

A Tribute to Turfgrass

by James H. Boyce, Turfgrass Consultant, Canada

"Next in importance to the divine profusion of water, light and air, those three physical facts which render existence possible, may be lying in the sunshine among the buttercups and dandelions in May, scarcely higher in intelligence than the minute tenants of that mimic wilderness our earliest recollections are of grass; and when the fitful fever is ended and the foolish wrangle of the market and forum are closed, grass heals over the scar which our descent into the bosom of the earth has made, and the carpet of the infant becomes the blanket of the dead.

Grass is the forgiveness of Nature — her constant benediction. Fields trampled with battle, saturated with blood, torn with ruts of cannon, grow green again with grass, and the carnage is forgotten. Streets abandoned by traffic become grass-grown, like rural lanes, and are obliterated. Forests decay, harvests perish, flowers vanish, but grass is immortal. Beleaguered by the sullen hosts of winter, it withdraws into the impregnable fortress of its subterranean vitality and emerges upon the solicitation of spring. Sown by the winds, by wandering birds, propagated by the subtle horticulture of the elements which are its ministers and servants, it softens the rude outlines of the world. It invades the solitude of deserts, climbs the inaccessible slopes and pinnacles of mountains and modifies the history, character and the destiny of nations.

Unobtrusive and patient, it has immortal vigor and aggression. Banished from the thoroughfares and fields, it bides its time to return, and when vigilance is relaxed or the dynasty has perished, it silently resumes the throne from which it has been expelled but which it never abdicates. It bears no blazeny of bloom to charm the senses with fragrances or splendour but its homely hue is more enchanting than the lily or the rose. It yields no fruits in earth or air, yet should the harvest fail for a single year, famine would depopulate the world."

-Anonymous

The above was written many years ago and so many persons have claimed authorship, including more than one U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, that it is impossible to give credit with any degree of accuracy. Whoever the author was, he certainly was well acquainted with the importance of grass to the human race, although one might question the statement "it yields no fruit in earth or air ..." since the seed of such cereal grains as wheat, oats, barley, rice and rye and kernels of corn are, in the strictest sense of the word, fruits and all belong to the grass family.

Reference to grass may be found in the Bible and other literature throughout the ages. Aside from its immense contribution to farm and field in producing fodder for animals and grains for both human and animal nutrition, grass plays an extremely important role in the production of turf for the comfort, recreation and the sense of well-being of the majority of the population. Almost everyone has an interest in turf, whether it be the home lawn, park, sports field, golf course or simply as a covering of a cemetery plot. Because of the increase in population and of the technological advances which permit more leisure time for most, the importance of turf is increasing phenomenally. There are large housing developments, great increases in the numbers of golf courses and other recreational areas and in highways to move people from one to the other. All are dependent on turf for much of their effectiveness. The purposes

of turf may be classified as: a) utility or functional; b) recreational; and c) ornamental; and d) monetary.

Among the utility or functional uses are the control of wind and water erosion of soil which is essential to the receding of dust and mud problems around homes, factories, businesses and schools. It was noted during war-time work with the armed forces that when mud and dust went uncontrolled at military bases, the personnel were sloppy, but as soon as all bar areas were tured, dress and military bearing were immediately greatly improved. Turf also has an influence in climate control; it reduces glare, noise, air pollution, heat buildup and visual pollution problems. Turf on highway medians and slopes make for safer driving by giving a stabilized surface off the highway for emergency stopping. While major airfields have hard-surface runways, it is important that the areas alongside these runways be turfed, if only to prevent ground loops if the aircraft leave the runway. At the same time, reduction of the dust problem protects airplane motors and precision equipment. Smaller airfields depend entirely on turf for landing and take-off.

From the recreational standpoint, many sports depend on turf for their usefulness. These include baseball, cricket, croquet, field hockey, football, golf, lawn bowling, lawn tennis, lacrosse, polo, racing, rugby, skiing and soccer. The contact sports, such as football, soccer and rugby, are served best by turf because of its resilience and heat reducing properties.

From the ornamental standpoint, turf provides beauty and attractiveness for human activities. Such aesthetic values are of increasing importance to counter the stresses of modern day living.

And, no one can deny that as soon as a property has been turfed, it increases greatly in value - far more than the initial investment in turf.



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Frost on the Pumpkin

October's here and Frost will do It's duty,

Changing leaves of green to Fall's florid beauty.

The end for many plants, shrinking in despair,

Coated with Frost in the chilling morning air.

Many plants will disappear, knowing all the while,

They'll re-establish in a new Spring style.

Much has been said of Frost on the Pumpkin,

Nature knows it's part of a yearly function.

Kenneth R. Zanzig