

the commercial sod industry

ASPA Convention Report

The Growing Sod Market

"The market is so good but the soil is so bad, that we would grow sod on the walls to meet the demand," John R. Hall said as he addressed members of the American Sod Producers Association (ASPA) at its summer convention July 16 to 18 at New Carrollton, Maryland.

Hall, secretary of the Maryland Turfgrass Association and turfgrass specialist at the University of Maryland, outlining the sod market in Maryland said the state's 80 sod growers made sod production the fourth most important agronomic crop last year. He also presented the group with statistics on housing starts, average family income and potential population growth to prove just how good their commercial sod market is. Maryland's Sod Certification Program, Hall continued, stimulates good management practices, provides for the best varieties of sods and good pest control; and benefits not only the producer but the installer and consumer.

But the modern sod grower is not just confronted with ever-changing problems of an uncertain

economy. During their annual business meeting Wednesday morning, members faced a dilemma of serious concern to their national organization. Jack Kidwell, then-president of the association, asked members to interpret a section of their basic constitution that could alter the course and function of ASPA.

In brief, members were asked to take a position on whether or not to include sod installers as "incidental to the production of sod and thus remain within the definition of agriculture."

Several members voiced opinions pro and con. Some questioned the position as being prejudicial to the interests of their customers, namely sod installation contractors. Others cited the ASPA constitution defining a member as anyone involved in the 'production, maintenance or marketing of sod.'

Kidwell said the producer members would receive a questionnaire asking them to indicate their position on the issue. The ballots would be tabulated and the associa-

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A special exhibit area in hotel featured the latest developments in sod harvesting and handling equipment. Here ASPA members chat with commercial representatives.



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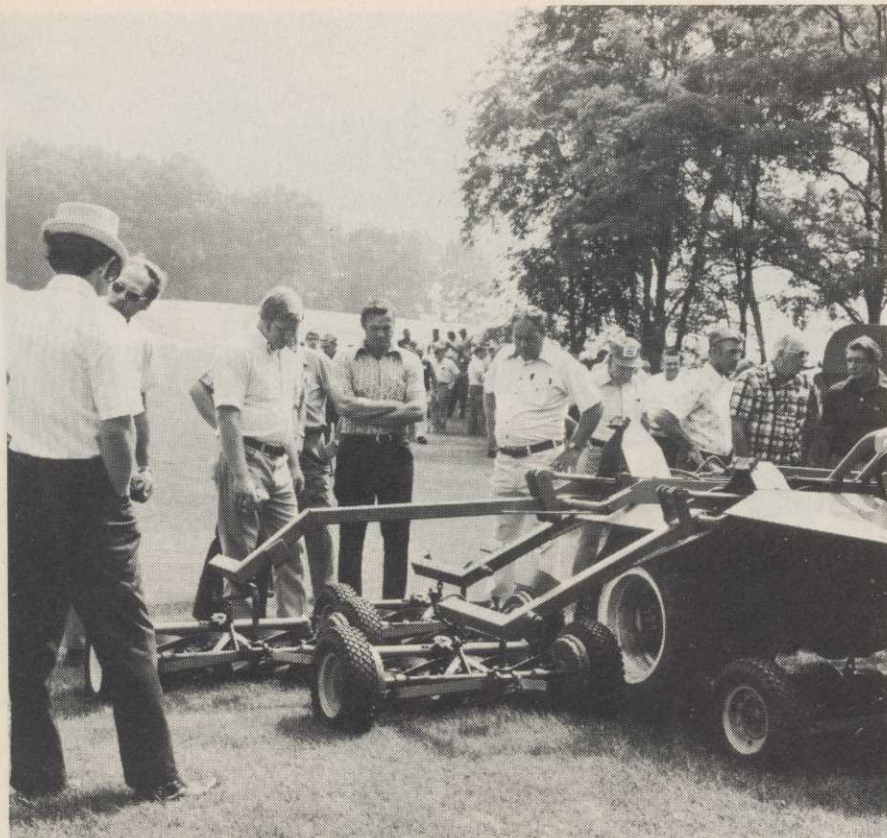
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For More Details Circle (134) on Reply Card



Under the critical eye of sod producers and installers, this harvester gets a tough workout on some of Maryland's dry, rocky soil. This equipment demonstration took place at Dick White's Sod Farm.

WEEDS TREES and TURF



One of the specially designed gang mowers draws attention from the members. This mower and others were demonstrated at the Larriland Sod Farm. Also featured were PTO-driven sweepers and a small spraying unit.

SOD (from page 18)

tion would take that position indicated by the majority of voters. Following reports from secretary Gerry Brouwer, treasurer John Nunes and executive secretary Bob Garey, the meeting adjourned.

The sod business is an outdoor enterprise and field demonstrations and tours largely occupied members. After the annual meeting, the members visited a number of Maryland sod farms.

First stop was Fairwood Turf Farm. A box lunch was served and participants were treated to demonstrations of the newest sod harvesting and handling equipment. Beck, Ryan, Princeton, Nunes, Brouwer and Finneyfrock operated their units on Maryland's typically rocky and dry soil. A new idea in fork lifts, the Frate Lift, designed by Brouwer, attracted attention. The yellow unit featured a three-wheeled chasis, and instead of being towed to the job site, the unit links up to the rear of a truck and lifts itself into travel position, eliminating towing.

Most equipment featured at the demonstration was in the form of improvements and optional equipment for already field-proven units. Specially designed gang mowers, PTO-driven sweeper units and a surprise razing by a crop duster airplane were featured at the Larriland Sod Farm. At Dick White's Sod Farm equipment also included Pyles, Allis Chalmers and Champ fork lifts, a Barnes tiller, a Jacobsen seeder and a Roterra irrigation unit. A Harley Stone Picker was demonstrated at Stedding Turf Farm.

Guest speaker at the banquet was Herbert Wallace, executive vice president of Hart, Schaffner and Marx. The newly elected officers are: president, Charles Davis, Wharton Turf Grass, Inc., Wharton, Tex.; vice president, Paul Florence, Marysville, Ohio; secretary, Charles Lain, Pine Island Turf Nursery, Inc., Sussex, N.J.; treasurer, Wallace Huggett, Huggett Sod, Marlette, Mich. New board of directors members include Norm LaGrande, Hendricks Sodding and Landscaping, Lincoln, Neb., and Thomas A. Thornton, Thornton's Turf Nursery, Elgin, Ill. Attendance at the meeting included 223 sod producers, 78 commercial representatives, 90 wives and children and 20 university members.

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