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LM

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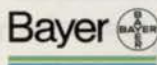
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Composts vs. peats: composts win

by RON HALL/ Sr Editor

Composts can improve soils and the establishment of turfgrass, including turfgrass for athletic fields and putting greens, says soil scientist Dr. Ed McCoy.

In fact, research suggests that, in some respects, composts out-perform native peats, a more traditional and widely-used soil amendment.

Composts are mixtures of decomposing vegetation or other organic materials. They're manufactured from a variety of organic waste sources, many of which previously would have been hauled to landfills.

Like peats, their primary function is to add organic matter to soils. Organic matter, explains McCoy, "buffers" turf from the environmental demands placed on it.

But very real physical and chemical differences exist between native peats and composts, says McCoy, an educator and researcher at The Ohio State University.

Composts have:

- ▶ less organic matter content than peats,
- ▶ finer texture than peats,
- ▶ lower cation exchange capacities, and
- ▶ higher levels of soluble salts. (This may not be as big a problem as it seems if irrigation leaches the salts through the soil.)

McCoy has, for several years, been testing composts,

all of which have different characteristics although not, obviously, as broad as their differences with peats.

He's learned that composts: increase soil organic matter, reduce soil bulk density, increase the infiltration rate of heavy soils, and they can "assist" in suppressing some turf diseases.

While composts are increasingly being used to amend soils of home lawns and athletic fields, their use in sand USGA-specification putting greens is still being investigated.

"There's a real concern that these composts—with low organic matter contents (relative to native peats) and fine textures—may not perform suitably in a situation such as a putting green where we have to have very rapid water drainage, rapid infiltration, and we want to maintain large pore openings," says McCoy.

To help shed light on that concern, McCoy tested six rootzone mixes: three contained composts and three used native peats. He blended the six amendments—at one percent and three percent by weight—with sand to produce USGA-type rootzone mix.

He packed 12 inches of each mix into identical columns, and, by using a layer of coarse material, created a perched water table in each column. Then he seeded each column with identical, and recommended, rates of creep-



Ed McCoy sees more use in turfgrass for composts.

ing bentgrass.

The mixes containing the composts produced better germination and early growth

than the mixes containing the peats, says McCoy. Also, the mixes with composts were significantly more permeable.

During drought and traffic tests the turfgrass growing in the compost mixes performed at least as well, and often better, than turfgrass growing in the peat mixes.

"I've had lots of surprises working with compost. It seems to be performing very well," says McCoy. "I think there's a real opportunity for the use of those materials (composts) in the future."

McCoy spoke at the OSU Short Course earlier this year from which this report was compiled. □

Landscape certification: coming to your state?

Six state and regional landscape associations are looking into the Certified Landscape Technician tests being used in California, and 13 more states have already adopted a similar test.

Landscape associations representing Utah, Texas, Colorado, Illinois, Wisconsin and Maryland/Virginia/D.C. were on hand when the California Landscape Contractors Association administered its CLT test earlier this year.

John Riffel and Eric Schultz of the Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado express enthusiasm about certification as a change agent. "It's definitely helped our industry," they say. "We're starting to see the effects on the commercial side, and we expect the demand for CLTs in the residential markets will follow."

The CLT test was developed 13 years ago, sold to the Associated Landscape Contractors of America two years ago, and has grown each year.

"This is our best test ever," says Henry Buder, CLCA's state

Barefoot buys Hydro Lawn

Barefoot, Inc., announced in mid-July that it had bought Hydro Lawn, Inc., based in Gaithersburg, Md.

Barefoot is the nation's second-largest lawn care company with expected revenues of about \$130 million in 1996. The company reported revenues of \$95 million in 1995.

Hydro Lawn was founded 24 years ago by Jerry Faulring, one of the founders and the first president of the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA). Faulring, who has been involved with a plant nursery the past several years, was unavailable for comment.

Barefoot president and CEO Patrick J. Norton says: "Hydro Lawn is another example of Barefoot acquiring a quality company to add to its portfolio of premier companies." Hydro Lawn had revenues just under \$4 million in 1995.

The acquisition adds to Barefoot's customer base in the Washington, D.C. and Baltimore market areas. It reportedly has several other operations there. Barefoot has 53 company locations and 46 franchise locations, primarily in the central and eastern United States.

Hydro Lawn is just the latest of a string of lawn care operations to be absorbed by either industry giant TruGreen/ChemLawn (1995 revenues of \$578 million) or Barefoot which is based in Worthington (Columbus), Ohio.

Early in 1995, Barefoot acquired the customers of 11 northern lawn care branches of Orkin Lawn Care. A year earlier, it purchased seven Lawnmark locations in New York, Vermont, and Maine. □

certification test chairman. "In fact, we simply couldn't accommodate the demand, and reluctantly had to turn away several applicants. For the last two years, the tests have consistently sold out."

The ultimate goal, says CLCA state certification committee chairman Dave Wolkenhauer, is to create a recognized standard. He was among representatives from 15 states who was responsible for writing the test.

"We wanted to make the test more accessible and more consistent, and to offer more options for test-takers," Wolkenhauer explains. "This restructured format allows for more specialization as well as continued growth of the program."

California's construction test received the biggest makeover this year. The committee scaled it back from two days to one and renamed it the landscape installation test. Problems on irrigation, carpentry and concrete were deleted from it because, beginning this fall, separate certifications in carpentry and concrete will be offered.

"This new format is more flexible and therefore more easily adaptable to other states," says Kim Heckes of CLCA. "But not every problem or even every test is appropriate for all locations." For example, Illinois and Wisconsin, two of the states set to launch CLT programs this year, will not offer the irrigation test because it is not an issue in their climate.

For more information, call Heckes at (916) 448-2522. □

Bang! You're disease-resistant

Herbicide-resistant bent was first; disease-resistant tall fescue could be next 'shot from a gun,' if Scotts researchers are on track.

by JERRY ROCHE / Editor-in-Chief

Using a "gene gun," researchers at The Scotts Company believe they can produce brown patch-resistant tall fescue grass—soon.

"We think we'll have a genetically-engineered tall fescue seed that is absolutely brown patch-resistant in the next year," says Kevin Turner, manager of seed production and research at the Scotts facility in Gervais, Ore. "We believe we'll be able to make it available [to buyers] within four years."

The "gene gun," invented by Dr. John Sanford of Sanford Scientific Inc., can deliver DNA into turfgrass and thus improve the turf's desirable characteristics. Scotts and Sanford Scientific signed a cooperative agreement earlier this year, which led Scotts to prepare a dedicated genetic engineering laboratory.

Genetic research will be conducted at the Dwight G. Scott Research Center in Marysville, Ohio. Initial work on the program was directed by Dr. Virgil Meier, but Dr. Lisa Lee will now assume its reins.

Dr. Lee and a Rutgers University research team used the gene gun to develop a bentgrass that is resistant to a widely-used weed control product, making it possible to selectively control most weeds without affecting the bent.

"We are extremely excited about using this technology," says Dr. John Neal, who is Scotts' vice president for research and development. "Employing genetic engineering will allow our researchers to add desirable traits as well as speed up the process of turfgrass variety development."

Scotts estimates seven years to create and market a genetically-improved turfgrass, compared with 12 to 15 years without genetic engineering. □

SPREADERS

A quality spreader assures that seed, fertilizer and dry chemicals 'hit the ground running.'

by TERRY McIVER / Managing Editor

Your "ground level" plan for turf and landscape management should include a spreader that matches the size of the job, and is versatile enough to carry and deposit a variety of products.

Art Downing, sports field supervisor for the Howard County, Md., recreation and parks department, looks at spreaders from four angles:

1) **Easy to load.** This means the hopper has to be wide enough to accept the bag of material that you're loading, and low enough so you don't have to lift the bag very high off the ground.

2) **An agitation device that works.** Pelletized lime, for example, works much better in spreaders than the powdered variety, says Downing.

3) **Ease of operation.** Gauges should not be complicated, says Downing, requiring only "an easy on or off."

4) **Consistent spreading pattern.** This is important whether it's a tractor model that throws material 25 feet, or a walk-behind model with a spread of 5 feet. In the walk-behind category, Downing prefers spin models over drop spreaders.

"If you don't walk the exact pattern, [drop spreaders] will miss," he says. "They're great for powdered lime, but that's about all."

You won't have uniform turf color and vigor if your spreader puts material down unevenly. This means the spreader chute or ports must be cleaned before and after every application, or at least given a good look to check for clogged particles.

Drop spreaders may also not apply materials evenly if the driver or person walking behind it is not moving at an even pace. Too fast an application may result in missed spots or inadequate coverage. Too slow an application will cause materials to be applied heavier than necessary.

High-capacity walk-behind models reduce the labor involved in refilling the hopper repeatedly on the same site. Spreaders from Agri-Fab, for example, come in 100-lb. push models as well as 125-lb. or 175-lb. tow-behind models. **LM**



The Grotech multi-purpose spreader has universal mounts.



Vandermolen's Windmill spreader, above, has an effective spreading width of 40 feet. At left, the Gandy drop spreader can be used as a walk or tow unit.



Jacobsen's SV System Vehicle with spreader attachment. The spreader carries 14 cubic feet of material.

AGRI-FAB
(217) 728-8388
Circle No. 200

The Model 45-0238 is a tractor-mounted spreader that carries up to 100 lbs. of material. The spreader is compact, with a reliable design that ensures even and continuous flow and spread of materials. Spread width is 10-12 feet. The unit is driven by a 12-volt motor and comes with a poly wrap-around shield to reduce the spread width to four feet, and a vinyl cover.

EARTH WAY
(914) 356-8300
Circle No. 201

Distributed by Landscapers Supply Corp., Earth Way Ev-N-Spred commercial spreaders have large, easy rolling jumbo tires. Nylon wheel bushings ensure long, maintenance-free operation and smooth travel. All tractor pull and push models feature large enclosed gears with a full, 2-year unconditional guarantee, a self-cleaning design and a controlled feathered-edge broadcast.

C & S TURF EQUIPMENT
(800) 872-7050
Circle No. 202

The Turf Tracker is a riding spreader/sprayer unit that allows the operator to apply a granular product or spot application of liquids at the same time. Application speed allows the operator to cover one acre in 10 minutes. Zero-turn allows high maneuverability in heavily landscaped areas.

CHANDLER EQUIPMENT CO.
(800) 243-3319
Circle No. 203

"Low profile" golf course spreaders have capacities from three to five tons. A standard PTO belt drive is set up for 540 or 1000 rpm PTO or both. The dual hydraulic hook-up with hydraulic flow is supplied by tractor. A self-contained hydraulic drive with direct mount pump mounts to the tractor PTO. The "High profile" model is available in 304 stainless steel, 409 stainless steel painted or heavy-duty carbon steel.

GANDY
(507) 451-5430
Circle No. 204

The 6500 series of spreaders are 4, 5 and 6-foot-wide models for

heavy-duty jobs. Use them to fertilize, apply seed, herbicides, insecticides, fungicides and nematicides. Four- and five-foot models can be ordered with a handle to maneuver in small areas. Two rotors are independently driven from each end with three lengthwise rods spaced uniformly around the core for gentle agitation and free material flow.

GROTECH
(800) 725-8377
Circle No. 205

The MPS-125 is a multi-purpose spreader to mount on any tractor, utility vehicle, front mower or truck. A simple trailer attachment enables the user to pull the unit behind a golf cart. The MPS-125 spreads evenly, regardless of the throttle rpm or terrain. The spinner height adjusts 24 inches vertically, on a three-point hitch mount. The spread pattern adjusts from 4 to 40 feet.

HIGHWAY EQUIPMENT CO.
(319) 363-8281
Circle No. 206

The L2020GT has a 50-lb. capacity. The successor of traditional spinner spreaders, the unit resists corrosion, reduces bridging and improves spread patterns. A carbon steel hopper is fully welded, caulked, and painted with an advanced corrosion-resistant paint system developed to endure years of use. The hopper body is 96 inches wide.

JACOBSEN
(414) 637-6711
Circle No. 207

The SV System Vehicle comes with a spreader accessory that carries 14 cu. ft. of materials. The working width ad-



The Turf Tracker has a spreader mounted on the front. The Spyker Spreader, below, has responsive controls.

justs from 20 to 66 feet. It installs with brackets on top of the polyethylene hopper (with formed steel frame) for lifting. The SV hydraulic system provides the drive. One spout is used for sand and salt applications, another for seed and fertilizer.

LESCO
(800) 321-5325
Circle No. 208

The Mark II is made with a new frame and handle assembly that features stiffer construction to reduce bounce and provide more comfort and easier pushing for the operator. To better accommodate applicators of all sizes, the spreader has longer, adjustable handles and a wider handlebar. A simplified calibration adjustment improves application accuracy and establishes uniformity when calibrating a fleet of spreaders.

MARUYAMA
(206) 885-0811
Circle No. 209

The MG10 granule spreader carries seed, fertilizer and other dry chemicals, up to 2.9 gallons in capacity. The model MG10 features very uniform distribution and an 18-foot range. The spread pattern can be set for left or right side, or a 180-degree coverage. It has a 10 position adjustable discharge volume and tank agitator to eliminate clumps or jamming.

RIVERSIDE GARDENS
(607) 729-2292
Circle No. 210

The Applicator's Friend shield encloses the rear portion of fertilizer spreaders to reduce operator exposure to materials. The shield

does not affect the spreader operation or spread patterns. The Applicator's Friend shield is thermoformed from durable, high-tech, corrosion-resistant materials. The shield can be cleaned easily with water, and it can be attached in minutes.

SPYKER SPREADERS
(219) 774-8122
Circle No. 211

Pro Model spreaders from Spyker have been improved and are now available to the green industry. Spreaders include the "Big Spread" spreading spinners, and Model 78-22 with instant action spread/no spread. Stainless steel frames are optional. The "Big Spread" distributes material in a wide, level distribution pattern.

UNITED HORTICULTURAL SUPPLY
(503) 678-9000
Circle No. 212

Commercial broadcast spreaders from UHS feature linear, low density polyethylene construction. Gears are made of Nylatron GS, and are self-lubricating, with superior wear characteristics. Nylon 6/6 axle and wheel bearing are also self-lubricating, with excellent wear and load-carrying ability.

VANDERMOLEN CORP.
(201) 992-8506
Circle No. 213

The Windmill Spreader Model 510 features a granular capacity of 400 lbs., and an effective spreading width of 40 ft. The Windmill spreads all types of seed, and can handle salt and sand. The Windmill is designed for smaller tractors in the 16 to 28 hp range. □



1996 EMERALD AWARDS

READERS PREFER *Echo, Toro, Lofts*

'What are your favorite brand names?' we asked our 51,000 readers last spring. Some of their choices were overwhelming.

by JERRY ROCHE / Editor-in-Chief

Echo, Inc., of Lake Zurich, Ill.; the Toro Company of Bloomington, Minn.; and Lofts Seed of Somerset,

N.J., were big winners in LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT's "Emerald Awards" sweepstakes/contest held earlier this year. Each green industry supplier was named "favorite" in two categories by LM readers.

Echo was first among reader faves in the leaf blower and line trimmer categories, while Toro finished a strong first in both

the riding and walk-behind mower categories. Lofts' varieties, Rebel and Palmer, won the turf-type tall fescue and perennial ryegrass seed categories, respectively.

Double-winners

Bill Peel says Echo's prime concern in the professional market—where 90 percent of its equipment is sold—is making sure the end-user is happy.

"One of the biggest concerns from our research is power-to-weight ratio," the company's director of marketing notes. "We try to comply with the users' requests by working with landscapers to build operator comfort. We have a team of professionals that works with landscape managers to field-test our equipment. In addition, we also know that people who buy the equipment base their purchasing decision on recommendations from their employees who use the equipment, and on input from other landscapers."

Everyone also knows the Toro name, but the company's success is the result of hard work.

"We have a world-class team of designers and engineers," says Brian Masterson of

Echo trimmer



Kubota tractor



Toro Groundsmaster mower



Toro. "Before any product goes to market, we test it, then it goes out to dealers and cutters—and if they don't like it, we re-design it.

"We take care of some of the best courses in the world. The Toro name is synonymous with quality and top-notch beautification equipment."

Equipment

Other winners in the equipment categories were Kubota (compact tractors), Ryan (aerators), Ford (pick-up trucks) and Stihl (chain saws).

Jackson D'Armond of Stihl, Inc., says the company relies heavily on its network of dealers and distributors to learn what customers want.

"We get feedback on what's in demand, how to improve products, or if there's anything going wrong with products," says D'Armond. "We have to be able to respond. We have very high quality standards, and that's one of the things we believe makes our products excel. We try very hard to listen to the market."

Paul Williams of Kubota says the company takes an extra step to talk to the people on the front lines.

As part of Kubota's "Product Quality Management System," the company's regional service engineers and other representatives often visit end-users to ask them to evaluate Kubota products.

"We basically ask, 'How do you like your Kubota?'" says Williams. "We cover general questions about what they like and what they don't like, from ease of handling to maintenance. We obtain a wealth of

Ryan aerator



information."

Dave Ferguson of Ryan says the aerator manufacturer holds focus groups prior to new product releases. It's one of the ways the company has stayed competitive.

"We get [end-user] opinions on what features they'd like to see," says Ferguson.

Fertilizers & pesticides

In the fertilizer/pesticide categories, favorites were Scotts (fertilizer), Sandoz's Barricade

Echo blower



and Monsanto's Roundup (herbicides), DowElanco's Dursban (insecticide), ISK's Daconil 2787 (fungicide) and Ciba's Primo (growth regulator).

Susie Calhoun knew Scotts "trounced" the competition before we even told her.

"I think part of it is due to our patented technologies with years of proven performance, and the fact that our tech reps are out there calling on the customers one on one, providing services and consultation, and being a partner in turf maintenance programs," says Calhoun. "That, coupled with good products, is the reason for the awareness."

Gene Hintze of Sandoz credits Barricade's performance in the field for its performance in the Emerald Awards contest.

"The thing that people like about Barricade is that it's a consistent performer," says Hintze. "They know what they're going to get year in and year out. It doesn't matter if it's a wet year or a drier year, Barricade is still going to perform." Hintze, who credited distributors for some of Barricade's popularity, says Barricade has been on the market

Stihl chain saw



Ford truck




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