

TURF MANAGEMENT

A. J. Powell, Jr., Turf Specialist
"Turf" — The Anti-Pollutant

It behooves the sod industry and turf enthusiast to mount the pollution bandwagon and tell the nation just exactly how a high quality turf protects our environment. Anti-pollution is the current thought. Therefore, sod and other green vegetation is our immediate antidote to the current trend to help "clean up America". Let's go on a spree of insisting to our neighbors, club members, cohorts, business associates, and politicians that cleaner air and water is a must and that something can be done within our own industry.

There is a possibility of adding to the pollution by using pesticides indiscriminately on turf and not according to the label. Just as an engineer must study his blueprints, the pesticide user must read and understand the label. A turf plant is a living organism, as is the bald eagle, and must be spared within the safe tolerance limits of the pesticide which is applied directly to the plant. It is also noteworthy that turf pesticides are applied directly to a high organic layer that greatly decreases the amount of chemical run-off or leaching and holds the chemical for a longer period of time so that it may be used or dissipated safely. When used correctly, run-off or movement through soil erosion is minimal. So, with the many known advantages of turf in our environment, let's consider turf pesticides as "Environmental Protectants" rather than harmful pollutants. Turf and other green vegetation are anti-pollutants unapproached to even a small extent by any artificial medium.

Plants on land and in the sea supply man and animals with the oxygen desperately needed for life. The oxygen supply is said to be dwindling in our cities that have continuously overpopulated and undervegetated themselves. Considering that we breathe in approximately 20% oxygen, it is estimated that one average sized home lawn with healthy, vigorous turf can replenish the air with enough oxygen for eight persons. Not only that but plants absorb and detoxify sulfur dioxide, one of the most critical air pollutants. Some green plants are used as pollution detectors. However, preliminary work has shown that turf is more tolerant of polluted air than many plants.

Soil erosion and subsequent stream pollution is nothing new. But, the improved chances of getting immediate turf cover on highly erodable areas by sodding is relatively new. Considering the high repair cost of eroded soils in development projects, it is undoubtedly cheaper and surely less polluting to use sod.

What about eye pollution? Turf virtually eliminates glare and helps to detract from the ugliness of our asphalt, metal, and concrete inventions. Why are our utility lines being placed underground and advertisement billboards being virtually eliminated from our interstate system? At least some persons were quite proud of the recent Highway Beautification

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Program and the effects it has had to decrease the monotony that can be prevalent on slum-like highways. Landscaping reflects our inherent love of beautiful surroundings whether on our highways, in our cities or around our homes. This represents the natural intimacy between man and nature. Millions of city or suburbia dwellers flock to the outdoors yearly to discover the wonders of nature as given to our care by the one supreme Being. Artificial turf has placed its mark upon our illustrious society but no one praises its natural appeal just because it is painted green.

Turf and ornamentals also help to control heat pollution. Because of evapo-transpiration, a lawn is usually 20 degrees or more cooler than pavement or artificial turf and even at 5 feet above the surface, the temperature may be 10 degrees cooler above turf. The artificial turf mediums absorb heat and thereby alter our own micro-environment.

Vegetation also deadens sound thereby reducing noise pollution. It is said that both psychological and physiological problems are increasing because of increased noise pollution. Small areas of turf can then be considered as acoustical sound blocks to deflect, absorb and muffle the many sounds which make city and community living miserable.

Homeowners should be the big target for our salesmanship of turf as an anti-pollutant. People do not like ugliness in their surroundings and should be demanding better quality lawns for their new homes. Many people move from old homes because of the increasing slum-level appearance of their neighborhood. Poor lawns and rundown ornamentals tend to produce a ghetto atmosphere which destroys morale and property values alike. Many times, however, the enthusiastic activity of one homeowner can influence all others to improve his community.

At present, the homeowner can make many improvements himself. However, the present do-it-yourself system of lawn maintenance is being challenged. Several states are considering legislation that requires pesticide applicators to be licensed. This could be a "big break" for custom applicators, but it might also force many homeowners to neglect their lawns because of the added expense. Pesticides should be used correctly. But let's insist upon reasonable restrictions. If regulations become too severe, then the result can only be poorer quality lawns leading eventually to lawns consisting possibly of painted rocks, unstable sand, lawn rugs (so-called "artificial turf"), and artificial mulches. The pesticide controversy is only a small segment of the larger problem of pollution from other sources. Pollution must be controlled and everyone should advertise the fact that the Maryland Sod Industry has an "anti-pollutant" for sale.

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