

Briefs



SOD PRODUCERS FUND RESEARCH

ROLLING MEADOWS, Ill. — The American Sod Producers Association has provided \$21,000 to researchers at the universities of Florida, Maryland, Nebraska and Illinois.

ASPA's Research Committee reviewed 24 projects from 19 researchers at 14 institutions before reaching its decision.

Grants went to Dr. P. Busey of the University of Florida for his study on "High Impact Turf: Design Specification for Natural Sodded Parking Areas"; Dr. M.C. Carroll of the University of Maryland for his study entitled "Sediment Capture by Materials Used To Line Construction Site Waterways."

Also, Dr. G.L. Horst of the University of Nebraska for research on "Water Use on Turfgrasses and Ground Covers in Conventional and Xeriscape Conditions"; and Dr. H.T. Wilkinson of the University of Illinois for work on "An Integrated Biological Control Program To Reduce Fungicides Used for Control of Lawn Diseases."

Funding for the grants came from the organization's general revenues and a \$5,000 donation from Ciba-Geigy Turf and Ornamental Group.



Steve Edwards, right, of Pro Turf in St. Louis, presents Wesley Mathany the Superintendent of the Year Award.

MATHANY SUPER OF THE YEAR

Wesley L. Mathany, superintendent at Glen Echo Country Club in St. Louis, has been named Superintendent of the Year by Seed Research of Oregon.

The company also presented Dr. Milt Engelke of Texas A&M University with its annual Excellence in Research Award, given to a leading turfgrass research "whose work deals with modern-day solutions to modern-day problems."

Mathany "has consistently shown himself to be a leader and innovator in golf course management," Seed Research of Oregon President Mike Robinson said. "He has constantly been at the forefront of trying new ideas on turf management for the tough transitional region of St. Louis."

Mathany is president of the Missouri Valley Turfgrass Association and vice president of the Mississippi Valley Golf Course Superintendents Association.

Engelke was cited for contributing to improvements in turfgrasses, most recently buffalograss, creeping bentgrass and Zoysiagrass.

Grads' job market good, not great

By Peter Blais

College graduates have fewer superintendent job openings to select from than a year ago, although most should still find employment, according to faculty members at turf management schools.

"The job market isn't as good this year," said Michigan State University Professor John 'Trey' Rogers. "There may be fewer openings because superintendents haven't moved from course to course as much.

Maybe employers are being more conservative. Or they were worried about the Gulf war and the economy. I'm not sure.

"But all our graduates should get jobs. Last year there were two openings for every student. This year it's more like a one-to-one ratio."

Texas A&M's Richard Doble also noted fewer superintendents changing jobs throughout the South.

"I suspect it had something to do with all

the winter kill last year," the extension turfgrass specialist said. "Usually a superintendent loses his job if his greens die. But everyone's greens died last year, so they didn't blame the superintendent. If you fired the superintendent there was no one around to fix the greens."

Lake City (Fla.) Community College Professor John Piersol noticed a drop-off in job openings, even in the country's

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Mechanics are in high demand

Job openings for beginning assistant superintendents may be down, but not so for golf course mechanics, according to Lake City (Fla.) College Professor John Piersol.

"I've gotten calls from Arizona and South Dakota in the last week looking for mechanics. They've looked everywhere," said the chairman of the school's Division of Golf Course Operations, which includes a one-year certificate program in equipment and shop operations for aspiring mechanics.

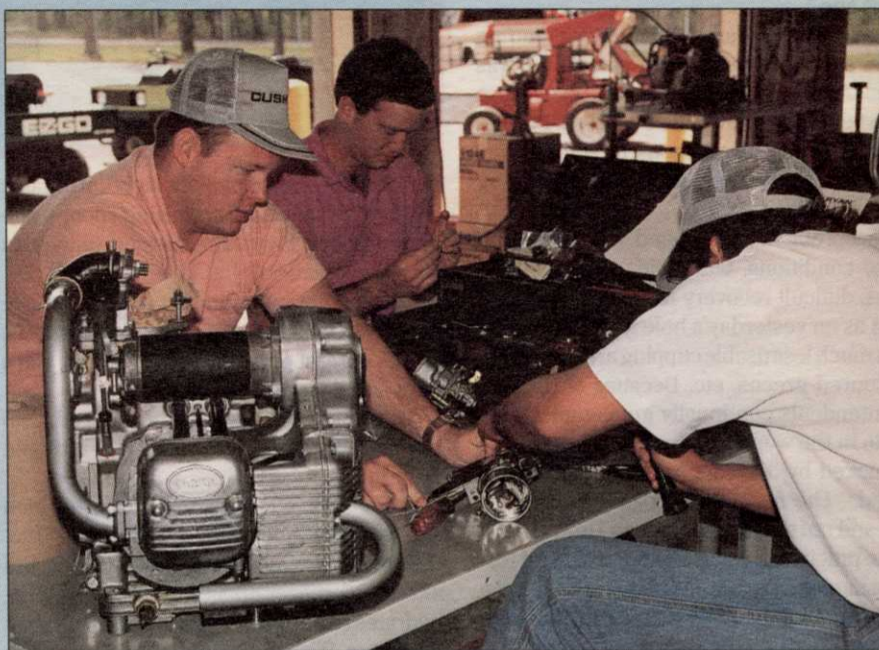
"We have just seven people graduating from the program this year. If we had 50 we could easily place them in jobs right away."

And the pay isn't bad. Lake City graduates start at \$7 to \$10 an hour and are usually in the \$25,000- to \$35,000-per-year range within a couple of years, Piersol said. Pretty good for someone with a high school degree or GED and a one-year certificate.

So why aren't students knocking down Lake City's doors to get into the golf course mechanics program?

"High school students have never heard of the job," Piersol said. "Students who become mechanics usually don't play golf, so they don't know what's available. When they hear the title, they think about lawn mower and golf car repair.

"There's a real misunderstanding of what



Students get hands-on training at Lake City (Fla.) Community College.

golf course mechanics do. Guidance counselors think all they do is grease equipment. But that's far from the truth.

"Golf course mechanics are often responsible for \$500,000 or more in equipment. They're not grease monkeys. They're turf equipment managers. They set up shops, train people, develop preventive maintenance programs and work with computerized equipment.

"A properly trained head mechanic warrants \$35,000 to \$40,000 a year. He can save a course at least that much. Most superintendents will tell you the mechanic is their right-hand man."

Lake City's program is 18 years old. Four instructors handle the class work and have access to \$500,000 of state-of-the-art turf equipment donated by golf industry suppliers. College level reading, writing and mathematics courses are not required.

"The program concentrates solely on aspects of golf course mechanics," Piersol said.

"Among our classes are a three-credit course on sharpening and grinding mowing reels, one on preventive maintenance and another on setting up the maintenance shop."

In search of the perfect superintendent

Trent Jones joins with Faubel, Payne in new enterprise

By Peter Blais

Three of the best-known names in the golf course management business have formed a worldwide executive search firm for superintendents.

Architect Robert Trent Jones Sr., Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Immediate Past President Gerald Faubel and Michigan State University Professor Emeritus Ken Payne recently founded Executive Golf Search, Inc.

The firm will deal primarily with superintendents but may eventually branch into the club professional and general manager areas, Faubel said.

One of the company's primary services will be helping courses define their needs regarding the type of superintendent they want. Conversations with club officials and follow-up questionnaires will be used to determine those needs, Faubel said.

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"Some superintendents are strong in construction and others in maintenance," he added. "It's important clubs recognize what is entailed in hiring a superintendent who can meet their needs regarding communications, technology and the environment.

"I've always felt if a club first identified its needs before hiring a superintendent it would have greater success in keeping that individual."

Faubel said the firm will stress placing GCSAA-certified superintendents.

"We will closely adhere to the GCSAA code of ethics," the former association president said. "If a club has a superintendent we're interested in recruiting, we'll notify the club properly. We don't want anyone treated unfairly."

Faubel said the firm's strength lies in its founders' international experience and contacts in the course maintenance industry.

Limited placement services are currently available for superintendents, according to Faubel. The GCSAA's Employment Referral Service lists job openings and salaries. At

least two other placement firms deal with golf industry personnel, Faubel said.

"But no one has the in-depth experience we do with superintendents," Faubel said. "Other firms deal with architects, builders and club managers, too. We'll be just superintendents for now."

Executive Golf Search will help clubs develop salary, benefit and educational packages while assisting in contract negotiations to help recruit the best superintendents available, Faubel said.

"Our goal is to meet and identify highly qualified individuals and attempt to reward them for their service to golf with the best possible jobs," Faubel said. "We have some fantastic people in the golf course maintenance field who are ready to move on to clubs. Often, those clubs don't realize how important the superintendent is, especially with the environmental situation today.

"We want to have an impact on the industry by having employers realize how important the superintendent is to their operations. It's a win-win situation for everyone."

The company is located at 699 Westchester, Saginaw, Mich. 48603.

Proposed water tax would put squeeze on Florida courses

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primarily at the agricultural industry, the state's biggest water user, but will cost most Florida courses an additional \$20,000 to \$30,000 annually.

Supporters hope to have the tax in place by July 1992. But that is unlikely since the bill was still in the committee process and wasn't expected to be ready for a full legislative vote before the Legislature adjourned in April or early May, said Bob Brantley, executive director of the Florida Golf Council, the trade association representing the state's \$5.5-billion golf industry.

The Legislature could take it up if a special session is called this fall, although it probably won't be addressed again until the next regular session begins in March 1992, he added.

Still, like most states, Florida is in a financial squeeze. The bill would raise money and the Legislature could try to rush it through, Brantley said.

"We're opposed to the bill as it stands," he said. "The bill's supporters hope the tax will encourage golf courses to speed up the process of hooking into reclaimed water systems.

"We want to do everything we

"We want to do everything we can to help conserve water. But we don't want the state mandating that everyone use reclaimed water when there isn't enough available."

— Bob Brantley

can to help conserve water. But we don't want the state mandating that everyone use reclaimed water when there isn't enough available. It's not fair to begin taxing courses if the reclaimed water isn't there."

The Florida Golf Council favors further study on the availability of effluent use before imposing any new taxes. At the very least, Brantley expects the state's four water districts to soon begin requiring courses to use reclaimed water where it's available. A new tax, while not a certainty, is a definite possibility, he added.

Finch and Brantley fear any new tax would not stay at 10 cents for very long.

"I was in the Legislature for eight years and served as lieutenant governor for four," Brantley said. "In my experience, it's very rare that a tax is ever replaced or reduced. Once it's on the books, the only way it usually goes is up."

The Florida Golf Council and the regional superintendent, sod grower and athletic field associations are committed to working with the state to find an equitable way to conserve water, agreed Brantley and Young.

"We need to conserve water," Young said. "We don't oppose a tax as long as it is equitable."

Making the tax equitable requires taking a course's seasonal watering needs into consideration, Young said. Monthly allotments should be higher when courses traditionally need more water — during the summer, while overseeding or when growing in a new course — and lower when the need drops, he said.

The state's four water districts and the Legislature have been very cooperative, Young said.

"We've met many times. It's a foregone conclusion we must consider something like this to con-

serve water," the FTA official said.

Florida's water shortage resulted from several successive drought years.

Heavy spring rains might help Orlando, Young's home area, reach its average 60-inch annual rainfall this year, he said. But if the rains stay away this summer, as they have the past several years, the spring downpours will be of little value, he added.

"The weather patterns have changed the last few years," Young said. "The timing isn't what it used to be. We haven't been getting the

rain when we need it."

Non-golfers are generally unsympathetic to the turf industry. Many view it as wasteful in times of drought, Young said.

"But the golf industry produces a lot of revenue. People are starting to realize the importance of golf to the state. We want to be viewed as part of the solution, not the problem," Young said.

Toward that end, the FTA is helping finance a 31,000-square-foot, \$700,000 environmental research facility being built at the University of Florida, Young said.



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Graduates: One job apiece, instead of two

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busiest golf development state.

"It's a little slower than last year," said the chairman of the school's Division of Golf Course Operations. "But I'm sure we'll have 100-percent placement, just like the past 24 years."

Piersol blamed the slowdown on the effects of the savings and loan crisis on new course construction and negative attitudes about the economy.

"When people are uncertain about the economy, they may hold off hiring someone right away," he said. "But the sluggish economy is overemphasized. Overall, the golf industry is in good shape."

The only students having problems finding jobs are those restricting themselves to certain geographic areas, according to Pennsylvania State University's Don Waddington.

"There seem to be more job openings for assistant superintendents in eastern than western Pennsylvania," the soil sciences professor said. "Those limiting themselves to a certain locality are at a disadvantage. They are much better off if they can remain mobile."

While more 1990 Lake City graduates (17 of 42) wound up in Florida than any other state, many found jobs in Georgia and the Carolinas, Piersol said.

"We have graduates working in Finland, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia. It's hard to go anywhere in the world without running into a Lake City grad," he said.

Educators report starting salaries for novice assistant superintendents remain in the \$18,000 to \$28,000 range, with a full range of benefits from health insurance to vehicle allowances.

"Students aren't even looking at jobs without those types of benefits," Rogers said.

The recession hasn't slowed the

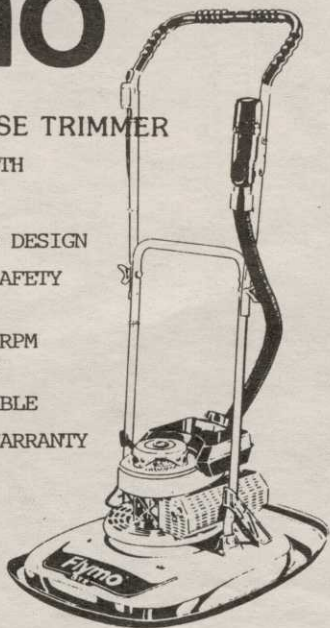
pipeline flowing into turf management programs. Michigan State, Penn State, Lake City and Texas A&M all reported waiting lists to enroll in their turfgrass programs.

"We limit enrollment in our two-year program to 40 students," said MSU's Rogers. "We have 85 applicants wanting to get in. That's even a little higher than last year."

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