

BRIEFS

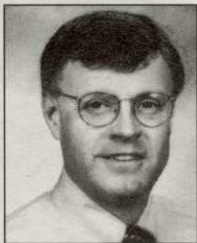


CHANGE OF PLACE FOR GCIS

OLIVE BRANCH, Miss. — Golf Course Irrigation Services has changed its mailing address. The firm can now be reached at P.O. Box 156, Olive Branch, MS 38654-0156. The phone number is 601-895-1114; the fax is 601-895-1107. Note: The shipping address for Golf Course Irrigation Services remains 8765 Old Craft Road, Olive Branch, MS 38654-0156.

GAGNE JOINS REGAL CHEMICAL

Regal Chemical Co. announces the addition of its newest management team member, Ronald A. (Ron) Gagne, who brings to Regal nearly 30 years experience in sales and marketing in the professional turfgrass and ornamental industries. His previous employment includes 25 years with The Scotts Company, where he attained the position of vice president, professional business group.



Ron Gagne

Industry seeks alternatives to field burning

Expect specific changes in cultivars, and their growers

By BOB SPIWAK

OLYMPIA Wash. — With all field burning outlawed next year, turfgrass seed growers here are scrambling for new methods of crop management and several ideas have emerged, although none yet are as economically sound as the traditional incineration.

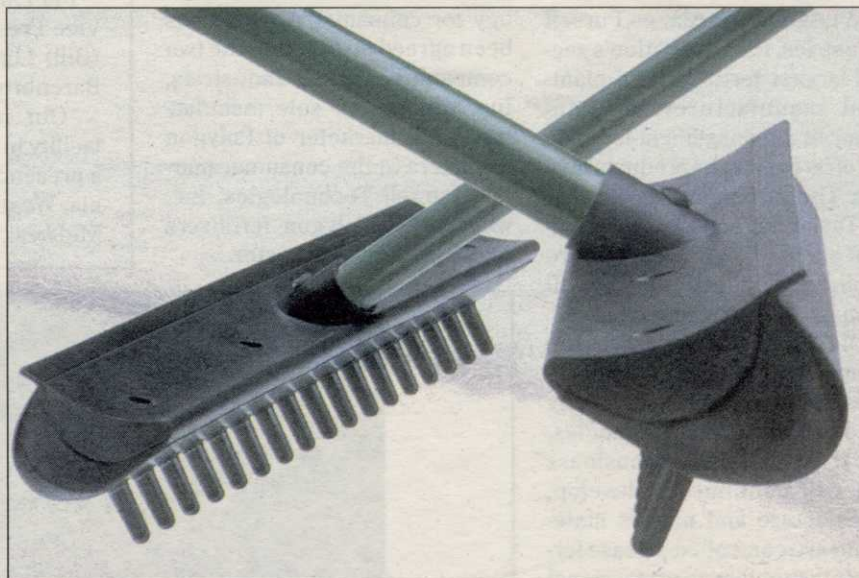
Fields are burned to remove stubble, kill weed seeds and, some maintain, enhance seed production. However, a groundswell of environmental opposition has been growing in the Northwest for some years. Oregon imposed a partial ban in 1991 which still allows 40,000 acres to be managed by fire. Washington took more Draconian measures, requiring total cessation of field burning by the end of 1998. That leaves Idaho as the only state with no anti-burning legislation, but farmers and industry people expect this to change.

Oregon State University (OSU) crop physiologist Dr. Tom Chastain, who studies how plants respond to management practices and affect the economics of crop production, said that while OSU has found economically viable alternatives to burning, these practices may not apply to eastern Washington, whose climate is different than Willamette Valley in Oregon.

Chastain refers to "an evolutionary process," where the industry, not the plants, must evolve to produce turf without fire. "In the '80s, it was all burned," he said of Oregon turf crops, "while in the '90s only 20 percent is being burned. Washington is in a different phase than us." (Oregon's burning reduction began a decade ago after errant smoke from field burning caused a tragic freeway pile-up.)

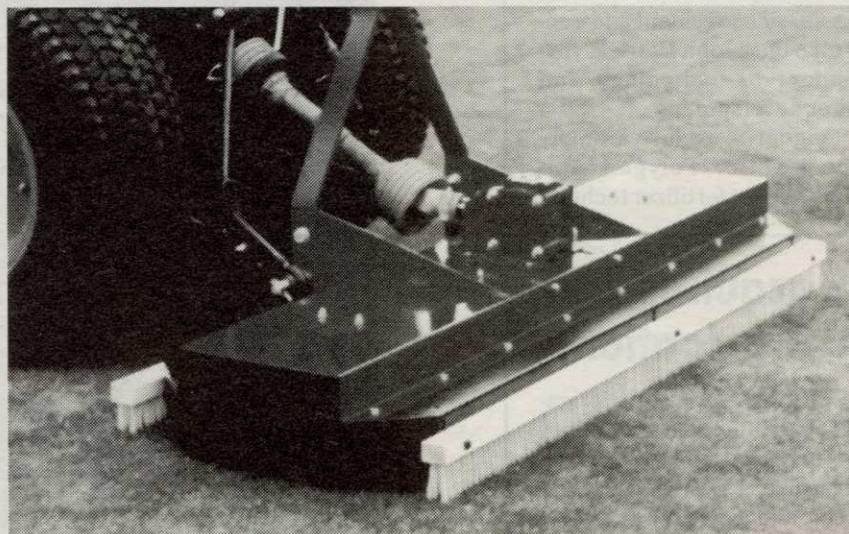
A "bare-bones program for non-thermal

Continued on page 55



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Par Aide has introduced its new BunkerPro, the bunker rake that's designed to deliver years of use. A full 15 inches wide, the dual-sided, nylon-filled plastic head displays tines for smoothing on one side with a flat blade on the other. Since comfort plays an important factor in player participation in course upkeep, the extra-long, 54-inch handle with molded rubber grip surpasses conventional rakes by a full 6 inches. But perhaps the biggest selling feature is affordability. Priced well below \$20, this rake satisfies the needs of bunkers and budgets. For more information, contact Par Aide at 612-779-9851.



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SRO HONORS COURSE AND SUPER OF THE YEAR

Seed Research of Oregon, Inc. awarded Eagle Point Golf Course located here its 1996 "Golf Course of the Year" award. For their hard work and dedication, architect Robert Trent Jones II, and golf course superintendent, Dave Stephens received their awards at this year's Golf

Course Superintendents Association of America's International Golf Course Conference and Show in Las Vegas.

Seed Research also presented Paul Ellwood, CGCS, formerly of Club Terravita in Scottsdale, Ariz., its 1996 "Golf Course Superintendent of the Year" award in Vegas.

Field burning

Continued from page 53

management of Kentucky bluegrass" is at the heart of the Washington ban, Chastain said. OSU's recommendations are in five parts:

- 1) Remove most of the straw by baling; 2) Reduce the height of the stubble by flail mowing to less than 2 inches. A standard farm flail can be used, as well as a J-blade knife; 3) Remove the straw

and stubble after harvest as quickly as possible. Waiting 30 days can reduce crop yield by 30 percent; 4) Use a vigilant program of test monitoring and control. Without burning, there may be more pests remaining, such as weed seeds; and 5) Find the lowest-cost approach to production.

One method which has been tried is vacuuming the crop residue, which Chastain said is not economically sound. He main-

tains that today's baling and raking equipment is better than that of even a decade ago.

The crop physiologist concedes that burning is still the most cost-effective method, but argues that changes will have to be made. He has some concerns that, unlike Oregon, Washington has not allowed enough time for farmers to examine alternative measures. Again he stressed that what works in Oregon may not in Washington's turf-growing region, 300 drier miles northeast.

Oregon created an entire industry out of the residue of turf crops, using baling and flailing after mowing. Developed during the six years of the burning phase-down, straw barns were erected to store the stubble, which is compressed and sent to Japan as animal feed.

"But, it took years and years to build those facilities in Oregon," said Chastain. "In Oregon our yields are right up there with Washington's without burning and using the bale and flail method. But, the caveat is that it is more costly when done under Oregon conditions."

According to Skip Allert of Jacklin Seed Co. in Post Falls, Idaho, just across the Washington state line, growers tried to bale the straw after being combined, but without much success. It is more expensive and does not kill weed seeds or diseases. (Chastain noted that OSU had not seen an increase in diseases when fields weren't burned, but added that the studies were not extensive and, again, what works in Oregon may not work the same in another area.)

Time, or the lack of it, appears to be the major obstacle facing the Washington growers. Whereas Oregon, which still allows burning of 10 percent of its 400,000 acres of turfgrass, gave its growers years to develop new methods, Washington effectively slammed the door on burning, reducing it by one-third each year to total abstinence next year.

As Allert noted, "We need more basic research... what genes to change... But there is a costly time lag — a year before we get the crop out, another year to see the results."

There is little question that alternatives to burning are available. From all indications these are more costly than incineration. Those growers with the financial resources to make the change will probably survive, and marginally capitalized growers may go out of business.

In the meantime, researchers in the private sector and at universities are continuing their efforts to find an economically feasible way to manage turf crops, for there is also little question that smoking fields, like smoking tobacco, is now taboo.



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