



## SOD INDUSTRY SECTION

Using the low-slung JD300 turf tractor with terra tires, Harold Gunn has eliminated wet weather ground problems. Result is better quality, fast growing sod plus savings in labor.

# High Flotation Tires Solve Problems At New Jersey Blue Grass Lawn Farms

Wet weather and soggy ground conditions have always plagued turf growers during the critical growth period between March 15 and June 15. Harold Gunn, co-owner of Blue Grass Lawn Farms, Vincentown, New Jersey, has solved these problems. In doing so he's growing a better quality, faster-growing sod; saving 12,000 yards of sod a year; saving eight man-hours of labor a day; fertilizing 60 more acres a day; mowing 53 acres a day more; and upped spraying production by eight acres a day. How? Gunn is using a combination of low-slung John Deere Model JD300 Turf Tractor and nearly four-foot-wide (44x41:00-16A) Goodyear Terra Tires which give greater flotation, permitting work during weather

and ground conditions that heretofore stopped or limited production.

Common in the sod industry is the problem of obtaining maximum maintenance time in the 90 days before June 15 when the seed is building a root system and plant body. Sod lies dormant during hot weather. Therefore, proper maintenance with minimum ground disturbance during the spring when temperatures are low insures top quality sod and faster growth.

"Using heavier maintenance tractors with normal-size tires to pull fertilizer distributors, sprayers, and mowers usually results in lost time," says Gunn. "Tractors bog down or can't work at all because of wet-weather ground conditions. Added to

this, normal tires cause indentations which result in a loss of cultivated sod."

"Before we bought the JD300 with Terra Tires, we were as much as two weeks late getting started due to inclement weather and lost time in useful tractor production. Sticking a tractor used to occur at least three times a day. This meant another tractor, working at another location, would have to stop its work and be used to retrieve the stuck machine . . . resulting in lost service of both tractors. It cost the firm up to eight man-hours daily of non-productive time to retrieve disabled equipment. During a season that amounted to over 12,000 yards of sod."

Gunn tried to solve the prob-



Much of the acreage of sod at Blue Grass Lawn Farms is under water following a heavy rain. Even though ground is wet, mowing is seldom a problem with the wide rubber tire type of equipment.

lem by fabricating 48-inch wide by 48-inch diameter steel wheels. The steel wheels had the needed flotation, but little traction over the wet slick ground or during mowing operations. Gunn mows every other day.

Since adopting the new equipment combination, Gunn claims his company has encountered no wet-weather problems or no loss of sod, and work that required three men and three tractors can now be done with two tractors.

"An increase of over 53 acres of mowing a day has been accomplished," says Gunn. "In addition, the spraying operation has been increased by eight acres daily and fertilizing time has been cut from 10 to 12 days to five and six. That's a fertilizing production increase of 60 acres a day."

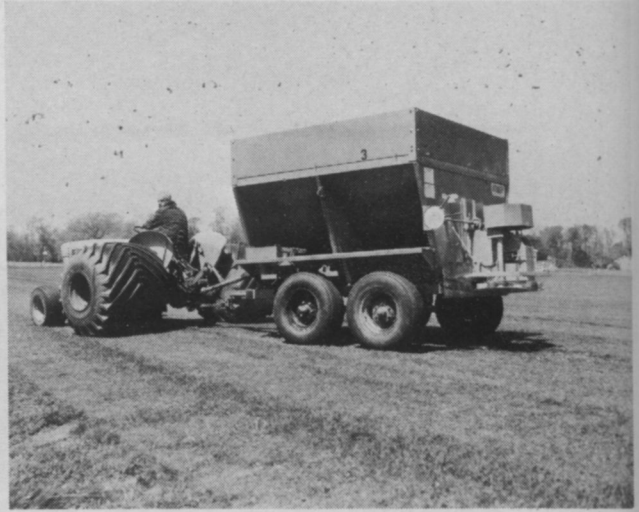
Gunn explained that many turf growers have to resort to use of helicopters for spraying in order to fertilize sufficiently during the growing period. "We



With early spring sod care problems solved, cutting and rolling good sod is relatively simple, according to Gunn. Sod is cut 16" x 84" with Ryan cutter and rolled with Ryan roller.



Terra tires present no problem when pulling 200-gallon sprayer used by Gunn. Small steel wheels were custom fabricated.



Up to eight tons of fertilizer can be hauled in this Wilmar spreader and handled without compaction or danger of sticking.

even fertilize in the rain," says Gunn. "The fertilizer works faster when mixed with water."

Innovation is not new to the operators of Blue Grass Farms. Harold, Jack, and Owen Gunn, co-founders of the 20-year-old firm, were the first to introduce mass-produced bluegrass sod in New Jersey. They're considered among the leading producers of top-quality Merion bluegrass in the area. The Gunns were the first in New Jersey to cut and deliver sod in rolls of about one square yard (16x84 inches) which reduced the time factor and labor costs for landscapers. They presently operate over 735 acres, cultivating Merion and Merion-Kentucky bluegrass sod.

### Warren's Develops Hardy, New Bluegrasses

Warren's Turf Nursery, Goshen, N. Y., has been conducting research on bluegrasses for several years at its national headquarters in Palos Park, Ill.

Warren's Shade Bluegrass (A-34), tested under varying conditions, will tolerate up to 65 per cent shade, says the company. Its similarity to Merion (not shade-tolerant) makes it an ideal grass to plant in partially shaded areas of lawns where

Merion or Kentucky bluegrass is used in sunny areas.

A bluegrass designated "A-20" has proved to be resistant to rust, mildew, smut and leafspot, says Warren's. It makes a dense, dark green turf but does not develop thatch as readily as most bluegrass due to its upright growth characteristics.

Warren's A-10 Bluegrass, tested in hot, humid climates where Kentucky bluegrasses do not usually grow well, has indicated a temperature adaptability range from  $-20^{\circ}\text{F}$  to  $+100^{\circ}\text{F}$ , reports Warren's. It retains a dark green color throughout the growing season.

Two other new bluegrasses—A-25 and A-26—do well with a mowing height of only  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch and can be used ideally for home-putting greens, croquet courts and other play areas, according to the company.

### Tour Stimulates Interest in Bluegrass Production

W. J. Walden, Kentucky's major producer of Bluegrass, recently hosted a "Bluegrass tour" of his farm at Midway, Ky., designed to stimulate interest in

Bluegrass seed and sod production.

Sponsored by the Kentucky Seed Improvement Assn., the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and the Cooperative Extension Service, the tour was attended by some 75 farmers, agronomists, county agents and state officials.

Of particular interest during the tour were the new stripper-loader unit that enables two men to do the work of 28 and the one-man sod cutter that can cut sod as fast as an operator can walk. These machines helped demonstrate how sod production—at low expense and with minimum labor—can earn \$350 or more per acre, according to Walden's reports.

Walden claims that Bluegrass grown from seed of Kentucky origin has proved superior in performance. Despite this fact, however, of the 40 million pounds of seed marked and sold as Kentucky Bluegrass last year, only 184 thousand pounds were produced in Kentucky, says Walden. Since 1960, he explains, foreign importation and competitive production of seed in northwestern states have resulted in a drastic decline in the production of Kentucky Bluegrass seed.