

## BRIEFS

### LEBANON APPOINTS WESTERDAHL

LEBANON, Pa. — Lebanon Turf Products has appointed John Westerdahl to division sales manager for the newly developed Western U.S. sales region. Westerdahl brings more than 15 years of experience in the turf industry to his position as manager of sales west of the Rockies and Southeast Asia and Pacific Rim markets.



John Westerdahl

### RIVERDALE PROMOTES CASEY, CLARK

GLENWOOD, Ill. — Riverdale Chemical Co. has promoted Sean Casey to the position of national sales manager. In his new position, he will manage the company's specialty product sales force as well as the company's key account programs with Scotts Co. and TruGreen ChemLawn. Casey has been with Riverdale for more than 10 years and most recently held the position of manager, formulator business. Riverdale has also promoted Curtis Clark to the position of business development and marketing manager. In his new position he will be responsible for developing alliances and business partnerships with other manufacturers. Clark has been with Riverdale since 1998 as the company's marketing manager.

### PICKSEED BRINGS IN BURNS

TANGENT, Ore. — Pickseed West has appointed Tom Burns to the position of vice president international sales and market development. Prior to this appointment Burns was international sales director of Agribiotech. His international experience in the seeds industry enables Burns to assume the offshore commerce of Pickseed West. This includes extensive marketing in China, Japan, Australia, Korea and many of the registered varieties in western and central Europe and Scandinavia.

### SEED RESEARCH ADDS JUNK, DUNN

CORVALLIS, Ore. — Seed Research of Oregon has appointed Bill Junk as managing director of sales and Bill Dunn as managing director of product development and production. Junk will direct sales development in the United States and Canada.

## GolfGM.com enters the e-commerce fray

By A. OVERBECK

WEST SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The golf course industry's rapidly expanding business-to-business (B2B) marketplace has grown yet again with the Sept. 15 launch of GolfGM.com. While GolfGM founder and president Chris Soderquist admits that the market is quickly becoming crowded and consolidation is imminent, he remains bullish on the potential of the golf market.

"There are 16,500 courses, 2,000 off-course retail shops and 1,700 practice facilities in the United States," said Soderquist. "We aspire to be a one-stop shop for superintendents, golf pros and club managers."

GolfGM, which is owned by e-venturelab, a business incubator for Internet start-ups, launched as a business-to-consumer company selling golf merchandise. "We started as Netpar," said Soderquist. "But that space filled quickly with competitors so the company never got off the ground."

However, when one of the

golf professionals who was working with the company pointed out that pro shops could benefit from a B2B site, Soderquist began to investigate. In a survey of 35 golf course managers, he found that 94 percent felt that an electronic marketplace would be extremely to somewhat useful. Sensing an opportunity, Soderquist decided to launch GolfGM.com.



### THE SET UP

GolfGM.com will work like many of the other Internet sites specific to the golf course industry. The catalog service

features a "click and buy" online listing of golf supplies. The request-for-proposal (RFP) service allows buyers to participate in a reverse auction and get price quotes from multiple suppliers and manufacturers. There also will be an exchange that will allow courses to sell used and excess inventory.

In addition to the commerce portion of the site, GolfGM will also feature news, weather, chat and job posting

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## Textron Golf and Turf teams with ProLink

By ANDREW OVERBECK

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Textron Golf, Turf & Specialty Products (Textron Golf and Turf) has formed a strategic sales and marketing alliance with Tempe, Ariz.-based ProLink, a pioneer of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) for golf course information management services. The ProLink deal replaces Textron Golf and Turf's previous relationship with Sarasota, Fla.-based ParView, which expired earlier this year.

"We spent a lot of time looking at the major players in this business," said Bill Robson, director of marketing for Textron Golf and Turf. "In the past year we decided that a GPS system would be a really strong enhancement for the [E-Z-GO] car both in terms of the golfer experience and creating value for the course."

"ProLink stood above the crowd in terms of the technical and engineering expertise," he said. "They have a strong base and all the technology has been developed in-house." ProLink holds six patents for the use of GPS and has several additional patents pending. The company's system is featured at 120 courses throughout the United States and Japan.

Under the terms of the agreement, ProLink will sell and service GPS systems through E-Z-GO's 25 factory-direct branch locations. "The branch network will have exclusive sales and service responsibilities for the ProLink system in their area," Robson said. "ProLink has an existing service organization that will continue to serve current customers until E-Z-GO's branch technical staff are trained on the ProLink system."

A ProLink system for an 80-car fleet costs upwards of \$300,000, said Robson. "There will be a variety of payment options, from cash purchase to rent-to-own to leasing," he said. "Our intent is to provide customers with a range of financial and service options."

According to Robson, the ProLink system will be most appropriate for resort and high-end daily fee golf courses,

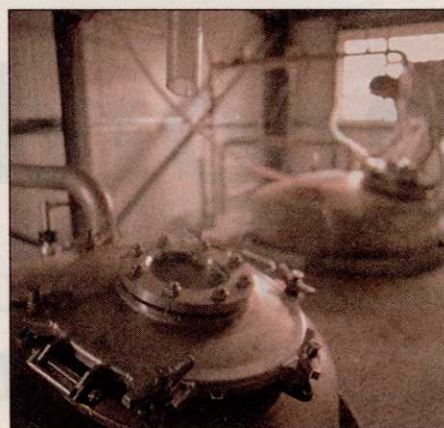
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## Becker Underwood acquires MicroBio

AMES, Iowa — Becker Underwood Inc. has purchased U.K.-based MicroBio Group. The acquisition includes the exclusive production and marketing rights of all MicroBio bio-fertilizers and bio-pesticides for the professional turf, agriculture and greenhouse markets.

"This acquisition further underlines Becker Underwood's strategy that combines organic growth of internal product development with key acquisitions of companies, technologies and selected brands for the turf and ornamental market," said Roger Underwood, president. "MicroBio brings proven bio-solutions to our product offering. We will utilize their production facilities in England and Canada to continue to provide the highest quality products."

Headquartered in Whittlesford, England, MicroBio is an international developer of natural disease solutions to pest and disease problems. The company was formed in 1983 and has production facilities in Saskatoon, Canada and Littlehampton, England. It specializes in the discovery, scale-up fermentation and formulation of living organisms, which offer growers the opportunity to reduce the use of chemical and mineral fertiliz-



MicroBio's research facility

ers. MicroBio products are based on naturally occurring micro-organisms that help to maximize yield and protect plants from pests and disease. The company consists of three business units including rhizobium inoculants, nematode bio-pesticides and a new product group.

MicroBio's product line includes the following brands:

- HiStick — a rhizobium inoculant that increases yields in legume crops by fixing atmospheric nitrogen and making it available to plants.
- Nemasys — a bio-pesticide for insect control in greenhouse, nursery stock and specialty crops.
- MBI 600 — a novel strain of naturally occurring soil bacterial species that stimulates plant growth and suppresses a number of plant fungal pathogens.

## Tyler expands fleet

ELWOOD, Ill. — Tyler Enterprises has expanded its high-precision, custom fertilizer application system for golf courses, by adding a third applicator truck to its fleet.

"Customer satisfaction and demand for our custom fertilizer application system has been extraordinary," said Bruce Jasurda, chief operating officer. "When we introduced the system last October, we worked very hard to incorporate the specific design and engineering features that superintendents told us were lacking in other applicator trucks. We have added two more complete systems in less than a year."

The proprietary Tyler system is an integrated unit which arrives at the customer's site allowing a single visit, all course, fertilizer application. To ensure maximum fertilizer coverage on all types of golf course terrain, the applicator truck features a low, seven foot, ten-inch profile for difficult applications under trees. The adjustable spread width of 20 to 70 feet, provides flexible precision application capabilities for each specific hole and course. Equipped with uniquely designed Goodyear turf tires, the applicator truck displaces only 20-25 psi when fully loaded, lighter than most conventional golf course maintenance equipment.



C E D A R FALLS, Iowa—Standard Golf Co. has begun construction on a 30,000-square-foot addition to its existing 75,000-square-foot manufacturing facility here. The project, which includes a state-of-the-art powder coating system is estimated to cost between \$2 to \$2.5 million and is

## Standard Golf expands factory, adds powder coating system

expected to be completed in February 2001.

The new system offers a long-lasting and environmentally friendly finish and since the powder contains no harmful solvents it can be used without pollution control equipment.

at the facility.

"By adding more space and updating manufacturing equipment we are positioning ourselves to serve the golf industry for many years to come," said Peter Voorhees, Standard Golf president.

The expansion will also significantly add to storage space

## GolfGM.com rolls out web site

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components.

"GolfGM's development has focused solely on the needs of buyers and suppliers," said Soderquist. "As the site matures and evolves the buyer will be able to go to one site and compare products and buy from multiple vendors. Vendors will

have an e-commerce channel to compliment sales activities, saving them the cost of building a full-functioning e-commerce presence."

While the site will focus primarily on commodity items such as seed, chemicals, golf shirts and food and beverage products, it will also help facilitate larger transactions. "I don't think anyone is going to go into the catalog and buy a \$30,000 mower, but the RFP and exchange service will give buyers and suppliers an ability to talk to each other," said Soderquist.

The company is ramping up business development and will first go after the suppliers and manufacturers. "We have zero suppliers and zero golf course customers signed up," said Soderquist. "But we are developing the site so that we can show suppliers and manufacturers how everything works."

### RACE AGAINST TIME

Soderquist acknowledges that the market segment is changing rapidly and the challenges are many. "One, we have to get suppliers on the site and show that we add value," he said. "Two, we are not going to change the way the industry does business. The Internet will not replace personal relationships. But we can compliment them and improve the way business is done."

The pressures of consolidation will also be a factor according to Soderquist. "There will be a shake out in the next six to 12 months," he said. "Some start ups are going to run out of money. It may happen to us, or it may happen to our competition."

In the meantime, time is of the essence. "We have the people, the idea, the processes and the capital," said Soderquist. "The one thing we can't control is time. We just need to keep our focus and run like a fleet of gazelles." ■

### ProLink

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a market he estimates at 4,000 courses. "Only 10 percent of these courses have GPS systems right now," he added.

The two companies are also developing software and hardware that would bring the ProLink technology to turf maintenance equipment. "ProLink will be working with the product management of turf vehicles and looking at applications that will help superintendents improve efficiency and equipment utilization," Robson said. ■



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