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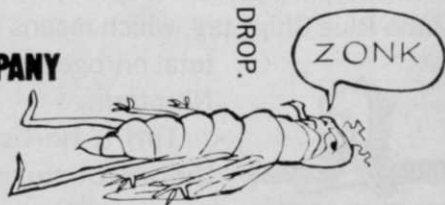
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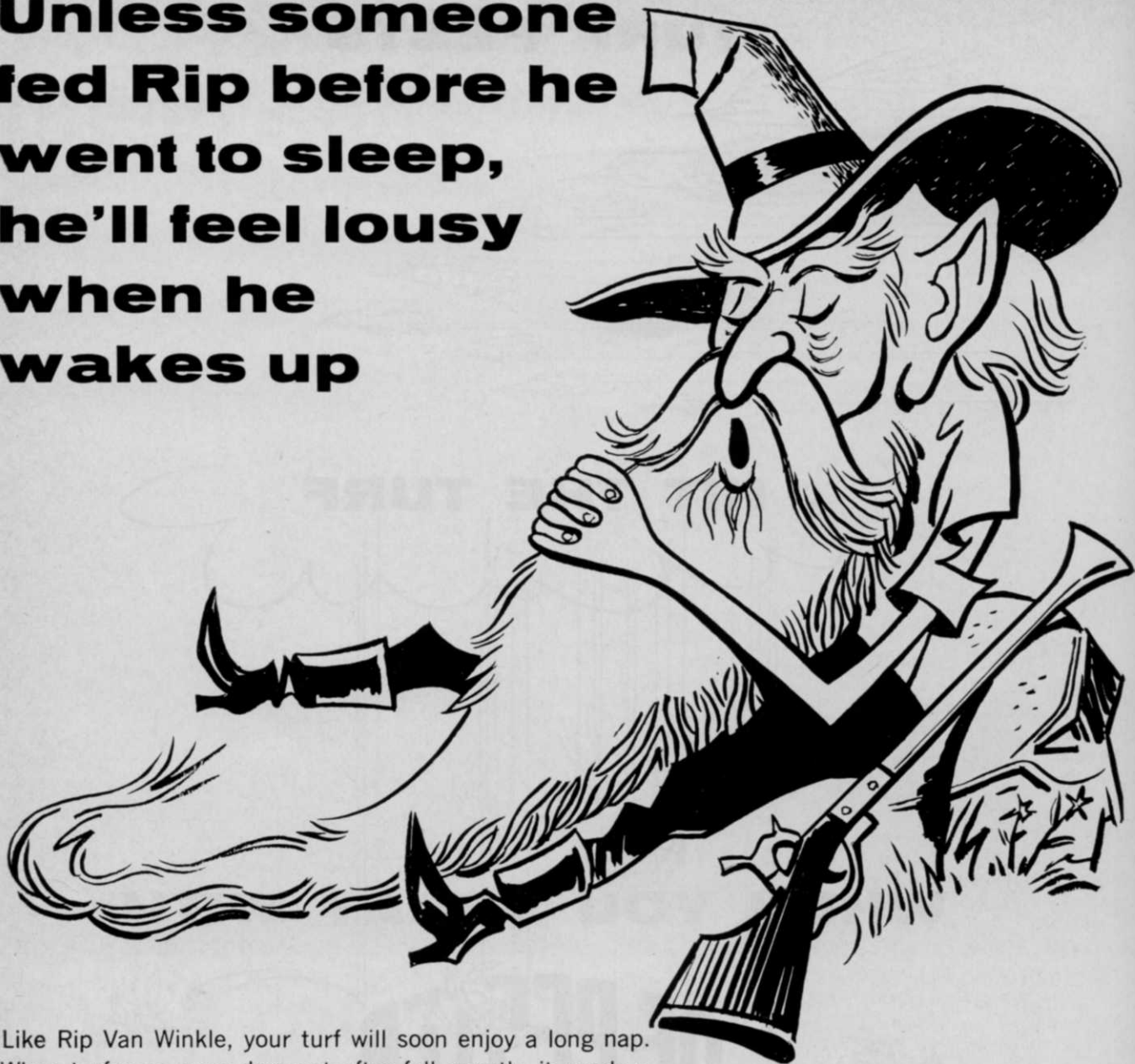


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 FORMERLY WEEDS AND TURF

September 1967
 Volume 6, No. 9

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Your voice in your industry can seldom be heard except in unison. Most operators in the vegetation care and control business have sat down at one time or another with a state legislator or congressman and discussed quite frankly regulations and laws which affect their specific industry.

Most lawmakers prove to be good listeners. Another common characteristic is their need to know for whom you speak. Do you represent a group? Or are you an individual who just happens to reside in an area which by geography makes you a member of their constituency. In either case, you get your audience. But do you get a commitment for action? This we believe to be the big advantage of association membership.

Most businesses have associations. This is the norm. The history of associations has been such that competitors have found it advantageous to share market information, sales techniques, production know-how, and collectively try new research. The result has been to upgrade the industry and to win acceptance with the public by generally improving quality whether it be a product or service. And when the association needs legislative action, they can operate as a group, not necessarily as a pressure group, but as a cohesive organization with knowledgeable information presented at the most astute time and to the right people.

We are happy to see the sod growers organize into the American Sod Producers Association. A number of state groups are already organized. But many growers are lagging. The notion seems to persist that organization will encourage new growers and further dilute the sod market. Rather, we feel that the opposite will be the result. Standards which come as a natural result of organization can only upgrade the quality of both service and product. Associations in other areas have served to alert the public to expect improved quality and higher standards of service. And the public through the years has proved willing to pay the bill for quality.

We congratulate the 40 charter members of the new sod group. And we encourage all growers to join them. Mr. George B. Hammond of Paint Valley Bluegrass Farm, 71 E. State St., Columbus, O., will gladly handle your queries.

WTT can only point to the effectiveness of the associations it already serves as examples of group action. We believe leading sod producers are moving the industry in the right direction. We hope sprayers will shortly follow suit.



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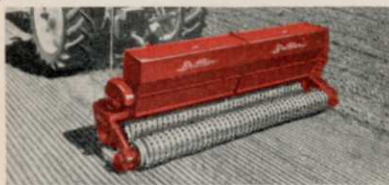
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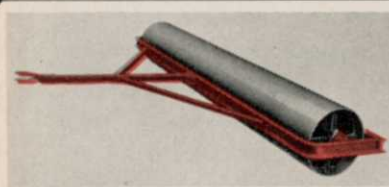
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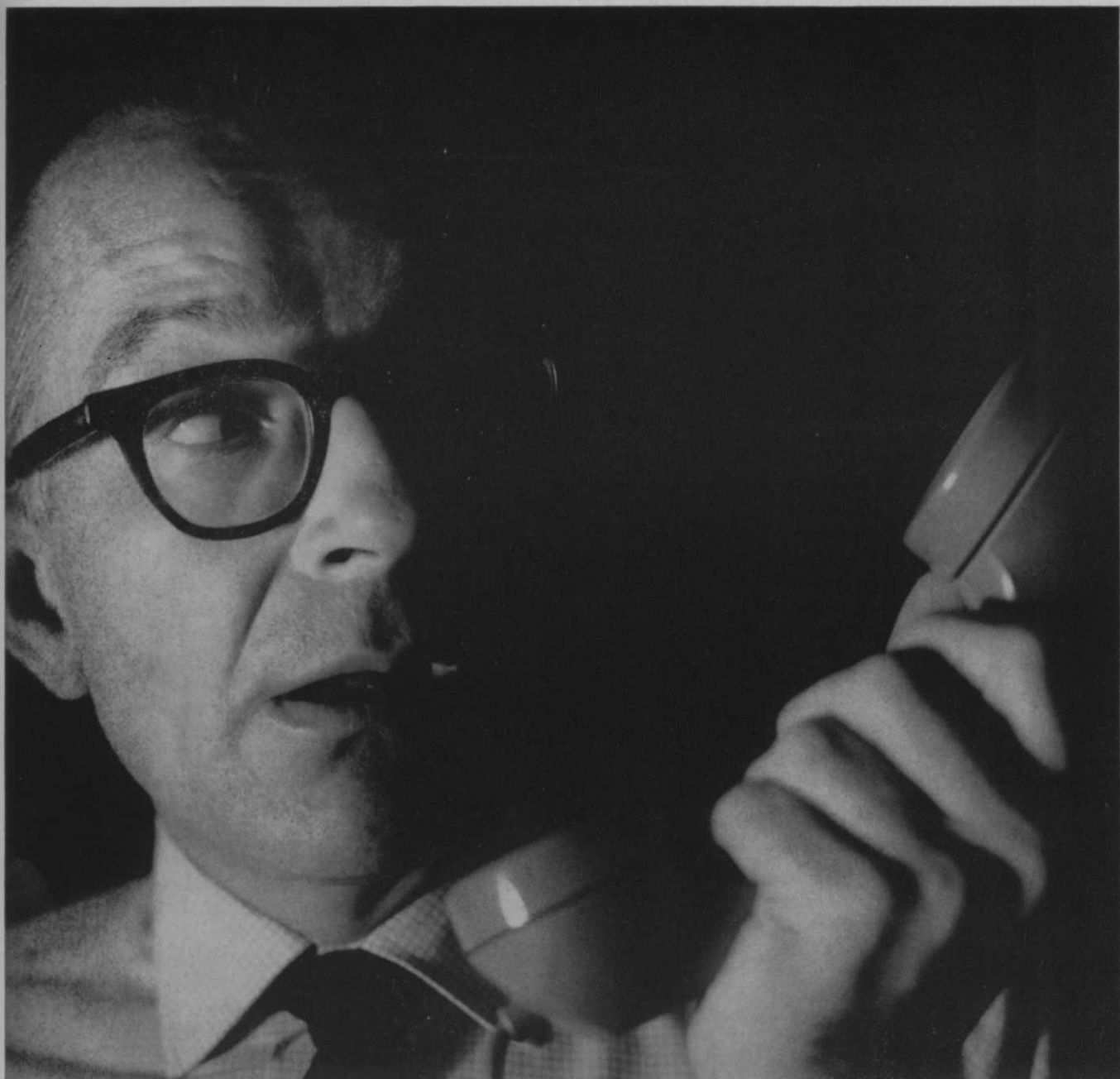
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LS-98

WEEDS TREES AND TURF is the national monthly magazine of urban/industrial vegetation maintenance, including turf management, weed and brush control, and tree care. Readers include "contract applicators," arborists, nurserymen, sod growers, and supervisory personnel with highway departments, railways, utilities, golf courses, and similar areas where vegetation must be enhanced or controlled. While the editors welcome contributions by qualified freelance writers, unsolicited manuscripts, unaccompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes, cannot be returned.



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Sodman

Leases

Land

A FLORIDA sod producer has built a sizable business by leasing farm land and adapting local grass as a lawn turf. He is Jimmy E. Anderson of Ft. Myers, Florida. He markets 125,000 square feet weekly and operates practically the year around.

Ideally, Anderson leases existing grass acreage, fertilizes, irrigates, mows, and generally builds up the grass over a 2-month period. Then he lifts the sod for use at Ft. Myers and adjacent areas.

With this system Anderson avoids the high investment which land ownership in his area of Florida demands. His capital outlay is restricted to equipment, fertilizers, chemicals, and overhead. He normally keeps a 15-man crew on his payroll, some being paid on a piecework basis. Anderson, himself, serves as general manager, sales representative and trouble shooter for the entire operation.

Anderson has been operating his business 6 years. His background consists of youth on a Texas farm, education at a liberal arts college, and sales jobs including Fuller Brush, encyclopedia sales, and Singer Sewing Machine Company. His first experience in the sod business was as crew chief for a landscape gardener laying sod on home lawns. Later he sold sodding jobs and finally decided that oppor-



Jimmy E. Anderson, right, owner of Anderson Sod Company at Ft. Myers, Fla., discusses day's operation with John Cannady, longtime employe of the company. Anderson is equipped to cut, move, and lay 40,000 square feet of sod daily.

and Adapts Local Grass

A WTT staff report based on an interview with Jimmy E. Anderson, owner of Anderson Sod Company, Ft. Myers, Florida.

tunity for him lay in the production end of the sod industry.

Since going into business for himself, he has literally educated himself on the fine points of Argentine Bahia, the local grass he has adapted as a lawn turf in the area. Besides reading anything and everything available on the subject, Anderson has kept in close communication with university researchers and become active in the Florida Turf-Grass Association. Even more important, he carefully studies his own sod. He uses a carefully kept ledger to plot new cultural practices. The ledger includes dates of leasing, seeding, rainfall, fertilizing, mowing, and final lifting. His treatment of local Bahiagrass in preparation for lifting and sale has practically made it a special Anderson Sod Company grass.

Bahiagrasses Thrive On Dry, Sandy Soils

Argentine Bahia is one of several Florida varieties of Bahiagrass, all of which thrive on droughty, sandy soils of low fertility. The Argentine variety has a wide leaf blade, a dark green color, and is not as upright in growth as the Pensacola Bahia. Other varieties of Bahia (*Paspalum notatum*) are Wilmington and Paraguay, seed of all being available.

Bahiagrass is a South American native which has proved itself in the Florida Gulf area as

a grazing grass and which is moving inland in nearby states. It is a densely tufted grass with virile underground stems. Leaves are broad and succulent and stands are hardy. Anderson says his experience during the past few years has proved to him that it is a serviceable lawn grass. Little research at the college level has been done on the grass, recognition to date being nil.

However, the American lawn has become the true grass testing

institution. That turf which adapts to an area and proves adequate as a lawn grass, even though it be a weed or strictly a pasture grass in another area or utilized another way, becomes a valuable asset. Anderson's experience proves the point.

Land leasing for sod production is possible in Florida because of the unique nature of agriculture in the area. Nematodes, disease, and fungus force operators to turn land back to

Forklifts are used to load palletted sod on truck at site. A twin unit is maintained at the unloading site to keep the operation mechanized. Anderson estimates that each pallet weighs about 3500 pounds.





Ryan sod cutter is used to cut sand soil-based sod into 1'x2'x1" strips for loading on pallets. Checking out cutter is David Pipkins, field foreman.



Pallets are loaded on a piecework basis at \$1.25 per pallet. Typical of crew members is Marion Brown, above, who can load 40 pallets in a good day.

sod every 3 years. Normally the sod is grazed for a few years, the acreage then going back into intensive cultivation.

Many times, land will be cleared and leveled for truck or other crops. The normal cultural practices necessary for intensive cropping include leveling of the land which makes it ideal for a follow-up sod crop.

Because normal practice fol-

lowing heavy cropping is to turn the land to grass, Anderson is in position to lease a regular supply of 2- and 3-year-old sod, which is the period needed for Argentine Bahia to develop into a useable lawn grass. The arrangement is mutually profitable to Anderson and the farm owner or operator.

Anderson prefers to lease mature sod, since seeding costs in this area of Florida run about

\$70 per acre, and the grass crop has to be maintained over a 3-year period. However, he has leased and seeded but finds it advantageous not to have to carry the financing on seeding over the long period. Normally, he finds plenty of sod land available for leasing and averages 600 to 700 acres under lease at any given time.

Land for sod production is leased by Anderson within a 65-mile radius of Ft. Myers. He has various sources regarding available sod but a prime one is spotting grass by air. His June bill for a chartered airplane used in spotting listed 50 hours of time over the previous 60 days.

Once potential sod is spotted from the air, Anderson returns with truck and sod cutter. If sod is as good as it previously appeared from the air, he tests the soil base with the sod cutter to see if the sand base will hold together for cutting and handling. If so, he explores the possibility of leasing. Anderson prefers to lease by the square foot, but sometimes leases by the acre.

When a grass stand is leased, Anderson decides when he will need the sod. During a 2-month period prior to lifting, he mows, fertilizes, and gives the grass the utmost in care. This includes sweeping up all mower clippings

During 2-month period prior to lifting, sod is fertilized, irrigated, and mowed on a regular basis. Final mowing just prior to lifting is made at 3½" height. Clippings are picked up by a vacuum sweeper unit designed by Anderson.

