

**SOD
INDUSTRY
SECTION**

American Sod Producers Assn. Stages California Sod Blast

The American Sod Producers Association has become a mature, well established, industry oriented organization. Established at Lansing, Mich., only five years ago with a skeleton group of producers, membership is now nationwide, and includes an impressive group of Canadians. The ASPA '72 conference and field day, just concluded at Anaheim,

Calif., Feb. 21-24, pulled more than 300 persons, the majority being growers.

Few organizations can boast the educational program put together for this session by Executive Secretary Henry Indyk, Rutgers University. Featured on this program were three of the best known turfgrass plant breeders in the industry: Dr.

Victor Younger, University of California, Riverside; Dr. Glenn W. Burton, Georgia Coastal Plains Experiment Station, Tifton, Ga.; and Dr. C. Reed Funk, Rutgers, New Brunswick, N. J.

Supplementing their discussions on plant breeding and new varieties were other national leaders in culture and management of cultivated sod. These included Dr. James Beard, Michigan State, East Lansing, Donald Juchartz, Wayne County, Mich., and Tobias Grether, president of the association and of Cal-Turf, Inc., Camarillo, Calif., host to the event.

Dr. Younger reviewed physiology of the sod plant and briefly discussed the problem of moving sod in hot weather. He said this is a difficult situation at best, and suggested good seedbeds and optimum soil management to encourage quick knitting in of newly installed sod. Maybe, he stated, this is the time to also start a disease control program. The obvious out, of course, he said, is to push as many sod sales during the spring and fall months as is possible.

Both growers and guests were treated to a brief history of warm temperature grass development by Dr. Burton. He reminded the group

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Picture Identification: Tobias Grether, president, Cal-Turf, Inc. Camarillo, Calif. and ASPA Convention host; Dr. Henry Indyk, Rutgers University and ASPA executive-secretary; Ralph Daily, Cal-Turf farm manager; Dave Austin, U.S. Borax; Mel Hansen, Tuco-Upjohn; Sam Besse, west coast representative for Elanco.



Tobias Grether



Dr. Henry Indyk



Ralph Daily



Dave Austin



Mel Hansen



Sam Besse

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that in 1936, in the south, most lawns were swept daily because they had no grass. The only grass prevalent at the time was carpet grass which had been spread largely by cattle. The next improvement came with the introduction of centipede grass from China, which, he stated,



Bob Scagnetti, sales manager for Toro's institutional products, demonstrates gang mower.

is still a good one for the South. Then came St. Augustine or "Charleston grass" as it was generally known at the time. In 1946, a breeding program was started for bermudas with selections from golf courses and other areas. Almost 100 bermudas were evaluated in 1947. From these came Tifton 57, which eventually became Tiflawn. Next was Tifgreen 328 which is today the most popular hybrid for golf greens in the South. Tifway bermuda, another in the chain proved to have frost tolerance which made it attractive as a lawngrass. Another selection out of Tifgreen, Tifdwarf became the best and is now being used on greens. Burton listed 18 varieties of improved bermudagrasses, not one of which was available in 1936.

Looking ahead, he expects exciting developments for St. Augustine research now being done in Florida. Right now, Burton said, a total of \$10 million is needed to solve warm season turfgrass problems and to develop new varieties and management programs.

Dr. Funk pointed to the need for breeding disease resistance into new turf grasses. He also said wear tolerance is a factor which needs more study, especially where grasses are



Fumigation, an expensive procedure for sod producers, is in use on Cal-Turf.

being used on athletic fields. With restrictions on chemical use, Funk said insect resistance is becoming a greater factor in the quest for new varieties. No one grass today, Funk stated, serves all purposes. For this reason, he believes that blends have a place in improving performance. The approach to research today in-
(continued on page 58)

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cludes three methods, namely, selection, mutation, and finally, hybridization, he stated.

Juchartz told growers that record-keeping and intensive management study is a must for business success. He said a grower must know operational costs and predetermine his profit. In short, he said, the successful grower today sets a profit goal and then prices accordingly. He

used information adapted from Co-operative Extension Services at Massachusetts and New York in showing the effect of pricing on profits. For example, Juchartz said: To obtain the same gross income, a price increase of 3% means that only 90% of the original volume has to be sold to bring in the same gross income. With increases of 5%, only 83.5% of the original volume of sod has to be sold; with 7¼% only 77% volume; with 10% only 71%; with 15% only 65%; and with a 20% increase in price, only 58% of the

original volume will produce the same gross.

This is well and good, Juchartz said, but he suggested that the group also consider the effect on gross income of a price cut. A 3% price cut requires an additional 13.6% of original volume to produce the same gross income. But a 5% price cut requires that 25% more volume be sold; 7¼% requires 43% more; 10% requires 67% more; 15% requires 150% more; and finally, a 20% price cut requires that an additional
(continued on page 64)



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Jacobsen gang mower on display at ASPA field day demonstration.



Prior to field demonstrations crowd inspects equipment. Nunes sod harvester is in foreground.

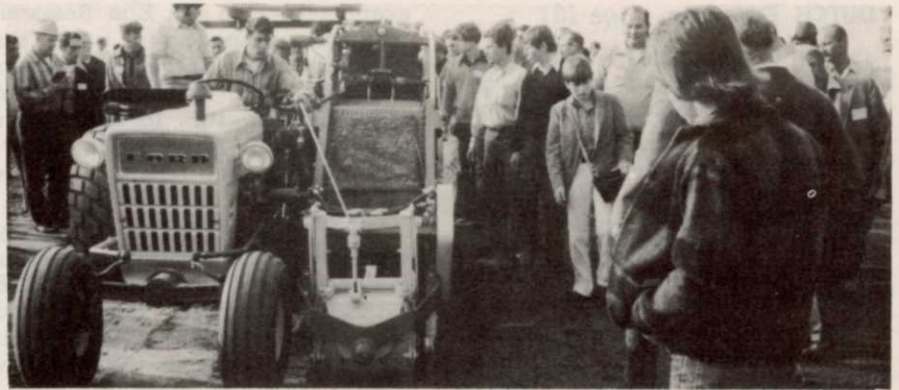
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400% volume of sod be sold to gain the same gross income.

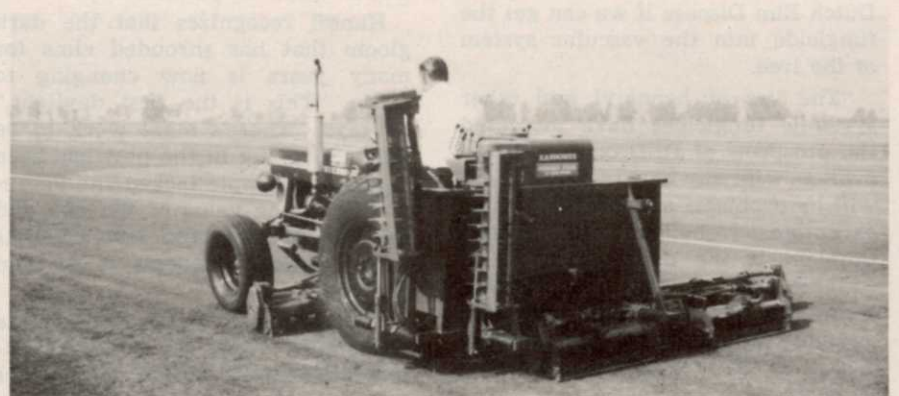
Besides an intensive educational program, growers toured University of California research plots and one ranch of host Tobias Grether. Tours included a look at test plots of U. S. Borax, Elanco, Tuco Upjohn and others. A major exhibit and field day was also held on the Grether ranch where in addition to late models of more or less standard equipment, several new items were introduced. Toro displayed a hydro-mulcher, Grether demonstrated his custom-built, 12-foot flail mower for clipping sod, John Nunes demonstrated his new model harvester which includes a sod cutter and sod folding mechanism, and Ransomme demonstrated a new sod slitter attachment for their mower.

Headquarters for the session was Disneyland Hotel, adjacent to Disneyland, and this attraction proved worthy in that more families accompanied growers than at any previous meeting.

Next major event will be a summer meeting hosted by the Ontario, Canada, Nursery Sod Growers July 10-12.



New sod harvester model manufactured by John Nunes features sod cutter.



Raised gangs on the new slitter units demonstrated by Ransomme.

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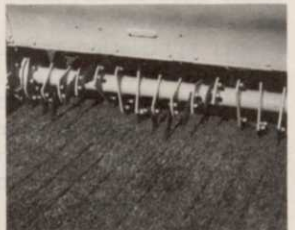
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