

1996 SPORTS TURF MANAGEMENT PROGRAM UPDATE
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1996 was a busy year for the Sports Turf Management Program at Michigan State University. We concentrated our research efforts in three major areas:

- 1) Sod establishment on plastic
- 2) *Poa supina* management for sports turf
- 3) Sand selection and crumb rubber effects on SportGrass™

Each of these areas will be reviewed in some detail in this paper and/or in subsequent papers within these proceedings.

Refined Wood Fiber Mat (Ecomat™) as an Establishment Media for Turfgrass

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Sodding is a method of turfgrass establishment providing an instant turfgrass cover. Conventional sodding methods involve strips of turfgrass with the adhering soil. This adhering soil layer has often been attributed to causing water movement and rooting problems when the soil of the newly laid sod does not match the soil type on the site where it is placed. This problem is accentuated when the turf is subjected to traffic during suboptimal growing conditions. Washing the soil off of the sod pieces during harvesting is a procedure that helps eliminate any potential soil layering problems. However, the use of washed sod is limited to turfgrasses with stoloniferous and rhizomatous growth habits. Stoloniferous turfgrasses have a tendency to perform better than rhizomatous turfgrasses because the stolons are less likely to be sheared and washed during sod harvesting. Washed sod without an adhering soil layer and/or intact root system is vulnerable to wilting in a shorter time than a non washed sod.

Sod production on plastic is a unique method of turfgrass establishment that provides many benefits compared to conventional sod production. For instance, root shearing is eliminated when sod is grown on plastic as a result of the roots inability to penetrate the plastic. Instead, the roots become intertwined with the other roots and the growth media that they are growing within; which allows for the establishment of bunch type turfgrasses for sod. Sod production on plastic allows for the sod to be produced on a number of contrived growth media. Currently, commercial sod production on plastic uses sewage sludge, wood mulch, and sand as the growth media for turfgrass establishment. The ability to select a particular growth media eliminates the potential for soil layer problems commonly associated with sod produced by conventional methods. Using a soil less growth media also provides a more light weight sod thus, enabling larger pieces of sod to be harvested.

Ecomat™ is a refined wood fiber mat consisting of fine strands of shredded wood fiber supported by a thin woven polyethylene backing. Manufactured in New Westminster, British Columbia, by Canadian Forest Products Ltd., Ecomat™ is used extensively as an erosion control mat along roadsides. Another use for Ecomat™ is as a basket liner for hanging plants. Available enpregnated with turfgrass seed (Take Home Turf), Ecomat™ provides a combination of grass seed and mulch making turfgrass establishment easy to apply and grow. Ecomat™, in rolls 135 feet by 4 feet, is light weight and has the potential for very large pieces of sod to be harvested, when used as a growth media for sod production on plastic.