Fields of green

A contractor uses crop-sensing technology to save money and improve athletic turf conditions.

By JONATHAN KATZ

The athletic fields Pat Hester’s Clintar Landscape Management franchise maintains near Barrie, Ontario, have never looked greener, thanks to technology commonly used in agriculture. Last spring, the company began using GPS and crop-sensing equipment to record data about turf health each time it mows a field.

The data allow Hester to analyze turf conditions remotely, eliminating extra on-site visits. The company also uses the GPS-enabled location information to target areas that require fertilizer rather than performing blanket applications.

The system has helped Clintar save about $1,800 per fertilizer application on athletic fields, Hester says. “Before, we would fertilize the whole field and apply the same amount every time,” says Hester, who purchased a system called GreenSeeker from GPS technology provider Trimble Navigation. The system comes with a sensing unit, which the company mounted to a mower, and software.

The sensing unit shoots a beam of light from the front of the mower, takes a reading and stores information about the field. Hester downloads the data into the software program, which plots the readings on a satellite image. From there, he can see any stressed turf areas. The readings are color coded and graded on a scale of zero to one. For instance, a dark green reading of 0.9 indicates healthy turf. A yellow reading of 0.4 represents unhealthy turf.

“Green, healthy plants reflect light differently than stressed plants do, resulting in different data readings.”

The Ticker:

**MAINTENANCE**

**Polaris Industries** will supply **Ariens Co.** with a work vehicle under the Gravely brand. Polaris has executed similar partnerships in the past, such as its ongoing partnership with **Bobcat Co.**

Texas landscape firms **Greater Texas Landscape Services** (GTL) and **Hadden Landscaping** merged. Terms weren’t disclosed. The firms will exist as individual corporate entities and will share resources. Tucson, Ariz.-based The Groundskeeper will be the parent company of both. Hadden has locations in Plano and Fort Worth. GTL is based in Lewisville and has other service locations in Waco, Austin, San Antonio, Rio Grande Valley and Houston.

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