SOD PRODUCERS PLANT FEWER ACRES IN 1978

Approximately 1,200 companies grow $225 million worth of sod each year according to a survey of 144 sod producers by Weeds Trees & Turf. In the process, sod producers spend $6.6 million for seed, $15 million for fertilizer, and $3.9 million on chemicals each year.

More than 700 U.S. sod producers were mailed questionnaires for this survey. Twenty percent returned them.

The universe of 1,200 sod companies was derived from input by the American Sod Producers Association and suppliers. Those considered actual sod farmers either have sod production as a primary source of revenue or farm a significant amount of sod acreage. Significant in this case would be more than 20 acres. Many nurseries grow a few acres of sod as a sideline to wholesale or retail business. For this survey, such nurseries were not included.

A value of $1,500 per acre of sod produced was used to calculate gross revenue. This figure is a moderate estimate based upon data from Maryland (see article page 33). Value per acre has been reported as high as $2,200 and as low as $1,300.

The average sod farm is 290 acres from which 112 acres of sod was sold in 1977 at a value of $168,000. Using median figures, the typical sod farm is 150 acres from which 70 acres was harvested in 1977 at a value of $105,000. A few sod farms in the 800 to 1,500 acre range inflated the average.

The average staff is six full-time and seven part-time employees.

According to these figures, sod growers harvest between a third and a half of their acreage annually. They expect to sell between 10 and 15 percent more acreage in 1978 than in 1977. However, respondents planted 15 percent less acreage in 1978. Perhaps this is in response to a predicted downturn in building starts.

Landscape contractors are the largest purchasers of sod, followed by homeowners and builders. Nearly two-thirds of sod growers sell to retail nurseries and 56 percent sell to wholesale nurseries. Athletic fields (58 percent) and golf courses (51 percent) are major buyers of sod.

Sod growers indicated that Tifway is the most common bermudagrass for sod. Penncross is the most common bentgrass. Pennlawn is the most common fescue, Manhattan is the most common ryegrass. Flotam is the most common St. Augustine grass, and Meyer Z-52 is the most common Zoysia.

Bluegrass, of course, is the dominant type of sod produced. Baron ranked number one with 47 percent of the growers. Merion still places strongly in second (27 percent), Fylk-

Annual expenditures projected for 1,200 sod producers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Projection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fertilizer</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>$75-$140,000</td>
<td>$7,000</td>
<td>$14,465</td>
<td>$15,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fungicide</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>$100-$27,000</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>$1,298</td>
<td>$660,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbicide</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>$20-$35,000</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>$3,604</td>
<td>$3,200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seed</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>$250-$85,000</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>$9,505</td>
<td>$6,600,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Equipment owned by 1,200 sod growers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Projection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aerator</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical Applicator</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dump Trucks</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lift Trucks</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat Bed Trucks</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickup Trucks</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trailer Trucks</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flail Mowers</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotary Mowers</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reel Mowers</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>2300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang Mowers</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertilizer Applicators</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Projection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sod Cutters</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Utility</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Contained</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sod Harvesters</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tractor Drawn</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-50 h.p.</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-100 h.p.</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100+ h.p.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Projected totals of acreage of sod farms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Projected to 1,200 farms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Acreage</td>
<td>349,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres Planted in 1978</td>
<td>128,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres Harvested in 1978</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres Sold in 1977</td>
<td>135,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For more information on how to cut out fungi diseases in turf and ornamentals.

Your turf and ornamentals need moisture to survive. However, wet weather brings out the worst in your soil. Fungi diseases like damping-off, blight and rot. Diseases that can stunt or weaken your plants.

Terraclor® and Terrazole® soil fungicides protect the value and beauty of your turf and ornamentals. Give you healthier, stronger plants, that are more beautiful.

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Terraclor, Agricultural Department Olin
P. O. Box 991, Little Rock, Arkansas 72203

Survey

izer ($50), followed by seed ($33) and then herbicides ($12). An average of $7.50 per acre is spent for fungicides.

The 1,200 sod producers own 3,350 harvesters and cutters, 6,070 tractors, 7,720 mowers, 2,300 lift vehicles, 2,800 pickup trucks, 1,900 flatbed trucks, 1,500 fertilizer spreaders, 1,200 spray rigs, 1,400 trailer trucks, and 450 aerators. A conservative value of equipment inventory of the average sod producer is $250,000. WTT

Types of seed used for sod and number of respondents indicating use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seed Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BERMUDA</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tifway 419 or 328</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Ana</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FD 102</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiff Green</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midiron</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coastal</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BENT</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S71</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penncross</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seaside</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto C-15</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLUEGRASSES</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baron</td>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merion</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glade</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fylking</td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelphi</td>
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<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Park</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Windsor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newport</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Touchdown</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Majestic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Penstar</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blends</td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FESCUE</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennlawn</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamestown</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K 31</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creeping Red</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RYEGRASS</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manhattan</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennfine</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>ST. AUGUSTINE</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floratam</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bitter Blue</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Living Carpet</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Blue-Green</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Common Texas</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZOYSIA</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>Emerald</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meyer Z-52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metrella</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARGENTINE BAHIA</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CENTIPEDE</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Names and addresses may be withheld from publication at the request of the author. All questions should be addressed to the author.