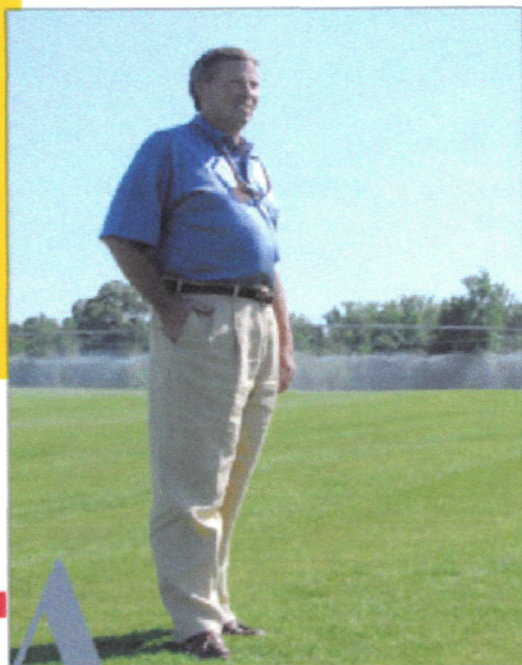


ON
BUSINESS

PHILLIP JENNINGS

POSITION President/Owner,
Phillip Jennings Turf Farms

ON THE ROAD 100 days a year



GENERALLY SPEAKING, TURF IS A LOCAL PRODUCT. WHY ARE PLACES SUCH AS CHINA, AFRICA, VIETNAM AND SAUDI ARABIA COMING TO YOU IN SOUTH GEORGIA FOR THEIR SOD?

We sell washed and shredded sod mainly for golf development in locations where the water is either scarce or of poor quality. They come to us because of our revolutionary *Paspalum* turf grass.

C'MON. HOW CAN GRASS BE REVOLUTIONARY?

Well, it's unique in that it is highly salt-tolerant and can thrive in poor water-quality situations. Nations with unreliable water resources, such as Africa, China, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam, are able to construct golf courses now because of the grass we have cultivated.

SO YOUR GRASS IS, IN FACT, GREENER. HOW DO YOU STAY CURRENT ON EMERGING TRENDS IN THE SOD INDUSTRY?

We are constantly doing research in our three greenhouses, growing and experimenting with numerous varieties of grasses—even biofuel products. We also partner with scientists at different universities.

LAST SUMMER, THE U.S. SOUTHEAST SUFFERED A DROUGHT OF EPIC PROPORTIONS. IS THERE A DROUGHT-TOLERANT GRASS IN THE WORKS?

Yes, there is. Right now we are working with several major universities on a grass that uses 50 percent less water than a typical Bermuda grass; it also needs less fertilizer and pesticide.

HOW DID YOU WEATHER LAST SUMMER'S DROUGHT?

Long ago we constructed our own reservoirs in order to not deplete the local ground water. If we'd been dependent on Atlanta for water these past summers, we would have had to give up the business.

“Right now we are working with several major universities on a grass that uses 50 percent less water than a typical Bermuda grass.”

SHIPPING LIVING PLANTS ALL AROUND THE GLOBE MUST BE TRICKY. HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN QUALITY CONTROL?

We have data recorders that tell us everything about the journey: temperature spikes ([though] everything is refrigerated) delays, etc. It's a black box for sod transport. Right now we can receive an order on Monday and have turf landing Friday in China.

WHO IS YOUR BIGGEST COMPETITOR?

Piracy. ... We have a system in place to protect us, but people are still going to try and grow our grass illegally.

HOW MANY SQUARE MILES OF YOUR SOD ARE GROWING ON THE GLOBE NOW?

Not sure about square mileage, but in 2007 we had our turf grass growing in over 35 different countries.

WHEN YOU HOST GUESTS FROM DIFFERENT NATIONS, HOW DO YOU SHOW THEM A GOOD TIME IN SOUTH GEORGIA?

We generally invite them into our home for a traditional Southern meal. On one occasion we invited the local sheriff, and our Chinese visitors kept referring to him as “John Wayne.” We forget how much of America's identity is forged by television.

WHAT'S THE BEST TRAVEL ADVICE YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?

Two martinis and a sleeping pill (ha-ha). But seriously, I need my noise-reduction headphones and two or three good books for the long-haul flights.

WHERE IS THE BEST GOLF IN THE WORLD?

The golf in the Dominican Republic is as good as it gets. Dubai is coming along as a close second.

WHAT'S ON THE CLUBHOUSE MENU OF THE GOLF COURSES IN PUNTA CANA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC?

Rice and beans, lots of seafood—great conch, too.

IS THERE ONE CHINESE FOOD THAT REMINDS YOU OF GOOD OL' SOUTHERN COOKING?

They actually fry okra over there. I'm hoping to teach them how to fry tomatoes one day.

—Katie Be