



Sod Industry

By DR. HENRY W. INDYK*

LOOKING at the future of the sod industry obviously is a more difficult task than reminiscing about its past. A more comfortable and positive position would be to observe rather than predict.

It is evident, from a brief look into the past, that the progress and developments of the sod industry are of rather recent date. One of the most striking developments has been the rapid emergence of sod production as a highly specialized and sophisticated industry from the "pasture stage" of long standing. The primary stimulus for such rapid advancement was the realization that there was a demanding market for a high-quality sod. The industry quickly and successfully responded to satisfy this market.

Striking improvements in sod

quality were achieved through the adoption of intensive turfgrass cultural practices, improved turfgrass varieties of known genetic purity and high-quality seed. The improved quality of sod more than any other single factor stimulated the surging interest in the use of sod.

A continued increase in the use of sod as a means of establishing home lawns and other turfgrass areas can be expected as long as the sod industry continues to provide high-quality sod of improved turfgrass varieties. Statements of this nature should not be misinterpreted to mean that there shall be or there presently exists a large unsatisfied demand. The industry has kept pace with the demand and there is every reason to expect it will continue to do so.

The need for more efficient production will become increasingly critical. In view of the rising costs of all factors of production whereas the price tag on the sod has remained somewhat stable, it will become increasingly difficult to maintain a desirable profit margin. Under this type of "squeeze" that is presently in effect, it becomes highly essential to take a critical look at the total operation to seek out more efficient means of production.

Mechanization will become a prime consideration in achieving more efficient production. Considering not only the high cost of labor but also the difficulties encountered in obtaining satisfactory labor, sod production must become a mechan-

ized industry. Furthermore, there is no immediate hope for improvement in the labor market. The area in many sod operations that is most in need of mechanization is the harvesting and handling. Great and rapid advancements in the harvesting and handling of sod have made equipment available that has substantially reduced not only the costs but also the drudgery of this phase of sod production.

It is interesting to note that many of the developments in sod harvesting have been developed by individuals actively engaged in sod production. The major stimulation was their recognition of the need for achieving a more efficient means of production.

Closely associated with mechanization in the sod production industry is a need for mechanization in sod placement. A breakthrough in this area was observed at the American Sod Producers Summer Field Day conducted last August in New Jersey. Sod placement is plagued by similar labor problems as the production phase. The development of efficient mechanization in sod placement will be a major factor influencing the future interest and demand in the use of sod for the establishment of turfgrass areas.

Many new turfgrass varieties will become available. The industry will no longer be a predominantly single variety industry. It will become increasingly important to become acquainted with new varieties to de-



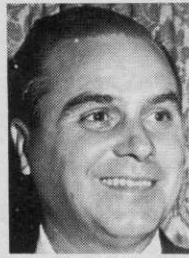
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termine this adaptation and acceptance within a specific marketing area. Many of the new varieties will be similar in appearance. Positive identification on the basis of visual morphological characteristics will become increasingly difficult. The value and necessity of sod certification programs, as a means of assurance of genetic identity, will become more evident.

In addition to new turfgrass varieties, other technological advances can be expected. The necessity of staying abreast of new developments will become increasingly important. Various means of gaining turfgrass knowledge pertinent to the production of sod are presently available. Turfgrass conferences and field days, publications such as Weeds Trees and Turf, and membership in state, regional or the national sod producer organizations provide unlimited opportunity for keep up-to-date.

In order to be a part of a rapidly advancing and progressive sod industry, a sod producer no longer can afford to be content with the accomplishments of the 60s but must look forward and be a part of the changes that will be coming in the 70s.



Outlook—'70

Contract Applying

By STAN G. RAPLEE, JR., Washington Tree Service, Inc.
Past President, Pacific Northwest Pesticide Applicators, Inc.

ON OCT. 14, 15, 16, Seattle had the dubious honor of being host to a three-day hearing on the banning of DDT. While no decision will be made until the end of December, we feel there may be some restrictions forthcoming.

The hearings pointed out two things. First, there is a well-prepared group fighting the use of DDT and all chlorinated hydrocarbons. If your state has not yet gone through this, be prepared. Opponents are organized and have a big lead on us. Under such names as "environmental council," they appeal to the public. The news media, while crying they are not biased, most certainly are. They favor headlines. Secondly, we must do something to improve our public image. Because we are mostly small businesses, and unable to do much by ourselves, I

would say one of the most important things that must be done is to at least lay ground work for a national organization in 1970. Our association, Pacific Northwest Pesticide Applicators, Inc., now includes both Washington and Oregon. The job is a big one, but it's the old story of "united we stand, divided we fall."

1970 should be a good year if we do the right things. Our cancellations indicate tighter money. A lot of people still look at spraying of trees and shrubs as a luxury, but most of them will find they have become accustomed to living without insects. They will be back. In the meantime, there are literally thousands of people who aren't aware our service even exists.

The sellers' market we have had the past few years is slowing down. More attention will have to be giv-



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