

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.

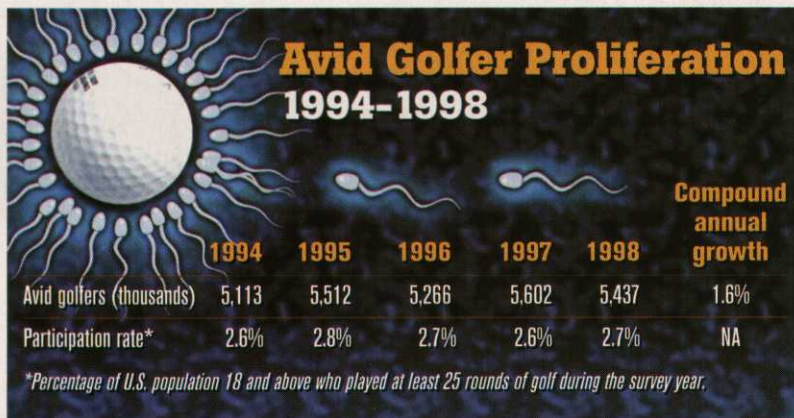
Lesco also announced it's realigning its business into three separate divisions — golf, lawn care and product supply — to support its long-term growth and profitability strategy and to increase the company's focus on growing shareholder value.

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

Next 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.