

A SURVEY OF SOD PRODUCTION IN 1979

John E. Kaufmann
Crop and Soil Sciences, M.S.U.

In March of 1979, a survey was mailed to 85 sod farmers in Michigan. The intent of the survey was to estimate sod acreage in Michigan, and the major cultivars used in Michigan sod production. The survey was prompted by continued concern among lawn care personnel finding greater problems with Fusarium blight on sodded lawns than seeded lawns. Research at MSU has shown that Fusarium blight is very severe in Fylking and Merion Kentucky bluegrass, regardless of whether seeded or sodded. The survey was designed to determine the frequency of use of these and other cultivars.

Of 85 surveys mailed, 27 were returned for a return rate of 32 percent. The average farm size was 178 acres and the average expected turnover for 1979 was 77 acres. Thus 43 percent of the sod farm acreage was expected to turn over in 1979. A total of 4,816 acres was accounted for in the survey. If the average size farm found in the survey was representative, a total acreage estimate of sod in Michigan is 15,050 acres.

Of the sod farmers returning the survey, 28 percent reported that sod was ready for harvest in about 12 months, while 68 percent reported that 18 months was average time to maturity. Only 4 percent indicated that sod was held in the field for 2 years.

Most (68 percent), were growing sod on muck soils. About 27 percent indicated that sod was grown primarily on mineral soils while only 4 percent were growing sod on sandy soils.

Table 1 shows the frequency of use of 19 turfgrass cultivars for sod production in Michigan. While Merion and Fylking are still being used in sod production, many other improved varieties are being used to a greater extent. Research at MSU to date has shown Adelphi and Majestic to remain free of Fusarium blight. Varieties such as Baron, Nugget, Glade and Touchdown have had some Fusarium blight but have recovered to again form a dense acceptable turf cover.

The data in Table 1 does not record the quantities of each cultivar. However, Michigan State University recommends blends of 2 or more improved varieties. Therefore, it is felt that the frequency of use of the improved cultivars in blends is more important than actual quantities. The data in Table 1 indicate that the frequency of use of improved cultivars other than Merion and Fylking is high. This should help reduce the number and severity of Fusarium blighted lawns in the future.

Table 1. Frequency of use of 19 turfgrass cultivars in Michigan Sod Production in 1979.

Cultivar	Frequency of use	Percent of Total No. of Farmers
1. Baron	24	89
2. Adelphi	21	78
3. Glade	19	70
4. Merion	17	63
5. Touchdown	12	44
6. Nugget	11	41
7. Cheri	10	37
8. Majestic	9	33
9. Victa	8	30
10. Fylking	4	15
11. Pennlawn	3	11
12. Benson (A-34)	1	4
13. Bonnieblue	1	4
14. Bristol	1	4
15. Delta	1	4
16. Galaxy	1	4
17. Newport	1	4
18. Park	1	4
19. Wintgreen	1	4