

can conduct random employee drug testing, says Lehr, but it must have "reasonable cause" to test an employee suspected of being alcohol impaired.

While outside vendors can conduct felony record checks of job prospects (about \$35 per individual, says Diederich), employers can do this themselves. It will require several calls to the county where the applicant lives, or previously lived.

Likewise, Orkin uses a vendor to run motor vehicle checks of prospects. "A current license doesn't necessarily mean a clean driving record," says Diederich.

Again, employers can get this information themselves, although it may take a while. Motor vehicle departments may or may not be as cooperative as you'd like, depending on the state.

What about a telephone reference check of a job candidate?

Do it, advises Diederich. Some former employers will only reveal that the individual worked for them, and perhaps the job title and length of employment, but their tone of voice can be significant, he says.

You may also be able to contact a former supervisor or co-worker who might provide a more complete picture of the job prospect.

As for the physical examination, most companies would probably benefit from using a local doctor who's, at least, familiar with the types of jobs the prospect will be doing. Will it require heavy lifting? Sitting for prolonged periods?

Crucial to the entire process is confidentiality. Whatever the company learns about the prospect must remain confidential, cautions Diederich.

Beyond the tests and the interviews, says Diederich, green industry employers should ask themselves the ultimate question:

"Would I want this person servicing my home? Or driving a vehicle in which my wife and children are passengers?"

"If the answer is 'no,' no matter how desperately you need a person, I would say, pass on that person," says Diederich. **LM**

—For more on hiring, consult the business section of your local library (Dewey Decimal 658.311).

hitters

Hiring tips

- 1) Establish a positive company image to attract the best talent.
- 2) Know what you need, especially in the areas of technical expertise and personality traits.
- 3) Don't pre-judge candidates you're interviewing, and don't hire on instinct.
- 4) Look for industriousness, intelligence, temperament, creativity, resourcefulness, confidence, motivation and drive.
- 5) Ask for references, and check them. □

—Sources: "A Small Business Guide to Employee Selection by Lin Gresing; "On Hiring" and "Finding, Hiring and Keeping the Best Employees" by Robert Half.

Why you must prepare for job interviews, too

To successfully interview a job candidate, you should prepare first, believes Ewald Altstadt, director of national operations for Lawn Doctor of Holmdel, N.J. Unfortunately, many don't.

"We should organize the necessary data. We should make a list of the key questions. Even the most skilled interviewer should prepare questions beforehand—job-type qualification questions," says Altstadt.

The interviewer can draft these questions by following these five points:

- 1) Determine exactly what is required of the job.
- 2) List the characteristics, the skills and the abilities a person will need to do the job.
- 3) Find out as much as possible about candidates' background.
- 4) Determine to what extent each person you interview does or doesn't have the necessary skills or ability.
- 5) Weigh all information on all available applicants and make a decision.

Altstadt suggests "a semi-structured" interview process. Its goal is to learn as much as possible about the job prospect which means "getting the person talking and keeping him or her talking."

Even then, hiring a prospect is, at best, an educated guess. "The more data we have on each candidate, the better our guess is going to be," says Altstadt. After each interview, thank the applicant and let him or her know when you will make a decision, says Altstadt. That's the time to write down your impressions of the job candidate.

All managers can greatly improve their ability to conduct successful job interviews. But it takes persistence and preparation, says Altstadt. □

—R.H.



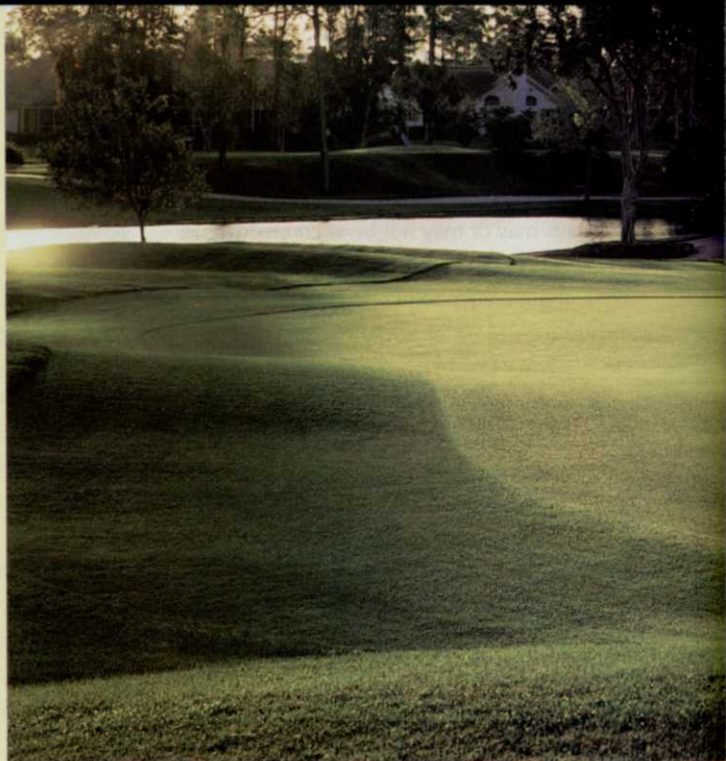
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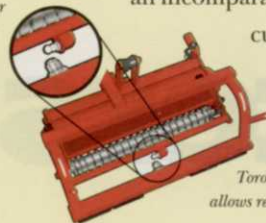
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Circle No. 127 on Reader Inquiry Card

Safety:

NEVER ENOUGH, NEVER TOO MUCH

by BARBARA G. HOWELL

OSHA, RCRA, EPA, MSDS, ANSI, DOT, WPS.

In the alphabet soup of safety rules, those of us working in the green industry are often caught in a stew. Some experts estimate that a single crew must comply with between 15 and 30 regulations—just from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Consultants advise companies before OSHA inspections. Professional organizations like the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA) and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) offer booklets and programs to ease compliance, training and safety. States have entered the safety arena with their own regulations, which often conflict with or override federal standards.

Ironically, these regulations do not even address the major safety concern of half the personnel in the green industry. Five of 10 owners and workers say vehicular safety—highway driving—is their biggest concern.

Carmen Zayas, human resources director for Clean Cut of Austin, Texas, explains:



Mix and apply products carefully, and wear the proper clothing and safety equipment.

"When applying chemicals, you can train and have control. Motor vehicles aren't under your control. There are so many other elements involved. My biggest

concern is defensive driving. You can do more damage than anyone else in the crew when you're driving."

Ron Mathews, vice president of Regal Landscape Services in Columbus, Ohio, agrees. "My biggest concern is being on the highway with trucks. There are a lot more accidents there than while mowing, especially with quick stops and dragging trailers."

What about regulations governing mowing and pesticide use? Most operators believe they are too numerous and too confusing.

Areas of concern in green industry

Here are the main areas of safety concern that are controlled by local, state and national laws:

- ▶ record-keeping of spills and accidents;
- ▶ posting of codes, signs and use of decals in the workplace;
- ▶ personal protection equipment (respirators, goggles, boots, gloves, etc.);
- ▶ keeping the workplace free of obvious and hidden hazards (oil cans near furnaces, unbalanced stacks of materials, etc.);
- ▶ regulation compliance as determined by inspections;
- ▶ proper handling and transportation of pesticides and hazardous material;
- ▶ monitoring of employee exposure to toxic substances;
- ▶ proper storage and disposal of pesticides and

containers;

- ▶ state certification of personnel;
- ▶ training of new and continuing employees;
- ▶ notification of customers and neighbors

when chemical applications are made;

- ▶ noise levels;
- ▶ fire and spill prevention, control and containment;

ment;

- ▶ temperature and ventilation control;
- ▶ compliance with label directions and availability of relevant material, including product Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs);

▶ safety features, conditions and proper use of equipment;

- ▶ emergency procedures;
- ▶ electrical systems and safety; and
- ▶ adequate exits and access. □

"The regulations are well-intentioned and not 100 percent attainable," says Todd Stevenson of Sports Turf Services, Boynton Beach, Fla. "Regulators think they are raising the level of public confidence in industry safety, but, in fact, many regulations do not measurably increase safety."

Sometimes, Zayas says, the volume of regulations and requirements actually hinders safety efforts. "We are constantly struggling to make time for activities in the field, conducting job analyses and coordinating hands-on training because we have to spend so much time on the documentation and paperwork involved."

"The amount of research time that goes into keeping up with new regulations and being in compliance is astronomical. It is indeed time-consuming when you have to make five phone calls just to figure out if a law applies to you. Often, the agencies that originated the regulations themselves do not have the employees available who can readily explain the ramifications of the legislation."

Even with all the areas of concern (see sidebar), some owners believe there need to be more regulations in some areas. Beverly Hills Landscaping owner Dave Mercure of Coral Springs, Fla. believes that a lot of tree

trimming is done unsafely. He and other pesticide applicators are also concerned about the number of illegal pesticide applicators not stopped because of insufficient regulation of pesticide sales or use.

Concern for safety of the employees and customers, even of those walking by when a weed-eater is in use, motivate owners to remind themselves and others that, as Mathews puts it, "any time we can do anything to help each other, it's good."

Even in equipment use, where operators are tempted to disengage safety switches, Ron Witt (owner of Ron's Lawn Care in Deerfield, Fla.) says, "Society in general is over-regulated, but lawn mowing is not. Safety shut-off switches are good and emissions control is okay."

Zayas at Clean Cut concludes: "Most employers have their employees' best interests in mind [in complying with regulatory efforts]. Not just because of the moral and ethical issues, but also because it makes financial sense."

"Money spent on medical costs, property damages, lost productivity—it all adds up. Therefore, it is in the employer's best interests to reduce accidents and injuries."

—Barbara Howell is a freelance writer based in Cleveland, Ohio.



Truck and trailer accidents are common in the green industry. Safe driving is just as important as proper pesticide use. Also, don't 'soup up' engines or remove guards.

10 safety tips

1. Get everyone to "think safety." Motivate employees with incentives.
2. Wear the proper safety gear.
3. Pay attention and be alert—at all times.
4. Mix and apply pesticides carefully. Remember the threat to homeowners and pets.
5. Secure equipment on trailers.
6. The label is the law. Follow it.
7. Leave all guards on power equipment, and don't defeat safety switches. Don't be careless when operating it.
8. Be relentless in communicating to employees that management will not tolerate negligent behavior.
9. Be safe in everything you do. Life is fragile: handle with care. Sell your service as being safe in every way.
10. Train employees in proper lifting techniques and make support devices available. □

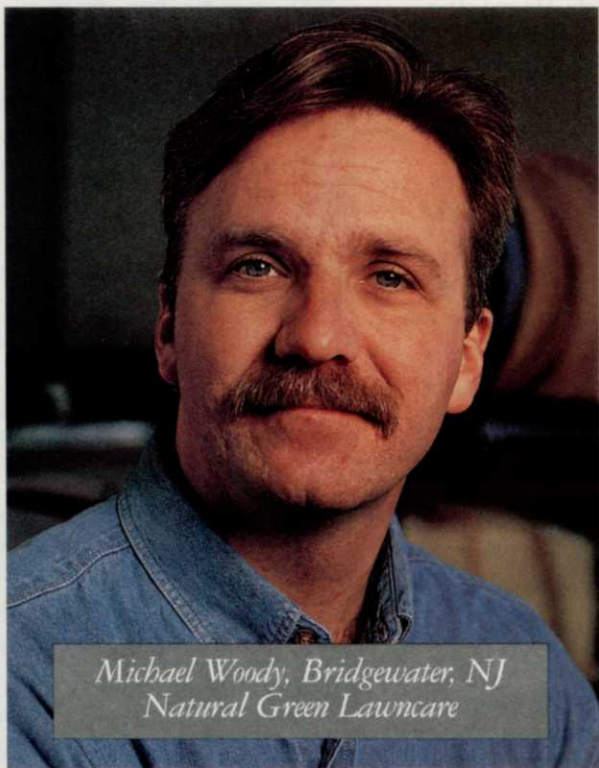
Publications

"Rinsing and Disposing of Pesticide Containers," from the Ohio State University Cooperative Extension Service, 2021 Coffey Rd., Columbus, OH 43201

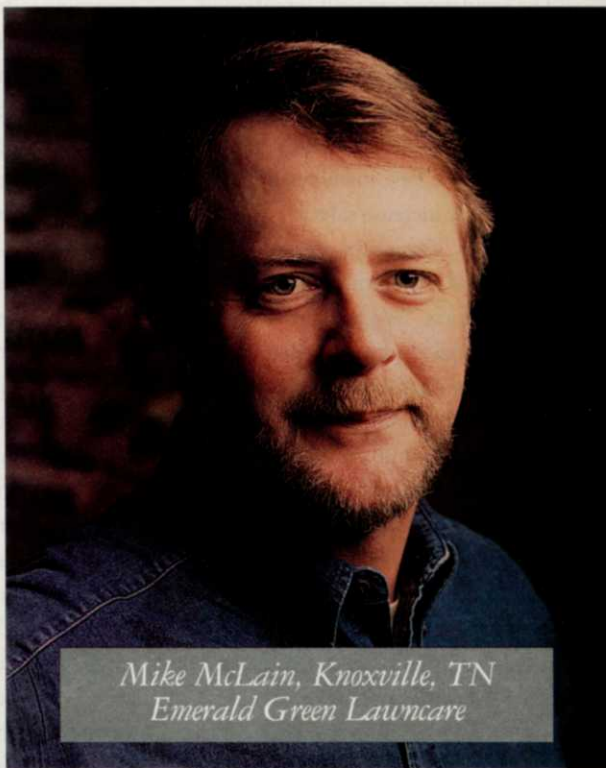
"Overall Safety," "Walk-Behind Safety Guidelines" and "Safe Riding Mower Use," from the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, 341 S. Patrick St., Old Town Alexandria, VA 22314

"OSHA Handbook for Small Business," "Lockout/Tagout," "Eye and Face Protection," "Chemical Hazard Communication," "Personal Protective Equipment," others: OSHA Publications Office, 200 Constitution Ave., Washington, DC 20210

"Safety and Regulatory Resource Manual" from PLCAA, 1000 Johnson Ferry Rd., NE, Suite C-135, Marietta, GA 30068-2112 □



*Michael Woody, Bridgewater, NJ
Natural Green Lawncare*



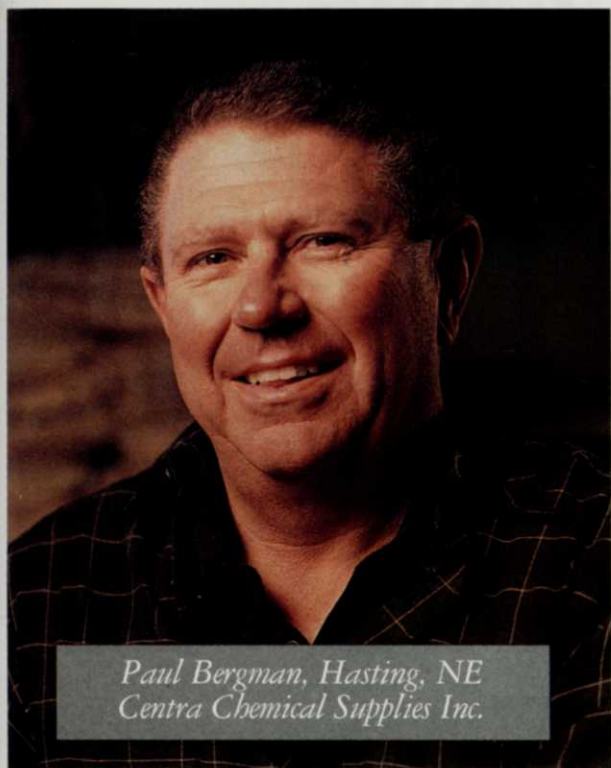
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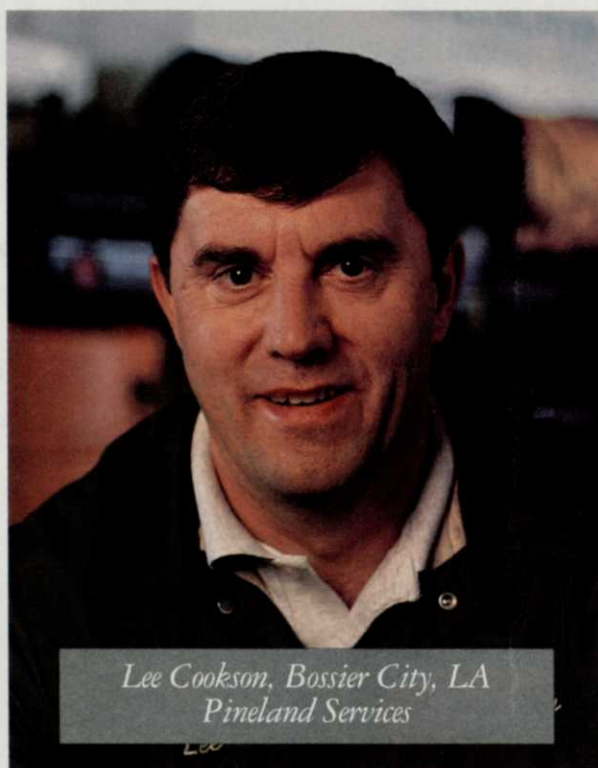
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Selbro Pro-Blow mounts to Walker ZTR mower.



It's no secret: power blowers are fast, efficient and worth every penny of their purchase price. Here, a grounds manager uses the Stihl BR 320L.

BEWARE: BLOWER BANS

Your community could be next for 'Project Quiet Yard.'

by JERRY ROCHE / Editor-in-Chief

Landscapers from coast to coast are not taking too kindly to some of their local leaders lately. From as far east as Scarsdale, N.Y., about 15 miles north of Manhattan, to as far west as Los Angeles, they are being threatened by anti-leaf blower legislation.

In Los Angeles, Marvin Braude heads a committee that recommends a law to ban the use of backpack blowers within 500 feet of residential living units.

"Obviously, Councilman Braude is pretty intent on going after this issue again," says Robin Pendergrast of International Marketing Exchange, which represents Echo, Inc., a leading blower maker. "My feeling is that he has a hard, tough road ahead of him, as he has in the past."

The entire L.A. city council will probably have a public hearing on May 14th, prior to a vote on the proposed blower ban.

In Scarsdale, landscapers are not allowed to use any power leaf blower that is louder than 75 decibels. At certain times of the day—according to a city law—they cannot even use a blower louder than 55 decibels.

Members of the New York Turf & Landscape Association are poised to go back to court a third time to battle the legislation, which was allowed by an appellate panel of three state Supreme Court justices early this year, after being disallowed late last year.

"Improper procedure lost us the case," says New York Turf & Landscape Association president Joe Tinelli of Westchester County. "But we are re-submitting all the paperwork and we're going to have it contested again this summer on the basis of constitutionality."

The association has already spent nearly \$18,000 on the case, not including the \$4,000 to re-submit.

"We're planning a public forum where both sides can take off the gloves and go at it," says Tinelli. "People are being brainwashed by that 'Project Quiet Yard' group out of Connecticut, which is travelling all over the country."

cont. on page 30

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PB4600 has 44cc engine; 70 dBA; 22 lbs.; tube-mounted throttle control offers one-hand operation; two-quart fuel tank

ENCORE (402) 228-4255 Circle No. 281

Pro-Line walk-behind blower has 8 hp industrial/commercial engine; adjustable chute; heavy-duty front caster; heavy-duty pneumatic rear wheels with re-greasable roller bearings; wide air intake vent

FRADAN (914) 632-3769 Circle No. 282

Model BB-50 Bac-Pac has 41cc Fradan engine; 236 mph air speed; 590 cu. ft./min. air volume; 67 dBA with large 3-qt. fuel tank

Models PB8IC, PB9VG, PB14VG, PB11IC are walk-behinds with Briggs & Stratton Engines (model no. corresponds to engine hp) with cu. ft./min. volume ranges from 2129 to 3500 and dBAs of 70

JACOBSEN (414) 637-6711 Circle No. 283

B-40 is a high-volume blower that mounts to any 25 hp, 540 rpm tractor with three-point linkage; 5,000 cu. ft./min.; directional chute; all-steel construction

Three blower attachments can be mounted to Jacobsen Turfcut; feature 23 and 28 hp diesel engines or 45 hp gas engine; 225 mph air speed; 3400 cu. ft./min. air volume; 222° directional chute

JOHN DEERE (919) 850-0123 Circle No. 284

Model 45BP (back pack) has air speed of 180 mph with padded harness and backrest; 44cc engine; air volume of 370 cu. ft./min.; twist-lock pipe section for hard-to-reach areas

LESCO (216) 333-9250 Circle No. 285

Hydraulic Drive Wheel Blower 4000 is a walk-behind with 16 hp Briggs & Stratton engine; variable speed hydraulic drive; remote control side deflector; heavy-duty swiveling front caster wheel

LITTLE WONDER (215) 357-5110 Circle No. 286

Commercial walk-behind has 11 hp engine; ergonomically-designed handle; 12-gauge steel housing; five-year warranty

Commercial hand-held blower weighs 8 lbs.; 130 mph air velocity; 300 cu. ft./min. air volume; 21.2cc engine with electronic ignition

MARUYAMA (206) 885-0811 Circle No. 287

BL400 backpack: 40.2cc Kawasaki engine; 475 cu. ft./min. air volume, 220 mph air speed; 19.8 lbs.

put volume; cast aluminum

Model PB-18KBDC mounts in the bed of most turf truck vehicles; powered by Kohler 18 hp Command engine; adjustable discharge chute; 175 mph, 5500 cu. ft./min.

Models PB-8HIC and PB-8BV are walk-behinds with vertical- and horizontal-blow units

ProBlow attaches to and operates off fuel and battery of sand trap rakes with Class I three-point hitch; Kohler Command 18 hp engine; 175 mph; 5000 cu. ft./min.

SHINDAIWA (503) 692-3070 Circle No. 290



Shindaiwa EB480 features fuel shut-off on throttle control.

BL4800 backpack: 48.6cc Kawasaki engine; 580 cu. ft./min. air volume, 220 mph air speed; 20.9 lbs.

MIGHTY MAC (610) 495-7181 Circle No. 288

LB552PNIP walk-behind has 5 hp Briggs & Stratton IC engine; 175 mph air speed; flow rate of 1800 cu. ft./min.

LB862IC has Briggs & Stratton 8 hp IC engine; 200 mph, 2000 cu. ft./min.

LB962V has 9 hp B&S Vanguard engine; 200 mph, 2000 cu. ft./min.

SELBRO (419) 483-9918 Circle No. 289

Model PB-18WLKR mounts to Walker ZTR mower; air speeds up to 175 mph with 4500 cu. ft./min. out

EB480 introduced last month; noise rating of 69 dBA; 43.6cc engine; blowing speed of 180 mph; fuel shut-off on throttle control lever; Walbro carburetor; convenient tube design; under 20 lbs.

SOLO (804) 245-4228 Circle No. 291

414 Backpack blower uses 55cc engine; 229 mph air velocity; 589 cu. ft./min. volume; weighs 17 lbs.; anti-vibration elements; pistol grip

STIHL (804) 486-9100 Circle No. 292

BR400: 57cc engine with air speeds up to 170 mph and flow rate of 476 cu. ft./min.; variable speed trigger on swivel air tube; one-year professional warranty

BG72: 23.9cc engine; weighs

8.8 lbs.; 365 cu. ft./min. air flow rate; quiet-69dBA; one-year professional warranty

BR 320L: 44.9cc engine; weighs 18.5 lbs.; swivel air tube; built-in tool holders and tools; 69 dBA; optional vacuum kit, spray conversion kit, dry spreader kit

SNAPPER (770) 954-2598 Circle No. 293

Model SLB514 is walk-behind with 5 hp Briggs & Stratton engine; 125 mph air speed; 1500 cu. ft./min. air volume

Model SLB55PN: 5 hp B&S engine, adjustable front wheel, loop handle; 175 mph air speed, 1800 cu. ft./min. air volume

Model SLB862IC: 8 hp Briggs industrial engine; adjustable front wheel; loop handle; 200 mph air speed; 2000 cu. ft./min. air volume

STEINER (330) 828-0200 Circle No. 294

Model PB100 14-inch blower fits on front of Steiner Model 410 turf tractor; 90 mph blowing power; 8-bladed, welded fan

TANAKA (206) 395-3900 Circle No. 295

TBL-4600 backpack blower has 43cc engine that delivers 500 cu. ft./min. air volume and 200 mph air speed; weighs 20.9 lbs.; 1-year commercial warranty, 5-year ignition module warranty; extra large fuel tank

TORO (612) 887-8801 Circle No. 296

Gas Blower/Vac has 31cc engine; weighs 12 lbs.; full two-year warranty; variable speed throttle control, super low tone muffler

Super Blower has dual air speed control; 190 mph air speed; 6+ lbs.

VANDERMOLEN (201) 992-8506 Circle No. 297

Windmill Model 856BT has air volume of 800 cu. ft./min. and 225 mph speed; 56.5 cc engine; anti-vibe system, interlocking blow pipes; 12-blade fan; positive ratchet throttle lever; 22 lbs.; quiet low-tone muffler