

CUTT

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The World Series From the Ground Up

One of the more glamorous aspects of being the New York State Turfgrass Extension Specialist is when professional sporting events request my assistance. One such opportunity occurs on a regular basis with the New York Yankees baseball club.

Dan Cunningham is the head groundskeeper for the Yankees and a friend of mine from college many years ago when we studied at the University of Rhode Island. Like many of us who graduated from the URI program, Dan pursued his interest in turfgrass management on the golf course, working at Winged Foot Golf Course in Mamaroneck, NY. Until, that is, he was encouraged by Bob Alonzi to apply for a grounds position at Yankee Stadium almost 20 years ago.

Dan started out on the crew, working his way into the assistant's position and for the last several years has assumed the

Head Groundskeeper position. Dan is aided in every aspect of field care by his assistant Rob Ley, as well as the staff of Steve, Horace and Tommy.

Given the dominance of the Yankees in the American League, it has been an exciting time in the Bronx for the last seven years, especially in Fall. For the last two years I have been able to attend the last game of the season at Yankee Stadium. Neither were the closing games of the World Series, since the Series was concluded, to different results, at the visitor's field. However, both games were memorable.

The Setup

I arrive at the field by noon the day of the game. The starting time for World Series games is generally around 8:00 pm. It is an

continued on page 7

This Times

1. *The World Series* 1. *NY Turfgrass Survey* 2. *Clippings: Organic Short Course; Maffei Receives NYSTA Award*
 3. *Scanning the Journals: Fertilizer Effects on Microbes and Disease; Alleviating Heat Stress* 10. *Moss Control*
 12. *Organic Weed Control* 18. *Cornell Turfgrass ShortCUTT* 20. *Point Source Pollution Prevention*

Can We "Count" on You?

The turfgrass industry in New York is an important aspect of the state's agriculture yet it has not been properly assessed for its economic value to the state. The last survey of the industry was conducted in 1977 and clearly the industry has experienced substantial growth in the last two decades.

Industry surveys conducted in other states have resulted in substantial additional financial and legislative support from state governments. In some cases, several hundred thousand new dollars have been allocated to turfgrass research and education. This is a vital time for New York—with pending legislation and lack of effective pesticide alternatives—to invest in turfgrass research

focused on environmentally responsible management. Your participation in a new turfgrass industry survey will help the process and could yield significant additional resources.

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and the National Agricultural Statistics Office is preparing to conduct the survey in Fall 2002. The financial commitment from the state is expected to be over \$100,000 while the industry will be asked to provide \$65,000. The Board of Directors of the New York State Turfgrass Association has been actively and successfully advocating for this project and now needs your help. Work with

continued on page 4

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Turfgrass Industry Survey

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your allied associations to provide financial support for the industry contribution and fill out the survey when it arrives this Fall. I hope we can count on you!

Overview

Turfgrasses represent one of the more important interfaces where people and plants come together, directly impacting the quality of human lives. Rough industry estimates extrapolated from the 1977 survey suggest that in New York State close to two million acres are covered with turfgrasses, consisting of lawns, parks, golf courses, sod farms, industrial and institutional grounds, rights-of-way, etc. About 321,000 acres of residential and commercial lawns are managed by lawn and landscape services. Of that acreage, 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. Yet, while land estimates can be calculated, there is no current information available on the contributions of the turfgrass industry to the economy of New York State. The old data from 1977 estimated from \$313 million to \$595 million for total maintenance expenditures.

Several states (IA, WI, VA) have been attempting to determine the economic contributions of the turfgrass industry. Recently, the Virginia Agricultural Statistics Service, in partnership with the Virginia Turfgrass Council, reported a 66% increase in turfgrass acreage from 1982 to 1998, with a concomitant 400% increase in maintenance expenditures that exceeded \$1.5 billion. This surpassed the combined cash receipts of all major agricultural commodities combined! Furthermore, in Virginia—a state barely 20% the size of New York—the industry created over 390,000 jobs with an annual payroll of \$700 million. Finally,

the Virginia study indicated that approximately \$85 million was spent on goods, services and individuals outside the state. Therefore, a comparable analysis of the turfgrass industry in New York would fulfill a need to evaluate and assess the magnitude and economic potential of this important service sector industry.

The Project

Total maintenance expenditures for the New York State turfgrass industry was estimated to be between a \$313 and 595 million in 1977. Since then no meaningful economic assessment of this important industry has been attempted. Therefore, the contribution of the turfgrass industry to the economy of New York and the opportunity for continued economic expansion cannot be fully understood or capitalized on until a thorough economic analysis is conducted. Consequently, the objective of this project is perform an economic survey of the turfgrass industry in New York.

The New York Turfgrass Economic Analysis (NYTEA) will be the centerpiece of an effort to capture the magnitude of the industry by assessing the overall amount of turfgrass acreage, including an analysis by sector, i.e. golf courses, sod farms, parks, schools, home lawns, athletic fields, and the like. Additionally, total expenditures for turfgrass maintenance that will include such items as paid labor, costs of establishing new turf areas, equipment, supplies, crop protectants, among others, will be calculated. Finally, an educational needs assessment that would aid the state agencies responsible for regulation will determine major turf problems, formal training programs and primary sources of information.

The NYTEA will highlight employment opportunities in the turfgrass industry that might not otherwise be known, identify opportunities for investment in new technologies, such as turfgrass seed production and compost operations, and attract allied industry investment in a state with significant economic resources allocated to turfgrass maintenance.

Objective

The objective of the NYTEA is to provide basis statistics that describe each of the individual industry segments (home lawns, highway roadsides, golf courses, sod farms, general areas, airports, athletic fields, cemeteries,

churches, parks, schools, and service companies) for:

- number of hired workers
- value of unpaid family labor
- equipment expenses
- non-equipment expenses
- paid labor expenses
- maintained acreage of turf
- capital improvement expenses

The NYTEA will deliver a comprehensive document that will serve as a basis for continued economic expansion (employment, equipment purchases, etc.) and investment in new technologies. In addition, this economic analysis will be useful for state agencies responsible for regulation by providing a more thorough

understanding of the various expenditures, employment opportunities, and challenges facing New York's turfgrass industry.

It is safe to assume that based on the brief 1977 economic analysis of expenditures for turfgrass maintenance in New York and the recent publication of the Virginia Turfgrass Industry Survey that New York's turfgrass industry constitutes a multibillion dollar economic resource. It likely employs hundreds of thousands of citizens, utilizes taxable resources, and significantly supports local communities through tax revenue. Yet, without a properly implemented assessment, the understanding of this industry, as well as opportunities for growth, cannot be realized.

Frank S. Rossi

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compiled by
Virginia Agricultural Statistics Service

Virginia's
Turfgrass Industry

You Can Help This Say New York

A report covering....

- Home Lawns
- Highway Roadsides
- Parks
- General Areas
- Golf Courses
- Sod Farms
- Service Companies
- Cemeteries
- Churches
- Schools
- Airports

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