

Sod is covered by tarp before delivery to prevent drying out. Red Hen is owned and managed by Harold Hetler, Ron Keigley and Victor Keigley.

Compromising At The Sod Farm

IF THERE is one thing that is constant, it is change. In the past 16 years with regard to bluegrass varieties, we have experienced many changes and many more are planned for the years ahead. Here's a few examples to illustrate my point:

We have changed from rolling sod by hand to the sod harvester which rolls it, conveys it to men who place

By **VICTOR R. KEIGLEY**
Red Hen Turf Farm, Inc.
New Carlisle, Indiana

it on pallets ready for the fork lift to load on wagons or trucks. We have decreased labor cost to the customer by eliminating unloading of sod by hand through the pallet and fork lift system which places

the sod exactly where he wants it.

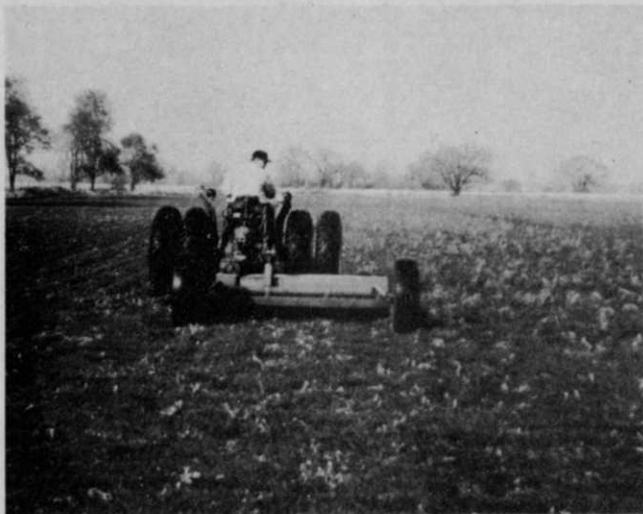
We have also had some changes in the varieties and the blends of bluegrasses grown since our beginning in 1956. When we first started, we grew one field of Merion and one field of Kentucky bluegrass. When I think back to those days there was really no reason for growing two different fields of sod except that everybody else had two or more varieties, and you could sell the Kentucky for less money and have an excuse.

But one problem situation was apparent in Kentucky bluegrass production. Leafspot or "melting out" disease occurred during early spring's cold wet weather. This caused a delay in harvest and actually increased the cost of growing sod that was selling at a lesser price than Merion.

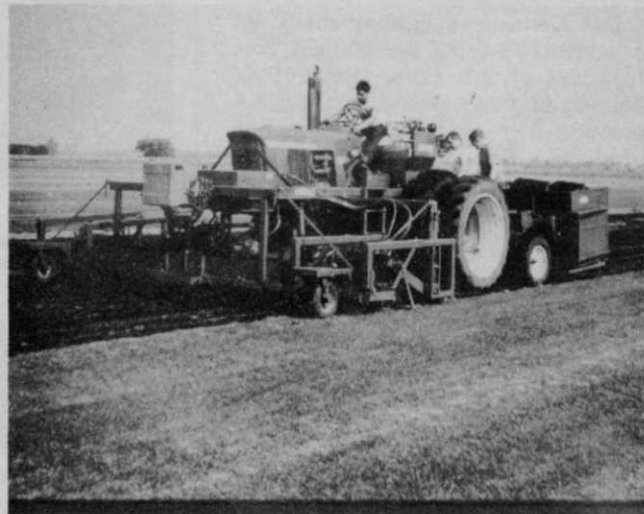
In the early 60's along came Delta Ky. and Newport Ky. bluegrasses. They were to be the answer to the leaf spot problem. The first year everything was great, but the second year the same old problems were back again.

At this time we were growing half our acreage in Merion and half in Delta Newport blend. Along in 1963 and 1964 we were going to eliminate our problems by growing a blend consisting of Merion, Delta & Newport. Having half our acreage in Merion and half in the blend worked out fine for a couple of years; until we had a very wet cold spring which melted out everything except the Merion. This caused delay of harvest until late fall and was very costly.

We then began to realize the blend which was selling at a lesser price was costing more to grow than the Merion Ky. variety. We tried



A brush chopper is used after seedlings have emerged to get large weeds which have escaped herbicide application.



Sod harvester follows closely behind the sod cutter. Conveyor carries rolled sod to four men on rear of machine.

Windsor when it came out and that also was disastrous under our conditions when leaf spot took over in May.

During this time of growing two different fields of sod, another cost factor was showing up very clearly. The best way to explain this cost factor is to give this illustration: Let's say that you're sod cutting and loading capacity per day is 10,000 yards providing the men cut and load from the same field during the whole day. If you worked 10 hours per day you have an average of 1000 yards output per hour. During this day you have five different customers come in and want a different variety than the one you are now cutting which is in another field. By the time you have moved your men to the other field and moved back again, you have wasted one half hour.

If you move from field to field five different times during the day, you have wasted two and one half hours or you have cut down your cutting and loading capacity by twenty five hundred yards. This is very costly.

From 1965 to 1970 we realized more than ever the extra cost involved in delay of harvest due to leaf spot and the very high cost of growing more than one variety. We looked to the newer varieties that Purdue University people reported on at the Midwest Turf Conferences.

We grew an acre of Fylking for a couple of years when it first came out. We were happy with the results of Fylking so in the fall of 1970 we decided to grow one sod product consisting of a bluegrass blend. This would conserve on acreage as well as increase our efficiency and service to our customer.

During this time, we were growing Sodco in an acre plot and were very impressed by this new variety.

Now we are growing a bluegrass blend consisting of Merion, Fylking & Sodco. By growing only one elite sod product, we feel we are giving the customer more for his money and at a price that he can afford. This is made possible through the savings in the efficiency of the farm operation.

Since we are sod growers and sod growing is our only business, we take the attitude that we know more about grasses than the average man on the street. If he happens to call in for a particular variety of grass, we make no bones about selling him on our new elite bluegrass blend. We take the attitude that we are giving the customer the most for the least cost, and we believe it. □

Market New Products O. M. Scott & Sons

Two new products, ProTurf Victa Kentucky Bluegrass Seed and ProTurf Starter Fertilizer, are being introduced to sod growers and professional turf managers by the ProTurf Division of O. M. Scott & Sons Company, Marysville, Ohio.

Victa, a new variety of Kentucky Bluegrass, was tested for more than 10 years before being marketed. According to ProTurf spokesmen, the testing program shows that Victa seed produces fast developing turf, a dense low growing sod with outstanding disease resistance—particularly to leaf spot, stripe smut, rust, dollar spot and mildew.

The new variety germinates quickly and vigorously, establishing healthy roots and tops. Victa is low-growing and adapts well to various mowing heights, tests show. It shows excellent response to fertilizers, and over the ten-year test period it performed well under varied environmental conditions.

Also being marketed are several Victa blends, combining the characteristics of Victa with those of other Kentucky Bluegrasses. Victa Blend 635 (Victa/Windsor) was developed for sunny or lightly shaded turfgrass areas, while Victa Blend 640 (Victa/Nugget) is for sunny and light to moderately shaded areas, utilizing the features of Nugget, a proven shade performer.

Victa Blend 532 (Victa/Nugget C-26 Hard Fescue) adds features of Nugget and C-26 Hard Fescue to those of Victa to produce turf for lightly to moderately shaded areas. Victa/Baron combines these two new Kentucky Bluegrasses for improved disease resistance, and Victa/Merion, especially blended for sod production in the Northern regions of the bluegrass belt, combines two varieties which demonstrate good fertilizer response, excellent establishment, dark green color, pleasing blade texture, and disease resistance.

The new ProTurf Starter Fertilizer has been specially formulated to provide nutrients in proportions to satisfy the specific needs of seedling turf.

ProTurf Starter Fertilizer is formulated in an 18-24-6 analysis and is designed to supply a balanced diet of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium in seeding, sodding or sprigging new turf areas. Documented tests show that it is the proportion of phosphorus and a controlled release source of nitrogen in this analysis which produces vigorous and dense seedling growth.

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