

\$1 million invested in sod project

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Marnie has done every job on the farm, from pallet stacking to the secretarial duties. Her main job is to drive the fork lift. "I'll tell you, Eric is certainly no chauvinist," stated the striking Vancouverite. "I get called on for anything and everything."

Anderson estimates the project has cost him nearly \$1 million to prepare, plant and harvest so far. He directs his spare time to farming 3,400 acres of dryland wheat and about 850 acres of irrigated wheat. He's also experimenting with 20 acres of lima beans.

Growing sod takes more preparation than a regular crop, according to the Heppner-born Anderson. "Mainly because it's hard to grow. The ground, for example, has to be smooth and bare," he said.

'Growing sod takes more preparation than a regular crop'

Anderson would be the one to know the difficulties. He learned them the hard way when he lost 45 acres of seed, his first planting, to a 70 mile per hour wind last year. He turned around and made a call to the seed supplier for another \$15,000 worth of seed.

Maybe Anderson was willing to take the second gamble because of his confidence in his dream and the location he had chosen. "This is natural blue grass country with long days and no natural weeds," he said. "What few weeds we do have, get cleaned up with the first crop's spraying and we never seem to have them again."

The main emphasis of the Anderson's is professed to be toward quality. "My goal is to continually offer the quality we have here," he noted.

Although some rumor has indicated that area corporate farms are planning to give sod a go, Anderson isn't worried. He actually invites their competition. "I'm sold on my operation and our kind of farming far exceeds their sloppy operation. I don't see how they could do it at my prices and still break even. If they want to try, I'd love the competition."

Sod is a little more expensive to grow than potatoes, Anderson said. It's higher cost is in the harvest. Specialized equipment is used to lift and cut the three-quarters and five eighths inch deep grass mats. Cutting usually begins at 5:30 a.m.

'It's all been too perfect'

The crew is hand picked, made up of Anderson's family and friends for the most part, including a high school coach. His cousin, Hal Bergstrom, drives the harvester while two men stand in the back piling the turf on pallets. Another worker drives the forklift. "We don't seem to have any trouble keeping a crew because it's pretty clean work," Marnie pointed out.

The grass is mowed 40 to 60 times before harvesting. Plastic netting has been used to hold the grass down during this initial start. It eventually dissolves into the soil after about two years. "We don't think we'll be using it anymore," Anderson added.

He first learned about the sod business while going to school at OSU. The man who originated the business in the Northwest gave Anderson a job at his Corvallis area turf farm. His former employer now buys from him. "And that's a real compliment when it's good enough for that man," Anderson said.

The only worry the turf farmer seems to have is the smoothness of the operation. "It's all been too perfect. Everything has gone too well," Anderson said. "Except for the beginning, I guess."



Marnie and Eric Anderson--Leading turf growers in area.

Public Notices

PUBLIC NOTICE
The Heppner City Council is considering an age reduction to accommodate more Senior Citizens who might be eligible for reduced sewer and water rates.

special rates need not sign up again.
Mary Jean McCabe
City Treasurer
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Justice Court

Justice Court received 51 speeding violations for the week and released the following dispositions:

—David J. Steelman, Heppner, found guilty of violation of a basic rule and fined \$53.

—Dorothy Brower, Irrigon, found guilty of negotiating a bad check. She was fined \$50 and ordered to pay restitution.

—John Dupont, Lexington, found guilty of negotiating a bad check. He was fined \$50 and ordered to pay restitution.

—Joe Borman, Pendleton, found guilty of furnishing liquor to a minor. He was fined \$100 and given a 30-day suspended jail term.

GAZETTE-TIMES CLASSIFIEDS 676-9228

Sheriff's Report

Sheriff's reports for the week include:

—John Ripple of Morrow County Grain Growers reported the theft of tools valued at \$37 from a tool box on a vehicle parked in the fertilizer plant yard.

—Richard Stanley, Irrigon, reported the theft of a bicycle valued at \$100 from his home. The bike was later recovered missing the seat and a wheel.

Jr. league seeks help

The Colt Junior League Basketball program will soon be gearing up for another season of activity.

In order to upgrade the program, organizers are asking for donations from businesses and individuals in the area. The league is open to girls and boys in grades 3-6 and has proven very success-

ful in the past.

Anyone interested in Donating should mail their check to Jim Ackley in care of Heppner High School. The program is also seeking coaches to volunteer their time and talent to the youngsters. If you feel you are qualified, contact Ackley at the high school or call his home at 676-5591.

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