

[EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK]

Temps down, attendance up

GCI's man-about-the-industry Bruce Williams reports back from the Northern Green Expo

Early January saw record low temperatures throughout the US. Imagine temperatures of 23 below zero during the week of a regional Minnesota turf conference and many would presume attendance would be down.

The Northern Green Expo is organized quite well and managed by Cassie Larson of the Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association. Even with the temperatures staying in the sub-zero zone attendance numbers were up. Collaboratively, the groups involved offered quality education and the show was a strong anchor for the event, as well.

There were several components of this show which account for its success. The show continues to grow with 6,271 attendees. That number is up 3 percent from 2013. Nearly 44 percent of the attendees are categorized as decision makers and are comprised of owners, managers and superintendents from a myriad of companies in the green industry. With the broad spectrum of attendees it is evident that no one single group makes up an overriding focus therefore resulting in a variety of educational opportunities as well.

In speaking with industry veterans like Roger Stewart and Jim Nicol they both indicated that this was an event not to be missed. It saved a lot of time by connecting the commercial side of the industry with the end user consumers. The exhibition hall was nearly filled with 885 booths occupied, 327 total companies exhibiting and total space used was 178,000 square feet.

While the show was an important part of the event there were many other things going on at the same time. In addition to individual meetings of the various sponsoring organizations there was a very broad set of educational programming.

Topics included small business operations, interpersonal skills, human resources, legal and financial sessions, management solutions, plant materials, water management and of course turf management technical presentations.

The organizers did a wonderful job of putting on some additional hands-on training programs on the show floor. Since we all know that trade shows would not exist without the many commercial companies exhibiting it is important to keep show traffic up for a three-day event. A hosted lunch on the trade show floor enhanced that opportunity for attendees to network with the exhibitors.

Hats off to Minnesota's green industry.



FOR MORE

Check out the app version of this story for Bruce's expanded report on the Northern Green Expo.

From THE FEED



The temperate region doesn't seem very temperate with the polar vortex keeping things chilled.

Almost everyone headed to Orlando for the big show is ready to feel the heat. Of course, some superintendents are up for making the best of things if, say, a few trees are damaged.

The Syngenta Business Institute gave superintendents the chance to learn and network, and some of them did a little networking on Twitter as well! There were plenty of opportunities to share some knowledge – and maybe have a little fun in the process.



Jim Dillard @dillard645

10 day forecast in Orlando looks great!



Andrew Hardy @andrewhardyturf

I was taking shorts already. But now I may take my speedo too #notreally



Jennifer Seevers @jenniferseevers

ahhh as I'm staring outside at the frozen landscape this is like the light at the end of the tunnel!



Turf Republic @turfpublic

The warmth cannot come soon enough!



Clay DuBose @clayhomerun

Potential ice accumulation for the Coastal area through Wednesday morning



Tom Taylor @tom_taylor1421

hopefully no "important" trees get damaged. I'd hate to cut them down



Clay DuBose @clayhomerun

I can think of a few that could/need to get damaged!



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{ EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK }

Time for change

After more than two decades, Club Car rolled out updated versions of its Carryall UTVs.

For more than 20 years, Club Car has hesitated making any major changes to its Carryall line. But that changed recently as the company, in January, rolled out new models with improvements to fuel efficiency, horsepower and other features.

The company invited media members and dealers to Disney's Fort Wilderness Lodge in Orlando, Fla. to get an up-close look at the new vehicles and to test drive them.

Disney has nearly 3,500 Club Car vehicles on its properties and has a 20-plus year relationship with Club Car. What Club Car has learned through its relationship

with Disney (Club Car actually developed a custom solutions department because of Disney) was implemented into the updated Carryall vehicles.

In addition to lessons from Disney, Club Car sent 12 employees across the U.S. and Europe visiting 46 locations that use Club Car or competitor vehicles. What they heard from that research was customers wanted a more powerful engine, more comfort in the vehicle and a fit-to-task-bed box.

Kurt Meyer, commercial/industrial marketing manager, said landscapers specifically asked for a better bed, and they wanted a pick-up truck-like tailgate that is easy to open. The new vehicle now has a single-handed latch and release tailgate, and a protected aluminum bed that will protect the inside from corrosion from any spillage.

Landscaper feedback also led to the implementation of movable bed dividers and cargo tie-down loops to prevent tools and other cargo from shifting. "You are protecting your assets," he says of the upgrades to the truck-bed's storage capabilities.

The company also wanted a more truck-like look to the interior, and a truck-like feel to the seating area. "We tried to decrease the gap between getting out of the truck and transitioning into this vehicle," says Billy Dakuras, director of sales and business development for the Americas.

The company expects sales increase of 24 percent in the commercial utility vehicle market. UTVs can be a less expensive alternative to pick-up trucks and vans when moving people or tools around a facility. "As budgets and teams shrink, they (facility managers) are always trying to do more with less," says Mike Cotter, commercial/industrial and consumer marketing director.

Brian Horn is managing editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

