

# OPEI: Commercial power equipment sales sluggish

OLD TOWN ALEXANDRIA, VA — Shipments of commercial turf care products continued to drop in the first quarter of model year (MY) 2007 (Sept. – Dec. 2006). Intermediate walkers declined 16.5%, compared with the first quarter of MY 2006, and commercial riders, which were flat from MY 2005 to MY 2006, skidded 29.3% for the first quarter. Expansion of only 1.5% is

forecast for intermediate walkers for MY 2008, while riders will experience a double-digit upsurge for MY 2008 of 14.2%, according to mid-

March news release from the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI).

Things weren't much better for consumer sales, said the release.

Shipments of walk behind powered mowers fell 7.2% in the first quarter of MY 2007, compared with the same period a year earlier. This was a sharper reduction than the 6.1% drop for all of MY 2006. Changes in quarterly growth are expected to turn positive at the beginning of the 2008 model year (August 2007).

Consumer rider shipments fared even worse during this first quarter, with front engine lawn tractors falling 17.8% for the first quarter of MY 2007, and riding garden tractors sliding by 38.2%.

Hand-held blower shipments are forecast to increase by 2.2% in 2008, rebounding from a projected decrease in shipments of 2.4% in 2007. Shipments growth of 3.4% for 2007 is expected for backpack blowers with an additional increase of 5.2% for 2008.

However forecasts estimate that a rebound in the housing market will happen

at the end of this year. This rebound is expected to help boost shipments of consumer and commercial turf products.

While these statistics provide

some indication of the state of the turf and landscape power equipment market, not all suppliers are members of OPEI or report sales figures to it.



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BEFORE

**Problem** The clients are unhappy with the appearance of their wood line area. They think it looks messy and "unsafe." What would you recommend?

**The cause** The client's perception that the area is messy and "unsafe" is their reality. Some clients want landscapes to have a wild, natural appearance, others, a neat and tidy one. Clients in residential areas are concerned about the safety of children.

Every day you see horticultural problems. Sometimes the solution is obvious, but others are much more difficult to solve. Brickman Group Senior Horticulture Specialist H. Bruce Hellerick tackles these issues each month in Problem Solver. He can be reached at [Hellerick@BrickmanGroup.com](mailto:Hellerick@BrickmanGroup.com)

**Solutions**

The only solution that satisfied the clients in this case was the removal and disposal of all low-growing and vining plant materials and selective removal of small trees growing along the wood line. The resulting views into the woods improved the beauty of the site and increased the feeling of safety. Now the client wants to add a path from the road to the woods, install a gazebo and create a shade garden around it for the community to enjoy.



AFTER



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**Kehoe's keys to profits**

**BOSTON** — Green Industry guru Kevin Kehoe offered these "10 Keys to Profit" at the recent New England Grows conference & exposition. Kehoe says that it is absolutely essential business owners:

1. Know their true costs
2. Run their businesses by the numbers
3. Use a flexible pricing model
4. Get out of low profit work
5. Capture all work orders
6. Minimize customer dissatisfaction
7. Measure and hold their people accountable
8. Get rid of waste in processes and people
9. Pay more for "A" managers
10. Pay for results.

"The high growth companies in the industry are not running perfectly efficient operations," Kehoe adds. "They are, however, aggressive in pricing and managing customer expectations. In order to compete with your larger brethren, you may need to price like them on certain segments of your portfolio in order to increase the average job size."





# Canadian pesticide opponents ready for spring push

**TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA** — Several environmental, public health and medical organizations are turning up the heat on Ontario provincial lawmakers to ban what they refer to as the aesthetic use of pesticides.

They're redoubling their efforts this spring because it's an election year there. They're aggressively courting candidates to come out against the so-called cosmetic use of pesticides to demonstrate their awareness and support of environmental issues. They claim that, even if pesticide use is suspected of causing health problems (and most of the activist groups go beyond that), why risk it?

Representatives from at least five activist organizations met with provincial ministry officials in February to plead for a province-wide ban similar to the one in place in neighboring Quebec province. They claimed that a recent poll showed that 71% of Ontario residents support a ban.

Industry associations representing lawn care product end users insist the anti-pesticide crusade is misguided and has no basis in fact.


The call for a province-wide Ontario ban on urban pesticides for use on lawns and gardens should be considered in the context of the facts and not misinformation, said Lorne Hepworth, president of CropLife Canada and the Urban Pest Management Council of Canada.

Public policy should be based on sound science. A province-wide pesticide bylaw would remove, without any proper scientific foundation, the benefits provided by the science-based Health Canada regulation of pest control products. "Placing additional burden of regulation on provincial or municipal authorities is unreasonable and unnecessary," said Hepworth. "Local and even provincial governments are not equipped to properly assess complex products on a detailed health or

environmental scientific basis, so a total ban becomes a default position. Banning pesticides is not only unnecessary, but also costly to enforce and provides little additional public health benefits."


The agitation against lawn care products remains high in communities across Canada. To date, more than 120 towns and cities have restricted or banned the use of pesticides for "cosmetic purposes."

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## In the Know

# PLANET reports continued growth in Green Industry

HERNDON, VA — In honor of National Lawn Care Month in April, the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) celebrates by announcing the Green Industry's growth.

As baby boomers age, and with more than 30 million acres of lawn across the United States, rapidly increasing numbers of homeowners are turning to professionals to care for their lawns and landscapes.

"Americans realize the importance of well-cared for lawns," states PLANET's President Jim Martin. "In addition to being beautiful, lawns have a positive impact on our environment. They trap dust and dirt in the atmosphere and convert large amounts of carbon dioxide to oxygen. Lawns also provide a natural filtering system for rainwater as it soaks into the ground. Additionally, healthy lawns provide a cooling effect in summer months, which saves on energy costs."

In 2004, PLANET conducted a national Harris Survey that reported that homeowners spent \$11.6 billion on their lawns in 2003, up 12% from 2002. These

Realtors report that homes with beautiful lawns and landscape can increase property values 15% to 20%.

same homeowners projected that they'd spend even more on their lawns in 2004. Consumers realize that healthy lawns play an important role in home sales and they have a huge impact on "curb appeal."

Realtors report that homes with beautiful lawns and landscape can increase property values 15% to 20%, and that homeowners can realize returns on their investment of 100% to 200%. Lawn care companies also provide a large number of jobs across the United States.

"Homeowners can be proactive in April by putting together a lawn care program, with their lawn care professional, that ensures their lawns will be healthy and beautiful throughout the year," Martin suggests. "It's important to maintain and even increase property values."



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Circle 120



# People & companies



The **Toro Co.** has named **Scott Cornwell** national sales manager for its Toro

Dingo compact utility loader product line.

**Hunter Industries** added **Rafael Rodriguez** to its growing roster of international sales representatives. Rodriguez will handle distributor, contractor, municipal and specifier duties throughout Mexico.

**AquaScape** owner and CEO **Greg Wittstock** was inducted

into the Chicago Area Entrepreneurship Hall of Fame.

**Jerry Corbett** has joined **Quali-Pro** as technical services manager.



Lebanon, OH-based **Fecon** named **Ted Christian** national sales manager.

**Cal Poly's** College of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Sciences has named **John Peterson** to head the Horticulture and Crop Science Department.



**Steve Newton** has been named executive vice president of the **Southern Nursery Association**.



**Tremendous Landscape Co.** of Plainfield, IL, promoted **Eric Tharp** to vice president of

Operations.

**Profile Products** announced **Jeff Langner** as its executive marketing assistant.






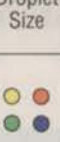








**Ric J. Hendricks** and **Dennis R. Anderson** have been promoted to principals of **NUVIS**, a landscape architecture and planning firm headquartered in Costa Mesa, CA. Previously senior associates, Hendricks manages NUVIS, office in San Ramon, CA, and Anderson manages the firm's Las Vegas office.







**Venture Products** recently appointed **Kevin Holland** Ventrac national sales manager.

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Turbo TeeJet® Induction 	---	Excellent		Turbo TwinJet® 	Excellent	Excellent	
AIC TeeJet® 	Good	Excellent		XP BoomJet® 	---	Very Good	

-  Very Fine
  -  Fine
  -  Medium
  -  Coarse
  -  Very Coarse
  -  Extremely Coarse
- (Droplet-size categories may vary with nozzle capacity, spray angle and spray pressure.)



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Circle 121



# Add-On Biz

BUSINESS EXTEND YOUR BUSINESS

## Mole control

► They may drive homeowners crazy, but moles can provide landscapers added income.

BY DON DALE

At times Keith Fisher feels that he's over-run by moles. His lawn care business, Growing Green Lawn Care, in Lawrenceville, IL, has seen a 40% increase in mole activity in the last five years, and his clients are clamoring for mole control, he estimates.

But that's good news, because he is making control a larger part of his business. That is a lot easier, nowadays, because instead of the traditional Victor traps, he is using Talpirid, a mole bait manufactured by Bell Laboratories. He has found that what was once an unpleasant sideline now can be an at-

tractive and time-efficient way to increase his revenue.

Fisher found success with the bait-impregnated "worms," which mimic earthworms, moles' traditional food. Unlike most aspects of his business, there are no startup costs other than the material. His four employees simply use a pencil or pen to punch a hole in the mole's active tunnels and drop a worm inside. Gloves are necessary for safety and to keep human scent off the worms.

### Timing is everything

Fisher starts treatments in March, as moles begin tunneling near the surface, and it is easy to make an immediate ap-



Keith Fisher (right) and John Armstrong checking out mole runs

plication and do a follow-up if needed as the crew returns to mow the lawn. A crew notes the location of a worm insertion and returns in 10 days to see if it has been consumed.

The company has been using the bait since last summer, and has settled on a flat charge of \$10 per worm, including labor. It's a bargain for homeowners, because the previous cost for mole control was \$20 per trap. Fisher doesn't guarantee the application, however, and tells the client up-front that any follow-ups will cost more. He estimates a 60% success rate.

In Huntingburg, IN, Scott Souders increased his business by about 10% by using the product. He also charges by the worm, although another option is to sell a seasonal treatment program. Moles have become a significant part of Souders Lawn Care's chemical treatment business in the two years he has been using the product.

### A simple solution

"It's not rocket science," Souders says of the use of Talpirid. But employees are cautioned to plug the mole hole and not crush the tunnel while working.

"You have to find your feeder tunnels," he notes, and then the grass is lifted with a putty knife so that a worm can be inserted. Mowing crews carry a few worms in their trucks for follow-ups during the season.

Souders now buys bait by the case, and he has used as many as 20 worms on mole-infested lawns. Like Fisher, he markets mostly by word of mouth, emphasizing client education about moles and the efficacy of the product. But he also now mentions mole control in his newspaper ads.

"The homeowner can't tell you were there, and that's a good thing," Souder says of a successful mole-busting visit.

— The author is a freelance writer living in Altadena, CA.

### BY THE NUMBERS...



**45-50**

lbs. amount of worms and insects a 5-ounce mole consumes each year

**FIVE**

million — number of businesses that maintain turf in mole territory

**EIGHTY** feet per minute — speed at which a mole can travel through existing tunnels

**50**

million — number of home lawns in the U.S. and Canada located in mole territory

SOURCE: TALPIRID AND THEMOLEMAN.COM

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the grub guide

If Grubs are your problem,  
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## Grubs

Grubs are the larvae of a group of beetles called scarabs (*Scarabaeidae*). Creamy white in color, they have a dark hind end, brown head, and six well-developed legs. Depending on their age and species, grubs range in length from 1/4 to 2 inches.

### The Damage

Grubs feed on and destroy the root systems of grasses and other plants. If they are left untreated, a homeowner will face not only an aesthetically unpleasing lawn, but a problem that can get a lot worse. Each year, homeowners spend hundreds of thousands of dollars replacing grub-damaged lawns.

You can help educate your customers about the damage grubs can cause and help them recognize the first signs of a problem. Their lawns – and your relationship with them – will only prosper.

### The damage above-ground...

Look for irregular sections of brown or grey-green drought-like turf that don't appear better after watering or rainfall. Grub-infested turf may also feel spongy underfoot and damaged areas will peel away easily, like rolling up a carpet.

### ... But the Real Damage is Found Below-Ground

In the past sampling was the best way to assess grub damage and it is easy to do. First, map out the property and take samples from a depth of 4-6 inches in various locations. Remove a sample of soil and grass and determine the number of grubs per square foot from this sample. A square-foot population of 5 or more means you have a problem.

### When the damage typically occurs

Grubs thrive in moist soil, so damage may not be noticeable in the wet spring and fall months, when turf grasses grow quickly and their roots can recover quickly from grub attacks. But in drier summer months, root systems are easily compromised by lack of water, increasing stress on the turf. This makes grub damage easy to recognize.