

## Brickman to expand Investments to increase service to commercial accounts

As large corporations and significant property management associations continue to "outsource" their landscaping needs, the industry itself is responding by offering services at regional and national levels. The Brickman Group Ltd. has

arranged a partnership with two large financial institutions to fund major expansion efforts into the next century.

"We can provide national or regional service at a reduced price, which helps us stand out in this highly fragmented business dominated by small, local companies," explains Scott Brickman, who now becomes president and chief executive officer of the Langhorne, PA-based operation.

"This transition is a positive step in the continuing evolution of The Brickman Group as a national leader in our industry," says Dick Brickman, Scott's father, who moves up to chairman after 40 years as president and CEO.

The exact terms of the investment plans are not being disclosed, but the financing will be provided by First Chicago Equity Capital and Continental Illinois Venture Corp.

Most of the company's expansion is expected to involve increasing its current staffing levels. "The foundation of our business has been internal growth," says Scott Brickman. "It's really not going to be different than anything we've done over the years," he points out. "We've been growing regionally for years—we just have a different ownership structure (now)."

The goals do not exclude the purchase of existing firms in various markets, but the growth thrust is likely to remain in-house. The annual internal growth rate has been holding steady at 20 percent. "Our biggest limitations are *people*," Scott confides. "Sales is not the challenge—it's developing good management people."

Buying other landscape companies remains a viable strategy, but any actual deals will depend upon

specific situations. "We'll be doing acquisitions as opportunities present themselves," Scott notes. "It's really not that scientific," he reveals, "we enter new markets as opportunities present themselves."

That being said, Brickman invites business owners to make a pitch if they are so inclined. "If people are interested in selling we're interested in talking to them, but we're under no pressure to do anything."

Founded in 1939, The Brickman Group generates annual revenues of about \$100 million. Its 45 branches in the Midwest and on the East Coast cover numerous commercial accounts for corporations such as McDonald's, IBM, Motorola and properties under the management of LaSalle Partners, Trammel Crow and Liberty Property Trust.

"We can now take advantage of two growing trends in our industry," says Scott, "toward outsourcing of corporate services and toward property management consolidation by Real Estate Investment Trusts and other national property managers."

Dick Brickman, 65, son of company founder Theodore Brickman Sr., observes that "this investment ensures that The Brickman Group will continue to provide high-quality landscaping services to our customers across the east and Midwest. Importantly," he adds, "this partnership will enable us to expand our services across the country."

Brickman's day-to-day management operations will remain the same as the investment groups will have seats on the corporation's board of directors. "We're backing the management team (already in place)," says Chris Perry, president of Continental, which is a subsidiary of BankAmerica Corp.

"They're looking to us to grow the business—we're the experts," explains Scott Brickman. "They have connections that can open doors for us, which is good," says Scott. "They have substantial financial analysis capabilities," he adds. "But it's really not going to change the way we do business."

—by James E. Guyette

## Herbicide resistance confirmed in *Poa annua*

ANAHEIM, CALIF.—Herbicide resistance has been identified in some weeds in some locations but there's no need for concern just yet, said Dr. Fred Yelverton at North Carolina State University.

"I don't say this is going to be a tremendous problem, but we're see-



Yelverton reported on herbicide-resistant *Poa* at Rhoñe-Poulenc press conference.

ing new cases pop up," Yelverton said at a press conference sponsored by Rhoñe-Poulenc in February in conjunction with the GCSAA Trade Show & Conference here.

Yelverton, who is with the Crop Science Dept. at NCSU, said he's identified four golf courses in North Carolina with populations of *Poa annua* (annual bluegrass) resistant to the herbicide simazine, and to all other herbicides in the triazine family. There are probably more examples in North Carolina, he said.

Simazine-resistant annual bluegrass has also been reported in Mississippi. Simazine is commonly used to control

*Poa annua* in non-overseeded bermudagrass fairways of southern golf courses. Yelverton said that in the four locations that he's investigated, simazine was used continuously for seven years or more for *Poa* control.

"Herbicides do not cause genetic changes in the plant that lead to resistance," stressed Yelverton. "It's nothing but a selection pressure that goes on over time. You're selecting for that wild-type plant that is out there in that population."

There are also reports of particular areas of goosegrass and crabgrass that are suspected of being resistant to particular herbicides, he added.

Yelverton said that turfgrass managers can delay herbicide resistance in weeds by rotating herbicides. He said products like Ronstar or Barricade can also effectively control annual bluegrass.

He also touched on annual bluegrass control in bermudagrass overseeded with perennial rye. Initial findings suggest that turfgrass managers can control *Poa*, without damaging the rye seedlings, with either Ronstar or Balan about eight weeks prior to overseeding. The rates still need to be worked out though, he said.

## LESCO builds NE presence

CLEVELAND, OHIO—LESCO, Inc., is increasing its presence in the Northeast by acquiring the specific assets of two privately owned companies—Agriturf, Inc., in Hatfield, Mass., and Cadwell & Jones, in Manchester, Conn. Lesco said it's acquiring the professional turf care segments of the two businesses, including lawn and golf course turf maintenance. Terms of the all-cash transactions were not disclosed.

These transactions will provide Lesco with its first New England manufacturing facility. The Cleveland-based company plans to consolidate its new business operations in Hatfield, where it will acquire 11.8 acres of land, including Agriturf's fertilizer blending plant and a warehouse for distribution.

LESCO expects the consolidation to be complete by the time the 1998 season starts. In the longer term, the Hatfield facilities will be expanded, it reported.

## Seed demand up after El Niño?

Wet weather conditions across the US this winter may cause increased demand for turfgrass seed, as landscapers, lawn care professionals and golf course superintendents begin to assess their needs.

The windy, rainy weather that accompanies the El Niño warming pattern could affect American's turf and gardens, reports Pennington Seed. Strong storms can cause landscape problems such as flooding, broken tree limbs and erosion. Plants may become waterlogged, topsoil and hillsides have been washed away in parts of California and trees can fall.

"The greatest effect of El Niño this past year has undoubtedly been in the Northeast," says Ronnie Stapp, senior vice president of Pennington's Seed Division.

"I would expect that the ice storms will result in a need for overseeding, because ice is the most devastating element to turf and gardens."