

NEWS PICKS

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What forces are shaping our industry this year? Here's a peak at some people and events that will affect your operations for months to come

BY JASON STAHL / MANAGING EDITOR

1. New EPA administrator



Whitman

Green Industry pros are trying to read new EPA Administrator Christie Whitman. The fairness they're seeking might best be represented

by second-in-command Linda Fischer, formerly of Monsanto, says Tom Delaney, executive vice president of PLCAA.

"In some aspects, I think Fischer might not include herself in decisions on biotechnology," Delaney says, "but she's seen the other side and maybe will be more understanding."

Whitman singled out pesticides early this year by saying, "I think we've done a good job to curb the pesticide program," and Delaney feels the statement hinted at her desire to make as few enemies as possible.

2. Bye-bye Dursban

It wasn't surprising to lawn care professionals when Dow AgroSciences agreed with the EPA to voluntarily cancel Dursban last year. Most had phased it out of their inventories already, but it signaled a bleak future for organophosphates. As Allen James, executive director of RISE, said, "That's nothing to say they'll (the EPA) be more even-handed with other products."

3. Web sites nosedive

Last year, everyone was talking e-com-

merce. Then, tech stocks crashed, and investor money dried up. Web sites like Greenzebras.com lost their funding and were forced to either close shop or find a partner. Word is that e-commerce is still alive, and many entrepreneurs are still convinced there are solid business plans out there.

4. Economic woes?

While many industries are feeling the impact of a slow economy, the Green Industry is not. Most landscape and lawn care businesses are growing revenues at 10 to 20%. But it's still early, and the Green Industry will likely be one of the last to be impacted.

5. Clearing the air

Houston and Galveston, TX-area landscape pros suffered a blow when the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC) banned them from using gasoline-powered lawn and garden equipment during morning hours. On a positive note, the leaf-blower bill sponsored by Arizona Rep. Christine Weason was abandoned due to organized industry opposition.

6. John Deere Landscapes

Deere & Company stated last year that its goal was \$6 billion in revenues by 2006. So far, they've shown they meant business. In December, Deere acquired Great Dane. Less than a month later, the company acquired McGinnis Farms, a full-line supplier of nursery stock, landscape supplies and irrigation products through the South-

east. Then, McGinnis Farms' name was changed to John Deere Landscapes, and Richton International Corporation was added to it on May 29, 2001.

7. Pesticides still attacked

Long Island-area commercial pesticide applicators gained a small victory when a judge in Nassau County, NY overturned the neighbor notification law.

Despite negotiations with ACPA and RISE, Sen. Torricelli (D-NJ) submitted his pesticides-



Torricelli

in-schools amendment to S. 1, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Authorization. The legislation, introduced

in the House by Rep. Holt (D-NJ) as the School Environment Protection Act of 2001, would eliminate the use of pesticides not deemed "least toxic" at schools within six years.

8. ServiceMaster struggles

ServiceMaster's revenues went up for 2000, but profits were less than 1999. Net income from its largest business segment, the reorganized and unified TruGreen Group, was well below planned levels due to what the company said was the "assimilation and integration of our TruGreen landscape business." Talk about a management headache. Integrating more than 100 different companies has been more than a chal-

lenge at ServiceMaster; it's been a costly one. Now, the company's focus is not on buying up companies but running those operations well and increasing profit.

9. Mergers & acquisitions

On the chemical side, AstraZeneca PLC and Novartis AG made a big splash by merging and spinning off into a separately traded concern named Syngenta. So did BASF when it bought American Cyanamid. TruGreen-Landcare bought the \$22 million Leisure Lawn. But everyone saw how dangerous consolidation could be when AgriBioTech went bankrupt and was forced to sell off all the businesses it had acquired just a few years earlier. Watch for a few more big ones on the chemical and equipment side this year.

10. Water issues

When the Water Quality Act was created in 1998, all nurseries and greenhouses were required to have nutrient management plans. Now, as the act makes its way to the state level for implementation, it's hitting home on our industry.

"Water issues are going to add costs to everyone's bottom line," says Fred Langley, Manager of State Government Relations for RISE. "As we go forward, this industry will have to look at any place that discharges material that could impact water quality."