

The Package Deal

MANUFACTURERS DESIGN CONTAINERS WITH SUPERINTENDENTS IN MIND

By Joseph DiPaola

As any maker of laundry detergent will attest, consumer decisions are often subjective and not based only on practical needs. Many times, we choose a certain product because we like the look or feel of its packaging. While that strategy may be appropriate in the grocery store, it



takes on critical importance for superintendents. When superintendents choose a fungicide, insecticide, herbicide or plant growth regulator, it's important to choose the proper packaging because an improper decision could affect worker safety, product performance and the health and beauty of their courses.

Companies decide how to package a new product or new formulation of an existing product based upon its use by

superintendents. Some companies actually send its packaging engineers to the field to discuss packaging concerns and product-use modes with end-users. Today, packaging is a science, complete with seemingly endless testing and evaluations conducted by packaging engineers with degrees in the field. Scientists must evaluate handling, stacking, accidental dropping, shelf life, among other factors, before a package enters the market place.

Manufacturers have entire departments dedicated to this task, which must ensure that packaging exceeds the legal requirements for labeling, transportation and storage. Often, the product itself will dictate a packaging decision. A particular packaging option might be chosen because it's the right weight for pouring or mixing. For example, the chemical's form (liquid vs. dry), its formulation and its stability during storage could limit liquids to small containers so superintendents can agitate the product easily before use.

Both manufacturer and consumer are concerned with a number of physical aspects of product packaging. Storage space can be a scarce resource around a golf course maintenance facility so manufacturers ask themselves: Are the storage requirements of space, temperature and humidity reasonable? Additionally, the packaging for some products must protect against exposure to air, moisture and temperature extremes.

Another consideration is, of course, the aesthetics, which

Quotable

"A narrow strip of mown grass that separates two groups of golfers looking for lost balls in the rough."

— *Steff Boe, wife of Florida superintendent Joe Boe, relating a definition of "fairway."*

"To a degree, I view my profession as a beauty contest. We grow roses."

— *John Szklinski, superintendent of Southern Hills CC in Tulsa, Okla., on his livelihood.*

"They have a hard time standing around when a foursome is playing through because they want to keep working."

— *Steve Campbell, director of agronomy at Las Campanas Sante Fe in Sante Fe, N.M., on his hard-working Hispanic employees.*

take into account the time constraints and labor issues of average superintendents. The clean and distinctive packaging of most chemicals should speed the recognition and location of them on the shelves. Clear labeling and instructions can also minimize the likelihood of someone making an application with the wrong product.

As with almost everything on a golf course, environmental considerations are important and influence packaging. In order to minimize potential spillage and worker exposure, packaging departments spend hours designing packaging that is easy to handle.

The final challenge in designing packaging is container disposal. The logistics of returning empties can involve significant expense, time and storage space. Container disposal is a challenge and expense, which has resulted in several product packages that are returnable and recyclable.

As consumers, superintendents may take much of this effort for granted. That's the point. When we design packaging for our products, we want them to be convenient. As a result, our customers spend less time thinking about the handling and disposal of chemical packaging and more time how to use the product successfully.

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