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## Gaston Family of Companies: A Growing Dynasty in the Sunshine State

BY P.J. HELLER

Little did Bill Gaston know when he landed a summer job while in high school with a tree surgeon company that more than five decades later, he would still be in the industry.

"The first couple of days at work, when I saw these guys climb trees, I knew immediately I could do it," he recalls. "It was something I knew I could do. I couldn't wait to get into the trees."

He eventually convinced his mother to co-sign a \$1,200 note so he could purchase a pickup truck and begin working for himself.

"I didn't pick my career. My career picked me," Gaston is fond of saying.

From what he describes as "very humble beginnings," he has created a family of companies – Gaston Tree Service, started in 1972; Gaston Tree Debris Recycling, a full-service green waste removal company; and Gaston Soil and Mulch, which bagged more than 2.5 million bags the past year and is expected to more than double that amount this year.

"Same pants, different pockets," he says of the three businesses.

"The business model creates a closed-loop system in which a customer's trees can be removed, recycled, and returned to the landscape as mulch or soil, all under the Gaston umbrella," explains Gaston, the founder and chief executive officer.

The family-run company, which employs some 150 people, is headquartered in Gainesville, FL, and operates about a dozen sites throughout the state stretching from Jacksonville to Orlando to Tampa. The largest site is 65 acres, the smallest 10 acres.

"We followed our nose,"

Gaston says of the operations.

"The first thing we did was start a tree service. The next thing we wanted to do was to get rid of the stuff, so we started recycling it. And out of that, we ended up making [mulch, soil and chip] products for beneficial use."

The Tree Debris Recycling business was the first permitted tree, yard, and land-clearing debris recycling center in Florida, notes Gaston's brother, Levin, a company co-founder and chief operating officer. It was launched in 1985 after the state mandated that vegetation could no longer be dumped into landfills.

*Continued on page 3*







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# Gaston Family of Companies

*Continued from page 1*

Gaston not only took in its own tree debris, but material from the city of Gainesville, the University of Florida and some of its competitors in the tree service business.

“We were making boiler fuel,” Levin Gaston recalls. “We were chipping it and then we started grinding it and screening it.”

After screening, the remaining material was placed in a large pile to be aerobically composted and later sold as compost or soil. Levin Gaston is considered the company’s soils expert.

The company manages vegetation for Hillsboro County, handling about 100,000 tons annually, and recently received a contract from Polk County to handle about 75,000 tons yearly. Overall, the company manages approximately 1 million tons a year of green waste throughout the state.

“We hate the word ‘waste’ but it is green,” Bill Gaston says. “It’s tree-land clearing and yard debris. We used to call it waste. Now we call it feedstock so we can make our product. We charge people a tipping fee to bring it into our location, then we process it into a product for beneficial use. Then we put it out there on the market. Our favorite phrase or motto is, ‘Whoever controls the fiber wins’.

“We made our competitors our customers,” he adds. “Our competitors will come in and turn in their tree debris, and we’ll use it for biomass, or it can go into a bag to a big box store.”

Gaston supplies materials to several landscape wholesalers and bagged plant potting mix and mulch providers.

“We make a soil. We make a mulch. It can go in a bag and can go into a big box store. If you’ve recently purchased a bag of topsoil or mulch from a big box store, hardware store, or nursery and garden center, there’s a good chance that part of it came from Gaston Mulch and Soil,” he says.

The company is in negotiations with a company in Spain to make biochar and is discussing exporting clean chips from the Port of Tampa.

Gaston also does emergency service contract work, providing assistance not only in Florida but in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Connecticut and New York. The company can bring its grinders to help clean up large quantities of vegetation created by hurricanes, tornadoes, ice storms or other storm events.

It was instrumental in assisting with cleanup in Florida after Hurricane Helene, a

category 4 storm with peak winds of 140 miles per hour, swept through the region in late September 2024. It made landfall just southwest of Perry, FL, in Taylor County and caused catastrophic damage in Florida’s Big Bend and Gulf coast communities as well as in Georgia, North and South Carolina, and Tennessee.

Helene was responsible for at least 250 fatalities in the United States, making it the deadliest hurricane in the contiguous U.S. since Katrina in 2005.

Gaston processed about 6 million cubic yards of storm debris in Florida. Some of the storm debris was ground up and land-banked around the state, where farmers can access it or it can be composted, worked into the soil or be subsequently screened for mulch or organic soil.

Dealing with Helene, Gaston confined its work to Florida since there was so much work there.

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# English Proficiency and Licensing Under Scrutiny in U.S. Trucking Industry

**A** recent article in [theepochtimes.com](http://theepochtimes.com), highlights efforts underway to strengthen safety standards for commercial drivers. The U.S. federal government is ramping up efforts to enforce English language proficiency and tighten licensing requirements for commercial truck drivers, aiming to address safety concerns and regulatory loopholes in the transportation sector.

In April 2025, President Donald Trump signed an executive order directing the Department of Transportation (DOT) to implement stronger enforcement mechanisms

for ensuring that commercial drivers operating within the United States meet English proficiency standards. The move also calls for a review of how foreign and non-domiciled commercial driver's licenses (CDLs) are validated and issued.

Industry stakeholders have voiced concerns that relaxed licensing standards and inconsistent enforcement have allowed drivers with questionable or insufficient credentials to legally operate on American roads. Trucking associations and advocacy groups, including American Truckers United,

argue that this practice compromises highway safety and contributes to declining wages for U.S. drivers.

Shannon Everett, co-founder of American Truckers United, warned that some drivers with limited English skills may be unable to understand critical road signs or communicate effectively in emergency situations. "When someone driving an 80,000-pound truck can't understand a warning sign like 'lane closed ahead,' the consequences can be fatal," he said.

The executive order mandates the revocation of a 2016 policy that had relaxed English proficiency requirements. By the end of June 2025, the DOT is expected to issue updated enforcement guidance that could lead to noncompliant drivers being placed out-of-service.

The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA), a multinational group comprising transportation safety officials from the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, has already moved to act on the new directive. On May 1, the CVSA added a lack of English proficiency to its list of out-of-service violations. Drivers placed out-of-service must cease operations until the issue is resolved.

Further reinforcing the initiative, DOT Secretary Sean Duffy ordered the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to include English proficiency as a violation that could lead to federal enforcement actions.

The White House clarified that English proficiency requirements were already part of federal law but were not rigorously enforced under prior administrations. Drivers must be able to read and understand traffic signs, interact with law enforcement, and receive instructions in English.

Data from the National Safety Council shows a troubling rise in fatalities and injuries involving large trucks. Between 2009 and 2023, truck crash-related deaths surged from approximately 3,380 to over 5,470. Injuries increased from 73,000 to more than 153,400 during the same period.

Several high-profile accidents involving drivers with limited English proficiency have further highlighted the issue. For example, in 2019, Rogel Aguilera-Mederos was involved in a fatal crash on Colorado's I-70, resulting in four deaths. Another case in 2024 involved Ignacio Cruz-Mendoza, who was convicted in a deadly crash while unlawfully present in the U.S. and previously charged with multiple offenses. Most recently, in January 2025, Singh Sukhjinder was charged in connection with a fatal accident in West Virginia; police reports indicated he required an interpreter during questioning.

*Continued on next page*

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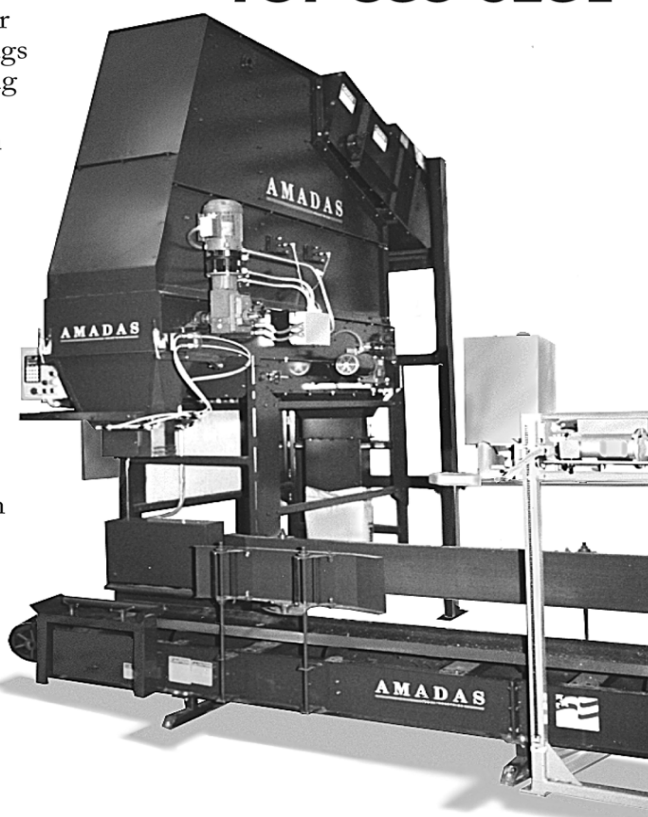
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*Continued from previous page*

The FMCSA has acknowledged that language barriers may have contributed to several of these incidents.

A key focus of the executive order is the use of non-domiciled CDLs—licenses issued to individuals who are not residents of the issuing state. Originally designed to assist state motor vehicle departments, this type of license has increasingly been used by non-citizens to work as commercial drivers across the U.S.

Critics argue that these licenses are being exploited by logistics companies to hire lower-paid foreign drivers, putting pressure on wages and regulatory standards. Everett pointed to instances of fraudulent licenses from countries with less stringent oversight, adding that some trucking companies rely on these loopholes to meet demand without increasing pay or improving working conditions.

The trucking industry currently faces high turnover and an ongoing labor shortfall. An April 2025 report by Southern Bank Co. estimated that around 24,000 truck driving positions remain unfilled, resulting in nearly \$96 million in weekly lost revenue.

However, experts say the issue is not a true labor shortage but a problem of unsatisfactory pay and working conditions. The Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA) reported turnover rates as high as 90% at certain carriers, suggesting systemic instability within the workforce. The organization stated that without improvements in compensation and labor conditions, companies have resorted to recruiting lower-cost drivers to maintain operations.

Many foreign drivers entering the U.S. workforce are from countries such as India, Mexico, and Serbia, where commercial driving wages are significantly lower than in the U.S. While some foreign drivers operate under NAFTA-era rules allowing cross-border deliveries, enforcement has reportedly weakened, enabling some to work domestically without proper authorization.

Industry advocates warn that without stricter oversight, the continued influx of drivers with foreign or non-domiciled licenses could undermine both safety and labor standards within the U.S. trucking industry.

As federal agencies work to implement the new mandates, the trucking industry is bracing for potential operational changes. Increased scrutiny of licenses and language proficiency may lead to a reevaluation of hiring practices and regulatory compliance across the sector.

For now, stakeholders await final guidance from the Department of Transportation, which is expected to clarify enforcement criteria and establish benchmarks for English proficiency testing by the end of June.

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## Turning Waste into Resource: How Black Soldier Flies Offer a Solution to Reducing Food Waste

As global food waste continues to rise, researchers and environmental advocates are increasingly looking to innovative biological solutions to tackle the problem. One such solution comes from an unlikely hero: the black soldier fly, reports an article on [ag.purdue.edu](https://ag.purdue.edu).

Native to every continent except Antarctica, the black soldier fly (*Hermetia illucens*) is gaining recognition for its remarkable ability to transform organic waste into valuable resources. This insect's unique life cycle and voracious appetite make it a promising tool for waste management and sustainable agriculture.

Black soldier flies undergo complete metamorphosis—starting as eggs, developing into larvae (commonly called maggots), and eventually becoming adult flies. During their larval stage, they act as detritivores, consuming decaying organic matter at a rapid rate. This characteristic is what makes them such efficient composters.

According to research led by Dr. Laura Ingwell, assistant professor of fruit and vegetable pest management at Purdue University, a single gram of black soldier fly eggs—roughly the size of a bottle cap—can consume up to five kilograms of food waste before reaching maturity. This makes them not only fast and efficient but also a potentially scalable solution for both small farms and larger waste management systems.

Traditional composting methods rely on bacteria and fungi to break down organic material—a process that can be slow and limited in scope. Certain food scraps like meat, dairy, and cooked food are discouraged due to the risk of attracting pests and fostering harmful bacteria. However, black soldier flies excel in breaking down these materials quickly, leaving little opportunity for pathogens or pests to become a problem.

Studies have also shown that black soldier flies can neutralize harmful substances such as pesticide residues and even pharmaceutical contaminants in organic waste. This further enhances their value as a safe and effective composting alternative.

Once the larvae complete their 14-day feeding phase, they become a rich source of protein that can be used to feed livestock or pets. Farmers can harvest the mature larvae and use them as feed for chickens, fish, and other animals, effectively closing the loop between waste generation and food production.

“Insects have long been part of animal diets,” says Dr. Ingwell. “But what’s new is the integration of food waste management with animal feed production, all facilitated by the life cycle of the black soldier fly.”

On small farms, such as one in Indiana where Ingwell collaborates with local producers, this method is already in use. Waste feeds the flies, and the flies, in turn, feed the animals—a self-sustaining, low-cost system that promotes circular agriculture.

Despite their potential, black soldier flies face challenges in colder regions like the Midwest, where they cannot survive harsh winters. To address this, Ingwell and her team are developing composting systems with climate protection to ensure year-round operation. A recent grant awarded in collaboration with The Ohio State University is supporting efforts to create insulated bins that enable winter composting.

The research team, including Purdue’s Dr. Amanda Deering and Dr. Laramy Enders, is also examining the safety and microbial effects of using black soldier fly compost on food crops and livestock. Their work will help ensure this system can be safely adopted on a wider scale.

Beyond Indiana, the black soldier fly is already making a difference in international settings. In Timor-Leste, a Southeast Asian nation where fish farmers struggle to afford feed, Ingwell worked with local communities to cultivate native black soldier flies as a sustainable source of protein for aquaculture.

The black soldier fly offers a unique and promising solution to two of today’s most pressing issues: food waste and sustainable agriculture. By harnessing their natural abilities, communities can reduce waste and create a new source of animal feed.

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# News From The Mulch & Soil Council

BY ROBERT LAGASSE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## MSC 54th Annual Meeting Hilton Orlando Lake Buena Vista Orlando, FL Sept. 30 - Oct. 2, 2025

**T**om Kohut at Grand County Mulch, is our Program Chair for the 54th MSC Annual Meeting on Sept. 30 – Oct. 2, 2025, at the Hilton Orlando Lake Buena Vista Hotel in Orlando, FL. To better understand what members want for an education program, Tom worked with MSC Assoc. Executive Director Shelli Williams to create, distribute and assess a member survey on program topics and content and the members expressed the following priorities:

1. Manufacturing Topics
2. New Technologies
3. Business
4. Marketing
5. Supply Chain

These survey results are driving the program development with topics such as:

- Leveraging Screening Methods for Cost Savings and Quality Control
- The Facts About Termites/Insects and Mold/Fungus In Mulches
- Mulch Color Trends
- The Future of Raw Materials
- And more

The first session MSC can announce as a major focus of our education program for 2025 is our Keynote Presentation by Rudi Ruettiger.

Against all odds on a gridiron in South Bend, Indiana, Daniel “Rudy” Ruettiger in twenty-seven seconds, carved his name into history books as perhaps the most famous graduate of the University of Notre Dame and the nation’s best example of a true underdog success story of defeating the odds through perseverance. The son of an oil refinery worker and third of 14 children, Rudy rose from valleys of discouragement and despair to the pinnacle of success. Today, Rudy is one of the most popular motivational speakers in the United States. It took years of fierce determination to overcome obstacles and criticisms, yet Rudy achieved his first dream - to attend Notre Dame and play football for the Fighting Irish. As fans cheered his name ... RU-DY, RU-DY, he sacked the quarterback in the last 27 seconds of the only play, in the only game, of his college football career. He is the only player in the school’s history to be carried off the field on his teammates’ shoulders.

In 1993, TRISTAR Productions immortalized his life story with the blockbuster film, RUDY. Written and produced by Angelo Pizzo and David Anspaugh, the award-winning team who brought us HOOSIERS, and starring the endearing Sean Astin in the title role. The critically acclaimed RUDY received “Two Thumbs Up” from Siskel and Ebert and continues to inspire millions worldwide.

Today, as an Emmy Award Winning and highly sought-after motivational speaker, Rudy entertains audiences with a unique, passionate, and heartfelt style of communicating. He speaks to corporations, universities, schoolchildren, sports teams and professional athletes, with the same enthusiasm, portraying the human spirit that comes from

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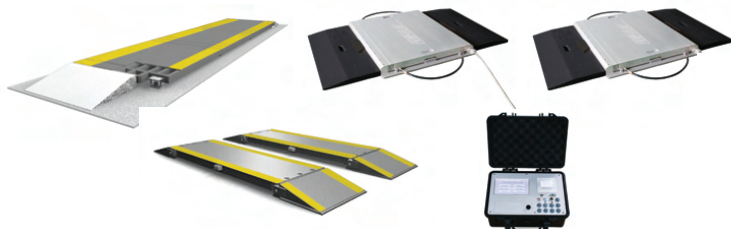
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# News From MSC

Continued from page 8

his personal experiences of adversity and triumph. His captivating personality and powerful message of “Drean, Big & Never Quit” stays with his audiences forever. Rudy’s opening remarks receive thunderous applause and standing ovations from audiences of 200 to 20,000 people who emotionally chant RU-DY, RU-DY!

Recently Rudy performed his one-man show, DREAM BIG - RUDY RUETTIGER LIVE ON BROADWAY at the Samuel

Friedman theatre New York. In addition, Rudy’s new documentary titled, DREAM BIG – THE WALK ON won several Emmy Awards for Best Director and Best Documentary. The link is available on Amazon Prime (Search “Rudy Ruettiger: The Walk On.”)

In Celebration of the 25th ANNIVERSARY of the Movie RUDY, the film was presented on the big screen at the Microsoft Theatre in LA while the musical score was performed live by the Hollywood

Orchestra. RUDY IN CONCERT now performs at various locations across the country.

Millions have been inspired by the movie RUDY, now let the man behind the movie inspire YOU!

## Canadian Peat Tariffs?

In March 2025, the Mulch & Soil Council (MSC) joined with numerous other horticulture industry organizations and submitted letters to several key federal officials—including President Donald J. Trump, Vice President J.D. Vance, Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins, and Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick, plus the Chair and Ranking Member for the House and Senate Agriculture Committees — urging the exemption of Canadian peat moss from proposed tariffs. These letters highlighted the essential role this material plays in U.S. horticulture, particularly in potting soils and soil amendments for both commercial growers and home gardeners. The MSC emphasized that:

- 96% of U.S. sphagnum peat moss is imported from Canada.
- These imports are vital to food security, supporting fruit, vegetable, ornamental, and mushroom cultivation.
- A proposed 25% tariff would significantly raise food production costs and potentially result in a \$17.5 billion GDP loss across related sectors.
- Alternatively, peat moss should be granted “critical mineral” status, which could reduce any applicable tariff to 10% rather than 25%.

*Peat Moss and the Pandemic:* The Council also emphasized that the mulch and soil industry, including producers of peat moss, played a pivotal role during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recognized as essential, the industry enabled millions of Americans to engage in home gardening, thereby supplementing food sources amid supply chain disruptions. This further underscores the strategic importance of ensuring an uninterrupted and affordable supply of peat moss.

*Government Response & Tariff Status:* According to the latest updates from AmericanHort and related policy briefs:

1. USMCA Exemption: Canadian sphagnum peat moss is currently exempt from tariffs under the USMCA, provided it meets the agreement’s rules of origin. This shields it from 25% IEEPA-related duties.
2. Reciprocal Tariff Executive Order: Peat is also specifically listed in Annex II (HTSUS code 27030000) of the Executive Order on Reciprocal Tariffs as exempt from the 10% across-the-board tariffs.

Continued on page 12

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# News From MSC

Continued from page 10

3. HTS Classification and Legal Codification: Annex III confirms that products from Canada are not subject to the additional 10% reciprocal tariffs that apply to other countries.

**Conclusion:** Is There a Tariff on Canadian Sphagnum Peat Moss? No, there is currently no tariff on Canadian sphagnum peat moss. Due to exemptions under the USMCA and Annex II of the Executive Order on Reciprocal Tariffs, Canadian peat imports (HTSUS code 27030000) remain duty-free.

*The Mulch & Soil Council began in 1972 and is the national association of producers of horticultural mulches, consumer potting soils and commercial growing media. Its mission is to define quality products and promote an open market and fair competition. For more information about MSC, visit [www.mulchandsoilcouncil.org](http://www.mulchandsoilcouncil.org) or call 806-832-1810.*

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## AI-Powered Biomass Facility Launches in Grand Rapids, Pioneering Sustainable Energy from Wood Waste

**G**rand Rapids, Michigan, is now home to a groundbreaking biomass processing facility that merges artificial intelligence and renewable energy innovation. According to an article on [bioenergy-news.com](http://bioenergy-news.com), climate tech company has officially opened its flagship site, marking the debut of the first AI-driven wood waste-to-energy operation in the United States.

The new facility is designed to convert construction and demolition wood waste into high-quality biomass fuel. By integrating advanced machine learning algorithms, Woodchuck streamlines the sorting and processing of reusable wood, dramatically increasing efficiency and minimizing contamination in the recycling process.

Developed in partnership with NorthStar Clean Energy (a CMS Energy company), Alloy Partners, Beckett Industries, and The Right Place, the Grand Rapids facility is set to become a model for sustainable waste management and clean energy production. The initiative reflects a growing movement toward localized, eco-friendly solutions that generate both economic and environmental benefits.

Once operating at full capacity, the plant is expected to divert tens of thousands of tons of wood waste from landfills annually. The resulting biomass will support local industry energy needs, help reduce greenhouse gas emissions—particularly methane from decomposing wood—and contribute to regional utility decarbonization goals.

Woodchuck CEO Todd Thomas emphasized the potential impact: “Construction and demolition sites produce an enormous amount of recoverable wood, yet the majority of it still ends up in landfills. This facility changes that. Woodchuck transforms waste into value, reducing costs, reducing landfill usage, and unleashing an abundant energy future.”

As the first facility of its kind, Woodchuck’s Grand Rapids operation demonstrates how AI and climate-focused innovation can intersect to build a more sustainable, circular economy.

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## Biomass Power Generation Expected to See Modest Growth in 2025, According to EIA Forecast

**T**he U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) has released its latest, projecting a modest increase in biomass electricity generation for 2025. The report, issued on May 6, outlines the expected trends in renewable energy use in the United States over the next two years, reports [biomassmagazine.com](http://biomassmagazine.com).

According to the EIA, renewable energy sources are projected to provide 25% of the nation's electricity in 2025, rising to 27% by 2026. This marks a steady increase from the 23% share recorded in 2024.

Biomass energy, which includes power generated from organic materials such as wood and waste, will continue to play a small but stable role within the renewable energy mix. The EIA estimates that biomass will contribute 1.95% of renewable electricity generation in 2025, before slightly declining to 1.78% in 2026. This is a decrease from the 2.16% share it held in 2024.

In terms of actual electricity output, biomass generated 20.5 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh) in 2024. That number is expected to rise slightly to 20.7 billion kWh in 2025, then dip to 20.4 billion kWh by 2026.

Installed capacity for biomass power generation is expected to remain unchanged over the next two years. As of the end of 2024, the electric power sector maintained 2.7 gigawatts (GW) of waste biomass capacity and 2.2 GW of wood biomass capacity. These figures are projected to stay consistent through 2026. Similarly, the industrial and commercial sectors held 5.3 GW of wood biomass and 1.3 GW of waste biomass capacity, with no changes expected in the near term.

The report also provides insight into biomass fuel consumption across sectors. The electric power sector used 1.156 quadrillion British thermal units (quads) of waste biomass in 2024, a figure expected to drop significantly to 0.155 quad in 2025 and hold steady through 2026. Wood biomass consumption in this sector is projected to increase from 0.162 quad in 2024 to 0.167 quad in 2025, then return to 0.162 quad the following year.

In the industrial sector, waste biomass consumption is expected to remain relatively flat, falling slightly from 0.154 quad in 2025 to 0.153 quad in 2026—equal to 2024 levels. However, wood biomass consumption is set to rise from 1.219 quad in 2024 to 1.317 quad in 2025 and further to 1.374 quad in 2026.

The commercial sector's consumption of waste biomass is projected to remain at 0.068 quad for both 2025 and 2026, slightly down from 0.069 quad in 2024. Wood biomass use in this sector is expected to stay steady at 0.072 quad annually.

Residential wood biomass consumption is projected to experience a marginal increase, growing from 0.358 quad in 2024 to 0.359 quad in both 2025 and 2026.

Overall, total consumption of waste biomass across all sectors is expected to dip slightly from 0.379 quad in 2024 to 0.376 quad in 2025 and hold steady in 2026. In contrast, wood biomass consumption is forecasted to rise from 1.811 quad in 2024 to 1.915 quad in 2025 and 1.967 quad in 2026.

While biomass remains a relatively small part of the overall renewable energy landscape, the EIA's projections indicate stable use and modest growth in certain areas, especially within the industrial sector.

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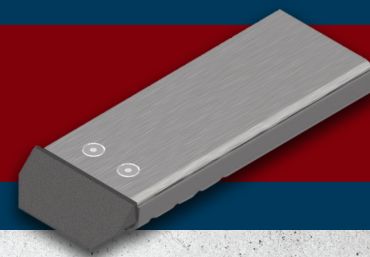
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## Product / Equipment Profiles

### CBI Unveils the 5900T Horizontal Grinder

**C**BI® recently introduced the CBI 5900T, a next-generation horizontal grinder designed to set new standards in efficiency, power, and durability.

With a 60-inch-wide infeed rotor, the 5900T optimizes material flow, handling wider material and reducing the need for pre-processing. Its robust 755-horsepower engine, paired with a hydraulic clutch, delivers smooth, powerful performance with precise control, making it an exceptional choice for high-production environments.

A key enhancement of the 5900T is an updated discharge system engineered with multiple wear plates and a material-ejecting pulley to boost durability and overall performance. It also boasts a 755hp engine with a hydraulic clutch that delivers exceptional power, smooth operation, and precise control, while the integrated Metal Detection System (MDS) provides essential protection from tramp metal to safeguard vital components. Additionally, the 60" wide infeed and rotor improve material handling and reduce the need for pre-processing, and the belt hold down rollers extend skirt rubber life for increased efficiency and longevity. Its compact and transportable design, featuring an 8'6" legal width and an advanced dolly system, further enhances mobility.

To learn more about the 5900T and explore its capabilities, visit [www.terex.com/cbi/en](http://www.terex.com/cbi/en) or contact your local CBI distributor.



### Terex Recycling Systems Launch the TDS-820SE Low Speed Shredder

**T**erex® Recycling Systems, manufacturer of modular recycling plants and products, recently introduced the TDS-820SE, a versatile Static Electric Low Speed Primary Shredder. Designed to efficiently handle a wide range of materials, the TDS-820SE has powerful twin shafts and is equipped with aggressive teeth to deliver exceptional shredding performance and thorough material reduction.

One of the standout features of the TDS-820SE is its customizable shredding programs, which allow operators to tailor the machine's settings to their specific requirements, optimizing performance and minimizing downtime. The independent shredding shafts further enhance the machine's versatility, enabling it to handle a variety of materials with ease.

The TDS-820SE is powered by an electric hydrostatic drive, providing reliable operation and protection against contamination. Additionally, the bidirectional shredding capability allows for greater flexibility in material processing. The machine's two-meter-long shafts, featuring fully welded teeth, offer impressive throughput and excellent material reduction.

To further improve efficiency and reduce wrappage, the TDS-820SE incorporates independent gearboxes, allowing each shaft to be operated separately.

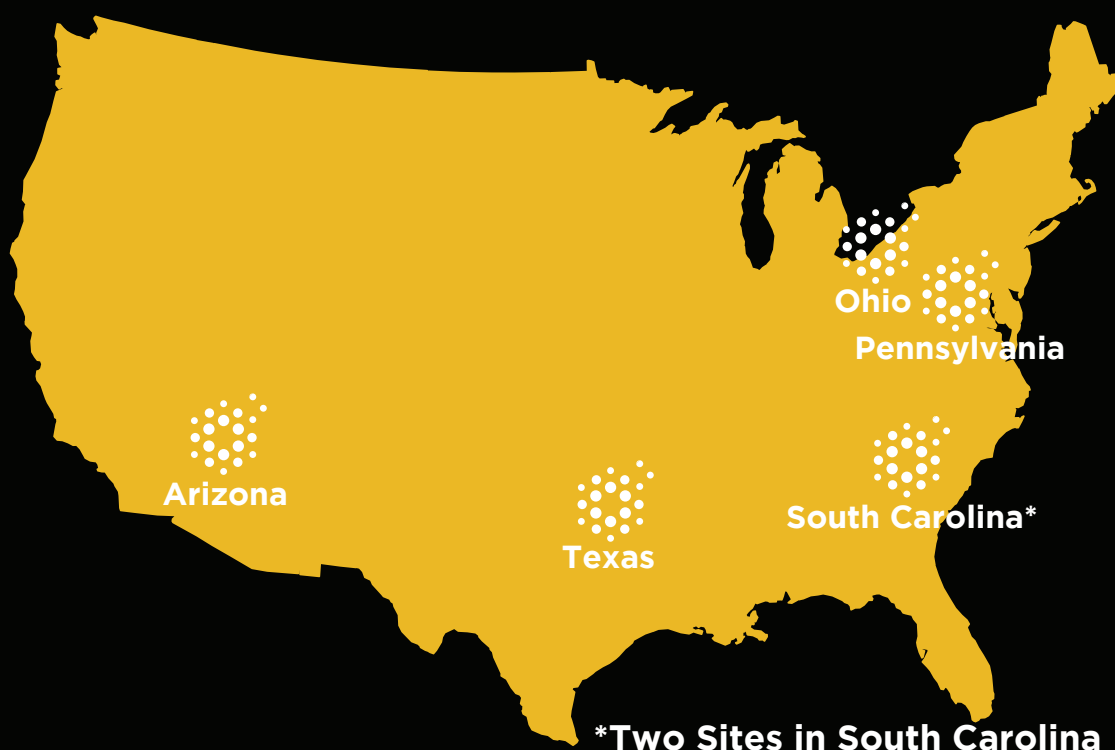
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## Gaston Family of Companies

*Continued from page 3*

“Basically, we go out and we pick up sticks, improve them, put them in a bag or a bulk and put it back out there for beneficial use,” Gaston explains.

“We’ll come to your house. We’ll cut your tree down. We’ll bring it in here to our site. We’ll turn that into a mulch. We’ll put it in a bag. It’s going to end up in a big box store down the street, and you’re going to go get your bag back and so it completes the cycle.”

Gaston is also composting food waste, including from the University of Florida, at two of its sites. Florida does not mandate food composting, although some cities and counties require it. Gainesville, for example, requires restaurants to divert food waste from landfills.

Bill Gaston says the company is well-positioned for the future, with a second generation – his son and son-in-law – in place in the business. He’s hoping a third generation, currently two 11-year-old twin grandsons, will eventually join the company.

“What we do is needed everywhere, so I see us continuing to grow at a pretty good pace,” he says.

Some employees have been with the company for 28 years.

“If you’re going to be in this industry, you want to be with us,” Gaston says, adding that he’s not worried about competition due to the cost of getting started, which he estimates at a few million dollars.

“We’ve got about \$20 million invested in screens, grinders, rolling stock and other equipment,” he says. “It does give us a little edge in the industry.”

With so much work in Florida, Gaston says the company isn’t ready to expand out of state.

“We’ve been looking at heading up the I-75 and I-95 corridors, but with so much to do in Florida, we’re not ready to do that yet,” he says. “We’ll travel for a storm event. If we’re needed, we’ll travel.”

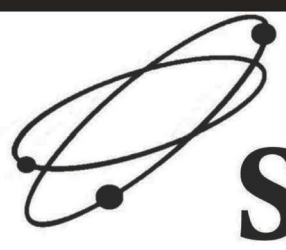
Gaston says he never envisioned being where he is today when he started the business 53 years ago.

“Amazed, amazed, amazed,” he says when asked if he’s surprised by his success.

“We are blessed,” he says. “We feel blessed every day. It goes back to the fact that we can work together as a family . . . To us money is a representation of service to other people. In order to create an income, you’ve got to provide a product or a service. We’ve been fortunate enough to have our own business. Nobody was doing what we were doing anywhere. It was make it up as we go.

“We’re just fortunate that we’ve been able to work at something we really love, and at the same time make a living,” he says.


*Photos courtesy of the Gaston family of companies.*



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