

Good news down Mexico way

At the invitation of Jeff West, vice president of GTO International L.L.C., I flew to central Mexico this past July. What I learned there encouraged me, and it should encourage you, too. Read about the growing role of Hispanics in the landscape industry on page 24.

But first you should know more about Jeff and his company, GTO.

GTO is the labor contracting company that West founded. GTO is the abbreviation for Guanajuato, the Mexican city where his company maintains an office.

West graduated from Arizona State University with a degree in horticulture and spent the next 11 years as a golf course superintendent in Arizona and California. He returned to his home state of Michigan to build a golf course at the Wyndgate Club. He's now involved in several entrepreneurial ventures, including GTO, and works mostly out of his home.

A necessary thing

West got involved with finding Mexican labor out of necessity. In 1995, the INS took away his Mexican workers as they were building the golf course. The INS said they were working with fake social security cards.

So he researched the H-2B program as a way to provide himself and his employer a pipeline to dependable and "legal" workers from Mexico. He traveled to Mexico, met with workers and talked with government officials. From there, it wasn't too hard to find Mexican workers for other U.S. landscape businesses, too. For a price of course.

I went to central Mexico because I wanted to see where so many of our Green Industry's workers come

from and how we recruit them. I wanted to know why these mostly young men leave their families for 9 to 10 months each year to mow for 10 hours a day, 6 days a week. The answer was too obvious — employment.

Like I mentioned before, most of what I learned should encourage labor-strapped U.S. landscapers.

First, there is a huge pool of healthy, willing young Mexican workers eager to work in the U.S. That means that as long as our government allows us to bring them in through the H-2B program, we can select and keep the best.

Next, Mexican state officials support efforts by U.S. industry to establish training programs in Mexico. In fact, they're willing to help set up these programs. The more dollars that their citizens earn, the better for their local economies.

On a more controversial note, incoming Mexican President Vincinte Fox stated he wants a freer flow of commerce across the U.S./Mexican border, something akin to the United States' relationship with Canada. This isn't going to happen soon even if Mexico's new government begins doing its part to halt illegal immigration.

Jeff West is not counting on uncertain immigration policies to drive his business. Instead, he's banking on U.S. demographics that suggest the need for evermore labor, and the eagerness of Mexican workers to fill that gap.

Contact Ron at 440/891-2636
or e-mail at rhall@-
advanstar.com

There are more young Mexican workers
eager to work in the United States
than we could ever assimilate into the workforce.



The landscape industry hasn't been around long and therefore is still **wide open** for innovation because everybody is always looking for ways to save time and labor.



You may be an inventor

You may not see yourself as an inventor, but you might be. If you've run a landscape company for any length of time, chances are you've "invented" a labor-saving tool or piece of equipment.

You came up with the product not because you thought you were another Edison, but you saw a way to save either time or labor. You felt that you (or your employees) were working too long or too hard on a specific task. What you may not realize is that other landscapers could benefit from your invention, too and that your product could become a commercial success.

I've been in the landscape business for almost 30

Will demand warrant the expense?

Turning a good idea into a marketable landscape product can be expensive, but it can also be profitable.

If you have an idea for a new product, the first step is to determine if it is, in fact, new. You will need to do a patent search. An experienced patent attorney can help you fulfill the requirements of the U.S. patent office, including the drawings.

Unless you're convinced the market will respond to your "new" product, you may be scared away by the \$20,000 to \$25,000 you will need to invest to get a patent.

years, and I don't like hard work any more than you do. That's one reason why I keep my mind open to developing new products either to save labor or solve a particular problem.

But I don't usually stop there. When I come up with a new product that I feel a lot of other people could benefit from, I take the extra step. I patent and bring the product to market. It doesn't even have to be a landscaping product.

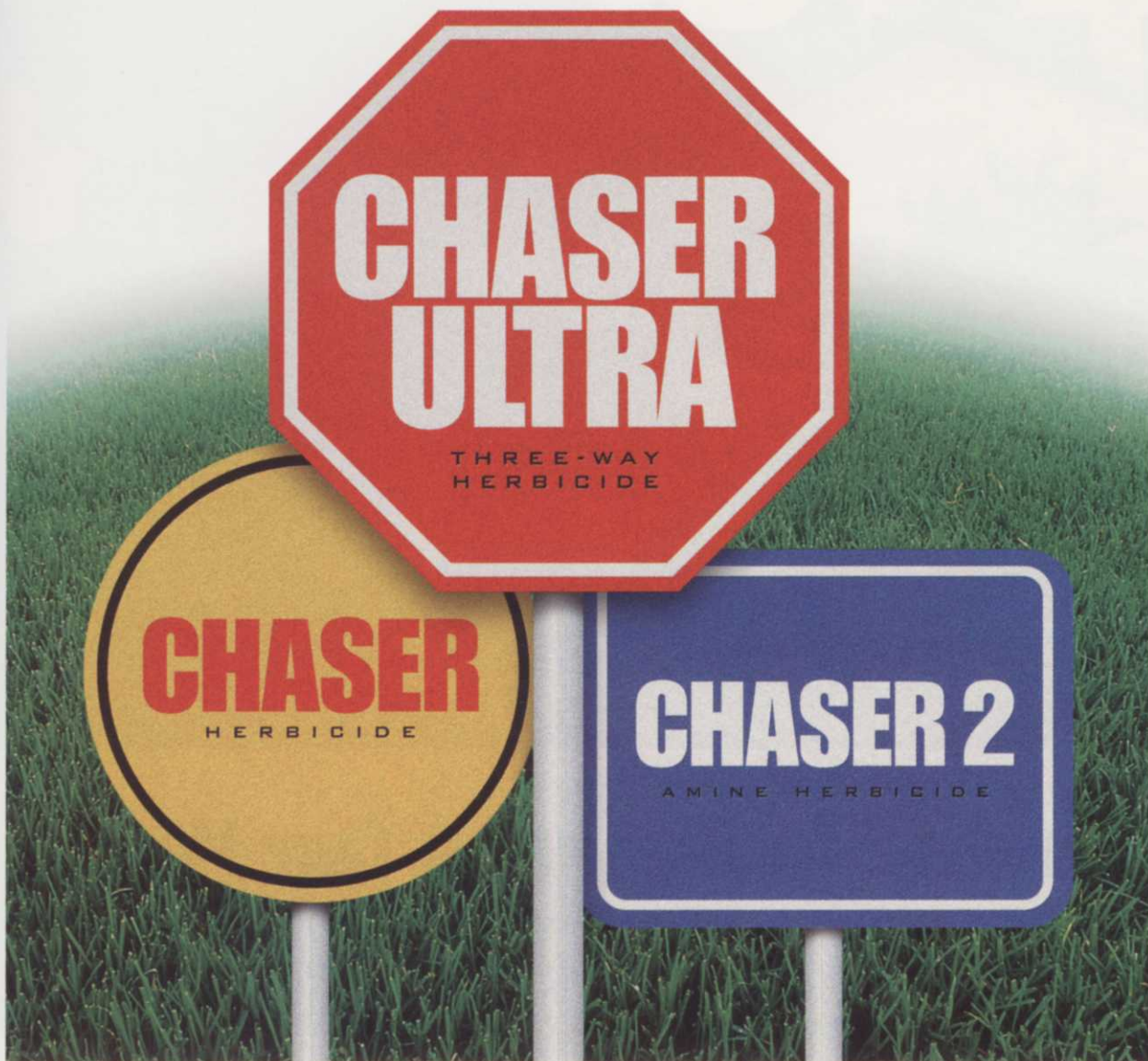
For example, one of my most successful inventions is a product called the Drainbox. I came up with the idea for it when I noticed that homeowners had just two ways to dispose of rooftop drainage, and neither was satisfactory in neighborhoods where the houses were close together. They could let the water flow from downspouts around the foundation of their houses, or direct it away with unsightly pipes or tubing. The houses and landscapes might look nice, but your eyes are always drawn to those pipes. They don't look good.

So I experimented with a system that would direct the water from the downspouts into an underground "drainbox" (www.drainbox.com) away from the house. When I had a system that worked, I obtained a patent and began production.

Most of the other products I've developed have been for the landscape industry, like my first patented product in 1981 called the "Total Landscape Machine." The combination box blade/soil pulverizer/earth remover saved my crew almost 30% time on every soil renovation task — every fourth job we were working on free time. My most recent invention, the "Tongue Twister," is a lawn care equipment trailer that's been generating a lot of interest at equip-

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Author Chumley's "Tongue Twister," a trailer with both front and rear ramps.

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trade shows. The trailer is equipped with both front and rear ramps. A side-mounted hydraulic motor can swivel the trailer 40 degrees in either direction, so you can remove the equipment you need from either the front or rear of the trailer.

I am far from a genius when it comes to inventing — everything I've come up with has been a result of my practical experiences as a landscaper since borrowing a mower and starting my own maintenance business in 1972. I was married, had a new baby, a new house, a new car and not much money, but looking back on it, it was exactly the right thing for me to do.

I've been in the landscape business ever since, growing and adding services to fit the changing marketplace in and around Greenville/Spartanburg, SC.

To all potential inventors, I say this: The landscape industry hasn't been around very long and therefore is still wide open for innovation because everybody is always looking for ways to save time and labor.

This translates into opportunities to de-

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— Bill Chumley is president of Reidville Products International, Reidville, SC. He can be reached at 864/433-0446.

Chumley believed in his "Drainbox" enough to patent it and create its own Web site.

Husqvarna acquires Bluebird

CHARLOTTE, NC — Husqvarna acquired Bluebird International Inc., a manufacturer of commercial dethatchers, aerators, seeders, sod cutters and other turf care equipment.

"We believe that Bluebird will be an excellent complement to the product line currently offered as a result of the acquisition of Yazoo/Kees last October," said Bengt Andersson, CEO of Husqvarna Worldwide.

Husqvarna will continue to market the Bluebird brand through existing Bluebird dealers and its distributor network. Terms of the purchase were not revealed.

Simplot adds Lange-Stegmann

BOISE, ID — With an eye on expansion to the East Coast, Simplot Turf & Horticulture acquired the professional product line from St. Louis-based fertilizer formulator Lange-Stegmann. The deal includes the Lange-Stegmann production facilities for its professional products in the golf, landscape and lawn care markets.

"We're committed to bringing our products and service to the national market," said Bill Whitacre, president of Simplot Turf and Horticulture.

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CLIPPINGS

'Biocalendar' helps plan pesticide applications

BY JAMES E. GUYETTE / CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Landscape managers can help their operations blossom simply by watching the plants grow. Tracking and recording when certain plants bloom can pinpoint the best times to treat for specific insect pests. Dr. Dan Herms, an entomologist at The Ohio State University, has developed what he calls a "biological calendar" that predicts the emergence of tree and shrub pests — and thus the best time to spray — based on when ornamental plants bloom. "By knowing the order that pests occur, managers can plan their pesticide strategies," he says. "The sequence remains remarkably constant from year to year."

The calendar shows, for example, that European pine sawfly eggs hatch at the same time as first bloom in PJM rhododendron, and that gypsy moths hatch at full bloom in Spring Snow crabapple. (Herms' study is specific to his area of Ohio, but similar work has been accomplished in Illinois, Kentucky and Michigan. Check with your local extension office.)

To prepare his study, Herms looked at the blooming times of 86 ornamental plants and matched them with the activity of 40 insects and mites. The result was a list in order of what happens when. It works because the development of plants

Good timing is a benefit of the biological calendar, ... it allows landscape managers to spray when a pest is present — not before or after.

and insects depends on the temperature, and the order of this development is the same every year. "What you see in one year is going to hold in other years, which is why it's important for you to make these observations while you're applying your own controls."

For instance, Herms found that eastern *continued on page 17*

Turfco Direct offers fall money-making kit

As all landscape professionals know, marketing is half the battle when trying to increase profits, no matter what the season. Turfco Direct knows that, which is why the company has come out with the "Fall MoneyMaker Kit," a free package of marketing materials to help landscape professionals sell aeration and overseeding services to their customers.

The "Fall MoneyMaker Kit" includes customer brochures, suitable for mailing and/or use as handouts and door hangers, that describe the benefits of both aeration and overseeding. A "plan of action" explains how to use the materials for best results and how to effectively sell these services to new and existing accounts. Also, there are pricing guidelines to help lawn care firms establish profitable pricing for their own area.

For more information about the "Fall MoneyMaker Kit," call Turfco Direct at 800/679-8201 or visit www.turfco.com.

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tent caterpillar eggs hatch under particular temperature conditions. The date varied from March 28 in a warm spring to April 4 in a cooler one, but it always coincided with full bloom in Cornelian cherry dogwood, which also occurred at the same time.

Other examples are holly leafminers, emerging at full bloom in Amelanchier 'Regent'; and bronze birch borers, appearing when black locust blossoms peak.

Until now, bronze birch borers' emergence has been especially hard to forecast. "We found that it can be accurately predicted simply by watching black locusts bloom along the highway," Herms explains. "When black locusts begin to bloom, that's when you need to make an insecticide application for bronze birch borer."

Timing helps

Good timing is a benefit of the biological calendar, he observes. Instead of relying on the date or a schedule of regular applications, landscape managers can spray when a pest is present — not before or after. Pesticide use is cut, yet control is the same or better. This is especially true for hard-to-detect pests and those susceptible only at certain stages.

The end result is fewer, yet more effective, pesticide applications, according to Herms, who adds that you can create your own bio calendars specific to your climate and business operations.

The bio calendar can benefit an IPM program by making short-lived pesticides such as insecticidal soaps and oils more effective through timely application. Pesticides with longer, residual effect-types might not be needed.

Herms, a professor at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center in Wooster, based his bio calendar on three years of observations in the center's Secret Arboretum. He is currently preparing a similar bio calendar relating to weed control, which should be ready in three years.

Herms believes you can design a bio calendar with just a year's worth of observa-

tions by using existing field techniques. "You're keeping records on the pesticide applications anyway, and you can just add another space on the form to list the plants that are in bloom," Herms explains.

"If your timing is correct (during a specific battle), you can make that same application in following years," for your firm's bio calendar. "Follow-up monitoring is critical."

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Becker Underwood acquires MicroBio

AMES, IA — Becker Underwood, Inc. acquired UK-based MicroBio Group Ltd. The acquisition includes the exclusive production and marketing rights of all MicroBio biofertilizers and biopesticides for the professional turf, agriculture and greenhouse markets.

Remember your absentee ballot

INDIANAPOLIS, IN — This year's Green Industry Expo is set for Nov. 3-7 at the Indiana Convention Center. Tuesday, Nov. 7, is election day, so if you're planning to attend the GIE and intend to vote, consider voting by absentee ballot (at least two weeks in advance). You can find out your state's voting requirements by calling your local election official.

Legionnaires outbreak traced to soil

ATLANTA, GA — Two women from Oregon and Washington are believed to have contracted Legionnaires' disease from potting soil in the first such cases ever reported in the U.S. A California man's death from Legionnaires' in May may also have been connected to potting soil, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. Potting soil has previously been blamed for outbreaks in Australia and Japan.

Legionnaires' disease is a form of pneumonia that was discovered after an outbreak that killed 34 people at a 1976 American Legion convention at a Philadelphia hotel.

RISE predicts uphill struggle

WASHINGTON — Pesticide activists' attacks on the use of specialty chemicals will become more of a critical issue for professional applicators, predicted Allen James, president of RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment), at the association's annual meeting here last month.

"The intent is not just to attack our industry, but to destroy it," James said. He named various conflict areas at the local, state and federal levels.

The growing movement to include pesticide use as a key issue in children's health leaves both pesticide producers and applicators vulnerable, James noted. "They have found the one area where we're the most vulnerable."

While the specialty chemical manufacturing industry backs its case with comprehensive research, the movement is having success, especially with regulators, said RISE staffers.

Rampant myths

Fred Langley, RISE manager of state government relations, noted key initia-

tives to limit or eliminate pesticide use in Massachusetts, California, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, New York, Minnesota and New Mexico, which either passed or were defeated narrowly.

Expect more pressure or local or statewide pesticide regulation in the future, Langley predicted. The groups are active, networked and at many levels, and industry data means very little to them. "Myths are rampant at those levels," he said.

David Crow, legislative contact for RISE, predicted a dramatic turn for the worst if the Gore-Lieberman party wins the November election. Sen. Barbara Boxer's (D, CA) many efforts to limit pesticides on federal properties will continue, he predicted, along with several other Administration and legislative efforts.

All RISE staffers called for a strong defense of pesticide testing and safety, plus education on the destructive and unhealthy effects of pests.

—Sue Gibson

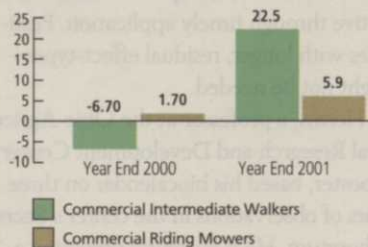
CLIPPINGS

Commercial mower sales to remain strong, says OPEI

ALEXANDRIA, VA — The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) predicts that while shipments of all consumer product categories will be slightly down in 2001 due to rising mortgage rates and declining housing starts and resales, commercial mower sales will continue to be strong.

For commercial turf equipment, intermediate size walk-behinds were down slightly in 2000 but OPEI predicts an increase in 2001. Commercial riding rotary turf mowers continued their strong growth in 2000, and OPEI says those sales will continue to be strong in 2001.

For the 2000 model year, consumer walk-behinds lost .4% to 5,901,846 units, while all riding units reached 1,662,836 units, a 3.2% increase.





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John Deere stores feature new look

DAVENPORT, IA — Bright showroom lighting. Streamlined display shelves. New signage. Colorful interiors. These elements are all part of the new John Deere "superstore" designed to enhance the buying atmosphere for customers.

River Valley Turf, a John Deere dealership for commercial and lawn and garden equipment, was one of the first new "superstores" to be built from the ground up. The idea for the new design, however, was conceived in 1998 as part of the Image 2000 program, which included in-store

merchandising plans and specific design instructions.

"We'd like to have all the stores like this, but different areas wouldn't lend themselves well to it," said Randy Davis, manager of retail marketing. "Our dealers are independent, so how each store is made is up to them."

It's no wonder Davis would like to see all stores take on the new, 21st century retail design. Sales are apparently up. "We have noticed considerable sales increases in certain products — particularly handheld ones."



Bright showroom lighting, new signage and colorful interiors are elements of the new John Deere "superstores."

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