

SMALL SEED IS A BIG FOCUS AT LA CROSSE FORAGE & TURF SEED

By Dan Foor, Forage First and La Crosse Forage & Turf Seed

La Crosse Forage & Turf Seed, LLC has focused on small seeds for over 65 years. What is small seed you ask? Things like alfalfa, clover, pasture grasses, and mixes as well as the entire gamut of turf grass seed is typically what falls under this moniker. And servicing farmers' and turf professionals' needs for *small* seeds is exactly what one La Crosse, Wisconsin-based company has chosen to be its reason for being in business.

The company began as La Crosse Seed in 1945 and has undergone a few name changes over the years. Two consistent themes have been a constant however: a relentless focus on serving customers' small seed needs, and the Curran family name in key management positions at the company. Three generations of Currans have helped steer the company through agriculture's sometimes smooth and often turbulent times. Today, Paul Curran is at the helm as CEO; brother, Tom, handles operations for its La Crosse Division; and youngest brother Jeff leads up key accounts and marketing. Scott, Tom's son is also in a key role focusing on warehouse operations improvement. The Currans are surrounded by nearly 60 other team members across LFT's 6 locations; many sharing the distinction of 20+ years in the business.

"I couldn't be more proud of our entire team for continuing to carry the La Crosse Forage & Turf philosophy forward of doing what it takes to make sure our customers not only get the best products, but the best service to accompany those products," says Paul Curran. The company has undergone perhaps its biggest challenge in its history recently through a partnership with Land O'Lakes' WinField Solutions division. In the partnership, LFT has taken on the EarthCarpet® brand of turf mixes, Forage First® line of forage seeds, and Brier Ridge® wildlife food plot seeds for the northern Midwest and in addition, the latter two brands for the northeastern United States. "With an early spring, nearly doubling the number of products and people on our staff while adding three locations, we persevered through an arduous couple of months, and our customers told us those efforts were just what they needed."

But LFT is not a company to rest on its laurels. It's COO, Dan Foor, who joined the company last year states, "We are taking significant steps to not only improve our ability to service customers today and tomorrow, we are making sure that we are at the leading edge of trends in the forage and turf seed sectors." The company is focused on speeding up its order-to-delivery cycle, continuing to improve the value its support staff can offer to customers and enabling electronic communication opportunities for customers who value such services. On the product front, LFT continues to scour the fields for the most elite proprietary forage and turf genetics, and has made a bold play into the rapidly resurging cover crops market. "Our customers have told us that proprietary offerings are the most significant attribute they look for in a forage and turf supplier; and while our slogan is *the seed you need, when you need it*, we want to make sure it's the highest quality and best performing seed available."

The company has seen unprecedented movement of seed used in cover crops this fall. Surpassing even its most optimistic forecasts for sales of traditional commodities such as fall rye, winter wheat, and triticale; while newcomers such as King Annual Ryegrass and the entire portfolio of Cover Crop Solutions products, including the Original Tillage Radish®, have shipped out to customers as fast as the company could get them in. And while the drought much of the country experienced this season may have caused a spike in demand, leaders at LFT are confident the underlying trends in cover crop adoption are solid and growing. Jeff Curran says, "We're honored to have a seat at the table of key organizations focused on tackling the barriers facing greater use of cover crops. It's a practice that just makes sense."

What's next for LFT? According to the management team, the company is looking to continue to add locations and staff to be the preferred provider to its customers. "While we grow, we are taking special steps to ensure we don't lose the small company *"La Crosse Seed feel"* that is not only important to our customers, but is central to our philosophy of doing business. We understand that for many of our customers, the seed we offer may not be as important to their operations as other seed products such as corn or soybeans. However, we want to instill the confidence in our customers that not only can LFT be the go to source for information on the latest and greatest seed for growing forage or turf, we're committed to making sure our customers look to LFT as a reliable supplier to their needs." said Tom Curran.

Want to know more? Well, you can ask them yourself by calling into any one of their six locations or calling on any of their thirteen sales reps crisscrossing the northern Midwest. Additional information about the company can be found on their website <http://www.lftseed.com>.