difficult at best, but it can be done.

SOIL PREPARATION FOR A BEAUTIFUL LAWN

“The beauty is in the blades, but the ‘action’ is in the roots,” is a good adage to remember when growing grass. The value of proper site preparation and soil improvement before any planting takes place, makes it easier for the grass roots to penetrate deeply and evenly. Deep roots make a lawn more drought resistant, a more efficient water and nutrient user, and more dense as new grass plant shoots emerge. A dense lawn crowds out weeds and resists insects and disease.

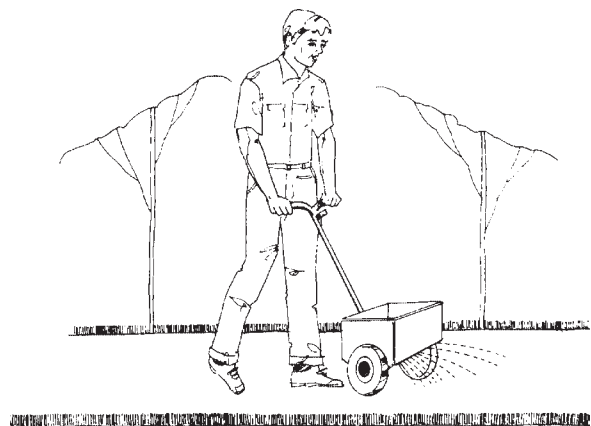


Follow these simple steps for a beautiful, healthy, and trouble-free lawn:

1. Clear the site of all building materials (wood, cement, bricks, etc.), as well as any buried debris larger than 2–3 inches.
2. Rough grade the entire area to eliminate any drainage problems on the property. This would include sloping the grade away from building foundations, eliminating or reducing severe slopes and filling low-lying areas.
3. Till to a depth of at least 3 inches, prior to adding any topsoil or amendments. This will control most annual weeds, alleviate subsoil compaction, permit bonding of the topsoil to the subsoil, and improve root penetration, air exchange, and water movement.
4. Add topsoil if needed (loamy sand, sandy loam, sandy clay loam, or silt loam) to improve the texture of the soil medium in which the roots will be growing.
5. Have the soil tested to determine the pH and plant nutrient level. *Acidic soils* (pH of 6 and below) can be improved with the addition of lime, which will be shown by recommendations on your soil test.

6. Apply a “starter fertilizer” that is high in phosphate (the middle number on a bag of fertilizer) at a rate recommended for by your soil test. The lime and fertilizer needs to be incorporated into the top 3–4 inches of soil to avoid root injury to the newly installed turf.
7. Smooth the entire site and finally roll the area with a lawn roller one-third full of water to firm and settle the surface.

The site is now ready for turfgrass sod. With this degree of careful and thoughtful soil and site preparation, the resultant lawn will be one of which you will be proud. It will require less maintenance...smaller quantities of water, fertilizer, and pesticides...as it maintains a high degree of density and recovers rapidly from normal use.



IMPORTANT NUMBERS TO REMEMBER

800-479-8873 toll free number
828-428-8359 local number
828-428-2093 FAX number
piedmontturf@conninc.com e-mail
www.piedmontturf.com web page