

## Efficient Cultural Practices Vital to Sod-Farming Family

PRODUCING high quality turf in the hot, humid Southwestern Illinois climate is not an easy task, but Art Brockmeier of Edwardsville has proved it can be accomplished. He's been doing it since 1955 and his sod has been improving steadily — especially since he has developed added know-how in disease control.

Sod farming is a dawn-to-dusk business for Brockmeier and his wife, Dorothy, and son, Ken, who join efforts on 140 acres. They supply sod for homeowners, golf courses, nurseries, landscaping contractors, industrial plant sites, small businesses and highway median strips. The Brockmeiers alternate the sod with farm crops on part of their acreage and also operate a sizeable fill dirt and top soil business.

They work as a precision team, handling a variety of tasks including seeding sod, spraying chemicals, hauling dirt, cutting sod and working the farm crops. During summer vacations and after school, area high

school students provide additional needed manpower.

Throughout his 20 years as a sod farmer, Brockmeier has always stressed the importance of healthy grass in providing good sod. "The price of our sod is a bit higher than others in this area," Brockmeier says, "but we strive for top quality. I'm a believer in good cultural practices. We fertilize adequately, aerate properly and provide the needed water."

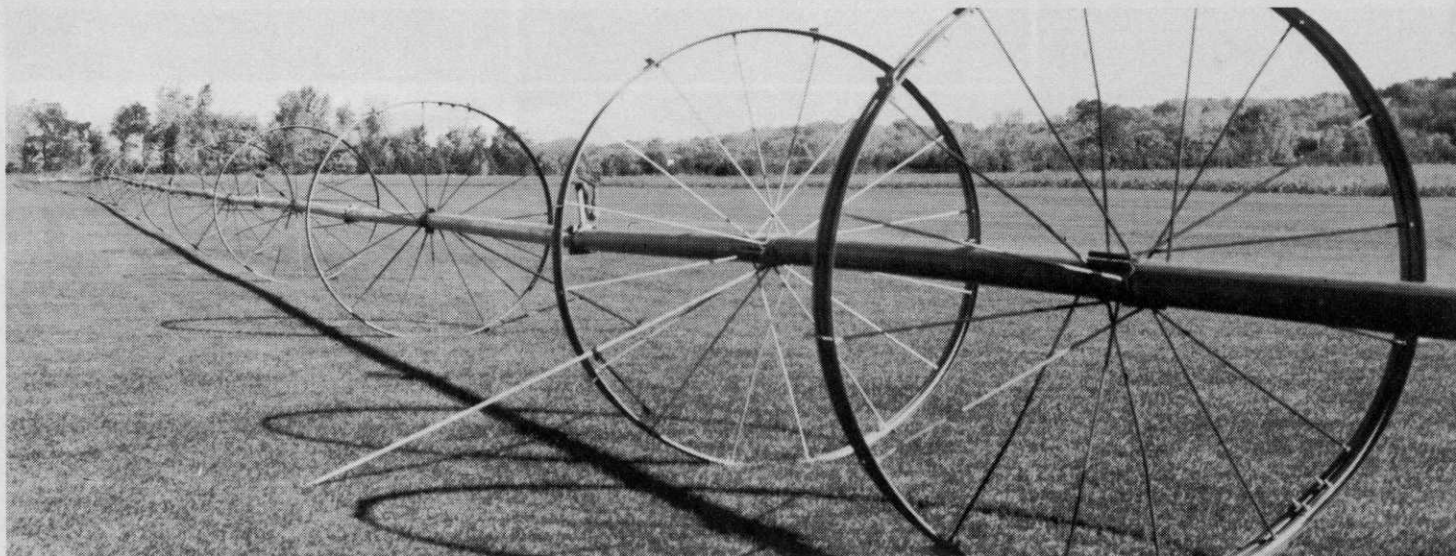
The Brockmeiers have experienced isolated disease problems. Two years ago, at a turf meeting, Brockmeier was convinced by a speaker that the proper use of fungicides could produce still better turf in his normally unfavorable climate.

"Last season, for the first time, I tried a planned fungicide program and experienced unbelievably good results in a dry year," he notes. "Fusarium blight is often a serious problem in our part of the country. It is especially troublesome when the hot, humid weather is followed by a



*Keeping America green is more than an environmental theme to Art Brockmeier. These signs on his property communicate to the passerby his dedication to growing quality sod.*

**Below:** Rotating watering systems covers entire length of Brockmeier's sod field. Water goes on evenly as equipment rolls across sod. Sod from this family-owned and operated farm can be found throughout the Edwardsville, Ill. area in lawns at homes, small business and industrial plant sites.



long dry spell. That was the situation in 1974, but 6 oz. of 'Tersan' 1991 per 1,000 square feet controlled the Fusarium blight. We applied it at the first appearance of the disease and repeated 10 to 14 days later."

Early Helminthosporium leaf-spot is another disease that has been a problem for Brockmeier. Last year, he applied "Tersan" LSR at a rate of 4 oz. per 1,000 square feet in 5 gallons of water when the disease first appeared in April. In areas where the disease persisted he made a second application about 10 days later. The disease was controlled. A third material, "Tersan" SP, was used at a rate of 4 oz. per 1,000 square feet in 5 gallons of water to control Pythium blight.

Water is most important both in the growth of healthy grass and in keeping the soil moisture high before and after the fungicide application for Fusarium blight control. We get our water from the Mississippi River Basin and use a field-length, circular watering system which rolls across the field as it waters. I'm now in the process of leveling portions of my fields, as some of the knolls get less water than I'd like, said Brockmeier.

Fertilizer also plays an important role in developing quality sod. "Fertilizer alone won't prevent disease," Brockmeier observes, "but properly fertilized grass is stronger and less subject to attacks by parasitic organisms. We like to use urea if we can get it. In addition, we use 'Tupersan' to control crabgrass and apply an insecticide when needed.

The Brockmeiers have enjoyed success with a number of grasses including Fylking, a mixture of Delta, Newport, Park and common Kentucky blue and a mixture of creeping red and chewing fescue.

"Over the years, we've removed our sod from a newly-seeded field after 18 to 24 months of growth. This way, we don't have to reseed often. We take it about 3/4 of an inch below the soil surface, leaving a portion of the root system. Within three weeks, the grass is beginning to grow back in again. By cutting the sod where we do, the exposed roots aid the sod in taking root in its new environment. After the first cutting, we can figure on a crop of sod approximately every 12 months," Brockmeier says.

In some fields, they alternate turf

with soybeans or wheat. In other areas, they double crop beans and wheat. "We try hard to make the best use of each particular plot of land. Some of the ground is best suited for use as top soil and fill dirt so we are in that business too," he reports.

The Brockmeiers' sod business doesn't stop with the growing of good turf. When the sod is ready, it is cut into neat, unbroken rolls 18

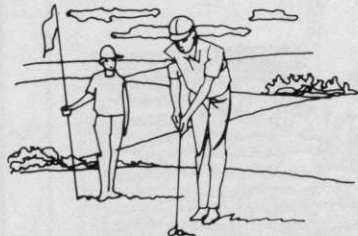
inches wide and 6 feet long (1 square yard) for delivery or pickup. Examples of their sod can be seen throughout the Edwardsville area, including many lawns in the nearby, elite Glenwood Estates.

Good cultural practices have always been vital to the Brockmeier operation. Now the family is parlaying these qualities with a solid fungicide program for even better sod. □

# Horticultural Perlite...

## The multi-purpose soil conditioner for turf, containers and propagation.

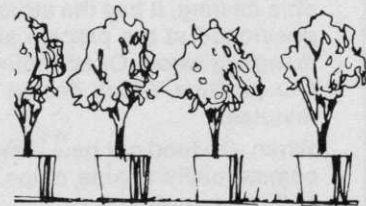
Professional landscapers and grounds maintenance men have long made Horticultural Perlite one of their main 'tricks of the trade'. It's an ideal soil conditioner that



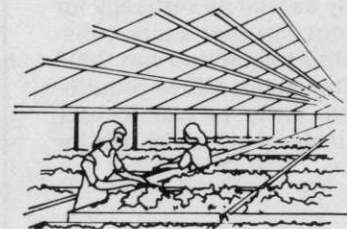
helps promote "a sea of green velvet". You see, by preventing compaction, it keeps the soil loose enabling more oxygen to reach and help nourish the root system. And because Horticultural Perlite also retains three to four times its weight in moisture, it keeps the root network moist long after watering. The result is a beautiful blanket of green growing on a thick healthy, robust root-system that not only keeps grass beautiful, but prevents **golf courses, institutional and campus**

**lawns and residential lawns** from getting soggy, mushy or soft underfoot.

Nurserymen find Horticultural Perlite practically indispensable for **container grown plants and shrubs** because of its ability to retain moisture, and to keep the mixture around the root environment loose. It is also a great "starting mixture" for transplanted stock as it helps reduce the incidences of transplant shock. And because Horticultural Perlite is sterile and non-toxic, it won't rot, decompose, disintegrate or break down. Nor will it help promote insect life. Being light in weight, Horticultural Perlite makes container moving light work and shipping costs a lighter expense. It's not only ideal for your plants—Horticultural Perlite is ideal for your business.



For **plant propagation**, Horticultural Perlite soil mix is almost as important as sunlight. Because of its water-retention characteristics, this mixture maintains an even distribution of moisture to stimulate fast root development in cuttings and to speed seed germination. Most important, by keeping the starting mixture loose, Horticultural Perlite permits a freer flow of oxygen to help nurture the new growth. This also makes transplanting easy; without root damage; and without undo shock. Horticultural Perlite is inert matter that can last indefinitely in your seed beds. It is sterile, odor-free and can't promote insects or bugs. It is a great asset for the new beginnings of plant life.



## Perlite Institute, Inc.

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