

Stolon Harvester Found at 4th Annual Cal-Turf Field Days

A new stolon harvester which can harvest up to 1,200 bushels of hybrid bermudagrass stolons per hour, was on display at the Fourth Annual Field Days, sponsored by Cal-Turf, Inc. at its Camarillo, Calif. farms, July 21-24.

The harvester was developed by Cal-Turf to reduce the cost of stolons and thus make hybrids more saleable for use on athletic turf facilities.

Nearly 300 architects, contractors, and recreation personnel attended the four-day affair intended to acquaint prospects and others with the latest in methods, varieties, and equipment within the turfgrass field.

Shown also was a planting machine for greens, developed by Cal-Turf president Tobias Grether. Of particular interest to golf course superintendents, the planter distributes stolons evenly and simultaneously presses them into the soil. A disc roller pulled behind is interchangeable with a solid roller, used to dress bentgrass at Cal-Turf.

Ability of hybrid bermudagrass sod to withstand abuse was demonstrated by retaining sod

for seven days before installing it on soil. Visitors saw sod at varying stages of recovery after the test had been prepared prior to the Field Days.

"While bermudagrass can withstand misuse, I do not recommend it," Grether commented. He warned viewers that they should not abuse bluegrass in California either or they would have sodding recalls and unhappy clients.

Tests being conducted on various grasses by Cal-Turf in several plots include daily compaction by a 700 lb. roller. A portion of each plot on display was covered with shade cloth to show degree of shade tolerance.

Salinity (salt) tolerance of bluegrass and Tifgreen hybrid bermudagrass was shown in specially constructed bins filled with various test soils. Soil having a high salt content won't support bluegrass unless the soil is corrected. Thus, the importance of matching turf varieties with the right soils was pointed out, according to Dick Morrow C-T field representative.

Need for extra nitrogen when sawdust or chips are added to soil at high rates was also shown.



Salinity tolerance is being checked here by Cal-Turf representatives Ed Mutoza (left) and Dick Morrow. Bluegrass on the right was completely brown 23 days after being sodded on high-salt-content soil. Tifgreen (left) on same soil survived. These boxes were built for the meeting.

Stolons were planted on varied soil mixes, ranging from all soil to sand with high rates of sawdust. The mixtures were planted on June 7th, and received no fertilizer after planting. Turf planted on pure soil was lush and green, but turf planted on plots containing sawdust was chlorotic, red stemmed, and very sparse. President Grether said, "No attempt is being made to encourage growers to plant in 100% soil, but when sawdust is incorporated, extra fertilizer must be added if turf is to establish fast and perform satisfactorily."

Presently the company is testing 23 different varieties of grass from all over the U.S. In the future, many of these will be tested on 20,000 square feet of play area at a local school. Wear and recovery from wear will be checked under persistent usage by active school children.

Cal-Turf was established in 1959 with one acre of turf. That was the year the Dodgers moved to Los Angeles and ordered all the turf the company had. It was sold out before it really started. Today the company has 300 acres in two locations: Camarillo and Patterson, California.

Coordinator for the educational affair was William Gourley, Jr., who told WT&T, "It was the most successful Field Days show we've ever held."



"Toby" Grether, Cal-Turf president (center), took visitors on tour of test plots at firm's Camarillo sod farm. Growing habits of new varieties of bent, bluegrass, and bermudas were seen, as well as their ability to withstand compaction and shade.