**BRIEFS**

**HOWARD JOHNSON'S PROMOTES ERNST**

MILWAUKEE — Howard Johnson's Enterprises, Inc. has announced the promotion of Joe Ernst to director of commercial sales and technical services. "We will be able to increase the management of all commercial sales and marketing for the company. Ernst, who brings 18 years of experience to the job, has been named employee of the year. Jerry Schroeder, previously with the Van Diest Supply Company, has been named territory manager Western region. Schroeder will be in Kearney, Neb."

**AMERICAN EXCELSIOR'S CABALKA REAPPOINTED TO ASTM**

ARLINGTON, Texas — American Excelsior Company, a manufacturer and distributor of erosion control products, including Curlex excelsior blankets, reports that Dwight Cabalka has been reappointed as chairman of the ASTM subcommittee on Erosion Control Systems, D18.25, Sediment and Erosion Control Technology. Created in 1996 with Cabalka serving as its first chairman, subcommittee D18.25 is contained within Committee D-18 on Soil and Rock. According to the International Erosion Control Association (IECA), subcommittee D18.25 is responsible for developing standards for erosion control materials and systems based on the ASTM process.

**CARNEY BRINGS EXPERIENCE TO GROWTH PRODUCTS**

WHITE PLAINS, N.Y. — Growth Products Ltd. has added Patrick Carney to its staff of technical sales representatives. Carney's territory will encompass the states of Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota. Prior to his hiring at Growth Products, Carney was a Certified Golf Course Superintendent at Owl Creek Country Club in Anchorage, Ky. The Indiana University Southeast graduate has held similar positions at various courses throughout Indiana and Kentucky.

**NATURE SAFE NAMES GARCIA AS NEW REGIONAL MANAGER**

COLD SPRING, Ky. — Nature Safe Natural & Organic Fertilizers has named Vic Garcia as its new regional sales manager. Garcia will be in charge of the Midwest and Northwest Regions. He has over ten years experience in the turf industry. Garcia resides in Fishers, Indiana.

**John Deere opens $38 million skid steer operation**

LOUDON, Tenn. — John Deere’s Worldwide Commercial & Consumer Equipment Division has opened a new, $38-million business operation incorporating engineering and assembly 30 miles southwest of Knoxville, Tenn. The 300,000-square-foot Commercial Worksite Products (CWP) facility will house production of the company’s new line of skid steers, the first designed and delivered by John Deere.

Deere plans to market the new line of skid steers into the golf market, as well as the landscape, rental, nursery and seed and sod markets. "With our long experience in the skid steer business and our engineering and manufacturing expertise, we felt it was time for us to design and build the product ourselves," said Chuck Hagedorn, general manager of the CWP business division.

**Toro teams with ProShot**

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. — Toro has added a critical piece in its efforts to solve the technology puzzle with the inking of its alliance with ProShot Golf, a provider of GIS-based information and communications products to the golf industry.

According to the agreement, Toro becomes an equity partner in ProShot and will share engineering expertise and gain access to its distribution network. ProShot will assist in the integration of GIS technology into Toro equipment and provide support to the golf course owners, managers, and superintendents.

The goal, said Toro, is the development of a modular, desk-top-based, course-wide decision-support system for turf and irrigation. "ProShot has taken a practical application within our market, tracking golf carts, and they've made that work," said Debra Bly, new technologies marketing manager for Toro's Advanced Turf Technology, an internal think tank consisting of agronomists.

"GPS is just one of the many enabling technologies that go into a semi-autonomous vehicle."

—Toro’s Debra Bly

engineers, plant nutritionists and marketing people designed to cross the boundaries of Toro’s professional business group. “We can take that and build on it instead of trying to build on other applications we’ve looked at in other industries.”

“GPS just happens to be one of the technologies you might use to help solve customer problems,” said Dana Lonn, director of the Center.

A first step, said Lonn, could be the integration of ProShot’s GIS technology with Toro’s GIS-based T-Map, the electronic map utilized in Toro’s irrigation control.

"With T-Map we can tell the superintendent where the sprinkler heads are because they don’t move around," said Lonn. "Now the ProShot component will allow us to track things that are moving around the course. You can bring that information back via radio, real-time, with bi-directional radio link to all those machines. You can now move data out from the central computer onto the golf course then move it from the course back to the center."

Today that technology is used primarily for cart location and player interaction with the clubhouse. Lonn suggests that the information could

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International.

United States. In its wake, the small, independent seed companies, which once dominated the market, are left to ponder the idea of selling. Those that remain independent could eventually be relegated to the sidelines, jumping into the game only to fill the gaps ABT has left uncovered.

“They are a force,” said Turf-See’s John Green’s Tom Stanley. “They probably have half of the forage and turf market under their control. We just have to find our niche and be one of those companies that do well in niche markets. Whatever crumbs are left over we’ll be there to pick them up.”

“Consolidation of the industry isn’t really that bad,” said Tom Pape, vice president and general manager of Seed Research of Oregon. “Hopefully what will happen is that the margins will improve in our industry, taking some of the smaller brokers out of the picture.”

ABT Acquisitions: Since January 1995, ABT has acquired 33 companies in the sector, and has three pending acquisitions it expects to close soon. As a result of the acquisitions, ABT is now the sixth-largest seed company in the world and the largest forage and turf grass seed company with $475 million in annualized net sales.

Some of the familiar names that have been acquired by ABT include Lofts Seed, Germain’s, W-L Research, E.F. Burlingham & Sons, Olsen Fennell Seeds, Seed Corporation of America, Green Seed, Wilmette Seed Company, Peterson Seed Company, Kinder Seeds, Zajac Performance Seeds and Van Dyke Seed.

ABT has acquired other seed and seed-related businesses that focus on and serve golf course superintendents in the West and Southwest: Las Vegas Fertilizer and Garden West Distributors.

“ABT’s acquisition plan called for building a large, vertically integrated company with a national platform in production, distribution and research and development [R&D],” said Dr. Johnny Thomas, ABT’s chairman and chief executive officer. “We are proud of all our acquisitions because they share our vision and each bring strong components to our platform.”

Deere/Skid Loaders

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ness unit. “As we place more emphasis on commercial and golf and turf products to increase sales overall, skid steers are a major focus for us. As we look at our new 155-horsepower lift system, a 45-degree dump angle, 35-degree bucket rollback and a sloped rear deck for 360-degree visibility.

"It’s like buying a home computer system," said Lonn. "You buy the base and you’ll be able to plug in what you want."

Toro’s Dana Lonn

course," said Lonn. "The most difficult problem that no one has solved yet is the collision avoidance problem. But I don’t think GPS is quite accurate enough to get you what you need."

In the meantime, Lonn said that Toro’s Center for Advanced Turf Technology will be working to add modules that will allow superintendents to use technology to make better decisions around the course. "It’s like buying a home computer system," Lonn said. "You buy the base and you’ll be able to plug in what you want."

"You do this in pieces," added Bly. "It’s constantly evolving."