What Do We Mean By ‘Fail’?

Turfgrass can be said to ‘fail’ when it is difficult or impossible to maintain a good appearance, using standard maintenance practices alone.

Turf appearance often indicates a deeper problem.

During the development of a commercial property, many forces are at work—regulatory, economic, etc. Many organizations & many people must interact & cooperate.

Most of these people assume that everything possible has been done during development of a property to ensure a successful landscape.
If that’s true, the assumption goes, standard maintenance is now all that’s needed.

Right??

Unless the assumption is wrong.

The reality is that in most, if not all, commercial landscapes, compromises have been made...
...between budgets, deadlines, regulations, design and quality.

During property development:
Compromises do occur
+ mistakes do happen
+ inaccurate assumptions are made
+ communication problems occur

These issues accumulate

Often these problems are not readily apparent.
But eventually (months - years) the turfgrass will reflect these problems.

As a result most commercial turfgrass will have a few problems.

At worst, the turfgrass will fail.

Later in the process, others may not be aware of these problems.

Potential Development Problems

- Tight budget & tight deadlines
- Poor fill dirt
- Construction activity
- Soil problems - no top soil, pockets of clay, compacted fill dirt, or combo
- Poor landscape design
- Poor sod quality
- Poor installation practices
- Poor irrigation design
Landscape Components

Soil

If everything else in a landscape is perfect except the soil… the turfgrass will not perform well, and may FAIL completely.

Soil pH

Soil Basics

Topsoil - This is where plants root and grow. Usually contains organic material. Plants need topsoil to grow well.

Subsoil - little organic material, little oxygen.

Bedrock

Building codes require a stable foundation for construction.

A stable foundation means compacted fill dirt.

Soil

In some cases sod is laid directly on compacted fill...

...without topsoil or even sand for the sod to root into.
Soil

- In effect, that places sod directly on top of ‘bedrock.’
- Like placing sod on cement.
- Turf then has no place to root.
- Root to shoot ratio

Does This Affect Your Property?

A quick check with a soil probe or soil profiler can tell you the quality and depth of your soil.

Sod Quality

- Dormant
- Thin
- Healthy

Sod Quality

Growers job is to produce uniform, high-quality sod...as quickly as possible...in an ideal environment: soil, irrigation, nutrients.
Chemically dependent & pumped!!
Sod Quality

Do we set healthy sod up for failure in poor fill dirt, compacted soil, poor irrigation, & poor design?
The result is weak, thin turfgrass that will never reach it’s potential.

Design

Should turfgrass be purposeful?

Even shade tolerant varieties of St Augustine requires 4 hours of full sun per day.

This turf will thin and die. This is an easy mistake to make if you’re working from a blueprint.

Design Problem?

Seriously, do you want to maintain this?

Design Problem?

Should I mow or should I string trim?

What happens as the tree grows?

Wrong plants,

Wrong place!!

Irrigation

If everything else in a landscape is perfect except the irrigation...

...the turfgrass will not perform well, and may FAIL completely.
Remember if you can't see... you may not know

Let's look at some photos... can you figure out what's wrong?

Remember if you can't see... you may not know
Grill cover...tailgate party?
Take All Root Rot

Gray Leaf Spot

Large Patch
Even the Experts Have Problem Areas

Turfgrass Diagnostics
- Always call in advance
- Get a good history
- Sample 8”-12” square
- Include root zone
- Marginal area: 1/2 looks good - OK, 1/2 looks bad

Questions
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