

industry almanac

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Weed Man ranks high

SCARBOROUGH, ONTARIO — More than 2,500 franchisers and related professionals polled in *Success* magazine's list of top franchises ranked Weed Man number four in the top 200, reports Turf Holdings Inc., parent company of the lawn care franchise in Canada and the United States. Companies were compared on financial performance, franchiser/franchisee relationship, corporate management, growth and stability, and opportunities for growth.

VW&R, E&E now use Vopak name

KIRKLAND, WA — The Van Waters & Rogers (VW&R) and Ellis & Everard (E&E) brands have been consolidated under the Vopak name to reflect the expanding global presence of their Rotterdam-based parent, Royal Vopak, a world leader in oil and chemical storage, logistics and distribution.

Bayer Corp has a new name

KANSAS CITY, MO — Bayer Corp. announced that its Garden & Professional Care unit has changed its name to Bayer Corp., Professional Care.

YOU DON'T SAY

► U.S. shipments for power lawn and garden equipment should rise more than 3% annually through 2005, reaching \$9.8 billion.

SOURCE: THE FREEDONIA GROUP, INC.

Landscape Management debuts new Web site

CLEVELAND, OH — Look for more opportunities to get round-the-clock information on operations management, expert help with technical problems, updates on products, hundreds of Green Industry links and insightful industry news at the new Web site developed by *Landscape Management*: www.landscapemanagement.net.

The new site sports a new address and design, eGreenBook resource and reference guide of products and services specifically developed for the Green Industry, an e-mail newsletter, past issue archives of *Landscape Management* and easy subscribing.

Please visit www.landscapemanagement.net to enter the Green Star Profes-



sional Landscape Management Awards, or to enter our PalmPilot Giveaway Contest. We look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions at 800/225-4569 x2729 or sgibson@advanstar.com

CLIPPINGS

Mexico's fledgling program trains workers for U.S. Green Industry

IRAPUATO, MEXICO — State government officials here, at the urging of U.S. businessman Jeff West, began training Mexican workers for the U.S. landscape industry. The training prepares workers for the H-2B program that allows U.S. employers who can't attract local labor to recruit and employ unskilled, seasonal foreign workers. The majority of these workers are recruited in Latin America, including Mexico.

West operates GTO, a Michigan-based labor solutions firm that places H-2B workers. He said the program will help alleviate some of the problems attached to H-2B. He says that bribery and fraud plague the recruiting process in Mexico. The biggest problem for U.S. employers is



Program in Mexico trained 300 workers.

workers going AWOL, and taking higher paying jobs in other industries.

"If we don't get our act together with this H-2B, it could be in big trouble. Officials know what's going on and they don't

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Here today, consolidated tomorrow

BY LARRY AYLWARD

In the past two years, several small-, medium- and large-sized companies have merged with or acquired their counterparts. Some of the more notable deals included:

■ Novartis Agribusiness and Zeneca Agrochemicals combining to form Syngenta

■ The Andersons acquiring Scotts Co.'s U.S. professional turf business

■ BASF purchasing the Cyanamid herbicide division of American Home Products

■ Simplot Turf & Horticulture buying Lange-Stegmann's professional products

■ Dow Ag acquiring Rohm and Haas' agriculture chemical business.

■ Aventis announcing it would spin off Aventis Crop-Science

Why all the mixing and joining? Economics is the simple answer.

Raj Gupta, chairman and CEO of Philadelphia-based Rohm and Haas, said the decision to sell the company's agri-

cultural chemicals business to Dow Ag was difficult but necessary. "It has become evident that the agricultural chemicals business will flourish more as part of a global firm with a stronger presence serving the agricultural markets," Gupta said.

Jennifer Remsberg, residential market manager for Bayer Professional Products, said Green Industry professionals are more concerned about the fate of products, not the fate of companies. "This is a product-driven market," she added.

Still, Green Industry professionals should know that consolidation can be good, said Keelan Pulliam, head of Syngenta's Professional Products Business Unit. "When mergers happen, the size of the businesses are much larger," he noted. "That allows us to spend the dollars we need on research and technology, which is critical to solving Green Industry professionals' problems."

— Larry Aylward is editor of *Landscape Management's* sister publication, *Golfdom*.

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like it," said West, explaining that many first-time H-2B laborers arrive at their U.S. employer's office with few job skills. They speak little or no English, are unfamiliar with turf/landscape equipment and have little experience with U.S. laws and customs.



Jeff West seeks more training help in Mexico.

Training needed

With a few reservations, West terms the program a success. Taught by professional bilingual educators, it required worker candidates to attend two weeks of classroom and hands-on instruction. They received lessons in conversational English and U.S. laws and customs, and learned how to operate and maintain commercial mowers

thanks to commercial mowers donated by John Deere.

About 300 potential landscape employees "graduated" from the program. Classes began in early February and concluded in mid-March. West said these workers stand a better chance of becoming productive landscape workers. Also, he insisted, they're less likely to go AWOL from their U.S. employers (become "illegal") to seek better pay in construction or other U.S. industries.

"If these men spend two weeks of their time here, eight hours a day, without getting paid, that tells me they're serious about wanting to work in the United States," he said.

West admitted his motives for promoting the program weren't entirely altruistic. Through his labor contracting firm, GTO International, Whitmore Lake, MI, he said he expected to place at least 100 of the "trained" laborers with U.S. landscapers.

West said that he's also met with officials in other Mexican states, and they're interested in developing similar training programs for workers seeking seasonal employment in the United States.

— Ron Hall

6 steps to successfully recruit H-2B workers

Get temporary work visas. Get an agent or other expert familiar with the H-2B program so you can recruit labor via legal means.

Get involved. Don't depend solely on outside sources to recruit for you. Use them to help make an initial contact and preliminary screening only.

Recruit from within. Use a trusted employee who has permanent or legal status in the United States, or contact a local Hispanic-based group to help acquire new workers.

Meet and greet. Make an effort to send a company representative to the border to meet and greet your new recruits. This will help break down some of the new employees' anxieties, and also provides them with correct transportation to your place of business.

Spanglish? Make some effort to increase your communication with your recruits. Have a translator available as much as possible. You've got to be able to communicate.

Plan for the future. With a successful season of recruitment, you can plan on the next year being just as successful as you will have a local group of employees.

— Terry Foley, Foley Enterprises labor solution company, Austin, TX.

Surfin' Turf

Weed of the Week

Okay, so you think you're the King Weedhead. Why don't you find out if you really are by logging on to PBI/Gordon Corporation's WeedAlert.com Web site to play the



"Weed of the Week" contest?

Each week, the company puts up a new turf weed for site users to identify. The first five participants with correct guesses receive a WeedAlert.com coffee mug and online recognition as winners.

According to Monte VanBibber, Programmer/Webmaster for the company, the "Weed of the Week" page gets around 200 hits and 30 to 40 guesses per week. After each week's contest, the weed is added to the site's identification listing with a full description of the weed, its growing habits and germination timing, cultural control methods and herbicide use timing.

When you're done bruising your brain over weed identification, check out some of the other features on the site: useful tips, links to universities offering turf and horticulture programs, a "Weed Spotter" posting section and an on-line technical advisor.

Washington landscape pros face water ban

BY JASON STAHL

EVERETT, WA — A plan to inform the public on how to maintain their landscapes despite a potential water shortage might not be enough to save Washington-area landscape professionals from a big economic hit this year.

In February, the Washington Association of Landscape Professionals (WALP) was told by Seattle Public Utilities that there was a 1-in-10 chance of a drought and subsequent water ban occurring this summer. A

week later, the phase one Advisory Stage of the City of Seattle's 2000 Water Shortage Contingency Plan was implemented.

On March 29, the WALP met with Seattle Public Utilities again and learned there was now a 1-in-7 chance that water restrictions would be put in place. Also, the Advisory Stage was upgraded to Voluntary Stage, requesting the public to take serious steps toward conserving water.

"If this pattern continues, we'll be in the

Emergency Stage before May 19, which is right before our busy season," says Peter Dervin, WALP Executive Director.

An uphill battle

Dervin says the WALP's press releases advising the public to consult with landscape pros who can devise a landscape that conserves water haven't been able to counter negative television coverage. According to Dervin, customers have been hesitating to buy new installations based on what they have heard so far.

"I saw the first brown lawn on television in December," he says. "In a thirty second sound bite, they say to turn off your sprinkler. The public hears this and says, 'If I can't water, then I'm not going to have new landscaping installed.' We try to tell them that installing irrigation systems with rain sensors will actually save them money."

"We've had steady rain for about a month now, so we're telling people that right now is the best time to install new landscaping since the rain will help it get established," Dervin continues.

High demands on water

Washington landscape pros' position is even worse because of the state's agricultural needs and impending energy crisis. Water is needed to allow Washington to make good on agreements to trade power with other states, and to grow produce. Also, the EPA and National Marine Fisheries have asked the state to restore endangered salmon habitats, another water concern. Dervin says out of all these concerns, landscapers end up last.

"The landscape and nursery industries tend to be the sole target because the knee-jerk way to address a water shortage is to stop sprinkling lawns," Dervin says. "Yet the Seattle Times uses water to print its newspaper, and car dealers wash their cars every morning."

Info Center

VIDEOS AND LITERATURE FOR THE GREEN INDUSTRY



See the spectrum... of field measurement devices in Spectrum Technologies' 2001 product catalog, including the new family of WatchDog weather stations. The 24-page catalog features products for weather monitoring, integrated plant management, nutrient management and soil water measurement. To receive a free copy contact Spectrum Technologies, 23839 West Andrew Rd., Plainfield, IL 60544 or call 800/248-8873 or visit www.specmeters.com.

People & companies



Ferris Industries promoted **Phil Wenzel** to vice president

and general manager.

Environmental Industries re-hired **David L.**

Hanson as vice president of operations. He held various positions with

Environmental Industries' Environmental Care (ECI) division for over a dozen years.

BASF appointed **Charles Austin** senior sales specialist for BASF Turf, Ornamental and Pest Control Groups.

Patten Seed Company appointed **Joe O'Donnell**

vice president of Georgia Super Sod Outlets.

Simplot Partners promoted **Craig Shafer** to national accounts manager.



Seed Research of Oregon named **Bill Dunn** vice president.