

Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

Business briefs

Jacobsen sells lines

Textron Inc. announced that the Jacobsen business unit has sold its commercial grounds care product lines to Commercial Grounds Care, an affiliate of Schiller-Pfeiffer Inc. in Southampton, Pa. The sale includes the Jacobsen Johnson Creek, Wisconsin manufacturing facility, a leased service parts facility in Dalton, Ohio, and products branded BOB-CAT, Bunton, Ryan, Steiner and Brouwer.

The sale of the commercial grounds care product lines allows Jacobsen to heighten the focus on its golf and professional turf-related markets with equipment manufactured in Charlotte, N.C., and Ipswich, England.

"Jacobsen has made a strategic decision to focus on its professional turf business which includes golf course, sports turf and municipal grounds equipment," said Dan Wilkinson, president of Jacobsen. "Although the commercial grounds care division offers strong brand names and an excellent facility in Johnson Creek, it is not consistent with Jacobsen's long-term growth strategy."

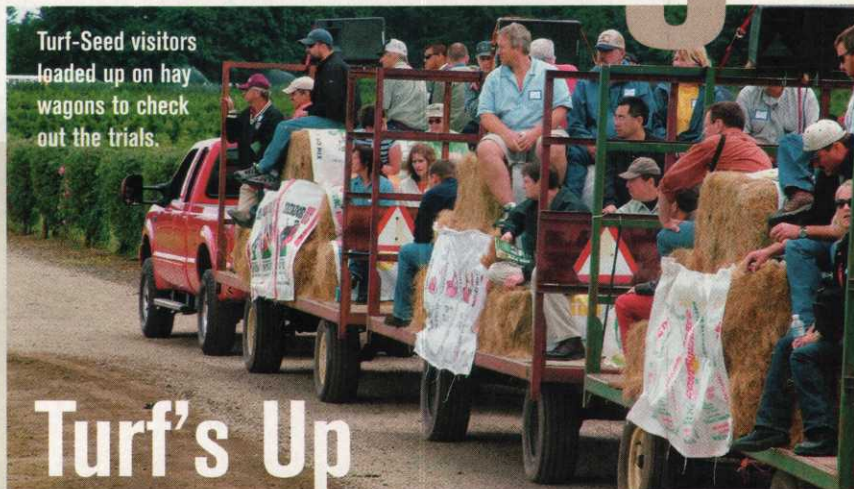
Target honors stack

Malcolm Stack would have loved it — a golf tournament in his honor. More than 140 golfers turned out for Target Specialty Products' seventh annual Charity Golf Tournament in July at Tustin Ranch Golf Club in Tustin, Calif., to honor the life of Stack, the founder of Bell Laboratories, Inc., who died in April after battling lung cancer.

Stack's wife, Debra, and daughter, Linda Stack Hughes, were among the golfers participating. After the tournament, the Malcolm Stack Perpetual Trophy Award was given to the tournament's low-gross foursome, includ-

Briefs continue on page 18

Turf-Seed visitors loaded up on hay wagons to check out the trials.



Turf's Up

GRASS FANS FLOCK TO OREGON FOR SEED COMPANY TOURS

By Stephanie Ricca

Turns out, it *is* interesting to watch the grass grow. I also picked up a few more key points about grass biology, pinot noir and the ongoing discussion over genetically modified turfseed during this year's seed company tours in Oregon held in June.

Beatles fans go to Liverpool. Grass fans go to Oregon. The fertile Willamette Valley is home to a handful of the most productive seed companies (large and small) that research and breed, grow test plots and cultivate the grass varieties that end up on lawns and golf courses across the country.

Every few years the companies open their doors to their distributors, research partners and members of the media to learn more about the science behind the green carpets. A lot of pure research goes on out here, but like any agricultural crop, it's easy to see that what starts in the field today ends up on the table tomorrow, so to speak.

Seed companies work ahead, and

plan and test varieties for the next National Turfgrass Evaluation Program trial. They cultivate proven winners and hope the weather holds out for a good crop.

At Seed Research of Oregon, Dr. Leah Brilman spoke about the digital imaging programs that Drs. Mike Richardson and Doug Karcher are developing and testing at the University of Arkansas. These small digital "boxes" can gauge turf coverage, density and disease via imaging programs. The group is working to fine-tune these programs and translate the data gathered into useful terms, but the possibilities are endless, Brilman said.

Researchers with the company are also on quest to develop a protein-based test to determine annual vs. perennial ryegrasses at the point of germination. This knowledge would make the shipping process much more efficient.

Up the road at Pickseed West, I tried to apply my new turf knowledge to distinguish ryes, blues and tall fescues on their neatly mown plots. I'm getting there.

Continued on page 20

Off The Fringe

Who Will Win?

POLITICAL ANALYST CHARLIE COOK
OFFERS UP HIS VIEW OF ELECTION

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

You probably care, whether greatly or mildly, about who wins the upcoming elections in November. That's because whoever wins — and which party ends up controlling the House and the Senate — could impact the industry in which you're employed.



But Charlie Cook said he doesn't care who is victorious in November. The veteran Washington, D.C.-based political analyst says he just wants to see some good old-fashioned excitement unfold.

"I just want to hear shoulder pads crack," Cook told members of the trade press earlier this year during a speech at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington as part of a Media Summit presented by BASF.

Cook said he can't predict who will win control of the House and the Senate in the U.S. Congress.

"I'm supposed to have a real good idea of what's going to happen, but I don't," said Cook, editor and publisher

of "The Cook Political Report" and columnist for the "National Journal." "This is a really confounding election."

Cook examined the election from two perspectives — the macro political approach and the micro political approach. When you look at it from the macro political approach — or from top to bottom — Cook said Republicans appear to be in eminent trouble.

"They're toast," Cook said. "This is going to be a truly horrendous election for them."

But when one looks at the election from the micro political approach, or from the bottom to the top, it appears the Democrats will have a difficult time gaining control of the House and the Senate. "When you look at it from that approach, where you look at each of the 435 House races and each of the 33 Senate races, it doesn't look so bad for the Republicans," Cook said. "They will probably lose some House and Senate seats, but they'll probably hold their majorities."

Several additional factors could and probably will impact each political approach, Cooke noted. When looking at the election from a macro political approach, the job-approval ratings of Congress and President Bush could prick the Republicans. Cook said the Gallup Organization has found that when Congress' job approval is more than 40 percent, the net seat change in the House is about five seats out of 435 seats. "That's nothing," Cook added. But when the job

approval rating is under 40 percent, the average turnover is a 29-seat loss, he said.

Then Cook recited several recent job-approval ratings for Congress from various polls. There was a 35, a 27, a 28 and a 23. "And that's just not the liberal news media speaking," Cook said. "Fox News had Congress at 25."

Mid-term election outcomes are also affected by a current president's approval rating, Cook said. Then he recited recent approval ratings for Bush, including a 32, a 33 and a 39. (Bush's approval ratings have dropped even more lately.)

In a president's second term, a 48 to a 53 rating is "OK," Cook said. A rating in the mid 40s is "Rodney Dangerfield/No Respect" territory, he added. A rating in the high 30s is "toxic," and a rating in the low 30s is "radioactive," Cook said. A below-30 rating is what Cook called "Nixon land."

With the Republican-controlled Congress and Bush receiving bad ratings, there's a good chance the Democrats could re-energize and reorganize to win back the House, Cook said.

Of course, most of Bush's low approval rating stems from the war in Iraq. "It's like a wet blanket hanging over the president and the party," he said.

Still, when examining the situation from the micro political approach, Cook said Democrats will need to run the table to win back the House and the Senate. "It sounds like a big feat for the Democrats to pull off," Cook said.

Continued from page 12

Regarding bentgrass, the showpiece at Turf-Seed later in the week was the putting green. More than a few people slipped off a shoe or two to feel the grass.

Besides the explanation of current research on drought tolerance in Kentucky blues, the talk around Turf-Seed was its acquisition by the Scotts Miracle-Gro Co. Sure, mergers and acquisitions happen all the time, but this one has a bit of a back story: Turf-Seed founder Bill Rose has been a critic of Scotts' development of Roundup Ready creeping bentgrass, a genetically modified turf under consideration for deregulation.

Tours that week concluded at Turf Merchants Inc. TMI had a theme for its event — GSI: Grass Seed Investigation. In addition to a tour of the turf plots, participants could visit six different stations intended to separate fact from fiction regarding such topics as Texas bluegrass, DNA fingerprinting of Kentucky bluegrass, and the proper testing for annual and intermediate ryegrass contamination in perennial ryegrasses.

Oh, and about the pinot noirs? Just try one and you'll know what I'm talking about.

Ricca is managing editor for Landscape Management magazine.