



1996 EMERALD AWARDS

READERS PREFER *Echo, Toro, Lofts*

'What are your favorite brand names?' we asked our 51,000 readers last spring. Some of their choices were overwhelming.

by JERRY ROCHE / Editor-in-Chief

Echo, Inc., of Lake Zurich, Ill.; the Toro Company of Bloomington, Minn.; and Lofts Seed of Somerset,

N.J., were big winners in LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT's "Emerald Awards" sweepstakes/contest held earlier this year. Each green industry supplier was named "favorite" in two categories by LM readers.

Echo was first among reader faves in the leaf blower and line trimmer categories, while Toro finished a strong first in both

the riding and walk-behind mower categories. Lofts' varieties, Rebel and Palmer, won the turf-type tall fescue and perennial ryegrass seed categories, respectively.

Double-winners

Bill Peel says Echo's prime concern in the professional market—where 90 percent of its equipment is sold—is making sure the end-user is happy.

"One of the biggest concerns from our research is power-to-weight ratio," the company's director of marketing notes. "We try to comply with the users' requests by working with landscapers to build operator comfort. We have a team of professionals that works with landscape managers to field-test our equipment. In addition, we also know that people who buy the equipment base their purchasing decision on recommendations from their employees who use the equipment, and on input from other landscapers."

Everyone also knows the Toro name, but the company's success is the result of hard work.

"We have a world-class team of designers and engineers," says Brian Masterson of

Echo trimmer



Kubota tractor



Toro Groundsmaster mower



Toro. "Before any product goes to market, we test it, then it goes out to dealers and cutters—and if they don't like it, we re-design it.

"We take care of some of the best courses in the world. The Toro name is synonymous with quality and top-notch beautification equipment."

Equipment

Other winners in the equipment categories were Kubota (compact tractors), Ryan (aerators), Ford (pick-up trucks) and Stihl (chain saws).

Jackson D'Armond of Stihl, Inc., says the company relies heavily on its network of dealers and distributors to learn what customers want.

"We get feedback on what's in demand, how to improve products, or if there's anything going wrong with products," says D'Armond. "We have to be able to respond. We have very high quality standards, and that's one of the things we believe makes our products excel. We try very hard to listen to the market."

Paul Williams of Kubota says the company takes an extra step to talk to the people on the front lines.

As part of Kubota's "Product Quality Management System," the company's regional service engineers and other representatives often visit end-users to ask them to evaluate Kubota products.

"We basically ask, 'How do you like your Kubota?'" says Williams. "We cover general questions about what they like and what they don't like, from ease of handling to maintenance. We obtain a wealth of

Ryan aerator



information."

Dave Ferguson of Ryan says the aerator manufacturer holds focus groups prior to new product releases. It's one of the ways the company has stayed competitive.

"We get [end-user] opinions on what features they'd like to see," says Ferguson.

Fertilizers & pesticides

In the fertilizer/pesticide categories, favorites were Scotts (fertilizer), Sandoz's Barricade

Echo blower



and Monsanto's Roundup (herbicides), DowElanco's Dursban (insecticide), ISK's Daconil 2787 (fungicide) and Ciba's Primo (growth regulator).

Susie Calhoun knew Scotts "trounced" the competition before we even told her.

"I think part of it is due to our patented technologies with years of proven performance, and the fact that our tech reps are out there calling on the customers one on one, providing services and consultation, and being a partner in turf maintenance programs," says Calhoun. "That, coupled with good products, is the reason for the awareness."

Gene Hintze of Sandoz credits Barricade's performance in the field for its performance in the Emerald Awards contest.

"The thing that people like about Barricade is that it's a consistent performer," says Hintze. "They know what they're going to get year in and year out. It doesn't matter if it's a wet year or a drier year, Barricade is still going to perform." Hintze, who credited distributors for some of Barricade's popularity, says Barricade has been on the market

Stihl chain saw



Ford truck





for just four years.

Ciba's Primo was unveiled at the GCCSA Convention in 1993. Described as a new generation of PGR, end-users discovered that it makes grass grow shorter, denser and stronger.

"We're seeing Primo being used in markets other than golf, markets like sod farms, sports turf, cemeteries and commercial mowing management," says product manager Jose Milan. "Primo has a fairly broad use pattern."

Dursban insecticide is 25 years old and is still going strong, which Phil Howard of DowElanco says is a result of "doing a lot of things right over a long period of time.

"You can't get into this industry overnight with just a lot of flash," says Howard. "There are a lot of other things the industry demands, one of which is quality products. They know what to expect with Dursban. We are continually asking customers how we are doing, and what customers would like to see us do to improve quality."

Turfseed

Favorite turfgrass cultivars were Baron (Kentucky bluegrass), Manhattan and Palmer (perennial ryegrasses) and Rebel (tall fescue). Dipel topped the list of favorite biological control products.

"Baron was the first improved Kentucky bluegrass to be available," says Tom Peters.

"Barenbrug of Holland had

an excellent research program, and brought it to the U.S. [20 years ago]. It's an excellent seed producer, with a good yield and good return per acre, which are all reasons why growers like it so much," says Peters.

Readers selected Lofts' Rebel tall fescue and Palmer perennial ryegrass. Dr. Rich Hurley of Loft Seeds says breeding work on both cultivars began in the 1960s by Dr. C. Reed Funk at Rutgers University. The first variety of Rebel came out in 1979, fol-

lowed in 1985 by Rebel II and then Rebel, Jr.

"In the future, we're going to have a Rebel XL and we're going to have a Rebel 2000. They will probably be coming out in two years," says Hurley, who points out that much of the germplasm of turf-type tall fescues can be traced back to Rebel material. Palmer ryegrass made its commercial debut in 1982-83, he says.

Manhattan is also an old-timer, according to Steve Tubbs of Turf Merchants.

"Manhattan is one of the original perennial ryegrasses," notes Tubbs. "Reed Funk found it in Central Park in New York, and it's been a high-quality program since 1969. Anybody who's ever gone to a turf school has heard of Manhattan, so you're talking 25 years of brand awareness. And today the name is more important than the product because it's hard to get a bad perennial rye."

Turf-Seed co-markets Manhattan, and has for years.

Superintendent wins \$500 prize



Chalifour: Industry is competitive

Bob Chalifour, superintendent at Shennecossett Golf Course, Groton, Conn., took the first prize of \$500 in LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT's Emerald Awards sweepstakes.

A superintendent for 26 years, Chalifour and his crew try out equipment thoroughly before a purchase is made.

"We discuss the pros and cons of each brand," explains Chalifour, who cuts to the chase when considering a product, and looks immediately for product benefits.

"We look at the equipment from an operator's standpoint: What can the machine do?" says Chalifour.

Ease of service is also on Chalifour's list of important product benefits.

Chalifour says he used to be a very brand-loyal buyer, however, over the years, the equipment industry has become "very competitive," as more companies have appeared on the scene.

"Years ago, we had mostly one brand," recalls Chalifour. "The [competing] companies didn't have the service or equipment to do the job. Now, we have several 'colors' here at Shennecossett."

Chalifour says he relies on university data when he needs

to make a control product purchase. "I'm 45 minutes from the University of Rhode Island. They do extensive testing there."

In fact, Shennecossett is used as a test site by Rhode Island researchers.

The \$300 second prize goes to Pete Yerkich, superintendent at Highland View Golf Course, Butte, Mt.

Yerkich also values equipment trials, as well as a thorough look at product literature.

"I read up on it, learn the options they have, then judge the performance," says Yerkich.

If it's a greensmower Yerkich is evaluating, it is used on all 18 Highland View greens, not just one or two. He also wants his employees to give equipment a whirl.

Yerkich oversees one full time worker, two seasonal, and three summer helpers.



"We've been involved since the beginning," notes Turf-Seed's Tom Stanley, "when Bill Rose and Dick Bailey went back to Rutgers and got the original germplasm and started the Manhattan Ryegrass Growers Association. It was the first fine-leaved perennial ryegrass, a big improvement over Linn.

"We've always had the best germplasm available to work with. Woodburn High School near here has a football field planted to the original Manhat-

tan ryegrass, and it is still the best-looking football field in the area."

The contest/sweepstakes entry form was published in the magazine for four straight months. Most overwhelming responses came from fans of

Echo line trimmers and leaf blowers (30 and 35 percent, respectively), Stihl chain saws (48 percent), Ryan aerators (46 percent) and Ford pick-ups (43 percent). **LM**

—Additional reporting by
Terry McIver and Ron Hall.

The course is owned by the city.

Just as Yerkich demands the best performance from his equipment, so too he appreciates dedicated employees who are truly interested in the job.

"Workers have to put their heart and soul into the job," Yerkich believes. "If you don't have the love for the work, you won't do well."

Cindy Molter, our third prize winner of \$200, operates Circle M Lawn/Landscape of Benton Harbor, Mich.

A former landscape manager at a golf course, Molter relies on dealer support for parts and product information. She calls herself a brand-loyal buyer in certain product categories, especially mowers.

She uses Toro mowers, Medalist turfseed and a "a lot of Scotts" products. □

—Terry McIver

1996 EMERALD AWARD-WINNERS

Top scorers (only) in each category,
listed as percentage of total votes

WALK-BEHIND MOWERS

Toro	22
Scag	11
John Deere	9
Jacobsen	8
Ransomes	7

RIDING MOWERS

Toro	24
John Deere	11
Jacobsen	9
Ransomes	6
Scag	5

LINE TRIMMERS

Echo	30
Stihl	19
Shindaiwa	11
Toro	6
Red Max	5

LEAF BLOWERS

Echo	35
Shindaiwa	7
Toro	4
Green Machine	3
Lesco	3

CHAIN SAWS

Stihl	48
Echo	12
Husqvarna	9
Poulan	6
McCullough	5

AERATORS

Ryan	46
Toro	10
Lesco	4
Ransomes	3
Cushman	2
Jacobsen	2

PICK-UP TRUCKS

Ford	43
Chevrolet	32
Dodge	10
GMC	9
Toyota	3

COMPACT TRACTORS

Kubota	24
John Deere	23
Ford	15
Case	2
Massey-Ferguson	1

FERTILIZERS

Scotts	31
Lesco	17
Lebanon	7
Par-Ex	3
Andersons	2
Milorganite	2

PRE-EMERGENCE HERB.

Barricade	10
Surflan	9
Pre-M	7
Team	6
Pendimethalin	5
Scotts	5

POST-EMERGENCE HERB

Roundup	24
Trimec	22
Lesco 3-way	8
Confront	4
Acclaim	4

INSECTICIDES

Dursban	27
Merit	13
Diazinon	6
Dylox	6
Orthene	4

FUNGICIDES

Daconil 2787	19
Chipco 26019	7
Bayleton	5
Scotts	4
Fore	3
Banner	3
Touché	3

PLANT GROWTH REGS.

Primo	17
Embark	9
Atrimmec	6
Scotts TGR	3
Cutless	1
Limit	1

BLUEGRASSES

Baron	4
Glade	2
Midnight	2
Park	2

RYEGRASSES

Manhattan (&II)	5
Palmer (& II)	5
Lesco Eagle	3

TALL FESCUES

Rebel*	8
Jaguar	3
Bonanza	2
Bonsai	2
Falcon	2
*Rebel includes original Rebel, Rebel Jr., Rebel 3-D, Rebel II	

BIO CONTROLS

Dipel	4
Bacillus thuringiensis	3
Lesco Vector	2
nematodes	2
ladybugs	2