

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

# JACK FINDLING

DISTRIBUTION SALES • NEWSOM SEED

**J**ack Findling has a dynamic, 40+ year history in the industry and currently serves on the development committee at the VTC. We sat down with Jack to get his perspective on everything from labor challenges to consumer education and more. VTC would like to thank Jack for his dedication to our organization and his many years of advocating for a well-trained and knowledgeable work force.

### **What was your career path that brought you to your current position?**

When I was young, I enjoyed outside, I enjoyed the yard work. I got into application support with local companies, and residential companies were just starting up back in the 80s. I went in with ChemLawn when it was family-owned and I worked there for about 13 years. Then they were making a business change and it was time to move on. I got into distribution sales in the mid-90s and enjoyed that ever since and felt that was more my calling. I've worked for several companies doing that. All in the same mid-Atlantic area. I always just enjoyed that distribution sales line.

### **In being in that same segment of the industry for that many years, what are the biggest changes you've seen?**

I've watched people grow their business, I've watched chemistry change over the years. Certainly the EPA has a lot to do with that, either omitting something from the market or enhancing something new in the market that arguably could be a safer application not only to the environment, but for personnel as well. What might be the biggest change is the evolution of the chemistries, how they're stored, how they're applied, how you go about the certification knowledge to have a license, to be a company. It's an evolution going on even now, but I think that the biggest is watching the chemistry change over the years, for the better.

Jack Findling with Allen Bohrer,  
owner of Newsom Seed



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**Does that present a challenge for you in educating professionals in the field and companies on how they're using those products?**

I could easily write a yearly program and factor in some products and teach those products and be sure they're done with proper equipment calibration. The product rates per 1000 square feet per acre are done by label. You teach the EPA label as the word. So most distribution sales are involved with the teaching of new products as they come online.

**From lawn care to golf to sports turf, a lot of turfgrass managers who are public-facing are having to do some education on that end. Is that something you're able to help prepare your clients for?**

The answer is more full than that, it's beyond chemistry. It's seed and fertilizer and soil maintenance. You intertwine all of that over the course of the year. In doing so, you may minimize application products or the components of products, where they're more safe, and minimized, and you're doing more seeding or soil maintenance work and you're keeping the lawn *thick* in that regard, and it does help you minimize chemical application. I've been involved with teaching that, and it is a part of the market now. Certainly there are geographies that don't allow chemistry in home lawn use, so you're almost forced to develop a plan of action on behalf of these homeowners. And you have to do that along with the government agencies that restricted you as well as the lawn care business owner that's doing the home lawn use, so it's all intertwined together, and everybody works together. It quite amazing how that does evolve. And so far, so good. There's a challenge, but yet it's seamless. It's quite interesting.

**I know we hear the word "misinformation" a lot, and that certainly applies in the more technical elements of what you're doing. Can you get ahead of that or are you constantly correcting?**

Well, you can get ahead of it by building the relationship with the lawn care operator and then you usually don't go back to that. That's a process that happens once or twice and you might rework the formulation of pounds per thousand square feet, but usually if you're correcting a thought process you certainly do it in a gentlemanly way and then you just have a meeting of the minds and you're both helping each other out when you do that. But it's constant, you do get these – because the evolution of new companies is all the time.

**What's the best part of your job?**

The best part is I have found something that I like to do that doesn't appear to be work. And if you can do that in your lifetime, you've got it made. I've been doing it over 40 years and it's amazing to me. I see a lot of sports fields, I watch lawn care companies grow, you're a problem solver, that's rewarding, you get to do events like Tom Tracy and I have done to open the social aspects. Open back up again where people can get out and socialize and you're all industry brothers and to see everybody get out there again, it's rewarding. I think the mesh of me and this industry is solid for a long time, and that's what I enjoy.

**You serve on the development committee for the VTC – what does that include?**

Probably more than I know, but I can just tell you what I've done. There's a solid group involved in that committee and I'm thankful to be a part of that. I don't know what actually I bring to the table in all of that, but I've enjoyed sharing the knowledge of how to grow our VTC and things that are being done currently that might be different from 5, 10 years ago. We started different funding to assist new people in the industry or townships, promoting knowledge where people would know who we are. Seed packets for bee pollination we did, specifically I was involved with an event that we did recently. We had an in-person meeting – it was the first time in like 16 months, and we got people out in my Northern Virginia geography and people showed up. We had an estimated capacity and we met that. People just showed up, so that was enjoyable for me to do that.

**Can you talk about the relationships you have with others in the industry and your history and how that has helped you in your work with VTC?**

Even when I was in my application life with home lawn use and some commercial property applications, it takes a while to learn the industry and it takes a while to, in my case if you're selling a product, to figure out the procedure that you want to use that's welcoming to people. And maybe it comes easier to some, but I bet it took me ten years to learn that process. I became very comfortable from a customer service standpoint to offer my abilities to the industry and my distribution sales have been successful because of that. The relationships are classic. When you can talk with somebody who you've known 20 years and you don't even talk about the product that brought you there that day, you talk about each other's lives and glad to see you and a handshake or a hug and then, oh yeah, you need some fertilizer? We are a warm industry, we're a small industry and we know each other. Yes, there's competition involved, but that's with everything, but even then, it's a very gentlemanly industry. The camaraderie is something to behold and I welcome that every time.



### What would you say is the biggest challenge facing the turfgrass industry right now?

I think labor is something that is a challenge with a lot of companies. I know my lawncare customers are struggling. There are guys that have been around the block as long as I have and they're having to go back out when their primary job is office personnel. That's kind of where they are as business owners, but because of the labor structure of our country, they're having to get out there and do a lot of work that they haven't done in 20 years, so that is a visible sight. I don't know if it's getting much better, but I think we're close to where it might get better, but that's a problem. It's a challenge every day.

In my case, labor isn't a challenge for me, it's for my customers. For me, in distribution sales, the biggest challenge would be starting new business. You go out there and build new business, whether it be a startup, someone that's been around for 20 years, there's so much business out there, and often I don't even know who they are, so that's always a constant challenge. I don't think that will go away, and in sales, you always have to push yourself in that regard to keep in business.

### What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

I actually like working in my own yard, and of course that's what got me into this business 40 years ago, so I continue that. I like to cook, I do different recipes, whether it's in the kitchen or the campsite. My family and I go camping frequently, and in doing that I do water activity – whether it's canoeing or kayaking, fishing, and we'll do excursion trips as a family. So I do like the outdoor lifestyle. Traveling, I like to travel, but I've really enjoyed the safety of staying home of late. I enjoy being home right now. We'll get back out for vacations later, I'm not rushing it. I enjoy my neighbors. We visit frequently, and we have social events out in the front street – social distance and it's pretty funny to see everybody like that. Primarily outdoor activity, camping, fishing, kayaking, that kind of stuff.

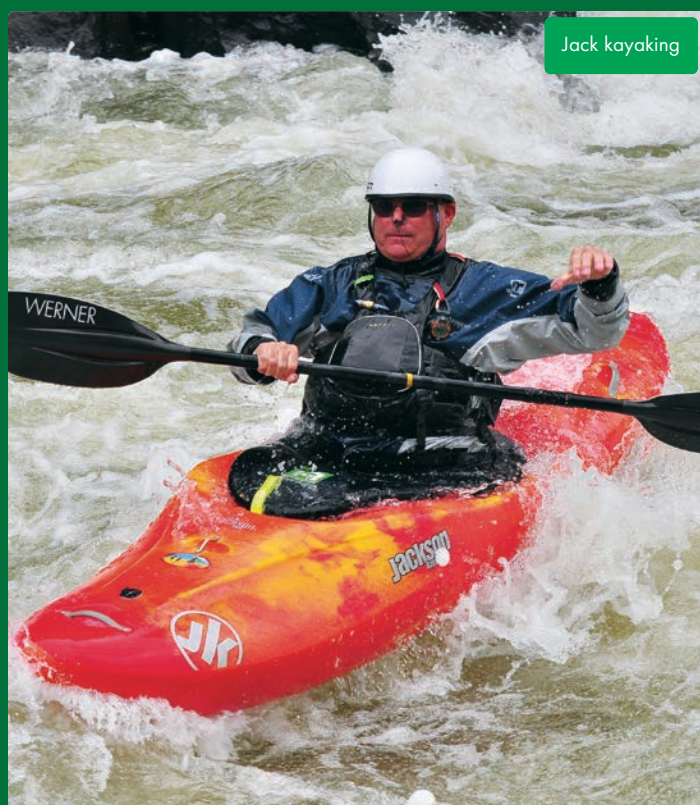
### What is your signature dish?

Seafood chowder. My seafood chowder can have five components of fish or seafood. Veggies, potatoes, it's just classic but it's more of a broth base, which might be a Rhode Island style versus New England cream based. And that's where I started on that, and then as I evolved, I felt the broth base was a little healthier and it's just good and I enjoy it. 🍲

Jack out for dinner  
with Mrs. Findling



Jack kayaking



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