

Ruppert goes from boardroom to farm

Craig Ruppert is working his farm and he likes it.

Ruppert, who built a landscape company with revenues of \$45 million a year and, for several months, was the head of the landscape division of TruGreen-ChemLawn (TG-CL), now manages his 300-acre nursery and farm in rural Maryland. Helping him is Chris Davitt, former Ruppert Landscape Senior Vice President of Operations.

"Ruppert Nurseries, which has always been a separate company, was not included in the acquisition," says Ruppert. "We're now rolling up our sleeves in that business and plan to grow it."

Late last summer TG-CL purchased Ruppert's Maryland-based landscape company, at the time, the third largest landscape company in the country. Prior to their departure, Ruppert led TG-CL's landscape division from his Ashton, MD, location in addition to managing the company he had built; Davitt managed the East Division.

"Despite being a strategically sound move, the changes that accompanied ServiceMaster's acquisition of LandCare—including moving certain corporate functions from Ashton to Memphis—gave us reason to be concerned about our ability to influence and control the future in the way that we had hoped,"

explains Ruppert. TG-CL and LandCare had been competing to acquire landscape companies throughout 1998. SM's (parent company of TG-CL) stock-for-stock fold-in of LandCare, based in Houston, should be completed by the end of March.

"TG-CL has a big job integrating these companies into one strong company, but I think they'll build a successful national landscape com-

pany," Ruppert adds. "Paul Anderegg (TG-CL) is an excellent manager, and I enjoyed working with him, as well as with Dave Slott (TG-CL)."

As for the landscape company he built and is now no longer a part of, Ruppert says it remains in capable hands with Don Jarratt, Ken Hochkeppel and a host of talented managers.

"While the decision to leave was difficult and I miss the challenges of directing a large company, I'm very happy to have cut down on my traveling and to have so much more time to spend with my family and my community activities," says Ruppert. "I'm also very happy to continue working so closely with Chris Davitt and with my brother, who has managed the nursery since 1990."



[CLIPPINGS]

Green groups hold water summit

WASHINGTON D.C. — Representatives of 10 industry organizations met February 22 to discuss a unified approach to using water resources effectively. The Irrigation Association hosted the meeting as Congress prepares to consider changing and reauthorizing the Clean Water Act.

Participating in the meeting were the American Society of Irrigation Consultants, the American Water Resources Association, the Associated Landscape Contractors of America, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, the National Association of Conservation Districts, the National Association of Water Companies, the National Ground Water Association, the United States Golf Association, the U.S. Committee on Irrigation and Drainage and the Water Environment Federation.

Yazoo/Kees set to acquire Dig-It tractor, Huskie vehicles

JACKSON, MS— Yazoo/Kees is acquiring HCC's Dig-It tractor and towable backhoe products, the Huskie utility vehicle product line and the Power King garden and estate tractor line. The manufacturing of the three product lines will be moved to the 166,000 sq. ft. Yazoo/Kees manufacturing facility and corporate office in Jackson, MS. This transition is expected to be completed in four to six months.

PHC to market four new microbial-based products

PITTSBURGH, PA — A venture between Plant Health Care, Inc. (PHC) and Ecogen, Inc. allows PHC to sell four new biopesticide products into the U.S. commercial turfgrass, landscape and garden markets under its own label. The EPA-registered products will be packaged by PHC at its production facility in Pittsburgh. Like other PHC products, the new biopesticide products contain microbial-based active ingredients. AQ10™ is a selective fungal hyperparasite used to control powdery mildew. Cruiser® contains beneficial insecticidal nematodes that control Japanese beetles and other white grubs, billbugs and sod webworms. Crymax® and Lepinox™ are advanced *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) bioinsecticides that protect ornamental, fruit and nut trees, bedding plants and turfgrass from caterpillar/worm pests, says PHC.

Ariens and Kanga forge agreement

BRILLION, WI — The Ariens Company has announced a manufacturing and distributing agreement for the Mini Skid Steer Loader and attachments with Kanga Loaders USA of Bixby, OK. Ariens and Gravely dealers will begin selling the Kanga products in the next few months and Ariens will begin manufacturing them in the near future.

[CLIPPINGS]

Giant home builder Centex gets a start in lawn care market

DALLAS— Centex, based here, is the largest home builder in the United States. It's now in the lawn care business too with its HomeTeam Services. Other services offered by this Centex subsidiary include pest control and home security systems.

Mitch Smith is putting together the lawn care segment of HomeTeam Services. He started in the lawn care business with a Year-Round Lawn Care before spending eight years as a regional manager for Orkin LC. He left Orkin LC when it was acquired by TruGreen-ChemLawn in 1997.

"We're really just getting it started," Smith said of Centex HomeTeam LC.

"We've put lawn care into 11 of our pest control offices. We're treating it more like an incremental business in the pest control offices." HomeCare offers lawn care from locations in Florida, Texas, North Carolina and Georgia.

"The vision at Centex is to provide quality services that homeowners want, and security is a natural fit, pest control is a natural fit and lawn care is a natural fit," Smith adds.

Parent company Centex operates in 20 states and recorded revenues of \$3.9 billion in 1998.



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Griffin embraces Audubon program

COLD SPRING, KY — Griffin Industries, based here, has registered 22 of its facilities throughout the United States in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System's (ACSS) Corporate and Business Certification Program.

The ACSP for Businesses is similar to the Sanctuary Program for golf courses. Businesses are certified in 5 areas: environmental planning, wildlife and habitat management, outreach and education, resource conservation and waste manage-

ment. Of the 93 businesses registered in the ACSP, 11 have reached full certification so far. Over half of the fully certified businesses are Griffin facilities. Griffin Industries is the maker of Nature Safe Natural and Organic Fertilizers.

Evergreen funds continue to grow

RALEIGH, NC — John Deere donated \$25,000 to the Evergreen Fund (formerly known as the PLCAA Education & Research Foundation) which is promoting greenways and a national greenway system.

Green industry associations are working with the Evergreen Foundation to



form a Green Industry Coordinating Group. When a greenway project is approved, associations can ask members in the geographical area to volunteer time and services, donate equipment and materials and provide other kinds of assistance.

Part of the John Deere contribution will help fund a Greenways Archive at North Carolina State, bringing together many sources of information and making the information accessible through the Internet.

The Evergreen Foundation is at 1000 Johnson Ferry Road NE, Ste. C-135, Marietta, GA 30068-2112. Call Betsy Demoret at 770/977-5222 for more information.

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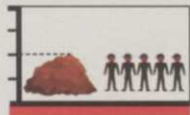
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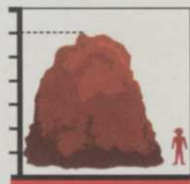
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