

# Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

## Business briefs

### Ryegrass supplies short; bentgrass back in line

It's no secret. Supplies of ryegrass will be short this spring.

"We all know the reasons (for the shortage)," said Brian Muntz, regional sales manager for Seed Research of Oregon. "It's because of a lack of carryover and a poor-yielding crop mostly because of the weather."

Experts also point to the fact that many Oregon seed producers voluntarily took their fields out of production when prices were low, reducing the overall ryegrass acreage in Oregon.

"What we have in the valley will be gone," Muntz said. "The better varieties will be the first to go."

In the bentgrass market, inventories are back in line and prices have stabilized, Muntz said. "But there isn't as much of a surplus as there was a couple of years ago," he added.

### LESCO restructures

LESCO announced a strategy to restructure debt and strengthen its balance sheet by the end of the first quarter of 2004, including:

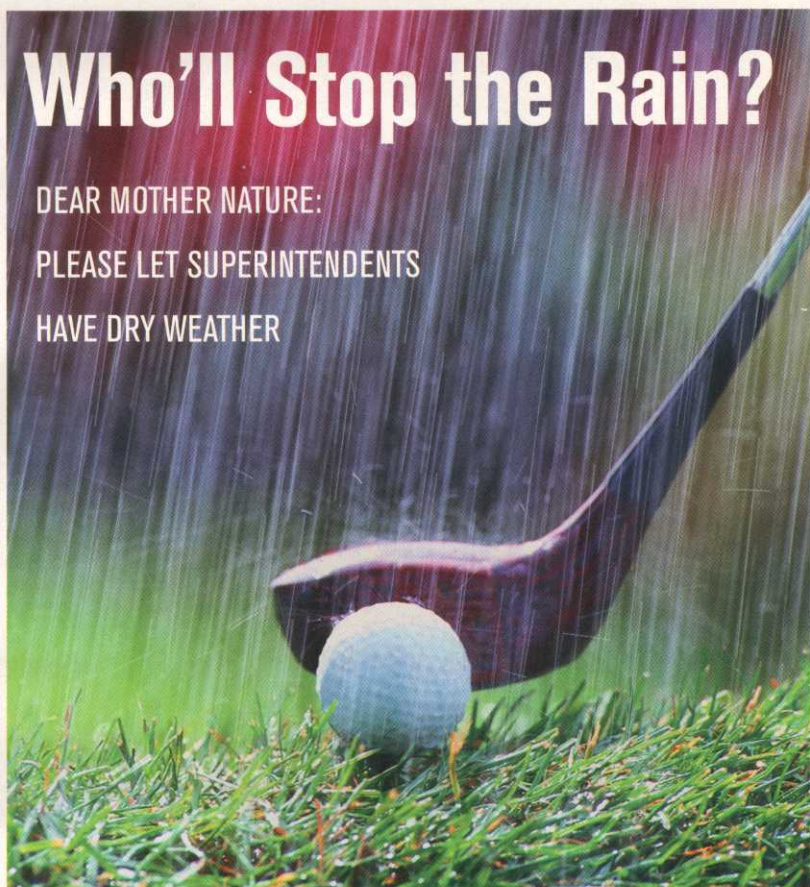
- the sale of its receivables portfolio to GE Business Credit Services (GEBCS) and outsourcing of its private label credit program;
- refinancing of its revolving credit facility;
- buyout of its interest rate swap agreement; and
- buyback of its outstanding preferred stock.

Under the terms of its agreements with GEBCS, the company will sell its existing accounts receivables portfolio to GEBCS for about \$55 million and will outsource its private label credit program through the GE

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## Who'll Stop the Rain?

DEAR MOTHER NATURE:  
PLEASE LET SUPERINTENDENTS  
HAVE DRY WEATHER



DIGITAL STOCK

By Larry Aylward, Editor

**W**ith spring around the corner, many superintendents are praying to the golf course gods for dry weather — and for good reason. Dry weather could equal good business, which could equal fatter maintenance budgets and maybe even year-end bonuses.

The weather, especially the abundance of rain, wreaked havoc on courses' businesses last year, mostly in the Midwest and Northeast.

"The biggest player in decreased

rounds (last) year was Mother Nature," said Michelle Frazier, certified superintendent of Boston Hills Country Club in Hudson, Ohio.

"The weather in the Northeast (last) season had a major affect on business," said Scott Wohlers, superintendent of Arrowhead Golf Club in Spencerport, N.Y. "For us, we didn't start to have nice weather until mid-June. We've had poor springs for two years in a row. It's almost impossible to recover lost income."

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## Business briefs

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platform. All proceeds will be used to reduce outstanding debt. LESCO expects to incur a one-time charge of \$2 million to \$3 million in connection with the agreement.

"In combination, these agreements will allow us to reduce debt by more than \$50 million and increase our financial flexibility, which is critical for long-term growth," said Michael P. DiMino, LESCO's president and CEO.

### **Certis USA distributing Basamid**

Basamid soil fumigant is now available for use in golf course renovation in North America from Certis USA LLC. Basamid, used prior to turfgrass installation to control weeds, harmful bacteria and soil-borne diseases, nematodes and soil-dwelling insect pests, was recently sold by BASF to Kanesho Soil Treatment SPRL of Brussels, Belgium.

Kanesho Soil Treatment has granted the North American distribution rights for Basamid to Certis USA.

### **E-Z-GO upgrades ISO certification**

E-Z-GO Textron has changed its Quality Management System to the new International Standardization Organization (ISO) 9001:2000 version. ISO certification is a model for quality assurance in design, development, production, installation and servicing.

Bureau Veritas Quality International (BVQI) of Jamestown, N.Y., the ISO registrar, conducted a final audit of E-Z-GO's Augusta, Ga., plant in early October, subjecting the company's operations to a rigorous inspection, according to E-Z-GO.

### **Medallion looks to expand**

Medallion Golf, a new affiliate of New York-based Meadowbrook Golf Group, is looking to expand its portfolio from three to six in the next year.

According to the *Orlando Business Journal*, Medallion is preparing to spend \$100 million to buy equity interests in golf courses across the country. The report says three golf courses are already in the portfolio and that three more are under active consideration.

## Before You Cut Down That Tree...

By Jami Pfirman

**T**he foundation of any golf course is the turf. From playability to appearance, the health of a course's turf affects everything. By maintaining turf health, lush courses attract not only players but attention as well.

To maintain turf health, superintendents do their best to remove all hazards, from miniscule weeds and grubs

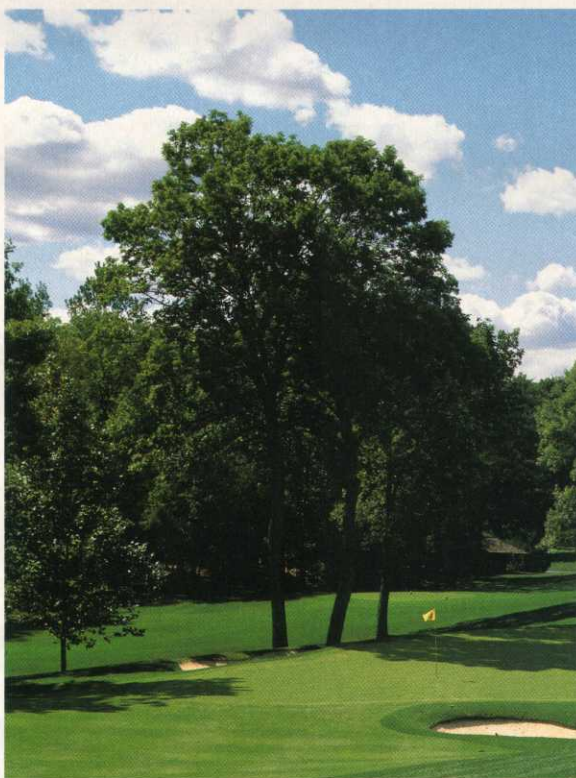
and many superintendents will send crews out to take down numerous trees during winter. Before handing over a chainsaw, however, The Davey Tree Expert Co. recommends exercising caution. Haphazard tree removal is dangerous to the course and the crew.

First, taking down a tree will alter your course dramatically. The look and playability will be affected. Other practices, such as routine pruning, may help improve turf condition.

Pruning, when done properly, will allow the necessary light and air movement to reach turf grasses once starved in the shade of a tree.

Second, tree removal can be incredibly dangerous to crew members who have little or no training. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recognizes the danger involved with tree removal and pruning by untrained personnel. OSHA has mandated that any person doing tree care or maintenance must be fully trained in accordance with the American Standards Institute Z133.1, which is the safety standard that includes pruning and removals.

By employing a trained and insured arborist, course managers can eliminate some of the danger to employees and the course. Trained arborists can assess a tree's existing conditions and suggest an appropriate course of action to protect turf and trees.



MIKE KLEMM

**Consider consulting a trained arborist before you make a decision to cut down a tree.**

to large threats like trees. While the decision to rid courses of grubs and weeds is an easy one, trees pose a conundrum. Trees affect course play and appearance. But they also cause shady patches and compete with the turf for nutrients, often causing damage to greens. For those reasons, many course managers opt to completely remove problem trees.

Removing the trees may seem like a logical solution to alleviate turf woes,

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