

Turfgrass Advocacy

2009



New York State Turfgrass Association • March 11, 2009

Background

The turfgrass industry is an important industry in New York State. Close to 3.5 million acres in the state are covered with turfgrass, consisting of lawns, parks, golf courses, sports fields, sod farms, industrial and institutional grounds, rights of way, etc. Five billion dollars of turf maintenance expenses contributed in 2003 to the State's economy. Additionally the 2003 New York Turfgrass Survey documents that New York employed over 43,000 employees who had turf maintenance as their primary responsibility. The cost of total payroll for employees in 2003 was nearly \$467 million. Over 843,000 acres of new turf was established in 2003 at a cost of nearly \$1.56 billion. Residents of New York benefit from turf in every day life. Quality turfgrass provides countless environmental benefits such as holding rainfall for groundwater recharge, filtering pollutants, absorbing sound, cooling the air temperature, and providing plentiful, clean oxygen. Dense, healthy turfgrass provides a safe playing surface for our children and athletes of all ages as well as beautifies and softens our urban landscapes. Turfgrass has a major influence on the quality of life for New Yorkers.

NYSTA Perspective

It is the mission of NYSTA to promote professionalism through education and research, while advocating environmentally responsible management. Turfgrass managers are constantly challenged to meet consumer expectations for quality, safety and environmental compatibility while complying with increasing regulation. The science to date tells us that we can have healthy turf and preserve and protect environmental quality. More research is needed to provide improved turf management solutions.

Environmental research looks beyond the traditional agronomic aspects of turfgrass science and seeks to determine the influence of the practices on the environment. Issues such as water quality protection, Integrated Pest Management that strives to reduce reliance on pesticides, and the development of biological control practices that enhance the ecological compatibility of turf systems are a few of the many efforts currently underway. Additionally, we are assessing future needs beyond the challenges of today and expect to begin projects that reduce reliance on potable water and use effluent water for golf courses.

Product development that enhances turf quality while protecting the environment is critical. New crop protectants are exhibiting vast improvements in chemistry. Turfgrass biotechnology could create disease and insect resistant turfgrass plants that withstand heavy traffic and require much less water.

The 2006-2007, 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 New York State Budgets included a \$175,000 appropriation for a Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund. There is no appropriation in the 2009-2010 New York State Budget. Projects that received funding included:

Prospecting for Resistance to the Annual Bluegrass Weevil in Improved Cultivars of *Poa annua*

- Daniel C. Peck, Ph.D., Cornell University

Development of Molecular Diagnostic Techniques for Identification of Invasive Pest Crane Flies in Turfgrass

- Ping Wang, Ph.D. and Daniel C. Peck, Ph.D., Cornell University

Benefits of Turf: Reasons Why Pesticides and Fertilizers Applied to Turf are Not Just for Cosmetics

- A. Martin Petrovic, Ph.D., Cornell University

continued on page 2

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continued from page 1

Integrated Cultural Practices to Reduce Dollar Spot on Golf Course Fairways

- Alex Ellram, Ph.D., SUNY Cobleskill

In addition to these projects, funds are also being allocated to Cornell University in the area of turfgrass and landscape weed control to develop integrated chemical, cultural and biological approaches to weed management that result in reduced reliance on chemical herbicides. Developing management strategies for invasive species is also of interest.

With 2009-2010 funding our goal is to enhance environmental stewardship in New York State by improving and enhancing the diagnosis of turfgrass insect pests, weeds and diseases.

Recommendation

* Restore funding for a line item of \$175,000 in the 2009-2010 budget for the Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Fund.