

DISTRICT 6 GROUP MEETING - FORT WORTH, TEXAS

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MARCH 25

"In the discussion of soils, it was recognized that the various States will have preference for methods of classifying and showing soil types. The classification as worked out by the Kansas Highway Department is an excellent approach to the problem; however, in this district, the engineers and field forces specify soil types by numbers. The soil is divided into ten types and the engineers find this to be a simplified method.<sup>1</sup>

"The discussion on the shoulder problem in median strip areas brought out the fact that the Southwest is lacking in suitable material for median strip planting in most instances. It was agreed that all median strip developments depend upon the individual development. Whereas the North and East have to consider the problems of snow removal, and so on, the South has to consider the extreme variations of climatic conditions. The selection of low-growing shrubs and ground covers that will withstand the hot dry seasons of the summer is limited; therefore, the method of treatment will be quite different from the sections where such conditions do not exist.

"It is again suggested that a small booklet showing photographic illustrations of roadside development with short descriptive articles be published in lieu of charts, forms, and outlines. It is believed that such a publication would be of material aid to the various States."

A typical illustrated booklet of this character covering the use of sod on highway shoulders, issued November 15, 1940, by the Landscape Division of the Texas State Highway Department should be of interest to roadside engineers in all regions, particularly in regions where similar vegetative practices may be feasible. This booklet (Number Nine) is a discussion and illustrated study of the use of grass sod shoulders. The road shoulder is a major problem in highway maintenance, and for this reason it is worthy of much consideration. It must be borne in mind that a shoulder is not a pavement; it is intended only for occasional use. For such use turf is an excellent material; it is easy to apply and economical to maintain. This means that sufficient width of pavement must be provided for the traffic.

Narrow pavement and suburban roads, poor soil, soil conditions, shoulder maintenance, asphalt roads, concrete pavement, stabilized shoulders, edges of asphalt pavement, fire hazards, and grass sod versus weeds are topics discussed and illustrated in this timely contribution from Texas.

"It is true that there are areas where a grass sod cannot be established, but such areas are few in comparison with the areas where it can be grown.

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1. See page N-38<sup>4</sup> and also PUBLIC ROADS, February 1942 (Vol. 22, No. 12) - "Classification of Soils and Control procedures Used in Construction of Embankments." Table 2, p. 273, is a summary of soil characteristics and classification.

"As outlined in the foregoing, a good grass turf from the edge of the pavement to the right-of-way line has great economic values. Under ordinary conditions well-sodded shoulders are effective because they deter traffic from the shoulders; they are economical because they cost comparatively little to construct and maintain. Also, a dense cover of good living sod over the entire right-of-way is usually practical and economical because it renders the right-of-way virtually erosion-proof and insulates the subsoils thereunder. Furthermore, with but little maintenance as compared with expensive shoulder stabilization, the well-sodded shoulder will make for unity and spaciousness, and consequently add immeasurably to the appearance and restfulness of the highway."

The wartime need for serious attention and further study of this subject is more and more apparent in all sections of the country. Soils experts are tending to recognize the economic value of a turf cover on shoulders and slopes as an effective means of reducing extreme fluctuations in the subsoil moisture content.

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SELECTION OF GRASSES - "A grass selected for use on road shoulders, roadsides, drill fields, and recreation areas should be tough and resistant to the rough usage to which such areas are subject. Far more important than the fine texture sought in lawn grasses is the ability to withstand wear and tear of heavy traffic. Since turf on many areas is often required on relatively short notice, rapid growth and the ability to "cover up" quickly are also of major importance in the selection of the grasses. In many cases, dust, so detrimental to the motors of planes and other mechanized equipment, can best be checked by the rapid establishment of a ground cover. Any turf subject to wear by planes, trucks, etc., is likely to suffer badly from scars unless it is composed of rapidly growing species which heal quickly. The selection of grasses that require minimum maintenance costs is of considerable importance. Other factors being equal, low-growing species should be used in preference to the upright ones, since mowing costs often involve large sums of money."

---TURF CULTURE, March 1942