

INDUSTRY
INNOVATION

NETTING FOR SOD

REALITY FROM IMAGINATION



Harvesting sod in half the usual growing time is possible with the use of Vexar plastic netting. The netting is laid when the field is seeded, and covered with one-quarter inch of soil.

A major problem in commercial sod production is the length of time the grass has to grow before it can survive handling. Often, turfgrasses are attractive and marketable in four to six months but cannot be lifted because of sod weakness. Sod producers, then must bear the cost of maintaining their fields until the necessary sod strength is achieved.

Cal-Turf, Inc., California's largest commercial sod producer, has found a way to combat the problem. By using Vexar plastic netting to anchor turf roots, the firm can harvest its sod as soon as it is marketable.

Cal-Turf, a division of American Garden Products, Inc., cultivates more than 1,000 acres on its four farms.

"Traditionally we have harvested three crops from each field every two years for an average of eight months per crop," says Steve Cockerham, production manager of Cal-Turf. "But now with the Vexar giving us sufficient sod strength to lift so much sooner, we hope eventually to cut our overall turnaround time in half. If we can get the turfgrass uniformity we seek in four months, the Vexar allows us to harvest.

"The net technique is especially good for bluegrass," he continues, who did Cal-Turf's research with the plastic netting. The company's expertise with the turf net has been gathered during the planting of more than 250 acres with the new method.

"To plant a field using Vexar plastic netting, we establish a true surface with the usual preparations, then do some extra land planning. We plant with our own machine,

applying the net, seeds, and cover at the same time. The cutting depth of the netted sod is the same depth at which we cut our other sod," he says.

"We seeded our first field of Vexar (37 acres) with Peninsula Blend, our new blend of Pennfine perennial ryegrass and Fylking Kentucky bluegrass. The sod had more than enough lift strength at the end of four months."

The sod market continues to grow steadily, despite ups and downs in new housing starts. With less land available in populous areas, more home construction is being done on sloping, hilly sites where sodding is
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Steve Cockerham, general manager, Cal-Turf, shows how the netting helps give the sod sufficient strength to be lifted in half the usual time. Cal-Turf will have 450 acres of netted turf on its farms this year.



NETTING FOR SOD

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the most practical way to assure soil stabilization.

"Long lead times are the exception in our business," says Steve. "We deliver palletized sod to job sites within 24 hours of order placement, and we spot the sod where the contractors want it. Customer acceptance of the netted sod has been excellent."

The ability to double sod production without adding land is a long-range economy appreciated by Cal-Turf. "We're working Vexar into our fields as crops are harvested at our California farms in Camarillo, San Juan Bautista, and El Toro," he says. "Of course, our overall sales will dictate how quickly we incorporate the net method in all our fields, but now we know we can double our business before we will need more land."

ASPA Summer Meeting Slated For Maryland

The Sheraton Inn — Northeast in Washington, D.C. (New Carrollton,

Maryland) will be the site of the ASPA annual convention and field days in 1974.

The Maryland Turf Grass Association is serving as the host organization and a program is being put together for both business and social pleasure.

For the first time, an inside display of equipment products and supplies will be held the night prior to the meeting; the area will be open as well on opening morning.

Field trips will be made by chartered buses to various sites in the area where demonstrations of the newest in sod production equipment will take place. "This is a real opportunity for personal inspection of various units that are available and an opportunity to update equipment and to see things in action," says Jack Kidwell, ASPA president.

Wage-Hour Litigation Draws ASPA Legal Help

Attorney Bill Harding, counsel for the American Sod Producers Association, has been directed by the association to file a special brief in-

behalf of a wage and hour suit involving a ASPA member.

Because of the nature of the case, the board has ruled that a decision by a court could have direct influence and bearing on every U.S. sod producer. Board members believe that the decision could have impact on the future of the sod industry and thus have solicited the services of ASPA attorney, Bill Harding.

The intervention will consist only of a brief filed by Harding. Financing is to be supported by sod producer members who are willing to make contributions outside the ASPA budget. Members may submit a voluntary contribution by check made out to ASPA, c/o Association Building, 9th and Minnesota, Hastings, Nebraska 68901, and noted thereon "legal brief."

Winter Sod Conference Attracts 160 Producers

An action-packed meeting about the business end of sod production was the drawing card for about 160 members of the American Sod Producers Association in early February.

Meeting in New Orleans in the heart of Bourbon Street's heavily sodded nightclub and fun district, members concentrated on the mid-winter conference theme: "How to make and keep a buck!" The two day cram session was essentially divided into two parts. Bill Harding, ASPA legal counsel, headed part one: dealing with government and how to survive.

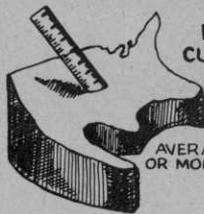
Harding's legal expertise was manifested in his ability to explain the details of Federal laws affecting the sod producer. He has the subtle persuasiveness of a trial lawyer and the pounding authority of a distinguished college professor. His best quality; however, is in communicating the little known to the uninformed. He talks the sod producer's language in their terms.

Thus, when it came to the nitty-gritty of OSHA, unions, energy regulations, wage and hour regulations, Phase IV, and Interstate Commerce Commission matters, Harding competed most favorably with the attractions on Bourbon Street. The February meeting covered in more detail many of the aspects discussed by Harding during the ASPA summer meeting. Only this time, it was more real. Some sod producers

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IT'S A FACT...

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