

Turfgrass Producers International

New TPI Membership Benefit VISA/MC Bankcard Program

A new VISA/MasterCard bank card processing program is now being offered as a brand new TPI membership benefit. TPI has worked out an agreement with the National Processing Company (NPC), one of the largest merchant credit card processors in the U.S. with more than 25 years of bank card processing experience. The company will offer processing fee discounts to TPI members on both VISA & MasterCard.

Due to the anticipated volume of credit card processing for members of TPI, NPC is able to offer these discounted rates. NPC will be able to accommodate the processing of American Express, Discover Card and Diner's Club/Carte

Blanche credit cards at rates negotiated individually by TPI members.

NPC also provides services to electronically authorize, capture and process all transactions including:

- * Custom Software: NPC provides point-of-sale software, including everything from terminals and printers to decals and printer paper. Custom software packages are also provided.

- * A 24-Hour, Toll-Free Customer Service line.

- * A secured daily deposit into your own bank through the Federal Reserve Bank's Automated Clearing House (ACH) System.

The following processing fee schedule will be determined by your average sales transaction.

Average Ticket	VISA/MC
\$750.00 & Above	1.601%
\$500.00-\$749.00	1.661%
\$100.00-\$499.00	1.841%
\$75.00 - \$99.99	1858%
\$50.00 - \$74.99	2.001%
\$25.00 - \$49.99	2.631%

All members have or will soon be receiving flyers from NPC describing the program or you can call NPC at 800/753-7172 for more information.

PR SCORECARD

May 15 - Jan. 15 (the first 8 months)

Mailings to Media & Members

Total: 97,398 pages

Free Media Exposure:

issues	68*
pages of articles	47*
circulation	3,201,623*
advertising value	\$118,000*

Paid Advertisements:

Landscape Architecture

Two full page 4-color advertisements
circulation 40,000
advertising cost \$3,842

Landscape Architect & Specifier News

One full page 4-color advertisement
circulation 16,538
advertising cost \$1,046
ads scheduled for publication in
February, April & May 1995

1st-Aid Information Requested & Mailed to Architects & Contractors:

330 kits

(kits include state-wide member lists)

* represents documented results gathered by the TPI office & members.

PR Program Update \$118,000 Free Media Exposure

As of January 15, the new TPI PR program has received \$118,000 in free media exposure, representing a 187.6% return on investment.

Over the last two months the number of "Turfgrass, First-Aid for the Earth Kits" requested and mailed with a listing of area turfgrass producers has more than doubled. More kits are expected to be requested in February, after the next advertisement runs.

TPI Public Relation activities from Nov. 15 - Jan. 15 include:

- * A High Profile Turf Projects response form was mailed to all members. Members' turfgrass sod stories were collectively included in a newsrelease and sent to professional trade publications and selective consumer publications in late January.

- * The second Turfgrass Media Kit was mailed out in Mid-December. The kit included an updated rolodex card, a media invitation to the 1995 Midwinter Conference in Orlando, a paper on the value added by turfgrass sod written by Dr. Eliot Roberts, former director of the Lawn Institute, the recently released

USDA turfgrass sod farm census results, a profile of the TPI organization and six different newsreleases describing TPI's five turfgrass sod promotional brochures. The brochures were made available free to the public by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to the Turf Resource Center. Already consumers have been mailing in for their brochures.

- * The December newsrelease featured the keynote address delivered by Doug Fender, TPI Executive Director, at the Environmental Care Association. The newsrelease was titled, "Think of Lawns as Rainforests." Copies of the 16 page manuscript were also made available upon request.

In the next two months, the TPI public relations program plans to continue sending out monthly newsreleases and expects to be wrapping up preparations for the third media kit. The third kit will include various articles on spring yard preparation, highlighting turfgrass sod.

Please keep those turfgrass articles coming into to the office, both good and bad. The more we react with the media, the more positive PR for turfgrass sod.

Mailing Lists — Making the TPI PR Program Work for You

Many TPI members report that they would like to take advantage of TPI's promotional materials. However, when it comes to using them in direct mail, most producers have a full desk as it is, so sending out a mailing often gets pushed back. Starting and maintaining a mailing list can be very frustrating.

However, direct mail can be a very efficient, cost effective marketing vehicle once it is used. The major issue is to get the most from your investment of time and money. Here are some ideas to help you do just that:

1) Building your mailing list. First figure out who your target audience is. This is likely to include: landscape architects and contractors, nurseries, builders, land developers, homeowners, golf course and park managers, sod brokers, etc. To create this list you can review past customers records, go through the yellow pages, attend home and garden shows, and contact professional organizations.

There are also mailing list companies who can do the research for you. They have the data to reach individual residents or distinct professionals groups.

2) Using the list. There are two basic options here a)you can buy special mailing list software or b)you can pay a mailing list management company. To decide which one to use, evaluate the

costs of buying the special software and the time involved with maintaining your own list versus the cost of having someone else do it for you.

Mailing list software can be purchased from most computer stores. The software will give you individual fields to insert names, addresses, phone numbers, customer information and easy access to use this data. The software will also be able to merge the data into letters, print mailing labels and sort the data into different categories (such as occupation/classification, location, phone lists, etc.).

Mailing list management companies will either charge per name and address (about 15 cents per record and about 5 cents to update a record) or for the amount of time involved to place the list in the computer (about \$25/hour). When looking for a mailing list company it is important to shop around. Some companies only specialize in the larger bulk mailings while other companies like to work with the smaller businesses. The companies can also supply you with direct imprinting, instead of labels and they can also save you postage, by presorting the mailing.

3) Deciding what to send. A special reason to send the mailing helps to demand attention. Some ideas are: the introduction of a new season, anniversary month, holiday, highlighting

recently completed projects and discussing how you can do the same for them. Coming up in April is Earth Day, National Gardening Month and National Lawn Care Month.

Marketing Consultant, John Graham suggests asking these questions before sending out a mailing.

A) Does the mailing create the impression that you want to make?

B) Does the mailing have eye appeal?

C) How many times have you used the word "you"? Graham suggests talking directly to the customer and discussing what they want in comparison to what's for sale.

D) Are the sentences short? Anything complicated only confuses the reader.

E) What's your offer? The goal of a mailing is gaining a response. Words that stimulate response are: free, limited offer, respond by the date for discount. Without an offer, there is no urgency for the customer to act.

F) Have you included a guarantee? Customers are looking for satisfaction.

G) Are you making it easy for the customer to respond? Make sure to highlight your phone number or enclose a business reply card.

4) TPI Benefits. Producing promotional pieces as a group is extremely cost effective. Don't forget to take advantage of this benefit.

Member Safety Tip

KEEPING AN EYE OUT

Keeping an eye out on all your farm operations is extremely important. Training your employees on the proper ways of using machinery, is a must in every business, but accidents may still occur. Once things get into full swing, the working hours become longer and the chances of an accident occurring rises.

After we have finished harvesting sod for the day the employees have different job responsibilities around the farm. I make sure that either myself or another employee checks on everyone hourly,

this way we can see that they are doing things properly, there are no breakdowns, or that no accidents have occurred.

Most importantly just by stopping and talking briefly gives the person a quick break to refresh a little.

The Daily Dozen

12 Things To Keep An Eye Out For:

1. Lack of adequate guards or safety devices.
2. Lack of adequate warning system.
3. Fire and explosion hazards.
4. Unexpected movement hazards.
5. Poor housekeeping
6. Protruding object hazards.

By Chip Lain, Pine Island Turf Nursery, New Jersey

7. Close clearance and congestion hazards.
8. Hazardous atmospheric conditions.
9. Hazardous arrangement, placement, storage.
10. Hazardous defects of tools, equipment, etc.
11. Inadequate illumination, intense noise.
12. Hazardous personal attire.

Remember the most frequent and serious accidents to occur on turfgrass sod farms are caused by: 1)Bodily Motions, 2)Sod Harvesters & 3)Heavy Objects. The top injury types are cuts and lacerations followed by strains and sprains.

PLAN AHEAD FOR A BUSY SEASON

PROMOTE BUSINESS WITH TPI's **TURFGRASS SOD SELLING TOOLS**

ITEM DESCRIPTION CODES:

(1) = combine with Tech Sheet for added emphasis

(F/F) = available either flat for local printing, or folded for immediate use.

(PL) = personalize locally, with company contact information in space provided on each item

CONSUMER-DIRECT BROCHURES

"TURF INSTALLATION GUIDE" - sell your sod by showing how easy a beautiful lawn can be to install with this step-by-step approach. 4-Color, many photos. (1) (F/F) (PL)

"WHY ARE MOST LAWNS SODDED?" - a real door-opener to increase sales, answering many common questions, with beautiful photos of instant lawns. 4-Color, varied settings for sod use. (1) (F/F) (PL)

"THE DREAM LAWN IS YOURS IN HOURS WITH SOD" - illustrates many advantages of sod to gain instant beauty, erosion control and other values of sod. 4-Color, illustrations included. (1) (F/F) (PL)

"SELF-SCORING METHOD: HOW TO ESTABLISH A LAWN" - for the thinking person, who want to compare the strengths of sod against seed or hydroseed. 4-Color photos, with check list of characteristics inside. (F/F) (PL)

COMMERCIAL/WHOLESALE CUSTOMER MATERIALS

"GUIDELINE SPECIFICATIONS TO TURFGRASS SODDING" - landscape architects, contractors and other specifiers appreciate the detail contained in this 8-1/2 x 11-inch, 16-page booklet covering all aspects of sodding. Black & White, no illustrations. (PL)

"TECH SHEETS" - variety descriptions and maintenance guidelines for Bermudagrass, Bluegrass, Centipedegrass, Fine Fescue, Ryegrass, St. Augustinegrass, Tall Fescue and Zoysiagrass. Each sheet measures just 3-1/2 x 8-1/2 inches for easy use in business envelopes. (1) Insert Tech Sheets with Consumer-Direct Brochures for added information and impact.

"CONTRACTOR ESTIMATOR FOR TURFGRASS SOD AND SEED INSTALLATION" - create a direct cost/profit comparison between sod and seed with commercial customers, showing how beneficial sodding can be to everyone. 8-1/2 x 11-inch, yellow sheets.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

"OUR PRECIOUS PLANET" - the environmental benefits of turf, the immediacy of sod, that's the simple yet direct message of this colorful brochure. A companion handout for use with "This Precious Earth" video. (F/F) (PL)

"THIS PRECIOUS EARTH (VHS Videotape)" - show how good turf is for the environment with 6-minutes of fast moving, fact filled entertainment that's also educational. The main program is followed by four public service announcements/ commercials that can be easily personalized for local or television use.

"TURFGRASS - FIRST-AID FOR THE EARTH" - full-color reprint of advertisement designed for national landscape magazines in conjunction with TPI's Public Relations/Public Education Program. Reverse side is blank for personalized messages.

"HEALTHY LAWN-HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT" - written by the U.S. EPA, printed by ASPA, to teach how lawn care can be environmentally friendly, 20-pages, 8-3/4 x 5-1/2-inch booklet. (PL)

"JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL TURFGRASS" - TPI's magazine-format publication (8-1/2 x 11-inches, without advertisements), presenting a wide variety of consumer-oriented facts about the benefits of turf to the environment. Includes clip-art for reproduction. (PL)

"TURF'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE ENVIRONMENT (35mm Slides)" - a set of 47 slides, prepared by Dr. James Beard especially for TPI members. Content of slides tells the positive story of turf in the environment.

TURFGRASS BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT

"TURFGRASS SOD FARM EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK" - samples of employee handbooks and guidelines for writing your own. 48-pages, 8-1/2 x 11-inches

"FARMLAND & URBAN SOIL CONSERVATION RESULTING FROM CULTIVATED TURFGRASS" - research reports and IRS documents to substantiate that sod production does not destroy topsoil. 10-pages, 8-1/2 x 11-inches

"FEDERAL & STATE RULINGS REGARDING TURFGRASS SOD PRODUCTION AS AN AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY" - federal and many state precedents documenting sod's place in farm activities and its advantages. 28-pages, 8-1/2 x 11-inches.

"TURFGRASS SEED...IN TURFGRASS SOD PRODUCTION" - reprints of significant seed-related articles from issues of "Turf News" Magazine. 20-pages, 8-1/2 x 11 inches.

PRODUCT PRICING INFORMATION & ORDER FORM ON REVERSE SIDE

ORDER FORM

ITEM		COST	QUANTITY ORDERED	YOUR COST
Turf Installation Guide	<input type="checkbox"/> Flat <input type="checkbox"/> Folded	\$75 for 500 or \$250 for 2000		
Why Are Most Lawns Now Sodded?	<input type="checkbox"/> Flat <input type="checkbox"/> Folded			
The Dream Lawn is Yours In Hours With Sod	<input type="checkbox"/> Flat <input type="checkbox"/> Folded			
Self-Scoring Method: How to Establish a Lawn	<input type="checkbox"/> Flat <input type="checkbox"/> Folded			
Our Precious Planet	<input type="checkbox"/> Flat <input type="checkbox"/> Folded			
Turfgrass - First-Aid for the Earth		\$15 for 100; \$60 for 500; \$200 for 2000		
Contract Estimator for Turfgrass Sod and Seed Installation		\$5 for 100, or \$20 for 500		
Tech Sheets	Bermudagrass	\$15 for 500 any single variety		
	Bluegrass			
	Centipedegrass			
	Fine Fescue			
	Ryegrass			
	St. Augustinegrass			
	Tall Fescue			
	Zoysiagrass			
Journal of Environmental Turfgrass	<input type="checkbox"/> 1993 ed. <input type="checkbox"/> 1991 ed. <input type="checkbox"/> 1992 ed. <input type="checkbox"/> 1990 ed.	\$1.30/each		
Guideline Specifications to Turfgrass Sodding		\$2/each, or \$15 for 10		
Farmland & Urban Soil Conservation Resulting from Cultivated Turfgrass Sod		\$2/each, or \$15 for 10		
Federal & State Rulings Regarding Turfgrass Sod as an Agricultural Activity		\$2/each, or \$15 for 10		
Turfgrass Sod Farm Employee Handbook		\$5/each		
Turfgrass Seed.....in Turfgrass Sod Production		\$5/each		
Healthy Lawn-Healthy Environment		\$1/copy; \$5 for 10; \$10 for 25; \$30 for 100		
This Precious Earth		\$25/video		
Turf's Contribution to the Environment		\$50/slide set		
TPI Membership Plaque		\$15/each		
Code of Ethics Plaque				
			TOTAL COST	
			* SHIPPING	
			TOTAL CHARGES	

* SHIPPING CHARGES

U.S. Orders:

Under \$50.....\$3
 \$51 - \$100.....\$5
 \$101 - \$150.....\$7
 \$151 - \$200.....\$9
 \$201 - \$250.....\$12
 over \$250.....\$18

Canadian & International Orders:

Leave the shipping section blank - you will be billed for shipping charges after shipment is sent.
 PLEASE CHECK THE FOLLOWING:

- ☐ Ship fastest method regardless of cost (approx. 1-2 weeks)
☐ Ship most economical method (approx. 8-10 weeks)

All orders must be prepaid. U.S. Funds Only.

SHIP TO:

NAME _____
 FIRM _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____ STATE/PROV _____ ZIP _____

CHARGE TO:

☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express

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Expiration Date _____ Signature _____

RETURN FORM: TO TURFGRASS PRODUCERS INTERNATIONAL, 1855-A HICKS ROAD, ROLLING MEADOWS, IL 60008
 Phone: 708/705-9898 Fax: 708/705-8347

Marketing Tip

By Jeff Hum, Green Valley Turf Farms, Inc., Canfield, Ohio

Be Involved With Local Organizations

Our marketing tip of the month is to promote your product by receiving exposure from helping other local organizations and events. This could include the Home Builders Association (HBA), Habitat for Humanity projects, county fairs, landscape organizations and home show promoters and participants.

The HBA puts on a Parade of Homes

featuring nine homes plus a dream home. We donate turfgrass sod for the dream home in exchange for a sign that is placed in the yard. Sod is discounted to the other nine builders for the right to display a sign. Three years ago half of the yards were sodded. This year all the lawns were sodded. Almost 15,000 people walked past our product and signs.

We have donated small amounts (less than 100 yards.) of sod to other events

such as a home and garden show or the county fair.

What is a landscape without green grass? Pumpkins and other fall displays look great sitting on green turf.

Keeping our name and product in front of the end user is expensive. By teaming up with other organizations reduces the cost, makes the business look good and increases the exposure of your name and product.

Advertising- Getting the Most for Your Money

For an advertisement to be successful, it must grab the reader's attention. Here are seven suggestions to make your advertising more attention-getting:

- * Busy layouts often pull better than neat ones. One recent split-run test showed busy layouts out pulling neat ones by 14 percent.

- * Vary shapes, sizes, and colors. People will get bored, and turn the page, if there is no variety.

- * Color will attract attention. But usually, it isn't cost effective. Tests show

that color is not a good idea in four out of five cases. Consider using color only when the product itself demands it.

- * Putting something odd into a picture will attract attention. In David Ogilvy's Hathaway Shirts campaign, the model wears an eye-patch. That odd little detail made the campaign famous as well as successful.

- * Too many extraneous props divert attention. For example: A curtain material company ran an ad with a cute teddy bear. The company got more calls

asking about the bear than they did their product.

- * Photographs are more convincing than drawn illustrations. Photos can increase response by over 50 percent.

- * Before-and-after pictures are very persuasive. This technique is a great way to show the benefit of your product.

- * Instead of using words such as "versatility" and "quality," provide concrete facts. Cite the qualities of the product or show evidence of its performance.

Taking Care Of Business

By Chris Hope, The Manderley Corp. North Gower, Ontario, Canada

COMPENSATING DRIVERS

As the turfgrass sod business has grown over time, many of us have had to become involved in the trucking business. The transport of our product has in many cases become a necessary part of our service to customers. In conversations with various producers it is evident that there are many different theories on how drivers should be paid. The following compensation methods are some examples of what TPI members are doing.

HOURLY PAY: The most straight forward method of compensating drivers is to pay by the hour. The rate of pay for drivers is usually higher than that paid to workers on the farm. In many cases the same employees are used for both operations and can help efficiencies greatly.

HOURLY PAY PLUS PIECEWORK INCENTIVE: This method involves a combination of hourly time and an incentive based on the units hauled. The piecework rate often varies depending on the distance or delivery zone. Rookie drivers can be started at lower hourly rates while the piecework rate remains standard. Multiple drop loads can also involve a paid premium.

PIECEWORK: a method very similar to the one above but without the hourly portion. The driver's pay is determined solely by the amount he hauls and the delivery zone rate per unit.

FLAT RATE/ZONE: In this method the driver is paid a flat rate for the delivery based on the distance or delivery zone. The same amount is paid regardless of load size, and a premium is involved for multiple drops. Smaller

shipments are subsidized by the larger ones and it enables a simplified pricing for the customer.

FLAT RATE: When trucking large volumes on a regular route (large jobs or distribution points) some producers pay a flat rate per trip.

MILEAGE: Although I didn't talk to anyone using this method, it is quite common in the trucking industry. Drivers are paid based on a rate per loaded mile (distance to destination), or rate per mile (total travel). This is especially well suited to long distance shipping.

As you can see there are many different ideas on methods of driver compensation. The system that you choose depends on the fit with your company and your own unique market situation.

TPI Action

MAJOR FEDERAL ISSUES LIST EXPANDS, as TPI represents its members' interests on each of the following important matters:

1. EPA's Worker Protection Standards: as this newsletter goes to press, a follow-up meeting with EPA regulators has been scheduled to obtain answers to the turfgrass sod industry's specific questions and concerns. While TPI continues to be promised answers and information from the EPA, it has also joined the 19-member Coalition for Sensible Farmworker Protection (headed by the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture) seeking a Congressional delay of WPS enforcement.

2. Federal Crop Insurance for Turfgrass Sod: sod is now eligible for noninsured disaster assistance protection because of TPI's direct actions; however, the association is now following up as implementary regulations are being written for the program by the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation. TPI will also begin efforts to ensure that the

specialty crop representatives selected to an on-going panel are also very familiar with the industry's needs.

3. Independent Contractors Definition: TPI is supporting legislation that would restrict the Internal Revenue Service's current latitude in determining the employment status of individuals or companies who consider themselves independent contractors, but whom the IRS says the service receiver must consider employees and therefore pay all withholding taxes, possible health benefits, etc. TPI joins the Small Business Legislative Council (SBLC) and NFIB's Independent Contractors Coalition on this issue.

4. Regulatory Moratorium: developed by a new coalition, "Project Relief," in which TPI shares a role, this legislation seeks to provide regulatory relief for businesses by forbidding the introduction of any new federal regulations for a minimum of six months.

5. Unfunded Mandates: this is another segment of the Republican party's "Contract With America," supported by the SBLC and TPI. As proposed by Senator Kempthorne's legislation, the Congressional Budget Office would have to report on the estimated costs to the private businesses of any new law or regulation before it could be passed.

Among the other issues TPI continues to work on in Washington, D.C. are farm wetlands, farm labor issues and of course the 1995 Farm Bill. In recent years, representation of the turfgrass sod producers' unique interest at the federal level has become a very significant responsibility for the association. Without this level of involvement, many legislators and regulators would be totally unfamiliar with the needs of this industry. Too frequently, they have shown an ability to ignore these needs unless the facts are placed squarely before them in an effective and meaningful manner, such as TPI has been able to do.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Economists from McGraw-Hill, a construction information service, reports that with higher mortgage rates likely to take a bigger bite out of single family housing this year, the continued growth of nonresidential building will become even more essential to the industry's prospects in 1995.

They also report that the momentum shown by nonresidential building during the second half of 1994, alongside the sustained expansion for the overall economy, offers reassurance that enough nonresidential support will still be available to offset 1995's lower housing volume.

McGraw-Hill estimates that total

residential construction will decline by 1%, while nonresidential will increase by 6% and nonbuilding construction will climb by 5%. This relates to a 3% jump in overall construction rates in 1995.

For more detailed numbers see the last *Business Management* issue or call the TPI office at 800/405-TURF.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Turfgrass Producers International
1855-A Hicks Road, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008

FIRST CLASS MAIL
U.S. POSTAGE

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Rolling Meadows, IL 60008

Permit No. 662