

Off The Fringe

It Wasn't About Shutting Up Bill Rose, Scotts' Schwartz Says

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

The Scotts Miracle-Gro Co.'s recent acquisition of certain brands and assets from Turf-Seed Inc. was not about silencing Turf-Seed founder Bill Rose, who has been a vocal critic of Scotts' development of Roundup Ready Creeping Bentgrass (RRCB), a genetically modified turf now under consideration for deregulation by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, said Mark Schwartz, senior vice president and general manager of grass seed for Scotts Miracle-Gro.

"This isn't about shutting up Bill," Schwartz said. "I don't feel like there's a need to [shut him up]."

Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass has sparked controversy the past few years. Rose has repeatedly voiced his concerns about the glyphosate-resistant turf cross-breeding with non-glyphosate-resistant turf.

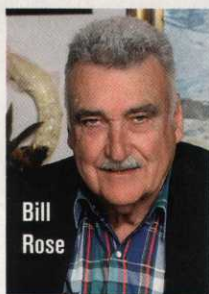
In June, Marysville, Ohio-based Scotts Miracle-Gro announced the acquisition from Hubbard, Ore.-based Turf-Seed, a producer of commercial turfgrasses for more than 35 years. The purchase price for Turf-Seed's assets and payments, under the six-year term agreements, is expected to total about \$30 million to \$35 million, according to Scotts Miracle-Gro.

Under the agreements, Scotts Miracle-Gro acquires certain assets of Turf-Seed, including its brands, turfgrass varieties and intellectual property. Scotts also enters into a multi-year collaboration, including relationships with several entities controlled by Rose. These agreements include Pure Seed Testing, Roselawn Seed and Rose Agri-Seed.

Schwartz said he didn't expect Rose, who was developing his own transgenic turfgrass called HybriGene, to sit back and watch as Scotts developed and tested RRCB a few years ago. Rose's complaints about RRCB were just "competitive instinct," Schwartz said.

"He has a point of view from a competitive point of view and an environmental impact point of view," Schwartz added. "He's certainly entitled to his point of view, and I respect it."

Schwartz will lead the combined seed business. Rose will serve as chairman of the Scotts Grass Seed Advisory Council, which will help guide the grass seed business and provide strategic direction in the area of innovations and marketing.



Quotable

"It's important to the country club that the lake gets cleaned up for people who water ski on it or have to look at it."

— Bob Senseman, the superintendent at Oswego Lake Country Club in Lake Oswego, Ore., who has stopped applying fertilizer with phosphorus to the course.
(Source: *The Oregonian*)

"Our products are vital to public health protection and property protection. And sometimes the American public tends to forget that."

— Allen James, president of the Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment, on the importance of pesticides, which have been underrated by many Americans

"I don't want to discuss politics."

— Matthew Yount, superintendent of English Turn Golf & Country Club, when asked how he thought President Bush handled the devastation brought on by Hurricane Katrina last summer.

Schwartz said he and Rose "buted heads a few times" in the past few years regarding Rose's objections over RRCB. "But to me it was never personal," Schwartz said. "It was just rhetoric."

Schwartz also said that he and Rose have formed a solid relationship. "Bill and I have become close friends over the last year, and we have already begun to partner closely in making our great business even better."

Rose could not be reached for comment.

The agreement between the two companies does not include Rose's HybriGene business. But Schwartz said, "We may or may not end up working together closely on that in the future." T-2-Green, a separate entity from Turf-Seed, is also not part of the deal. But Schwartz said: "I'd love to work with them to see if we can do some good as far as synergizing and growing the Penn bentgrass franchise and varieties."

A few weeks after the Turf-Seed deal, Scotts announced it had acquired certain brands and assets from Albany, Ore.-based Landmark Seed Co. Under the agreement, Scotts acquired certain assets of Landmark Seed, including its brands, turfgrass varieties and intellectual property.