

# MAINTENANCE



## BRIEFS

### USGA RELEASES "MAKING ROOM FOR NATIVE POLLINATORS"

FAR HILLS, N.J. — The United States Golf Association has released a new book, "Making Room for Native Pollinators: How to Create Habitat for Pollinator Insects on Golf Courses." Written by Matthew Shepherd, pollinator program director for the Xerces Society, the book is a result of a grant provided through the USGA's Wildlife Links program and is targeted to golf course superintendents, course officials, and environmental consultants to help manage out-of-play areas on the golf course. By taking some simple steps to establish patches of native wild flowers and nesting sites, golf courses can provide an important refuge for bees and other pollinating insects, which in turn helps maintain healthy plant communities.

### VALLEYCREST GOLF NETS STONE CREEK GOLF CLUB CONTRACT

MAKANDA, Ill. — ValleyCrest Golf Course Maintenance has signed a partnership to perform golf course maintenance for Stone Creek Golf Club here. Under the agreement, ValleyCrest will provide professional maintenance services for the 18-hole daily-fee golf club. The addition of this facility is the company's first in Illinois and increases the company's maintenance portfolio in the Great Lakes area to four. Stone Creek was designed in 1998 by Jerry Lemmons of Golf Links Inc. The course features bluegrass/ryegrass tees and fairways with fescue roughs and bentgrass greens. Superintendent Joel Tyrpak will handle maintenance duties at the course.

### DELHI PAIR WIN SCHOLARSHIP

DELHI, N.Y. — Two students of the State University of New York at Delhi's golf course management program were recently awarded scholarships from the Long Island Golf Course Superintendents Association. Brian Macmillan and Christian Munoz were awarded \$750 each, recognizing them as outstanding students pursuing a career in golf course management.

## 2002 NEWSMAKERS

# More superintendents taking organic approach

By DOUG SAUNDERS

TRUCKEE, Calif. — The interest in organics has increased this year on many fronts other than in the golf industry. The Food and Drug Administration recently announced new guidelines for the labeling of organic products for the marketplace after years of discussion. More organic products are appearing in stores, which increases public awareness about trends in the agricultural industry. More public awareness leads to more concerns on how to best protect our environment.

But for the golf maintenance industry, the talk of organic methods for the golf course is tempered by several factors. Foremost is the desire to present the best possible conditions in order to attract the playing public. Second are the economic factors that have to be weighed as golf course superintendents are continually juggling their budgets in order to satisfy the needs of their golf course and the demands of their course managers.

Can an organic approach sat-



Old Brockway near Lake Tahoe has adopted an organic maintenance program.

isfy these two primary demands?

Over the last several years more organic fertilizers and products have been introduced to the golf market but the decision to use

them is a difficult one for course managers as there is little track record on their effectiveness.

"The bottom line in the discussion about the pros and cons of

the use of organics on golf courses is that the turf itself knows no difference in nutrients that come from organics or from synthetic

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## 2002 NEWSMAKERS

# Compost tea shows promise

By ANDREW OVERBECK

WOODBURY, N.J. — As more superintendents study organic golf course maintenance practices, compost tea has emerged as viable alternative to a chemical-only approach.

While the compost tea technique has been around for

more than a century, today's higher-tech version "brews" compost to create a concentrated "tea" that delivers beneficial microbes and low levels of nutrients to turfgrass.

Evidence at this point is strictly anecdotal, but superintendents using compost tea report less disease pressure, less need for fer-

tilization and irrigation and all-around healthier turf.

Last February, *Golf Course News* interviewed Woodbury (N.J.) Country Club superintendent Charles Clarke about the results he had gotten after two years of using compost tea. Clarke stuck with his compost tea regimen this year and recorded a third successful season with his "home brew"

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## 2002 NEWSMAKERS

# Courses face cost-cutting pressure

By ANDREW OVERBECK

An uncertain economy and flat or declining rounds played numbers have placed increasing pressure on the bottom line at courses across the country.

According to a *Golf Course News* poll, 56.3 percent of courses will see maintenance budgets for 2003 remain the same, while 25 percent will see them drop (See page 8).

As more budgets come under pressure, superintendents are forced to produce the same turf conditions with fewer resources.

"You have to cut costs

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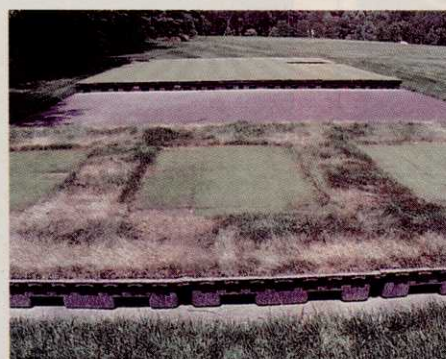
## 2002 NEWSMAKERS

# Roundup Ready bentgrass still on track

By ANDREW OVERBECK

MARYSVILLE, Ohio — The Scotts Co. and Monsanto are pressing forward with the development of Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass. The transgenic turf has created a buzz throughout the golf industry this year because it would allow superintendents to control weeds with Roundup without damaging the bentgrass (see related story page 18).

Since gaining approval from the



Roundup Ready trials are ongoing at several courses

Oregon Department of Agriculture in July to set up an 11,000-

acre control area for the production of the transgenic turfgrass, 400 acres have been planted and will be ready for harvest in July 2003.

However, the two companies cannot market Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass until they receive approval from the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS). That

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## Adaptive market waiting to take off

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that manufactures Club Car's adaptive golf car is convinced adaptive cars will become required.

"Golf courses are required to provide access under the Access Board guidelines," said Pretekin. "And courses must be designed to have easy access by wheeled vehicles. The only way courses can legally not provide access is if it is economically prohibitive or if it fundamentally alters the characteristics of the game or the facility."

SoloRider has already sold 500 adaptive cars, 250 of which have been placed on golf courses. The company recently signed a deal to provide all TPC courses with adaptive cars.

E-Z-GO's adaptive car, the Eagle, went into production two months ago and marketing communications coordinator Ron Skenes said there is a growing market for the vehicle.

"We think the demand for these types of vehicles is going to grow and there are going to be more courses wanting to offer them as an option to handicapped players on down to those who may just have a bad back," Skenes said.

The vehicle is being manufactured by Eagle Products and distributed by E-Z-GO.

Yamaha is looking to enter the adaptive car market as well.

"We are probably going to team up with someone else [an adaptive car manufacturer] that is already out there," said Yamaha Golf Car vice president Bill Szarowicz. "There is no need to reinvent the wheel."

However, not all manufacturers are viewing the market with such optimism.

Several smaller manufacturers have gone

out of business and veteran adaptive golf car maker Golf Xpress recently pulled out of the market and is looking for a buyer of its assets.

Fairway Golf Cars, in Brookfield, Wis., is expanding its manufacturing facility, but is taking a much broader approach to the market by offering an adaptive car, a power caddy and a new single rider fleet model which it is set to unveil next summer.

"There are two challenges with the adaptive market at this time," said president Cole Braun. "There is not a definitive rul-



Fairway Golf Cars has expanded its product line beyond adaptive cars

ing from the Department of Justice, and second, the golf industry has not had a good year so they are not going to invest money in something that they can't see an immediate positive return on."

In the face of these challenges, Fairway Golf Cars has placed its adaptive car, the Spirit, on 40 courses nationwide including municipal courses in Indianapolis, Branson, Mo., Lincoln, Neb., and Portland, Ore.

"The adaptive market is still solid, and there is a need there," said Braun. "But we also want to revolutionize the way people move around the golf course and give owners another option. The new single-rider fleet model and the power caddy provide that option." ■

## With new factory online, YGC set for a busy '03

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could have a heavy-duty and a lighter-duty vehicle," said YGC's division manager of new business development and off-fairway vehicles Jon Bammann in the June issue of *Golf Course News*.

Szarowicz also said new products will be unveiled that "enhance the off-fairway division."

YGC's new 220,000-square-foot factory is making the product line expansion possible.

"The plant is going crazy," Szarowicz said. "The efficiency rate is up, and production numbers are up. So far it is exceeding expectations. We are also looking at implementing a build-to-order system. This gives us the ability to react faster. Before when we shared space with ATV manufacturing we couldn't do all of this."

New production technology has also made the G-MAX car better. The new facility features 17 robotic welding stations and a new multi-step frame coating system that includes immersion cleaning, immersion corrosion protection and powder coating.

According to Szarowicz, the new car has set itself apart from the field with its Tru-Trak front suspension and ergonomic Ergo-Shade sun top with integrated grab handles. The company will soon roll out its Genius fleet management system that uses any personal digital assistant to perform diag-

nostics via infrared.

### CREATING FLEET OPTIONS

YGC also introduced its certified pre-owned program this year that is based out of a separate facility in Peachtree City. Szarowicz said hundreds of reconditioned units have already rolled off the line giving the company an opportunity to compete in a different market.



The new G-MAX, introduced in June, is the first of many new vehicles on the way from Yamaha.

"This brings the golf car out at a different price point and gives us an advantage at looking at ways courses can save money on their fleet," he said. "For example, some courses have chosen to mix and match. They may need 60 cars but would like 80. We now can offer 60 new cars and 20 certified pre-owned cars and they can get what they want at a lower price point. Golfers will never know the difference." ■

## Compost tea brewing organic success

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despite drought conditions and high disease pressure.

"It was a good year with compost tea," said Clarke. "We bought a bigger brewer and we were able to reduce fungicide use again. We only did five curative sprays for dollar spot control on the fairways as opposed to the usual 11 to 12. We also reduced fertilizer on fairways to two pounds of nitrogen."

"On the greens we had no outbreaks, but we did have dollar spot pressure," he continued. "We sprayed curatively and we were able to increase our spray intervals. Overall we reduced fungicide use by 30 percent."

Clark applies five gallons of tea per acre every seven days, but backed off to every 14 days this fall. He had no anthracnose, very little brown patch and pythium and had no algae on his greens.

"I am still tentative with compost tea," said Clarke, "and we are not chemical-free by any means. But we have been able to truly implement an IPM program and I attribute that to the tea."

Seeing Clarke's success, Todd Struse at LuLu Temple Country Club in North Hills, Pa., started a compost tea program this summer.

"We have a real bad anthracnose problem here and it is because of an imbalance in the soil chemistry," he said. "We want to reduce our budget by reducing use of chemicals, nematicides and fertilizers."

Since he is just beginning the program, Struse is applying compost tea at a 35-gallon-per-acre rate every week. While it was too soon to see results this season, Struse did benefit from another of Clarke's techniques - topdressing tees with compost during the winter.

"I put down a heavy layer on the tees in January and let it rain in and then blew off the debris," Struse said. "The compost provided enough nutrients so that I didn't have to fertilize them until September."

Clarke topdressed roughs, six tees and two fairways with compost last winter and noticed that it helped combat drought conditions.

"We have a mixture of bluegrass and ryegrass in the roughs and they went dormant later and bounced back earlier. The areas we didn't get to went dormant right off," he said.

Clarke plans to topdress the whole course this year.

### COMPOST TEA CATCHING ON?

If compost tea provides at least some benefits, why aren't more superintendents aren't using it? Clarke said the lack of university research is the biggest problem.

"A lot of guys won't accept it until a Rutgers or a Penn State or an NC State says 'Yes this is the way to go.' Unfortunately this is a grass-roots thing and there is no one with the money to pay for a study," said Clarke. "So far, anecdotal evidence is the only way [information on] compost tea gets out there." ■

## Lesco to increase sales capabilities

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and distribution capabilities will help it grow sales in the six to eight percent range next year.

"We will continue to add salespeople, stores and stores-on-wheels," he said. "I have all the data and our return on investment is outstanding when we add sales capabilities. If we don't add, we'll die."

The hub-and-spoke distribution system is nearing completion with new centers already open in Westfield, Mass., and Avon Lake, Ohio. New centers in Atlanta and Chicago will be on-line by the beginning of the year and facilities will be added in Stockton, Calif., and Texas later in 2003.

"We have changed the profile of how distribution centers hold products and what services they provide," said DiMino. "We need to replenish service centers and stores-on-wheels from the local level instead of from distant distribution centers."

"Our five zone vice presidents are in place to put the right products on the shelves and decide where stores and stores-on-wheels go," added DiMino. "Their job is to drive the regional competitors crazy using the Lesco assets. We are a national player but we want to act like a local player."

### REDUCING OVERHEAD AND CUTTING COSTS

DiMino, however, has also had to trim costs. He has reduced what he calls "corporate overhead" and manufacturing costs. Lesco also sold its troubled Novex fertilizer plant to KPAC Holdings Inc. in late October. The company has signed a supply agreement with KPAC and said the Novex products will continue to be available to Lesco customers.

"We will be able to produce it cheaper in this new structure than we were when we were producing it ourselves," said DiMino. "Novex will still be our product for greens and tees and hopefully for fairways soon as well. There will be no interruption in the supply." ■