Seed companies victimized by the double squeeze

Hal Phillips, editor

The seed companies doing business in Oregon's grass belt. They're getting squeezed by new and seasoned competitors and maybe well see higher ryegrass prices as a result.

For the better part of two years, we've been reporting on the advent of purchasing groups -- courses which have pooled their buying power to negotiate lower prices for, like grass seed. These groups buy in bulk, so while sales are steady and voluminous, seed company margins take a hit on the top end.

Now perennial ryegrass growers -- the farmers who sell their product to seed companies -- have organized a bargaining association and instituted floor prices.

It's called feeling the pinch of tighter margins at both ends of the marketplace. "The price is going up. No one can deny that," said John Schaal, Oregon president. "And it's not only because of the bargaining association -- it's because of supply and demand."

Through the wonder of the Turfgrass Information Network (TGIF) and Turfbyte, "There has been a shortage around the world of perennial ryegrass, and seed companies have been getting a little more money this year. But we may be facing a huge crop this year. If we have a bumper crop and prices don't go down, we won't see a price hike until next spring."

Bob von Brecht, president, and general manager of Great Western Seed, said the increase will come this fall. He also believes the Perennial Ryegrass Association may well signal a new era in seed economics. "initially we're going to see it in ryegrass," he said. "But if these guys are successful -- and they are very well positioned to be successful -- I can foresee a successful bargaining association popping up in the near future."

Through the wonder of the Turfgrass Information Network (TGIF) and Turfbyte, Golf Course News has been on-line for sometime. But we finally have our own e-mail address: hphillip@gcn.biddeford.com.

For you superintendents, managers, architects and builders with one foot firmly planted in the 21st century, anyone at Golf Course News is a superintender, manager, architect or a builder.

Letters...

PB/GORDON SETS THE RECORD STRAIGHT

To the editor: PBI/Gordon Corp. wishes to correct any misconception concerning the quality of SCAG mowers that may have been generated by our 1995 Embark Lite advertising campaign, "Get the turf management tool that works when you can't."

The campaign is based on the testimonial of Scott Hall, president of Classic Landscape, Inc. of Frederick, Md. According to Mr. Hall, Classic Landscape uses Embark Lite as a "tool" in his business, i.e., the plant-growth regulator (PGR) keeps turf growth from getting out of hand when schedule delays might otherwise be experienced.

The makers of SCAG mowers felt that the mention of inevitable "mower breakdowns" in an ad which pictures one of their machines might cause the industry to perceive the mower in a negative way.

Hal Dickey, Director of Advertising, PBI/Gordon Corp.

TDD TAKES ISSUE WITH "TRUCE"

To the editor: I saw the "Truce" in bold print on the front page of the April edition of GCNS in regard to the relationship between the USGA and the current physical evaluation laboratories supporting the 1993 USGA Guidelines. I was confused, because in order to have a truce, you first have to have a "War" and at best Mr. [Jim] Snow's fear was that the USGA would have to deal with the potential of angry lab technicians. But I am sure that the mob of Green Section personnel that was in attendance would have gallantly protected Mr. Snow. However, I can't fault the tone-setting headline of the article because, as Mr. Stovall was quoted in Mark Leslie's column in April's edition, it sells newspapers.

The meeting that the USGA set up in San Francisco with the American Association of Laboratory Accreditation was in small way historic. The USGA deserves credit for taking a major step forward in resolving the controversy over the qualifications of the laboratories that protect the integrity of the 1993 Guidelines.

It was clear to me that there was no opposition to the requirement for accreditation of the laboratories and there will probably be a list of accredited labs by the 1997 GCSAA show. However, please let me clarify the somewhat less than optimistic picture of the accreditation process that was attributed to me.

Continued on next page

OBITUARY

Dr. William H. Daniel, 75

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Dr. William H. Daniel, Purdue University professor emeritus, died Feb. 24 in St. Elizabeth Hospital, where he had been a patient one day.

Dr. Daniel, 75, retired in 1985 after working 35 years at the Department of Agronomy. One of the leaders in developing the International Turfgrass Society, he pioneered research and educational methods in turfgrass management and developed the PUR-E-Wick Water Management System and Prescription Athletic Turf (PAT).

He is survived by his wife, Gwen, a son and two daughters.

Subscription Information

Golf Course News
P.O. Box 3043
Langhorne, PA 19047
215-788-7112


Copyright © 1995 by United Publications, Inc. All rights reserved, reproduction, in whole or in part, without written permission from the publisher is expressly prohibited.
LITERATURE

EARTH-SAFE DISEASE REMEDIES

POWNAL, Vt. — Don't be deceived by its title, the new book "The Gardener's Guide to Plant Diseases" contains a number of techniques and tips for dealing with problems encountered on the golf course.

From airborne to plant pathogens, from viruses to bacteria, author Barbara Pleasant covers a gamut of problems— and offers earth-safe remedies.

While turfgrass problems are not on her menu, many horticultural concerns are.

Each chapter begins with a general discussion of the "culprits," followed by an alphabetical listing of diseases associated with them.

The book is available in paperback for $12.95 at bookstores, or from the publisher for $14.90, by contacting Storey Communications, Inc., P.O. Box 445, Pownal, Vt. 05261; 800-441-5700.

SEED-TO-BLOOM SIMPLIFIED

POWNAL, Vt. — From abronia to zinnia, author Eileen Powell has filled in the blanks on sowing, germinating, planting, maintaining and propagating every plant you might landscape a golf course with in a new book from Storey Communications.

"From Seed to Bloom" is a comprehensive encyclopedia look at more than 500 annuals, perennials and even herbs. Powell is the proprietor of Serengeti Gardens Landscaping and lives in Arlington, Va. She holds a certificate in landscape design from George Washington University.

The book is available for $18.95 in bookstores in paperback, or for $20.90 from Storey Communications, Inc., P.O. Box 445, Pownal, Vt. 05261; 800-441-5700.

MAINTENANCE

Leslie comment: A little praise, a little censure

Continued from page 12

Pennington absorbed, or the time, energy and frustration.

This was a pure and unadulterated case supporting Lewis H. Lapham's claim that "the supply of government exceeds the demand."

As the epicenter of an earthquake lies at the site of the problem, so Washington, D.C., is indeed the center of some very queer, tumultuous behavior. We can only hope and pray the new Congress does affect change. It is applied government. Witness legislative measures that would require a reasonable cost-benefit ratio before new laws are enacted, and that lawmakers stay clear of bills that would give bureaucrats reign over such workplace issues as ergonomic.

This relates to golf from the clubhouse (remember the states legislating how much space ladies' rooms should have compared to men's rooms?) to the fairway (remember the no-chemical edict to Squaw Creek in California). And I recall former U.S. Wild Dunes owner David Lucas declaring that our government is "tyranny by legislative fiat and special-interest groups."

Lucas, who formed the Council on Property Rights to combat to the fact that the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 was merely a 19th-century prelude to 20th-century land grabs by enviroyo-driven government. He needed to go to the U.S. Supreme Court to be his state of South Carolina, which had tried to prevent him from building a home on beach-front property—though it was flanked on either side by homes.

Yet, I would not be so unkind as to agree with Honore de Balzac's assessment: "Bureaucracy is a great mechanism operated by pygmies."

Nor would I be so brazen as to agree with Ludwig van Moses' statement: "Government is the only institution that can take a valuable commodity like paper and make it worthless by applying ink." Well, I'll agree with van Moses.

A how-to-go to Augusta National super-intendent Marsh Benson and Double Eagle Club superintendent Terry Buchen, a GCN contributing editor, for finishing 1-2 in the nation in conditioning, as judged by Golf Digest panelists. GD's Ron Whitten wrote: "Perfection, thy name is Augusta National. But among courses actually open for play during summer months, the surprise is Double Eagle near Columbus, Ohio. How plump is it? They run Stimpeter tests on the tees."

Woudn't you like to trade places for a while with Masters Chairman Jack Stevens and Vice Chairman Joe Ford? They are members of Augusta National and Double Eagle.

A Top 10 maintenance poll are Pine Valley, Muirfield Village in Ohio, Oakmont, Shadow Creek, Cypress Point, Merion's East Course, Inverness in Ohio and The Quarry at La Quinta, Calif.

Paul, we coulda loved ya'... Oh, well. Mentioning Paul Harvey's comparison of the U.S. Golf Association to the tobacco industry, a friend said, "That's like comparing nuns to Nazis."

What's in a name? Speaking at the Canadian Golf Course Superintendents Association annual conference, Dr. Joe Vargas said: "The biggest mistake we ever made was that we started calling things we used to control plant diseases 'pesticides.' People who use things to control human diseases call them 'medicine.' It doesn't matter that you are controlling a bacterial disease in a person or on a plant, you use a bactericide. It doesn't matter if you are controlling a fungal disease on a plant or on a person, you are using a fungicide. But, unfortunately, when we use them on a plant we call them pesticides... And people who are a perception out there that medicines are good and pesticides are bad, when in reality they are oftentimes the same chemistry."

Hints aside from Vargas in Ottawa:

• When putting fertilizer in a sand-type environment, use either a slow-release fertilizer or one that is soluble where you are putting down limited amounts, so that the fibrous root system can pick it up.

• Thatch is very good at preventing pesticide leaching. "Remember all these states we told you thatch was bad?" he said. "Well, now we're telling you thatch is good."

AVOID THE WATER HAZARDS GETTING TO THE GREEN.

Fast-release N fertilizers leach nitrates and threaten groundwater. N-SURE® contains our patented, non-burning Triazine® closed-ring formulation of slow-release nitrogen. That makes it a safer source of less volatile N for rich, lasting green color and reduced environmental risk. Apply N-SURE with KTS® for the highest levels of K plus S in any clear liquid fertilizer. Keep your game on the green—see your distributor today or call us at 1-800-325-2803.

May 1995

CIRCLE #130

[Image of product advertisement]