

2005 RUTGERS Turfgrass Proceedings



THE NEW JERSEY TURFGRASS ASSOCIATION

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The Rutgers Turfgrass Proceedings is published yearly by the Rutgers Center for Turfgrass Science, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, and the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, Cook College, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey in cooperation with the New Jersey Turfgrass Association. The purpose of this document is to provide a forum for the dissemination of information and the exchange of ideas and knowledge. The proceedings provide turfgrass managers, research scientists, extension specialists, and industry personnel with opportunities to communicate with co-workers. Through this forum, these professionals also reach a more general audience, which includes the public.

This publication includes lecture notes of papers presented at the 2005 New Jersey Turfgrass Expo. Publication of these lectures provides a readily available source of information covering a wide range of topics and includes technical and popular presentations of importance to the turfgrass industry.

This proceedings also includes research papers that contain original research findings and reviews of selected subjects in turfgrass science. These papers are presented primarily to facilitate the timely dissemination of original turfgrass research for use by the turfgrass industry.

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Dr. Ann Brooks Gould, Editor
Dr. Bruce B. Clarke, Coordinator

RESULTS FROM A SURVEY FOR YARD WASTE MANAGEMENT AND A PROPOSAL FOR COMPOSTING

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Leaving grass clippings on the lawn is an environmentally sound practice that recycles nutrients and under proper management improves turf quality. Occasionally during surges of growth, or when weather prohibits timely mowing, the collection of grass clippings may be necessary, in which case the grass clippings may be composted along with other yard waste such as shade tree leaves. Recycling of grass clippings and composting is widely encouraged by municipalities because they prefer to keep yard trimmings out of municipal solid waste landfills and incinerators. Currently, there is little information available about how the landscape industry in New Jersey handles their yard wastes.

A survey was thus conducted in August 2005 during the annual Turfgrass Research Field Day that was held at the Rutgers Plant Science Research and Extension Farm near Adelphia, NJ. Near the end of the field day a survey (Table 1), consisting of seven questions, was distributed to landscapers and turfgrass managers in attendance. A total of 47 people completed and returned the survey. The results of the survey and the tabulated responses are also summarized in Table 1.

The findings suggest that most turfgrass managers leave clippings on the lawn and that only about 13% of them practice clipping removal every time they mow. When clippings are removed, results suggest that the clippings are often taken to a composting facility or they are land applied. Shade tree leaves are similarly taken to a composting facility or land applied. Results also suggest that a small number of landscapers simply take grass clippings or shade tree leaves and “dump them wherever possible to get rid of them.” Just over half of survey respondents indicated that a composting facility is available in their area that accepts grass clippings or shade

tree leaves. Approximately 40% of respondents indicated that they have no such facilities near by. This finding would suggest that there may be a need to expand the geographic distribution of composting centers for easier access by the landscape industry. Survey results suggest that most landscapers do not regularly utilize composted yard waste for soil improvement, but 11% indicated that they would use such compost if a source was readily available in their area.

Survey respondents were from across New Jersey, with a majority of them coming from Central Jersey (26% Monmouth, 18% Ocean, 12% Mercer, 9% Gloucester, 6% Camden, 6% Morris, and 3% Sussex Counties). A few (15%) of the respondents were from neighboring states.

In summary, the findings from this survey suggest that the majority of landscapers make an effort to manage yard waste in an environmentally responsible manner, but that there is a need for greater access to composting facilities. There also appears to be an unsatisfied demand for compost in the landscape industry. Another industry that is also widely distributed across New Jersey is the equine industry. Equine produce an abundance of organic waste material in the form of manure and bedding material that also needs composting. One possible solution to better utilization of these two types of organic waste materials may be to develop a good distribution of composting facilities that can be used by both the landscape and equine industries. This combination of yard trimmings and horse manure bedding would likely make an excellent blend of materials for composting, with respect to achieving a desirable carbon to nitrogen ratio and a high quality compost product.

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Table 1. Original survey for yard waste management distributed at Turfgrass Research Field Day, Rutgers Plant Science Research and Extension Farm, Adelphia, NJ, August 2005, and tabulated responses.

Survey for Yard Waste Management

Findings from this survey will be used by Rutgers Cooperative Research & Extension to develop programs to help the landscape industry better manage yard waste. All information is strictly confidential.

% of 47 respondents

1. How does your lawn care service manage grass clippings?
 - 13% a) We remove clippings from the turf every time we mow.
 - 50% b) We leave the clippings on the turf every time we mow
 - 26% c) We sometimes remove and sometimes leave the clippings depending on the amount or customers wishes
 - 11% d) Other: _____

2. How does your lawn service dispose of grass clippings?
 - 33% a) They are taken to a composting facility
 - 10% b) They are taken to a farm for land application
 - 10% c) We dump them wherever possible to get rid of them
 - 47% d) Other: _____

3. How does your lawn service dispose of shade tree leaves?
 - 51% a) They are taken to a composting facility
 - 21% b) They are taken to a farm for land application
 - 13% c) We dump them wherever possible to get rid of them
 - 15% d) Other: _____

4. List any county/counties where you dispose of shade tree leaves and/or grass clippings:

5. Is a composting facility available in your area to take grass clippings or shade tree leaves from commercial lawn care companies?
 - 56% a) Yes
 - 44% b) No

6. Do you use composted yard waste for soil improvement for your clients?
 - 7% a) Always
 - 57% b) Never
 - 25% c) Sometimes
 - 11% d) We would use such a compost if a source was readily available in our area

7. Other comments concerning the issue of yard waste:
