

Marketing Roundup, continued from Page 5

as a promotional video. The original commercial, which was taped at the farm, captures Modern Turf's capabilities and products. The video has been versatile, and is used at special events and as a sales tool.

These ideas are just a few of the many we have seen this year. We applaud and encourage all of the producers' initiative, as well as the quality of the turfgrass produced. Please send your own creative marketing ideas, including photos, to Sis Reda if you would like them included in *The Fish Wrap*. Sis can be reached at 843.849.1288 or sreda@sodsolutions.com. We are available to talk with you about your own marketing ideas and plans. Contact Sis if you'd like information about the variety of Sod Solutions marketing

support services, from sales brochures to marketing planning, special events, photos, graphic design, and more.



sodsolutions.com

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The Fish Wrap

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Above Right
Joel Lane, Field
Technical
Representative,
offers advice for
mowing

2004 Producers Meetings Scheduled for January Bay City, Orlando Are Meeting Sites

Recommended Mowing Heights for EMPIRE

By Joel Lane - Field Representative

We have touched on this topic in *The Fish Wrap* and elsewhere more than once; but during this season, we feel it is necessary to again discuss mowing heights for EMPIRE Zoysia.



Over the last couple of years, we have observed EMPIRE to perform better at specified heights. These recommendations differ from what we originally felt were ideal. Since most areas have already seen the onset of dormancy, we will take the time to help you prepare for spring green-up.

In late winter-early spring, try to get your heights down between 3/4" and 1-1/2" (lower heights are possible) for quickened spring green-up. Lower mowing heights can be achieved, as seen on some golf courses that have mowed EMPIRE as low as 1/4" on tee boxes. As you maintain the grass through the growing season, try to sustain these heights if possible. As you approach winter again, make sure you are at the heights mentioned above. You should observe prolonged color in the fall, and this will enable your turf to green up quicker in the spring. We believe you will find a better performing grass with fewer thatch problems and, as a result, fewer disease and insect problems.

Sod Solutions includes comprehensive installation maintenance recommendations for EMPIRE in a Best Management Practices sheet (BMP). Contact the office at 843.849.1288 if you need copies. BMP's are also available for Palmetto St. Augustine and Celebration Bermudagrass.

Sod Solutions Seventh Annual Producers' Meetings are scheduled for the last week of January 2004. We are again offering two meetings - one in Texas and one in Florida - so that attendance may be as convenient as possible for the majority of licensed producers.

The first meeting will be in Bay City, Texas at the Bay City Convention Center on Monday, January 26. The meeting will begin in the morning, and lunch will be served. We also hope to offer an afternoon of shotgun sports.

The second meeting will be Thursday, January 29 at TM Ranch in Orlando, Florida. The meeting begins in the morning, and will include a field tour to set the tone for technical discussions. Lunch and an afternoon of sporting clay shooting are also planned.

Additional details will be sent early in January via mailed invitations. We hope that you will mark your calendars for one of the meetings.

The Annual Producers' Meetings provide an opportunity to chat with other producers, review progress made in the past year on sales and marketing of Sod Solutions varieties, and have a little fun. We'll also discuss technical questions, and learn about new developments and marketing activities that are scheduled for the coming year.

We look forward to seeing you in January!

INSIDE

Tobey Talk

Destination:
Down Under
(Pages 3-4)

Marketing Highlights

Great Marketing
Ideas from the
Field
(Pages 5-6)

Tech Talk

Celebration and
EMPIRE Sports
Sites
(Page 2)

Celebration and EMPIRE Both Brands Popular with Golf, Sports Venues

Golf courses and sports fields are very important to the turfgrass industry. Both types of applications showcase turfgrass first-hand to thousands of golf enthusiasts and sports fans. However, both applications put turf "to the test," demanding the best possible playing surfaces for enthusiasts in many diverse settings, from golf greens to soccer and polo fields.



Sod Solutions is proud to contribute to this large and important segment of the turfgrass business with two improved varieties: Celebration Bermudagrass and EMPIRE Zoysia.

Celebration, with its outstanding deep blue-green color, has captured attention from a variety of turf professionals and sports enthusiasts, including coaches, golf superintendents and developers. Celebration is found on fairways and tees at an increasing number of golf courses across the U.S. A few recent installations that have been reported to us are: Carolina Trace Country Club, NC; Country Club of Charleston, SC; Palm Beach Country Club, FL; Presidential Country Club, FL, and Eagle Mountain Country Club, AR.

Celebration performs well under some shaded conditions. At some golf courses, like Westwood Country Club, MO and Gambit Golf Club, IL, Celebration has been a viable option for shaded tees where Tifway 419 was not performing well.

Other great characteristics of Celebration Bermudagrass are its strong rhizomes and root system. These features enable Celebration to better tolerate water stresses, and to recover well from mechanical injuries. Soccer and football fields, where injuries are usually pronounced, have also been using Celebration. Some locations include the soccer complex for the city of Poplar Bluff,

MO; the Marion, AR High School football field; and the Town of Mt. Pleasant, SC athletic fields.

EMPIRE Zoysia also has a strong root system, but does not grow vertically as quickly, so it does not require as much mowing as bermudagrass. EMPIRE can be an important tool on slopes, preventing erosion on roughs and margin areas. Also, EMPIRE tolerates some herbicides that cannot be used on bermudagrass, which makes EMPIRE easier to manage and maintain at different sports fields. These important characteristics have made EMPIRE attractive to these sites: Harbortown Golf Links, SC; Twin City Country Club, GA; Hammock Dunes, FL; and Tannenbaun Golf Course, AR.

Sod Solutions has compiled lists of golf courses and sports fields across the United States that use Celebration. A list of EMPIRE golf and sports sites is underway, and will be available in January. These lists include sites that producers have reported; and they will be updated periodically as we receive new information. If you would like a copy of the Celebration Bermudagrass or the EMPIRE Zoysia references, contact Sis Reda at 843.849.1288 or sreda@sodsolutions.com.



Roberto Gurgel,
Agricultural
Engineering
Specialist

Tech Talk



Joel Lane,
Field Technical
Representative

Above Right
Celebration
Bermudagrass
at Westwood
Country Club,
Poplar Bluff, MO

Marketing Roundup Great Ideas from the Field

During travels and chats with producers, we have observed the ideas that you use to market and sell the brands. Many producers are savvy about their markets and customers, and have original ideas. Here are a few we would like to share:

Turf Demonstration Area - Rhyne's Select Turf, Benton, AL. Rhyne's Select Turf produces EMPIRE Zoysia and another variety. They installed a turf demonstration area, which includes EMPIRE and varieties they do not produce. The plots and the entire demo area are large, and help customers evaluate purchases.

Truck Signage and Driver Preparation - Green Acres Turf Farm, Furman, SC. Green Acres displays farm name and contact information on signs mounted on the backs of trucks, as well as on side doors. Therefore this information is visible to passing and following cars. This farm also educates drivers about the turfgrasses, and they keep brochures in the trucks. These simple activities help drivers to promote the turfgrasses.

Creative Print Advertising - Evergreen Turf, Tempe, Arizona. Last year, this producer developed a series of print ads that creatively communicated their best competitive advantages. One ad featured the legs of a "prisoner," dragging ball and chain, and the headline, "You don't need to "do time" waiting for sod to be delivered." This ad promoted Evergreen's ability to deliver great sod, at the right price, right away. Other ads also featured unique graphics and copy, promoting the farm in a memorable way.

Promotional Video - Modern Turf, Rembert, SC. Modern Turf developed a cable TV commercial that they also used

(Continued on Page 6)



Sis Reda
Director of
Marketing

Market Rap

Marketing Highlights October - December 2003

October

- New Texas Celebration Print Ad Completed / Available to Producers
- 7 Ads in Turf Industry Publications

November

- Booth space at Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Conference & Trade Show - Nov. 18-19, Myrtle Beach
- 6 Ads in Turf Industry Publications
- EMPIRE Brochure Reprint
- Sales, Marketing Visits - Australia

December

- 6 Ads in Turf Industry Publications
- Booth space at Texas Turfgrass Association Winter Conference and Trade Show - Dec. 15-16, San Antonio

MARS Reports Reminder

The 2004 Monthly Acreage Reports (MARS) have been mailed to all licensed producers. If you do not receive yours by January 5, 2004 please contact Brenda Roberts at 843.849.1288 or broberts@sodsolutions.com

You don't need to "do time" waiting for sod to be delivered.

Why wait! Life's too short. Get great sod, at the right price, delivered right now. Whether you need 10 square feet or 8 acres, we can turn dirt into grass virtually overnight. Call today for details. After all, you have better things to do than wait.

- Real free soil
- Professional inspection
- Proven and reliable
- Available in 1/2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100
- In fact, some day job-up available

Real grass. Real fast. Real easy.

evergreen TURF 480.456.1199

Destination: Down Under Australian Trip Provides Insights

The plane with the red kangaroo on the tail takes off from Los Angeles and lands in Sydney, Australia 14 hours later. Greg looks a little jetlagged as Todd Layt whisks us from the airport to the destination of our first night's stay in the "Land Down Under." Our watches, set to US time, read 7:00 a.m., but it is dark in this strange place. The night air is cool, with a fragrance of spring -- flowers and mowed grass. Our body clocks tell us it is time for a good night's sleep. Instead, we set out for a full day of activity. We pop into a McDonalds for a quick drink. This one has the golden arches on the outside, but the people inside speak oddly. They do not accept American dollars. We are off; and our adventure has begun.

We spend the first days visiting a multitude of farms. Each farm and owner has a unique, charming personality. Todd and Marina Layt's hospitality is wonderful, highlighted by their 12 year old twin daughters' preparing authentic Australian foods. Michael Muscat's family at Greenline Turf also treats us to a delicious Aussie breakfast. The "free range" eggs and fresh fruit are my favorites. My taste for Vegemite, a breakfast spread eaten on toast, remains in the development stage. With full bellies we are off for more turf farm visits.

The overall quality of the farms, or "paddocks" as they are called by Australians, is unbelievable. It is difficult to find a weed in the fields. Seeing Palmetto St. Augustine, or "Palmetto Buffalo" as they call it, mowed at 1 inch, and even tighter, is mind boggling. What would these growers think if they saw the 4-inch mow in Florida? The growers "roll" the "turf" that is sold: "sod" is a derogatory term not used in Australia! Turf is rolled because "Bermuda," or "Couch" as they call it, has been the standard

for many years. The Australian sentiment is, "It's just the way us blokes cut turf; we're selling turf, not real estate," as one grower explained. It is hard to argue with that logic!

This first week has been full of pleasant surprises. Palmetto St. Augustine is ahead of our best expectations. It is recognized as the premier Australian St. Augustine. Its great winter color, drought resistance, and excellent blocking ability are Palmetto's distinguishing Aussie traits. EMPIRE and EMPRESS Zoysia grasses look equally impressive.

Most of the growers had never produced a Zoysia before EMPIRE and EMPRESS. They are excited about having two finer-bladed grasses with the drought tolerance to go dormant during water restrictions, then recover when water returns.

Several growers have sold all EMPIRE inventory, and many are expanding. We look forward next to visiting northeastern Australia, including Cairns, Mareeba, and Townsville.

The grower's conference in Brisbane is wonderful. Special thanks to Kate at Ozbreed for planning an outstanding conference. A bus load of growers heads to Clifton Park Turf, where Bob and Moira Pinkerton welcome all to their immaculate farm. The Palmetto is almost, but not quite, perfect. Our inspector, Walter Scatinni, finds *one* weed! The other weed-free acres shimmer greenly in the hot sun. After questions and answers, we load up and head back to the Conrad Hotel for the grower's conference. Topics include the drought, marketing plans, new products, grower issues, and the future of the industry. Much has been accomplished during the past year. (Continued on Page 4)



Tobey Wagner
President

Tobey Talk

Note:
Sod Solutions works with turf farms in Australia. Recently, Tobey Wagner and Greg Douglas visited Australia, and this article reports their observations.



Tobey Wagner
President

Tobey Talk

Palmetto has become well established, EMPIRE is making strides, and growers in most areas are working together to improve markets. We have been in Australia less than a week, and the trip is already a great success!

Next we head west from Brisbane to Perth. Perth is as far from Brisbane as Jacksonville is from Los Angeles. Perth is Australia's "wild west." It is the largest city in the state of Western Australia. The state is 1/3 the size of the U.S. with less than 2 million people (over 1 million near Perth), making even Texas seem small.

Our body clocks are far off now, as Perth is 12 hours ahead of the US Eastern Time zone. We arrived late and see a thunderstorm for the first time on our trip. Storms are unusual in this region. This spring storm dropped temperatures, creating several perfect, cool days. We visit several farms, and are impressed to see Palmetto and EMPIRE mowed at unbelievably low heights of less than 1 inch.

We spend the next few days with Greg Hackshaw, Adrian Pitsikas, and John Maas. We visit a remote farm and tour Western Australia (WA), and discuss regional EMPIRE and Palmetto plans. These guys are innovative. By working together, the producers have dealt with severe drought, as well as difficult market conditions and governmental regulations. The growers of WA, although very independent, are setting an example of cooperating to solve common problems. They are good businessmen and great hosts. We visited large ranches, fished in the Indian Ocean, and dove on beautiful reefs off the coast of Geraldton. These guys work hard and play hard!

Our last stop is Melbourne. Special thanks to Rob and Wendy Davey, who treated us like family. We stay in their home. From mealtime, to the kids

hurrying to school, their household routine isn't so different from ours (except for that strange Vegemite goo). We visit several farms, including the largest farm in Australia, ANCO Turf (700 acres). We are again impressed with the overall quality. Melbourne is unique. A temperate climate and "average" rainfall allows for production of both cool and warm season grasses. Cool season grasses have been predominant until recent years, as the rainfall has been well below average. Like many world areas that have experienced drought, Australia (particularly Melbourne) is undergoing a significant change from cool season to more substantial warm season grass use. Generally, warm season grasses use less water than cool season grasses. Palmetto St. Augustine, and EMPIRE and EMPRESS Zoysias, are recognized as water-wise grasses in the region. They are gaining in acreage and usage.

This trip has been both a business success and the trip of a lifetime. Greg and I are overwhelmed by the generosity demonstrated by too many people to mention. We are grateful to the producers and associates of Australia for their business affiliation and friendship. We have seen parts of Australia most natives never see. Thanks again!

A Short Australian Glossary

These are some common Australian terms we heard during our trip, and their American meanings:

Paddock	Field
Turf or Lawn	Sod
Sod	A cranky old man (slang)
Buffalo Grass	St. Augustinegrass
Couch Grass	Bermudagrass
Zoysia Grass	Zoysia
The lot	The whole thing
Bloke	Man
Bloody bloke	A bad man
Shelia / Tart	Negative word for women. Not used often.
That much	A whole lot
Square meter	More than a square yard
Shocking	Very bad
Chips	French (Freedom) Fries
Rump	Steak
A bad beer	Fosters and Budweiser
Ute	Pick-up truck
Boot	Trunk of the car