

## Business briefs

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### **GCSAA teams with XS Inc. for e-commerce program**

GCSAA Communications, a subsidiary of GCSAA, has entered into an agreement with Raleigh, N.C.-based XS Inc. to bring e-commerce to superintendents. The program began with a soft launch in May so that "GCSAA and XS can work with buyers and sellers to develop the best possible service prior to making a decision on a full-scale Internet commerce presence," according to GCSAA.

### **Eco Soil merges with PHC**

Rancho Bernardo, Calif.-based Eco Soil Systems merged with PHC (Plant Health Care), a privately held company with manufacturing headquarters in Pittsburgh.

Eco Soil is the surviving corporation in the merger and PHC stockholders will receive shares of Eco Soil stock. Both companies manufacture biological products that are alternatives to chemical pesticides and fertilizers.

### **Bayer changes name**

Bayer Garden & Professional Care is now known as Bayer Corp., Professional Care. The company said the new name better reflects the company's increased focus on the professional service provider.

### **Bush Hog building new facility**

To meet growing demand for its golf course maintenance equipment, Bush Hog will construct a new 330,000-square-foot manufacturing facility in Jonesborough, Tenn. Bush Hog is based in Selma, Ala.

### **Disney courses receive Audubon designation**

Audubon International designated the five championship golf courses at Walt Disney World Resort as Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuaries.

"We have a strong commitment to maintaining the balance between golf and the environment," says Gary Meyers, manager of sports turf and golf course maintenance at Walt Disney.

# Shopping for Hand-held Power Equipment

## DO YOU KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR?

**H**ow many hours a week would you say your hand-held power equipment is in use, especially during your peak season? Are you ever worried that it's going to break?

To get the most out of your equipment — and your crew — you should purchase hand-held power equipment with these key factors in mind:

- Evaluate the durability of the product to ensure a good long-term investment.
- Test the power and power-to-weight ratio for maximum performance.
- Review important, and often overlooked, ergonomic features that lend to a better personal working environment — leading to reduced fatigue, increased worker productivity and improved worker satisfaction.

Generally, you should purchase equipment and accessories from manufacturers that spend a lot of time collaborating with professional users. As a professional, you benefit from the hours of hands-on research that goes into designing and manufacturing equipment to perform powerfully and comfortably.

### **Durability**

Your crew works hard, which means your equipment takes a beating. Ensuring that your equipment will run long and strong depends on your initial purchase decision and your ongoing maintenance. While many manufacturers use the words "tough" and "durable," take a closer look at the equipment to decide for yourself. Here are a few examples:

- How are the parts assembled? For example, check out the crankshaft. A forged connecting rod and forged three-piece crankshaft will provide longer life.
- When purchasing a string trimmer,



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**Hand-held equipment should be easy to use so it doesn't tire out your workers.**

look for a unit with fully enclosed throttle cables to reduce snagging and breaking when handling and storing the equipment. Also look for a solid steel or a tubed drive shaft to provide more durability and less vibration than a cable drive shaft.

- Does the equipment carry a good warranty? Buy from a manufacturer that backs its products.

### **Don't sacrifice power**

Look for equipment that provides the highest power-to-weight ratio available. Perhaps the equipment is light enough to handle, but does it provide enough power to accomplish all the tasks it's intended to do? For example, a power-to-weight ratio above .18 kw/kg means you've got high power combined with lightweight. Anything above 2.0 is exceptional.

In addition, you'll want to be mindful of recent regulations to reduce engine emissions. Some manufacturers have sacrificed power and increased weight in effort to be compliant. Look

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# Off The Fringe

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for a low-emission engine with the power you need and a low weight that is comfortable for the user.

## Ergonomic considerations

Ergonomically advanced equipment, including many of today's hand-held chain saws, trimmers, brushcutters and blowers, fight vibration and fatigue through the use of an anti-vibration system that isolates the engine from the handle.

When purchasing a string trimmer, be sure it has an anti-vibration feature. Take a close look at the handle mechanism. Can it be adjusted for the different people who use it? An adjustable loop handle can slide up or down the shaft to provide comfort for users of varying height.

Finally, always look for unique user-comfort features that can maximize productivity. For instance, look for a harness with good weight distribution on a backpack blower. Typically, a backpack blower hangs from the operator's shoulders. However, units that feature a hip pad distribute a good portion of the weight onto the operator's hips, like a true hiking backpack, which reduces some of the weight on the shoulders. That's an important benefit to the operator saddled with the weight of a two-cycle engine on a warm summer day.

*The author of this story, Mark Michaels, is the business unit manager of hand-held products for Husqvarna.*

# All Spikes Not Created Equal

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY SURVEY SHOWS DIFFERENCES IN ALTERNATIVE PRODUCTS

By Frank H. Andorka Jr.

Researchers at Michigan State University concluded that the green-friendliness of alternative spikes relates directly to the material used to manufacture them.

Thom Nikolai, the turfgrass education specialist at MSU who oversaw the study, said alternative spike manufacturers must find materials flexible enough to be green-friendly while still providing adequate traction.

"The 8-millimeter metal spike damaged the turf by pulling it out of the ground," Nikolai said. "If alternative spikes do the same thing, what difference does the type of spike make?"

Softspikes, the original manufac-



**Flexible material is key to a green-friendly spike.**

turer of alternative spikes and maker of the Black Widow cleats, funded the 18-month study, which concluded earlier this year. Last year, the first generation of Black Widows alarmed superintendents because the damage they caused eerily resembled metal spike damage. "We wanted an independent study done that compared all the alternative spikes, including our reformulated Black Widows," said John Hyman, Softspikes CEO.

To create a standard test protocol, Nikolai and his researchers observed

wear patterns on golf course greens around the country. Then they simulated the patterns on their test greens with volunteers wearing the same size shoes.

"Other people had done other studies, but there was no common platform from which to work," Hyman said. "Therefore, the results varied depending on the size of the shoe."

Nikolai's study concluded that no brand on the market perfectly marries traction with turf friendliness.

Hyman said Softspikes will involve superintendents in future design plans. To achieve that goal, Softspikes created a superintendents' advisory panel earlier this year.

## golf GIZMOS

Superintendents were polled as to what constitutes the most valuable item of personal technology they use at work. They said:

Personal computer:

41%

Two-way radio:

37%

Cell phone:

17%

FAX:

1%

PDA (Palm Pilot, etc.):

1%

Pager:

1%

Crystal ball:

0% (C'mon, 'fess up!)



SOURCE: GCSAA

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