

Getting to the Root Cause

As turfgrass managers we sometimes have to deal with situations where turfgrass sod is stressed. Too often, that stress is compounded by the human stress of end-users demanding the perfect hue of green, no matter what the circumstances!

According to turfgrass scientists and field extension experts, the most common mistake in trying to solve turfgrass problems is that the symptoms are treated ... not the root cause.

Too often and too quickly people point at the grass and declare that it must be the fault of the turfgrass sod and proceed to replace it. Typically, if the sod is the only element changed, the symptoms reappear, as the conditions that caused the problem are seldom corrected.

Common mistakes

When it comes to turfgrass sod, people can be cruel – not maliciously – but because of incorrect assumptions.

For instance, many people do not prepare the soil properly. When seeding an area, people know to spend time preparing a perfect seedbed. It is no different for turfgrass sod. Although turfgrass sod produces immediate results, it will begin to wane if placed on a poorly prepared surface that is void of the nutrients needed to sustain turf. A well-prepared bed will produce long lasting results.

Another issue is the lack of necessary care. Although the turfgrass cultivars available today have greatly improved disease resistance and are grown with certain attributes for specific, desired applications, turfgrass sod still requires some basic elements for survival. Just like any other living plant, turfgrass needs adequate nutrition, water, drainage, and direct sunlight. If any of these are omitted, turfgrass will begin to show symptoms of ill health.

Don't overlook the obvious

When attempting to assess a turf problem, start with the basics. Often the seemingly most complex problems have straightforward answers. For unusual situations, ask your peers for advice because sometimes another set of eyes can see situations that you may have overlooked.

Another tip is to be aware of the quick fix. When solving turfgrass issues don't prolong a chronic problem by temporarily overcoming it with chemicals. The effects of chemicals can mask a problem but if the underlying issue is not addressed, the chemicals have a short-term effect and the unresolved problem will reoccur the moment the "solution" is absent.

Given unlimited funds and a penchant for perfection, almost any turfgrass problem can be overcome. However few managers have the luxury of an unlimited budget. So avoid disappointment by doing it right from the beginning. Build a great foundation for your turf and the world (and your end-users) will benefit from it for years to come.



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