

BRIEFS



AHNERT JOINS RAIN BIRD GOLF DIVISION

AZUSA, Calif. — Rain Bird announced that Fred Ahnert, key accounts manager for the golf division, has joined the staff of Mike Donoghue, golf division director. In his new position, Ahnert will continue to manage Rain Bird Golf's relationships with management companies and large account-based firms while contributing his experience in these areas to the strategic planning and direction of the division.



Fred Ahnert

GROWTH PRODUCTS ADDS BLAIR

WHITE PLAINS, N.Y. — Growth Products, Ltd., has added Brian Blair to its staff of technical sales representatives. Blair's territory will cover Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and a section of Tennessee. Prior to his hiring at Growth Products, Blair was regional account manager for Southern States Cooperative.

SYBRON APPOINTS SEDIVY

SALEM, Va. — Sybron's Biochemical Division has appointed John Sedivy general manager of GREEN-RELEAF products in the turf, horticultural and agricultural markets. Sedivy will manage and direct all business activity for the global development, production, marketing and sales of GREEN-RELEAF products. Before joining Sybron, Sedivy served four years as director of marketing and development for the agrichemical division of Elf Atochem North America, Inc.



John Sedivy

PICKSEED PICKS UP MCDOWELL

TANGENT, Ore. — Pickseed West Inc. has appointed Christie McDowell vice-president, sales and business development, North America. McDowell will assume a senior management role and responsibility for the company's North America product introductions, marketing and promotional projects and sales and sales management. She will also focus on new business development through the creation of distributor relationships in targeted areas.

QA Simplot Turf and Horticulture set to expand nationwide

Golf Course News recently sat down with Wayne Burk, senior vice president and general manager of fertilizer products for Simplot Turf and Horticulture, to talk about how the rapid changes in the fertilizer industry are affecting Simplot's business plan. Burk, who has been with Simplot for 18 years, lent perspective on how deals with Eco Soil Systems, Inc. and Pursell Technologies, Inc. (PTI) [see GCN March 2000] relate to the company's aggressive growth strategy.

GCN: What is driving Simplot's nationwide expansion?

Burk: The Simplot family and the top corporate management folks made this decision at the time they acquired Jacklin Seed Co. They saw an industry that a company the size of Simplot could play in. The turf and ornamental industry is attractive to us. We are basic in most of the raw materials, we have a pretty good foothold in the Western United States and the Pacific Rim. We see it as a business where we could leverage our brands and strengths and be a pretty sizable player.

GCN: What does PTI bring to the table?

Burk: They have the best controlled-release fertilizer technology in the world right now. Even though we are a major fertilizer manufacturer, we have never had a position in a controlled-release technology, so we came together to leverage

their technological position with our marketing and manufacturing position.

GCN: So this is a way to fill gaps in your product line?

Burk: Absolutely. There are certain fertilizer market segments in which you just simply have to have this type of performance product to play in.

GCN: What do Eco Soil and Turf Partners offer?

Burk: Distribution, particularly in the East and Midwest. We had more or less announced our plans to expand to the east and we talked to the players in those markets. Eco Soil came to us and said they were interested in taking our products into those markets. They have 20 locations with 75 sales people so we started pursuing [an agreement].

GCN: Will you be making any other moves to fill holes in distribution?

Burk: Turf Partners is a core that we will be looking to add onto in those areas where we don't have distributors to date. Recognizing that they don't have branches and distribution in the Southwest and Southeast, we would have to add onto Turf Partners depending upon how the business is structured. Having said that, the Pursell agreement does not include the Southeast.

GCN: Are there plans to ramp up supply capabilities?

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ABT continues to sell as asset sale begins

By ANDREW OVERBECK

HENDERSON, Nev. — AgriBioTech (ABT) has secured an interim debtor-in-possession (DIP) credit facility with Bank of America, N.A. that should help the floundering seed company stay afloat as its assets are liquidated.

"The company is experiencing a cash-flow crisis, and needs the proposed DIP financing in order to make payroll and support its business operations," said Bradley Sharp, a principal of Development Specialists, Inc. (DSI) the company's court-appointed reorganization consultant.

Despite the fact that the company is in the process of selling its assets, Richard Hurley, director of ABT's professional turf business unit, confirmed that the company is functioning, its brands are available and its employees are working and being paid.

"Everyone is being paid and the sales folks are obtaining orders,"

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Tyler extends its Midwestern reach

ELWOOD, Ill. — Tyler Enterprises, Inc. has made further inroads into both Indiana and Kentucky by opening warehouse and distribution centers and expanding sales and marketing staffs in each state.

The 7,200-square-foot building in Indianapolis will serve as a distribution center for Tyler's custom-blended fertilizer products and specialty chemicals and as an office for the seven-member Indiana sales and service team.

"Over the past year, Tyler has aggressively focused its marketing and sales efforts on the Indiana golf course, landscape, nursery and grounds mar-

kets," said Bruce Jasurda, Tyler's chief operating officer. "The opening of this facility represents our commitment to service specialty turf customers in the state. From this base of operation, we will be able to ensure on-time delivery and efficient local distribution of our custom-blended fertilizer products and services."

The distribution center will be managed by Bob Murphy and JD Ruggles will be in charge of delivery and customer service. Also based out of the Indianapolis facility are Tyler sales representatives Sam Detmer, Ginny Smith, Roger Valentine and Dave

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Lesco profits surge

CLEVELAND — LESCO, Inc. has reported that its net income for the fiscal year ending Dec. 31, 1999 increased 98 percent to a record \$11.6 million compared with \$5.9 million in the same period last year.

Sales of fertilizers, turf-protection products and turfgrass seed combined for \$385.4 million in sales accounting for 83.7 percent of total sales.

Commercial lawn care equipment and parts sales were \$75 million, an increase of 14.6 percent compared with a year ago. For the 12 months, comparable store sales increased about 8 percent over the same period a year ago.

"Throughout the year we focused our energies toward improving our profitability. We are particularly encouraged by the 190-basis-point increase in our operating margin to 4.9 percent in 1999 and believe our unique business model has begun to demonstrate its underlying profitability potential," said William A. Foley, Lesco chairman, president and chief executive officer. "We are encouraged by our progress and remain focused on improving our return on capital. We look for continued improvement in our 2000 results."

Lesco noted that positive factors for year-over-year profitability included improved sales mix, cost controls and improved performance at Commercial Turf Products, Ltd., its commercial equipment joint venture with MTD Products Inc.



Golf Course News STOCK REPORT (3/15)*

Company	Symbol	Stock Price	%Change 1/1/00	%Change 2/24/00	P/E	52-week Range	Proj. 5-yr Earn. Growth
Astrazeneca	AZN	42.125	0.90	26.69	31.88	31-48.94	10.80%
Deere & Co.	DE	37.5	-11.50	-1.96	40.72	32-48.5	9.70%
Dow Chemical Co.	DOW	106.5	-19.70	0.12	18.88	90-141.5	7.80%
Family Golf Centers	FGCI	1.031	-26.68	-8.36	N/A	0.72-10.125	25%
Golf Trust of Amer.	GTA	17.125	1.11	-4.86	13.09	14.5-25.75	8.80%
Ingersoll-Rand	IR	38.25	-30.53	6.01	12.03	34.25-73.82	12%
Lesco Inc.	LSCO	16.75	-1.47	4.69	12.59	12.25-19.5	15%
Nat'l Golf Prop.	TEE	21	6.33	0.57	15.42	18.38-27.75	9%
Toro Co.	TTC	30.125	-19.26	-8.38	11.89	28.5-39.5	12.5%
Textron Inc.	TXT	54.8125	-28.52	-9.97	4.02	51-98	14.3%

*DATA PROVIDED BY VALUE TREND LINKS, LINKS FUND UP 11.48% IN '00, WWW.GOLFMUTUALFUND.COM

Simplot's Burk weighs in on fertilizer market shake up

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Burk: We have to have the capabilities to support a distribution network whether it is Turf Partners or independent distribution, so we are going to be looking at that.

Of course we recognize that there are a lot more combination products in the turf market in the Midwest and the East than

we sell or have a demand for in the West. We are going to have to look at getting the capabilities and the products to support those markets. I don't know just what level of production that we are going to go into, but we are going to have to add production, packaging and distribution capabilities.

GCN: What is your reaction to

the Scotts/Andersons deal? How will it shape Simplot's business strategy?

Burk: Any time a No. 1 decides to exit the business, it sends shock waves through the industry. We haven't sat down and really tried to assess the pluses and minuses. Andersons is a good company and they are capable of picking up some of

the pieces, but can they pick up all of them? I don't know. They have to step up now and be a national player and that's going to present some real issues to them.

From our perspective, it probably accelerates our plan...it puts a little more pressure on us to move more quickly than originally intended.

GCN: Many industry watchers say this is just the first wave of

consolidation, do you agree?

Burk: You are going to see continued consolidation in the industry. It is fairly young in that process. You are going to see regional players join up or fall out with others. There is also going to be more alignment of technologies. We are very anxious to look at those [opportunities].

GCN: Are regional players positioning themselves with that in mind?

Burk: I would think so. I mean, hey, we were a regional company. You have to think about how you are going to continue to compete as companies get bigger. If you remain static, you are losing ground and the consolidation will take place around you and then you will have a difficult time competing.

GCN: What is Simplot's game plan going forward?

Burk: The next year will be real interesting. Everyone is trying to size things up and see how to go about taking advantage of this opportunity.

We have a lot of resources. We have big-time fertilizer manufacturing and seed capabilities and you throw in Pursell's controlled-release technology and that's pretty strong. Depending on the Turf Partners relationship, we will be involved in the resale chemical business as well. Simplot has the capabilities to go to the big chemical people and align ourselves, and that is what we will be trying to do. We are going to carry a broad line of products.

To be honest we would like to grow this business four to five times in the next two to five years... It is an aggressive plan but we expect to be able to do it. ▴



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Broyhill snags Yazoo-Kees turf

DAKOTA CITY, Neb. — Broyhill Inc. has acquired the turf assets business of Yazoo-Kees, based in Chetek, Wis. The company will consolidate all operations to the Dakota City facilities.

Yazoo-Kees' primary turf products include a self-propelled bunker rake, several powered greens brushes, spiker/roller and spiker seeders, a turf vehicle plus other optional equipment accessories.

Broyhill serves the turf, agricultural, and industrial vehicle markets.