

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

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**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."

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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.



**GOODSHALL JOINS PINMARK**

DALLAS—Scott Myers, vice president of PinMark Corp., has selected John Godshall as director of software product development. PinMark has developed a satellite-based, cart-mounted electronic yardage and golf information system. Features include graphics of each hole, two-way communication and course monitoring.

**Vermeer founder named to Construction Equipment Hall of Fame**

PELLA, Iowa — Vermeer Manufacturing founder Gary Vermeer, whose inventions have helped shape the construction equipment industry since 1948, was inducted into the Construction Equipment Industry Hall of Fame March 19, during the ConExpo/ConAgg equipment convention in Las Vegas.

Now the chairman emeritus of Vermeer Manufacturing, Vermeer's first invention was a mechanical wagon hoist designed

to speed up the task of unloading grain. To keep up with the demand, he built a 2,400-square-foot factory to start what is now one of the most successful family-owned equipment companies in the world. Through the

years, Vermeer manufactured several more industry firsts, including a PTO-driven hammer mill and the PTO-driven tilling ma-



Gary Vermeer

chine that grew into today's line of hydrostatic utility trenchers.

In the 1950s, Vermeer helped build the tree-care market with the invention of the stump cutter which allowed one person to remove a stump in minutes. The innovation of the first mechanical tree spade gave the industry a machine that could dig, transport, and transplant trees providing

homeowners instant shade.

Vermeer's most well-known invention was the large round baler in 1971. After learning that a friend was getting out of the cow-calf business due to the labor-intensive task of putting up hay to feed cattle, Vermeer designed a hay baler that would roll a bale of hay up to 2,000 pounds. Vermeer's large round baler is still considered one of the most revolutionary inventions in modern farming.



**Sod industry**

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faces and erodable areas, then it's up to the owner to decide what else is sodded, according to Don Roberts, general manager of Southern Turf Nurseries/Warren's Group.

"Seeding is probably a lesser cost, if you hit it right and it germinates," Roberts said. "But we've found that, with the rains we're apt to have here in the Southeast, you can have an entire seed bed washed away."

"Sodding really decreases the risk element involved out there," agreed Jeff Hartstine, president of Central Florida Turf, a course construction firm active in the Southeast. "It costs more, but you offset that because you can open sooner. They do the math."

"New courses are definitely sodding more, and you have to consider renovations. There have been many more remodeling jobs of late. They sod a lot."

Unfortunately for golf courses in the Southeast, this winter's severe weather will likely result in some involuntary replacement sodding. Superintendents are expecting a great deal of winter kill — another factor in sod farmers anticipating low inventories this spring.

"I think you can check the records, and this is the worst winter we've had in 12 years, to my knowledge," said Butch Gill of Turf Merchants, Inc. "Severe winter kill is definitely contributing to the replacement sod market. Jacksonville usually has about 500 chill hours per year. This year, we're already at 900 chill hours."

According to Dr. Joe DiPaola of Novartis (formerly Ciba and Sandoz), Bermudagrass testing has shown the turf to be susceptible to injury at temperatures of only 23 to 18 F.

"Superintendents need to check their soil- and air-temperature records and see if the temperature at crown height reached below 23F," DiPaola told USGA's Patrick O'Brien. "Damage will show first in areas that are shaded or poorly drained. Low potassium or an imbalance between N & K [nitrogen and potassium] will also increase the likelihood of low-temperature injury."

**ENVIRONMENTAL & IPM ADVANTAGES**

**Drift Control and Deposit Efficiency** The *Falcon* enclosed spray boom is aerodynamically designed to eliminate the drift created behind simple booms, making spraying in the wind feasible. Government drift studies show it has less drift in a 24 mph wind than the standard legal open boom limitation of 6 mph. The boom also gives exceptionally even distribution with either high or low volume application rates.

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