

Pennington, Cactus officials hail new cleaning technology

By Lynn Tilton

ROLL, Ariz. — Pennington Seed Inc. and its associated company, Cactus Seed, which is headquartered here, have two secrets they are keeping under wraps—a unique seed huller and a new type of coating machine for which they are seeking a patent.

“We’re able to condition seed two-and-a-half times quicker than traditional systems,” said Andy Hancock, project manager at Cactus.

Hancock added that the company’s huller is “gentler on the seed” and has “less abrasion than older hullers.”

“We have a couple of machines that no one else has, and they’re not part of any tour we give,” he said.

Along with their hulling and coating machines, Pennington and Cactus are having a production model of a new seed cleaner built in Sweden. That kind of cleaner has only been used in Europe, according to President Brooks Pennington.

Pennington said his company is seeking a patent on the coating machine and does not intend to make either it or the huller available in the marketplace.

Cactus’s seed coating includes a

fungicide and growth hormone and has bird and insect repellency. It adds 30 percent to weight of bare seed, compared with an industry average of 50 to 60 percent. Cactus got that technology from Pennington, which has the only other two machines.

Pennington said the entire conditioning process is quicker because it is “in-line” rather than “batch” technology. “The seed goes off the cleaners right into coating,” and is not stored between processes, he said.

Hancock added: “We’re faster because... we’ve learned, from older companies’ mistakes, how to set up the equipment. Our machine works on the same principle as the older style, but is much faster.”

Pennington and Cactus harvest a combined 5.5 million pounds of Bermudagrass annually, more than 40 percent of the U.S. industry’s total.

Pennington said the two made a perfect match. “We were looking for a constant good supply of Bermuda seed and they were looking for a market,” he said. “Cactus is

the largest processor of Bermuda seed in the U.S. and Pennington is the largest merchandiser.”

The Cactus plant cleans, hulls and coats both firms’ Bermudagrass, Pennington said.

Hancock said the speed of the speeded-up conditioning allows growers, for the first time, to choose when to market their seed. In addition, they can use their conditioned seed as a bargaining chip when they meet with their bankers, he said.

When Pennington, of Madison,

Ga., purchased Cactus in 1987, Pennington brought its coating technology to Cactus, which had one coating unit built.

One official said the cost of conditioners has deterred seed companies from buying newer models. Companies growing other types of seed have as much as nine times the amount of seed to prepare as the Bermudagrass grown by Pennington and Cactus. Yet the \$750,000 cost of new cleaning, hulling and coating machines is a major deterrent.

Major bluegrass seed growers

Allwestern Seeds, Inc., P.O. Box 1688, Albany, OR 97321; 503-926-9329; Circle #230.

Ampac Seed Co., P.O. Box 651, 32727 Hwy. 99E, Tangent, OR 97389; 503-928-1651. Circle #231.

Balden Seed Brokerage, 1675 E. Seminole, Suite K-600, Springfield, MO 65804; 417-881-6669; Circle #232.

E.F. Burlingham & Sons, P.O. Box 217, Forest Grove, OR 97116; 503-357-2141; Circle #233.

Cascade International Seed Co., P.O. Box 4230, Salem, OR 97302; 503-364-4689; Circle #234.

Casterline & Sons Seeds Inc., P.O. Box 1377, Dodge City, KS 67801; 800-444-4137; Circle #235.

CENEX Full Circle, P.O. Box 11065, Spokane, WA 99211; 509-534-0479; Circle #236.

Dennis Combs Ag Consultants, 587 Third St., Lake Oswego, OR 97035; 503-636-2600; Circle #237.

Commercial Seed Exchange, Ltd., 4833 River Rd. N., Salem, OR 97303; 503-390-6600; Circle #238.

Curtis & Curtis, Inc., Start Rt., Box 8A, Clovis, NM 88101; 505-762-4759; Circle #239.

Robert Dye Seed Ranch, Rte. 1, Box 99, Pomeroy, WA 99347; 509-843-3591; Circle #240.

Ellis Bros. Seed Inc., Rte. 1, Box 310, Centre, Ala. 35960; 205-927-5561; Circle #241.

Heart Seed Co., P.O. Box 313, Spokane, WA 99012; 509-291-3605; Circle #242.

Jacklin Seed Co., W. 5300 Jacklin Ave., Post Falls, ID 83854; 208-773-7581; Circle #243.

Landiseed International, 5775 S.W. Jean Rd., Suite 203, Lake Oswego, OR 97035; 503-635-3766; Circle #244.

Lofts, Inc., P.O. Box 146, Bound Brook, NJ 08805; 201-356-8700; Circle #245.

Norfarm Seeds, Inc., P.O. Box 725, Bemidji, MN 56601; 218-751-8617; Circle #246.

Normarc, Inc., P.O. Box 238, Tangent, OR 97389; 503-926-5801; Circle #247.

Pennington Seed Co., 265 Tangent St., Lebanon, OR 97355; 503-451-5261; Circle #248.

Peterson Seed Co., Box 346, Savage, MN 55378; 612-445-2606; Circle #249.

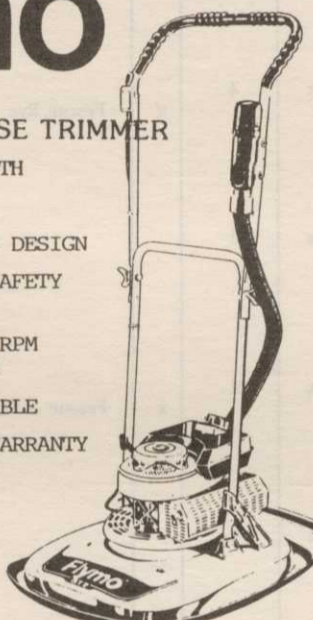
O.M. Scott & Sons Co., Marysville, OH 43041; 513-644-0011; Circle #250.

Seeds Inc., Rte. 2, Box 28, Worley, ID 83876; 509-291-5411; Circle #251.

Seed Research of Oregon, 644 S.W. 13th St., Corvallis, OR 97333; 503-758-5305; Circle #252.

Turf Merchants, Inc., 33390 Tangent Loop, Tangent, OR 97389; 503-926-8649; Circle #253.

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