In October of this year, we will host Amerimulch Customer Tribute IV. This is the only Technical Conference exclusively for the colored mulch industry, where current critical issues and topics are discussed in proactive terms. Past conferences have featured PhDs from Ohio State, the University of Georgia, the University of Tennessee, and Florida State University, to name a few. These experts spoke on pertinent topics to our industry, such as mold growth, combustion caused fires in mulch piles, termites, CCA-treated wood, and many more topics.

We also have industry experts discussing the latest advances in grinding, screening, and of course, coloring equipment.

Even though the classroom sessions are filled with valuable information and, at times, may put you on “overload,” there is plenty of time to socialize, meet new friends, network, and have a fun time.

I look forward to seeing you in October!
Mulch producers everywhere are preparing to embark on another mulch season. At this time of year, many are fine-tuning or confirming their previously estimated costs. One piece of that cost equation is your colorant cost. In our industry, quality and performance of colorants have clearly separated the pricing provided by various suppliers. If you’re focused solely on the price per pound of colorant, you may be overlooking a bigger issue.

The question to ask is what impact has your colorant supplier made on your “Total Cost” to produce a yard of Color-Enriched™ mulch.

To better understand the issue, start by computing your margin on a yard of mulch. Simply take the selling price and subtract your production cost. Historically, our industry has little to no interest in maximizing what can be obtained through product branding and differentiation. That means pricing will continue to fall until the market bottoms out. The good news is demand for color-enhanced mulch continues to grow … slowing the pricing free fall. This leaves most producers with one option to make more money: Find a way to produce it for less.

Depending on your situation, total production cost will vary. You’ll want to take into consideration: handling (each touch), grinding (each pass), screening, raw material, percentage of fines, colorant (per pound and accurate application), and waste disposal. Of course, this list is just focused on your manufacturing costs. You’ll need to add in all your overhead and added costs.

When an Amerimulch Account Manager works one-to-one with our customer to provide those solutions, the price per pound may not go down on the colorant used — but the amount of colorant used and the customer’s total cost of production do go down.

Amerimulch is focusing on each and every one of those cost centers. It’s our ongoing commitment to develop a network of partners that will provide insights on how we can be more cost effective on every front. The success stories are there … as demonstrated through our sales reps, newsletters and customer tributes. We look to expand our product handling competency by developing relationships with those who are experts in each of those specific areas. That way when you have questions, Amerimulch will have the answers.

Manufacturing the highest quality colorants in the business is just part of our challenge as your partner. Just as important is our role as a consultant, focusing on helping you significantly reduce production costs for color-enriched mulches.
Mulch and Soil Committee Meeting

Mulch and Soil Council Colorants Sub-Committee has initial meeting in Dallas

The Mulch and Soil Council’s Sub-Committee on Colorants held its first meeting last January in Dallas, TX. The first meeting focused mainly on the purposes and scope of the sub-committee. The committee mission statement was approved by the group: “In an effort to maintain the Mulch & Soil Council’s proactive stance on industry products, the mission of the MSC Colorant Subcommittee is to maintain the credibility of the MSC Certification Program by documenting information on existing or emerging colorants and their components to address ongoing potential concerns for human, health and environmental safety by the public, regulators and media.”

The group’s scope is to examine and formulate recommendations regarding human health and the environment, in particular: (a) Colorant Analysis and Content; (b) Toxicological Profile/Carcinogenicity; (c) VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) and Solvents; (d) MSDS Sheets (information provided to user); (e) Environmental Fate; and (f) Workplace Focus.

Amerimulch views the Council as extremely beneficial to our industry, and has taken an active role in participating in the process. Mike Chase, Corporate Counsel at ChromaScape, attended the Dallas meeting, on behalf of Amerimulch. He will continue to represent our company in assisting the Sub-Committee with their ongoing efforts.

The Sub-Committee’s next meeting is scheduled for May 8, 2007, in Washington, DC. For more information, please contact Robert (Bob) LaGasse, Executive Director, Mulch & Soil Council, at 10210 Leatherleaf Court, Manassas, VA 20111. Phone (703) 257-0111; Fax (703) 257-0213.

Customer Spotlight

Upstate Mulch
Greenville, South Carolina

Spring has sprung in South Carolina, and with it a new promotional campaign for Upstate Mulch. Opening their fourth retail center in the Greenville market, Upstate processes a variety of mulches from their plant in Spindale, NC.

“Mulch is almost a religion in the South, and Upstate Mulch has built a great reputation over the past 14 years,” says founder Bryan Stewart.

Upstate Mulch rebranded its Color Enriched™ product “MasterScape” this spring, to differentiate it and to drive the profit margin. On product brochures, promotional flyers, website and a cable television campaign, Upstate features the Heartland™ logo … the consumer’s added assurance of quality.

By the way, if your Spring promotional materials could use a facelift, feel free to contact us. For 2007, we are creating a marketing toolkit designed to help your company better merchandise and promote the mulch you manufacture. Contact us at 888-556-3304 if you’re interested in hearing more.

Top left to bottom right: Bob LaGasse, Carol Ledbetter, Steve Jarahain, Kathryn Louis, Steve Titko
What Do You Value Most From Your Colorant Supplier?
Insights from our recent market survey

In December, Amerimulch conducted an extensive survey to better understand what mulch producers value most from their colorant and equipment suppliers. Over sixty colorant users were interviewed for the study; approximately 60% were Amerimulch customers (40% non-customers).

Atop the list is Service Responsiveness … quick and effective response to production issues. This was particularly true during in-season operations, when a shut-down can mean thousands of dollars in lost revenue.

Colorant Quality (ranked second in our survey) touched a nerve among almost every survey participant, and for good reason: it has direct impact on the product you sell. Responses encompassed a range of quality issues, including chromaticity, color-fastness, color bonding, viscosity, and of course, overall product consistency.

One surveyor reported:

We broke an auger and were really in a bind. Our service technician was flying back from Germany at the time, and got back to the U.S. at 11 p.m. But the very next morning … before he had hardly unpacked his bags, he was on a plane to Baltimore, and stayed with us for two days to be sure everything was working properly.

Environmental Safety scored third highest among the survey group. While almost all acknowledged its importance, most perceived that it was a “given” for their colorant suppliers to be absolutely certain that their products were safe for plants, people and pets.

Amerimulch customers, in sharp contrast to non-Amerimulch customers, gave high marks to the importance of a Proactive Sales Rep in helping them more effectively manage their business. This underlines the contribution that our seasoned and customer-focused sales team brings to each account. Field-level services such as Colorant Calibration also received many positive comments. Although this service initiative is still relatively new, we were pleased to learn how important these efforts are to your operation and profitability.

Surveys help us to be more responsive to the issues that matter most to you. If you have additional insights, or want to address other areas of concern, feel free to contact us at 888-556-3304, toll-free in the U.S. Molding our company to understand and respond effectively to your needs makes us a better partner in your success.

Introducing Russell Holcomb and Chris Spilker

Russell Holcomb And Chris Spilker Join Amerimulch/ChromaScape Team

Amerimulch has added two new members to better serve its customers. Chris Spilker has joined the Administrative Staff as Company Controller. Chris will be working with the finance and accounting areas of the company. Russell Holcomb has joined the sales staff to help provide better sales coverage to the nation. Russell will be taking over the Midwest states of Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Kansas, Arkansas, Missouri, Wisconsin and Kentucky.

“We see the role of our Account Managers as service providers and consultants to our customers,” said Scott Thompson, VP of Sales and Marketing for ChromaScape. “Our sales team has been covering a lot of ground for the past few years, as our business continues to expand. Bringing in a professional of Russell’s caliber allows us to maintain the highest level of value-added service for every Amerimulch customer.”
The past year was another highly successful one for Amerimulch both in terms of revenue growth and product improvements. Most important was the introduction of several strategic programs designed to build stronger partnerships with our customer base.

As we thought about the strengths and opportunities ahead for Amerimulch, we felt it was time to bring new energy to the “face” of our brand.

As many of you know, our company originated mulch colorant technology, and the Amerimulch name is one of the cornerstones of our industry. So in revitalizing the look of our brand, the challenge was to intertwine our deep corporate heritage with the spirit of innovation that’s always been at the foundation of our company.

We think the new logo does just that. The font has a classic, timeless look. The mulch icons have a contemporary feel that underlines the cutting edge work that’s done by our research and development team. The tan, burgundy and gold signature colors establish a rich, natural canvas to tell our story. Altogether, we think the logo conveys a sense of integrity, honesty and deep values that are shared by our Amerimulch family with each customer.

Heartland Enriched Colorants™

Colorant technology is at the core of the Amerimulch brand. So as we considered how to express the essence of our company, a logical discussion was how to give our colorants a fresh new life of their own.

If the Amerimulch identity is a story about corporate values, the colorants we develop are about capturing the unmistakable purity of nature.

Safety, technology and innovation are a key part of this identity, to be sure. But, together with our customer-partners, what we sell is the ability to convert wood waste into something enduring and perfectly natural … a reflection of the best of the world we live in.

The inspiration led us to the name Heartland.

Heartland is more than just where we live. It’s a state-of-mind that every outdoor enthusiast understands.

Notice also the subtle distinction that completes the Heartland branding. What we make, and what you market, is more than just color-enhanced. It’s color-enriched! The mulch you manufacture isn’t colorized to last a few months. It’s forever changed, fortified to capture nature’s perfect hues, and to hold that brilliant color for the life of the product.
Spring Wash

“Spring Wash”

Every spring we get a phone call or two from new customers who tell us that they made a pile of colored mulch that looked great coming off the coloring system, but after two or three days of rain, the pile looks almost plain again. In the colored mulch industry, we call this “Spring Wash.”

A freshly made mulch pile is still wet. The heavy rain literally carries the colorant away from the surface of the pile. Spring wash can be fixed by simply turning the pile once the rain stops, or by covering the pile with a tarpaulin before a heavy rain. The problem doesn’t occur once the colored mulch is dry — once the color becomes bound to the wood surface, it is no longer affected by rain or water from sprinkler systems. It locks on to the wood fiber in a fashion similar to how a paint locks onto a wall.

“The worst thing about spring wash is the threat that a landscaper might purchase a few yards from you fresh from the production line, and he might apply them to a customer’s site before the product dries,” said Tim Carmichael Jr., Production/Quality Control Manager at Amerimulch. “If it’s a damp day, the customer has colorant running on his or her driveway. That makes the landscaper look bad, it makes the mulch manufacturer look bad, and it makes the colorant company look bad as well.” We recommend that you limit deliveries when rain is imminent in the forecast, that you advise your landscaping customers of the risks, and that you give your product between 48-72 hours to dry when showers are present.

For more information on dealing with Spring Wash, call us at 888-556-3304 to ask your Sales Representative about our Technical Bulletin on Spring Wash.

Odor Control

What’s that I smell?

When loads of materials are received at Omni Recycling of Babylon, they already are producing odors. Omni is a full service Recycling and Garbage Facility located in West Babylon, New York, and over the years it has tried many different products at great expense to eliminate odors. None of the tested products were good enough to satisfy management, so in the beginning of 2006, Omni decided to take a positive approach. The company went on a mission to eliminate odor.

The Omni team designed a system, using a state of the art misting application system which evenly distributes a patented odor neutralizing agent. After one year of operation, both the misting system and odor agent have successfully combated odor to the satisfaction of both Omni’s management and received praise from The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation’s staff members.

Omni has now introduced the odor agent in a granular form, which is available in evergreen, floral and cedar fragrance. The granule version of the odor agent has been used world wide as an additive to wood mulch and to offset the smell of decaying wood. Omni now offers for 2007, mulch not only in long lasting vibrant colors, but in your choice of fragrance. The granules can be easily distributed to the surface of the applied mulch at the rate of one ounce per 270 square feet and will produce the desired scent for up to three months and is available in 50 pound pails.

Omni has had a tremendous response to scented mulch and believes that this will be a great add on product for most mulch manufacturers. This odor problem is not isolated to only Omni, but every private and municipal facility that handles garbage in the country produces odor.

If you want to find out more about this product please contact Mike Coletta @ 631-694-1694.
Your Sales Rep Territories

Matt Cox  
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Steve Probasco  
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