

WTT Survey Shows Sod Industry Headed for Vast Expansion, Increased Sales

America's sod growing industry stands at the foot of a giant ladder which leads to new levels of expansion. This is the consensus of state agriculture departments, sod growers' associations, and many individuals engaged in the burgeoning professional turf business.

Prior to the introduction of the monthly Sod Industry Section in July, *Weeds Trees and Turf* instituted an extensive preliminary survey of sod growers to determine the extent of their operations, as well as their needs and plans. Research into all 50 states turned up a vast spectrum of information—much of it diverse and even contradictory. But the survey did point out some definite trends in the sod growers' community. And it helped WTT begin a deeper, more probing investigation of the sod industry, an investigation currently underway which will, eventually, report the details and scope of the heretofore virtually unexplored sod business.

If nothing else, the initial sur-

vey proved that many industry members really know little of the extent of American sod production. Many state agencies tend to underestimate their own state's sod production, claiming that much of the sod used in that state originates elsewhere. For example, one Wyoming extension agent claims that "There has been an increase in the past three years of sod shipped in from Colorado, Nebraska, and South Dakota." Yet an official of the South Dakota Department of Agriculture reports, "There are no commercial sod producers in the state."

Communications Lacking

This seeming contradiction does not really imply controversy between the states. It reflects, instead, the general lack of communications and information within the sod industry, a relatively common occurrence.

Few states require certification of sod growers, so there is often no official source of data. Since today there are only a limited

number of large sod producing companies in any one state, there are few state sod growers' associations. Even state or regional turf associations do not have complete information about sod growers among their membership.

Does all this mean, then, that America's sod industry is in a disorganized and rudimentary shambles? Not at all. It merely shows that sod production in the U.S. is in a germinative stage of development. As a small Ohio grower put it, "New companies are springing up all over."

"New" is one of the most common words in the sod industry's vocabulary. "We are so new that it is difficult to determine dollar value (in the industry)," the Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service reports.

Ohio Extension Agronomist Don W. Griffis reinforces this opinion when he bluntly states, "Each day we hear of another sod producer in business or planning to go into the business . . . Without a knowledge of the

New Bentgrass Assn. "Off n' Running" in Oregon



Conferring officers for new Exeter Bentgrass Assn. in Albany, Ore., are, from left: Fenn Emerson, secretary-treasurer, Albany; Bill Rose, president, Woodburn; and Loren Hoven, vice-president, from Jefferson.

Bill Rose of Woodburn, Ore., has hoisted the flag to announce operations are now underway for the recently formed Exeter Bentgrass Assn. in Albany, Ore.

Rose was recently named president of this organization, which plans to promote better understanding of Exeter bentgrass, to maintain genetic purity of grass, and to assist in dissemination of information about the value and use of this new seed.

Exeter, developed and tested in Rhode Island, has proved to be an outstanding turfgrass, Rose says. A limited supply of seed will be available for consumer use this season.

Further information is available by writing to Exeter Bentgrass Assn., P. O. Box 356, Albany, Ore.