

Q&A WITH THE EXPERT FUNGICIDES



BASF
We create chemistry

Q&A WITH JEFF VANNOY

Senior Product Manager at BASF, gives insight into the future of the lawn care industry and upcoming BASF innovations

1 What are the biggest challenges that today's lawn care operators (LCOs) face? How can BASF help address these challenges?

Jeff Vannoy: For the last seven to eight years, a primary challenge has been labor. Hiring and retaining good people has been difficult because jobs in the LCO business can be strenuous. You're out in the elements, and you have to know how to apply products the right way. Another challenge is setting and meeting the property owners' expectations in a reasonable way. If we get a stretch of hot and dry weather and folks aren't watering their lawn or don't have an irrigation system, then cancellation rates may go up. It's an age-old problem for any service company, but in lawn care specifically, it is very difficult if property owners aren't doing the things they need to do to help make their lawn healthy. As manufacturers, we try to make sure LCOs know what solutions are available and how to implement them. I think there is always room for improvement and for us to continue to strive to make our customers happy.

Disease control is also particularly tricky because most LCOs don't offer that service. A property owner may think there is something wrong with the fertilizer or herbicide when, in fact, they are dealing with a disease issue. The most common diseases LCOs face include cool-season brown patch and warm-season large patch; they're about half of the reported issues for lawns in the U.S.

2 BASF works hard to forge close relationships with LCOs. How are those relationships helpful as they build their spray programs?

JV: We try to partner with LCOs that are looking for value-added ways to grow their business and provide top-level products and services, resulting in a really healthy lawn. The ideal situation is working with LCOs that want to integrate our innovative solutions into their programs.

3 How do the innovations that BASF offers help LCOs create and maintain beautiful lawns year round?

JV: We offer an array of products that fit into season-long programs and meet the specific needs of lawn care operation, including post-emergents like Drive® XLR8 herbicide and pre-emergents like FreeHand® 1.75G herbicide and Pendulum® 2G herbicide, which is a granular herbicide that can be used either on lawns or in landscape beds. We are also focused on enhancing our fungicide offering this year for the lawn care market.

4 Which products have LCOs found to be the most successful in the past couple of years?

JV: Drive XLR8 herbicide — the post-emergent herbicide for grassy and broadleaf weeds — is a product we've had in the portfolio for a long time that has seen a lot of growth in the last four to five years. Folks are really enjoying it, and that has to do with its outstanding formulation; it's water-based and seems to be a big hit with LCOs. FreeHand 1.75G herbicide is also a growing brand for us and includes two active ingredients; it's great for any landscape bed or warm-season turf area, and it keeps things out — any sort of doveweed, goosegrass or crabgrass. It's really a nice, easy-to-use product.

5 Are there any new chemistries in the pipeline?

JV: This season, we are introducing Pillar® SC Intrinsic® brand fungicide, which will be a premier fungicide for disease control in both cool- and warm-season lawns. It's a very flexible, broad-spectrum product, so it will enable LCOs to have a new disease-control solution that can be integrated into their spray programs. We've always provided many herbicide solutions to the LCO market, but this will allow us to enter that fungicide space for lawn care and provide a more diverse offering for LCOs. ●