

**PERENNIAL REPORT TO THE MICHIGAN TURFGRASS
CONFERENCE GENERAL SESSION**

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PROGRAM UPDATE

Twenty-one incoming students helped boost total enrollment to 40 students, which has been my goal since arriving here in 1993. Here are the program's student numbers since 1993.

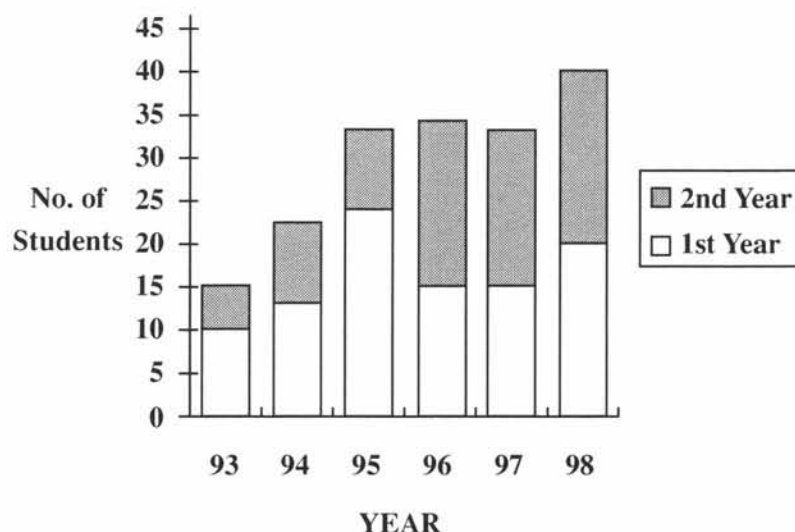


Fig 1. Fall-semester enrollment for first and second year Sports and Commercial Turf Management students.

Please note the number of first and second year students in this fall's class. I believe that it's important to maintain this balance as nearly as possible. Career interests for most of the students seem to be equally divided between athletic field related and commercial turf related jobs. However, more students are preparing themselves to become irrigation specialists.

FIELD DAY SURVEY RESULTS

Last spring I established height-of-cut plots on Kentucky bluegrass where mowing occurred according to the "one-third rule", which meant that each mowing removed no more than one-third of the leaf-blade height. For example, plots mowed at a 2-inch height were cut when the turf height was 3 inches, and a 4-inch cutting height necessitated mowing when the turf was 6 inches tall. This meant that different plots were often mown on different days. All plots received 1 lb. N per 1,000 ft² on or about Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, and Halloween. Irrigation to a 0.5-inch depth occurred twice weekly.

On October 17 all plots were mown at their respective heights. Two days later during the 1998 Michigan Turfgrass Field Day, Sports and Commercial Turf Tour participants were asked the following:

"In your opinion is the mowing height of each plot too short, too tall, or OK for a Kentucky bluegrass lawn?"

The actual mowing heights and the number of replications (3) were not revealed. The written responses, 251, indicated an overall preference for the 3 and 3.5 inch cutting heights (Fig. 2).

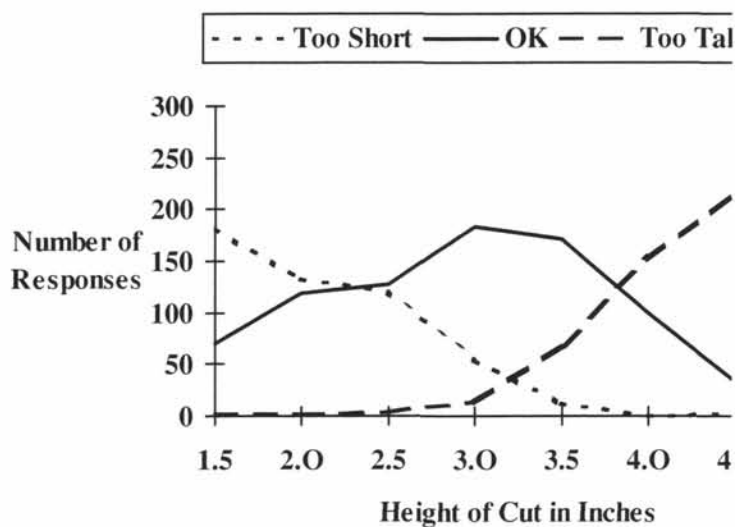


Fig. 2. Lawn height-of-cut survey responses of 251 attendees at 1998 Michigan Turfgrass Field Day.

RESEARCH UPDATE

With the study above, cutting intervals from late spring through early fall showed that 1.5, 2, and 2.5 inch heights-of-cut required mowing less than once a week via the “one-third rule” (Fig. 3). This first season of observation suggested a 3-inch minimum cutting height if Kentucky bluegrass is to be mowed once a week, which is a normal schedule for most commercial lawn mowing businesses as well as many homeowners. The quadratic responses for both average and shortest mowing intervals are probably anomalies and will most likely linearize over time with future observations. In other words, peaks for both measurements will probably end up being at the highest height of cut after two or three years of study. However, at this point the early data does suggest possible growth spurts at different growing heights.

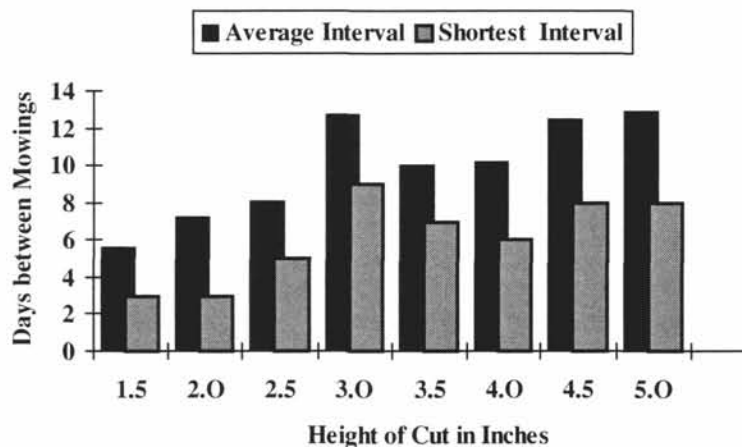


Fig. 3. Average and shortest intervals between mowings of Kentucky bluegrass mowed at 8 heights of cut between mid May and mid October of 1998.