



John Nunes, left, John Nunes Mechanical Harvesting Co., Patterson, Calif., explains Nunes system of handling sod to ASPA group visiting his farm.



Three guests of Nunes at national ASPA event are, left to right: Hal Vogler, W. F. Miller Garden and Lawn Co., Birmingham, Mich.; William Johnson, Halmich Sod Nurseries, Brown City, Mich.; and Robert Hailey, Hailey Sod Farms, Omaha, Neb.

## American Sod Producers Discuss Industry At First Annual Meeting, San Francisco

Sod growers, meeting at San Francisco and for the first time as a national group, decided that grass is about the same color on both sides of the fence. In short, producers in every section of the country have their problems. These include narrowing profits coupled with rising costs, labor shortages, marketing, handling, and a host of lesser concerns.

Members of the American Sod Producers Association met in a separate session, but in conjunction with the annual turf conference and show of the Golf Course Superintendents of America. More than 70 attended the west coast session, several of whom were industry representatives. Ben O. Warren, Warren's Turf Nursery, Palos Park, Ill., expressed pleasure at the grower representation from all sections of the country, espe-

cially for their interest in this initial session.

A grower from each sod producing section of the country

outlined industry problems for his own area. Not too surprisingly, these proved to be largely common to the entire country.

Nunes sod harvester was demonstrated to ASPA group who attended San Francisco meeting. Harvester can be adapted to handle both rolled and slabbed sod in various sizes. Unit is sold by Nunes complete with special built Ford tractor.



Richard Horner, Horner Sod Farms, Wind Lake, Wis., observed that among the unique problems of sod are extreme weight and perishability. Selling price on a weight basis may amount to only 1¢ per pound. Further, he said, the goal is to get this product delivered up to 100 miles within 5 hours after receiving a call. In the midwest area, where he operates, near Chicago, Horner pointed out that the short season forces him to do 1% of the season's business in a single day. These are some of the rather unique management problems which face sod producers.

But problems do not end with the physical handling of the product. Horner found strong agreement among the group when he stated that there is an inability to get strong identification of the product, especially when sod is delivered in a truck other than that of the individual grower. Different levels of pricing also present a problem. Sod is sold in the field at a price too low to assure the grower a reasonable return, especially, in the face of rising costs.

**Ousley Represents  
Southern Sod Producers**

Representing southern growers, James E. Ousley, Sr., Ousley Sod Company, Pompano Beach, Fla., said that increased costs of land were forcing growers farther from the sale area. Produc-

tion costs are up, he said, and competent personnel to operate an extensive sod business are not available. Labor is also in short supply, Ousley said, and skilled help to handle machinery is almost impossible to obtain.

Ousley pointed out that in his area where sod is grown on sand based soil, sod can not be mechanically rolled because it will not hold together. This makes hand loading of pallets almost mandatory. Thus the labor problem is critical, especially when weekend help is needed. Drainage is another problem, he said, which is delaying a move to automation in harvesting of sod.

Ousley said that chinch bugs were becoming a greater problem; billbugs are also increasing. These latter entail expensive treatments for control.

Sod growers, according to Ousley, who own land rather than leasing land, and who are diversifying their operations seem to be making the most progress at the moment. He said that more bermudagrass is being grown as more golf course superintendents are using this when replacing sod. St. Augustine remains the big seller in the area.

Among marketing problems, Ousley mentioned that a lack of communications has existed among growers. Because of this, middlemen have been able to play one grower against another. This has led to pricing practices



## RYDER-ROLLER SOD ROLLING ATTACHMENTS

for

## Ryan Heavy Duty Cutters

**Now available in 16",  
18" and 24" widths.**

Attaches easily to your cutter in less than three hours with no drilling or welding necessary.

Fully guaranteed to roll your sod at your farm regardless of soil type, or money cheerfully refunded.

Pictured above is Mr. Ernest Willinger on his Turf Farm in Phoenix, Arizona, who has been using this unit all winter long, and reports that this rolling machine is "an absolute requirement for a grower with over 40 acres."

Address all inquiries to:

**RYDER-ROLLER CO.**

44533 STERRITT

UTICA, MICHIGAN 48087

or call 313 - 731-2570

**NOTE:** The Ryder-Roller unit is now a Ryan Product and will be at your dealers this spring.



Edward Mutoza, Nunes sales manager, visits with, left to right: Dr. Elwyn E. Deal, University of Maryland; Doyle Jacklin, Jacklin Seed Co., Dishman, Wash.; and J. L. Kidwell, Kidwell Turf Farms, Culpeper, Va.

which have forced some growers out of business. As a result, growers in Florida have recently decided to meet and discuss mutual problems and seek solutions as a group. Ousley said that there is a great need to educate the public on quality sod. An aid to sales is proving to be chain store distribution since such stores are adding sod as a line in many cases.

Speaking for the west coast sod industry was Tobias Grether, Cal-Turf, Inc., Camarillo, Calif. Grether said credit problems in dealing with landscapers was one of the major headaches. Another major problem in the California area, he said, is the need to provide a firm supply of 9 varieties, as Cal-Turf does, and to deliver sod at altitudes ranging from sea level to 6000 feet. This creates problems in handling the product for delivery.

Hurting the sod market on the west coast, Grether said, is the fact that the public has no real consciousness of sod. Concept of the product is generally unknown, and seems unique to the area. Less than 1% of Cal-Turf sales, according to Grether, come in over the transom. As a result, salesmen are needed to move the product, and the product must be kept high in quality.

#### Oversupply of Sod On Eastern Market

Wiley Miner, president of Princeton Turf Farms, Inc., Cranbury, N. J., said growers on the east coast are troubled with an oversupply of sod. People maintain land in sod which is being held for speculation. Miner pointed out that large, expansive fields for sod production are difficult to obtain in the New Jersey area because of the pressure

for land. Miner said Princeton's largest field was 140 acres and that their sod is cultivated on 16 farms which stretch over a 22 mile area. In Maryland, however, he said, the corporation does have large fields.

Miner feels that the sod industry needs guidelines and standards. He believes growers would gain by being able to provide the landscape architect a set of uniform specifications. This, Miner told growers, might help build and hold the market. He called on the group to "dig in" and to make ASPA a working organization.

Growers met only on Feb. 21 in a formal session. Most of those present, however, accepted the invitation of John Nunes to visit the Nunes sod farm at Patterson, Calif., on the following day. This turned out to be a highlight of the first annual session. Nunes demonstrated harvesting and other equipment used in his operation.

Officers and directors who were elected at the July 11, 1967, East Lansing, Mich., organization meeting were reelected to serve an additional term. President is Ben O. Warren, Palos Park, Ill. Vice-president is Robert Daymon, president of Emerald Valley Turf Nurseries, Howell, Mich. Elected treasurer was Louis DeLea, Louis DeLea & Sons, East Northport, Long Island, N. Y.; and secretary, Richard Horner, Horner Sod Farms, Wind Lake, Wis. Other members elected to the 7-man board besides the officers were: Tobias Grether, Cal-Turf, Inc., Camarillo, Calif.; J. E. Ousley, Sr., Ousley Sod Company, Pompano Beach, Fla.; and Wiley Miner, Princeton Turf Farms, Inc., Cranbury, N. J.; George B. Hammond, Paint Valley Bluegrass Farm, 71 E. State St., Columbus, O., continues as executive-secretary. The group voted to again hold their annual meeting in conjunction with the GCSAA.

## Beck's **LAWN-O-MATIC PLUGGER-SPRIGGER**



Revolutionary **NEW**  
**GRASS-PLANTING  
MACHINE**

**\$795.00**  
f.o.b.

- Plants plugs or sprigs.
- Cuts labor by 90 percent or more.
- Plants Zoysia, Bermuda, Centipede or St. Augustine.
- Plants up to 3 acres per day.
- Rugged, trouble-free design.
- Self-propelled . . . easy to maneuver and load.
- Leaves lawn smoother—firmly rolled.
- 1, 2 or 3 row models available.

For further information write:

# BECK MANUFACTURING CO.

Box 752 E

Auburn, Ala.