

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Syngenta Allies With Deere

Syngenta Professional Products reached a distributor agreement and an agency agreement with John Deere Landscapes for Syngenta's products beginning Oct. 1. The agreements make Syngenta's product available at John Deere Landscapes, which operates more than 630 branches in the United States.

"This agreement allows us to increase the availability of Syngenta products and services in the golf and lawn care markets," Syngenta Lawn and Garden Head Steve Spain said in a prepared statement. "Our philosophy and direction on brand and value aligns nicely with John Deere Landscapes' national presence and brand strategy."

Steve Vincent, John Deere Golf's North American sales manager for agronomic products, said, "We feel this new alliance strengthens our product line and helps provide our customers with more solutions to effectively manage their golf courses."

FarmLinks Breaks New Ground

The folks at FarmLinks in Sylacauga, Ala., have been busy building new offices and an education pavilion.

For several years, "FarmLinks has envisioned a facility designed to enhance the educational environment for the benefit of guests and partners in The Experience at FarmLinks," according to a company press release. The education pavilion is scheduled for completion this month.

The indoor/outdoor design of the facility is created to work in harmony with the environment and to offer hands-on educational programs. The education pavilion features

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Superintendents and others confer during John Deere Feedback.

What Do They Think?

SUPERINTENDENTS DO THE TALKING AT JOHN DEERE FEEDBACK

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

Considering his company's mantra — "Nothing runs like a Deere" — Todd Link is one busy man. That's because Link, the senior engineer of fairway mowers for John Deere Golf, is inventing new machinery that *runs* on less fuel.

With maintenance budgets blown because of high fuel prices, golf course superintendents are seeking more fuel-efficient equipment for mowing. Hence, they're counting on people like Link to design equipment to meet their needs.

This was evident at John Deere Feedback, an event the company held recently at its headquarters in Moline, Ill. The company invited superintendents from around the nation to test its latest equipment innovations on a local golf course and to get their opinions on what they need most these

days in the wonderful world of golf course maintenance.

Of course, "fuel efficiency" were two words muttered often by superintendents at the event. And Link heard them loud and clear.

"Now that fuel prices have gone up, you can't expect them to go down," Link said. "So we're always looking to make a mower more efficient and run at lower RPMs so it burns less fuel."

Link smiled a tad when asked if he feels pressured to deliver the antithesis of a fuel-guzzling fairway mower. Sure there's pressure, he said, but it's fun.

"It's an exciting time to be in the job," Link added.

It's no secret that Deere and other manufacturers are delving into electric and hybrid technology. And while the power density of an electric-drive system is not where it needs to be, it will be in time, Link said.

Shawn Emerson, director of agronomy at Desert Mountain Golf

Club in Scottsdale, Ariz., was on hand at the event to see the latest that John Deere had to offer. Emerson believes there will be some big changes in mowing equipment in five years, including more affordable electric technology. Emerson said the sudden increase in fuel prices is pushing the automotive industry to move faster toward electric technology, which might quicken a trickle-down effect to the specialty equipment industry, including golf course maintenance.

Increased fuel prices, by the way, have forced Emerson to reduce fairway mowings this year. His crew normally uses about 12,000 gallons of fuel a year; the crew will use 10,000 gallons this year.

George Calabro, director of golf maintenance for El Conquistador Country Club in Tucson, Ariz., has also reduced mowing to save fuel. "We're a 45-hole facility, and we average between \$6,500 and \$7,000 a month in fuel costs," he says. "We have to do what we can to save."

Hence, Calabro said more alternative-fuel equipment, such as biodiesel, is needed. "It's the wave of the future."

Being in the desert, improved irrigation technology is also a must for this golf course, Calabro said. "Almost every dollar I spend goes to improving the efficiency of my irrigation system," he added.

Greg Moore, a superintendent and golf construction specialist for On Course Construction in Hamden, Conn., said he wants equipment manufacturers like Deere to eliminate potential small maintenance problems that can snowball into catastrophic costs. That might mean making sure a \$13 bearing on a mower doesn't go bad, which could lead to other more-expensive components getting damaged.

Moore, whose company operates five courses, also said he wants and needs more-versatile equipment.

"If I'm going to spend \$25,000 on [a piece of equipment], I need it to be

versatile," he says. "I can't stand to see equipment just sitting around during the off months."

At John Deere Feedback, there was a mutual sense of respect between the creator of the equipment and its users. While superintendents can go on for hours to talk about what they need in new technology, they appreciate what people like Link are doing to appease their needs.

Link, on the other hand, says he and other John Deere engineers couldn't do what they do without superintendents' feedback.

"We can't figure out what a golf course needs by sitting behind a desk," Link said. "We need to pick superintendents' brains." ■

Going for the Gusto

ILLINOIS SUPERINTENDENT TESTS HIS GAME AGAINST SOME OF GOLF'S GREATEST PLAYERS

By David Frabotta, Senior Editor

I'm a one-time trunk slammer on the Senior Tour, but I was there," says a proud Tom Robinson, superintendent at Ravinia Green Country Club in Riverwoods, Ill.

Trunk slamming is a touring professional's way of saying he didn't make the cut, but for Robinson, just playing in the U.S. Senior Open was a thrill that won't fade any time soon.

"I'm blessed to have gone through that event," he says. "It was unbelievable to hang out with golf's greats, like (Tom) Watson, (Tom) Kite and (Hale) Irwin. I walked to the range with Fuzzy (Zoeller). It's like every kid's dream."

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an innovative, high-tech presentation theater that will open up to an outdoor research and demonstration area. The theater can also transform into focus group rooms that will provide a ready-made setting for gathering information from golf course superintendents and other visiting groups.

"This is a very exciting time for us," said David Pursell, CEO of FarmLinks. "The new pavilion will be a great addition to our educational programming. ... The facility will also provide our partners with exhibit space and an ideal research and testing ground for obtaining consistent, immediate feedback while developing long-lasting relationships with end users."

Under construction alongside the education pavilion is FarmLinks' new headquarters, which will contain offices and conference rooms. ■

"Gusto" — *Continued from page 15*

Robinson, who has played in four other USGA events as an amateur in the past, qualified for the 2008 U.S. Senior Open by winning the sectional qualifier at Strawberry Creek in Kenosha, Wis., on July 1. The Senior Open took place at The Broadmoor Club in Colorado Springs, Colo., from July 28 through Aug. 3.

The 32-year golf course maintenance veteran says his putting inevitably led to his demise.

"The setup was as hard as it gets, and it really magnifies the flaws in your game, mine being putting. I was tied for 14th in drives and 144th in putting," he says with a chuckle.

Robinson is a scratch golfer who considered becoming a touring professional on the Champions Tour when he turned 50 five years ago, but

then he decided spending 28 weeks on the road each year wasn't the kind of lifestyle he wanted to live.

"I figured I had a real job maintaining 150 acres," he says.

But that real job won't stop him from pursuing more competitive golf tournaments. Now that he's 55 years old, he can qualify for U.S. Senior Amateur events, and he plans to try to qualify for next year's Senior Open, which will be held at Crooked Stick Golf Club in Carmel, Ind.

But regardless of his outcome, Robinson will cherish rubbing elbows with some of golf's greatest players.

"The aura of it all, seeing the leader board and having my name up with all the greats, it was quite an accomplishment, and I'm going to play more tournament golf." ■

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Money Topic

DOLLAR SPOT DOMINATES DISCUSSION

AT OHIO STATE/OHIO TURFGRASS FIELD DAY

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

If I had a nickel for every time someone mentioned dollar spot at the recent Turfgrass Research Field Day sponsored by The Ohio State University (OSU) and the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation (OTF), I'd have enough money to make fungicide applications on my lawn for two years to battle the dreaded disease.

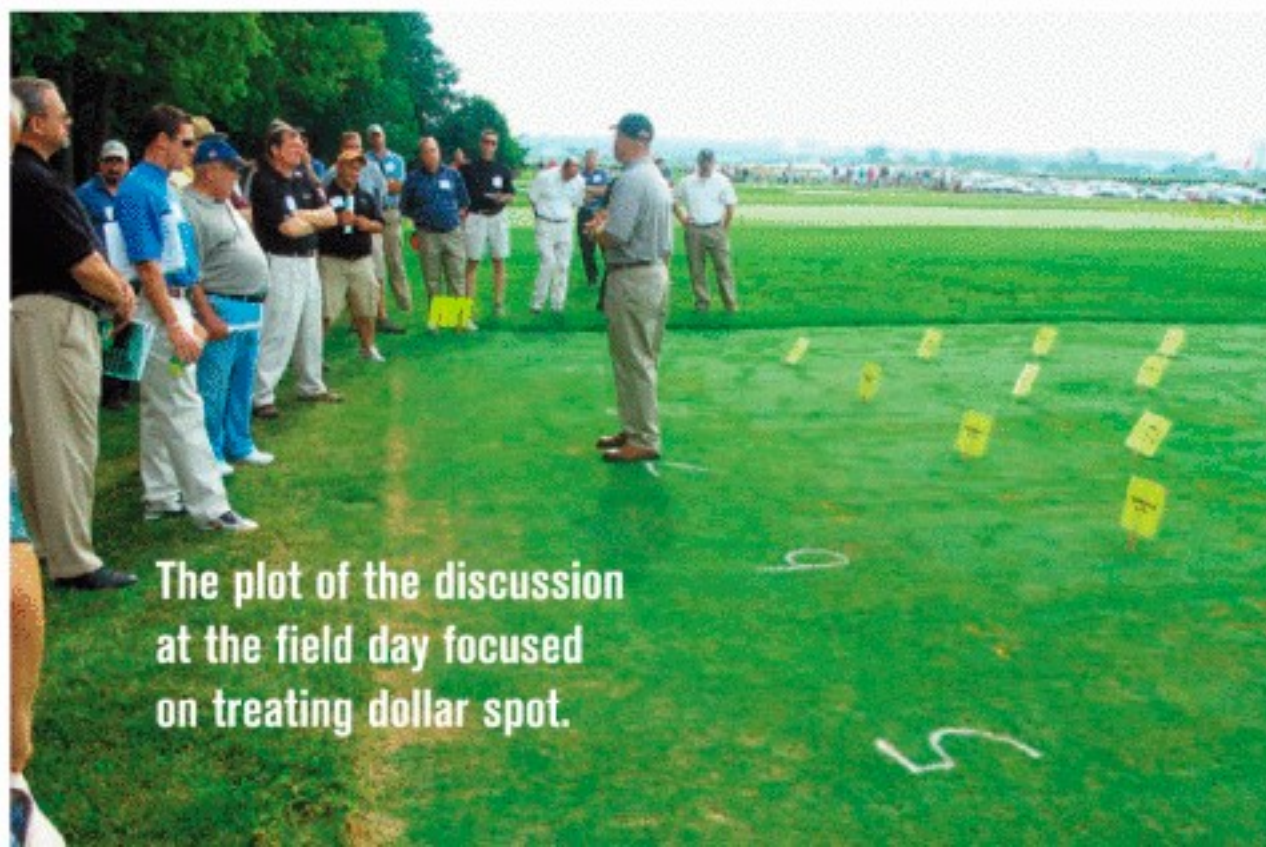
Indeed, dollar spot was the money topic at the field day, where several OSU researchers have been testing it in a variety of capacities. The researchers shared their results to the several hundred people who attended the event on Aug. 13 at the OTF Research and Education facility in Columbus, Ohio.

Mike Boehm, chair of OSU's department of plant pathology, has been part of a team evaluating fungicides for dollar spot control in creeping bentgrass and *Poa annua*. Boehm said the researchers have made good strides on determining the right timing of fungicide applications to achieve their best results based on weather patterns rather than time of year.

The study revealed that fungicide applications made in the fall will last to the following spring if that fall application was followed by cold weather. "However, if you hit it in the fall and it stays warm through January, you don't see that type of response," Boehm added.

Boehm said an April fungicide application can delay dollar spot's normal summer arrival by about three weeks. "So by the time dollar spot kicks in in June, it's three weeks behind the power curve. And if we're lucky, dollar spot doesn't get nasty until the end of June. And after that, it gets hot and dry, and dollar spot doesn't want to be a problem then anyway."

Boehm said the research from the study will ultimately lead to the smart targeting of disease-causing pathogens rather than treating the symptoms of the diseases.



The plot of the discussion at the field day focused on treating dollar spot.

Quotable

"This weed seems to give people fits. I probably get more calls from our sales guys about *Poa annua* than anything else."

— Laurence Mudge, technical development representative for Bayer Environmental Science, on the mother of all troublesome weeds.

"Golf clubs are sometimes seen as mysterious places and inherently bad because rich people go there. But they are probably the most sustainable economic engines in any given community."

— Jim Singerling, CEO of Club Managers Association of America, on the business of golf.

John Street, associate professor in Ohio State's department of horticulture and crop science, discussed the influence of nitrogen sources and rates as well as plant growth regulator combinations on creeping bentgrass color and dollar spot incidence and severity. Among other things, Street said the study determined that foliar feeding in combination with PGRs didn't intensify or reduce dollar spot.

Street also said the study revealed that frequent foliar feeding applications work better to suppress dollar spot than less frequent applications. "Applying .125 pounds of nitrogen every week will work significantly better than applying .25 pounds of nitrogen every two weeks," he said.

Karl Danneberger, an Ohio State professor in the department of horticulture and crop science, spoke about the impact of dew on dollar spot incidence. Danneberger discovered that if greens are rolled early in the morning and guttation water from dew is diminished, less dollar spot will occur.

"You can get a good feel for dew if you go out after the greens have been mowed and roll a golf ball across the green," says Danneberger, a *Golfdom* columnist. "If you pick up the ball and it sticks in your hand ... that's guttation water. Anecdotally, [the presence of guttation means] the potential of dollar spot is a lot greater." ■