

BRIEFS

Sod industry booms; inventory levels fall

By HAL PHILLIPS

Need Bermudagrass sod this spring? Take a number.

Southeastern sod producers are reporting their lowest inventories in some time, as a combination of strong residential sales, the Atlanta Olympic Games, winter kill and booming new course construction have resulted in shortages of Bermuda and zoysiagrass stocks.

Golf accounts for approximately one-tenth of the nation's sod purchases, according to Doug Fender, executive director of Turf Producers International. However, the growing popularity of sodding new courses, in addition to the harsh winter, has contributed to an upward swing in golf's use of sod.

"Only eight to 10 percent of sod use goes to golf, but that figure has doubled in the last three to four years," Fender explained. "It's a remarkable phenomenon but we have to keep it in perspective. If we doubled our residential business, we couldn't meet demand. Golf is a smaller scale but there's no denying golf is on a stronger use path."

Added Aaron McWhorter of North Georgia Turf: "The sod industry is at its peak. We may never see the demand for our product at these levels again for a long time."

Of the 21 sod producers polled by the Georgia Sod Producers Association, 70 percent described their inventory levels



of Bermudagrass at fair to poor. Zoysia levels are no better. Of the eight farms in Georgia growing zoysia, only two reported adequate levels.

Despite the shortage, only 35 percent of the sod producers anticipated a price increase, while 65 percent expressed hope that prices will remain steady.

"New golf courses have really increased their purchase of sod," said Don Moore, vice president of Tifton Turf Farms. "In the past, only 50,000

square feet of sod or less was used at a new course, around ditches and swales. Now, many new courses purchase 1 million to 1.5 million square feet for an 18-hole course. Developers want to protect themselves from erosion losses during gully-washers and the sod is the fastest method to cover the exposed soil."

The general rule of thumb: Architects factor in 10 acres of sod for bunker

Continued on page 56



LEWIS TO LEAD VERMEER MARKETING

PELLA, Iowa — Jeffrey Lewis has been hired as managing director of international marketing for Vermeer Manufacturing Co. Lewis' primary responsibility for Vermeer will be directing the company's long-term global strategic plans to gain market export leadership and competitive advantages worldwide. He will head Vermeer's International Department that coordinates sales through 66 locally operated sales and service dealerships located on every continent except Antarctica.



Jeffrey Lewis

E-Z-GO TAPS SUNDBERG

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Larry H. Sundberg has been named director of specialty vehicles at E-Z-GO Textron. Sundberg will oversee E-Z-GO's specialty vehicle sales, new product development and distributor/dealer management. Sundberg was previously with Club Car for eight years, where he was national sales manager for distributor sales and, most recently, director of western zone sales.

GASPERINI TO MANAGE GOWAN SALES

YUMA, Ariz. — Gowan Co. has announced the appointment of Frank Gasperini as turf and ornamental manager for the United States and Canada. Gasperini will manage the sales and marketing effort for Gowan's Turf and Ornamental product line including Tupersan, Betasan herbicides, Hexagon miticide and Metasystox R-2 insecticide. Gasperini comes to Gowan with more than 15 years in sales.

BROUILLETTE JOINS SEI

MONTPELIER, Vt. — Michael C. Brouillette has joined Stone Environmental, Inc. (SEI) as staff scientist/GIS specialist. With expertise in Geographic Information Systems (GIS), he will assist senior scientists and project managers in water-quality and land-use modeling investigations and data-management issues related to GIS. Prior to joining SEI, Brouillette worked as GIS database manager in the Research Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory in Hanover, N.H.



Michael Brouillette



NEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Providing crew members with adequate protection on the course is a chief concern to golf course superintendents and crew members alike. Par Aide's new Safety Net offers protection from the hazards of working in the line of play. Finished with a universal "Safety Yellow" border, the 6-foot-by-6-foot net folds for easy transport. Sturdy, finished steel "step-in" stakes grip a full 12 inches into turf. Aluminum uprights hold net in place for dependable, wind-resistant stability. While the new portable safety net provides reliable protection, Par Aide recommends crew members abide by safety standards and wear protective helmets at all times. For further information about this product, contact Par Aide Products Co. at 612-779-9851. For more accessory coverage, see pages 32-35. For more new products, see page 58.

Host resigns Scotts presidency; Seitz assumes former post

MARYSVILLE, Ohio — The board of directors at The Scotts Co. has announced the resignation of its president and chief executive officer, Theodore J. Host, who also resigned his seat on the board of directors. Tadd C. Seitz, the current chairman of the board and the company's chief executive officer from 1983 until April 1995, has agreed to resume his former posts as CEO and president on an interim basis while the board conducts a search for a new CEO.

Seitz first became CEO of The Scotts Co. in 1983 and guided it through a management buyout from ITT Corp. in 1986. He also led the firm through its initial public offering in 1992 and through acquisitions in 1989, 1993, and 1994 of Hyponex, Republic, and Grace-Sierra, respectively, and the 1995 merger with Miracle-Gro.

"Tadd Seitz has been a stabilizing force for the company since 1983," said Horace Hagedorn, vice chairman of the Scotts board and chairman of Miracle-Gro prior to the merger, speaking on behalf of the board. "We are truly looking forward to having him back at the helm and toward refocusing the company's efforts in the 1996 fiscal year."

•••

The Scotts Co. also recently announced the appointment of Robert Stohler as vice president, international. Stohler joins Scotts following an executive career in the global market. Most recently, he was president, Rubbermaid Europe in Luxembourg. In this new position, Stohler is responsible for international operations for both the consumer and professional business.