

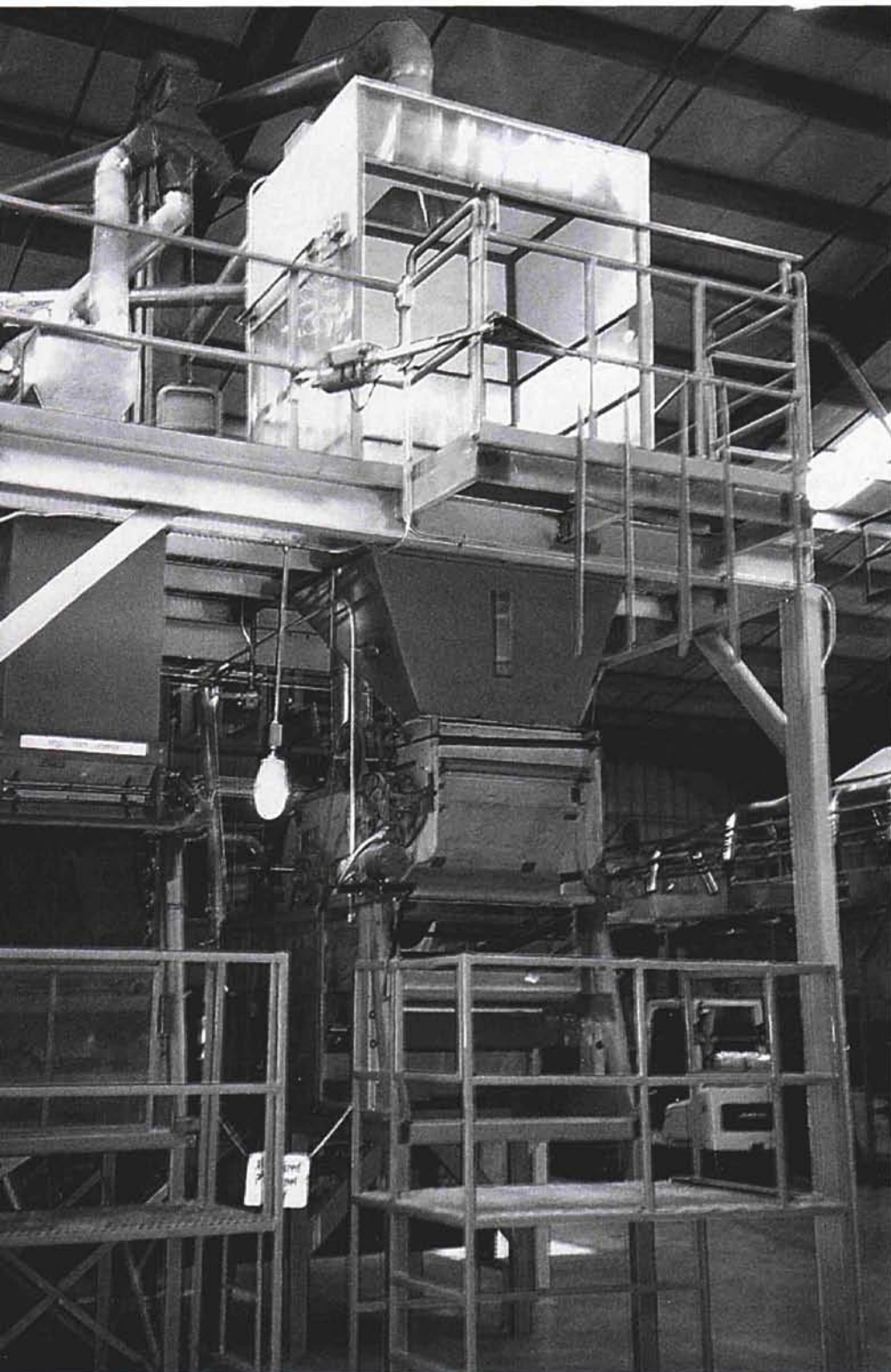
# Impressions of the Medalist America Field Day

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In June, I joined more than 200 individuals interested in turf seed development and use at the Medalist America Field Day in Post Falls, Idaho. It was a high-quality event; we spent a day touring research labs and greenhouses, viewing seed production and storage facilities, and studying hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of turf plots. I came away from the day with several impressions.

First, the seed business is huge and getting bigger. We viewed seed cleaning equipment and storage facilities with a capacity of more than 20,000,000 pounds of cleaned seed. As I understand it, that's approximately a year's crop for Medalist. Emerging markets for turf seed in Asia and Eastern Europe are expanding the demand for the U.S. product.

Second, if you're a fan of Kentucky bluegrass fairways and lament their passing, there is hope. It appears as though there is great interest in Kentucky bluegrasses for golf course fairway use throughout the U.S. We viewed many plots of 1/2-inch tall bluegrasses, several of which show great promise. Will Kentucky bluegrasses become more widely used in the future? Probably not at 1/2 inch in Illinois, but high-quality Kentucky bluegrass fairways of 3/4 to 1 inch appear very realistic.



*Photo by Fred Opperman*

*Seed cleaning/processing machine.*

*(continued on page 18)*

### Impressions of the Medalist...

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Finally, endophytic creeping bentgrasses and Kentucky bluegrasses may become a reality. For a number of years, endophytic fescues and ryegrasses have been available so that users can take advantage of the insect resistances, and perhaps the environmental stress tolerance that these species enjoy. At the field day, we saw endophytic creeping bentgrasses growing in the field and endophytic Kentucky bluegrasses in the lab. It remains to be seen if researchers can develop endophytic strains of these species that have desirable turf quality, but current work certainly shows potential.

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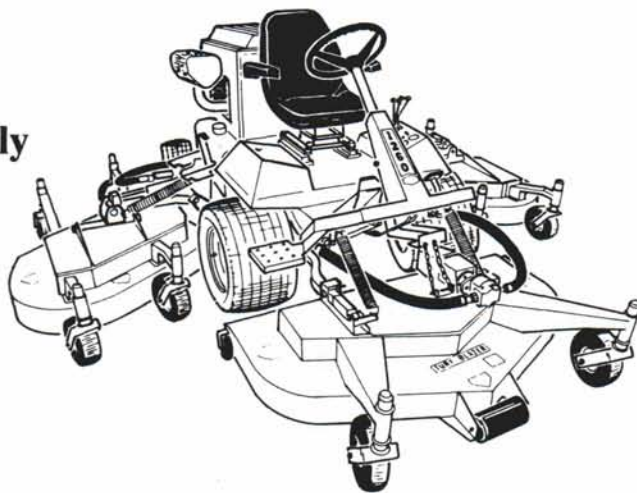
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Over the past fifty years, the turf industry has made great strides in developing new pest control products and equipment that has allowed steady improvement in turf quality over that time. However, neither of these industries have surpassed the accomplishments of the turf seed industry. Currently available turfgrasses are probably the best ever marketed. With the research and development work of turf companies like Medalist America, the movement towards better and better quality turf appears as though it will continue. ■

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