Toro commits to training

New facility is next step toward creating "total solution" ideal

By MICHAEL LEVANS

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. — Marking its biggest commitment to training and equipment support to date, the Toro Company will open a 5,800-square-foot training facility designed for customers, distributors and Toro employees this fall. The facility, located at its Bloomington headquarters, houses two classrooms, four fully equipped service bays, as well as video conference and audio-visual capabilities.

The company said the facility is its next step in building a "total-solution approach" for its customer base.

"This gives us the physical facility we've needed to augment the training work we've been doing in the field," said Don St. Denis, Toro's director of public relations.

"We're [Toro] in a unique position in terms of services we can offer. We have irrigation and equipment, but we also get involved with the architects and can advise on the grow-in and fertigation. So we see the information training as an extension of that work in order to help our customers manage their facility."

Training curricula, to be held in weekend units, will be taught by Toro personnel and will consist of courses designed to meet certification requirements for professional organizations and help attendees earn continuing education credits.

"Curriculum will be devoted to our commercial turf products and will focus on basic hydraulics, electrical systems, troubleshooting and preventive maintenance," for the other companies, said Rich Smith, Toro's service training manager. "These courses will be devoted to the golf and commercial landscape industry," Smith said.

Classroom lab areas and service bays

Continued on page 48

Lofts acquires Sunbelt, gains 100% control

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. — Lofts Seeds Inc. has completed its acquisition of Sunbelt Seeds Inc., a wholesale grass seed and fertilizer distributor located in norocor, Ga.

"Lofts already had 50-per cent ownership in Sunbelt," said Neil Myers, Lofts’ spokesperson. "We felt it was a good move to establish 100-per cent ownership since Sunbelt is one of the largest distributors in the Southeast."

"This was a natural outgrowth of our original purchase of the 50-per cent," said Joe O’Donnell, general manager of Sunbelt.

"They have a strong background in the seed industry. And even though they were a 50-per cent partner, they were the 50-per cent seed-oriented partner. This was a logical progression."

Under the new arrangement, Sunbelt Seeds will function as a subsidiary of Lofts Seed and will sell seed to golf courses, sod farms, retail stores, landscapers, lawn-care operators, sports facilities and government municipalities.

O’Donnell will be staying on board as general manager.

We are very excited with this acquisition because it will enhance our capabilities and services for our existing customers and opens new market opportunities," said Richard Budd, Lofts’ chief executive officer.

Lofts operates branches in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, Ohio, North Carolina and Oregon and markets turfgrass seed internationally.

Continued on page 48
Calling all old Vermeers

PELLA, Iowa — Vermeer Manufacturing has kicked off its "Hunt for the Longest Running Vermeer," a contest to locate its oldest operable machine. Contest rules and registration are available at every North American Vermeer dealership where entries for the contest are being accepted until November 1, 1997. The winning machine and its owner will be present at Vermeer in Pella during the company's 50th anniversary in 1998.

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Continued from page 45

TOKYO — In response to an action filed by Kubota Corp., Kubota Tractor Corp. and Kubota Manufacturing of America Corp., the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) has issued a general exclusion order prohibiting the further importation of "gray market" Kubota tractors under 50 PTO horsepower that infringe Kubota's federally registered trademark rights.

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Toro training

Continued from page 45

will allow hands-on servicing — the key, said Smith, to helping the curriculum stick.

"The purpose of this service facility is to replicate the actual work environment that service technicians encounter in the turf industry," said Smith.

"We’ll demonstrate practical application in a state-of-the-art service environment," he said. Course fees will vary depending on subject and number of sessions.

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