

When The Going Gets Tough—

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In this peculiar time when we find our ability to obtain the material necessary for the production of quality turfgrass hampered by shortages, it becomes increasingly difficult to make management decisions. Today's supply uncertainty looms heavily in the minds of all turfgrass managers. Turfgrass managers are generally paid commensurate with their ability to provide quality turf **in spite of Acts of God or man.** Therefore, I fear we had best tighten up the reins and get with it.

Current material shortages exist in gasoline, fertilizer, seed, chemicals and machinery. The reasons why these shortages exist are complex and in certain instances unexplainable. The fact remains, however, that if "Push Gets to Shove" the turfgrass industry is going to have a struggle on its hands. All segments of the industry are now feeling the pressure of shortages. The American Sod Producers Association (ASPA), Maryland Turfgrass Association, Maryland Turfgrass Council and Mid Atlantic Association of Golf Course Superintendents are actively defending their interests. Others are involved, too.

Largely through the efforts of an alert American Sod Producers Association the sod producers have been granted the status of "agricultural production" by the Federal Energy Office. This means that if fuel is available sod producers will be allotted 100 percent of current requirements. Fuel availability to sod installers is not as clear.

ASPA legal counsel, William A. Harding, indicates that the Federal Energy Office is considering use of the Standard Industrial Classifications Manual Definitions in future cases. In this manual sod is classified as an agricultural commodity and the installation of sod is classified as an agricultural activity. However, it appears that only sod installers involved in sod production will receive

agricultural energy allocations.

Fertilizer will be in short supply in 1974. The reasons for the fertilizer shortage are many: 1) Release of government control on production acreage has increased fertilizer usage, 2) reduced electrical power and natural gas availability has limited production, 3) devaluation of the American dollar has made our fertilizer cheap on the world market thus we are competing with foreign markets, 4) fertilizer production capacity was reduced when older plants not able to meet new pollution and safety standards were shut down in lieu of costly modifications, 5) more urea is being used as a protein feed supplement because of high protein food costs.

Our fertilizer prices are higher due to: 1) increased costs of natural gas, phosphoric acid, sulphuric acid and basic nutrients used in production, 2) increased labor and transportation costs, 3) increased production costs as a result of expensive pollution abatement equipment and 4) increased cost of fertilizer bags.

Turfgrass managers with properly timed cool-season grass fertilization programs should miss the real fertilization crunch that will arise when corn and soybean fertilizer meets peak. No sod producer in Maryland should have applied spring nitrogen fertilizer to cool season grasses after March 31. The longer after this date one waits to apply his nitrogen fertilizer the more shoot growth and less root growth he is going to produce. More shoot growth simply means more mowing and further aggravation of your gasoline shortage problem.

Seed prices are up and availability of certain bluegrass varieties is mixed. The current seed shortage arises as a result of several factors: 1) competition with wheat land is severe and certainly of a good price for wheat is better than for grass seed, 2) open burning of seed fields has been prohibited reducing seed yields and increasing disease and insect problems, 3) drought in the 1972-73 production year was the worst in 50 years and crippled seed production and 4) overseas markets are booming with

European and Japanese countries now becoming turfgrass conscious. The current seed-pricing situation has brought the common Kentucky bluegrass almost into the same cost bracket as the superior varieties. With the cost differential diminishing between superior bluegrass and common bluegrass this should be the year to strengthen the blends with real performers such as Merion, Penn-star, Fylking and Adelphi.

Chemical availability also appears to be mixed with most of the standard broadleaf weed control materials such as 2,4-D, Silvex, Dicamba and MCPP in short supply. Prices are up somewhat due to the fact that most of our pesticide chemicals are petroleum-based and oil is deficient and expensive.

From a management standpoint, the use of surfactants should allow more efficient use of herbicide materials and help reduce rates of use. Consider use of synergistic mixes of demethylamine salts, of 2,4-D, MCPP and Dicamba. Total herbicide usage can be considerably reduced with the synergistic mixtures.

Keen diagnostic techniques are essential in this time of shortages. Preventive spray programs will become harder and harder to justify as the season progresses. Blanket applications of insecticides and fungicides without positive diagnosis is a luxury few of us will be able to afford. Consider use of pyrethrins for diagnosis of sod webworm problems in 1974. This insecticide-irritant will bring thatch-borne webworms to the surface of the turf simplifying diagnosis.

Machinery and parts availability is poor for most of the turf industry. Stocking of parts that annually break down might be wise. There may be considerable delay for some replacement parts. In view of this situation proper machinery maintenance is more essential than ever before. All the turfgrass management expertise in the world is of no avail if equipment is not running.

Admittedly the picture is bleak but we in the turf industry know as well as anyone that when the Going Gets Tough — The Tough Get Going.