

# Off The Fringe

## Business briefs

### Simplot, Pursell team up

Post Falls, Idaho-based Simplot Turf and Horticulture and Sylacauga, Ala.-based Pursell Technologies Inc. reached a long-term agreement to market Polyon Prol fertilizers and other PTI products to U.S. professional turfgrass markets in northeast, midwest and southwest states.

Simplot and PTI currently have a joint venture arrangement to market fertilizer products to the professional turf and horticulture markets in the West, as well as Pacific Rim countries.

### Eco makes more changes

Rancho Bernardo, Calif.-based Eco Soil Systems announced the resignations of Douglas M. Gloff, its president and chief operating officer, and Mark D. Buckner, its chief financial officer and corporate secretary.

Max D. Gelwix, previously vice president of marketing, was promoted to president and chief operating officer. Dennis Sentz, previously vice president of accounting and controller, was promoted to chief financial officer and corporate secretary.

William B. Adams, Eco Soil chairman and CEO, said: "The company is reorganizing its corporate functions to position itself for the proposed sale of all or a part of its Turf Partners subsidiary to The J.R. Simplot Co. and the creation of a distribution channel for Eco Soil's proprietary products through Simplot."

### Terra Now ProSource One

Memphis, Tenn.-based ProSource One is the new organizational name for the professional products group of Terra Industries.

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## Poll: Nay to PDI

**S**am Hocutt III, CGCS for Pawleys Plantation in Pawleys Island, S.C., is doing his George Gallup impression. Hocutt is conducting his own poll on the Professional Development Initiative, GCSAA's proposal to "improve the knowledge, skills and abilities of the professional superintendent." Through March 7, here are Hocutt's findings:

### Are you in favor of the PDI?

Yes — 28 percent  
No — 72 percent

### Would you like to see the vote on class change canceled until 2002?

Yes — 78 percent  
No — 22 percent

### Do you like the Career Development System\* plan better than the PDI plan?

Yes — 60 percent  
No — 40 percent

### Have you ever posted a comment in the GCSAA forum concerning PDI?

Yes — 53 percent  
No — 47 percent

### Are you happy with the current voting method?

Yes — 25 percent  
No — 75 percent



### Would you like to see the vote return to the individual?

Yes — 79 percent  
No — 21 percent

### Would you like to have absentee voting?

Yes — 83 percent  
No — 17 percent

You can participate in Hocutt's poll by logging on to the Internet site:  
<http://www.samscomputers.bizland.com/Pdiinfor.html>

The poll began on Feb. 29 and received 120 votes through March 7.

*\* The Career Development System is being hailed by some superintendents as a simpler, fairer and cheaper proposal to better the profession. See page 10 (Flagstick) for more details.*

## Hot Little Golf Car

You don't need to be a kid to collect this cool Hot Wheel offering from Mattel: the spiffy, chrome-engine laden, mother of all golf cars — Teed Off. Oh, to drive one for real!

# Pursell Playing Up Southern Hospitality

**T**he sleepy little town of Sylacauga, Ala., is about to become a big-time destination for superintendents.

David Pursell, perhaps best known for Polyon products and his golf lithographs, has announced a bold plan to develop his family's 2,700-acre Sylacauga homestead into a headquarters campus featuring an upscale course and a guest lodge for small groups of visiting customers. His goal is to create a corporate showcase which will wow superintendents and cement lifelong customer relationships.

"We're playing up our primary strength: Southern hospitality," Pursell says. "We're going to win the market with a strategy that combines technology, research, education, recreation and, of course, down-home Southern cooking."



David Pursell takes aim on his company's soon-to-be golf course

In short, Pursell is investing \$15 million to build his company's brand and gain customer loyalty one superintendent at a time. It's a visionary concept that's not without risk. But given the shakeups that have occurred in the fertilizer market (Scotts, Terra) and supply chains over the past few years, the chance to emerge as the brand leader makes the concept a good bet for Pursell and his team.

The Pursell Farms project consists of:

- FarmLinks, an 18-hole course designed by Mike Hurdzan and Dana Fry. The course, which is scheduled to open in early 2002, will take advantage of the property's mix of rolling farmland, heavy woods and foothills. Longtime Pursell executive Tim Lacy is overseeing the project and will manage the completed property.

- A First Tee facility featuring a junior course and teaching academy for kids.

- A new 20,000-square foot Pursell Technologies headquarters that will overlook the 18th hole.

- A nine-room guest lodge designed to house the small

## Quotable

**"Golfers think you mow once a week and go to the bank once a day."**

— A Michigan owner overheard at breakfast during the National Golf Course Owners Association annual conference.

**"First you manage people, then you motivate them, and then you lead them."**

— George Sweda, president of Sweda Training & Development.

**"Who's in charge of the greens these days at Hogan's Ally? Stevie Wonder?"**

— Alan Shipnuck, Sports Illustrated golf writer, on the conditioning at Riviera CC.

**"It's hard to play in this slop field."**

— David Duval, complaining to CNN/SI about the conditioning at La Costa Resort after rain poured down on the course for two days prior to the Match Play Championship.

groups of visiting customers in comfort.

- A system of trails and nature areas suitable for hunting, hiking and ATV riding.

- Three largemouth bass ponds (my personal favorite).

In addition to golf, fishing and other outdoor activities, visitors will also tour the Pursell plant and the already completed PTI-Max multimedia theater.

"My dad Jimmy told me years ago that you never get a second chance to make a first impression," Pursell says. "We're putting that advice into action."

Pursell and his team (Lacy, operations chief Arnold Cleghorn, marketing guru Jeff Higgins and sales vice president Dave Heegard) are already hosting small groups of superintendents — and lucky editors like me — for visits to the site and a preview of the coming Pursell Farms project.

— Pat Jones

## Off The Fringe

### Business briefs

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Cenex/Land O'Lakes Agronomy Co. acquired the distribution business of Terra last year. ProSource One, which combines Terra Professional Products and Terra's South Florida Specialty Crop business with Land O'Lakes East Turf and Ornamental Products, is a new marketing unit of Agro Distribution LLC (a division of Cenex/Land O'Lakes Agronomy Co.) The new organization will supply fertilizer, plant protection products, seed and services to golf course industry and other industries.

ProSource One is directed by Tom Perkins.

#### Lesco doubles net income

Rocky River, Ohio-based Lesco reported a net income of \$11.6 million last year — nearly double from 1998 — despite a small fourth-quarter loss of \$1.3 million, which is typical because of the seasonality of the business.

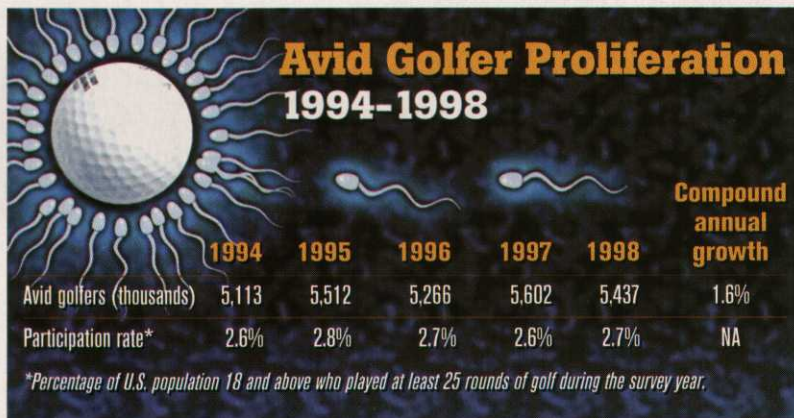
Lesco also announced it's realigning its business into three separate divisions — golf, lawn care and product supply — to support its long-term growth and profitability strategy and to increase the company's focus on growing shareholder value.

Alex Antonio was named president of the golf division. Antonio, formerly of Howard Johnson's Enterprises, was a PGA Tour player in the late 1960s.

#### Everything is Jake (again) at Textron

After several years of promoting the corporate "umbrella" brand, Racine, Wis.-based Textron Turf Care And Specialty Products is shifting its marketing focus back to individual product line brands. The Jacobsen, Ransomes, Cushman and Ryan brands will now be the stars in advertising and other promotion, according to senior officials at Textron's marketing agency, Nelson & Schmidt.

"We're going to return to emphasizing the product lines, rather than the corporate brand," says Dan Nelson, president of the Milwaukee-based agency. "That's how customers view us, so why wouldn't we position our marketing that way? A superintendent doesn't buy a Textron, he buys a Jake or a Cushman."



SOURCE: NGF; ILLUSTRATION: DAN BEEDEY

## Let There Be Crabgrass

### RESEARCHERS SAY IT COULD CLEAN UP PETROLEUM-LADEN SOIL

**N**ext time you're complaining about crabgrass on the No. 4 fairway, remember what you're about to read here. University of Arkansas researchers want you to believe that crabgrass is not as unpleasant and detestable as you think.

In fact, the researchers — Greg Thoma, Craig Beyrouthy and Duane Wolf — commend crabgrass because it may be able to clean up soils heavily contaminated with petroleum.

Soils with oil contamination are a significant environmental problem in many states, but crabgrass may provide a low-cost, low-maintenance solution, the researchers say.

Heavy oil contamination usually occurs around oil wellheads, where oil has been extracted over several years. This contamination produces a hard, black expanse where little will grow.

"The contaminated soil is asphalt-like," Thoma says. "It's hard and black with a thick crust layer covering a gooey, tar-like substance that can be a foot deep."

But because the oil is near the surface, immobile and not an immediate threat to the environment, it's a contender for phytoremediation — a form of bioremediation in which plants are used to reduce or eliminate hazards by enhancing naturally occurring biological processes that decompose oil.

The researchers evaluated the germination, survival and growth of five plant species — bermuda, rye, fescue, crabgrass and alfalfa — in crude-oil contaminated soils during a greenhouse study. They also looked at the effects of soil amendments, including inorganic fertilizer, chicken manure, paper mill biosolids and hardwood sawdust.

The study revealed that crabgrass had a moderate germination rate (78 percent) and a low survival rate (64.5 percent), but the plants that survived grew at a spectacular rate and produced high root length and biomass.

Other forms of remediation, such as dig and haul or incineration, take less time, but they require constant attention and are costly, according to the researchers. Phytoremediation is a slow process, but it is cheap and requires little maintenance.

# Swing Science

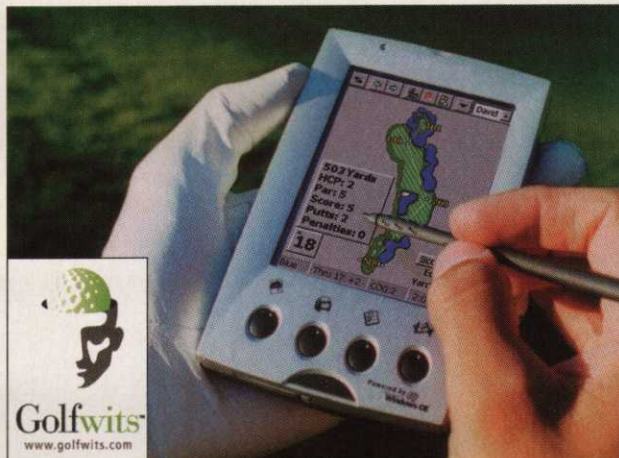
Forget the caddie. Let Golfwits software turn a palm-sized PC into a portable purveyor of all the information golfers could ever need about the courses they play.

The software contains digital maps of courses from around the country (and more courses are being added every day, says Lynden, Wash.-based Siscosoft, which created the software). Once golfers download the program, it allows them to check yardage, store personalized scorecards (with handicaps) and compile on-going statistics about their rounds on most palm PCs, with the notable exception of the Palm Pilot. Each round is stored for future reference, allowing golfers to return to old rounds to avoid the same mistakes they made the last time.

The program retails for \$49.95. Interested golfers can test the software's capabilities, as well as download it, at

<http://www.golfwits.com/main.php3>.

Now, instead of a caddie carrying the clubs, golfers will be able to carry their caddie. What a change a computer can make.



## Scanning the Web

Anyone out there looking for a soon-to-be out-of-work associate editor (which I may be after all the heat I took after last month's ratings; see *Editor's Note*)? Here are some labor sites to check out as you search for workers (all sites start with <http://> unless otherwise noted):

\*\*\*\* – **Bookmark it and return frequently;**  
\* – **Look at only if absolutely necessary**

\*\*\*\* **[www.usgolfjobs.com](http://www.usgolfjobs.com)** – The comprehensive nature of this site allows users to have a full-service career consultant at the click of a mouse. It is a subscription service (\$29.95 to subscribe), but it has listings for a variety of jobs in the golf industry for the maintenance professional as well as on the consumer



side. Its career advice section is well-organized, and it features articles designed to help people gain more skills so they can move up. The green writing on a gray background is sometimes difficult on the eyes – but other than that, it's a great site.

\*\*\*\* **[www.golftrade.com](http://www.golftrade.com)** – The site has a pleasing, if understated, look to it. Its best feature is its interactive job boards, which provide a forum both to post jobs as well as posting interest in jobs. The site also has a search engine that enables superintendents to find equipment manufacturers in their areas and other important golf industry vendors. It's not quite as comprehensive as other sites I've seen, but it certainly holds its own.

\*\* **[www.greengrads.com](http://www.greengrads.com)** – Greengrads is a division of executive search firm Stebbing and Associates that focuses on jobs in the green industry. It's not quite a recruiter, according to the site; it's hired on a case-by-case basis to help employers find employees. It contains some good, general career search advice (it's 10 commandments for a job search are great), but its thrust seems more directed at executive-level positions.

*Editor's Note:* By far, the best reaction to my two-star rating of [www.golfclubatlas.com](http://www.golfclubatlas.com) (March 2000) was, ironically, posted on [www.golfclubatlas.com](http://www.golfclubatlas.com): "It (the rating) is especially ridiculous considering that a visit to the Golfdom site finds its November/December issue still posted on the first page and the "Breaking News" wire not working (at least on my computer).

"I have a funny feeling its own site would rate an 'incomplete' in its own method of ranking."

Frankly, I wouldn't even have rated our own site that high at that point (our first 0-star rating, perhaps, but I probably wouldn't have dignified it with an incomplete). It was rather embarrassing that we hadn't updated our site from the November/December issue by the time the March issue hit the streets, but by now it should actually be up-to-date.

If it isn't, please send the hate mail to me at [fandorka@advanstar.com](mailto:fandorka@advanstar.com), since it will be my fault from here on out.

*Scanning the Web* is compiled by Frank H. Andorka Jr., Golfdom's associate editor, who as of the writing of this column is still gainfully employed. You may reach him, however temporarily, at [fandorka@advanstar.com](mailto:fandorka@advanstar.com) with future column suggestions or sites you think he should visit.