

CUTT

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Cornell's Turf Program Addresses Social, Economic and Environmental Issues

Turfgrasses represent one of the more important interfaces where people and plants come together, directly impacting the quality of human lives. Currently there are between 20 and 30 million acres of turfgrass in the United States, consisting of lawns, parks, golf courses, sod farms, industrial and institutional grounds, right-of-ways, etc. In New York State alone, close to two million acres are covered with turfgrasses. About 321,000 acres of residential and commercial lawns are managed by lawn and landscape services. Of that, approximately 50 percent lies in downstate New York (Westchester, Rockland, Nassau, and Suffolk Counties), where the landscape industry has traditionally been very strong.

The approximately 800 golf courses in New York State cover at least 80,000 acres of intensively maintained turfgrass, again concentrated throughout urban areas of the state. In addition, there are over 200,000 acres of highly maintained turf and lawns in parks, public and private institutions, schools, cemeteries, and airports. The rest of the two million acres of turfgrass are lower maintenance areas, such as highway medians and the residential lawns or commercial grounds not serviced by the lawn care industry.

The turfgrass industry, both nationwide and in New York State, continues to grow, with exponential growth in the golf course sector of the industry. This year in New York State alone, over \$10 million will be spent on new golf

course construction. Some courses under construction are being developed on former dairy, beef cattle, and cash crop land by owners hoping to secure a living producing a recreational commodity. In the landscape maintenance segment of the industry, sales have increased, but increased demand does not guarantee next year's profit.

Highly maintained turfgrass sites use vast amounts of inputs (fuel, fertilizers, pesticides, water for irrigation). Pesticide use in particular is greater than any other agricultural commodity produced worldwide. Many high-maintenance turfgrass sites are found in close proximity to surface waters and within critical

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