

At the Florida Turfgrass Association's December committee day, a prominent sod producer suggested that the FTGA should be the organization to spearhead efforts to standardize the definition of a "bushel" of sprigs. Since we are trying to define and position the FTGA as the "umbrella" turf organization, it is fitting that FTGA tackle this problem. But superintendents, as the end users, and golf course designers, who typically write planting rates, need to be principals in the creation of these new specifications. Frank Hutchinson, president of the

Golf Course Builders Association of America, has already written on the subject, and the GCBAAs should also participate in this process.

How do *you* define a bushel of sprigs? Do you just accept what the grassing company delivers and then take the heat if your grow-in took longer than a neighboring course planted at the same time? Do you relish the thought of a confrontation with the grassing contractor and the inevitable delays when the planting job is

lighter than you had anticipated? If you're faced with a deadline or approaching winter, do you just specify a heavier rate of sprigs and pay the contractor more money for what might have been the proper and normal rate in the first place? Shouldn't a bushel from company A be the same as a bushel from company B?

I first became aware of the problem about 12 years ago when I sent a man and a truck to pick up 150 bushels from a nearby grower for a green renovation and was blown away by the paltry pile of sprigs he returned with. I sent my assistant to Publix to get a bushel basket, and when we had finished filling, counting, and emptying (without compacting), we had a grand total of 16 bushels. The grower was not apologetic or receptive to my complaint, but begrudgingly allowed me to pick up additional sprigs.

A Georgia bushel is supposed to be 0.4 cubic feet. A Texas bushel may be anywhere from 0.4 to 1.23 cubic feet. An industry standard bushel is 0.4 cubic feet, and the U.S. standard bushel is 1.25 cubic feet. Dr. Al Dudeck from the University of Florida defines a bushel as the amount of sprigs harvested from 100 square feet, while others try to

define a bushel in terms of how many live plants per square foot have survived three to six weeks after planting. Volume seems to be the only practical means of measuring sprigs.

Other factors also influence the delivered volume. Sprigs are typically delivered in an open truck rather than stuffed into bags, bushel baskets, or other containers. Trucks used for delivery must be easily measured to determine their capacity in cubic feet. Truck capacity can be certified by the grower or measured by the buyer upon delivery. Settling, or "shrinkage", is inevitable even if the sprigs were compacted after loading.

Obviously, the standards must agree on whether the volume is figured before or after this settling occurs. Water loss occurs the longer the sprigs sit in the truck before planting. Sprigs grown on heavier soils, like Georgia clay, are usually washed under high volume to remove the soil. This process may also remove more of the unusable detritus like clippings and thatch, whereas sand-grown sprigs are typically not washed (and may allow for nematode contamination as some of the Georgia growers contend). GCBAAs President Hutchinson's recommendation is to adopt the U.S. Standard bushel of 1.25 cubic feet and figure in no more than 20% shrinkage at delivery.

I won't go so far as to say that this is the grassing industry's "dirty little secret," but the facts that the sod producer who raised the issue wishes to remain anonymous, and that the industry has done nothing to police itself, suggests that a strong outside organization or coalition of organizations needs to step in. Having no standardized definition of a bushel of sprigs has allowed abuses by some grassing companies either at the bidding stage or the planting stage. The honest sod producers and grassing contractors will support this effort.

Architect Jan Beljan, who took part in December's discussion, has agreed to solicit the support of the American Society of Golf Course Architects and personally participate in the project. If we move forward with this, our thinking was to establish some plots at Ft. Lauderdale using different varieties and variable planting rates with photographs taken every step of the way, including the sprigs laid out on the ground before planting, to help in writing the standards and determining proper planting rates.

What do you think?

What is a Bushel?

Mark My Words



Mark Jarrell, CGCS

2001 Florida Green Photo Contest

Category 1 - Wildlife on the Course: includes mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians.

Category 2 - Course Landscape: Formal Plantings: includes annuals, shrubs, trees, entrance and tee signs.

Category 3 - Course Landscape: Native Plantings: includes aquatic vegetation, grasses, shrubs, trees and wildflowers.

Category 4 - Scenic Hole Layout Shots: includes sunrises, sunsets, frosts, storms and any other golf hole view.

Prizes

- 1 st Place (\$100) and 2 nd Place (\$50) in each category.
- Editor's Choice-Best Overall Photo - \$100.
- All winning entries published in the Fall 2001 issue.

Easy Rules

1. Color prints or slides. Prefer prints. Only one entry per category.
2. Photo must be taken on an FGCSA member's course. Photo must be taken by an FGCSA member or a member of his staff.
3. Attach a label to the back of the print or slide which identifies the category, course and photographer. **DO NOT WRITE DIRECTLY ON THE BACK OF THE PRINT.** Each photo shall be attached to an 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper. Attach the print to the paper using a loop of masking



Category 1: Wildlife on the Course. the largest mouse in Central Florida. Photo by Joel Jackson.

tape on the back of the photo. Slides must be easily removable for viewing.

4. A caption identifying the category, course and photographer should be typed or printed on the sheet of paper below the print or slide.
5. Judging will be done by a panel of FGCSA members not participating in the contest.
6. Mail entries in a bend proof package to Joel D. Jackson, 6780 Tamarind Circle, Orlando 32819. No entries accepted postmarked after August 1, 2001.

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Being environmentally sensitive doesn't bother me at all. I have to drink water, eat food and breathe air just like everyone else. Being environmentally stupid is something else.

If recent edicts and proposals coming out of federal, state and local departments, legislatures and commissions are any indication of the mentality of people charged with representing and serving the people, then there seems to be a need for a massive recall of many elected officials and firing of their appointed staff members.

Before I generalize too much I must recognize the thoughtful, rational people in government who understand that, as employees of the public, they represent all stakeholders in a contentious issue. They are duty-bound to look at all the evidence and facts and do what's best for everyone. I commend the staff members in the Florida DOACS and DEP and the water management districts who are working with the

green and ag industries in Florida to find practical, responsible solutions.

What boggles my mind is the sheer arrogance and/or ignorance of some regulators who come up some real boneheaded decisions that miss real opportunities for improvements. For instance:

- In Houston, home of the petroleum refining industry, local officials are fighting air pollution by banning the use of leaf blowers and other small engine tools during the morning hours to prevent smog build up during the day. It makes it seem as though the officials are doing something, but it doesn't really address the major causes of air pollution in a large, bustling, industrial city.

- In Minnesota, there are folks concerned about phosphorus pollution of the lakes. The only phosphorus they are going after is that used on golf courses and home lawns. Those concerned choose to ignore agriculture, nursery production, industry, septic tanks, and natural decay of the annual leaf fall. The fact that surrounding states have found no direct link from lawn fertilizing to lake pollution doesn't not impress the officials. Minnesota hasn't

done such a study, so it doesn't count.

- In New Jersey, this year's drought brought swift targeting of golf courses as big water wasters. The fact that golf courses accounted for only .003% of the state's water consumption did not impress anyone. Once again fair and meaningful restrictions on all users were ignored in favor of hitting the easy target. Late breaking news indicates New Jersey is going to study the feasibility of using effluent water on golf courses. Maybe there's hope yet.

- In New York we won't mention the ban on spraying mosquitoes carrying the West Nile Virus, but rather talk about the proposed ban on using industrial-strength pesticides on public lands. When the staff of the sponsor of the bill was asked what constitutes an industrial-strength pesticide, they couldn't define it. However, they will be producing a brochure at taxpayers' expense to warn the public about the dangers of being exposed to an industrial-strength pesticide, whatever that is! Don't people already know that pesticides can be dangerous if not used properly?

- Here in Florida, water is doled out during drought conditions by designating days of the week to water. This might work under certain conditions, but consider this goofy scenario: In one city even the people who had effluent irrigation systems had to abide by the water ban. The result: unused effluent water is being dumped directly into a pristine river. Go figure. Maybe it was too hard for the water police to figure out who was on gray water and who was on potable. So the environment loses out in the long run.

Which brings to mind a recent conversation I had with a superintendent who got a call from an irate citizen who lives along his golf course. The person called condemning him for having a lush green golf course in the face of this horrible devastating drought. When the superintendent calmly explained that he was watering with 100% effluent water, the caller only replied, "Well, I don't care. You're not doing your part!"

All of these examples just go to prove that we have a lot of educating to do not only to the regulators and legislators but the general public as well. We can't let people in authority use weird science to make decisions that can affect our lives.

Weird Science

Green Side Up



Joel Jackson, CGCS
Editor