

Industry takes an interest in composting

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because they occupy both ends of the composting spectrum. They create large amounts of grass clippings and brush — and when it comes to composted mulch and fertilizer, golf courses are potential users too.

"Every superintendent with a little bit of land should be composting on the golf course," according to Dr. Doug Hawes, a Dallas-based turf consultant. "Many golf courses don't have the available land, so industry can compost and sell it back to the courses. There's certainly a market there."

Hawes — formerly a consulting agronomist to the USGA Green Section, Mid-Continent Region — believes composting is more than responsible waste reduction. In addition to indicating its disease-suppression capabilities, studies have shown compost to be helpful in snow mold reduction.

"Down the road, it may be an alternative to mercury," said Hawes.

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According to 1990 figures supplied by the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA), lawn and yard waste constitutes 20 percent of all solid waste; and grass clippings constitute a full 50 percent of the lawn and yard waste. Twelve states have effectively banned the landfilling of yard trimmings; and

expect that number to double before the year 2,000.

Enter companies like McMaster, Scott and Pennington, who drive the "debris" away and recycle it into organic mulch, peat and manure products. McMaster has been in the composting business

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— J.D. McMaster

nearly 30 years.

"I'm 62 years old," he said. "And being born in 1930, you don't throw nothin' away. If you put your mind to it, you can put almost anything back into the soil."

The rice hull — the husk of a rice grain — was considered useless by the commercial rice industry before McMaster came along. Now his rice hull product routinely replaces peat in the soil-mixing process.

According to Brooks Pennington, president of Pennington Seed, aggressive, industrial composting is a win-win situation. "We've been going to municipalities and saying, 'Hey, you're hauling grass clippings and leaves to your landfill. We can take that and put it to use.'

"It's unique," Pennington continued, "because it serves two useful purposes. It's helping preserve landfill space, which is at a premium these days, and at the same time producing organic fertilizers and mulch products."

At this point, towns are paying Scott and Pennington to take the "waste" off their hands. But Gregory believes the situation will reverse itself if companies can create a viable market for composted mulch and manure.

Landfill bans are beginning to

put the burden back on the waste producers. Gregory, Hawes and McMaster all said golf courses should explore the possibilities of creating their own composting operations.

"One thing you have to remember," said Gregory. "Composting is waste reduction. And I believe golf courses could take care of their fairway and rough fertilizing with their own trimmings.

"Courses should start a compost heap this spring. It would be ready by next year."

Jake earns Governor's Award

RACINE, Wis. — The Jacobsen Division of Textron has won the 1992 Wisconsin Governor's Award for Excellence in Hazardous Waste Reduction.

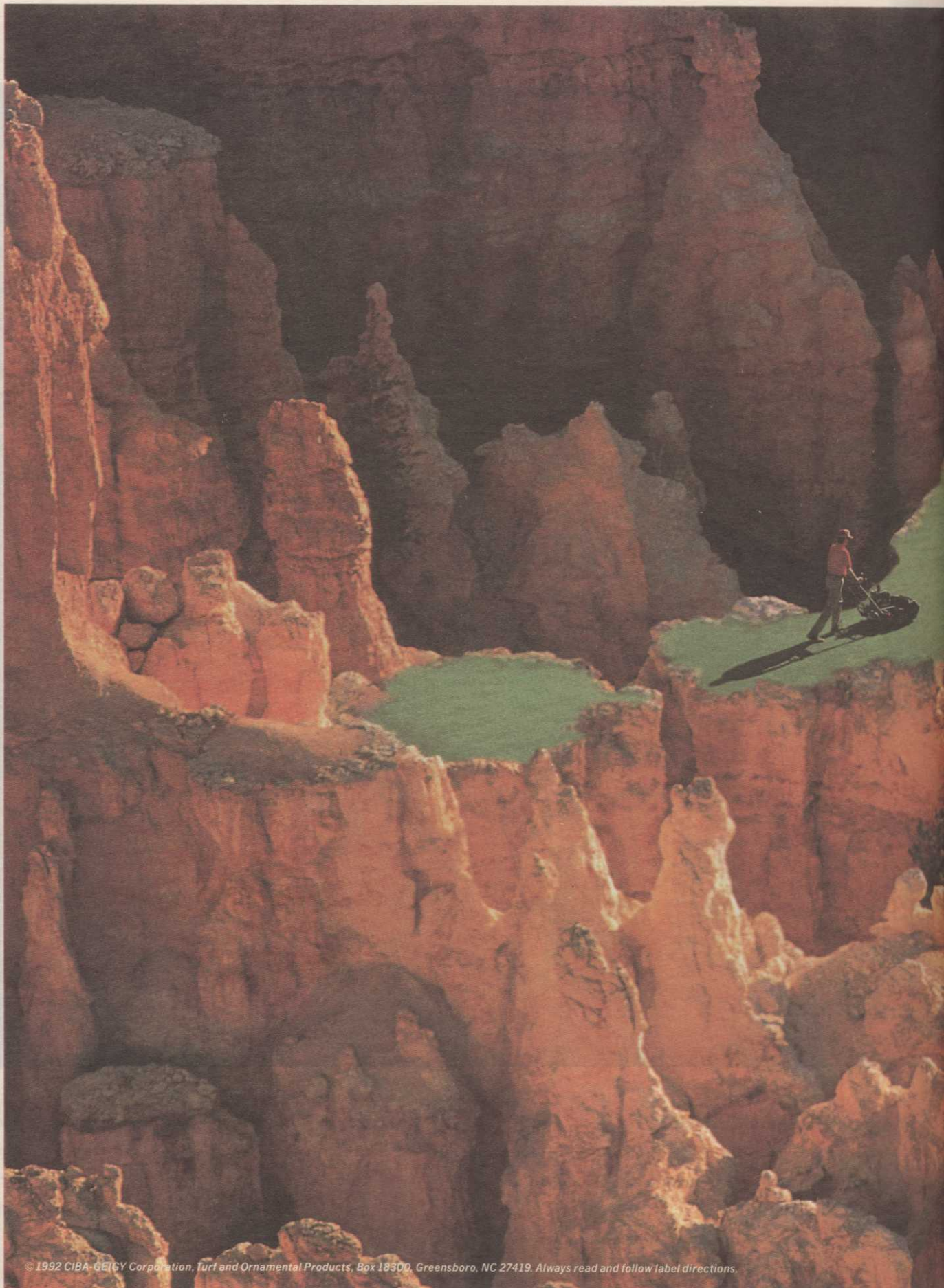
The turf equipment manufacturer earned the honor by reducing the amount of hazardous waste it generates by 75 percent since 1988.

Jacobsen achieved this substantial waste reduction by improving its performance in

several environmental areas. Among them, the firm installed a still to recycle and reuse cleaning solvents.

Jacobsen also converted its system for preparing undercoating and painting parts to use environmentally safe cleaners, sealers and paint formulations.

In addition, water-based cleaning solutions replaced mineral spirit solutions in the plant's part washers.



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