

CUTT

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Weed Suppressive Groundcovers A More Attractive and Effective Way to Manage Weeds

Recent meetings of the New York State Landscape Horticulture Program Committee have led to the development of focus areas for future research and extension emphasis in turfgrass and landscape settings in New York. The statewide program committee has both landscape and turf divisions with representation from academics at Cornell University, key stakeholders and county-based extension personnel. The development of alternative pest management strategies for weed, insect and pathogen pests of turfgrass and landscape plants, as well as environmental preservation of greenspace across New York were identified as key priorities in 2001. Greater understanding of the plant's interaction with its environment, including soil rhizosphere ecology, and the impact of stress on plant growth were also identified as important research priorities. Given this increased emphasis on alternative pest management and environmental preservation, our research and extension programs have expanded to address this need.

Increased Greenscapes

In the past 10 years the landscape industry has seen a rapid increase in spending by the homeowner and commercial landscaper on plant material selections, installation and maintenance. The green industry as a whole has nearly doubled in some areas of New York and the U.S., with recent expansion in numbers of acres in greenscape, and the completion of new golf courses, parks, athletic fields, and private landscape projects. In terms of turfgrass, the U.S. maintains over 25 million acres of turf, with over 2 million acres in New York alone.

Weed management in turf and landscapes has been identified as one of the most critical pest control issues in turf and landscape settings. This issue recognizes the time and amount of herbicide applied to these areas for control of annual and perennial weeds and the strong emphasis on aesthetic appeal. Complicating this issue is the fact that herbicide application in residential and public areas has become more and more controversial. Exposure of adults, children and animals to pesticides is of key concern, as well as runoff due to excessive rainfall or misapplication, or residual activity in local or municipal mulches. Most recently,

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