

# Off The Fringe

## Business briefs

### Bayer, Aventis negotiating

At press time, Aventis of Strasbourg, France, and Schering AG of Berlin Germany were continuing negotiations exclusively with Bayer AG about the sale of Aventis Crop-Science. Aventis holds a 76 percent interest in the crop protection and crop production business, while Schering holds 24 percent. The acquisition would be the largest in Bayer's history. The company wants to expand its crop protection business.

In other Bayer AG news, Paradigm Genetics and Bayer AG extended and expanded their commercial partnership for herbicide discovery and development for another five years. Under the new agreement, Paradigm will receive up to \$30 million including milestone payments, as well as success fees for all products that reach the market.

### Canadian court upholds ban

The Supreme Court of Canada ruled in June that municipalities have the right to ban the residential use of pesticides. The court dismissed the appeal of two Canadian lawn-care companies against the municipality of Hudson, Quebec, which was the first Canadian municipality to outlaw pesticides on lawns in 1991.

### Royster-Clark buys Agrilience outlets

Arden Hills, Minn.-based Royster-Clark Group will close a deal with Agrilience to acquire its Agro Distribution South and ProSource One businesses.

### BASF predicts stagnant income

BASF AG predicted it would not see any increase in its operating income in the second

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## H-2B Far From Perfect

BUT U.S. LABOR FIRM

TRYING TO MAKE IT BETTER

By Ron Hall

**T**he U.S. government's H-2B visa program allows employers who can't attract local labor to recruit and employ unskilled, seasonal foreign workers. The majority of these workers are recruited in Mexico and Latin America. Although the U.S. green industry has become increasingly dependent on these workers, the H-2B program is far from perfect.

Many first-time H2B laborers arrive at their U.S. employer's office with few job skills. They speak little or no English, are unfamiliar with turf equipment and have little experience with U.S. laws and customs.

"If we don't get our act together with this H-2B, it could be in big trouble," says Jeff West, who operates a Michigan-based labor solutions firm that places H2B workers in U.S. industries.

West's firm is improving H2B. After meeting with West, Guanajuato State in central Mexico, an industrial city of about 450,000 citizens, implemented worker training programs. West has met with officials in other Mexican states, too, and they're interested in developing similar programs.

West's program, taught by professional bilingual educators, requires worker candidates to attend two weeks of classroom and hands-on instruction. They receive lessons in conversational English and U.S. laws and customs, and learn how to operate and maintain commercial mowers, thanks in part to equipment donations from John Deere. The workers are tested at the end of the training sessions.

About 300 potential employees were trained by the state agency, and West believes they stand a better chance of becoming productive green

industry workers. Also, he feels they're less likely to go AWOL from their U.S. employers (become "illegal") to seek better pay in construction or other U.S. industries, one of H2B's not-so-secret dirty little secrets.

"If these men spend two weeks of their time here, eight hours a day and without getting paid, that tells me they're serious about wanting to work in the United States," West says.

West admits his motives for promoting the program aren't entirely altruistic. Through his labor contracting firm, GTO International in Whitmore Lake, Mich., he says he expects to place at least 100 of the trained laborers with U.S. green industry businesses.

*Hall is editor of Athletic Turf, Golf-dom's sister publication.*

**Many first-time H2B laborers arrive at their U.S. employer's office with few job skills.**

# Zero In

GERMAN FIRM CREATES SPACE-AGE MOWER THAT TURNS CLIPPINGS TO DUST WITH LASER TECHNOLOGY

By James E. Guyette

**G**ermany's Wolf-Garten Co. hopes to revolutionize the age-old quest for the perfect cut with its Zero riding mower — a former Mercedes two-seat automobile modified into a mower equipped with lasers instead of cutting blades.

"There are five laser beams that cut the grass," said Jim Morris, president of Grassmasters of Barrington, Ill., Wolf-Garten's U.S. marketing partner for the device. "It drops the clippings into the turf as grass dust."

There are zero cuttings since the machine chops the cut grass into tiny particles — and dries it — avoiding thatch and mold formations. Blade wear is zero because it has no blades, and courses remain free from damage inflicted by



WOLF-GARTEN CO.

**On paper, the Zero scores a perfect 10 as a mower. The out-of-this-world machine costs a mere \$30,000.**

dull blades.

Mercedes engineers designed the original 8-foot-long Smart car as a park-anywhere vehicle for European and Japanese drivers. Wolf-Garten modified the original car for golf course use by removing the roof and customizing the body components to provide a precision turf trim.

The Zero has small, squat tires to protect greens and fairways from tire tracks and a sophisticated Electronic Stability Program that measures wheel slippage to ensure top traction on wet

grass.

The Zero will also help superintendents meet new noise ordinance standards because of its laser-beam technology. Morris said whirling blades create 80 percent of a typical riding mower's noise, so the laser cutting keeps the unit quiet.

There have been a few bugs along the way, Morris conceded. The Zero experienced minor problems during development, such as burning the blades of grass. The engineers solved the problems by shading the Zero's beams on slopes.

"The professional turf maintenance model is ready to go," Morris reports, adding that demonstration models will

## Quotable

**"Ely's genius, as demonstrated through his development of innovative golf equipment and unique marketing strategies, have clearly helped propel golf to new heights over the past 20 years."**

— Tim Finchem, PGA Tour commissioner, on the death of golf equipment icon Ely Callaway. (GolfDigest.com)

**"If a technique was good enough for Old Tom, who am I to change it?"**

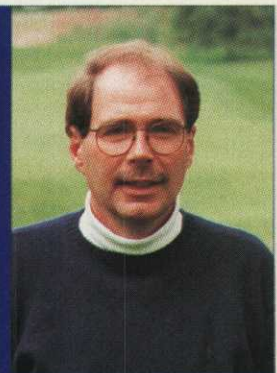
— Eddie Adams, head greenkeeper of the Old Course at St. Andrews, in a speech to Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents earlier this year.

**"We tend to forget as we're out playing golf that we're actually walking on a living cell, a live plant. We can control so many aspects of the course, but we can't control Mother Nature."**

— Bill Spence, veteran superintendent of The Country Club in Brookline (Mass.), telling it like it is. (The Boston Globe)

**"The Cold War ended when the reds were on the greens."**

— Robert Trent Jones Jr. commenting on his design in Moscow during a recent architecture seminar.



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quarter. The company cited high raw material prices, weaker growth in Europe and no sign of an economic downturn easing in the United States as reasons for its forecast.

#### **Uplink acquires XY Golf**

Austin, Texas-based Uplink, a provider of GPS-based distance measurement, communications, and course management systems to the golf industry, acquired the product line and intellectual property of XY Golf, maker of handheld GPS systems in the golf market.

#### **Dedman Sr. honored by SMU**

Dallas-based Southern Methodist University renamed its 75-year-old School of Law in honor of law school alumnus and ClubCorp founder, Robert H. Dedman Sr., his wife, Nancy, also an SMU graduate; and their family. The Dedmans pledged \$20 million to endow the school, which will be known as the Dedman School of Law. Second-generation family members are ClubCorp president and CEO Robert Dedman Jr., also an alumnus, and his wife, Rachel Redecker Dedman.

#### **Seed research awards Rutgers**

Seed Research of Oregon awarded Rutgers University nearly \$250,000, representing royalties for 23 grass seed varieties in 2000. Seed Research of Oregon President Mike Robinson began working with Rutgers professor Reed Funk in 1978. Funk was instrumental in helping Seed Research of Oregon establish its breeding program and develop a wide assortment of grass seed, including SR 4200, a perennial ryegrass.

### *An Open Letter to the Wildlife*



Dear Wildlife,

When are you going to take notice that we are not members of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program? Our acreage is a golfing sanctuary and therefore is subject to a high standard of etiquette, even from you. Therefore, I have the following advice for each of you:

**Mr. Fox** — You have beautiful fur and a wonderful little family, but I promise you we're not hiding anything under our newly changed hole plugs. So stop digging them up. Also, either rake the bunkers after you play in them or stay out.

**Mrs. Deer** — Your family is always a welcome sight strolling down the fairway (even if you are a high risk agent of disease). I must remind you, however, that if the greens are closed to members, they're closed to you, too. I was quite disturbed to find my No. 5 green, which had been submerged under water for 2.5 days, punctured with your hoof prints.

**Mr. Hawk** — We enjoy watching you soar effortlessly. You're polite and sit still when golfers putt. We also envy your hunting skills, but when will you realize that women golfers love baby bunnies — and don't like to find fur and guts spewed about the fairways. Please be more considerate.

**Mr. Snapping Turtle** — The sight of your menacing head peering out of the muck still makes the hair on the back of my neck stand on end. Although we don't discriminate against ugliness at our club, we do discriminate against turtles that rip up cart paths, bunkers and tees to deposit eggs. Knock it off.

**Mrs. Crow** — Please be advised that we have cut our pesticide use in an effort to be better stewards of our land — not to provide bigger, juicier grubs for your benefit. Respect our turf, or do the words "diazinon on a corn cob" ring a bell?

The last time your peers didn't heed our warning, we introduced them to a Border collie named Rocky, who has brought law and order to our course with minimal bloodshed.

As a sign of good faith, we have rewarded songbirds with wildflower patches, built an aquatic habitat for frogs and planted native grasses for rabbits to eat. It's now time for you to do something to show you appreciate our kindness. This is a golf course, not some shot-and-a-beer joint where you can carry on as you please.

If you feel you have been unjustly singled out, take note that separate letters have been sent to The Golfer and The Teen-age Vandal.

I hope this letter finds you in good health.

Yours in turf,  
The Superintendent

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*This lighthearted look at environmentally friendly golf courses was written by Doug Vogel, superintendent at Packanack GC in Wayne, N.J.*

## **Goldom Rakes In Awards**

*Goldom* magazine is recipient of several recent editorial awards. The magazine placed second in the best trade magazine category in the Ohio Excellence in Journalism Awards. *Goldom* also placed second in the Magazine of the Year competition sponsored by Advanstar Communications, which publishes *Goldom* and more than 100 other magazines.

In addition, *Goldom* staff members were honored for their work. Frank H. Andorka, recently promoted to managing editor, received a Grand Gold award from Advanstar Communications for his story, "Winds of Change," which explored the industry's white image. Graphic designers Lisa Bodnar and Lisa Lehman received a Grand Gold for Best Cover. Editor Larry Aylward and Andorka re-

ceived first-place honors in the Ohio Excellence in Journalism Awards and the Turf and Ornamental Communication Association (TOCA) awards. Aylward, Andorka, Bodnar, Lehman, publisher/editorial director Pat Jones and graphic designer Kim Traum also received merit awards for a total of 10 TOCA awards — more than any other magazine.

## Off The Fringe

### Stay Away From These ELF's in the Night

If you run into anyone from the Earth Liberation Front (ELF), the radical group responsible for setting fire to the University of Washington Center for Urban Horticulture in June, just wish that person a good day and walk away. You don't want to mess with anyone from the group, which calls itself "the burning rage of this dying planet."

We're all for standing up to what's right, but you're better off staying clear from these cowards. They're proud arsonists, and they're violent.

The ELF said in a news release that the fire it set was intended to destroy the office of Toby Bradshaw, a University of Washington associate professor and geneticist.

"[He] continues to unleash mutant genes into the environment that is [sic] certain to cause irreversible harm to forest ecosystems," the release said. "As long as universities continue to pursue this reckless 'science,' they run the risk of suffering severe losses. Our message remains clear: We are determined to stop genetic engineering."

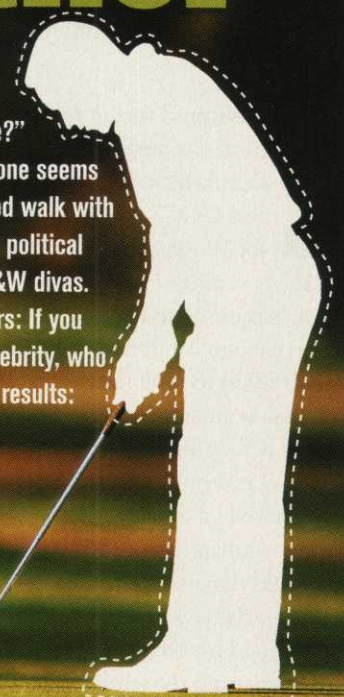
ELF has set fires elsewhere and wants everyone to know it's proud of its dastardly acts.

In its guide on setting fires with electrical timers, ELF states: "Never be satisfied with possible destruction or probable destruction. The objective of every action should be assured destruction."

Like we said, stay away from these invertebrates.

# Pick your Partner

Who wants to play golf with the host of "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?" Apparently no one. Everyone seems to want to spoil their good walk with dollar-drenched athletes, political powerhouses or wispy C&W divas. GCSAA asked its members: If you could play golf with a celebrity, who would it be. Here are the results:



Michael Jordan . . . . .18%	Bill Clinton . . . . .5%
George W. Bush . . . . .16%	Kevin Costner . . . . .5%
Faith Hill . . . . .15%	Jack Welch . . . . .1%
Clint Eastwood . . . . .10%	Oprah Winfrey . . . . .1%
Cameron Diaz . . . . .9%	Regis Philbin . . . . .0%

ILLUSTRATION: DAN BEEDY

## August In Turfgrass Trends:

*Editor's Note: Starting this month, Golfdom will publish monthly abstracts from its sister publication, Turfgrass Trends, an industry research digest for turf managers. To subscribe, call 888-527-7008 or visit [www.landscapemanagement.net](http://www.landscapemanagement.net).*



**FOLIAR FEEDING:** What constitutes true foliar feeding? The "real thing" should lower nutrient input and boost stress tolerance, says William D. Middleton,

founder and president of Emerald Isle Ltd., an organic chemical fertilizer company in Ann Arbor, Mich.

**BERMUDAGRASS CONTROL:** Ninety-nine percent is not good enough when it comes to bermudagrass control before a grow-

in. John Boyd, weed scientist at the University of Arkansas found that a Roundup + Fusilade combination outperformed either herbicide alone and

tank mixes of Roundup plus the other grass-specific herbicides. His warning: If bermudagrass control is not meticulous before a grow-in, you will pay later.

**CAREER DIRECTION:** Whether you work as a superintendent or a university researcher, studies have determined that you have about 33 years in your prime career. We usually take the reins on our careers about the age of 30, and wind down our work lives in our early 60s.

*Turfgrass Trends* Editor Curt Harler asks: How will you handle this year's installment?

# 'CGCS' Implies Something That Doesn't Always Deliver

**I** was introduced in my last column as a certified superintendent, which I'm not. I'm a former CGCS who was certified for 10 years from 1981 to 1991. My certification lapsed in 1992 when, because of an illness, I failed to obtain enough continuing education units (CEUs) to meet the re-certification requirement. I could have appealed to the GCSAA Board, but I asked myself: Do I really need to do that?

I realized I'd been, to some extent, taking seminars only to acquire CEUs so I could remain certified. Why should my employer pay for my time in my absence and my fees for travel, hotel and rental car if the seminar I'm attending isn't of direct and immediate relevance to my current position? What benefits does certification bring to the current employer of a competent superintendent?

Due to the nature of my job at that time, I hired and fired many superintendents. I also learned that the title, CGCS, doesn't provide an employer any certainty that the individual with the title can grow grass or manage a golf course maintenance operation.

The CGCS title is *not* intended to eliminate a potential employer's duty to fully review any candidate. Any potential employer would be negligent if it didn't thoroughly check all references that a job candidate provides.

There are certified superintendents with 10 jobs in 20 years that were not all climbing-the-ladder positions. There's a reason for that.

There are certified superintendents who are successful in their current jobs, but want to make the jump to courses that offer the big bucks. Despite all the GCSAA seminars they've taken, some will find they don't have a clue how to



master their new challenges other than by throwing money at them.

Most certified superintendents are among the better superintendents in their areas, but some are no better than someone available for \$30,000 or less.

In the employer's view, CGCS should stand for someone who can effectively and efficiently produce exceptional greens and an outstanding golf course daily — especially under stress, and most especially when others in similar circumstances can't do the job. Any employer would be happy to pay a premium price to be assured of a premium performance in crunch time. But why pay a premium for a certified superintendent if this isn't implicitly guaranteed?

This is the 800-pound gorilla that certification must pin before CGCS represents something other than the willingness to take yearly classes and

tests on somebody else's nickel.

The bottom line: CGCS implies something that it doesn't always deliver — and that's a long-term problem for GCSAA. Do other professional societies or associations have this problem? Have you ever read in the newspaper about a lawyer or a doctor who messed up? Such aberrations make the news because they are at least thought to be aberrations. Certified superintendents who get the ax don't make the trade publications often because it happens all the time.

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*Editor's Note: Mike Heacock, former vice president of agronomy and maintenance for American Golf Corp., fields your questions in his bi-monthly column. If you have a question, fire away. You can reach Heacock at: [mike.heacock@verizon.net](mailto:mike.heacock@verizon.net) or 310-849-5011.*

## Equal Treatment?

**F**or an organization that once derided Ben Wright for commenting on female anatomy in his golf commentary, the LPGA should examine its own media guide for clues to why he would make such comments.

As we thumbed through our LPGA 2001 Media Guide, we were shocked to see the types of items listed in the personal section: height, hair and eye colors, and hobbies, among other items that had little relevance to the player's golfing ability.

It took us a minute to figure out that we weren't reading some cheesy "Personals" ads in our local newspaper or the sidebar to a Playboy centerfold. Perhaps the LPGA should consider revising its own treatment of its players before accusing others of not taking them seriously.

— Frank H. Andorka Jr., Managing Editor