New Turfgrass America eyes national market

By A. OVERBECK

Granbury, Texas — In a move to expand beyond their regional reach, three Texas turf companies and a Florida grower have formed an alliance creating a new full-service firm here. The new entity, Turfgrass America, combines Thomas Brothers Grass, Crenshaw and Doguet Turf and Milberger Turf Farms with Apollo, Fla.-based Elsberry Greenhouses.

While the merger was completed May 14, Milberger and Thomas Brothers have been considering the move for a year and a half.

“As we all looked at the
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A SHORE BET

Black Brook, which has opened along with its sister track, The Sanctuary Course, is nestled along the shores of Mille Lacs Lake in Minnesota. The courses are designed by John Harbottle in collaboration with 1993 U.S. Amateur champion John Harris and owner Chip Claser. The Sanctuary Course is geared toward the average player, with shorter yardage than its counterpart Black Brook. Harbottle feels the courses should be ‘instant classics.’ See story, page 30.

Z-Net may revolutionize slow-growing grasses

Little Rock, Ark. — Tannenbaum Golf Course on Greers Ferry Lake near Heber Springs may have written its name into golf course history when it opened for public play in June. No scoring records were broken. The big story was a process that doubles the speed of growth for zoysiagrass, an excellent turf many superintendents have not used because of its notorious slow growth.

Z-Net, a new patented growing method developed in Japan and brought to America by Winrock Grass Farm, Inc., was used on the fairways and roughs at Tannenbaum for the first time in America. The new technology produces complete growing during just one growing season — about twice as fast as standard sprigs or plugs, according to Winrock President Frank Whitbeck.

“Z-Net worked beautifully,” said Tannenbaum course superintendent Scott White. “We grew in our zoysiagrass fairways and roughs in a little bit longer than the four to six months they predicted. But last summer was a hot summer and it was hard to get anything to grow. Right now it’s 90 to 95 percent
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Fertilization, filtration systems said growing in popularity

By Peter Blais

Demands for improved playing conditions have led many courses to install fertilization, acid-injection and filtration systems as part of their pumping stations. Tanks, tubing and controllers for both fertilization and acid-injection systems (which improve water quality) can be rigged up to a pump station at a cost ranging from $7,000 to $15,000, a dramatic reduction from the $20,000 to $30,000 price tag common just a few years ago, said
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Country club fertility on a public’s budget

By David Wilber

The subject of turfgrass fertility is an ever-changing and often complicated road of twists and turns. But by being aware of several essential areas, turfgrass managers at public, resort and daily-fee golf operations can untangle the knots that might otherwise keep them from having the best possible fertilizer program.

There is a myth that only the private club is spending enough money to do the fertility management job correctly. From the standpoint of many golf facilities, public and private, fertility management and fertilizer purchasing is often a guessing
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CC fertility on a public budget

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Dave Wilber is a consulting agronomist and owner of Wilber Turf and Soil Services in Rocklin, Calif. He works with over 120 courses and clubs in the United States, Scotland and the Caribbean. He can be reached by phone at 916-630-7600 or e-mail at dave@soil.com.

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Country club-style fertility

Continued from previous page
to be charging for that kind of service. If quick service is really needed it may be of value.

When purchasing well ahead of schedule with some flexibility on delivery time, cost saving is usual. Superintendents must seek out their own landing area in the equation of price and service and know that there is a give-and-take in regards to cost.

Planning the fertilization program is nearly impossible to do without analytical information. Fertilizer suppliers commonly offer soil testing. Superintendents may seek a more independent viewpoint from an independent lab.

Common fuel for the “Private Clubs Can Afford It and Public Courses Can’t” myth is that many private clubs do seek independent analytical services through a qualified soil consultant or other independent means.

Most superintendents report that the savings from this type of consulting advice are significant.

Information from analysis is often found confusing. It should never be a source of anything but answers, and superintendents who are left confused by their current testing should recognize this as a need to change. Testing should help in planning preparations, point out change brought on by applications, and monitor progress toward goals. Most importantly, good analytical information should eliminate guesswork.

BEYOND NPK

Balancing soil nutrients through amending means that purchasing must go beyond NPK-type fertilizers. With no doubt, nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium are very important in both agronometrics and economics.

However, minerals such as calcium, magnesium, iron and manganese are extremely important in overall soil performance.

Purchasing these materials may bring the superintendent to new suppliers.

Frequently these suppliers do a good deal of business in production agriculture. Nevertheless, mineral is mineral, regardless of intended use. Prudence in selection for high-quality materials will still yield good prices for soil amendments.

Many times superintendents who are watching their budgets tell me they can not afford to “go organic.” On the outside, this is true if the comparison is made between the standard NPK fertilizers and organics based on cost of nitrogen alone.

Looking at products this way may seem to make sense and look like an apples-to-apples view. In most cases, the overlooked issue in looking at the cost of an organic material is the value of carbon as a necessary element for soil performance.

Trials with various composts, granular organic fertilizers, oceanic material and humates frequently show the enhancement of NPK fertilizers through their role in soil conditioning.

Many tight budgets will get great results adding carbon into the fertilization program. The key is remembering that it is not always the product line but the process of soil amending and conditioning.

As a consultant, I work to evaluate each situation from both an agronomic and economic standpoint. Taking a close look

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Soil amendments such as calcium from lime can be applied to golf courses. Often, larger quantities are needed which require the use of equipment often used in the agricultural environment.
More (air) power to you: the first step in getting 'clean'

By TERRY BUCHEN

NAPLES, Fla. — Superintendent Darren J. Davis has started a recent standard operating procedure at Olde Florida Golf Club here, having his crews pre-cleaning all the maintenance equipment with high-pressure air hoses prior to the traditional cleaning with water.

"We found that using high-pressure air hoses first does a much better job of pre-cleaning our equipment prior to it being cleaned with a high-pressure water hose and nozzle," Davis said. "Plus, cleaning up dry grass clippings is much easier and has less of an odor than wet clippings."

Olde Florida installed two air hose reels adjacent to the service road leading into the maintenance complex and an additional one at the equipment wash rack. This second station helps relieve congestion at the end of the work day, Davis said.

Davis chose the Retracta Retractable Hose Reel that has 50 feet of 3/8-inch high-pressure air hose coiled inside. It also has a blow gun with an 18-inch long, 1/8-inch diameter stainless steel wand on the end. The red-colored high-impact plastic hose reel housing swivels from side to side and is attached to the air line with a 3/8-inch black high pressure hose, with a quick coupler connection.

The hose reel is mounted on a wall-mounted pressure-treated 4-by-4 post that is 8 feet long. Two feet of the post was installed underground using two bags of Sacrete concrete, said equipment manager Kim Ellis.

Hanging on the front of the 4-by-4 post is an orange-colored safety sign, both in English and Spanish, stating: "Warning — Eye Protection Required In This Area," with a Grainger Plexiglass Safety Glasses Holder for each employee to use.

Country club fertility

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often reveals purchasing that influences both areas in a negative way. Some top examples I see include:

✓ Using often-expensive slow-release nitrogen incorrectly or when not needed at all can be very costly and easily corrected.

✓ Many so-called "biological" products are not much more than small amounts of mineral, humic material and carbohydrates that are diluted to the point of being highly ineffective.

✓ Selection of a fertilizer blend that is not exactly what is needed instead of shopping around leads to unneeded expense.

Agronomic and economic selection of fertility programming is not just the realm of the club that has a great deal of money to spend. Public facilities can use the same techniques to plan, choose and purchase a better fertility program. This is a form of stewardship every superintendent can participate in regardless of budget status.