Turf Reawakening Demands Experts to Meet Its Challenge

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We are facing a situation today in the turfgrass field that is very likely to get worse before it gets better. Rapid development of interest in quality turf production has created pressures that will not be met until more determined and systematic effort is made to develop trained personnel than is presently evident.

Let's take a look at the picture. Industry has been quick to recognize the actual and potential market that the rapid expansion in turf production is creating. It is a poor year that does not see a dozen or more new chemicals developed specifically for use on turfgrass insects, diseases, and weeds.

The fertilizer trade is finally recognizing the tremendous potential for new business in the field of special turf formulas. In the last five years we have seen many of the largest companies in the business make a sincere effort to determine what is needed and to produce it.

Equipment manufacturers have been working overtime to develop new machinery and all sorts of gadgets. They hope these will meet the increasingly exacting demands for improvements that will do the more complicated jobs that a greater recognition of needs have created.

Improved Varieties

The seed industry is seeing "the handwriting on the wall." There are still a lot of seed mixtures being made and sold on a purely competitive price basis. And there will be for a long time to come. But there are very few catalogs of the better companies that do not carry descriptions and recommendations for the use of improved varieties of turfgrasses which have been developed because of their superior vigor and quality, disease resistance or some other special character.

Landscape and golf course architects and contractors, more and more, are realizing the necessity of using the best possible materials and construction methods if they are to build a good reputation.

This article is condensed from a speech made by Prof. Musser at the 29th annual turf conference held at Penn State University earlier this year.
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Supervisors of parks, playgrounds, sports fields, and other public recreation areas are beginning to understand that there is a lot more to producing and maintaining a decent turf cover on them than merely buying fertilizers on a low bid basis, and depending on political appointees for management. Supts. of cemeteries and grounds surrounding industrial plants and public and private institutions appreciate that competent management is the best protection of their investment in the turf on these areas.

Highway departments are finding that a knowledge of production principles and practices is essential to both the quality and economy of cover establishment and maintenance on the thousands of roadside slopes, medials and interchanges of modern highways.

Homeowners In It, Too

Home owners, in increasing numbers, are coming to a realization that good lawns don't just happen but are the result of the application of sound principles of production and care. If there is doubt of this, a check of the number of lawn samples received for testing each year by soil testing laboratories is very convincing.

And, finally, there is probably what is the most acute problem of all — the plight of our golf courses. Figures compiled by the National Golf Foundation on new courses completed in 1959, and additional courses under construction or in the planning stage, point up the situation. If the normal number of supervision replacements needed on old courses each year due to retirement, death, and other causes is added to the requirements on the new ones, the total demand goes far beyond the supply presently in sight.

While this outline of the need and demand for specialized training in turf management has, of necessity, been brief, it should be sufficient to set the picture. Now, no one is so naive as to claim that there must be the same degree of training in all these fields, even though we could wish there was. But certainly, if one is going to manufacture and sell fertilizers, he must know how the basic principles of soil fertility and plant growth apply to this specialized crop. The same thing applies to the production of chemicals.

And, surely, the man who undertakes to write a set of specifications for turf establishment must have a background of training that enables him to evaluate the conditions with which he is concerned, and adjust soil preparation, fertilizer, lime, seed, and all the other essentials, to them.