

# GREEN INDUSTRY NEWS

## Sod growers battle recession

Sod producers are having to improve their management practices to survive in the current market conditions. Representatives of the industry meeting at the American Sod Producers Annual Summer Convention agreed that sod sales are significantly down, due primarily to reductions in new home construction. According to Walt Pemrick of Warren Turf Nursery, producers are adjusting to the downturn by cutting back on overhead costs and making a more concerted sales effort.

According to Ralph White of Southern Turf Nurseries Tifton, GA and president of the ASPA, the smaller operators are under the most pressure. "A business which is as capital intensive as

sod is very difficult to justify on 50 acres." White feels that sod producers are becoming more business minded, keeping closer inventories, using more effective means of cost accounting, using more efficient machinery and hiring a higher quality of employee. The tighter market has narrowed the

open up specialized markets by developing regional sod grasses from dry land grasses, salt tolerant species and low maintenance varieties. "In the future, water will dictate the types of grasses we produce" stated Gardner. Water shortages will require sod producers to offer sod that is suitable to local climatic conditions, according to many sod growers.

Producers also have the opportunity to open new markets in areas that traditionally use seed rather than sod. Because the price of sod has come down dramatically due to oversupply, efforts are being made to convince both professional and retail consumers to convert from seeding to the use of sod.

According to White, the ASPA is planning its activities with the short term difficulties of its members in mind. Symposiums on water usage and business management are being offered in conjunction with the association's winter convention in San Antonio TX. White feels that the management changes that are being made in the industry as a result of this recession will put sod growers in a very strong position when economic conditions improve.



**Fourteen teams** competed in the Sod Rodeo during the ASPA Convention in Denver CO.

profit margin on sod and made mistakes far more costly than they were a few years ago.

Al Gardner from Greenlawn Sod Co., Inc., of Broomfield CO, commented that the industry is trying to

## COMING SOON

**National Council for Interior Horticultural Certification Exams**, Interior Plantscape Association Convention, Portland, OR Oct 25-27, and Tropical Plant Industries Exposition, Coconut Grove, FL Jan. 20-22. The final Step in the NCIHC certification process, the exams contain five sections: horticulture, business, maintenance, design and plant identification. To find out more about the certification process Contact NCIHC, One Mannions Lane, Danbury CT, 06810, 203/792-6085.

**Turfgrass Symposium**, Oct, 20-21, Columbus, OH. Focusing on turfgrass fertilization, the symposium will feature talks in on topics such as fall fertility, responses of turf to nitrogen sources, rates and timing of nitrogen, and the effects of potassium and phosphorus in turfgrass maintenance. Contact Dr. B.G. Joyner Plant Diagnostic Lab, Chemlawn, 6969 Worthington-Galena Rd., Suite L, Worthington, OH 43085 614/885-8367.

## SEED

### Davis Rogers Investment buys Vaughan-Jacklin

The Vaughan-Jacklin Corp. has agreed to sell its business and assets to the Davis Rogers Investment Group. The Vaughan-Jacklin board of directors was unanimously in favor of the proposed purchase agreement and has agreed to sign a voting and proxy agreement for 33% of the outstanding shares of Vaughan-Jacklin.

Davis Rogers is offering \$13.75 per share for Vaughan-Jacklin stock, less the expenses for the transaction. The purchase price is also conditional upon the net worth of Vaughan-Jacklin remaining the same as their preliminary estimate. After the transaction,

Vaughan-Jacklin intends to make an offer to each shareholder giving him the option of redeeming his shares for cash.

Vaughan-Jacklin is a distributor, manufacturer and grower of professionally used horticultural products and home garden supply items. The Davis Rogers Investment Group which owns and operates substantial agricultural businesses and real estate. David Rogers presently owns and runs companies involved in growing and distributing sod, raising row crops and ranching.