

Green Is For **GO**

Editor's Note: Louis L. Goldstein is the comptroller of the State of Maryland. In his work he regularly deals with reports on the state's economy. He was the guest speaker at the recent meeting of the Maryland Turfgrass Council. Although his remarks are directed to this group, we present them because they have meaning to all sod producers.

THERE was a book written some years ago which revolved around the fictitious story that all of the grass in the world had died except for one remaining green patch in England. The story highlighted the importance of grass through the description of the savagery and selfishness of the few remaining persons fighting for their very lives over the possession of this last green acre.

Without grass, there would be no meat nor other food crops. Without grass, our supply of oxygen would be dangerously depleted. Every acre

of healthy grass produces much life supporting oxygen. Without grass, soil erosion would engulf us all. Land without grass would indeed be a "Never-Never Land". Turfgrass and its production, is, thank God, your basic interest and consideration.

A chart in one of your recent newsletters caught my attention. It showed a breakdown of the various uses of turfgrass in the state (Maryland). The \$4.1 million expenditure for maintaining the sod being produced is a drop in the bucket when compared to the total effect on the economy derived from harvesting, transporting, and installing this product to the ultimate consumer site. (Table 1, pg. 66)

The many uses of turfgrass right here in Maryland make up an impressive list. But the uses for your product — turfgrass — and for other varieties of grass that I am sure many of you will be producing in the future, will continue to grow. Grass will undoubtedly be widely

Louis L. Goldstein, the author of this article, is comptroller for the State of Maryland. He is shown here (1) along with Dr. John R. Hall, U of Md. turf specialist, and Emory Patton, vice president of the Maryland Turfgrass Council.



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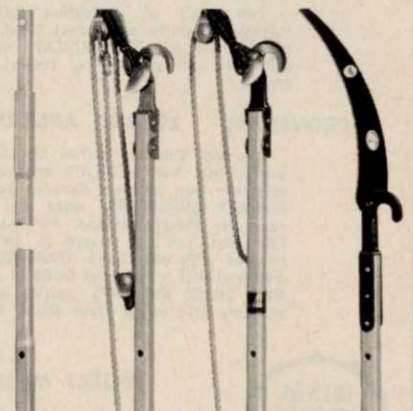
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Table 1. Estimated Expenditure in 1971 for maintaining turfgrass in the State of Maryland.

| Area | Acres | Annual Maintenance Production Costs |
|------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Sod | 13,000 | \$ 4,100,000 |
| Golf Courses | 13,240 | 8,570,000 |
| Lawns - Maintenance | 140,000 | 42,200,000 |
| Lawns - Established | 5,089 | 12,724,000 |
| Federal Installations | 21,900 | 2,250,000 |
| Schools & Colleges | 16,700 | 1,714,000 |
| Recreation Areas | 16,800 | 1,645,000 |
| Churches | 2,600 | 266,200 |
| Airports | 1,200 | 123,200 |
| Highways (State Roads) | 20,000 | 1,500,000 |
| Cemeteries | N/A | 4,800,000 |
| Total | 249,729 | \$79,892,400 |

used purely as what I call an environmental crop. A Crop whose basic use is for the maintenance and improvement of our vital environmental well-being.

The average cost paid in 1971 to cut, load, deliver and install an acre of sod in Maryland was \$3,279. Couple this figure with the estimated 13,000 acres of sod grown in Maryland and it is quite possible that the gross product of the State of Maryland could be increased by some 42 million dollars just by virtue of the installation of the sod crop.

Already we are moving in that di-

rection. Building developers are turning more and more to the establishment and preservation of green havens within their community planning . . . highway builders are realizing the physical and environmental necessity for providing green medium strips.

Cities are including a grassy green oasis within their urban development programs. Everywhere you look, the word is green . . . The color symbol for go — for life itself.

The word grass comes up in our conversation a thousand times a day — once again underscoring the importance of your product, "a great

crop." We say "That the grass is greener on the other side of the fence," when we dream of improving our lot in life. We speak of "the grass roots" of our American way of life, and we even sing of "The Green, Green Grass of Home."

But the time for sentiment alone is over. Like so many other things within the scope of our American way of life, that have been habitually taken for granted, the greening of America can no longer be left to chance. Wild grass is fast becoming extinct. Nowadays, the key word is cultivation and you of the council membership are doing an excellent job of keeping up with the technical problems of producing the best strains of healthy grass for a multitude of turf uses.

The production of tailor-made grass for a specific use is one of the great wonders of this age of technology. As you well know, golf courses require a different, tougher type of grass than say, a median strip of highway. Climatic conditions, usage, and many other considerations go into the development of your products.

Now is the time to take a down to
(continued on page 72)



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GREEN IS FOR GO

(from page 66)

earth look at the production and marketing of this crop of yours — turfgrass being one of our most important basic crops and will become even more important in the future.

Our open spaces are not merely for the eyes to behold, alone. A bit of grass, however small the plot, has a practical as well as an aesthetic value. The planners of tomorrow would indeed have "open spaces" between their ears if they did not include in their planning, open spaces for our fast growing population, concrete is nonproductive! We must save our farmlands, for, in the future, there will be more and more demand placed upon the tillers of the American soil.

The number of Maryland farms and the percent of land area used in agriculture continues to decline. (Table 2).

There are presently approximately 16,000 farms in Maryland according to Dr. George Stevens of the University of Maryland's department of agricultural economics. Although the number of Maryland farms is on the wane, that is no reason, no justification, to tax the

Table 2. The number of farms and the percent of Maryland area in farm land.

| Year | No. of Farms | Percent of Area in Farms |
|------|--------------|--------------------------|
| 1930 | 43,203 | 69 |
| 1940 | 44,412 | 69 |
| 1950 | 42,110 | 66 |
| 1964 | 20,760 | 50 |
| 1969 | 17,000 | 46 |
| 1974 | 14,000 | 43 |

remaining farmers to death.

Modern agriculture is a business enterprise that requires heavier, more complex and expensive machinery. Modern agriculture needs labor that has almost priced itself out of the farm market and, therefore, is becoming more and more difficult to find. Today's farmers need and deserve a tax break as much or more than any other sector of our economy. Sod production, the fifth largest agronomic business in Maryland, is perhaps the one — because of its unique production expense — that stands to suffer most from inequitable assessments and tax laws.

I believe, that land use should be a local matter, but one which must be treated equitably at the state level with regard to assessments and taxation. Groups such as yours here in Maryland and your sister

organizations in other states must be public information experts as well as agricultural experts to insure equitable treatment and orderly growth of your business.

As farmland located near the big cities and suburban areas becomes too "taxpensive" to farm, the erstwhile agri-businessman will find himself looking for another job. Perhaps farming is all he has ever done. Perhaps he or his family don't want an urban-suburban life. But often there is no other choice. Mr. Farmer will have been taxed off his land and away from his chosen way of life.

Agriculture is one business that is extremely difficult to relocate. When a farmer moves, he leaves his raw material, the precious land, behind him. When a farmer moves, he is uprooting not only his means of making a living, but his way of life as well. His home, his church, his school, his family, his business and friends are all left behind. But the landless, luckless farmer is not the only one who suffers.

The lack of sound statistical data is obvious in any attempt to describe the importance of turfgrass maintenance on the economy of the State of Maryland. As I have point-

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ed out, the maintenance portion of the industry is a small fraction of the total picture. Machinery costs, increased land values, transportation and installation costs to get sod from the field to the final consumer, golf car and pro shop revenues and other related revenues created by the Maryland Turfgrass Industry, have not been considered. The intangible effect of turfgrass on the health, happiness, and well-being of Marylanders cannot be determined, its dollar value in preventing erosion and purifying the air we breathe is incalculable.

According to the December 1972 issue of "The Agronomist:" "What does the future hold for the turfgrass industry in Maryland? The population is increasing very rapidly in Maryland and there is a great need for new homes, golf courses, and parks. The need for turf will be great and the future looks very promising for the turfgrass industry in Maryland."

Statistics alone cannot and do not tell you the entire story of the countryside in Maryland. To appreciate the real picture of the wonderful land beyond the city limits, you must see it, hear it, feel it, smell it, and breathe it. And lay

on it, as I do day after day — put your EAR to Mother Earth and listen to the beautiful sounds of nature — "What a great thrill".

Turfgrass is a most important part of that beautiful, three dimensional picture of land, sea and sky that is our Maryland heritage, I hope that through your efforts in the production and improvement of turfgrass, those signs we see in such plentiful numbers, "Keep off the Grass", will someday soon, no longer be necessary.

This is one of my favorite poems about land which sums up my feelings.

I AM LAND

Lynn Pinkerton

I am land
 I am trustworthy, when the friends and fortunes of men have wronged you, I will remain loyal.
 I am the producer of food, the foundation of factories and banks.
 I provide a birthplace for your offspring, a home for your family, and a shroud for your dead.
 I have absorbed the sweat and secrets of your forefathers as they toiled over me.
 I have witnessed the discovery of fire, The birth of Christ, and man's flight to the moon.
 I give you comfort when the world has wronged you, strength when your path becomes rough, and the solitude needed for self-evaluation.

I am a living, breathing entity, reproducing year after year, growing in strength generation after generation.

I am all on earth you can believe in, while all things wither and decay — I survive.

I am land.

Virginia's Jack Kidwell Talks Progress And Sod

J. L. (Jack) Kidwell of Culpeper, Virginia, has been "high" on grass for the past 15 years.

And it's an easy "high" for this Virginian because grass, more specifically sod, is his business.

He has 900 acres in sod on farms in Culpeper and Mecklenburg counties, making him one of the largest, if not the largest, sod producers in the state.

Kidwell's customers include housing, institutional and government projects. In Blacksburg recently, where he was among 200 persons attending the 17th annual Virginia Tech Turfgrass Field Days, Kidwell saw some of his turf product at the new Marriott Inn, located on the edge of the Tech campus.

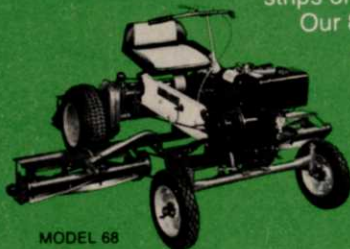
The professional sod producer is
(continued on page 76)

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