

Law Aids Sod Certification

At a dinner meeting of the Cultivated Sod Association of New Jersey we recently attended, Bill Cranston, chief of the Bureau of Seed Certification, New Jersey Department of Agriculture, announced that use of the term, "New Jersey Certified Sod," is now protected by state law.

Seems that a few growers (a small minority to be sure) and a few hotshot merchandisers had very lightly dismissed the hard-earned qualifications for certified turf. One supplier made the remark that "New Jersey Certified Sod" meant absolutely nothing, and that anyone could dispense sod, with or without the official blue label, and call it certified.

Quite understandably, this contention was not accepted by the people who have spent so much time and effort setting up the certification program, including personnel at Rutgers University, at the New Jersey Department of Agriculture (the official certifying agency), and members of the CSANJ. Consequently, the matter was referred to the state legislature some time ago, and now it's the law: there is only one certified sod in the state, that which is officially approved.

What does this mean to the certified sod grower? It means his extra efforts to produce a superior product and to upgrade the sod industry will be legally respected. He deserves this much; for there is no mistake about it, certification standards and inspections are meaningful and enforced.

What about the sodman who, for one reason or the other, does not grow for certification? This should help him, too, by weeding out the unfair competitor who pretends, usually somewhat mystically, his sod is "certified," or "approved," or "recommended."

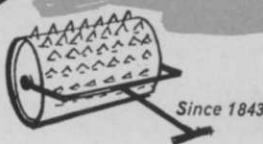
The New Jersey sod program has had many benefits: it has made it easier for the purchaser to be sure he is getting quality sod; it has made the grower more conscious of good production methods, and has provided a form of recognition for the quality grower. Its impact has extended to the seed producer, because he is aware of the high-quality seed required to meet the sod standards.

Other states have adopted or are considering sod certification programs. We think such programs will benefit the entire sod industry. But sod certification can do more harm than good unless its provisions are legally protected and its official identification labels "good as gold."

WEEDS TREES AND TURF is the national monthly magazine of urban/industrial vegetation maintenance, including turf management, weed and brush control, and tree care. Readers include "contract applicators," arborists, nurserymen, sod growers, and supervisory personnel with highway departments, railways, utilities, golf courses, and similar areas where vegetation must be enhanced or controlled. While the editors welcome contributions by qualified freelance writers, unsolicited manuscripts, unaccompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes, cannot be returned.

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