



HIGH IMPACT, LOW MAINTENANCE LANDSCAPES

BY JESSIE ATCHISON

Green is great. It's the prevalent color of the lush turf, towering trees, and dense hedges that provide the basis for many successful landscapes. However, green is only the beginning! Nothing brings attention to your work like using colorful annuals in the landscape. Well-executed use of color is just one way to continually promote the value of your services and annuals are among the most colorful, versatile plants for the job. Changing the annuals in a bed from one season to the next can provide a dramatic change that keeps the whole site fresh.

If you know the basics of designing with color and how to select and care for the best annual varieties, you can create the perfect landscape combination: a high impact design with low maintenance requirements.

Opposites attract

Combining colors in the most eye-catching way is one key to creating a high impact planting. There's really no such thing as too much color in a planting, but too many distinct colors can really make the wrong impression. Instead, choose a color scheme and use it consistently throughout the planting. Remember that opposites do attract; colors set across from each other on the color wheel, like yellow and purple, combine nicely.

In general, most "hot" and "cool" colors complement each other well, even if they aren't really "opposites." An example would be combining red and purple in a planting, like Purple Lady iresine and Vista Red salvia. Using similar colors (those next to each other on a color wheel) like orange and yellow can produce a stunning combination. Monochromatic schemes (those using a range of shades in one main color) can create a big impact as well, particularly in large plantings. Pay attention to foliage color, too; foliage comes in lots of different shades (don't assume it's just green!) and should complement the bloom colors you're using. Finally, a good rule of thumb is to use light or very vibrant shades against dark backgrounds and darker colors against

pale backdrops; this will keep the plants visible, creating the maximum visual impact.

All mowers, trimmers, and trucks are not created equal, and neither are all annual varieties. Choosing the best-performing varieties for your site will go a long way toward managing the maintenance requirements of the planting. Also, top-performing plants will, with proper care, look good all season.

To be sure you're making the best variety decisions, ask some basic questions. First, think about the site itself. Is the climate hot or cool? Does the site receive a lot



of sunlight, or is it mostly shaded? Answering these questions will help you narrow down your choices of suitable plant material for the job. If you're not sure which varieties fit your needs, your local grower or extension agent are valuable resources. When considering specific varieties, think about the growth habit of the plant. How tall does it get? How far does it spread? Knowing about plant habits helps you choose plants that will reach the proper height or width for the site and keeps you from inadvertently planting tall varieties in front of lower growing ones or planting vigorously spreading varieties in very small spaces. To keep things simple for your maintenance crews, pay attention to watering and fertilizer requirements, and plant varieties with similar needs together.

Most of all remember: all petunias, geraniums, impatiens, and so on are not the same. Even within one genus, individual varieties can be quite different. For example, one Wave petunia plant can spread up to 4 feet in the landscape, more than twice the spread of a standard petunia. Additionally, Wave varieties don't require deadheading, so they require less maintenance than other varieties. If you use just any petunia, you might not be getting the best possible variety for your needs.

Basic care tips

Again, keep it simple: take note of the care requirements for different varieties and combine varieties with similar needs. Use enough annuals to plant them close together to fill in the bed quickly, but don't overcrowd the plants. Regular watering helps plants get established in the ground. Above all, select easy-care, very colorful varieties, whether they're known for their flowers or their foliage. Dragon Wing begonia, Landmark lantana, Wave petunia, Aztec trailing verbena, and Fiesta double impatiens are just a few of the eye-catching solutions available. Their color provides the impact; their good performance makes them easy to maintain.

Still not sure where to start? Here are a few ideas to get you started.

Containers: Plants in containers require a little more water and fertilizer than those in the ground, but containers really can be low maintenance. It's simple to change, replace or altogether remove them if necessary, and they have the added bonus of putting color in places where beds aren't possible, like sidewalks or entryways. Another big benefit is that containers generally don't require weeding, because the plants in con-

tainers don't leave and space for weeds to grow.

Seasonal color. Changing the look of a planting for different seasons is quite simple. For early spring or fall, try Sorbet violas. They're available in a huge array of colors and, because their peak performance is during the seasons when most schools are in session, they can even be used for landscapes in school colors! When planted in the



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CAREFULLY CONSIDER COLOR COMBINATIONS AND PLANT SELECTIONS; THINKING NOW MEANS LESS WORK LATER.

fall, they'll overwinter in most areas and return for a second show of color in spring. Summer is a great time for petunias, impatiens or other warm-weather plants that are available in lots of hot hues, so the colors fit the temperature. Violas and petunias perform best in full sun; New Guinea impatiens prefer shade to partial shade areas.

Large mixed plantings. Combine plants of different heights and habits to create interesting plantings with lots of impact. Planting a tall variety like Purple Majesty ornamental millet with mid-height or low-growing plants like Wave petunias around it makes a big statement in full sun. Just be sure the plants you use have the same light, water and care requirements, as these do.

Small space solutions. You can pack a lot of color into a small space if you use the right plants. Designer geraniums have large blooms in bright shades and perform well in both large and small-scale plantings. They perform best in full sun.

It is possible to create successful landscapes that are both high impact and low



maintenance. The bottom line is that you must carefully consider color combinations and plant selections. Up front thinking now means less work later, so spend some time planning the project to ensure great results.

ST

Jessie Atchison is an account rep with Ball Horticultural Co., www.ballhort.com or www.ballseed.com.

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Sports Turf Management launches baseball field firm

Skip Kirby, owner of Atlanta-based Sports Turf Management, LLC, has announced the launch of a new company dedicated exclusively to baseball field construction and renovation. The new enterprise, named STM Baseball, will provide in-depth expertise and service in design, construction, management, and renovation of baseball fields.

"While STM will continue to build quality athletic fields for other sports, we desired to establish an entire company to cater to the special needs and intricacies of baseball fields. We are known for our passion for baseball and STM Baseball is a natural progression for us to expand in a niche in which we excel," said Kirby.

Since its founding in 1999, Sports Turf Management has experienced rapid growth and notoriety due in part to its work in building quality baseball fields. The firm is known in baseball circles throughout the Southeast, especially in collegiate and high school networks.

For more information, contact STM Baseball at 888-486-4786 or in Atlanta at 770-928-1580. Or visit www.sportsturfmanagement.com, which soon will link to www.stmbaseball.com, currently under construction.

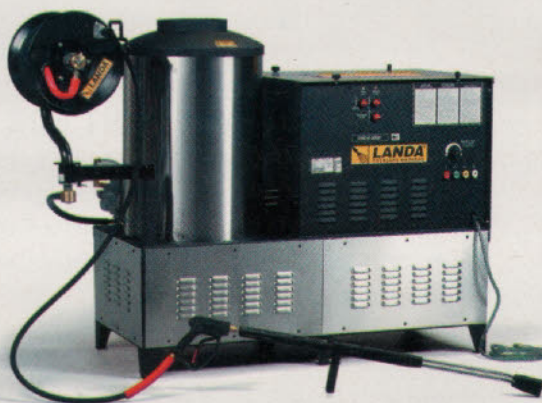
PRIME LINE 2004 CATALOG

As part of its mission to provide customers with a high-quality, one-stop source for all outdoor power equipment service parts, Prime Line released its new, easy-to-use 2004 catalog this month. New features include 379 new part numbers and an alphabetical format. Includes an extensive line of genuine, popular products for commercial applications.

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TrynEx International/800-725-8377

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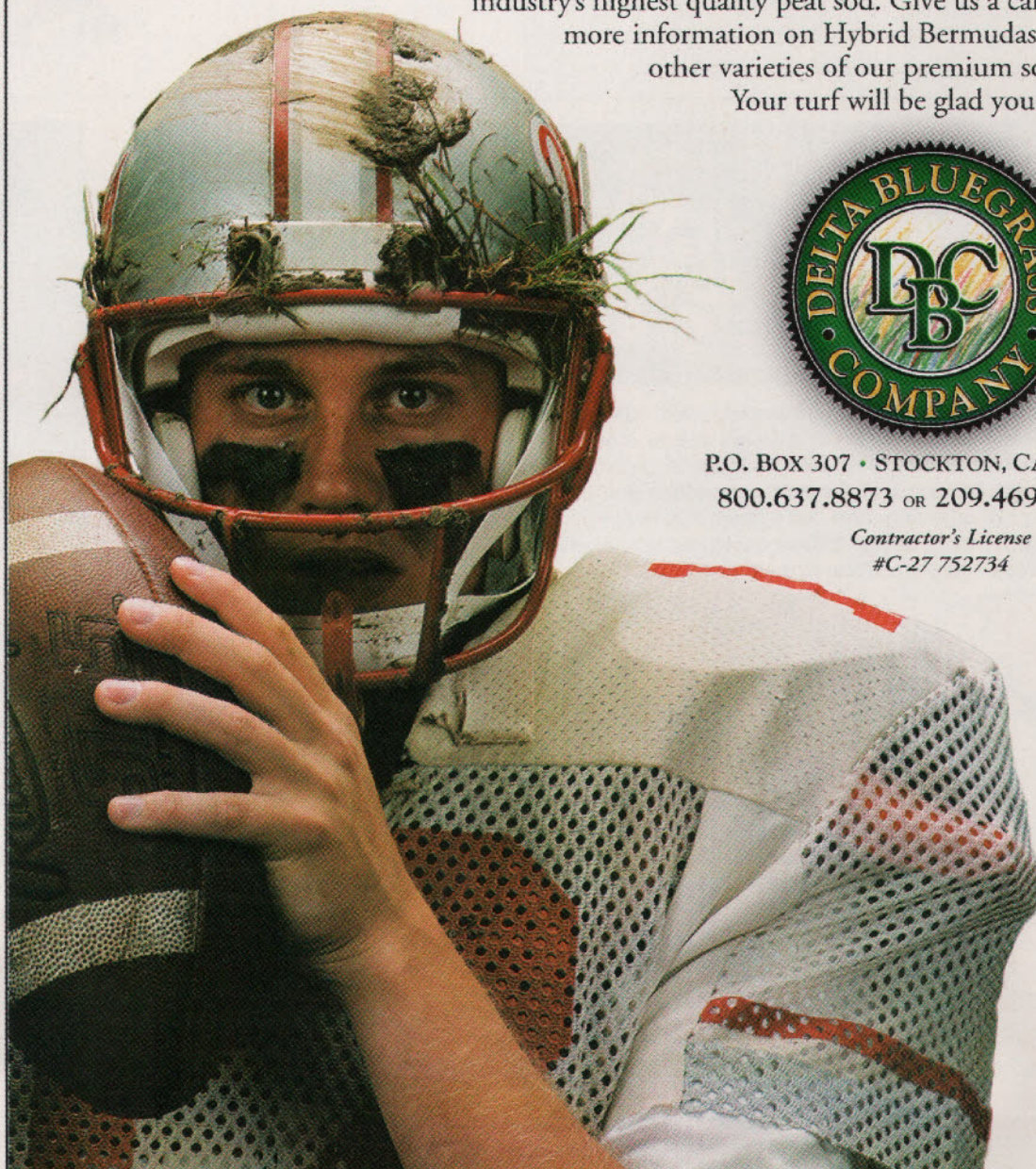
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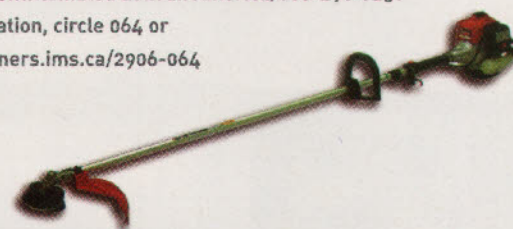
Landa/800-547-8672, x175
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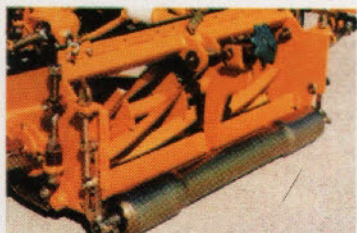
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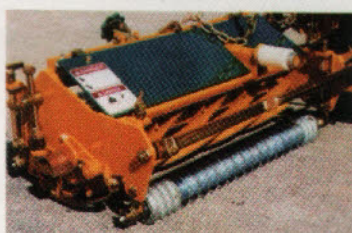


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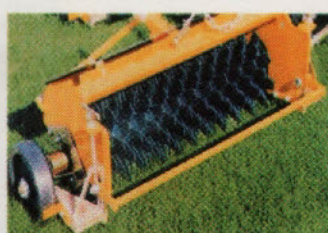
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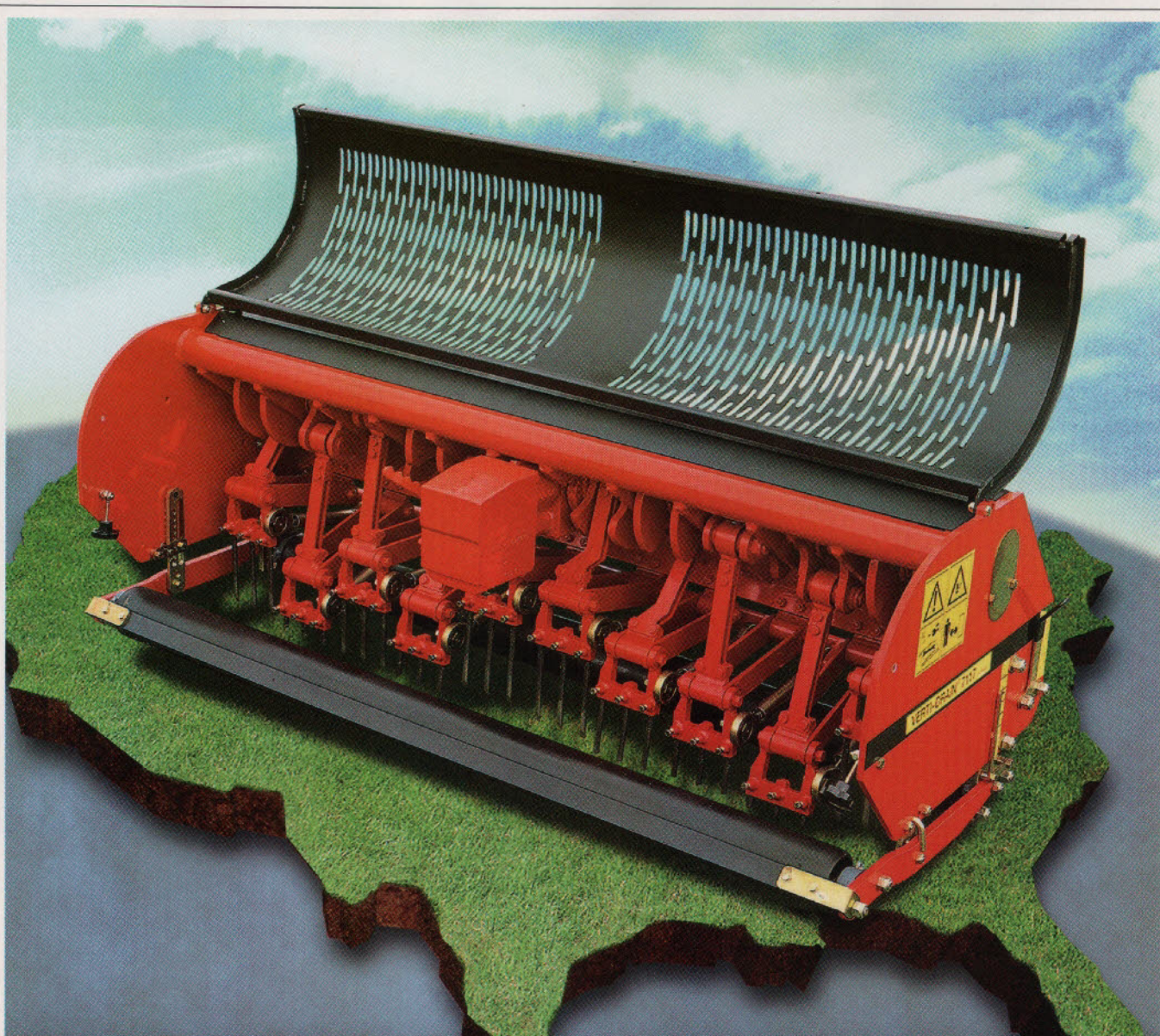
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BY BECKY TALBOT

RACING WITH TIME

It was a good news/bad news situation last year when Chris Weavil found out that Tanglewood Park would once again be hosting an annual steeplechase horse race. As maintenance supervisor of the park, he would have to get the track in shape within a matter of months. And it was the middle of a July drought.

For 31 years, the park held an annual spring steeplechase event on its 9.99-mile track, but lost its slot during a management transition. "We'd been out of the steeplechase race for 3 years in 2002," says Weavil, who started as horticulturist at Tanglewood in 1991. "During the time we didn't have the race, we continued mowing the track, but we didn't fertilize or groom it. Basically it was a 10-acre pasture."

The former estate of William Neil Reynolds, brother of R.J., the tobacco king, Tanglewood Park is located in Forsyth County, North Carolina, just outside Winston-Salem. Among other endeavors, Reynolds bred and raised harness horses and operated one of the largest harness racing tracks in the South. He deeded his estate to Forsyth County when he passed away in the early 1950s and the county turned it into a park.

Encompassing 1300 acres, Tanglewood Park embraces two 18-hole golf courses, an arboretum, several fishing lakes, a paddleboat lake, horse stables, tennis courts, and playgrounds, in addition to the steeplechase track. A certified arborist and registered North Carolina landscape contractor, Weavil maintains more than 500 acres of turf and landscape plants, including an 800-shrub all-American rose garden, the expansive front lawn of the lodging facility, and hundreds of large, mature trees, as well as the track. The golf course operates separately from the rest of the park activities.

Fescue shades out Bermuda

Located 100 feet from the Yadkin River, the steeplechase track is a combination of fescue and bermudagrass. "We keep the fescue at 6 inches year-round and that shades out most of the bermudagrass," says Weavil. "Taller grass is good for the race because it slows

the horses down. If they start running flat out, they could miss their jump and get hurt. We raise the height to 10 inches for the actual race; at that height it's like dragging your feet through snow."

But Weavil had a tough time last year keeping the grass as high as 6 inches. In 2002, North Carolina experienced a severe drought. "We were about 30 inches short of rain when we heard in July that we would be hosting the race in October," he says. "We knew we had to do something to get the grass kicked up again."

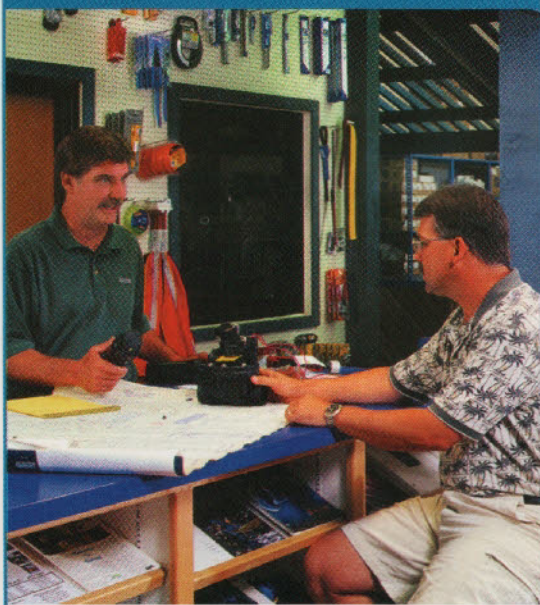
Though Weavil had always used Nitroform Blue Chip on the track, he hadn't been fertilizing during the hiatus for the race. "We have always liked the way Nitroform works," says Weavil. "It has a very low water-soluble component, just enough to provide a nice, green color quickly. The rest of the product is broken down by soil microbes. We could keep the track green with one timely spring application each year."

Weavil knew it was a little late for a nitrogen application this time. "We knew we were living on the edge a little, but we also knew that Nitroform wouldn't burn the grass any more than it was already burned by the drought," he adds. "We took a chance and made the application. Then we started getting rain in early September and within a month the track turned around and greened up. It was perfect for the race the first weekend in October."

Weavil was skeptical about applying a quick-release fertilizer because he knew if he didn't get rain, he wouldn't have any grass. "The high salt-index would have burned it to nothing," he says. "We pulled soil samples in September and got them back from analysis before the race last year. The only thing we needed was a little more nitrogen. Being in a river bottom, it's fairly silty, so all of our nutrients are present."

Horse traffic, in addition to foot traffic getting to the infield and parking areas, tore up the track during the race last year. "After the race, we aerated as soon as there was enough ground moisture for our pull-behind aerators to work," says Weavil. "But we only lime the track about every 3 years."

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around the grounds



Last fall, Weavil spread Nitroform on the track at the rate of 1 lb. N per 1,000 sq. ft. He applied it with a granular Viccon spreader, putting 300-400 lb. of product in the hopper at a time. The spreader provides a smooth, even distribution. He then made a light application of Nitroform in the spring to jump-start the fescue for the season. It keeps the cool-season grasses green throughout the summer months, he says.

In North Carolina, the weather this year did a complete flip-flop from last year. It rained so much the track was under water three times and the riverbank was higher than the infield. "We couldn't aerate until May because it was so wet," remarks Weavil. "But the microbial activity was going strong and the track stayed green all summer."

The National Steeplechase Association provides parameters for track conditions before the race, including grass height, compaction, and health. Association

representatives make inspections at 2 months, 1 month, 2 weeks and 2 days before the race. The last inspection looks for holes and hazards in the track.

Back in the day, the Tanglewood Steeplechase Race attracted some 12,000 people. Now sponsored by a Winston-Salem radio station and televised locally, the race drew 8,000 last year, but many more are expected this year as word of the new time slot spreads. Tickets are sold as tailgating spaces, with sponsors' row of tents providing food and beverages. In one afternoon, five three-lap races are held, rain or shine.

It takes Weavil's 22-member crew at least a week to clean up afterwards. "But it's well worth it to get the race back," he says. "It's an exciting event and we look forward to hosting it for many more years."

ST

Becky Talbot is a free lance writer living in Ambler, PA.



Members of Big Brothers Big Sisters of St. Joseph County, Indiana listen in as representatives from Toro and Notre Dame talk about what it takes to keep the turf at Notre Dame Stadium in top shape. Toro is the exclusive provider of grounds maintenance equipment for the University of Notre Dame's athletic facilities. Back row, left to right: Tony Wittrock, Tom Nowlin, Andrew Nemeth and Dorothy Johnson. Front row, left to right: Marcus Neely, Joe Wukowtich, Andrew Vandervort and Courtney Black.

POWER BROOM

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Shindaiwa, Inc./800-521-7733

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Bailey's/800-322-4539

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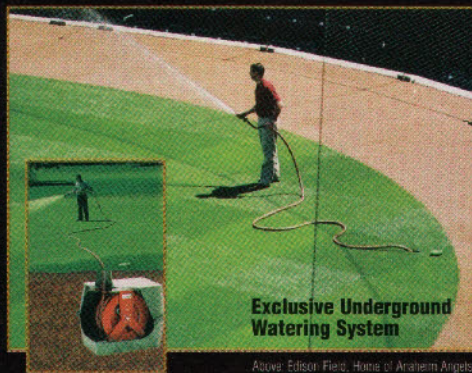


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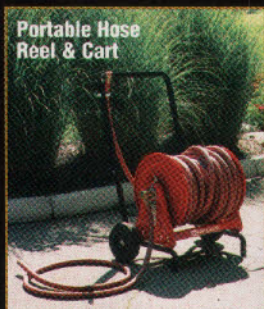
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