



TURFAX™

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CONTENTS:

- Beware - Wolf in Sheep Clothing!
- First State Seed Field Burning Ban.
- Upcoming International Event.
- JB Visitations.
- JB Comments.
- Build It Right The First Time!
- Upcoming JB Visitations.

BEWARE - WOLF IN SHEEP CLOTHING

One of the essential steps in the early planning phase of new turfgrass facility developments is the gathering of technical information prior to making a final decision. A principal source of technical specifications is from the manufacturer and/or marketer. This is a logical early step. Each source of information will most commonly emphasize the positive features and advantages of that particular product, which is the norm.

The next step is to seek impartial, comparative information about promising candidate products. There are five sources commonly used to varying degrees in securing this needed information. Unfortunately, some sources of information which traditionally have been viewed as impartial that have become tainted in recent years.

Testing Labs. Testing labs, such as for physical and chemical characteristics of soil, have been viewed as an impartial source of technical information, not only for the actual analyses, but also for the sources of various root zone mix

components. Unfortunately, some labs have become allied with certain suppliers of possible components. Thus, the question needs to be asked when contracting with a lab as to whether they have or will derive any monetary benefits, direct or indirect, from suppliers.

There also is the question of accuracy in analytical performance standards which appear to vary with some labs, particularly physical soil testing laboratories.

Independent Consultants. The first priority in consultant selection is to ensure that the proper expertise is possessed in terms of formal education and "real-world" experience, plus proven success. It also is important to select a consultant who will provide you with an impartial assessment, particularly in relation to products one may be considering for purchase. Be sure to ask the consultants whether they have in the past or currently have any arrangements with specific companies marketing products from which they derive benefit as a result of their sale and use.

Tax Exempt Organizations. A tax exempt organization that provides technical information to turfgrass practitioners must act as an impartial representative in order to sustain its tax exempt status. However, if the organization promotes a product from which it derives financial (ie. royalty) gain to the detriment of other equal or better products, they can be subject to a loss of this tax exempt status. Concerns in this regard should be raised with the appropriate governmental agency.