

Sunshine Farms Builds Vapam Rig

Frank Robinson of Sunshine Farms Turf in St. Augustine, FL, has fabricated a Vapam fumigation rig. Noting that his "knife" type rig left rows of untreated soil prone to weed germination, he devised an implement to deliver contiguous coverage utilizing a 186" spring tooth harrow with 47 fan nozzles placed behind 4" shoes. Vapam is applied at 4.5 mph, 6-7" deep, at 70 g/a with no detectable air release after embedding. Frank replaced the reels on the harrow with a drag-off board to smooth the furrows. If you'd like more information, call Sunshine Farms Turf at 904.940.5341.



The Palmetto St. Augustine, EMPIRE Zoysia, and EMPRESS Zoysia names and logos are registered trademarks of Sod Solutions, Inc. The Sod Solutions and Totality Shade Grass names and logos are trademarks of Sod Solutions, Inc.

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producer's marketing and advertising program to improve sales and profitability of your business. At Sod Solutions we have invested dollars and time into the development and re-design of our web site, www.sodsolutions.com. Producers may also utilize our banner program, brochures, television program features, radio advertisements, local producer meetings, and other marketing tools to promote Sod Solutions' varieties. Producers in our programs who have taken advantage of one or more of these marketing tools have seen positive results.

sodsolutions.com

SODTM
SOLUTIONS

Check Out Our Newly
Re-designed Web Site
www.sodsolutions.com

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At Right
Australian producers
Todd Layt, Michael
Muscat, Darren Miller,
and Richard Grech
with Tobey in a field
of Palmetto St.
Augustine near
Sydney, Australia.



This fall / winter (spring / summer in Australia) marked the first sales season for Palmetto St. Augustine in Australia and the early returns are very exciting. Fifteen licensed Australian producers began spring / summer sales in October 2000 and the harvesting continues. From the producer's perspective, the grass is competing very well in their market. Sod Solutions has put up a unique Australian web site (www.aulawn.com) which will be developed to target the needs of the Australian landscape professional and consumer.

EMPIRE and EMPRESS Zoysia have been released from Australian quarantine and initial propagation has commenced in New South Wales. Licensed EMPIRE / EMPRESS producers will begin receiving their planting stock soon.

Sod Solutions is very pleased to be part of these dynamic programs and we commend our Australian producers for their hard work and commitment. The future looks very promising.

Dry Summer, Wet Fall, Cold Winter..What's Next? Weather Just One of Many Recent Challenges

Australian Palmetto Cranks Up...EMPIRE and EMPRESS Zoysia Up Next

A long, cold winter is finally coming to an end across the country. Some areas experienced a "100-year winter" as temperatures in December and January set all-time lows with extended cold temperatures below normal. Many producers have commented that they do not know what "normal" is anymore when speaking of the weather. The past few years have brought many weather surprises! Texas recovered from a terrible drought this past summer followed by continuous rain during the fall and winter. Growers in the Southeast are suffering from a drought that has endured for over 4 years with no end in sight. The uncertainty in the weather is now accompanied by uncertainty in the economy. Although the turf industry has been strong during the past years, producers acknowledge that challenges are on the horizon.

Sod Solutions looks forward to working closely with each licensed producer to meet these, and other, challenges. **Your future is our future as well** and we will do whatever it takes to help our licensed producers improve their businesses; no matter the challenge. As always, your input and participation is crucial, so please take a few minutes to read *The Fish Wrap*, our newest "line of communication" to you: the producer. Let us know what you think and never hesitate to contact us with your thoughts and ideas.

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You...Our Customers...Are The Key

Sod Solutions Continues to be "Focused on the Producer"

We at Sod Solutions are excited about the future of the turf industry, particularly in the southern United States where population growth and construction is expected to continue to increase sharply. The past five years have been perhaps the best in history for turf production and sales. Producers have had the luxury of producing anything and selling everything. The next five years are promising, but with a changing economy, producers must strategically plan to ensure that their business remains competitive. New growers to the industry have planted thousands of additional acres in recent years. Many producers are experienced in production methods, but have given little thought to marketing and sales strategies. Issues like water restrictions, fertilizer restrictions, herbicide restrictions, and over production of common varieties are issues that must be faced.

Sod Solutions is honored to be working with 85 of the country's finest producers and we're developing new products and innovative strategies to give our licensed producers a competitive edge. From a

Herbicide Research

Sod Solutions' latest herbicide research has been completed and is available in the "Research" section of our web site or by calling our office. Jason Higingbottom, Clemson University, completed trials on EMPIRE, and EMPRESS Zoysia. The objective of the study was to evaluate suggested and elevated rates of grass herbicides for possible herbicide injury and unacceptable quality in EMPIRE and EMPRESS. The study used various application rates of Acclaim Extra, MSMA, Fusilade II, and Roundup Pro. Please visit our web site and review these results for use in your programs.

development viewpoint, recent agreements with key breeders across the world will help us bring new products to market and diversify what our producers can offer into the marketplace. New grasses will enable growers to sell products targeted to solve several common problems including water usage, weed control, shade issues, and reduced maintenance needs. Sod Solutions works with and sponsors several research projects at the university level to better quantify and qualify our development programs.

Marketing is key both in the short and long term for the turf industry. Marketing is not about growing a product and then trying to sell the product only after it is grown. Marketing is a sustained promotion of a company and the concept of the products sold. This concept of product and brand development will become very important to individual companies when times are tough. Sod Solutions is committed to a sustained marketing program that will support the individual **See Tobey Talk - Page 4**

Re-designed Web Site

Please visit our "new look" web site (www.sodsolutions.com) that was re-launched on February 1, 2001. We've added many new features including updated photo galleries of our grasses, an FAQ section, a zip code driven "where-to-buy" producer search function, a "Producer Page", and an "International" page. The number of visits to the site is up dramatically and we've heard from many of you that new customers are finding your business through our site. That's great! Please continue to refer your customers to the site for the latest maintenance and troubleshooting information.



Tobey Wagner
President

Tobey Talk

Marketing Opportunities Abound...What's Best For You? From TV, to Radio, to Banners, We're Building Our Brands

Time was, when a farmer talked about branding, he most likely was referring to an unpleasant bovine experience. Today, however, branding is a key element in any proprietary marketing strategy. Your ability to grow and sell a "branded" proprietary turfgrass variety, be it Palmetto St. Augustine, EMPIRE Zoysia, or EMPRESS Zoysia, gives you a competitive edge over other unlicensed producers.

At Sod Solutions, we strongly suggest that you leverage this competitive edge by advertising and promoting Palmetto St. Augustine, EMPIRE Zoysia and EMPRESS Zoysia through proper use of the trademarked names and logos. This strategy will allow your customers to recog-

Banners Motivate Buyers

Sod Solutions has started an exciting new "point-of-sale" banner promotion that allows producers and retailers to build and order full color canvas banners via the Internet. In partnership with BannerGalaxy.com, Sod Solutions has created six Palmetto St. Augustine, EMPIRE Zoysia, and EMPRESS Zoysia banner templates that can be customized to include your unique contact information (i.e. farm name, phone number, location, web site, etc.). The banners can be sized and fabricated to your exact specifications and the delivered price is lower than most local sign shops. As Vanessa Riebeling of Riebeling Farms puts it, **"I've found ordering banners from the web site to be easy, fun, and quick to do. I encourage everyone to order these banners for themselves and their customers."** For more information on how to order the banners see the BannerGalaxy insert in this mailing, visit the "Producer Page" on our web site, or give us a call.

Build Your Turfgrass "Brands"

- Educate Your Employees so They Understand How Your Brands Differ From Your Competitors
- Always Differentiate Between the Grasses You Offer, One Grass Does Not Usually Fit All Customers
- Stress the Improved Characteristics of Your Branded Grasses, Make the Customer Aware That They are Receiving a Superior Product
- When Advertising (newspapers, yellow pages, etc.), Always Use Trademarked Symbols and Logos (available from our office in many formats)
- Take Time to Educate Your Customers so They Will "Ask For Your Brands By Name" in the Future
- Always Back Your Brands With Excellent Quality and Service

nize you as a licensed source for the "brand" of turfgrass that they have been exposed to through your advertising activities and Sod Solutions' marketing campaigns. So don't ever forget to build your brands.

Marketing Highlights

April

- Better Lawns Radio Ad (FL)
- Rush Limbaugh Radio Ad (FL)
- 7 Ads in Turf Industry Mags
- Press Release for Australia
- Australian Palmetto Brochure Complete and Distributed

May

- Better Lawns Radio Ad (FL)
- Rush Limbaugh Radio Ad (FL)
- 7 Ads in Turf Industry Mags
- 2 Press Releases (TX & FL)
- Direct Mailing to Contractors

June

- 8 Ads in Turf Industry Mags
- Rush Limbaugh Radio Ad (FL)
- Direct Mailing to Architects



Greg Douglas
Vice President

Market Rap