Visual Reflective Essay:

Parking Lot of Grass

By Christopher Rinebold

What’s the shortest amount of time in which your opinion changed regarding a particular experience in life? For me, it was roughly five minutes and it occurred during the summer of 2011. While completing my internship in Virginia, I lived near an automotive dealership that was located on a busy highway. I drove by the dealership multiple times each week and was both confused and frustrated by what I saw. They did not have a paved lot. Instead, the new and used automobiles were simply parked on the large areas of grass that surrounded the main building. As a student preparing for a career in the Turfgrass Industry, this made me somewhat upset. Every time I drove by the dealership I thought to myself, “They are destroying that grass!” One particular day after work, I had some free time on my hands. So, I decided to stop by the dealership to see why their inventory was sitting on a perfectly good lawn and not a paved lot. I was completely surprised by what I saw when I exited my vehicle. The entire grassy lawn was growing on top of a grid of permeable concrete pavers. However, these pavers were not the traditional octagon style that I have seen before. They were arranged in small squares that were spaced nearly three to four inches apart. In between these small squares the grass was thriving. I’m sure that the salesman who came to provide assistance was wondering why I was looking at the ground and not the cars. I explained to him that I was studying Turfgrass and wanted to get a closer look at the grass on which the cars were parked. The salesman then informed me that the grid of permeable pavers is a relatively new product known as “Driveable Grass”. It was installed when the dealership was constructed. Since the dealership was located at the bottom of a low-lying valley, they did not want to risk flooding that may occur from pavement runoff during times of heavy rainfall. Therefore, the dealership had the “Driveable Grass” installed along with an adequate drainage system. The salesman said that this decision has received praise from the local construction authority for being a great example of sustainable landscape development. The salesman said that the permeable pavers were simply used out of necessity and the sustainability concept was only realized after the fact. Suddenly, I was no longer confused and frustrated about what the dealership was doing. It was a brilliant idea that proved to be both sustainable and extremely functional. From now on, I will definitely take time to learn more about the factors surrounding a particular landscape design before jumping to conclusions, whether they are positive or negative. I would also love to incorporate the “Driveable Grass” system into the driveway of my future home because it promotes groundwater recharge and minimizes runoff.

Photo retrieved from: http://www.soilretention.com/admin/userfiles/0428110141Parking6.jpg

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