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.

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

Can an organic approach satisfy 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

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

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 fertilization 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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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).

Roundup Ready trials are ongoing at several courses

Since gaining approval from the 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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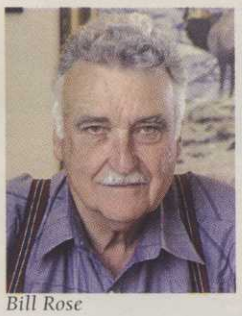
Turf-Seed continues research on male sterile and naturally Roundup tolerant turfgrass

By ANDREW OVERBECK

HUBBARD, Ore. — The development of Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass by Scotts and Monsanto has been a contentious issue, as detractors here in the Willamette Valley contend the transgenic turf will ruin the country's primary bentgrass production region.


Bill Rose

Bill Rose, president of Turf-Seed, has been the most vocal, predicting earlier this year that the Oregon Department of Agriculture's (ODA) approval for open pollination of Roundup Ready bentgrass in an 11,000-acre control area in Jefferson County would be a "disaster" (*GCN*, Sept. 2002).

"As a result of this control area, I expect to see genetically-altered turfgrass banned in the United States," he said. "My goal is to try not to get it banned."

Rose is concerned that production fields in the Willamette Valley could be contaminated, jeopardizing exports to Japan and Europe, which have strict regulations on genetically modified organisms.

There is also resistance from groups in the United States like the International Center for Technology Assessment, which is pressing the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to deny Scotts' and Monsanto's petition for approval of Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass. In a petition filed in August, the group called Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass a "superweed" and said the transgenic turfgrass has the potential to cause ecological and economic disruption because it could contaminate other stands of turf. The organization is also petitioning the USDA to list Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass as a noxious weed.

Rose, however, is trying to avoid the above scenarios by developing Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass that is male sterile, reducing the chances of any cross-contamination. In October, researchers said that they had a male sterile bentgrass plant.

"We found a number of plants that are transgenic that are proven to be male sterile," said Rose. "The results in October look very good, but we will wait until January or February for another generation to confirm it."

After confirmation, Rose said, the next step will be to conduct field-testing and that will require getting a permit from the ODA.

Rose's company Pure Seed Testing is also working on getting a turf label for its naturally Roundup tolerant Aurora Gold hard fescue and Pure Gold and Tomahawk RT tall fescues that are already on the market.

According to Pure Seed president Crystal Rose-Fricker, the company is waiting for an approval from Monsanto so it can release recommended safe Roundup rates that can be applied to the turf without harming it.

Rose-Fricker said work is also progressing on naturally Roundup tolerant creeping fescue, chewings fescue, slender creeping fescue, perennial ryegrass, Kentucky bluegrass, and bentgrass.

Scotts, Monsanto preparing to resubmit Roundup Ready bentgrass petition

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process hit a snag in September when APHIS issued a "letter of deficiency." The request for more information prompted Scotts and Monsanto to withdraw their petition for approval Oct. 3.

According to officials from both Scotts and APHIS, the withdrawal is an expected part of the approval process. Neither side, however, could specify exactly why the petition was withdrawn.

"We anticipated that they [APHIS] would request more information and additional data," said Scotts spokesman John Bosser. "They have asked for more data for a couple of the trials and tests concerning the biology of the plant. So we have withdrawn the petition and we will resubmit with additional data early next year. It is just a formality and we are still looking at an introduction in 2004 or 2005."

Bosser said since 1998 close to 40 percent of the petitions to APHIS have been withdrawn in order to submit additional data and then resubmitted. In fact, Monsanto's original petition for Roundup Ready corn was withdrawn in October 1997 before finally being resubmitted and approved in September 2000.

COLLECTING GOLF COURSE DATA

While Scotts and Monsanto work on gaining additional data for APHIS, Wayne Horman, director of seed sales and marketing for Scotts, is overseeing testing at individual golf courses across the country. In addition to university testing, APHIS allowed 12 courses to begin on-site testing in 2001 and approved 18 more testing locations this fall.

"We added 11 more courses this fall and we will add seven or eight more next spring in areas where it was too late to seed because of cold weather," said Horman. "Courses are placing the turf in their nurseries so they can compare it to varieties that they are using today. The data we have gotten so far is favorable.

"The courses that started testing last year are monitoring the grandparents of the variety that will eventually come to market," he added. "The new courses are testing turf that is more like the variety that will come to market."

In addition to on-site testing work, Horman is also conducting education sessions with superintendents.

"The educational phase is moving forward and we have done sessions explaining the technology and what it can do," said Horman. "There is interest from superintendents, some have already asked me when they can buy it. But we can't sell or market it until APHIS approves it." ■

Ross reviews new products of the year

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walk spreaders. One has to wonder what took so long for us to have these.

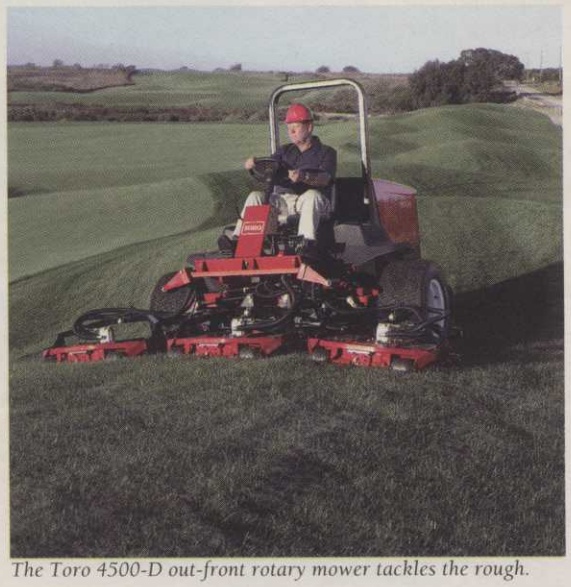
When it comes to iron, the debut of the Toro 4500-D/4700-D was probably the most talked-about new mowing unit. By learning from the faults of previous large out-front turf rotaries and increasing engine horsepower, this unit has performed very well for many courses.

Another mower which drew high interest this season was the Jacobsen LF 1880 fairway unit. Although not available for the better part of the season, demo units were out in force, and the feedback among superintendents was generally positive. The concept of this fairway mower falls between the triplex and fiveplex. It was being marketed toward high-end facilities with close-cut fairways. It has 18-inch cutting units that are very similar to a greensmower, and follows turf contours very well. We will have to wait until next year to see whether this machine will make a true splash in the fairway marketplace.

Although not new, two pieces of equipment still seem to be the talk of the industry.

The Toro Flex 21 may still be the hottest mowing unit on the market. In its second full season, this mower started to dominate the walking greensmower market. One major reason for this (besides the concept of the machine) was the lack of mechanical problems since its debut. This season, Toro also offered attachments for the unit, from brushes to groomers. These additions now offer even greater benefits for this mower.

The second unit that seemed to be on the tip of everyone's tongue, especially those with newer bentgrasses, was the Graden Dethatcher.


The Toro 4500-D out-front rotary mower tackles the rough.

As superintendents increasingly scrutinize their thatch management plans, this unit seems to fit into that plan. It offers the use of one-, two- and three-mm blades and adjustable depth of up to one-and-a-half inches, all depending upon the level of aggressiveness desired on green surfaces. Some courses even combined the Graden with the aerification operation to achieve very high thatch percentage removal.■

Bayer divests fipronil

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developed for the greenhouse industry, the fipronil divestiture will directly impact the golf market. Current fipronil products include Chipco Choice, Top Choice and Fire Star.

"We have the right to negotiate licensing back the products, but there is no guarantee," Carrothers said. "But the opportunity for a co-exclusive is part of the negotiations."

If licensing back the products doesn't pan out, Carrothers said Bayer ES would still have a very strong product line.

"It is not critical to our business model," he said. "Our portfolio is still extremely strong. We have products like 26GT, Merit, Compass and Bayleton that will make a huge impact in the golf market."

Bayer ES also has three insecticides, two herbicides and four fungicides in development right now.

Three of the new products are currently in the registration process with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Those being reviewed include: Triton, a broad-spectrum fungicide; Lynx, a sterile inhibitor fungicide; and Revolver, a post-emergent herbicide that removes cool-season turf from warm-season turf.

"When we look at our project review, we look at what diseases and pests are controlled and what the unique selling proposition is," said Carrothers. "Then we look at whether the active ingredient is compatible from an EPA perspective. All of this is being looked at to make sure we come out with new technology that our customers want and need. We need to bring new solutions to superintendents to help them more effectively manage their courses." ■