

# Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

## Business briefs

### Novartis, AstraZeneca join to launch Syngenta

Syngenta, the result of a proposed merger between Novartis AG and AstraZeneca PLC, will be the largest agrochemical business in the world when the deal is finalized. The company will push sales of nearly \$8 billion.

The managements of the Novartis and AstraZeneca divisions will lead the combined agrochemical company.

The Novartis-AstraZeneca move is likely to trigger further consolidation within the \$30 billion-a-year agrochemical industry, according to *The Wall Street Journal*.

Heinz Imhof, leader of the Novartis agrochemical division, will be named chairman of Syngenta and Michael Pragnell, AstraZeneca's agrochemical chief, will be CEO.

### Deere loses money, but posts gain

Moline, Ill.-based Deere & Co. lost \$29.5 million in the fourth quarter, citing flagging demand for agricultural equipment.

Continued depression in commodity prices has cooled high-horsepower, high-margin agricultural equipment, according to the company. For the full year, Deere posted a profit of \$239.2 million.

### Century acquires Legacy Golf

Madison Heights, Mich.-based Century Rain Aid acquired the Legacy Golf irrigation division of MPR Supply, a St. Louis-based distributor. Legacy is the golf irrigation division of Hunter Industries.

### Golf Trust, Legends team up

Charleston, S.C.-based Golf Trust of America assigned four of its leases to Legends

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## Fill 'er Up with Zinc

**I**s there a mower powered by a fuel cell in your future? Could be.

Bloomington, Minn.-based Toro Co. is developing a prototype greens mower to test the feasibility of a power source using zinc/air battery technology. Racine, Wis.-based Textron Turf Care And Specialty Products is investigating its use in utility vehicles.

The chief proponent of the zinc/air battery technology is Jeff Colborn, Ph.D., chairman and CEO of Metallic Power in Carlsbad, Calif. His system consists of zinc/air fuel cells and a zinc regeneration recycling "vending" machine. It combines zinc pellets (1 millimeter in diameter) with oxygen from the air, forming zinc oxide which reacts with an electrolyte inside the cell and releases electricity.

Colborn says his technology:

- Offers two- to three-times the energy of a lead/acid battery and, eventually, five- or six-times as much.
- Can be recharged in 10 minutes.
- Is virtually silent so it

can be operated earlier in the morning and later in the evening.

- Has no hydraulics, so it's not subject to hydraulic leaks.
- Will offer more precise control of blade and reel speeds.

"Our commitments with Toro and Textron are to work together to produce prototypes," Colborn says. "Then the decision will be made on going forward."

Toro is taking a wait-and-see attitude to its applications for golf course mowing equipment. "There's a need to electrify products for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the desire to reduce emissions in certain (geographic) areas," says Dana Long, Toro's director of advanced turf technology. "Also, you can make the products smarter and operate better by putting microprocessors on them."

The fuel cell technology developed by Metallic Power "looks promising," but don't expect to see fuel cell-powered turf equipment soon, Long says.

Golfers often complain about the maintenance practices of superintendents. Here's how they rate some of their most common complaints:

Problem	Often/Sometimes A Problem For Me	Very/Somewhat Bothersome
Recently Aerified Greens	67%	77%
Golf Course Playing Surface Too Wet	63%	70%
Golf Car Restrictions	43%	45%
Maintenance Workers On Course	37%	42%



SOURCE: GCSAA, 1996; ILLUSTRATION: DAN BEEDEY