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OCTOBER 1995 • \$3.00

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FULL STEAM AHEAD

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another.*

In this issue:
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Lawn & Landscape MAINTENANCE

VOLUME 16, NUMBER 10

OCTOBER 1995

FEATURES

Cover Illustration:
Bob Novak,
Cleveland, Ohio

26 Cover Story: Full Steam Ahead

Many enterprising lawn and landscape contractors have found ways to keep their businesses growing at a healthy pace. A good economy and astute customers also help.

30 Necessity is the Mother of Add-On Services

Customer demands, market forces and new equipment create value-adding opportunities.

36 The Survey Says...

Statistically, the industry has had a steady year, but nagging issues persist.

38 Fort Worth Welcomes GIE Show

In its sixth year, the Green Industry Expo promises even more opportunities for networking, viewing equipment, attending educational sessions or just plain having fun.

39 Basics of Micronutrients (Part 2): Don't Overlook Manganese and Zinc

Manganese and zinc play vital roles in encouraging growth for green, healthy plants. Careful additions can correct stubborn landscape problems.

45 When You Look Sharp, You Feel Sharp

Uniform use is on the rise because they look good and provide protection. Contractors must weigh the cost against the intangible benefits of looking "professional."

50 Software Can't Do Everything

Some contractors expect their new computer systems to take over the business. It's a mistake to think that software (or hardware) can replace the personal touch.

54 A Glance at the Water Management Mirror

Irrigation control in the past was pretty crude, compared to today's new devices. Allison and his great-grandfather, an old-time irrigator, explain how things have changed...

57 Business Management Series Part 10: Find the Right Tax Advice

Each tax situation is unique, but certain common-sense rules apply to everyone.

DEPARTMENTS

76
Advertisers' Index

19
Association News

6
Business Watch

71
Calendar

73
Classifieds

23
Design Notebook

4
Editor's Focus

8
Environmental Forum

12
News in Brief

63
People

64
Products

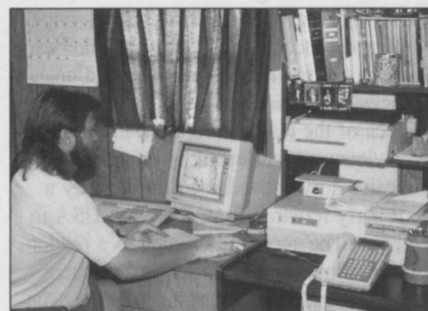
62
Trees & Ornamentals



p. 45



p. 54



P. 50

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Editor's Focus

TAKING THE PULSE. If you've ever sat in a pediatrician's office watching the doctor try to take the pulse of a lively toddler, you'll understand how hard it is to quantify this industry. Not that it's a toddler — more like a healthy, strapping youth — but it's energetic, complex and it doesn't sit still.

Good health is one of the first points that comes to mind as *Lawn & Landscape Maintenance* looks at the state of the industry. The overview starts on page 26. Our overview was based on in-depth conversations with contractors around the country. Its weak point is that every market and every lawn or landscape contracting business is a little different.

However, our conversations shared a remarkable similarity when contractors were asked about their prospects of business. Overwhelmingly, they reported that business is up, growth is steady and next year's forecast is positive.

One reason why prospects look good is that there are always new add-on options for the company that can sustain diversification of its services. Add-ons can help a contracting business get through those long, cold winters, or they can mean the difference between survival and failure. Add-ons are also hard to manage and some contractors have found that it is easier to find a service niche and concentrate on what they do best. Some of the more recent ideas in add-on services are detailed on page 30.

Much of the information used in our industry review was reinforced by the results of an extensive survey conducted for LLM by a third-party research firm, Research USA in Chicago. The survey, presented to a random sample of our 64,000 readers, asked them numerous questions about the way they run their businesses and the issues that are important to them.

The survey results show that professional contractors are optimistic of current and future business opportunities. The industry is maturing from its early days, and although there's always room for startup firms, many companies are becoming more sophisticated in the way they manage themselves. A preview of our survey results starts on page 36.

There isn't a week that goes by for me without someone in government or the industry calling for statistics on this industry. Unlike manufacturing, lawn and landscape contracting is a part of the new breed of service industries that hasn't yet been put under the microscope of statistics to any great extent. So we all have to scrape together as much information as we can find from other sources, conduct our own research and piece together reports of what's actually happening.

Our 1995 research survey is a major effort in this area, and over the coming months,



we'll continue to share some of our findings about the industry and the contractors in it.

TAX TIME ALREADY? If you're an astute business manager, you already know that tax time comes at least four times a year, when quarterly payments are due. However, you may not realize that a timely review of your tax strategy with an adviser who understands your business can pay off handsomely for years to come. The trick is finding the right tax adviser and also the extra time for developing those strategies. The latest article in our Business Management series has details.

OPPORTUNITY ALWAYS KNOCKS. It's so interesting to talk to contractors about their business. Their optimism is contagious and got me to thinking that if I were to sum up the industry in one word, I'd use the term "opportunity." It's always been there for anyone starting up a lawn or landscape contracting firm from scratch. There has always been the opportunity to work hard, learn the ropes of business and survive those first tough years of competition.

Established companies have always had the opportunity to improve themselves, offer better customer service, perfect their "systems" and explore new service add-ons.

Large industry leaders still have great opportunities to explore new geographical markets, make constant improvements in their management and services and innovate in a thousand other ways.

Whether a company is large or small makes little difference if the person in charge knows that opportunities exist. It's up to that person to grab them, take the risk, make those new opportunities work. It is the essence of a successful business and it explains why our industry is so diverse and healthy. — Susan Gibson

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EMPLOYEE SCOREBOARD

LAWN AND LANDSCAPE contractors hire modestly as a group, according to the most recent survey of the industry. In data just analyzed, a random group of *Lawn and Landscape Maintenance* readers were asked about their hiring practices. The survey was based on impartial third-party research conducted by Research USA, Chicago, from a sampling of our 64,000 readers.

In the survey, the largest group of respondents (22 percent) indicated that they employ between five and nine employees in their firms. The second-highest response, at 13.3 percent, was from one-person firms with no other employees. The third highest response (12.1 percent) were companies employing between 10 and 14 employees. Next in the ratings, at 11.2 percent, were firms with 20 or more employees. The fifth highest group included the 10.9 percent who reported they have two employees.

When asked to categorize full-time employees, the numbers are very similar: The largest group of respondents (22.2 percent) noted they had between five and nine full-time employees, followed by the 18.3 percent of respondents who reported no other full-time employees. The third highest response, from 12.1 percent, indicated they employed two full-time employees. Next on the list were the 10.9 percent of contractors with 10 to 14 full-time employees.

TOTAL EMPLOYEES



BROKERED CDs GIVE INVESTORS A CHOICE

HIGHER INTEREST rates and a shift to more conservative investments have created renewed interest in Certificates of Deposit (CDs). For years, individuals have enjoyed the advantages of investing in CDs — a low minimum investment and the security of federal deposit insurance — which make CDs a popular addition to most portfolios.

Today, CDs are offered not only through banks but through brokerage firms as well.

WHAT BROKERED CDS OFFER. Brokered CD programs provide investors with easy access to a wide variety of CD issuers, maturities and rates from which to choose. Let's take a closer look at some of the features and options that

are available with brokered CDs:

- **Access to a variety of CD issuers.** Through a brokered CD program, investors can conveniently select from a wide variety of CD issuers across the country with just one phone call. With this access, investors can diversify their CD portfolios with different rates while retaining federal insurance coverage and enjoy attractive rates.
- **Liquidity at market prices.** Brokered CDs can be sold in a secondary market prior to maturity without early withdrawal fees or penalties. Of course, the price received prior to maturity may be more or less than the original investment amount, depending on market conditions at the time of sale.

- **A wide range of maturities.** Brokered CDs are generally issued in maturities ranging from three months to 10 years. In today's changing interest rate environment, many investors choose to vary the maturities of their CDs by structuring a ladder portfolio with a financial services professional.

- **Competitive rates.** Brokered CD rates are very competitive because these programs provide access to a wide variety of CD issues. Investors can simply contact their financial services professional in order to obtain the most attractive rates available.

- **FDIC insurance.** CDs offered by brokerage firms are insured up to \$100,000 of principal and interest per investor and issuing institution by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation.

- **Low minimum investment.** Brokered CDs can typically be purchased for as little as \$1,000.

In summary, brokered CDs provide a convenient and affordable way to diversify CD investment — while still retaining federal insurance coverage — and also obtain competitive rates.

Information and data in this report were obtained from sources considered reliable. Their accuracy or completeness is not guaranteed and the giving of the same is not to be deemed a solicitation on Dean Witter's part with respect to the purchase or sale of securities or commodities. — John Houlihan, Dean Witter Reynolds Inc., Melville, N.Y.

WEATHER FORECASTS MADE EASY

You don't need to be a rocket scientist to forecast an approaching bad weather front. According to Weather Metrics, Lenexa, Kan., it's a matter of looking for a few indicators, like:

- Isolated high cloud patches that thicken, then lower.
- Fast-moving clouds that thicken and lower.
- Clouds developing dark pendulous bases.
- Heavy "piled-up" clouds building into great vertical heights before noon.
- Isolated roll clouds fusing into sheetlike forms and lowering.
- "Confused" clouds that move from different directions at different times.
- A line of middle clouds that darken the western horizon.



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Environmental Forum

PLCAA ALLIANCE. Many lawn and landscape professionals have taken steps to make their companies as environmentally friendly and conscientious as possible. A new alliance created by the Professional Lawn Care Association of America will provide information contractors can pass on to customers about making their yards an environmental asset.

PLCAA recently joined forces with the Audubon Society of New York State to promote the Audubon Co-operative Sanctuary System nationwide to the lawn and landscape industry. Members will be encouraged to distribute the Audubon Society's brochure, "A Sanctuary for Your Backyard," to customers as a means to promote property maintenance that is environmentally responsible.

A joint letter signed by PLCAA executive vice president Ann McClure and Ronald Dodson, president of the Audubon Society of New York State, was designed to accompany brochures distributed by industry members. The letter states that "caring for your yard can be an excellent way to help wildlife and protect the environment. PLCAA, the Audubon Society of New York State and your local lawn care provider encourage you to participate in a program to help you to achieve a 'wildlife friendly' backyard."

The golf course industry has supported a similar program with great success, according to Tom Delaney, director of government affairs with PLCAA. "Being associated with that program has been a very positive experience for participating golf courses and superintendents," Delaney said. "They stand out as supporters of the environment and wildlife — enhancing the industry's image as well as their own."

"By encouraging customers to participate, it reinforces their decision to maintain a healthy lawn while reaping its many environmental benefits," said McClure. "This brochure is one more way for industry professionals to highlight their companies' benefits as environmental caretakers."

For a free copy of the brochure, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope with a request to PLCAA, 1000 Johnson Ferry Road NE, Suite C-135, Marietta, GA 30068.

REREGISTRATION. The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency's efforts to reregister pesticides is hitting some serious speed bumps and significant cost overruns, which the agency is attempting to pass on to the industry in the form of registration fee increases to pesticide companies.

The Chemical Specialties Manufacturers



Association reported that this year's anticipated backlog of cases is 762, up from the 425 case backlog in fiscal year 1994. Lynn Goldman, assistant administrator for the EPA's Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances, said there is expected to be a shortfall of \$105 million in the reregistration program, despite the industry's contribution of \$147 million through fees.

Goldman said reasons for the backlog in the system include time extensions granted to registrants for the purposes of filling data gaps or correcting invalid data; incomplete or erroneously filed forms; confusion about the requirements; and inadequate agency resources. She blamed the dollar shortfall on the underestimation of cost back in 1988, which did not include product reregistration, increased review costs and delayed final decisions because of rejected studies.

Average processing turnaround times for 1994 proved lengthy. Some of the longest included 251 days for a new chemical, 355 days for inert ingredient clearance, 208 days for a new biological and 263 days for a new use for a pesticide.

TURF IS GOOD. Recent reports from Turf Producers International and the Professional Lawn Care Association of America are that positive mentions about the benefits of turfgrass and sod are getting their due in the national media.

Consumer and trade magazines and newspapers across the country have presented turfgrass sod in a positive light to the tune of 8.2 million readers, according to TPI estimations. All this exposure was the result of the organization's public relations effort, sponsored by the membership and private donations. More than 116,500 writers, editors and officials were regular targets of TPI

mailings, which discussed turfgrass sod's use in the World Cup Soccer matches, as well as its overall environmental benefits.

PLCAA estimates that more than 91 million readers were educated about National Lawn Care Month, grasscycling, choosing a lawn care service, the environmental benefits of turf and proper maintenance and safety practices. The number is more than the total exposure for 1993 and 1994 combined.

Public relations chairperson Terry Kurth spearheaded the new "Benefits of Turf" campaign for PLCAA last fall. PLCAA representatives visited national magazines, while the Lawn Care Information Kit was sent to 300 key publications across the country. The "April is National Lawn Care Month" release went to more than 4,000 in the media.

A two-part, four minute video produced and distributed for PLCAA by John Deere was viewed by more than 14 million people. The video featured PLCAA president Dale Amstutz, who discussed the environmental benefits of turf, as well as lawn care and safety tips.

GRASSCYCLING 101. The Toro Company is collaborating with the California Integrated Waste Management Board to turn California's 6-billion-pound grass clipping waste problem into fertilizer.

The two organizations will be promoting grasscycling through the state's partnership program of public and private groups whose purpose is to bring businesses and manufacturers together with the state to promote waste prevention.

"Of the 40 million tons of waste that Californians generate each year, more than 7.5 percent is from grass clippings alone," said CIWMB chairman Daniel Pennington. "We commend Toro and their California distributors for their decision to join with the state to promote grasscycling to the public as an environmentally sound alternative to landfilling."

"Grasscycling is simple, easy and it works, but it's a major challenge to get the public to see the benefits," said Kendrick Melrose, chairman and chief executive officer of Toro. "We see California's endorsement of grasscycling as helping the entire industry to expand the market for recycling products."

The CIWMB oversees California's mandate to reduce all waste going into landfills by the year 2000, and is encouraging corporate participation. Toro is the first business to partner with the state under this new waste reduction program. ■

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PENDULUM Plus Fertilizer controls all the troublesome weeds that PENDULUM alone does, including crabgrass, goosegrass, foxtail, oxalis and spurge. In fact, it controls every one of the weeds illustrated above *and more*. So the correct answer to our question is actually “none.” Remember *that* when you're filling out your entry form. It could win you \$10,000 in cash!

PENDULUM also offers greater flexibility than ever before, since it is also available in 60 WDG and 3.3 EC sprayable formulations. And now, like all Pendimethalin based products, it's more affordable, thanks to special cash rebates available to you through July 31, 1996.

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Gnaphalium purpureum



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PTO-854

NEWS DIGEST

UMass Offers Free Landscape Messages

A new information number has been established by the University of Massachusetts to provide landscape contractors with a variety of updates affecting growing problems and solutions. The 800 number operates on a 24-hour basis and is adapted to five different regions within the state. Callers can get updates on insect and disease outbreaks, cultural problems, growing degree days and educational offerings. The UMass number is 800/226-4476.

MacKissic Acquires Commercial Chippers

MacKissic Inc., Parker Ford, Pa., has acquired the commercial duty chipper-shredder line from Ameriquip Corp. The highway towable models will be manufactured by MacKissic at its plant in Parker Ford.

Dig-It Wins Patent Infringement Suit

Spancrete Machinery Corp., Milwaukee, Wis., has been awarded a sum in damages against RH&M Machine Co., Morgantown, W.V., for the infringement of a patent on a towable backhoe with the trademark "Dig-It." The line of Dig-It products are currently marketed and manufactured by HCC Inc., Mendota, Ill.

Russell Buys Rights to OPE Certification

Virgil Russell acquired the rights to the OPE Technicians Certification Testing in an agreement with the Service Dealers Association, Duncanville, Texas. The tests, which check technicians on 2-stroke, 4-stroke, compact diesel and electrical engines, have been used for three years. Additional tests may soon be ready on drive line/hydraulics and generators. For information on the tests, contact Russell at 512/442-1788.

Snapper's Environmental Program Aids Wildlife

In conjunction with the return of its popular turtle mascot, Snapper Power Equipment, McDonough, Ga., has started a corporate environmental program to help save the endangered sea turtle. Each purchase of a Snapper rear-engine riding mower from September, 1995 to August, 1996, will generate a donation to the Sea Turtle Survival League of the Caribbean Conservation Corp., a not-for-profit organization based in Gainesville, Fla.

RISE Calls for Industry Activism

A HALF A DOZEN years ago, Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment was simply an idea several specialty pesticide manufacturers had to rally the troops together to defend their industry. Today, the organization is 121 members strong, has become a leading activist in the environmental arena and just completed its fifth annual meeting.

"We will become 'activists' for our industry. Defense is no longer adequate," said Allen James, RISE executive director. "As we have shown through our school IPM work, we can address critical issues and manage them in a variety of ways to turn the issue to a positive for the industry. Coalitions with our friends are the only way. Whether they are coalitions with our national associate member associations, or coalitions with state groups, we must maximize every friendship, and build new ones."

Stewardship in Action was the theme that recently brought members from across the country to Washington, D.C., to share ideas on all levels from manufacturers to distributors and dealers to end users.

RISE legislative consultant David Crow brought RISE members up to speed about happenings in the federal government. Despite Republican dominance in both the House and the Senate, gridlock at the Capitol continues.

"But public opinion polls don't show dissatisfaction," Crow said. "I predict more Republicans will be elected (in 1996), but so will (President) Clinton."

If the reauthorization of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act is to be completed, Crow predicted, the work has to be done in the next three to four months because 1996

will be nothing but primaries and campaigning.

The new year will be full of issues requiring RISE's continued attention. Among others, they are multiple chemical sensitivity and state registries, integrated pest management, local pesticide ordinances, consumer confidence, posting and notification, container disposal and activist sponsored legislation.

MCS is an extremely emotional issue that probably won't disappear



Congressional insiders at the RISE meeting discuss FIFRA's reauthorization process.

any time soon. Although MCS has not been defined by the American Medical Association, its proponents and the list of those claiming to suffer from MCS continues to grow. The issue was a topic of discussion at one of RISE's panel discussions.

Dr. Janette Sherman, author of *Chemical Exposure and Disease*, likened MCS to chronic fatigue syndrome and Gulf War syndrome. She argued that it took the AMA about 25 years to issue a definitive statement on tobacco and that organophosphate-based pesticides are "direct descendants of nerve agents developed by the Nazis."

Although the definition of MCS is elusive, it is being applied increasingly to many illnesses, said Dr. Suellen Pirages of the Environmental Sensitivities Research Institute. "MCS has become a label for people not feeling well in general," she said.

New officers for 1996 were elected and installed into office at the annual meeting. They include: Richard Holzschu, DowElanco, chairman; Tommy Reeves, Oldham Chemicals, vice chairman; and Allen Haws, Bayer, treasurer.

Next year's RISE conference is Sept. 4-8 at the Ritz-Carlton in West Palm Beach, Fla.

Ruppert Acquires Assets of Green Thumb

In a major acquisition move, Ruppert Landscape Co., Ashton, Md., purchased select assets of one of its major Washington, D. C., area competitors — Green Thumb Enterprises, Chantilly, Va. The move involves the absorption of Green Thumb's maintenance business and brings the total of Ruppert branch offices to 12, in seven locations. The deal became official on August 1, 1995.

Green Thumb, which employed nearly 300

people in peak season, is estimated to be worth approximately \$10 to 15 million. Its commercial landscape maintenance business, which totalled about 70 percent of Green Thumb's revenues, has been moved to Ruppert. The firm's landscape installation business will continue to honor current contracts.

In the move, Ruppert combined Green Thumb's Atlanta office into one with its own, and absorbed the firm's Newcastle, Del., and Chantilly offices. Green Thumb's owners will join Ruppert's management staff at a future date.

(continued on page 14)



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News in Brief

(continued from page 12)

PPEMA Sues EPA Over California Tier II Rules

After years of cooperation, the Portable Power Equipment Manufacturers Association has taken the United States Environmental Protection Agency to court over the issue of power equipment exhaust emission regulations. The suit, filed in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, asserts that the EPA's decision to approve California's Tier II requirements failed to comply with the requirements of the Clean Air Act. PPEMA said the EPA is required to conduct a comprehensive analysis of technical and economic feasibility before granting approval of the regulations.

Currently, California's Tier II regulations call for greatly reduced emission levels by the close of the century. Manufacturers are not even sure yet if any technology currently exists to accommodate those levels.

According to Donald Purcell, PPEMA president, the Tier II regulations are "unreasonable" and "not feasible" at this time. He pointed out that the regulations are in direct conflict with current fire safety policies and

that the regulations for two-cycle engines threaten to eliminate some consumer products categories from the market.

PPEMA asserted that the regulations are "regulatory overkill," and stated that "EPA's approval of California Tier II regulations goes far beyond any action necessary by government to regulate emissions for portable power equipment."

An independent analysis performed by an economic think tank showed that the broad regulations would decimate the portable power equipment industry in California. The suit asks that the Tier II regulations be returned to EPA for the appropriate analysis.

PLCAA Announces New Management Conference

The Professional Lawn Care Association of America is holding its first executive-level meeting — the PLCAA Management Conference — January 12 through 14 — at the Embassy Suites Camelhead in Phoenix, Ariz. This event will feature marketing, management and sales-oriented sessions for both small and large lawn and landscape contracting company owners and managers.

Featured speakers will include Larry Helms, Western Training Systems; Bob

Jacques, American Honda Motor Co.; and Patrick Norton, Barefoot Grass. PLCAA plans to hold the conference each winter, which will be followed immediately by the organization's board of directors meeting.

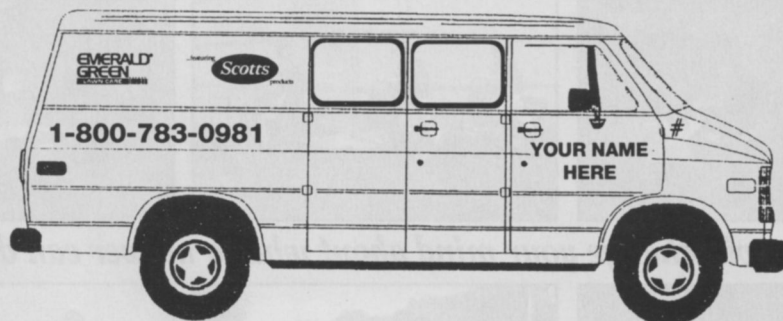
Rohm and Cyanamid Form Joint Venture

The formation of a marketing and sales joint venture to develop, register and commercialize a new insecticide will reduce costs and allow faster registration, said representatives of Rohm and Haas and American Cyanamid companies. The concept of a joint venture grew out of the discovery that both firms developed the same chemistry, which was discovered during the patenting process.

The venture, which is called RohMid L.L.C., allows both firms to share the costs of developing the insecticide RH-0345, which is a diacylhydrazine insecticide that controls grubs and other soil-borne pests on turf.

The compound is said to have a unique mode of action that interferes with the normal molting process of grubs and caterpillars. Early testing shows that the insecticide can be applied at low use rates without harm to earthworms, honeybees or other beneficial insects.

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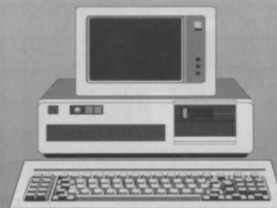
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The venture also will expedite the development of data necessary to register the product with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. RohMid representatives anticipate that the EPA will grant a registration for its use in the United States by early 1997.

Hardie Acquires Sovran's Control Technology

James Hardie Irrigation, Laguna Niguel, Calif., recently acquired the central control technology from Sovran, a company in Johannesburg, South Africa. The new technology relies on an advanced design user interface and communications protocol for a wide range of commercial irrigation system applications.

The agreement allows Sovran to continue selling these products in selected golf markets around the world.

Homelite Enters Commercial Market

The Homelite subsidiary of Deere & Company, Charlotte, N.C., announced its intentions to produce a line of commercial grade outdoor power equipment known as the Green Machine by John Deere. Earlier this year, Homelite completed the purchase of

Green Machine's assets from Mark Machine in Wadsworth, Ohio.

The new line will be based on exclusive products designs and will be expanded to include a wider range of products for the commercial power equipment user.

Products in the line include string trimmers, blowers, edgers, hedge trimmers, a sprayer, chain saws and walk-behind mowers geared for landscape maintenance operations. They will be manufactured using a special team approach and will be offered by Green Machine dealers.

L. A. Councilman Re-ignites Blower Ban

Marvin Braude, a councilman in the city of Los Angeles, Calif., moved for a ban on the sale and use of gasoline-powered leaf blowers. This motion, which is the third such effort in the last nine years, proposed a phase-out period of one year to allow blower owners to recoup part of their investment, according to Braude's office.

His motion noted that leaf blowers are an "intolerable intrusion into neighborhood peace," and they "raise clouds of choking dust and pollute the air with exhaust from their inefficient engines."

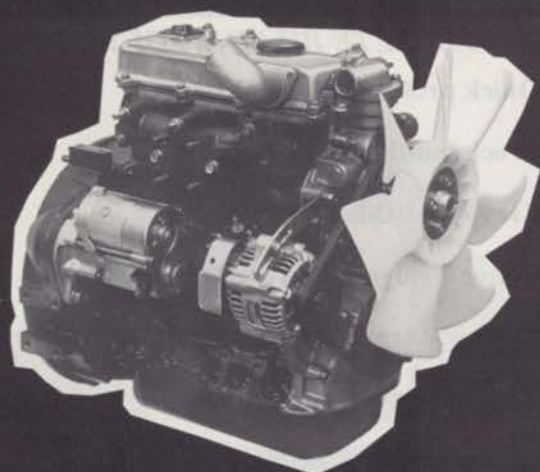
The motion also stated that "they are ineffective because they merely relocate debris from one property to another, thereby shifting one property's waste to another person's property where it is blown back by either the wind or another leaf blower."

Braude also noted in his motion that the leaf blowers "raise clouds of pollen and insecticides, with injure persons with respiratory problems, and they blow dust and grit through open windows and under doors, into homes." Councilman Braude stated that many people at home need "relative quiet," and that banning the machines "could at long last facilitate the enforcement of this often violated part of the City's noise ordinance."

His motion suggested that the ban would allow any Los Angeles police officer to cite the operators, which would allow the city's "specially trained and equipped noise-abatement team to concentrate its limited enforcement hours on other, more complicated enforcement tasks."

The city's Municipal Code allows leaf blower to emit no more than 65 decibels of noise measured at a distance of 50 feet.

Braude cited a U. S. Environmental Protection Agency study published two years ago in *Air Quality Week* magazine, which stated that one hour's use of a leaf blower



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produces as much volatile organic compound pollution as 100 miles of driving an automobile. According to Braude, this is evidence that leaf blowers are more serious polluters than cars, since no one can legally drive 100 miles in an hour.

In 1986, Los Angeles City Council rejected a proposed leaf blower ban by a 6-6 vote. In 1990, the Council rejected Braude's less sweeping plan by an identical vote. In a news release issued by his office, Braude expressed disappointment in the industry's efforts to produce quieter equipment.

"We have waited for years for the manufacturers of leaf blowers to produce equipment which would comply with our law," he said. "We are still waiting. It's time to stop waiting and start acting, to protect the people of Los Angeles from the noise and pollution these devices create."

California Nursery Sales Kept Booming in 1994

The California Association of Nurserymen reported that the state's 1994 retail nursery sales reached an all time high with a 4 percent increase to \$4.5 billion. This figure is almost double the percentage from 1993 and represents nearly 20 percent of all nursery

retail sales in the United States.

The state's wholesale production equalled 26 percent of national sales and is the state's fourth largest farm product, behind milk, grapes and cattle. John Chiapelone, president of CAN, explained that the figures indicate a slow but steady recovery of California's economy.

Nittany Lions Become Landscape Ornaments

An unusual partnership between graduate students and a landscape ornament supplier has resulted in the marketing of a 100-pound, concrete version of the famous Nittany Lion, mascot of The Pennsylvania State University.

The ornaments, which are modeled on the university's 13-ton original, are the result of a program initiated by the school, in the new Entrepreneurial Market Research Services Center.

EMRSC was the impetus that brought two graduate students and a firm called CC+ to collaborate on the design, production and marketing of the lion mascots. It is the first landscape art produced from EMRSC's program, but may soon be joined by similar mascots for other Big 10 universities, say the participants.

Conference Provides Research Funding

The 42nd annual Rocky Mountain Turf Conference, which will be held December 6 through 8 in Denver, is expected to generate additional research funds for the RM Turfgrass Research Foundation. Since 1988, the foundation has awarded more than \$184,000 for research. It awarded \$25,000 in grants to four professors at Colorado State University in 1995.

NAA Sets Tree Care Sales, Coaching Seminars

Four seminars for the sales and coaching of tree care owners, managers and sales people have been set for January, 1996, by the National Arborist Association. They are scheduled for San Francisco, Calif., on January 6; Rockville, Md., on January 13; Armonk, N.Y., on January 20; and Milwaukee, Wis., on January 27.

The one-day seminar, which is based on Hal Becker's book, *Can I Have 5 Minutes of Your Time?*, will debut at the TCI Expo '95 in Indianapolis, Ind. Successful selling, sales management and motivational techniques will be covered. Contact NAA for more information at 800/733-2622. ■

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Association News

NEW DIRECTOR of landscape services for the **American Association of Nurserymen** is Warren Quinn. He will serve as administrator of the National Landscape Association, replacing Abby Ruden, who will focus on the Horticultural Research Institute.

Quinn will coordinate AAN activities relating to professionals' use of plants in the landscape. He brings experience in his family's landscape design/build company to the position. He is a Certified Professional Horticulturist and has been a practicing attorney since 1992.

Robert Dolibois, executive vice president of AAN, noted, "Warren brings a strong package of skills and experience to AAN and NLA. His hands-on landscape background, professional legal skills and marketing and design abilities will enhance the value that landscape professionals receive from membership."

AAN also reported that Lawrence Bachman was elected to its Nurserymen's Hall of Fame at its recent convention held in Minneapolis. Bachman, who is retired from Bachman's Inc. in Minneapolis, started working for the family business in 1938.

For more information...



ALCA

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The Professional Lawn Care Association of America reported that it has added a 401K retirement plan option for its members. Retirement Plan Strategies Inc. will provide the benefit, which is called "Retirement Trust Funds."

Susan Spiller, program director for the company, explained that the benefit "combines attributes normally available only to large companies with the expanded admin-

istrative conveniences needed in smaller companies." She noted that the plan includes investment choices, straightforward retirement plan choices (401K and/or profit sharing), employee services, minimized administrative burden and competitive costs.

In other news, PLCAA announced that mid-term and final exams for the Certified Turfgrass Professional designation will be

(continued on page 22)

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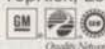
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Association News

(continued from page 19)

offered for the first time at PLCAA's Conference in Fort Worth, Texas, which will be held November 12 through 16. A representative from the University of Georgia will administer the certification exams for those candidates ready for mid-term or final tests. They will be held Tuesday, November 14 from 4 to 7 p.m. Preregistration is required through the university. Contact PLCAA for more information on testing or enrolling in the program.

October is not too soon to plan to attend the 1996 Student Career Days, according to the **Associated Landscape Contractors of America**. The event will be held March 21 through 24 at the Embassy Suites Hotel and California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, Calif. The group has planned 20 competitive events ranging from plant identification to installation techniques, which are available for sponsorship.

In related news, ALCA announced tentative 1996 dates for its Masters of Management for the Landscape Industry seminars. They are: February 16-17 in Atlanta, Ga.; March 1-2 in Chicago; and March 15-16 in Denver.

Grand award winners in ALCA's Environmental Improvement Awards for interior have been announced. They are: Environmental Care Inc., Calabasas, Calif.; Heroman Services, Baton Rouge, La.; Orkin Plantscaping, Knoxville, Tenn., and Carrollton, Texas; Plant Design, San Francisco, Calif.; Raimondi Horticultural Group Inc., Ridgewood, N.J.; Rentokil Environmental Services — Washington, Burtonsville, Md.; Rentokil Inc., Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.; Rentokil Inc. — Tropical Plant Services, Buffalo Grove, Ill.; Rentokil Inc./Primescape, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.; The Plantworks, Las Vegas, Nev.; and Valley Crest Landscape Inc., Calabasas, Calif.

The Penn Allied Nursery Trade Show drew nearly 6,500 people to its new location in Fort Washington, Pa., reported the **Pennsylvania Landscape and Nursery Association**. The increase in attendance included attendees and exhibitors, bringing the new total to more than 900 booths.

In other news, PLNA awarded a life membership to J. Franklin Styer. He received his Ph.D. in botany in 1930, after becoming sole owner of his family's nursery in 1924. Dr. Styer helped to create several professional organizations, including the National Land-

scape Association. He has received many awards for his work in a number of industry organizations.

The American Society of Landscape

Architects elected Donald Leslie as its president-elect for the 1995-1996 year. He is an associate professor of landscape architecture at The Pennsylvania State University. Leslie will be installed as president at the 1996 annual meeting in Los Angeles.

ASLA also reported that it is developing a homepage for the World Wide Web. The homepage, which is called LandNet, was scheduled to debut at ASLA's annual meeting this month. New features in LandNet will include discussion groups, a file library of CAD details, links to other homepages for landscape architecture and subscriptions to the United States Department of Commerce's daily publication listing all federal contracts.

The Ohio Compost Producers Association

tion reports that representatives have met with representatives of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency to discuss proposed quality standards for composts produced in Ohio. The schedule calls for filing of rules by April of 1996. ■



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Design Notebook

DESIGN CHALLENGES: Growing up, I occasionally heard the expression "making a silk purse out of a sow's ear." As a landscape architect, I was never able to fully appreciate the meaning as much as I did with this home's transformation.

A typical project for our design/build firm is a client with a big, new, beautiful home who wants it enhanced. When the Webbs came to me and asked me to look at a lake-front home on the Lake Erie shoreline they were thinking of purchasing, I eagerly accepted, as I love working on lakefront sites and we had done substantial work on their single-family condominium.

Arriving on site, I was disappointed at first. The front of the house looked like a double garage with a couple of rooms tacked on the sides. The back and side yards were a series of concrete block walls and steep slopes that were nicely mown. The inside, although cozy with big picture windows to the back, had no view of the lake.

I asked the Webbs about their expectations and I soon saw light at the end of the tunnel. They wanted to renovate the house similar to homes they had seen along the Eastern seaboard. Their ideas included clearing most of the trees in back to regain a view of the lake, renovating the lower level into a master bedroom suite, adding a big deck in back and relandscaping the front.

THE SOLUTION. An initial design concept grew out of these desires. To provide a basic character to the house, we designed a series of arbors and a paint scheme of bayberry, soft tan and a cream. Decks and steps would

DESIGN NOTES

Project Summary
The Project:
Landscape Company:

Lake Erie Renovation
The Webb Residence
Yardmaster Inc., Painesville, Ohio
Kurt Kluznik, president
Mikel McLaughlin, registered
landscape architect

Designer:
Size of Property:
Man-Hours to Construct:
Number of Plants Installed:

Approximately 1/3 acre
Approximately 1,000+ man-hours
Approximately 300+ plants

wrap around the side and lead to a patio off the lower level, being careful not to block light or views to the interior of the house.

To improve the lake view and make it more accessible, a series of steps and boardwalks would lead to a path to the beach. We would selectively clear and trim a view through the trees to frame a view of Lake Erie. Plantings were designed to provide privacy, dramatic seasonal interest and soften the lines of the architecture. Lawn areas would be kept to a minimum with the owner's bum knee in mind.

Looking at all the costs of renovating inside and out, their budget definitely came into play. A 3- to 5-year phasing plan seemed logical to achieve their goals, so we established a budget for the outside and decided that the initial priorities included:

- Carving out a view of the lake
- Building the initial arbors and foundation plantings in front
- Building a viewing deck
- Providing safe and easy access to the lake.

The front arbor was a very important feature as it not only took away the dominance of the double garage doors, but it also estab-

lished a light, airy theme and gave the home some style and curb appeal. Off the sun-room, we extended another arbor and deck wrapping around to a future pass-through window to the kitchen.

Complimenting three large sunburst honey locusts and a forsythia hedge in front, we planted wisteria, rhododendrons, little princess spirea, daylilies, blue princess holly, liriopie, bay magnolias, burning bush and another forsythia hedge.

In back, where there once had been grass that was mown weekly, we decided to let the hillside and lower lake plain return to a natural state with a boardwalk and steps meandering through the meadow grasses.

LOWER PATIO. Soon after the completion of the first phase, we sat down and discussed the project. The Webbs were thrilled with the initial phase of construction and they immediately went ahead with the first part of the lower patio. The caring, friendly attitude of the foremen and crew played a major part in instilling this level of confidence in the clients. The steady flow of compliments from friends, neighbors and passers-by didn't hurt either.

The lower patio became the area of concentration in the next couple of phases. We covered up the block walls with painted shake shingles, added retaining walls to create a terraced area for the patio extensions and extended the spindle rail from the deck and steps around the top of the wall. The patio pavers were chosen to match the soft pinks and grays and the rounded character of the lake gravel, which was brought up from the beach and incorporated as a mulch.

Five more arbors and overheads that we designed and built carried the airy arbor theme around the

Arbors became a unifying element to enliven the home's front and to enhance various backyard patios on different levels of the cliff.
Photos: Yardmaster Inc.



side and back yards. They were designed to provide a sense of entry, add shade, create a sense of enclosure and block views for privacy. The most dramatic arbor is one of the focal points of the patio. It has a graceful arch that frames a lion's head sculpture and blocks the neighbor's view of the patio.

Incorporating garden ornaments like the lion's head into the garden was quite endearing to the heart of the lady of the house. Numerous old stone and sculptural pieces were dramatically integrated into the landscape. They include a huge stone bird bath that we turned into a fountain, "Sara's head" (an old half-carved block of stone with the face of an inquisitive child), several animals, a variety of keystones and cornerstones, an old grindstone, a hand-carved stone hitching post, an old metal lamp post and a 10-pound meteorite that was handed down through several generations in the family. Each object became a fitting focal point for its site as it was tucked in among appropriate plantings.

A recent addition to the landscape is a side patio off the sunroom arbor. This cozy spot became a show piece for some of the smaller garden ornaments, with the old metal lamp post as a centerpiece. The patio was built to provide a special transitional space with a



view of the lake. It also eliminated the last steep hard-to-mow slope. Construction necessitated a timber retaining wall, rerouting drainage and extending the spindle fence. The actual patio was built of bluestone edged in rounded pavers and framed with a dwarf evergreen collection.

Complementing all these arbors, patios and sculptures are mostly the same palette of

Patios extend from the house down the cliff, where trails take visitors right to Lake Erie's shore. Judicious planning gave the owners dramatic lake views, as well as several usable outdoor areas around the home.

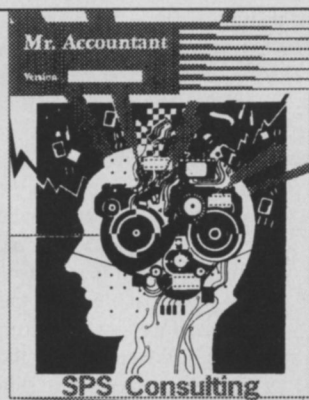
plants that we used out front, with a variety of additional perennials, grasses and evergreens. We slowly started adding more varieties of perennials as the project progressed, so that the client would get to know and properly care for each type of plant.

Now, the Webbs have the "perennial fever," and we're adding layers of beds out front to work in more and more varieties of perennials, as well as more evergreens and sculpture pieces.

The major focus of the Webb's landscape project initially was to achieve a dramatic lake view. Fairly quickly, outstanding views of Lake Erie from almost any place in the house, decks or patios became a reality.

However, even more impressive are the site's interior views that were developed over the last couple of years with arbors, sculptures, patios and lush, colorful plantings. — Mikel McLaughlin

The author is a registered landscape architect with Yardmaster, Painesville, Ohio.



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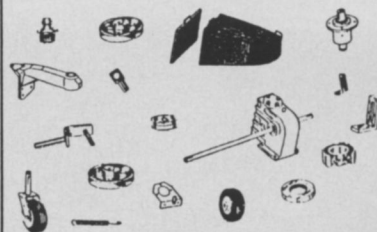
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By Susan Gibson

"CREAMRISES to the top," said one industry insider of this year's business. He pointed out the many opportunities that presented themselves for lawn and landscape contractors willing to work hard at customer service, business management and marketing.

"The best sales increase year in our history" is how John Rowland, president of Mallsapes, Dallas, Texas, described this working season. His interior and exterior contracting firm is established in 22 different cities in 11 states. This year, it experienced a 20 percent increase in sales and nearly a 100 percent improvement in profitability. He attributed the growth to being located in high-growth markets and the resurgence of the real estate market in the Southwest.

While not all landscape contractors reported such healthy growth, most are decidedly positive about the remainder of 1995 and their prospects in 1996. Many have shown healthy, moderate rates of growth and perceive that their customers are finally understanding that quality work is as important as price.

WEATHER INFLUENCES. Every year, the weather brings its special surprises to the landscape industry. This year has been remarkable for being both too wet and too dry. After years of drought in California, unusually heavy rains last winter caused some flooding in general, but did much to relieve the chronic water shortages.

Contractors have found ways to take advantage of the weather's severity. Rob Zolezzi, vice president of L&L Landscape Services, Santa Clara, Calif., reported that the record rainfall filled local water reservoirs and ended several years of landscape water restrictions. As a result, his maintenance customers felt free to add flowers and new plantings once again to landscapes.

"After suffering seven years of drought, we practically did dances in all the rain last winter," he noted. "Our landscape work grew to almost three times its normal level (to nearly \$2 million in 1995), while maintenance remains nice and steady."

In the East, the drought has meant a cutback in the need for mowing services, dormant lawns, stress on ornamentals and trees, delays in planting and the emergence of many turf diseases and weeds. It has left large areas of the East as much as 12 to 14 inches under normal rainfall totals. Other areas experienced hot, humid weather which served as an incubator for diseases.

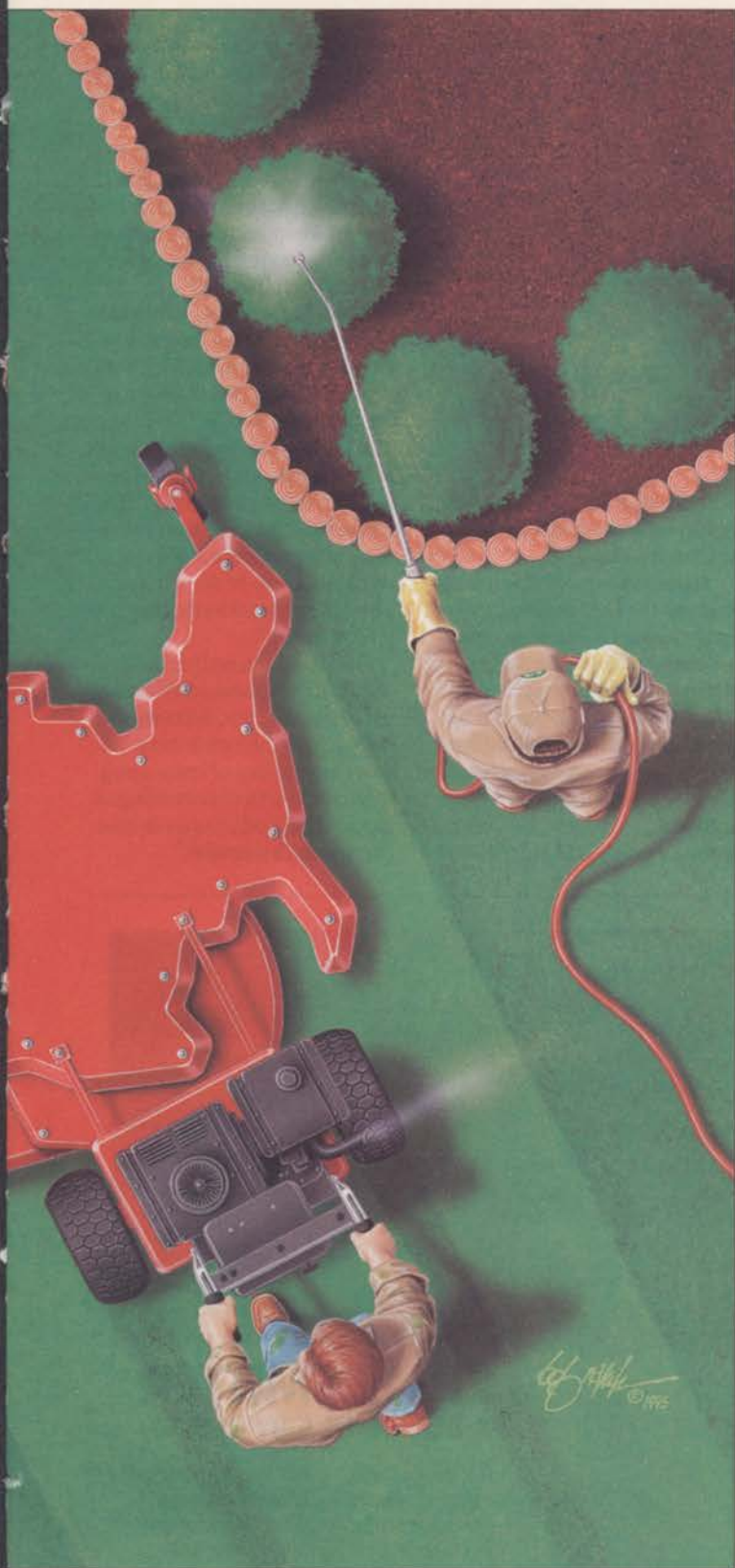
Mike Scian, president of Scian's Landscaping Inc., Berlin, N.J., mailed seeding and aeration proposals by early September with the anticipation of renovating several lawns before the end of the month. "We hope to get our residential customers done early, then do our commercial customers without irrigation during October."

He explained that the drought cut back his mowing maintenance work by approximately 5 percent to 7 percent, but expects to pick up more business by grow-ing his landscape installation department. His overall sales have grown between 8 percent and 10 percent this year, and he expects more growth next year (from 10 percent to 15 percent more).

ECONOMIC IMPACT. Dick Brickman, president of The Brickman Group Ltd., Long Grove, Ill., noted that while the landscape market is still growing, "construction continues to be a challenge." His firm, which has 40 branches



Full Steam



Cover illustration: Bob Novak, Cleveland, Ohio

in the East and Midwest, reported that the glut of office space in various markets is starting to be absorbed and that many clients are renovating existing landscapes.

"Although some areas are growing faster than others, the landscape market is doing well," Brickman noted. "However, the building industry is somewhat spotty."

He stressed that both the landscape design/build and maintenance markets are dependent on a growing construction industry. "Design/build is responsive to the construction industry. New, large corporate campuses are so few" compared to a few years earlier, when government tax and spending policies made it more feasible to build that type of commercial property. "I think it will be three or four years before building comes back to its previous levels. People are building now only when it makes sense," he said.

Landscape maintenance, too, grows proportionately with the amount of new building, Brickman explained. The limited number of new projects makes competition more fierce. In the face of such strong competition, companies that are better in business, horticulture and service will be the ones that continue to grow, he predicted.

One area still basking in the glow of new construction is Denver, according to Allen Keesen, president of Allen Keesen Landscape, Denver. Although major projects like Coors Field and the area's giant new airport are finished, they have had an impact on commercial growth in nearby areas. As a result, "Larger companies are purchasing acreage surrounding the airport and it's generating some excitement" concerning future landscape projects, he reported.

In Rowland's markets, the rebounding effect of commercial real estate and the construction or renovation of large, regional malls has led to a surge in landscape investments. For Mallscapes, this means a jump in interior landscape installations and subsequent growth in both interior and exterior maintenance.

While the interior market in gen-

eral has shown some consolidation over the past few years, he feels the tougher competition right now in his markets is in exterior maintenance. "There are a lot more contractors in this area," he pointed out.

PRICE VS. QUALITY? Price pressures also drive the markets in which Yardmaster Inc., Painesville, Ohio, competes. According to Kurt Kluznik, president, many customers are looking beyond price for quality work. "We can't compete on price, although some people buy that way. We look for clients who have a low price horror story to tell."

Prices for landscape maintenance have held steady for several years in the local markets, said Michael Branch, chief operating officer of DuBrow's Nurseries, Livingstone, N.J. He added that there continues to be plenty of price undercutting. To counteract that, DuBrow's is able to compete by offering a wide range of services.

He noted that many of this commercial clients are smart buyers and "know the cost of paying too little" for maintenance services. His upscale residential customers are either previous customers or referrals, and "price is not a leading issue" with them.

George Gaumer, national sales manager-commercial services for The Davey Tree Expert Co., Kent, Ohio, agreed. "The upscale residential customer is more concerned with convenience, company reputation, the crew's appearance and the level of professionalism."

He noted, "While some commercial customers are still inclined to bid work on a routine basis, others are more inclined to find a vendor that they are comfortable with and continue that relationship. Obviously, those that deal more on a relationship rather than a bid basis are preferred by most contractors."

For Sandra Weaver, president of Albuquerque Grounds Maintenance, Albuquerque, N.M., the lessons of loyalty are more important than ever. Her market is experiencing a building boom with much commercial landscape construction and an equal amount of competition.

Ahead

"The key is loyalty building and consistent quality," she noted. "Balancing a budget while maintaining quality is always a challenge."

She makes a practice of working with the client to find the program that fits the client's needs. Competitors occasionally butt into the process, however. "I've had to sell against companies that have taken my proposal and simply lowered the figures on the line items," Weaver recalled. She responds by stressing her company's track record and quality reputation.

LONGER CONTRACTS. Scian has found that some local commercial customers are extending contracts out to three years. He noted that many clients "seem to be happy with their contractors and are not looking to move. The contract times are getting longer and there is less turnover. If a contractor meets their demands for quick service, the client will not want to change."

The long-term contract is growing with popularity for contractors, who often bill customers on a monthly basis. Dale Elkins, divi-



Mowing continues to be an area of growth for contractors. In many markets, mowing is extremely competitive and sensitive to price wars. Photo: Ransomes America

and the professional landscape contractor. It shows that the contractor is committed and professional."

ACCEPTING REGULATIONS. As the industry moves toward greater acceptance of certification, it has learned to appreciate the importance of safety regulations for both equipment and pesticides.

"The industry can deal with safety regulations, as long as government doesn't handcuff us," said Paul Hoffman, sales manager for Lange-Stegmann Co., St. Louis, Mo. "The regulations bring a level of professionalism and environmental safety to the industry. The companies that bring their operations into compliance with these regulations will be the survivors. The dinosaurs will be the ones not in compliance."

Hoffman also noted that the level of training programs, certification, the use of uniforms, licensing and horticultural education have improved the quality of landscaping. "The public is more demanding of quality, and good companies have lots of growth potential."

sion vice president for ISS Landscape Management Services, Orlando, Fla., pointed out that the long-term contracts his firm has with local resorts give them the edge in finding ways to enhance services. "We set ourselves up for good enhancement money through client's upgrading of their sites."

While prices, quality work and competition are topics dear to the heart of every contractor, many of their customers have a hard time differentiating one from another,

Kluznik said. This applies to both residential and commercial customers, but it is changing.

The continuing practice of using price as the final decision maker may eventually change as customers become more educated about the industry, Kluznik pointed out. "As an industry, we have to find ways to help the customer differentiate between the unprofessional and the professional contractor. Certification is a movement that has the potential to help both the customer

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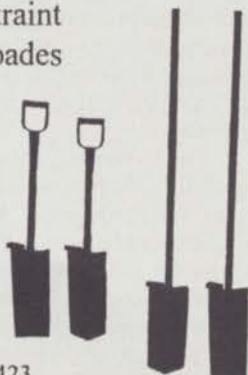
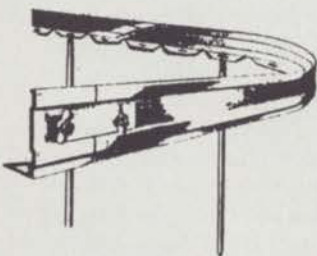
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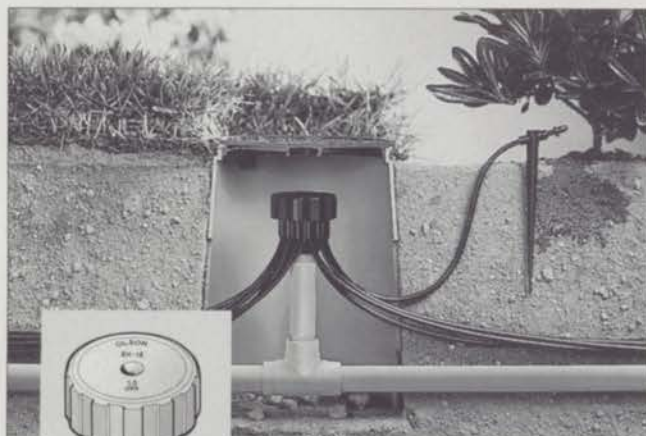
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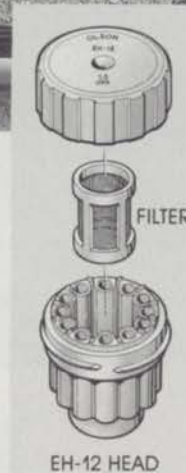
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Safety regulations on the design of landscape maintenance equipment are also having their affect, noted Rick Rodier, marketing manager for contractor equipment and services, The Toro Co, Minneapolis. "I see more and more enforcement of safety components on equipment. More operators are using seat belts, for instance."

NO GROWTH LIMITS. Not everyone has reported that this is a banner year. Some contractors in slow growing markets have found that it's still tough to remain competitive and profitable at the same time.

However, many feel that there are no limits to growth if the business constantly strives for improvement, good customer service and quality work.

"Our biggest challenge will be putting together support systems to manage our growth as we expand into new markets," Rowland commented. "I want to redo our system for keeping up with our complex scheduling, as well as get a good hold on our record keeping."

"One of the major influences

coming in our industry is the fact that a lot of in-house operations will be going out-of-house," said Brickman. "There is a significant amount of work in government and commercial areas that was historically done in house. If it becomes a trend, it could increase our market dramatically, as much as 50 to 60 percent. There's no question that the inside operations are not motivated by profit."

Rodier sees a more modest boost of around 10 percent if municipalities privatize. "We see more opportunity opening up for the industry in general, and especially the top group of contractors, to get involved with this work." But it also brings new challenges, he explained.

"It means a new world of equipment and equipment headaches when a contractor realizes that his walking mowers are not as productive on the larger properties. He'll have to get the right kind of equipment, then learn to operate and service it. He may also worry about spending the money on equipment and then not keeping the account."

The largest landscape contrac-

tors, who would get much of that work, currently are focusing on maintaining profitability, he reported. "They can starve off their aggressive competitors this way. It is a constant challenge because they're bigger and have more overhead, so they are more vulnerable to smaller, sleeker competitors."

Mid-size companies often are more focused on the day-to-day operations, satisfying their current customers and growing a little at a time, Rodier explained. "They want to maintain the business they have, keep their head up above water, keep the customer happy and keep the equipment running."

While they can find and keep good labor, most of these owners don't have much money to invest in training and want equipment that is easy to operate with little training.

Professional companies with the best employees are going to see the best growth in the future, Gaumer predicted. "Some companies are blessed with good people and that isn't an accident. The companies that can recruit, nurture and train people will find that it facilitates all

other things. All our services are delivered by people."

FUTURE CLOUDS? Amid the good business that is coming the way of lawn and landscape contractors are several issues that have yet to be resolved. They could potentially be troublesome and include: noise and power equipment emission regulations, a clampdown on immigration and continuing efforts on a local level to regulate the use pesticides and fertilizers in landscapes.

The emissions regulation discussion just became more heated when the Portable Power Equipment Manufacturers Association filed suit in federal court against the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. PPEMA claimed that EPA's decision to approve California's tough Tier II emission regulations violates the Clean Air Act because the agency did not conduct a comprehensive analysis of technical and economic feasibility of the regulations before it approved them (see page 14).

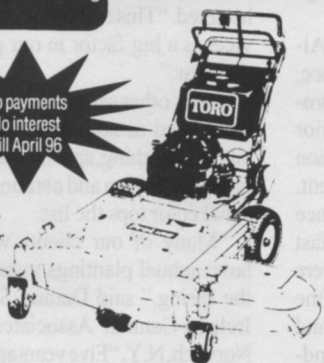
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(continued on page 78)

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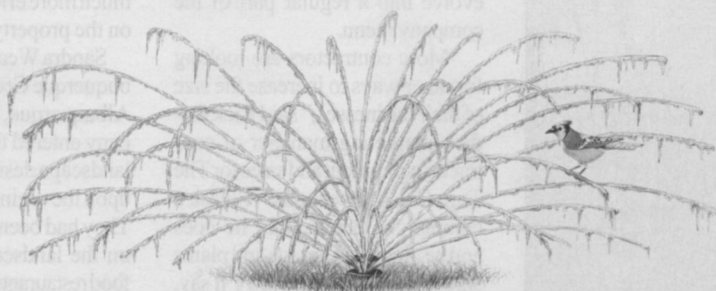
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STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

*Customers,
market forces
and new
equipment create
value-adding
opportunities.*

By Paul Schrimpf



THE SHARP, hard-working lawn and landscape contractor is always on the lookout for new ways to service customers and grow business. Whether from the development of new, cutting edge equipment, changes in the market, weather extremes or customer demands, adding on services is a natural outgrowth of the entrepreneurial spirit that has given rise to many successful operations.

Most times, the new service is a little gravy on the steak; occasionally, it becomes the steak itself. There's little doubt, though, that add-on services help keep businesses strong by creating new avenues for profit, and result in greater customer satisfaction.

IN DEMAND. The biggest reason for adding on a service is, of course, because it's what the customer wants. Usually, it starts out as a courtesy service to a few valued clients. Then, if enough customers buy into a specific program, the service can evolve into a regular part of the company menu.

"More contractors are looking for other ways to increase the size of their businesses," said Rick Rodier, marketing manager of contractor equipment and sales for The Toro Co., Minneapolis. "I'll ask a commercial cutter what he does and he'll say that he cuts and plants shrubs and trims trees. So I'll say, 'Sounds like landscape contract-



Hydroseeding is one add-on service that is growing in popularity with many lawn and landscape contractors. Photo: Reinco Inc.

ing,' but he'll say, 'No, I'm a cutter.' More contractors are getting into the industry with a business background, or they're smart enough to learn that if they're mowing a property, it wouldn't take much more effort to do other things on the property, too."

Sandra Weaver, president of Albuquerque Grounds Maintenance, Albuquerque, N.M., said the company entered the world of exterior landscape design and construction upon the urging of a faithful client. They had been doing maintenance on the landscapes of several fast food restaurants for a chain, and were asked to do a redesign on one of the sites. The project was a success, and today Weaver estimates that landscape refurbishing accounts for 30 percent of the business.

Selling loyal, long-time clients is the best source of add-on services, and many clients are more receptive than ever to receiving many services from one contractor, according to Dick Brickman, president of The Brickman Group, Long Grove, Ill. "Customers are trying to reduce their number of vendors—we see it all over the country," he said. "The contractor who can provide or manage more services will get more business."

That also goes for providing interior and exterior services for the prepared contractor. John Rowland,

president of Mallscapes, Dallas, said that 25 of the 30 malls the company has under contract include both interior and exterior work.

"We're starting to see the results now in our attempts to sell interior and exterior services to our clients," he noted. "This combination of services is a big factor in our growth this year."

Many other services commonly mentioned as add-on services included mulching, special plantings, lawn renovation and aeration. Seasonal color tops the list.

"Many of our clients want to have annual plantings installed in the spring," said Damon Scott of Ireland-Gannon Associates, East Norwich, N.Y. "Five years ago there was no market for it at all."

WEATHER FACTOR. Mother Nature has provided her share of grief this year, creating drought conditions in some areas and relentless storms in others. Of course, there has been a silver lining of opportunity for many contractors.

In New England, where much of the area saw only a handful of rainy days between the Fourth of July and Labor Day, lawn renovation and reseeding will be an area of additional business, including aeration, seeding and replacement of plant materials, according to

(continued on page 34)

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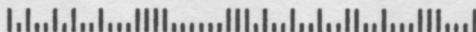
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2. The contest is open to licensed lawn and landscape contractors, their employees and suppliers. Only persons who, as of the date of the prize drawing, are 18 years of age or older, with a valid driver's license, and are legal residents of the U.S. are eligible to enter. Entry cards must be fully completed.

3. This sweepstakes is not open to employees or the families of all sponsoring firms, Lawn & Landscape Maintenance magazine or other GIE Publishing Co. publications, and affiliated companies.

4. Enter by completing and mailing the official entry form available in the monthly issues of Lawn & Landscape Maintenance magazine, or receive a valid entry form by sending a postage paid envelope to Sweepstakes '95, c/o GIE Publishing, 4012 Bridge Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio, 44113. Not responsible or liable for lost, late, stolen, mutilated, illegible, incomplete, postage due or misdirected entries. **No mechanical reproductions permitted.**

5. **PRIZE** — \$20,000 retail value of professional lawn and landscape products. The winner will be determined by a random drawing of all entries received by November 30, 1995. The winner will be announced and notified by U.S. mail and/or telephone. Prize notification returned as undeliverable as addressed will result in an alternate winner being drawn and notified until a qualified entrant

is awarded the grand prize. Only one grand prize will be awarded.

6. No cash equivalent or prize substitution offered. Prize is not transferable.

7. All federal, state and/or local taxes, if any, are the sole responsibility of the winner. Winner will be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility and liability/publicity release (allowing the sweepstakes sponsor to use the winner's name and likeness for publicity purposes) as a condition of being awarded the prize. Failure to do so will result in an alternate winner being selected.

8. Void wherever prohibited or restricted by law.

9. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of entries received. All entries become the property of Lawn & Landscape Maintenance magazine and GIE Publishing Co.

10. By participating, you agree to these rules and decisions of the judges which shall be final in all matters relating to this sweepstakes.

11. To obtain the name of the winner of this sweepstakes, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to "LLM Product Sweepstakes," 4012 Bridge Ave., Cleveland, Ohio 44113, Attn: Fran Franzak.

Add-On Services

(continued from page 30)

Michael Scian, president of Scian's Lawn Service, Berlin, N.J.

The opposite is true in California, where torrential rains after years of drought have resulted in clients spending more on existing landscapes. "This year's rains have resulted in lots of extra work adding plants to landscapes that did not have them (because of water use restrictions)," said Rob Zolezzi, vice president of L & L Landscape Services, Santa Clara, Calif.

Florida's frequent tropical storms have cre-

ated a greater need for tree service, according to Dale Elkins, vice president of the Florida division of ISS Landscape Management Services, Orlando. "Tree service is something we are seriously looking into," he said. "With all the storm and wind damage in the landscape, we could have used more arborists on staff, and more available equipment."

SHARPEN UP. You can fix their lawns, but can you fix their lawn mowers? A new add-on service idea can provide you the equipment and know-how to do just that.

Called Sharp-N-Lube, this franchise opportu-

nity allows lawn and landscape contractors to own a rolling mower maintenance shop. Franchisers are provided with a large trailer containing all the equipment needed to perform basic preventive maintenance on products ranging from small walk-behinds to 20-hp riders.

Services that can be performed on equipment include blade sharpening and balancing, oil changing, spark plug checking and changing, belt and tire checking, lube point greasing and engine and deck cleaning.

According to Craig Hammond with Price Corp., Omaha, Neb., who is promoting this new franchise, contractors who buy into this concept receive territory protection, two days of intensive training and ongoing marketing assistance in getting the program off the ground.

For franchiser Shawn Edwards, owner of Lawn of Leisure, Des Moines, Iowa, and self-proclaimed "king of add-ons," the service has been a strong seller.

"I was interested in it at first because so many of my customers would scuff their blades and damage the turf while mowing, and we'd get the extra service calls," he explained. "If we get customers to add this service, we can sharpen the blades and raise the level of the blades. It has reduced the number of extra service calls we get."

Selling Sharp-N-Lube to existing lawn care clients is the way it started, but as word spread around his area, Edwards found himself selling the mower service first, and later getting the customer's lawn care business.

"I've been able to take some of the lawn care business away from the competition," he said.

TELEMARKETING. By any measure, Sequoia Lawn Care, Wyckoff, N.J., is one of the most high-tech companies of its kind. A believer in telemarketing, vice president Steve Glaser has moved the company from a handful of rotary phones in 1985 to a state of the art computerized dialing system that can reach 250,000 residences in their target area two times during their yearly, 12-week new sales push.

But what do you do with all that computerized power when the company isn't in a selling cycle? Glaser's answer was to find companies that need telemarketing support, and rent it out.

Who wants to use such a system? Everyone from credit card companies to long distance carriers to political pollsters are waiting in line to use the system. The equipment and up to 24 individuals operate in a 1,000-square-foot area of the company's headquarters. Not only are machines available, but Glaser maintains a base of 150 trained telephone attendants.

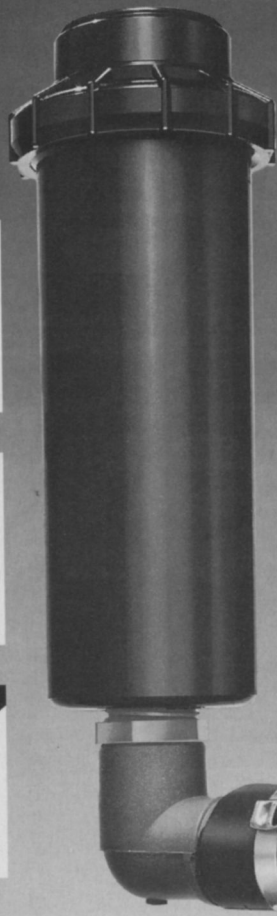
Glaser estimated that the equipment in place cost about \$250,000, but that is also what he presently makes each year from just the telemarketing end of the business.

"I see every business as a marketing company," said Glaser. "The better you market, the more people use what you have and the more successful you will be." ■

The author is Managing Editor of Lawn & Landscape Maintenance magazine.

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STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

Statistically, the industry has had a steady year. However, many nagging personnel and competitive issues persist.

By Paul Schrimpf

THIS SUMMER, while most of you toiled to keep the American landscape in order, Research USA, an independent research firm in Chicago, was quietly gathering data for the 1995 Lawn and Landscape Industry Study conducted exclusively for *Lawn & Landscape Maintenance* magazine.

And although no two companies are alike, the survey does provide an indication of who the average lawn and landscape contractor is, what he cares about and what services his company is banking on in the future.

AVERAGE COMPANY. The 1995 survey results show the average company has been in business for 15.8 years, and more than 68 percent have been established for more than 10 years, revealing a stable and mature side to the industry.

A majority of companies describe themselves as landscape contractors (36.8 percent) or lawn maintenance contractors (23.3 percent), followed by grounds maintenance, chemical lawn care and ornamental shrub and tree care at around 6 percent each. These results are very consistent with surveys in previous years, except for slightly higher numbers of companies in the irrigation contracting and landscape architect categories (see Figure 1).

The typical company's gross sales will average \$590,000 in 1995, up from 1994's figure of \$541,000. The majority of contractors expect to make between \$100,000 and \$249,999 (26 percent), followed by \$250,000 to \$499,999 (18.9 percent), less than \$50,000 (17.7 percent), \$50,000 to \$99,999 (15 percent), and \$500,000 to \$999,999 (10 percent). According to the survey, 12.4 percent of the industry expects to have sales levels of \$1 million or more.

The survey also revealed that 57.2 percent expect their sales to increase over 1994, while 32.2 percent do not expect any change in revenues. A drop in revenues is expected by 10.6 percent.

In terms of net profit on sales, the average company expects a 22.4 percent return. Slightly more than one-fourth of respondents expect a net profit of between 20 percent and 40 percent of sales.

Of contractors' total sales in 1995, mowing led all other services at 19.8 percent, followed by landscape installation (15 percent), pruning (5.9 percent), landscape design (5.8 percent), trimming (5 percent) and fertilization (4.7 percent). In irrigation, the combination of design, installation and maintenance accounted for 6.7 percent of sales.

When asked what they view as their company's fastest growing segments, 22.9 percent said landscape installation. Mowing followed at 16.9 percent, lawn care at 9.6 percent and landscape design at 6.3 percent.

Fastest growing services mentioned by between 2 percent and 4 percent were trimming, tree care, hydroseeding, pruning and irrigation.

TYPE OF BUSINESS

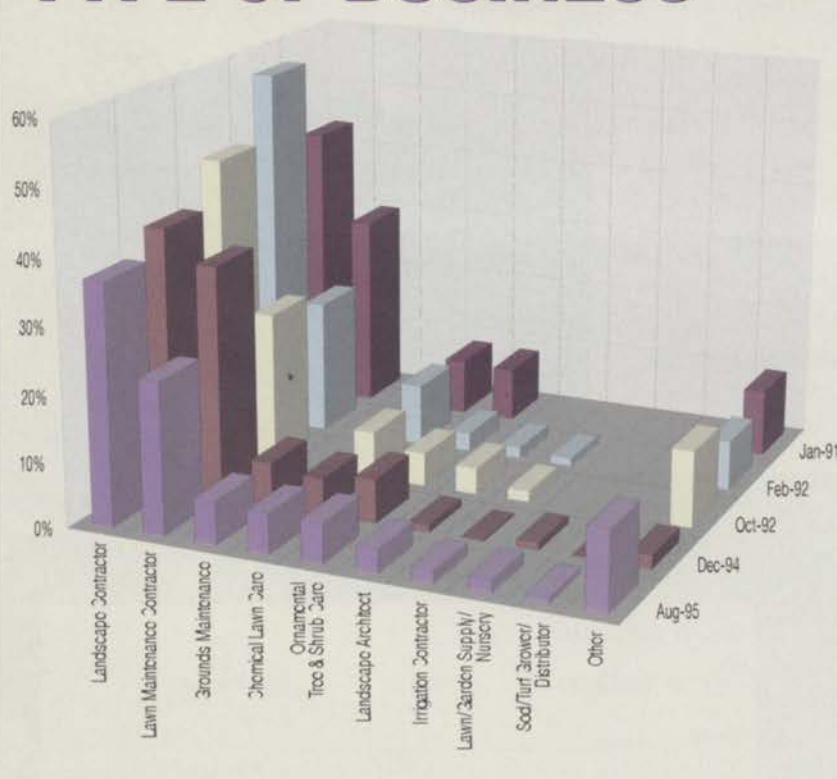


Figure 1: How contractors describe their businesses — a five-year comparison.

The Survey Says...

The growth in mowing services is not surprising, as 55.8 percent of respondents said they offer mowing services. Of this total, exactly half replace mower engines as a maintenance practice. Companies that provide mowing services operate an average of nearly eight pieces of equipment. Most are under 35-inch walk-behinds, followed by 40- to 54-inch walk-behinds and 35- to 39-inch walk-behinds.

The average engine replacement schedule for walk-behind mowers is 1,500 hours for under 35-inch units, 2,600 hours for 35- to 39-inch units, 3,800 hours for 40- to 54-inch units and 1,500 hours for units over 54 inches. Riding mower engines are replaced after 2,900 hours with units at 54-inches or less, and after 3,200 hours on mowers of over 54 inches.

When asked what services they intend to add in the next five years, 9.9 percent of the contractors said landscape maintenance, followed by retail garden center (9.2 percent), irrigation and trees/ornamentals (7.9 percent each), landscape design/installation (7.2 percent) hydroseeding (5.3 percent) and landscape lighting and watercases (4.6 percent each). Last year, tree service topped the list, followed by irrigation, hydroseeding, aeration and pest control as future services.

The majority of business comes from single family homes (54 percent). Commercial/industrial facilities account for 26.4 percent of total business, and the remaining 9.8 percent is in government, institutional and other facilities.

On the subject of contracts, 66.2 percent of clients are under written contract this year vs. 50.3 percent last year.

Anticipated business expenditures by the end of this year are headed by trees and ornamentals at \$26,340. Next are trucks (\$18,560), bedding plants (\$10,450), irrigation equipment (\$8,150), turf seed (\$6,440), fertilizers (\$6,030) and mowers (\$5,910). Most of these figures mirror the 1994 survey results (see Figure 2).

Companies also reported some

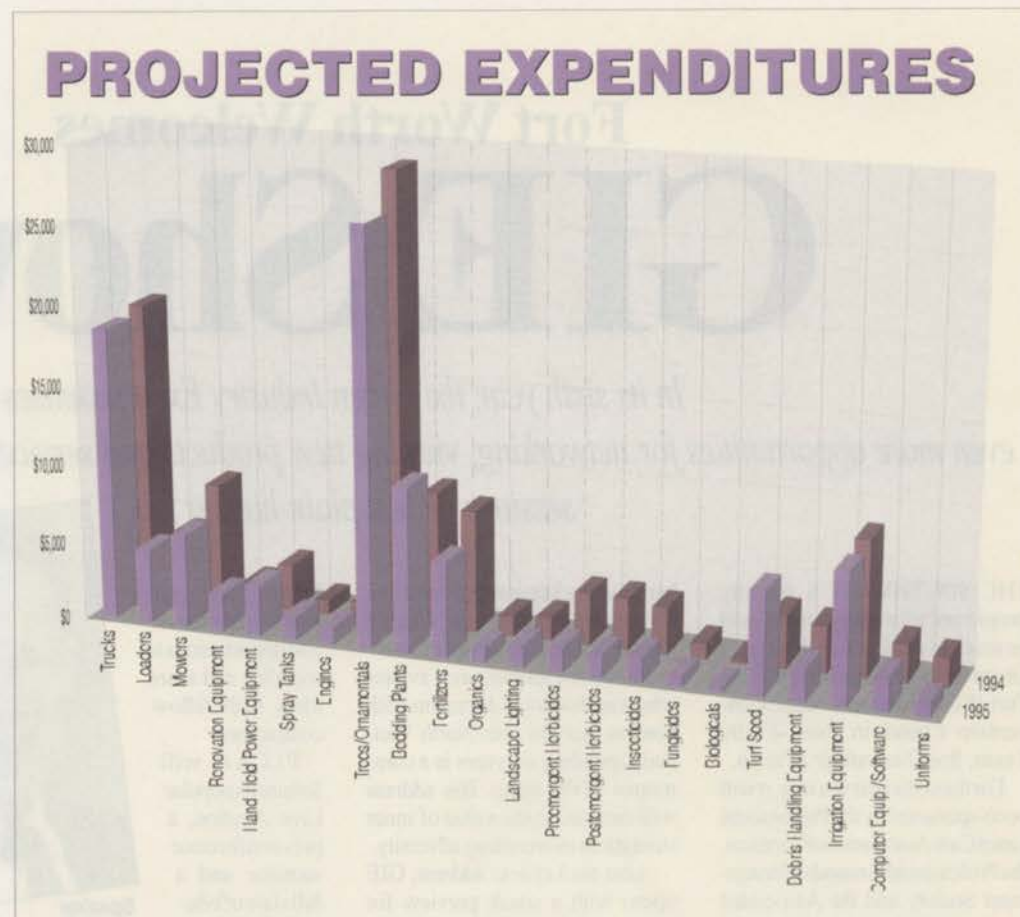


Figure 2: Estimated business expenditures for various categories in 1994 and 1995.

major business expenditures. Those listed include buildings, land or property (47.8 percent), trailers, tractors, dozers or other heavy equipment (33.3 percent), greenhouses (9.5 percent) and office equipment (7.1 percent). Purchases in these areas averaged \$54,850.

When purchasing landscape materials, 66.9 percent said that they go to a wholesale grower. Nursery retailers get 22.5 percent of the business, 14.7 percent use nursery brokers while 9.2 percent maintain a company owned nursery.

Surveyed companies manage an average of 153 acres of property. Approximately 11.9 percent manage 25 to 49 acres, 10.8 percent manage 15 to 24 acres and 10.8 percent manage 100 to 199 acres. More than 26 percent of respondents manage 100 acres or more.

The average fleet size is nearly six vehicles, and the majority say they own, rather than lease, their vehicles. Nearly 40 percent say they plan to purchase vehicles in the next 12 months.

PROBLEMS, PROBLEMS. The long-time negative aspects about the lawn and landscape industry in the areas of people, competition and financial backing are still foremost in the minds of professionals. When asked what factors are limiting their ability to grow or diversify, lack of qualified personnel topped the list at 43.9 percent. Money/finances came in second at 21.1 percent, followed by competition (14.5 percent), the economy and insurance (4.8 percent each).

Asked to name the industry's most urgent problem, people issues again prevailed. Unskilled labor/unlicensed contractors were mentioned by 30.6 percent, followed by competition/price cutting (19.4 percent), government regulations (17.3 percent), personnel (12.9 percent) and insurance (8.3 percent).

Given a specific list of problems to consider, the numbers revealed other problems and issues important to lawn and landscape contractors. At the top of the list of "serious problems" were skyrocketing in-

surance costs (69.5 percent), employee recruitment/retention (51.4 percent), licensing and certification (41.0 percent), training (40.6 percent), groundwater contamination (34.1 percent) and responsible pricing (33.3 percent).

One way to alleviate some of the problems of unskilled labor is training, which is recognized by more than 90 percent of the industry as important. The source of that training, however, is inconsistent.

In-house training programs are in place in 52.4 percent of the respondents' organizations, while 43.3 percent use association-sponsored seminars. Some 36.4 percent have university programs available, and 33 percent have technical/vocational schools.

Having a consistent and reliable source of training will be important as the industry continues to grow and mature.

The author is Managing Editor of Lawn & Landscape Maintenance magazine.

Fort Worth Welcomes GIE Show

In its sixth year, the Green Industry Expo promises even more opportunities for networking, viewing new products and services, attending educational sessions or just plain having fun.

THE SOUTHWEST'S friendly people and interesting history will be much in evidence as this year's Green Industry Expo travels to the Fort Worth/Tarrant County Convention Center in Fort Worth, Texas, from November 12 to 16.

For the sixth year in a row, it will be co-sponsored by the Professional Lawn Care Association of America, the Professional Grounds Management Society and the Associated Landscape Contractors of America.

GIE will host more than 300 exhibitors displaying products and services for the lawn and landscape contractor. The show will open Tuesday and Wednesday, November 14 and 15, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Special trade show-only admission passes are available this year for \$15 per day, which includes admission to the Outdoor Equipment Demonstration.

This popular event, to be held in nearby Trinity Park, will highlight the products of approximately 40 companies in hands-on demonstrations and test drives. The Demo will be held Thursday, November 16 from 9 a.m. to noon, with free shuttle buses available.

SHOW HIGHLIGHTS.

As in other years, the trade show kicks off on Monday, Novem-

Fort Worth's many restaurants and entertainment areas keep the night life varied and fun.

ber 13 with a keynote presentation. This year's speaker is Charlie Plumb, a former prisoner of war.

Plumb is a former naval aviator who was shot down during his 75th combat mission over North Vietnam, spending six years in a communist POW camp. His address will emphasize the value of inner strength in overcoming adversity.

After the keynote address, GIE opens with a sneak preview for conference attendees and exhibitors only.

Features at this year's GIE show include a grand prize drawing of \$500 with all attendees eligible; the New Product Showcase, which gives attendees a chance to preview the show; and the city of Cincinnati's drawing for home delivery of \$100 worth of the town's best barbecued ribs. Cincinnati will host GIE/96.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS.

Three association conferences start on Sunday, November 12, with a variety of programs on managing a professional contracting business, horticulture and customer service

topics. Each group also has planned several opportunities to socialize and share ideas with fellow contractors.

PLCAA will feature its popular Live Auction, a pre-conference seminar and a full slate of educational programs. This is the first year that it will offer mid-term and final exams for its Certified Turfgrass Professional designation, a national certification program co-sponsored with the University of Georgia. A western picnic lunch, new member fiesta reception and breakfast roundtables are some of the networking opportunities available.

Featured educational sessions include "Making Revenues Grow through Easy-to-Add Extra Services" and "How to Establish and Communicate a Professional Public Image." Roundtable discussions will cover IPM, managing people, the fate of pesticides, recruiting and other topics.

ALCA's popular ask the experts discussions, welcome reception, breakfast with champions and annual awards banquet return to GIE this year with a western flair. A western picnic box lunch and a rodeo



**Speaker
Charlie Plumb**

party at Billy Bob's are two events planned to allow participants to combine business with pleasure.

Seminar topics on ALCA's schedule include: "Building a Successful Management Team," "Outsourcing," and "Irrigation — The Right Stuff."

The educational seminars in PGMS's schedule will be complimented two new computer sessions offering 3-hour computer subject modules. Additional events include a preconference tour, business over breakfast networking sessions, brag night and PGMS' awards banquet.

Seminar topics include "Weed Control with New Herbicides on the Market" and "Subcontracting vs. In-House Landscaping."

FORT WORTH FUN. This thoroughly modern city still retains a flavor of the old west and its history shows in the architecture, museums and culture of the area. All three associations at GIE have planned several events around the many dining, shopping and historical spots of interest.

Where cattle drives used to move through town now stand art centers, historical villages and thriving businesses. Fort Worth boasts several luxury hotels, parks and gardens and modern transportation to any points of interest. ■





Basics of Micronutrients (Part 2)

Don't Overlook Manganese and Zinc

Although both manganese and zinc are present in small amounts in the soil, they play vital roles in encouraging growth for green, healthy plants. Careful, measured additions can correct stubborn landscape problems.

By C. Neal Howell

HOW IMPORTANT are manganese and zinc? Someone once compared micronutrients for plants to vitamins in humans. In both cases, very small amounts are required, but doing without them totally could be dangerous and even fatal.

THE MANGANESE FACTOR. Manganese was originally recognized as vital following research in 1920 by J. S. McHargue at the University of Kentucky agriculture research station.



Lush, green ornamental plants and turf will show none of the symptoms of micronutrient deficiency, which could be yellowing, dead spots, dissipated leaves and stunted growth. Soil or tissue tests can give specific guidance on the amount of nutrients to add to correct any problems.

Manganese is not present in large quantities in most soils. Although manganese averages from a trace to just over seven percent by weight in most soils, levels in soils in Hawaii contain up to 15 percent. The element is found naturally in oxides and manganic minerals. It is readily available at a soil pH below 6.0, but shifts to an unavailable form at a pH above 6.5.

The following situations promote manganese deficiencies:

1. Decaying plant material in high organic or mineral soils which can tie up to 93 percent of manganese.
2. Poorly drained soils.
3. Slightly acid to alkaline soils.
4. Overlimed clay soils, especially ones with low organic matter.
5. Areas with high levels of copper, iron or zinc.
6. Low light intensity.
7. Low soil temperatures.

Manganese deficiencies can occur in just about any part of the country, but are especially common in areas with high pH soils and in the eastern United States, where many of the above conditions are prevalent. Deficiencies are also very common in areas subjected to intense irrigation, especially those with poor drainage. As much as 95 percent of available manganese can be lost to leaching where excess water is allowed to accumulate.

OBVIOUS SYMPTOMS. Deficiency symptoms usually occur on new growth since, like iron, manganese is not mobile within the plant. The color will fade between the plant veins, turning a medium yellow while the midrib area stays dark green. Manganese deficiencies usually produce a more mottled yellowing than do iron deficiencies and do not affect leaf size or texture, just color.

It may initially resemble an iron deficiency, but, with lack of manganese, small dead spots appear as deficiency increases. The leaf tip almost always remains green while the leaf begins to roll and wither as the deficiency progresses.

CONVERTING NITROGEN. One of manganese's most important roles is its ability to assist in converting nitrogen to plant protein. Simply put, without sufficient manganese in an available form, utilization of nitrogen will slow down dramatically to the point that the majority of nitrogen in the soil will be unavailable to the plant.

Iron and manganese play closely related roles in plant metabolism and should be used carefully. One should not

(continued on page 42)



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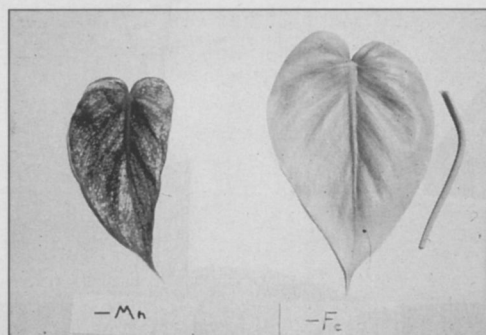
Micronutrients

(continued from page 39)

be applied in the absence or exclusion of the other. Manganese is very easily displaced by iron and the use of an EDTA manganese chelate can be disastrous if used in the presence of free iron in the soil. The iron will quickly displace the manganese and can actually increase a manganese deficiency.

Manganese can be displaced by other micronutrients and is, apparently, the least preferred in plants' tastes. In other words, if iron, zinc, copper, calcium, magnesium and molybdenum are available in greater quantities than manganese, a plant will fill up on those elements and exclude manganese from its diet even if it is in shortest supply to the plant.

Fifteen years ago, the use of iron to promote extra dark green color on turf was just beginning to be an accepted practice. Some people who had very dramatic color responses from initial applications of iron found the same dosages of iron failed to produce the dramatic color change in repeated applications. It



Two different leaves show a deficiency from manganese (left) and deficiency from iron (right). Mottled yellowing or small dead spots are common. Credit: Howell

was only after much experimentation with other micronutrients that we discovered that adding small amounts of manganese could restore that dramatic dark green color increase that had been so noticeable before when only iron was applied.

Manganese may have a direct effect on the chloroplasts which convert sunshine into chemical energy. Manganese, to a lesser degree than iron, is also responsible for the synthesis of chlorophyll.

Visual manganese deficiency symptoms are not easily diagnosed on turfgrasses. Ornamentals, with their larger leaf surfaces, would probably be better indicators.

TOXIC POTENTIAL. While manganese deficiencies are usually the rule, there are cases where levels of manganese can reach toxic levels to plants. Poorly-drained soils are generally the most problematic, even at relatively high soil pH levels. For the most part, in well-drained soils, manganese toxicities are not a problem unless the soil pH drops below 5.6. Exercise caution before applying any manganese product to any poorly drained or low pH soils.

The best advice on using manganese or any other micronutrients is to use them based on soil and tissue tests. Request the DTPA extraction test for available iron and balance

the iron levels against the available manganese. If you can't wait for the test results, a simple field demonstration may determine if manganese or iron deficiencies exist.

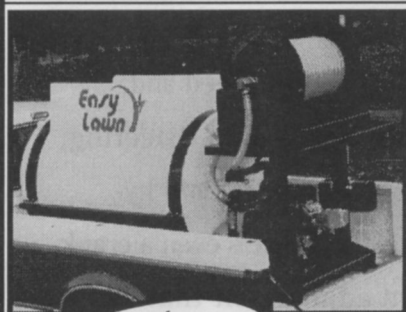
Set up plots and apply the two micronutrients at the label rates and, if greenup occurs within 24 hours, a deficiency for that nutrient exists. Several rates should be tried, as the "threshold" may affect responses. Usually a 1X, 2X, 4X rate test is best. Neither iron nor manganese are toxic to the point they will cause long-term damage to turf, but, at the 1X to 4X rate, the color response will allow the discerning applicator to diagnose the deficiency and pick the best color.

CORRECT ZINC LEVELS. Just when you think you know the answers, the questions change. An excellent example of this is the information available on zinc. For years, the general consensus on application of zinc was "Don't use it unless you're absolutely sure that soil levels are low, since you might induce a zinc toxicity."

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Research has been conducted on many agricultural crops and zinc is now routinely added to many fertilizer blends, especially on specialty crops grown in California and Florida. Pecans and other nut crops respond well to the applications of zinc. None of this research, however, was conducted on turf.

Zinc is present in nearly all soils in small amounts which should, theoretically, be of sufficient quantity to provide for normal plant functions. Under certain conditions, however, its availability is reduced to the point that it becomes the limiting resource.

ZINC DILEMMAS. Zinc deficiencies have been reported in almost every state with the possible exception of Alaska. The more important question is what happens when turfgrass is deficient in zinc.

While there has been considerable research on zinc on agricultural crops, not much has been done of turfgrass. Deal and Engel reported in 1965 that the growth rate, color and sod density of Kentucky bluegrass were not affected by zinc applications, but the root growth was stimulated by applications of zinc at a rate of 4.99 pounds per acre.

Although the knowledge of zinc on turfgrass is scant, most authorities recognize that a deficiency is a problem. In their 1979 book, *Turf Managers Handbook*, Daniel and Freeborg describe symptoms of zinc deficiency as: "Dark, thin, desiccating leaves which turn white in advanced stages, along with yellowing and bronzing of stunted leaves, witches' broom and reduced growth."

The first symptom of zinc deficiency is stunted growth. The leaves appear thin and tend to shrivel.

CONDITIONS WHICH DECREASE THE AVAILABILITY OF ZINC

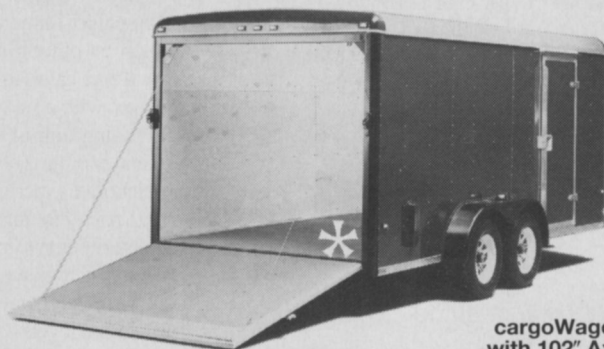
1. Soil pH above 6.5. Zinc availability decreases as soil pH increases, with the critical range at 5.5 to 6.5.
2. Light soils like sands, sandy loams and loams.
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4. Cold and/or wet soils.
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el, with younger leaves being affected first, said James Beard in *Turfgrass Science and Culture*.

Zinc has several functions within the plant. It is needed for auxin formation, for the elongation of internodes and for the formation of chloroplasts and starches. Zinc also serves as an enzyme activator. It is essential for normal leaf development, shoot elongation, pollen development and seed production.

RESEARCH REPORTS. With all its functions, why hasn't more attention been paid to zinc? Along with the other trace elements or micronutrients, zinc is required in very small amounts. The low requirement, along with soil availability, makes us look twice to see the need for zinc.

Most soils contain zinc in small amounts, with sandy soils generally having the lowest amounts. Luckily, plant requirements are very low. Some soil labs report soil levels of one-half to two ppm as adequate for turfgrasses.

A recent problem on a midwestern golf course illustrates some of the problems associated with micronutrient use. The turf division of a major university was approached by a superintendent who was having problems with several of his greens. The superintendent suspected some kind of nutrient imbalance and was desperate for help.

The experts at the university started off by conducting extensive soil tests. After the test results were received, they noticed the only element out of balance was zinc, which was recorded at over 40 ppm. At that time, anything over 20 ppm was considered toxic to turfgrass.

The two researchers decided not to name zinc as the culprit immediately. Upon further investigation on other golf courses in the area, they found zinc levels in other greens to be as high as 63 ppm with no symptoms of phytotoxicity!

Finding almost no published data on zinc toxicities or turfgrass requirements, they set up an elaborate experiment to determine the level of zinc toxicity for turfgrass. After several months of experimentation and much blood, sweat and beers, they reviewed their collected data.

One researcher was shocked to find that, while he had soil levels of 72 ppm and tissue levels of 102 ppm zinc, he had observed absolutely no sign of phytotoxicity. His partner, equally dumbfounded, suggested that perhaps they had not yet reached the toxicity range and should run the zinc levels up by 500 ppm increments to 2,000 ppm in the soil.

The partners agreed that these levels would certainly do the job, so they started new experiments. At year's end, they found that even these astronomical rates had produced only some slight, inconsistent yellowing at about six weeks with a rate of 2,000 ppm zinc.

As they saw their hopes of national recognition faltering, they decided to try again and, this time, to go for broke. They thought perhaps the turf was unusually tolerant to zinc, so they used five other turfgrass varieties in the test, running soil levels of zinc at 0, 500, 1,000, 2,000 and 4,000 ppm.

The results? After the dust had settled, the researchers found only inconsistent yellowing at

FUNCTIONS SERVED BY MANGANESE WITHIN A PLANT

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- 2.** It allows the plant to reduce unavailable iron Fe^{+++} to usable Fe^{++}
- 3.** Manganese aids iron in the synthesis of chlorophyll.
- 4.** It functions in photosynthesis.
- 5.** It increases the availability of several other elements including phosphorus, calcium and magnesium.
- 6.** It also acts as a catalyst to the metabolism of nitrogen.
- 7.** It functions in the formation of several enzymes within the plant.

about six weeks on some replications treated with 2,000 and 4,000 ppm zinc.

NEW DEFINITIONS. From all their efforts, the intrepid researchers were able to draw some conclusions. They felt the term "excessive" as used in many soil tests for zinc was misleading. Levels of zinc reported as excessive were probably not detrimental at all.

For optimum color and turf health, zinc probably should be part of your fertilization program, especially on light, sandy soils. Addition of zinc may also prevent problems following an application of lime on other soils, especially those with high organic content.

High pH soils in the western U.S. seem to respond very well to applications of zinc. As a result, zinc should be a part of the micronutrient package west of the Mississippi River. If soil tests show low amounts of zinc, use a product which incorporates zinc to provide optimum turf.

ZINC TEST LEVELS. Charles Darrah III at CLC Labs, Westerville, Ohio, specializes in testing turf soils and uses a relative availability index for zinc which reflects this new understanding. CLC's DTPA extractable zinc soil test levels are typically described as:

- *Low* — less than one part per million.
- *Medium* — 1 to 2.5 ppm.
- *High* — 2.6 to 150 ppm.
- *Surplus* — over 150 ppm.

Sometimes, the high levels of zinc are a result of using composted sludge over several years.

Exercise care in the application of micronutrients. Don't overdo it. A soil test or leaf tissue test is still the best way to determine need.

Applications of micronutrients can do a tremendous job toward maintaining quality turf and ornamentals, but they should not be applied indiscriminately. The old adage, "A little does a lot" still holds true. ■

The author is an industry consultant with Key Solutions, a division of Iris Sales & Solutions Inc., Rocky River, Ohio.

When You Look Sharp, You Feel Sharp

The use of uniforms for lawn and landscape crew members is on the rise, for two reasons: they look good and they provide protection. Contractors must weigh the cost of uniforms against the often intangible benefits of having a "professional" look.

By Bob Gitlin

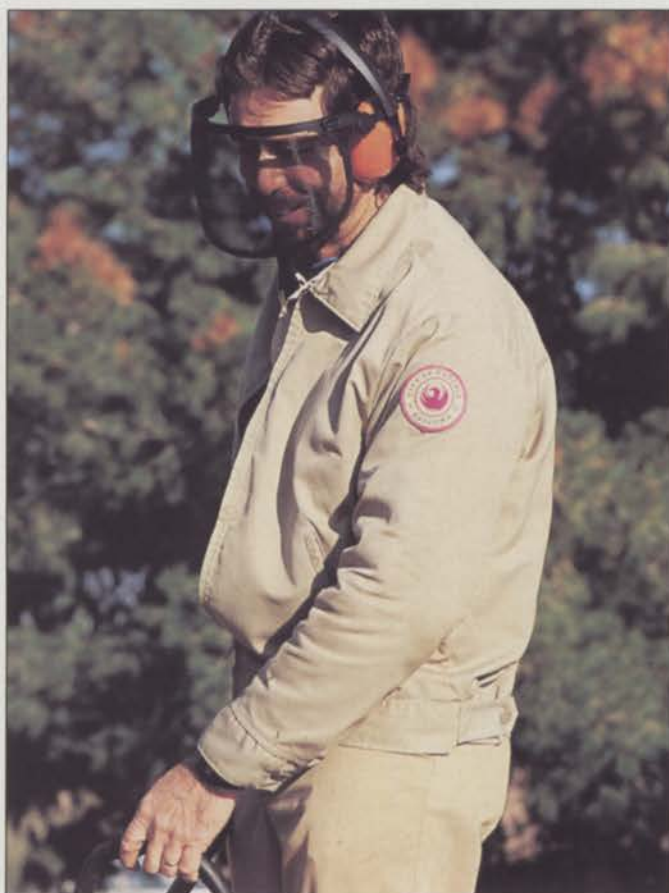
THE MILITARY long ago discovered the magic of a uniform—it unifies different people into one group and conveys a message to others that the group is professional, capable, disciplined. Who hasn't seen someone in a full dress uniform and been impressed?

Lawn and landscape contractors are discovering the power of the uniform, and many progressive companies rely on them to project an image of professional, capable work to the public. Although the effect of that message can't be measured, many contractors believe uniforms play a large role in their companies' competitiveness and customer relations. They also serve a second purpose: protection.

CREW MEMBERS. In both the lawn service and landscape industries, crew members are wearing uniforms and/or protective apparel more often. There is a twofold purpose.

Aside from adhering to the body protection criteria stipulated on pesticide labels, today's conscientious contractor strives to distinguish his or her employees from the shirtless workers in cutoffs and sneakers. Professional contractors are more image conscious, and they are finding that uniformed crew members present a very positive image to clients and the general public.

"The main safety problem is dermal inhalation," said Chris Ruppert



at Ruppert Landscape Co., Ashton, Md. "When spraying pesticides, you've all kinds of skin exposed. You need long pants and long sleeved shirts. The pores open up, and you can suck those pesticides

right in." He added that even a hot Maryland summer is no excuse not to wear the apparel.

BE PROACTIVE. Rob Zolezzi, vice president of L & L Landscape Ser-

Professional looking uniforms can include a shirt, pants, jackets, a hat and even boots. Photo credit: Gempler's.

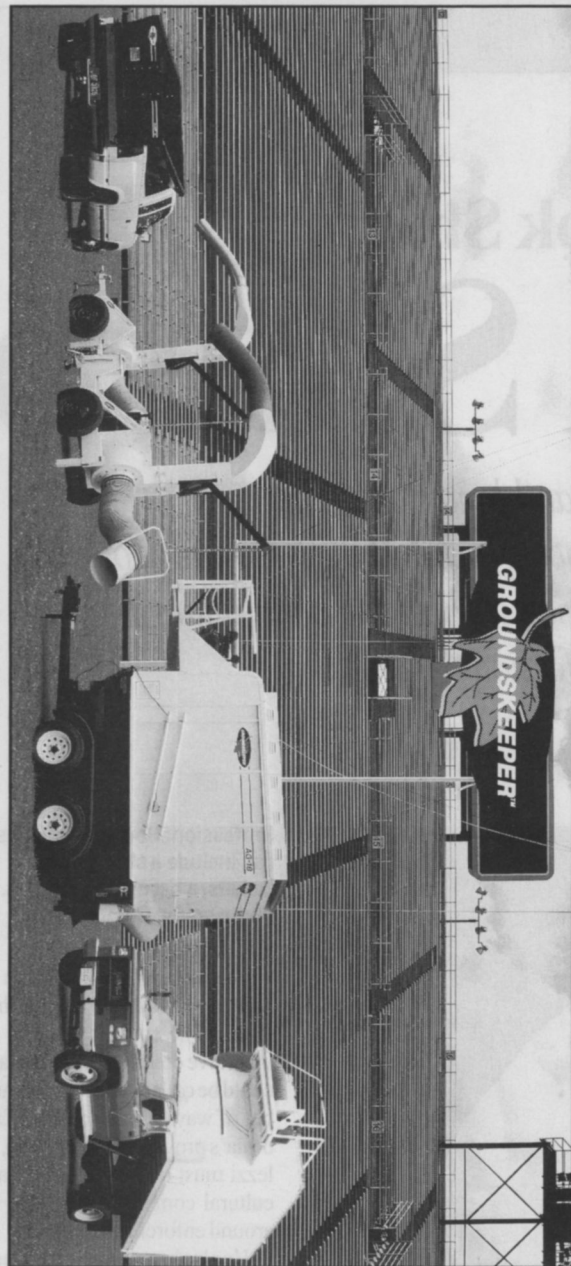
vices, Santa Clara, Calif., is out front on both safety and aesthetic issues. The company, which services five counties in the Bay area, could be called proactive in a number of ways. In response to California's progressive legislation, Zolezzi must deal with county agricultural commissioners who ride around enforcing label laws.

He also has aesthetic reasons for wanting to uniform his crew members in handsome pinstripe shirts with elegant lettering. "Put a tie on these guys and they look ready for church. Our uniforms set us off from the riffraff," he said, pointing out that the sharp looking uniforms have instilled a sense of pride in many of the employees.

In the past few years his annual uniform costs went from \$5,000 to \$15,000, as regulations dealing with employee skin protection have tightened, and as his zest for a spit-and-polish image has intensified. He's happy with the outside service he uses, which provides and washes the uniforms.

L&L has 100 employees who do spot spraying of weeds, applying different pesticides from 3-gallon tanks. "We cover half of the man's vulnerable area with our

The Groundskeeper line (from left): Dump "E" hydraulic dump body; AM-23 & AM-30 "tow-behind" units; trailer-mounted AG-18; flatbed-mounted FRP



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uniforms," he said, "and the other half with protective gear." This includes things like safety glasses or goggles, boots, gloves, disposable coveralls, etc.

"The basic uniform consists of full pants, a long sleeve shirt, a jacket and a cap," he said. "The uniform they're required to work in includes the work boots they own."

L&L (via the service) provides each employee with 11 sets of fresh uniforms tailored to their size. Then, each week, the employee turns in five dirty uniforms and gets five clean ones back. The uniform company collects the dirty uniforms and delivers the clean ones each Monday. Zolezzi reported that the system is efficient and easy.

"I put this thing together. We were told we could no longer have an employee wearing a short sleeve shirt and rubber gloves, spraying pesticide with exposed forearms," Zolezzi said. "The entire body must be covered with something."

He said for corporate image reasons, it's not just chemical applications that require uniforms at L & L. "We've decided every field employee will wear the long sleeve shirt and long pants. We don't wear shorts, as legs must be covered. Every field employee must wear boots. We wrote a dress code."

The label is the key influence on the dress code. If the label mentions mandatory goggles or rubber gloves, L&L employees wear them.

"They're also issued disposable, fake sleeves that go from the shoulder down, or a disposable coverall," he added. If the latter is needed, it must be worn over the basic pants-and-shirt attire, he said.

All the pesticide labels say if any product at all is dispensed, the applicator must wash the clothes he or she wore that same day, Zolezzi said. The service makes more sense than having the man take the uniform home and risk polluting his family's wash, which is illegal.

UNIFORM OPTIONS. Joe Williams is president of Lawn Master Inc., Pensacola, Fla., which is both

Coveralls or other special suits can be slipped on to protect the applicator and the everyday work uniform.

a liquid and dry applicator of pesticides and fertilizers. He has all his applicators wear rubber boots and gloves (rubber or summerweight spandex) during applications.

"When they're filling the trucks they use a face shield and an apron also. Normally, we do not wear anything else protective except long sleeve shirts, when applicable to the product itself," Williams noted. The most need for full body covering happens in the spring when his people are putting down weed control and related types of products.

"Some of the pre- and postemergent products require protective covering," he said.

Williams furnishes all boots himself, as well as the entire uniform. He maintains a stock of uniforms, boots and gloves, as well as a laundry that does all washing. "We also make jackets and caps available as optional items."

The company also does maintenance, and the mowing crews suit up in a uniform. "They have the option of short pants in the summertime. When they get into line trimming and weed-eating, a lot of them will take a pair of pants and leave them on the truck because of flying debris, although we don't require it."

Crew members doing edging, trimming and blowing also must wear safety glasses, he said. They must wear ear plugs when using a backpack blower. Optional cotton gloves are available to protect hands.

Williams believes that prestigious operators will continue to dress up their people. And it's not just because of regulations. "I see it more as a competitive thing."



THE "LOOK" THAT MAKES THE GRADE

This dress code applies to employees in several different departments at L & L Landscape Services, Santa Clara, Calif., according to Rob Zolezzi, vice president. The code follows:

1. L & L will supply all "field" employees the following: hat, jacket, pants and shirts.
2. Any clothing that is not L & L issued must be worn under the L & L uniform (and not be visible).
3. Hats are not mandatory, but if worn, they must be L & L issue.
4. Jackets, pants and shirts are L & L property and a fee will be charged for those items not returned upon leaving L & L.
5. It is mandatory that "fresh" pants and shirts are worn daily.
6. Shirts must be tucked in at all times.
7. Work boots must be worn.
8. A back brace must be worn.
9. Green, black or brown belts may be worn.
10. Jewelry may be worn if all safety requirements are fulfilled.
11. Hair must be neat and groomed. Long hair should be tied back for safety reasons.
12. Mustaches and beards are permitted. Unshaven appearance is not.
13. Any employee who does not comply with these regulations or is in violation of any safety standard will not be permitted to work.

EYE PROTECTION. "You may be handling a concentrated material that requires some form of eye protection when filling the vehicle," said Dr. Roger Yeary, vice president of health, safety and environmental stewardship at TruGreen/ChemLawn's technical center in Columbus, Ohio.

"TruGreen/ChemLawn crews have the option of wearing goggles or glasses. Some of them find goggles binding and cumbersome. The safety glasses, with side vents and brow shields, are a pretty good barrier to splashing into the eye. A third alternative could be a facial mask. You get the best compliance with safety glasses," he said.

Yeary pointed out that EPA seems not to have distinguished among dilution levels, almost all of which, in real-life field work, are benign. But TruGreen/ChemLawn is a good corporate/environmental citizen, so it complies.

"Often the formulator or manufacturer is not bothering to provide the EPA with data on the end-use dilution," Yeary said. "The label remains the law. You will find eye protection on a few labels during application, but probably not on most. As newer labels are being written, more are requiring long sleeve shirts, gloves and boots. We don't find any requirement for an additional outer garment during the application of pesticide in the lawn care business, in ornamental areas. The long sleeve shirt and pants are

enough. You don't need coveralls."

His company does require that people mixing and loading the concentrated material protect their uniforms with vinyl or aprons of other impermeable materials to protect them from splashing. He added that coveralls serve the same purpose.

WEALTH OF PRODUCTS. John Asaro, vice president of sales and marketing at Ben Meadows Co., Atlanta, Ga., doesn't see many lawn and landscape crew people in uniforms. His firm is a provider of protective apparel.

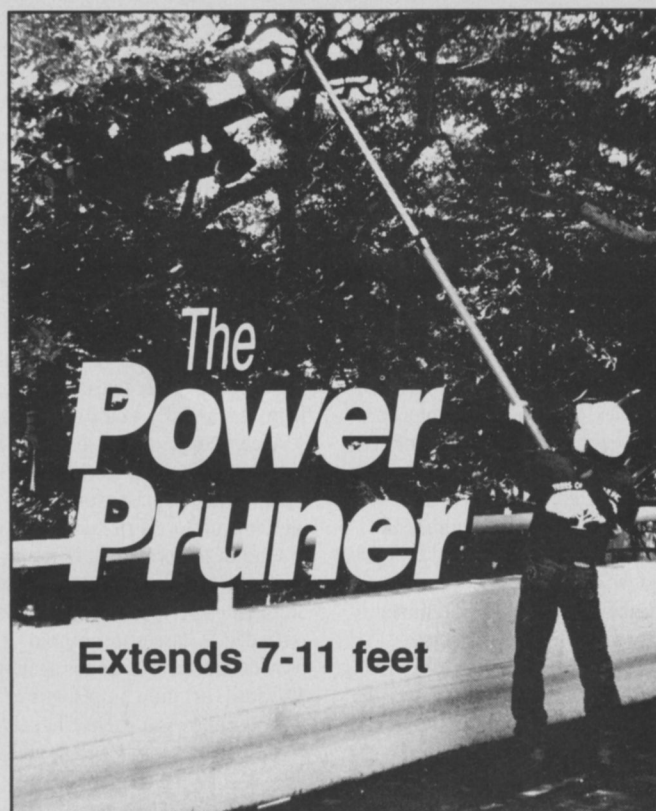
"They may wear shorts and T-shirts," he commented. He must not be around many multimillion-dollar lawn and landscape maintenance company employees.

But his observation is heard often. The industry's image varies greatly from place to place and business to business.

Ben Meadows sells Tyvek (rugged poly/cotton) suits to some lawn care contractors, though in many climates, the high heat would preclude that use, Asaro explained.

"The material keeps small particulates from getting through. There are three or four different Tyveks coated with different materials," he added.

Donna Decker, advertising manager at Valeo Inc., Waukesha, Wis., is aware of numerous sales of the firm's well-known weightlifter back-support belts, as well as other company products, to the green



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industry. "We also sell wrist support, lifting gloves, T-shirts and shorts. Sleeved elbow and knee supports are used by nursery and landscape people a lot."

"We sell a lot of face respirators, disposable coveralls, things they need when they're mixing, and a lot of the gloves they wear when mixing," said Trisha Cox, corporate sales coordinator at Gempier's, Mt. Horeb, Wis. "We sell a lot of safety glasses. They're almost sunglasses, but they also protect employees if they're mowing or weed-eating. We're strictly a mail order supply catalog. We deal mainly in personal protective equipment."

Boots are a major need also, she added. Crew members working in wetlands may come to rely on sturdy and protective work boots.

PROFESSIONAL PROTECTION.

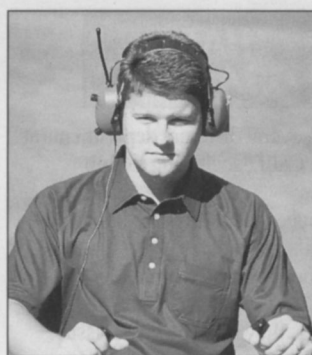
"Safety items are what we offer," said Joe Fritz, sales manager, Safety Wear Inc., Ft. Wayne, Ind., a full line personal protective equipment distributor. This includes protective clothing and footwear, and eye and respiratory protection. "We sell

disposable coveralls and shirt-and-pants outfits. Tyvek (manufactured by Dupont) is the main material. We sell a lot of protection from the knees down to the ground to lawn care firms. We call them called spray leggings." They are one leg of a pair of pants that fastens around the belt and protects the employee from thigh to ankle.

"We also sell over-the-shoe or over-the-sock boots. The combination of that footwear and the legwear normally would give lawn service people all the protective clothing they would need. Then it's usually a pair of glasses or goggles, and a respirator," Fritz said.

One of the problems in the industry, he said, is that a lot of people are buying safety glasses when more is needed. "Glasses are not going to provide adequate protection against a liquid or mist application." Goggles make more sense, he said.

"We offer chaps for people while they're spraying chemicals, and to lawn maintenance crews primarily when they are weed eating and edging," said Jim Carter, president, W.E. Chapps Inc., Port Orange,



Fla. "The chaps protect their uniforms. We also make specialty chaps for brush cutting and hedge trimming."

Hedge trimming can be dangerous without them, he said. The reciprocating blades of a gas-powered hedge trimmer can, if the employee's attention or strength flags momentarily, cut into his flesh on the inadvertent downstroke. With chaps, the rugged fabric absorbs the incisive action of that cutter bar.

Similar specialty uniforms protect employees using chain saws, and are available from several chain saw manufacturers.

Maintenance crews doing mowing or specialty trim work find that some safety items offer both comfort and protection.

"We distribute uniforms and protective gear," said Jack Ziegler, product manager, LESCO Inc., Rocky River, Ohio. Tyvek suits lead the pack as far as uniform material, he said.

"There are two things people are trying to do," he pointed out. "Protect against dust, as well as the chemical repellent or retardant that would keep spray from drifting back onto you. For instance, if you are up in a tree, spray could drift back. We also have rubber boots, goggles, rubberized full-forearm gloves, safety caps, disposable coveralls, rainwear and full suits (pants, jackets, hats)."

Is there a trend toward more suiting up in the lawn and landscape maintenance field? "Most definitely," he said.

The author is Contributing Editor of Lawn & Landscape Maintenance magazine.

THE PROS CHOICE.

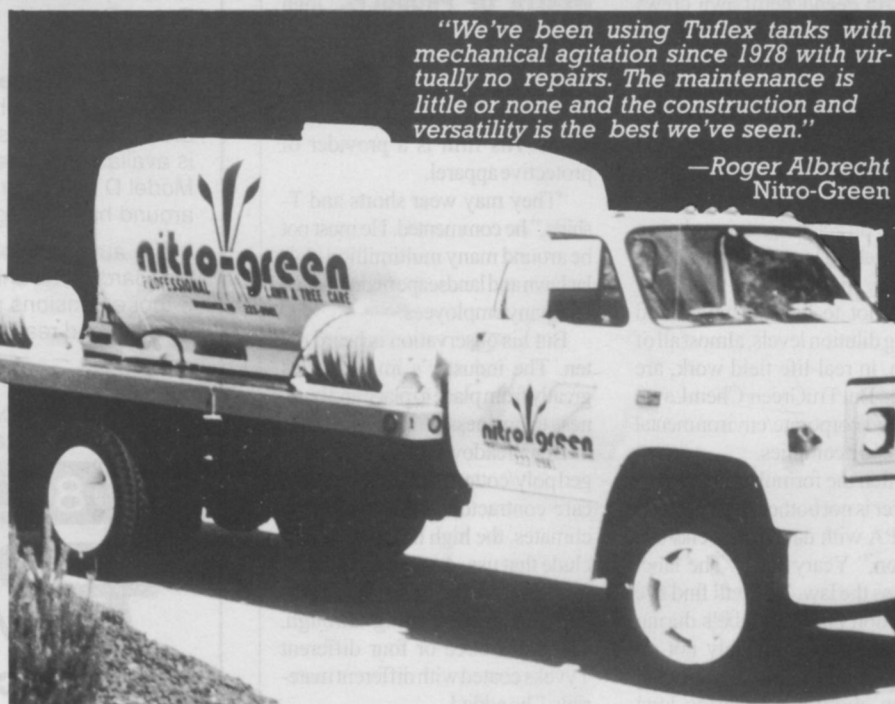
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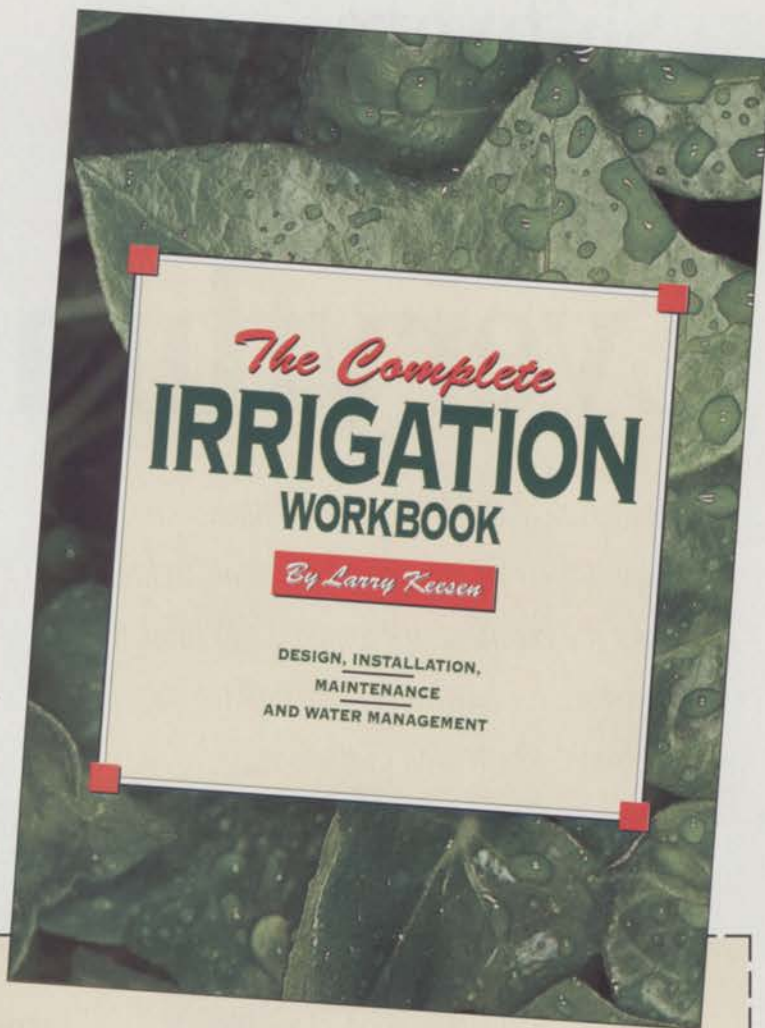
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Software Can't Do Everything

Some lawn and landscape contractors expect their new computer systems to take over the business. It's a mistake to think that software (or hardware) can replace the personal touch with customers.

By Barbara G. Howell and C. Neal Howell

UPDATED DESIGNS WILL SIMPLIFY USE

TWO CHANGES in the computer industry will have a direct impact on lawn care and landscape contractors.

Several software companies are introducing updates of their green industry programs because of the availability of a new language which affects Windows and UNIX programs. Many DOS-based software packages will be converted to Windows and one supplier suggested that "DOS is dead."

Developers promise that the updated programs will be easier to use because file folders, tabs and other on-screen markers will ensure that users will not lose their places in the programs, as they might have easily done before if they were unfamiliar with DOS-based systems.

The programs promise to be easier to install and developers suggest that users will no longer have to worry about pressing the wrong key and losing keystroked material. For multiple-user systems, the new language promises faster processing of operations.

Suppliers promise that demonstration disks will be available on the updates within the next 30 days and complete programs will be out in the next 90 days.

This change affects programs in accounting, routing and irrigation design. Upgrades are expected to cost about 20 percent of the original purchase price.



Computers can perform everything from accounting to advanced mapping and design of complex projects. Photo: LandCadd

"IT HAS NOTHING to do with bits and bytes and RAM. It's the people relationships," advised Phil Fogarty of Crowley Lawn Care, Cleveland, Ohio. He is a veteran of three computer packages.

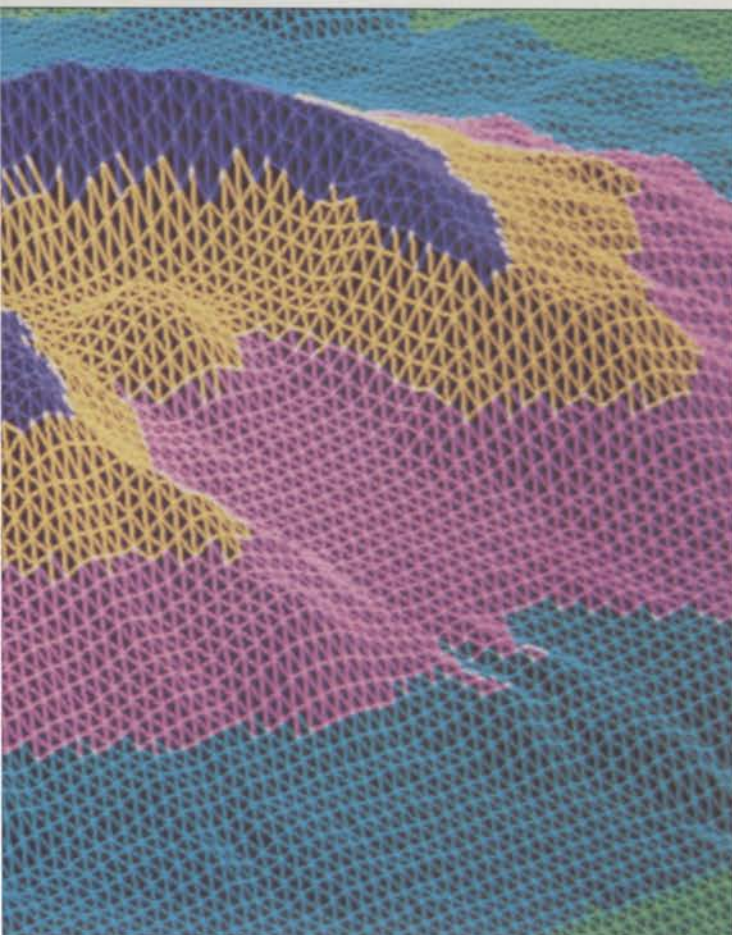
If you are selecting or using a computer program for your lawn service or landscape company and need advice, how much help can you expect? How much will the assistance cost? How fast can you get help? It all depends.

NO CONSENSUS. Some lawn care and landscape contractors buy and use prepackaged software for design, routing and accounting functions. Some contractors develop their own software, often based on their unsatisfactory experiences with packaged programs. Some contractors have software programs and don't know how to use them. Some even resist the trend and choose not to buy a computer system at all.

There is no consensus in the green industry about the right route to computer success. Fogarty, who has now used three software packages in the last 10 years, gave sound advice when he exhorted buyers to remember that a computer or software package alone do not guarantee success.

He recommended perfecting the company's systems manually before switching over to any computer program. Once a manager is ready to select a program, remember that the people who provide the software and the technical assistance are as important as the program.

Fogarty suggested a buyer take sufficient time to select a package based on the perceived need and that he allow a learning curve of four to six months



DIAL 1-800-NEED-HELP: THE NEW COST OF CONSULTING

FROM NOW ON, when you call for "help," expect to pay for it, sometimes by the minute.

Many computer companies are switching from toll-free help and technical assistance lines. Now, some software firms are instituting policies which provide the help for their own and often other applications at a flat annual or per minute rate. It's a matter of economics for the companies.

The per minute rate ranges from \$1.25 to \$2.00, with a maximum per incident fee sometimes set at about \$25. The rate for annual use of the help services ranges from \$600 to \$900. A variety of options for hours per year and unlimited use are available with many companies.

In most cases, an initial help period is still provided as part of the program cost. That period is usually 30 to 90 days, but is sometimes as long as a year. However, the user must now pay his own toll charges.

Software company spokespeople say the changes are being instituted to rectify past inequities. In the past, with toll-free help, people often called with questions that could be easily answered by consulting the program's manual. Sometimes, people called with questions about programs not even sold by that company.

They say the new charges are more equitable because people have numerous plan choices and only pay for the help they actually use.

There are still several companies in the industry which offer free 800 numbers for help, but, as a rule, there is a limit on the amount of free help from the 800 numbers. That limit ranges from 12 months to three months' unlimited 800 use.

In addition, several companies publish newsletters with users' questions and some offer computer bulletin boards where users may post questions or actually chat with company representatives or other knowledgeable users. Check with your individual suppliers.

In some cases, customers may use the bulletin board system to upload files with problems for company attention. Corrected files may then be downloaded back into the user's system. Other software firms will hook into a user's computer via modem to help diagnose and correct problems.

Responding to green industry concerns about timeliness of answers, one accounting software company offers a variety of options including plans which cost more not only for more help time, but also for faster answers. The company also offers a beeper plan which promises instant response for an additional annual charge.

to get up and running on a system.

While it may be beneficial to consult with other users of the software under consideration, be aware that your experience may not be like that of one of your peers. In several cases, contractors interviewed for this article had contradictory experiences with the same software supplier.

Most importantly, Fogarty advised computer buyers to have reasonable expectations. "Computers just allow you to make the same mistakes faster," he commented.

VARIED ADVICE. The list of computer software suppliers and consultants for the green industry is long. The advice they give varies widely.

Some, like Mark Miles of Greener Pastures, said, "The real world is 'know your customers' and that's being able to manage data. For instance, I have a lawn service with 1,300 customers and I will net more this year by knowing my customers' needs through our program than someone who has 8,000 customers without our program."

Others, like Jerry Mosely, owner of Grass Roots in Tulsa, Okla., said smaller companies with less than 1,000 customers and only one

branch can get along nicely without a computer system.

If you are going to buy a system or packaged software, take the advice of contractors who have been through the process. Remember that having a computer is not a panacea.

You cannot expect to have the computer and be a better businessperson, advised Mosely. You must give attention to customer service and use the computer to help you provide that service. Don't let the program substitute for your own attention and don't let the computer run your business.

"People tend to expect more out of computer program than it is capable of giving. They think the computer is going to make them money. That mystique is not a reality. You can't sit in front of the computer and be lackadaisical about taking care of business. You have to look after it," he explained.

"People sometimes play with the computer and lose contact with customers. The computer becomes a crutch; you're handcuffed to it. People think a computer system is the answer to their problems and they don't have to think. I've fallen into this trap myself," Mosely said.

Nor can you take full advantage

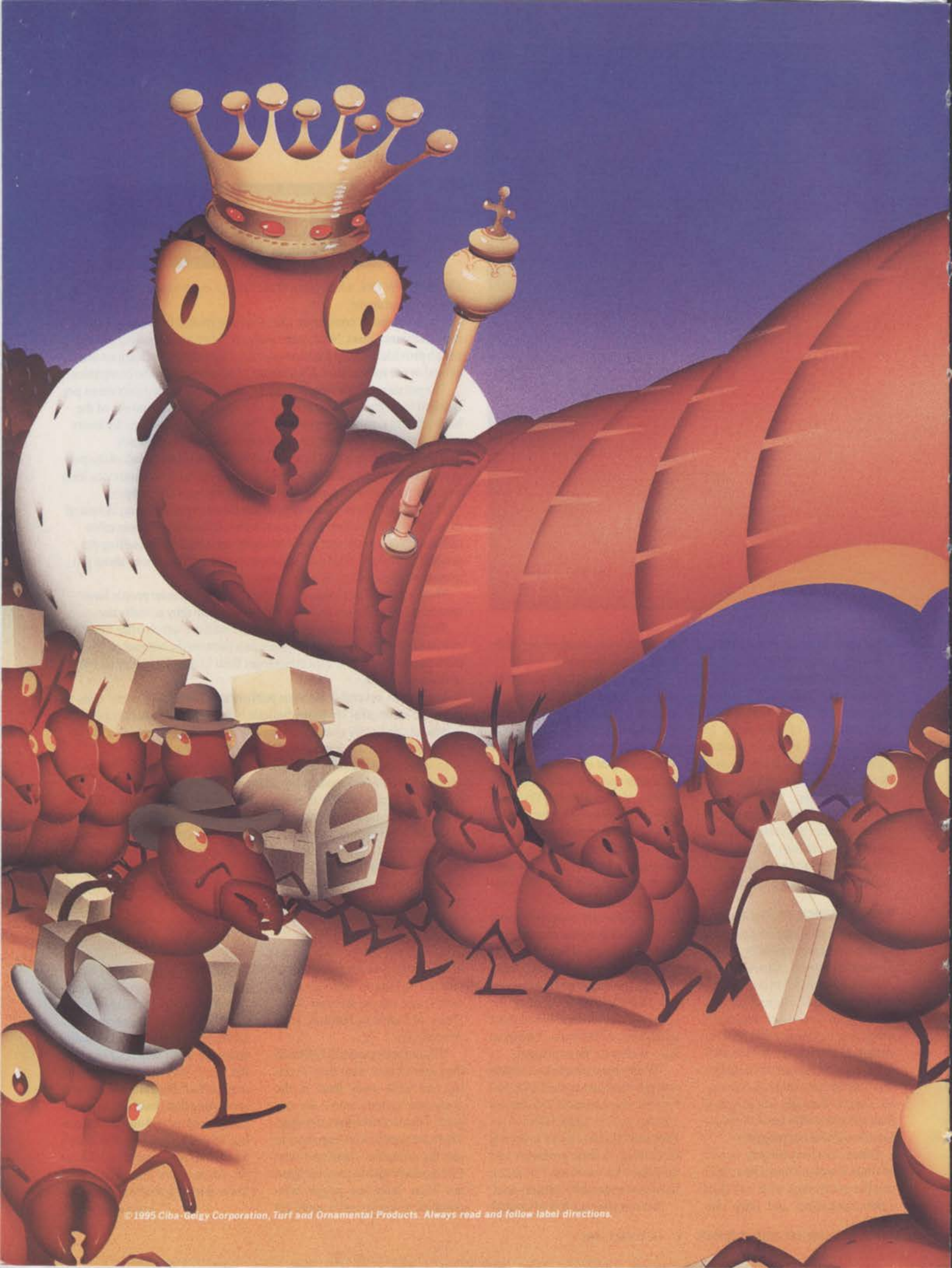
of any system or program unless you are willing to learn it, work with it and use it, advised Andy Hines, president of Shrub & Turf, Athens, Ga.

"If contractors spend \$4,000 and they don't know what they're doing and walk away from it, the computer system won't do any good. There are two kinds of people. There are people who learn how to use the computer tools and who fool around with it to see what it can do. Then, there are people who purchase a system and want to get

something specific done," he explained. If something else happens, they may not understand why.

"It's like a lady whose car I moved the other day. She was blocking someone and I went out to move her car. It was almost identical to the one I had. She came back in later screaming that I had broken something. I had moved up the tilt steering wheel to get out. She didn't know it moved. She'd had the car for seven years and didn't even know it had tilt steering," he said.

(continued on page 72)



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Allison and his great-grandpa explain how things have changed from the crude irrigation control systems of the past to today's computerized wonders.

By Luke Frank



Yesterday's controllers relied on manual adjustments. Photos: Bob Cloud Memorial Collection.

A Glance at The Water Management Mirror

MONDAY MORNING. Like slog in a sprinkler nozzle, I'm having a tough time getting through it. I'm a fourth-generation irrigation technician for our family business that oversees multiple resorts, business parks, homeowners associations and estates.

From my computer terminal, I access via phone modem the grounds control system — which includes irrigation — at The Bay Resort & Recluse Club near San Francisco, Calif. The grounds foreman has left me a couple of notes:

- Appears to be hot spots developing on western slope of berm, northeast quadrant, grid 7, satellite 4.
- Lost plant material in the south bed of building 3, along cubicle 14.

There's no reason for us to lose plant material, unless somebody hasn't been paying attention. I boot up the hub computer and access the site's central computer for the irrigation system. Sure enough, the system's self-diagnostic function indicates that two Time Domain Reflectometry moisture sensors are out of kilter for zones 27 and 18 on satellite 13 — the berm — and valve number one won't open on zone 31, satellite 2 — the planting bed. Jeez, why can't they make a control system that repairs the irrigation system?

This shouldn't take long. I override the sensor input and bump the stations' schedules 3.3 percent for the next five days. I might as well, since the controller did the math for that spot, factoring slope, soil type, turf type, solar radiation and precipitation rates, and the weather station has measured recent daily evapotranspiration values at nearly an inch.

The anemometer has been spinning like a drunk. The winds rip through there this time every year. At least the controller made the adjustment for all 36 zones on each of the 26 satellites. I'll leave a message on the computer for the foreman to make the repairs.

The central's diagnostic notes also indicate a busted riser that was swamping the turf on station 34, before the control system elected to override that irrigation block, *two days ago*. I add an exclamation point to my note.

In addition, the computer alerts me to a slight but consistent increase in flow from Effluent Water Source One. My coverage uniformity is off .007 of a point. It appears that two heads on zone 11 have nozzle wear.

Through the computer, I advance the Derringer nozzles on both heads and the new orifices spin into place. More hostile notes for that foreman. Where is he?

While I am furiously punching keys, my great-grandfather, the founder of Environmental Resource Controls, leans over my shoulder. "You know, Allison," he starts...

GRANDPA KNOWS. Great. Another stroll down memory lane in the middle of a Monday morning. "...When I was your age, we didn't have computers or modems or solid-state electronics," said great-grandfather. "We basically watered by the seat of our pants."

I stifle a chuckle. That explains the stains.

"We got pretty good at it, though," he continued. "When we started irrigating southern California landscapes in the 1920s, water cost pennies. The normally open hydraulic controllers used in agriculture were beginning to enter the landscape market."

I can't help myself. "What were those controllers like, Gramps?" I asked, resigning myself to a history lesson in irrigation control.

"Well, automatic sprinkler control started popping up commer-

cially in places like Michigan, Illinois, and, of course, California," he reflected. "Pioneers like John Brooks, George Moody and William Buckner patented irrigation controllers and valves that opened the door to commercial sprinkler automation."

"The Burdick valve, and the Tom Sawyer—early automatic controllers—used a piston travelling up and down a cylinder to activate sprinkler zones. That stuff came out in the early 1920s and 1930s."

How does he remember those names and dates?

"What you'd do is turn a control key to '0' on the indicator, which let water enter the cylinder and pushed the piston to the top, exposing the laterals. Turn the key to the '1' position and you had water for about 30 minutes; turn it to '2' and you had about 20 minutes; '3' gave you 10 minutes; and '4,' five minutes," he explained.

"It seems crude now, because the dial was like an egg timer and the accuracy could be off a couple of minutes either way. But it was truly revolutionary at the time. By sequencing remote-controlled valves, it made programming possible. As a result, commercial irrigation systems started surfacing all over the L.A. basin."

So you had to be at every site for every irrigation cycle you needed. That would be a drag with caliche clay in a hot Colorado summer, I think.

"Then came the slide valves, which had two motorized, slotted discs. As the discs slid, water moved through the slots to the valves to open and close them."

"After World War II, controller technology really started hopping..."

Uh-oh, I think. His eyes are beginning to glaze and I know there's no turning back now. Gramps is in a rain-making riptide and won't return until he works his way back to the 21st century.

"By the 1950s, electric

John Brooks created this hydraulic controller and clock for wealthy Detroit clients like Henry Ford. He patented 27 inventions.

timers were making their debut. Hydraulic controllers were still popular, as they are today, but the first adjustable cam-driven, electromechanical commercial timers for irrigation were starting to gain momentum.

"Somewhere in there, the late 1940s I believe, the Greenland brothers took their family-owned Superior Controls, which specialized in diaphragm control for these mammoth steam boilers, and started looking for new territory. They thought about textiles and a few other industries, but when they studied irrigation, they knew they'd found their home."

I jumped as the phone rang. I guess I was getting the glaze, too. It was my foreman. "Excuse me Gramps, I've got to take this one."

BACK TO REALITY. "Eric, where have you been? We lost plant material. We never lose plant material. That central tells us every minute of every day when there's any abnormal pressure or flow activity. Aren't you wearing your pager?"

I handled that pretty well, I think. He's a nice guy, but no training. Four years of environmental horticulture and not even a semester on irrigation control.

"Yeah, sorry Allison. I've been popping modules all week with

this new security system they tapped into the central. I had fountains soaking people, gates dinking cars, lights blinding cyclists—who also dinked some cars. As it turns out, the program was the problem about 60 percent of the time. Good thing these modules are cheap."

"Who's the programmer, Eric?" "Uh, that would be me."

Deep breath. "Take your time and think it through, and use the customer support. I'll download some training material for you from the 'Net.' Look for it in your office. Also, check your terminal. You've got a valve sticking, two moisture sensors are inactive and an old riser snapped. And Eric, don't ditch your pager again, or I'll have it permanently implanted."

"Okay, Allison. I'm pretty much back on track. I'll get a crew on the annuals, replace that old riser with a swing joint and check to see if that slope is hydrophobic. I'll follow up the crews with the hand-held remote to check the repaired zones and to syringe that slope, if it needs it. Sorry about that."

He's learning. "Don't sweat it. Thanks for calling, and I'll talk to you later this week." I hang up, thinking: One down and 13 more reports, three airports, five municipalities, 23 business parks, 56 condo complexes and 17 estates to go. Business is booming, especially in the Pacific Rim, where big money brought in cutting-edge irrigation, but there's no local training on how to operate it.

NEWFANGLED DESIGNS. Another cup of coffee will do. I wheel around and bump into Gramps, who is back to Superior Controls, thumbing through their old catalog.

"Look at this Allie," he said. "These guys had great timing. They came out with the first electronic actuator kits to automate commercial irrigation systems. There were thousands of manual systems in the L.A. basin by the 1950s."

"How did the kit work?" I asked. "You'd remove the stem assembly from an antisiphon valve and screw in the actuator, then run wire to the clock and go. It was pretty slick back then."

"So now things were becoming electronically automated, when did controllers go solid-state?" I'm



goad him now, but I know it will pay off later.

"That was the new age of control technology. Texas Instruments and Telsco/Weather-Matic brought the microprocessor in, as did Rockwell International and Buckner. They were very sophisticated and the instruction manuals alone were more than 10 pages. It kind of scared people. Then, Irritrol introduced the first really simplified solid-state commercial controller and it really swept through the market.

"But those solid-state controllers were very sensitive to lightning strikes and dirty power," he added.

"Dirty power?" Maybe he was goading me. My curiosity pulls me in like quicksand.

"Surges, spikes, lapses," Gramps explained. "Actually, electronics decreased controller repairs in the West, but in the Southeast and Midwest, weather was eating these controllers alive. It's funny, though. The biggest problem at the time was that nobody knew how to work the controllers' keypads. It was the launch of the computer age and there was very little experience.

He continued, "Basically, the unprecedented accuracy and flexibility of solid-state controllers permanently planted them in the industry with companies like Rain Bird, Toro, Hunter, Hardie, Griswold, L.R. Nelson, Champion and Rain Master, to name a few. Suddenly, you could activate any valve anywhere in the irrigation sequence. Multiprogram, multicycle irrigation was a reality. But controllers had to be easier for the end user to really be effective."

END-USERS ARE KING. "That's what brought hybrids to the market in the 1980s," I interjected. "People still preferred dials and knobs for starting and stopping sets, but wanted the microprocessor logic for programming water cycles, memory and data interface."

"That's right," Gramps agreed. It wasn't necessarily to advance controller performance, but to help with user acceptance. All the while, the features and functions of irrigation control exploded.

"I've seen the evolution of radio and other communication devices

like modems and satellites, which help with troubleshooting and programming. I've also seen the development of battery and solar-powered controllers for street-median and remote-site irrigation; surge protection for lightning and fluctuating power; moisture, flow, pressure and rain sensors — in fact, complete weather stations — for soil-water management; override functions and ET-based scheduling..." He was excited now.

"I bet legislation really pulled a lot of this stuff through R and D," I interrupted again.

"Yeah, it helped. But irrigation water and energy control, convenience, geography and simplicity all have played a role. Now, you have modular components for quick repairs with little downtime, and for specific sizing and upgrading controllers to sites.

"You also have self-diagnostics that locate problems with the system, shut down the zone and alert the operator; injectors that interface with controllers for metering additives to the plants through the irrigation system; and, of course, cen-

tral control that ties it all together and makes it a function of hydrology, agronomy, horticulture, chemistry, soil science, limnology, meteorology — you name it."

"Sounds like there's nothing left, Gramps, like they've developed just about every possible feature imaginable." I shift gears, realizing that our conversation has gone full circle, and it's time to get back to work.

"You'd think so. But there's always something new. They're manufacturing these things with the guts more intricate, but the operation increasingly simplified. We're no longer considered gardeners, Allison. Landscapes are now designed and managed around the availability of water, and the more you show them how to use it wisely, the greater commodity you become. After all, this is irrigation control in the 21st century."

I watch him shuffle out the door, then swiveled back to my computer and another week's work. ■

The author is a partner with VERDEcom Environmental Resource Media, based in Banning, Calif.

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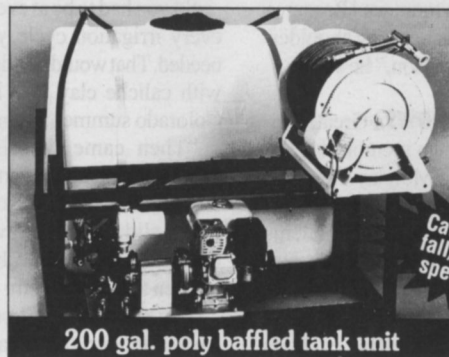
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Regional *Outlook*

Lawn & Landscape
MAINTENANCE

October

cover feature

Lifescapes, Valley Crest Tackle Vegas

Las Vegas never sleeps — as a 30-person crew from Valley Crest Landscape will vouch after six months of working 2 a.m. to 10 a.m. These night owls are busy constructing a 4-mile long desert garden down the middle of Las Vegas Boulevard, commonly referred to as “The Strip.”

The median runs in front of a pyramid, a sphinx, a sinking pirate galleon, a circus tent and a active volcano, among other bizarre and spectacular man-made illusions. These landscapers, under the direction of Art Williams, will have a story to tell their grandchildren for many years to come.

Valley Crest, of Calabasas, Calif., is no stranger to the city that gambling built. The company, together with landscape architect Don Brinkerhoff of Lifescapes, created the tropical indoor casino at Steve Winn's Mirage. Lifescapes and Valley Crest also performed landscape

feats at the Flamingo and the MGM. Their work brought praise and reliance on the two companies for the big job — the \$14-million Las Vegas Boulevard Strip Beautification.

The contract entails plant-



Las Vegas' Strip is undergoing a massive, \$14 million landscape renovation project.



ing 1,400 assorted palm trees (some weighing up to 40,000 pounds) and a total of 84,000 ornamental shrubs and vines.

Fifty-six miles of irrigation control wire, 52 miles of pipe for the immense drip system, and four miles of irrigation mains have been used. To make sure all this effort will be enjoyed around the clock, the

WEST/S.W.

project includes a \$4-million landscape lighting system, a possible record for spending on night lighting projects.

The work is ahead of schedule and should be completed early next year, months before the deadline.

"The contract was awarded in January of 1995, and by August, the first segment is 100 percent finished, ahead of contract time," boasted Burton Sperber, chief executive officer of Environmental Industries, Inc., parent of Valley Crest.

Julie Brinkerhoff, executive vice president of Lifescapes, Newport Beach, Calif., said the conceptual drawings were started by her father, Don Brinkerhoff, in April 1993. "In June, we presented a booklet and a 196-foot long scale model of the Strip to representatives of the 160 property owners. We divided the model up so each property owner could evaluate the part of the median in front

of his property," she explained. "The approval was unanimous! Valley Crest also presented the lowest bid of three qualified contractors for the job."

The project's construction and follow-up maintenance is paid for by a special improvement district made up of the property owners. The owners are assessed a fee according to the linear feet of frontage.

"This idea was first proposed 25 years ago, but it died because the property owners weren't organized," she added. "The idea was to create a world class resort corridor that places Las Vegas far above any other location. If you've been there lately, you can see that the landscaping is the backbone of the Strip and the corridor is now in place." — Bruce Shank.

The author is a partner with VERDEcom Environmental Resource Media, based in Banning, Calif.

business trends

Tougher Enforcement of Immigration Laws Expected

Contractors in the Southwest who depend on immigrants to operate their businesses should double check their employment records. Legislation has been introduced in the U.S. Senate to toughen penalties for hiring illegal immigrants and to establish a system of verifying employment eligibility. The effort has the support of President Clinton and both parties.

Senator Alan Simpson of Wyoming recently introduced legislation to tighten border control efforts and to increase the pressure on employers who hire illegal immigrants. Despite pressure on the federal budget, \$1 billion is being asked for enforcement efforts. Regulators want to cut the cost of social services going to illegal immigrants.

Employers are urged to obtain "Handbook for Employers M-274" from the Immigration and Naturalization Service, U.S. Post Offices or Internal Revenue Service offices. You should have an INS Form I-9 for each of your employees and make sure it is filled out completely and accurately.

You should also have photocopies of the driver's license for each employee, as well as their Social Security card, voter registration card or other official identification. You should require these forms of all employees, not just those who appear as though they came from a foreign country.

regional business trends

Phoenix to Host Two Major Management Conferences

Landscape contractors in the West will have two opportunities this winter to improve their management skills as both the Associated Landscape Contractors of America and the Professional Lawn Care Association of America will host management clinics in Phoenix.

PLCAA's new Management Conference is a first of a regular series for the organization. The executive-level conference is set for January 12 through 14 at the Embassy Suites Camelhead. Three speakers will offer their unique perspectives on management issues: Larry Helms of Western Training Systems; Bob Jacques of American Honda Motor Co.; and Patrick Norton of Barefoot Grass Inc.

"We can learn a lot not only from expert speakers, but from each other in a relaxed, professional environment," stated Lou Wierichs Jr., owner of Pro-X Systems in Appleton, Wis., and organizer of the conference. For more information on PLCAA's conference, call 800/458-3466.

The time-tested ALCA Executive Forum will be held February 11 through 14 at The Pointe Hilton at Tapatio Cliffs. The theme is "Busting Through Your Barriers...Maximizing Your Company's Potential," according to the conference's chair, Jud Griggs of Lied's Landscape Design and Development in Sussex, Wis.

Speakers will include Nate Booth, head trainer at Robbins Research International in San Diego, Calif.; Bob Dorf with Marketing 1:1 in Bridgeport, Conn.; and Will Philips with Faust Management Corp., San Diego, Calif.

Concentrated business evaluation and break-out groups are strong points of the ALCA clinic. For more information, contact ALCA at 800/395-2522.

California Ties Building with Water Regulations

Water rights disputes, which have plagued the West since the late 19th century, might soon be regulated more closely by landmark legislation awaiting the signature of Governor Pete Wilson. In September, farmers, developers and real estate companies put their support behind Sen. Jim Costa's (D-Fresno) Senate Bill 901, requiring developers of more than 500 dwelling units to research the impact of water supply before building permits can be issued.

"The bill is a milestone," claimed Sen. Quentin Kopp (I-San Francisco). "It demonstrates a monumental change in attitudes and public policy in California."

The fight over water has been complex. Farmers, city water districts and wildlife advocates have been battling over water following a three-year drought in the early 1990s. Restrictions on landscape irrigation were implemented at the time.

"Everyone knows that drought will return, but we tend to turn our heads until the reality of water rationing, parched landscapes and dead lawns hits home," stated a San Fernando

Valley landscape contractor. "This bill forces the issue."

Ever since the 1880s, when Fred Eaton and William Mulholland devised a way for Los Angeles to take water from the Owens Valley, 250 miles away, California has juggled the state's limited water resources to support development. The issue became further complicated when recent environmental regulations started taking water away from farmers and cities for wildlife in the Delta region of the state. The U.S. Congress is considering legislation on the use of water under the Central Valley Project, a federal project straining under budget and supply issues.

"Our concern was that agricultural water would be used as a bank for sprawl, which is an inefficient use of resources," said Mary Ann Warmerdam of the California Farm Bureau. Farmers in the San Joaquin Valley were significantly affected by the last drought and cutbacks in irrigation water.

"The question is, do we build homes without planning for water, or do we say before building that we need so much water for household consumption and landscaping?" asked the San Fernando landscape contractor.



Large, multifamily developments are covered in new water use rules.

CLCA Media Blitz Raises Contractors' Image

Calscape, an 8-month-long public relations campaign by the California Landscape Contractors Association, is a wrap after getting the message across that landscape contractors are professionals. The program ran in newspapers, television and radio programs. Each CLCA chapter was able to present charitable and environmentally significant work to its local media during the blitz organized by CLCA and C.W. Crocker Communications of Sacramento.

"We were looking for the Silver Bullet to penetrate the media with the message that contractors are caring, responsible citizens who serve their local communities," revealed Marc Gerig, CLCA director of communications. "Chapters were able to show the public that they are involved in water conservation, responsible pesticide use, fire prevention and protecting the urban forest. The north coast gained publicity for its landscaping of an orphanage in Santa Rosa. That project got a 2-minute spot during the prime time news and brought tears to many viewers."

"The board kept looking for a way to get our industry's professionalism across to the consumer," said Richard Jark, CLCA president. "This worked out extremely well. Executive board members were shown in business suits and chapter presidents in sharp uniforms. The media now knows it can come to us for good news about its local community. They understand that we work with community groups to solve problems that affect their readers and viewers."



regional outlook fax survey

LLM is interested in learning more about market conditions in the West/Southwest, so we've incorporated a Fax Survey into the inaugural issue of *Regional Outlook*. If you would like to assist us in learning more about your market — as well as find out how others are doing in your market area — please fill out the following questionnaire and fax (216/961-0364) or mail a copy to LLM magazine at 4012 Bridge Ave., Cleveland, OH 44113. We'll report the results of the survey in future editions of *Regional Outlook*. Thanks for your assistance.

1) Is business up, down or about the same as this same time in 1994? Up ☐ Down ☐ About The Same ☐

2) If your business is "up" or "down" this year, please list the percentage increase? + -

3) Please list any additional news items or market observations that might be of interest to you and our readers.

4) Please rate your company's business performance for each of the following service areas when compared to 1994 (check only one in each category):

Service	Above Average	Below Average	Average	Not Involved In This Market
Mowing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Aeration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tree Care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Landscape Design	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lawn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Renovation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sodding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Landscape Installation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pesticide Applications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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MAINTENANCE

October

cover feature

Heat Wave to Have Long-Term Effects

DON'T LET cooler fall weather fool you. This summer, it was sizzling across the Southeast, with record temperatures set in almost every major city. Mid-Atlantic states were particularly hard hit, with below average rainfall compounding the problem. The summer of '95 will be one that lawn and landscape professionals are dealing with long after it's over.

All types of plant material — from turf to mature trees — will be affected by this summer's heat and drought, as well as the cumulative effect of conditions from summers past, according to Virginia Tech Extension Nursery Specialist Bonnie Appleton. "It certainly is going to have some effect," she said.

TREE & SHRUB DAMAGE. Professionals likely will see smaller plants — both herbaceous and woody ornamentals — die this year. Larger plants and mature

trees take several years to react to the stress of high temperature and little water. In trees, this stress can cause "flagging," the loss of leaves at the top or crown of the tree, and eventual root death.

In a weakened state, plant material can become targets for opportunistic pests that couldn't normally attack healthy plants, said Appleton. Attackers might include borer insects, canker fungi and leaf spot fungus.

In Charlotte, N.C., the city's parks are losing 2 percent to 3 percent of older trees every year, according to the *Charlotte Observer*. The damaging effects of Hurricane Hugo six years ago, a drought in the early 1990s and the cankerworm

infestation that followed have left trees in a weakened state.

TURF SHOULD RETURN. Where shrubs and trees are expected to sustain long-term damage, turfgrasses should respond to cooler, wetter weather. "Fescue grass browns, but comes back in the fall," said George Morrell, CEO of the Morrell Group in Atlanta. Dormant grass usually can survive high temperatures and drought conditions.



Heat can stress all landscape plants.

SOUTHEAST

In Montgomery, Ala., tropical grasses can survive the heat but are showing signs of stress from drought. "The lack of moisture's been a big problem," said James Bartley, general manager and agronomist for Southern Lawns. Zoysia lawns are showing the most drought injury, and many may need replacement, he said, adding that drought-tolerant mites and chinch bugs are showing up on St. Augustinegrass.

Turf in greater Richmond, Va., is "fairly stressed," said Scott Wagner, owner of Landmark Landscape Management in Ashland. The fescue grass has gone dormant and hopefully will recover, he said, but with less than 10 percent of his customers' properties irrigated, recovery may take a while. Due to the hard ground, Wagner expects fall aeration will "not be as successful as I'd like it to be."

HIGHER COSTS. For many professionals, the hot weather resulted in higher expenses. Morrell said his firm incurred higher labor costs for watering new installations and heat stress caused higher plant mortality. The company's two water trucks were kept in constant use, especially at construction sites.

Because of the heat, The Morrell Group began organizing installation jobs differently, completing installations within the confines of an irrigation zone to ensure immediate watering. "Watering is critical," said Morrell. "This is not part of

the thought process under normal conditions."

While outright water restrictions didn't hamper most professionals, many municipalities encouraged conservative water use. Drip irrigation and gator bag watering devices were incorporated into many installation programs.

In the lawn service business, hot, dry weather caused some delays in chemical services such as fertilization, which increases a lawn's vulnerability to drought injury, said Bartley.

According to Wagner, the weather will impact one's business, "regardless of how long or loyal a relationship is with a client." As the lawn ceases to compete and weeds appear, the lawn's curb appeal suffers. "You try to talk to customers about the conditions, but it can still strain the relationship." A lawn suffering from heat stress can become "a selling opportunity for competitors."

CLIENTS WANT IRRIGATION.

According to Morrell, the intense weather made deficiencies in the design, installation, engineering and maintenance of irrigation systems very apparent, as well as inconsistencies in soil texture. The company's irrigation group received overwhelming customer demands for service. "It's been a tremendous strain on our resources," said Morrell. "There's no way to plan for this. Customers demand immediate response, and that's not always possible."

How Plants Survive Summer

Extension Nursery Specialist Bonnie Appleton of Virginia Tech's Agricultural Research & Extension Center in Hampton Roads recommends that extra care be taken with heat stressed plant material. The following are some common-sense suggestions:

***Pruning** — Although dead branches are unsightly, don't prune in the fall, as a rule. Pruning can stimulate new growth that won't survive the winter. Unless you've confirmed stem tissue is dead by checking the cambium, wait until spring. Pruning hazardous limbs, however, is essential.

***Mulch** — Renew mulch in late fall when plants enter dormancy. Mulch provides a moist, warm environment for root growth; however, mulching too early can extend the plant's growing season. New growth may not survive winter. Mulch when soil temperatures are cooler, such as November.

"This season, it's apparent that the green industry must educate homeowners on effective and economical irrigation," said Bartley. He anticipates that more irrigation systems will be installed, which eventually should result in better quality turf for customers.

EMPLOYEES & EQUIPMENT.

Lawn and landscape firms across the Southeast took measures to ensure employees survived the heat wave. The Morrell Group supplied employees with ice, Gatorade, hats and neck soakers, as well as ice-cold watermelons on some occasions. It was essential to do "anything we can do to keep these guys cooled down and hydrated," said Morrell.

The heat and drought also "takes a toll on equipment," Wagner pointed out. Dirt and dust clogs filters and contributes to heavier overall wear-and-tear. Preventive maintenance is essential, he added.

EXCEPTION TO THE RULE. Hot, dry conditions were widespread, but didn't affect the entire Southeast's green industry. A state used to hot weather — Florida — had enough rain for the entire region.

"Florida's plants and people are more adapted to high temperatures," said Marvin Gross of Marvin's Gardens in Sarasota. Constant, heavy rains have been a "tremendous hazard" this summer, with plant material suffering from "wet feet," he noted.

One bright spot was Irmo, S.C., where Gene Broome, owner of the True Green/Chem-Lawn franchise said that the local "yards look better than ever." He said it's been hot, but "we've been very fortunate this year with thunderstorms almost every day in the afternoons." — Anne Wemhoff.

The author is a free-lance writer based in Hudgins, Va.

City	June 1995	Extreme Temp.	# of Days 90°+	July 1995	Extreme Temp.	# of Days 90°+
Orlando	96°	6/9	24	95°	7/4, 7, 15, 16	24
New Orleans	96	6/27	18	99	7/12, 27	26
Montgomery, Ala.	101	6/9	20	100	7/18	28
Raleigh	94	6/8	2	95	7/23, 24, 30	20
Richmond	91	6/8	1	100	7/15	25
Atlanta	98	6/10	12	102	7/25	27
Columbia, S.C.	98	6/9	11	100	7/16, 21	30

Atlanta Olympics Landscape Projects Make Progress

Ruppert Landscape Co., Ashton, Md., was awarded two new Olympic projects: The Olympic Aquatic Center, a 1996 post-game retrofit of the Georgia Tech campus housing the swimming and diving events; and the Olympic Rowing and Canoe Venue at Lake Sydney Lanier in Gainesville, Ga. Ruppert also is developing Georgia State University's Olympic Village, one of the major athlete villages which features a rooftop garden and intricate plaza green.

The list of other landscape contractors winning Olympic business also grows, as the city of Atlanta and surrounding Olympic site areas continue to award projects for the installation of new landscapes or existing landscape renovations.



Contractors are busy finishing new landscapes in Atlanta. Photo: Ruppert

SNA Announces Winners

The following recognitions and appointments were made at the 1995 Southern Nurserymen's Association (SNA) annual meeting Aug. 4-6 in Atlanta:

•William "Buzz" Barton Jr., president of Barton's Nursery and Landscape, Inc., Tuscaloosa, Ala., and Plantation Tree Co., Inc., Selma, Ala., was named president of the SNA for 1995-1996.

•Sonny Bouldin, former president of Bouldin & Lawson, McMinnville, Tenn., was posthumously awarded the 1995 Pinnacle Award, presented to an allied industry member for contributions to the industry and SNA.

•C. Fletcher Flemer III, president of Ingleside Plantation Nurseries, Oak Grove, Va., received the Slater Wright Memorial Award for significantly advancing the Southern nursery industry and the SNA.

•Thomas Saunders, vice president of Saunders brothers Inc., Piney River, Va. and president of the Virginia Nurserymen's Association, was presented the David E. Laird, Sr. Memorial Award recognizing young men and women for outstanding service in the field of environmental horticulture.



regional outlook fax survey

LLM is interested in learning more about market conditions in the Southeast, so we've incorporated a Fax Survey into the inaugural issue of Regional Outlook. If you would like to assist us in learning more about your market — as well as find out how others are doing in your market area — please fill out the following questionnaire and fax (216/961-0364) or mail a copy to LLM magazine at 4012 Bridge Ave., Cleveland, OH 44113. We'll report the results of the survey in future editions of Regional Outlook. Thank you for your assistance.

1) Is business up, down or about the same as this same time in 1994? Up ___ Down ___ About The Same ___

2) If your business is "up" or "down" this year, please list the percentage of change: + ___ - ___

3) Please list any additional news items or market observations that might be of interest to you and our readers.

4) Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the long-term future of the lawn and landscape maintenance industry in your market? Optimistic ___ Pessimistic ___

5) Why are you optimistic/pessimistic?

6) Please rate your company's business performance for each of the following service areas when compared to 1994 (check only one in each category):

Service	Above Average	Below Average	Average	Not Involved In This Market
Mowing	___	___	___	___
Aeration	___	___	___	___
Tree Care	___	___	___	___
Landscape Design	___	___	___	___
Lawn Renovation	___	___	___	___
Sodding	___	___	___	___
Landscape Installation	___	___	___	___
Pesticide Applications	___	___	___	___

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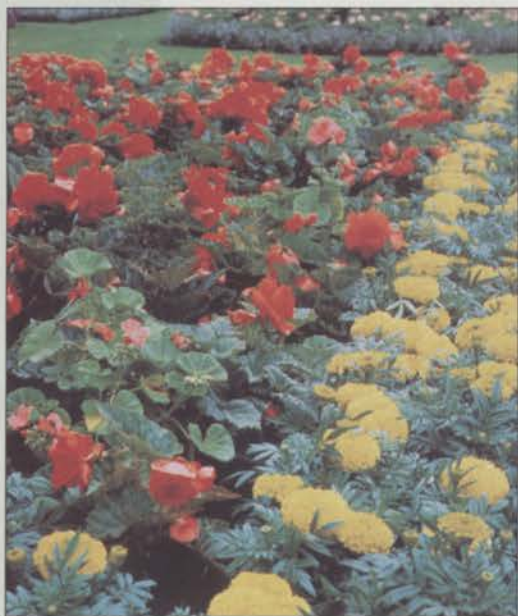
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Find The Right Tax Advice

Each business' tax situation is unique, but common-sense rules apply to everyone. Number one is to find a good tax adviser who understands your company and your goals.

By Kevin Tanzillo



When the Internal Revenue Service knocks on your front door, will you answer with a smile or slink behind your largest fertilizer tank and pretend no one's home?

Your answer probably depends on how good an accountant or tax adviser your company retains. Tax and small business experts — and contractors — agree that the quality of the individualized advice you get may be the most important part of your tax strategy this year or any year to come.

"Make sure you have a really good accountant who is a tax specialist or who has a specialist in the company. As you know, the rules change a lot and you can get hung up," advised J. Landon Reeve, president of Chapel Valley Landscape in Woodbine, Md.

"For example, we use what I consider to be a somewhat conservative accounting firm. We were audited two years ago and ended up getting a little bit of money back, which was a pleasure to say the least," he said. "It proves that probably we are taking too conservative a stand, but that is my preference rather than take risks and get surprised."

"I rely heavily on my accountants," agreed Dick Ficco, owner of Partners Quality Lawn Service in Easton, Mass. "I have a fundamental understanding, and I sought an accountant of a similar age — someone I could associate with and who would be considerate of the types of things my family would be going through."

"There is quite an interpersonal relationship that a company my size develops with a tax consultant or accountant. Choosing an accountant and a tax attorney are things you don't go into lightly. For me, it has been a terrific plus to find someone to deal with who knows about my family and what we want to do in the future."

SPECIFICS COUNT. Tax and small business lawyers and consultants are willing to offer a bit of general advice, but caution that specifics depend strictly on a company's situation at the moment.

"There is still a tax bill to be decided this fall, which would have a number of changes that might have an impact, but right now we are speculating," said John Satagaj, partner in the Washington, D.C., firm of London and Satagaj, specializing in tax and small business issues.

"For instance, you can write off \$17,500 this year for an expenditure such as a utility van for business purposes. Over

Look for tax advisers who understand the annual cycles of the lawn or landscape contracting industry.

that amount, you depreciate it. That could be affected by the tax bill, because the House version has that at \$35,000," he explained.

YEAR-END STRATEGIES. Still, Satagaj said, there are general rules for whether to buy something late this year or wait until 1996:

"If you are looking at an extraordinarily good year, you would probably want to accelerate your expenses to offset that. A lot is dictated by changes in the tax rates. If you know you are going to have some expenses you could incur this year, you might want to spend it on the expenses rather than pay taxes."

Ed Wandtke, an 18-year partner in the consulting firm of Wandtke and Associates, Columbus, Ohio, said there is something special about 1996 that might make it attractive to defer income into the new year: it's an election year.

"We're betting on tax rates going down, and I think that rates will not go up for sure. The likelihood of the rates going down in an election year is a lot higher than in a non-election year," he said. "The slower you collect receivables before Dec. 31, the better it can be for this year. You could just close your books on the 15th and not make any bank deposits for the rest of the year."

INCORPORATION OPTIONS. "Some generic advice is useful," conceded Richard I. Lehr, attorney with Lehr, Middlebrooks & Proctor in Birmingham, Ala. His firm has advised businesses in the green industry for 16 years.

"For instance, incorporating is good advice. You can become a Subchapter S corporation, with the tax benefits of a corporation. What any one owner should do varies, though, depending on the owner's objectives," Lehr noted. "Do you want to posture the business for a certain balance sheet in order to sell, borrow, expand the business? Do you want to pass the business on to the next generation? These all have an effect."

Ficco, current vice president of PLCAA, said his company is eight years old. It is a Subchapter S

corporation, "and that has certain protective measures for me personally as owner. It also has corporate benefits and has provided us more stature than your basic mom-and-pop companies."

Ficco noted when his company first incorporated, he was stuck with a calendar-year accounting season. Now he can petition the IRS for a one-time move to a fiscal year that better suits his business.

"This may be a consideration for me down the road because what happens is that I start the year on a losing note. If we don't have a good banking setup, it doesn't bode well for us to borrow money," he explained. "A lawn care firm would like to end on a strong note, and many firms end their season in September or October. That's the time of their best cash flow and profit."

Lehr offered that "most businesses are advised to incorporate so that the owner and his or her family are insulated from liability in the event of a legal dispute involving the company."

But, he added, "They are not insulated from liability if they fail to submit payments to the IRS. An accountant or attorney can be helpful in setting that up. As for me, I would want the shield of a corporation for my personal assets."

ACTION IN 1995. With most contractors on a calendar tax year, is it too late to make a difference in the taxes due next April or are there still some late-year tactics available?

"Between now and the end of the year may be the ideal time to set up a retirement plan if you don't have one in place," Wandtke said.

"You could win because it is a nontaxable use of funds," he explained. Where contractors keep all or most of their people on as full timers, the retirement plans "are a good way to retain people. A lot of contractors in the North may scale back, but more firms are adding retirement plans to get the employees to come back."

"In the South, where they may never lay them off, it's an excellent way to retain employees. You can lower your taxes and retain employees at the same time," Wandtke noted.

"Fringe benefits and profit-sharing plans are valuable, but it is a question of the philosophy of the company's owners and how they want to deal with the profits," said Reeve. His company has about 165 employees, with steady employment except for January and February.

"We do profit-sharing here," he explained. "You have to determine if you will have a pension, sheltered profit-sharing or actual cash. I think there is no question that if you are making a good profit, it makes sense to share the profitability with the people who helped make it."

Careful tax planning can make the difference between success and a struggling business. Photo: Clean Cut Inc.



TAX STRATEGY PLANNING. Satagaj, however, said the prime time for tax strategy is early in the year. "This late in the year, I don't know if there is anything contractors can do differently one way or another. In terms of estimated payments, for instance, those are things they should have planned throughout the year."

"When you get to the end of year, you might look at things like whether you are taking full advantage of the direct expensing provisions that allow you to write off purchases of equipment in the year."

The best strategy may take plenty of time and effort to pay off, he noted. "You might want to hold off on capital gains and sales of capital assets. One open issue at this point in the tax debate is whether there will be capital gains relief. If so, when will they apply the new rate? I might want to hold off on that to see when those dates are."

Lehr agreed that planning is one thing contractors don't do well when it comes to their tax strategy. "Contractors react rather than plan. Just as the season slows down and you start to get into equipment maintenance and advertising, it is an excellent time to plan what you want to do during the year."

The plan that looks good on paper in January may need adjustments as the growing season progresses, he explained. "It is a good idea to have another meeting with your tax adviser in June to review the plan. You're in the height of the season and you can see your projections. You don't want to be in a position where you run out of time to make changes."

Wandtke said most contractors "don't bother to do anything in the line of tax preparation until they have to file the return, then they see they didn't do the preplanning that should have been done."

He pointed out one costly mistake that can be avoided: "Perhaps the biggest thing is to make sure to make tax payments timely. If you don't, the penalties and interest are sometimes larger than the tax due had you paid it on time."

Ficco said he can't emphasize enough the importance of a good source of tax advice.

"Depending on the size of the company, profit or loss statements on a quarterly or monthly basis are important," Ficco said. "We are computerized and our software does the fundamental things as far as tracking general ledger account numbers. I don't overburden our accountant. Quarterly statements suffice."

"You can spend a tremendous amount of money on accounting," he added, suggesting that some computer software makes it easy to do much of the work yourself and save.

"Many accountants are just as content to teach people how to handle the day-to-day operation and how to get profit and loss statements on a monthly basis," he explained.

"We always do a full audit for the company, which is unusual for the industry," Reeve added. "We can do a review, compilation or a full audit. The full audit is the most expensive and thorough, and takes longer. For the size of company we are, I want to make sure we have audited statements and clean information."

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW FROM A CPA

As you seek an accountant to help you plan your tax strategy, especially in a larger accounting firm, there are questions you need to ask to choose the right person. Here are sample questions, from the PLCAA publication, *The Lawn Care Professionals' Guide to Choosing a C.P.A.*:

- What knowledge of the green industry does the firm have?
- What other service industry clients, and how large a staff, does the firm have in your market?
- How long has the firm been serving this market and how large is it in the market?
- Based on your company size, what would be the typical fee, and how is that determined?
- Will the firm work on a fixed-fee basis for the work needed and is there a cap on service cost for the year?
- What are the job titles of the people doing the work, and what do those titles mean in the firm?
- How often are personnel rotated on a job in the firm and what if I don't like the personnel assigned to service my company?
- How can I be sure I am being billed the correct fee for the level of employees servicing my account?
- How often will someone communicate with me?
- What if you give me incorrect advice and it costs me money?

GET GOOD ADVICE. "One lesson I have learned is that the tax laws are interpreted many different ways. It isn't true that the law is the law and that's the way it is. Every accounting firm will give you a different version and that can have a big impact on your business," Reeve continued.

Lehr said when it comes to hunting a tax adviser, it is important to learn the person's client base and how many small, seasonal businesses he or she has represented. He also recommended careful monitoring. "You have to ask questions to become an informed buyer of any professional services. Establish he or she charges, usually on an hourly basis, and request that bills be itemized to the tenth of an hour."

"Also, get references. Speak to at least two or three others who use the individual about the reasonableness of the fees. Also, in larger accounting firms, the person you contact may not be the person you deal with — you need to find that out."

"The key thing is not to confuse tax advice and business advice," warned Wandtke. "Those are two different businesses, so you look at different people for different expertise. The best analogy is that I wouldn't go to the same doctor for brain surgery that I would go to for a cold."

The author is a free-lance writer based in Norwalk, Ohio.

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USE READER SERVICE #12

Trees & Ornamentals

GEOTEXTILE FABRICS AND MULCHES GO UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

LANDSCAPE CONTRACTORS have been experimenting with a variety of solid plastic materials for weed control for some time now. In recent years, research and testing has caught up with these untested products.

This information is based on research at the Horticulture Department of Oregon State University, Corvallis, and researchers in other areas around the country.

PRODUCT TEST TRIALS. Geotextile fabrics vary dramatically in their effectiveness for weed control. Some tests have achieved the best control with thermally or chemically fused, nonwoven and laminated materials.

Poorest control occurred with nonwoven needle-punched products, woven products and solid perforated products. We found better weed control with heavyweight, nonwoven fused products. Lightweight products generally have been ineffective.

Nearly all geotextile products are effective in inhibiting the emergence of broadleaf weeds from seed, as well as emerging rhizomes of Canada thistle and horsetail. It's a different story with grass.



Recent research has evaluated the merits of landscape fabrics and mulches. Credit:

HEAVYWEIGHT ADVANTAGES. Only the heavyweight, nonwoven fused fabrics prevented the emergence of grass from seed or rhizomes. Plants germinating in mulch placed over fabrics rooted easily through nonwoven, needle-punched materials; woven, solid-perforated styles and lightweight nonwoven fused materials.

Roots from adjacent shrubs and trees readily penetrate and grow in nonwoven needle-punched fabrics, woven fabrics and lightweight, nonwoven fused materials.

ORGANIC MULCHES. When organic mulch is used over fabric for aesthetic value, the mulch has a greater impact on weed development than fabrics. Fine-textured bark and compost materials provided excellent sites for weed growth.

In contrast, very coarse bark, large wood chips, pea gravel and ground-up rubber tires were less likely to support weed growth.

Most reports show that geotextile fabrics are not as effective as mulch over herbicide or mulch over black plastic.

SURPRISE RESULTS. One unexpected benefit of this research was the discovery of ground rubber as a mulch. The material was used as a mulch to keep weeds away from trees and ornamental plants and compared to other mulch products. The surface of the tire mulch became hot enough in sunlight to burn off emerging weeds, but not hot enough to hurt the shrubs themselves.

While the ground rubber surface retained the sun's heat, the area below insulated the soil, keeping it about 60+ degrees F. — Thomas Cook, associate professor, OSU. ■

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People

ALAN BISHOP was hired as a regional manager for MacKissic. He will be based in St. Petersburg, Fla. and service Mighty Mac and Merry Tiller power equipment distributors in the U.S. and Canada. He was formerly with McCulloch serving in the same capacity.

Doug Hundt was named national sales manager for Vermeer Manufacturing. He will be responsible for sales of all industrial products in North America and will work with the company's domestic dealer network to manage territories and dealership personnel, and to oversee dealer recognition programs. He previously served as the northeast regional service manager.

Three promotions at James Hardie Irrigation include **Paul Temby**, appointed international sales manager with responsibility for implementing sales programs, leading the international sales force and strengthening the distribution network. In addition, **Gib Lundquist** was named district sales manager for seven north central states. He will provide sales support and training for distributors, and assist them with contractor development and marketing programs. **Bill Rosser** was hired as specifications manager, and will serve as the interface between the company and irri-



Temby

gation designers, contractors and consultants, as well as city, county and district officials.

Arthur Hatley is now the national sales manager for Fiberstars' commercial lighting division. He will develop and implement sales strategy for the firm's side-emitting and point fiber optic lighting products for commercial applications.

Michael Hanafee has joined Intrex/ASI as an interior account executive. He brings over 20 years experience in the interiorscape industry to the company.

Hunter announced that **Cita Berthelsen** has been named the new regional sales and service representative for the west central



Berthelsen

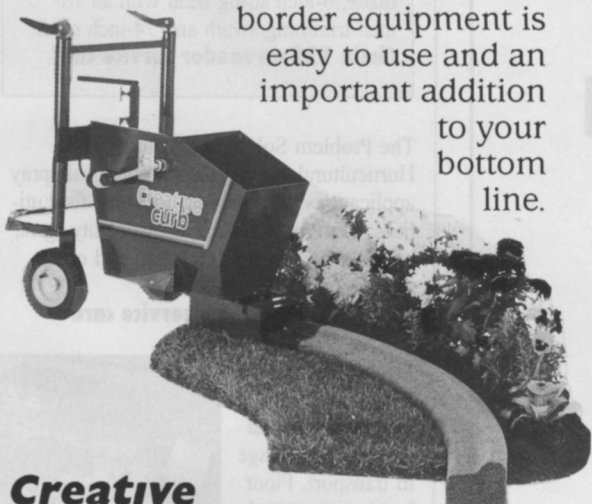
plains. She will be based in Evergreen, Colo., and will represent the company's complete line of irrigation products. Other responsibilities will include new product introduction, professional training and technical support. In addition, **Neil Struikmans** was appointed as the new regional sales and service representative for central California. He will work with irrigation distributors, landscape contractors and municipalities to provide new product introductions, professional training and technical support.

Steven McMillian and **Jennifer Duffy** have been added as senior engineers, and **Wain Cooper** as principal engineer, in the water resource division of Berryman & Henigar. Cooper will head a number of key division projects, including the pipeline design of a pump station sewer and force main for the city of San Diego. Duffy formerly worked for Dudek & Associates.

Steven Fales was named head of the agronomy department at Penn State University, replacing Al Turgeon, who stepped down to become director of distance education. In addition, Fales will continue as professor of crop management.

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Products

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT



HOMELITE offers a new line of trimmer/brushcutters for the commercial market — Green Machine by John Deere. The 2600, 2800 and 3000 series are powered by Mitsubishi full-crank engines ranging from 22.6 to 26.1-cc, which include solid state ignition and primer carburetors for dependability and quick starts. Models 2600 and 2800 feature a 72-inch shaft, 17-inch trimming swath with optional blade, and 13 pound weight.

The 3000 series, designed to handle a 40-hour work week, is equipped with a 73-inch shaft and the option of J-bar or bicycle-type handles. This series also offers a full anti-vibration system. The 4000 series brushcutters are powered by a high performance, 42.7-cc Mitsubishi engine. Other features include a quad brush blade, 6-inch string head with an 18-inch trimming swath and 74-inch shaft. **Circle 125 on reader service card**

The Problem Solver Pack from United Horticultural Supply aids in chemical spray applications. The product includes four utilities: a drift retardant aid, compatibility agent, antifoamer/defoamer and tank and equipment cleaner.

Circle 126 on reader service card

TrimmerTrap makes the Kreeper-Keeper to prevent equipment damage in transport. Floor brackets mounted to a vehicle bed and a bracket attached to equipment are connected by a pin to hold



equipment in place. It comes with mounting hardware, and a padlock can replace the pin for security.

Circle 127 on reader service card

Encore's PRO-Line Blower comes with an 8-hp engine for easy, fast cleanup. Features include adjustable chute for front or side discharge, heavy duty front caster, pneumatic rear wheels with regreasable roller bearings and wide air intake vent.

Circle 128 on reader service card

Tempo insecticide from **Bayer Corp.** is now registered for use in business and shopping complexes, multifamily residences and many other functional and recreational turf applications. As an advanced-generation pyrethroid, the product controls many turf and ornamental pests.

Circle 129 on reader service card

AmeriQuip's Eagle 2-41 articulated design aerial lift is trailer-mounted and features a 23-foot side reach and 41-foot working height. The 48 x 26 x 42-inch bucket holds two men at a total weight of 400 pounds. The unit allows 360-degree continuous rotation and simultaneous, 2-function operation with complete feathering capability.



An 8-hp gas engine or 24-volt electric power are available.

Circle 130 on reader service card

A new size Prill fertilizer from **Greener Pas-**

tures features no dust, uniform particle size, ease of spreadability and a non-burning formulation. Available in 50-pound bag, the product is manufactured in three formulations.

Circle 131 on reader service card

Glen-Hilton Products has installation details of all models of its Mini-Click II and Freeze-Click irrigation sensors available on diskette. The self-installing program loads drawings onto a CAD system in DWG or DXF formats. Diskettes are free to irrigation professionals, landscape architects and specifiers in the industry.

Circle 132 on reader service card

The LM-42 walk-along plow/trencher from **Vermeer** features adjustable plow blades from 12 to 30-inches and the vibratory plow

attachment's shaker box delivers 10,000 pounds of force to the plow. Designed to install irrigation and service lines such as electrical wire, the engine delivers 43.5 hp at 3,000 rpm. The trencher attachment digs



down to 42 inches, with 4- and 6-inch widths. Backhoe and rockwheel attachments are optional.

Circle 133 on reader service card

The 11-hp, Portable Truck Loader from **Parker Sweeper** picks up leaves, clippings, mulch and other bark debris. The unit features 6-blade impeller, lightweight 8 x 15-inch steel intake hose and an exhaust hose with 360-degree swivel. A safety switch disables the unit with unattached hose.

Circle 134 on reader service card

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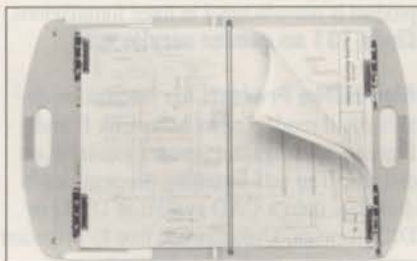
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Ciba's Citation insecticide has an expanded label allowing its use on Dipterous leaf-miners and fungus gnats in landscape and container-grown ornamentals, greenhouse- and shade house-grown ornamental bedding plants and ornamental crops, as well as interiorscapes. It is also approved for shore fly control on greenhouse-grown ornamental crops and interiorscapes.

Circle 135 on reader service card

The Print Cady from **Donnelly International** carries and provides a work surface for blueprints and drawings. The product



secures and protects against wind, and provides convenient storage of landscape drawings and plans. Constructed of PVC plastic, it comes in four sizes.

Circle 136 on reader service card

Three new models are available in the **Jonsered** chain saw line. The 2041, 2045 and 2050 models all feature the Turbo air cleaning system, said to reduce maintenance and engine wear and improve fuel economy. Engine displacements are 40.2, 44.3 and 48.9-cc, respectively. Other features are a professional style handle system for comfort, coil-spring anti-vibration design and inertia-activated chain brake.

Circle 137 on reader service card

The 6000 series Mow'n Machines from **Woods Equipment** include seven zero-turn radius mowers with engine options ranging from 14 to 24.5-hp, including diesel. Attachments include a snow thrower, sweeper and dozer. Other features include a low, out-front deck, instant forward-reverse action and low center of gravity.

Circle 138 on reader service card

Hynite 12-0-0 organic fertilizer from **Standard Tar Products** is made from a formula of processed leather tankage said to supply nitrogen in a slow-release, water-insoluble form. It is said to be nonburning and effective for ornamentals and ground covers in various landscape settings.

Circle 139 on reader service card

Terracare Products' new topdresser fits behind most utility vehicles. The product mounts in minutes without dismantling, and features a 5-hp Briggs & Stratton engine. It can distribute topdressing to either side or in



a full spread pattern for a variety of uses.

Circle 140 on reader service card

Aerators' Aqua-Lator fountain aerator features a stainless steel, water-cooled motor said to be maintenance-free. The motor mount, volute, propeller and mooring eyes are also stainless steel. Features include interchangeable nozzles and motors in sizes ranging from 1 to 5-hp.

Circle 141 on reader service card

Model JD 8875 is **John Deere's** most powerful in its skid steer line and is powered by a 61-hp Series 3029T engine and 2-speed transmission providing a top speed of 12 mph. Other features include vertical-lift design for load stability and better visibility, 48-inch wheel base and 2,352-pound SAE operating capacity. The cab includes



comprehensive digital gauges and visibility of 360 degrees for safety and productivity.

Circle 142 on reader service card

TruckCraft's TC-120 Ultra pickup dump insert is constructed of aluminum and stainless steel for durability and no rust. The unit has a 5,000-pound, 2.4-cubic yard payload capacity, an 18-second lift cycle and a 47-degree maximum dump angle. It can be installed in only an hour.

Circle 143 on reader service card



Husqvarna offers the Model 246 commercial chain saw, a 3.3-hp unit weighing just 10.5 pounds. The Smart Start system reduces starting pulling force by 50 percent, and LowVib technology reduces vibration.

Circle 144 on reader service card

The McConnel Swingtrim from **ALAMO** cuts hedges, grass and weeds around hard-to-reach places. The articulated boom and 4-foot sickle bar cuts up to 1/2 inch diameter, even below water, without disturbing roots. At under 500 pounds, the unit mounts on a 15-hp tractor. The hydraulic boom reaches 11 feet vertically and 14 feet left and right horizontally.
Circle 145 on reader service card

Little Wonder offers an 11-hp commercial blower with an enlarged fan and housing, increasing power 30 percent. Front and rear 10-inch pneumatic tires, ergonomic handle and anti-vibration grip add comfort of operation. Computer-balanced steel fan and 12-gauge steel housing provide durability and power.
Circle 146 on reader service card



The **Tanaka** TEA-500 two-man auger has wraparound handles with anti-vibration foam covers for comfort. The safety throttle requires both operators to engage before drilling. The gear case lock allows operators to manually back out a stuck bit. The unit is powered by a 50-cc engine to dig holes up to a 12-inch diameter.
Circle 147 on reader service card

Groundbreakers landscape tools from **V & B Manufacturing** are designed for sod



busting and digging in summer, ground prep and fall cleanup and wintertime break-up of frozen soil, snow and ice. Features include reversible combination tool heads and a selection of

various weights and handle lengths.
Circle 148 on reader service card

The Green Thumb Consultants catalog features a variety of ergonomic pruning and hand tools, wrist supports, heat wraps, clothing, books and accessories. Tools and accessories are built to minimize the effects of repetitive motion, and to aid workers who suffer from repetitive motion injuries.
Circle 149 on reader service card

The CH series of commercial chipper/shredders is available from **Sterling**. With a variety of engine makes and horsepower

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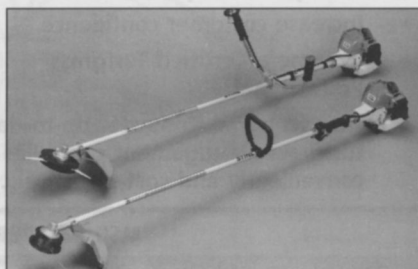


Circle 150 on reader service card

The new **Riverside** adjuvant, Rivet, enhances the consistency or performance of certain postemergence herbicides. The product is said to promote fast spreading, uniform distribution and absorption of pesticide sprays on leaf and stem surfaces, and is also recommended for products that desiccate or defoliate.

Circle 151 on reader service card

Stihl's FS 88 and 108 brushcutters feature anti-vibration systems, contoured engine housings, easy access air filters, see-through



gas tank, lifetime ignition, adjustable handles and shoulder strap and better power-to-weight ratio. Both are powered by a 25cc engine. The FS 88 weighs 14.1 pounds, and the FS 108, 15.4 pounds.

Circle 152 on reader service card

Trailer mounting and holding devices for landscape tools from **Green Touch Industries** are made of vinyl coated, heavy gauge steel. The store and secure motorized equipment, ladders, gas cans, drink coolers and others, both on the road and in the shop.

Circle 153 of reader service card

Three models are available in the 1996 line of **Snapper** Great Dane Hydro Rider, zero-turn radius mowers. Kubota engines ranging from 25- to 40-hp are available, as well as cutting widths of 52 to 72 inches.

Circle 154 on reader service card

The Strongland Mini-Trencher from **Armstrong Tractor** is a high-speed, hand-held electric trenching saw that can handle jobs from lawn edging to drainage and irrigation ditches. Uses include installing sprinkler PVC pipe, drip and subsurface irrigation, root barriers and outdoor lighting.

Circle 155 on reader service card

ranges available, the line also features a centrifugal clutch for easy starting, a balanced rotor with free-swinging, reversible blades and three discharge screen options.

GSL's TurfBlend sulfate of potash provides a source of potassium and sulfur for turfgrasses. The product contains 52 percent potash and 18 percent sulfur, leaches more slowly than other potassium sources, promotes stronger roots and adds disease and injury resistance with practically no chlorides or other contaminants.

Circle 156 on reader service card

The ASVF anti-siphon valve from **Rain Bird**, part of the DV Series, combines an electric remote control valve with an atmospheric back-flow preventer in one unit. The unit comes with either 3/4 or 1-inch inlet and outlet, spray-free internal and external bleed screws and easy-to-turn flow control.

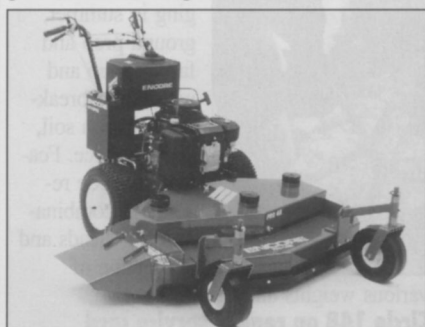
Circle 157 on reader service card



The 1996 model line of trucks from **Mitsubishi Fuso** feature several design advancements, including a new aerodynamic cab exterior, redesigned interior and instrument panel. A class 4, 14,500-pound/GVW model has been added to the line. The Class 5 FH has an upgraded GVW and other modifications, while the class 6 and 7 models feature boosted horsepower and standard automatic transmissions.

Circle 158 on reader service card

Encore now offers a 48-inch, hydrostatic walk-behind mower with a 14-hp Kawasaki engine as part of its Eliminator line. The product handles high wheel loads, with rol-



ler bearings rather than bushings supporting the main wheel drive shaft, and can withstand high temperatures.

Circle 159 on reader service card

The MiniDOS nonelectric water-powered fertilizer injector from **Dosmatic** features a built-in bypass to let technicians switch from solution to plain water and back. Polypropylene construction will accept a wider range of chemicals, including petroleum-based pesticides, acids and others.

Circle 160 on reader service card

Calendar

OCT. 25 Drip Irrigation Systems for the Professional Landscaper, University of California, Davis; 916/757-8777.

OCT. 25-27 Design Short Course III for Residential Properties: Advanced Design, Richfield, Ohio. Contact: Ohio Landscapers Association, 800/335-6521

OCT. 26-27 Using Compost and Other Organic Products, Pittsburgh Vista Hotel, Pittsburgh, Pa. Contact: American Society for Horticultural Science, 703/836-4606.

NOV. 1 - JAN. 10 Arboriculture Skills Workshops, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio. Contact: Anita Lide, 614/433-0045.

NOV. 3 Building With Trees: Saving Trees at Construction Sites, Grand Rapids, Mich. Contact: The National Arbor Day Foundation, 402/474-5655.

NOV. 7-10 Turf & Grounds Exposition, Rochester Riverside Center, Rochester, N.Y. Contact NYSTA, 800/873-TURF.

NOV. 9 Practical Pruning: A Workshop for

Arborists, University of California, Davis; 916/757-8777.

NOV. 11 Production Techniques for Organic & Sustainable Landscaping/Gardening, McLaren Lodge, San Francisco, Calif. Contact: Committee for Sustainable Agriculture, 916/756-6967.

NOV. 12-15 International Irrigation Exposition, Phoenix. Contact: Irrigation Association, 703/573-3661.

NOV. 12-16 Green Industry Expo, Fort Worth, Texas. Co-sponsored by the Associated Landscape Contractors of America, the Professional Grounds Management Society and the Professional Lawn Care Association of America. Contact GIE, 1000 Johnson Ferry Road, NE, Suite C-135, Marietta, GA 30068; 404/973-2019.

NOV. 14-15 Best Practices in Composting Workshop, San Diego, Calif. Contact: The Composting Council, 703/739-2401.

NOV. 16-18 Tree Care Industry Exposition '95, Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis.

Contact: National Arborist Association, 800/733-2622.

NOV. 27-29 North Central Turfgrass Exposition, Pheasant Run Resort, St. Charles, Ill. Contact: Illinois Turfgrass Foundation, 312/201-0101.

DEC. 4-7 Georgia Turfgrass Conference & Show, Atlanta. Contact: Gil Landry, Extension Crop & Soil Sciences; 404/228-7300.

DEC. 5-8 Ohio Turfgrass Foundation Conference & Show, Columbus Convention Center. Contact: Julie Guenther, OTF, P.O. Box 14824, Columbus, OH 43214-0824; 614/261-6750.

DEC. 6-8 42nd Rocky Mountain Regional Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show, Currigan Hall, Denver, Colo. Contact: 303/688-3440.

To ensure that your meeting date is published, send an announcement at least 10 to 12 weeks in advance to LLM magazine, 4012 Bridge Ave., Cleveland, OH 44113, or call 216/961-4130. ■

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Computers

(continued from page 51)

ON YOUR OWN. Some contractors are never able to find the pre-packaged software that works for them. Some, like Hines, have the ability to go it on their own.

Hines emphasized that the software specifically available for the green industry is only a type of relational data base. If one is too complicated or too inflexible, there are always choices.

As a former franchise lawn care operator, Hines originally had to work with a complicated program. There was a 5-tier system designed to give the company information in a way which was not usable to him. When he bought another packaged system, it offered a specific routing system unlike the one his company used. With five different programs, there was no interaction. It specified a system of map codes that didn't work for him.

Hines had worked as a computer consultant for some time and eventually developed his own software based on a readily-available program,

which works for his company.

"You don't have to spend a lot," Hines explained. "You need to track basic information and put your needs into focus. Many companies could get away with a simple data base available at the local computer store for \$150. Remember the KISS principle (Keep It Simple Stupid). And, whatever program you use, spend the time and money, if necessary on classes. Get to know enough to ask intelligent questions."

Mosely also rejected the system his franchise holder required. He said the system only fit corporate desires and was designed and run by accountants.

"The system was telling us how to do business. We bought a prepackaged program next and it wouldn't let us cancel a customer. With that program, it was hard to manipulate information and we couldn't get the reports we wanted. Canned systems just don't allow the flexibility and there was not enough help available," he said.

"One hundred percent of them are tied into accounting systems. It was the case of a lawn care company

that tried to fit into accounting techniques."

He consulted with a Texas-based programming company to create a program with "a high degree of flexibility, numerous safeguards to balance the totals and a unique routing system." It still takes time to get assistance and he said help from the programming company is "adequate."

His cost for the system, however, was far from minimal. A new set of hardware and the specially-created software cost about \$30,000 and took six to eight months to get up and running. That system was developed several years ago, and the cost today would be about half.

SYSTEM SUCCESS. Although it took three systems to get him where he wants to be, Fogarty is pleased with his packaged system. He likes features that allow him to specialize each account and make notes on many levels—general, billing and individual application. The marketing programs allow him to generate mailing lists.

Fogarty advised contractors to

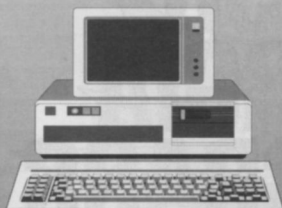
look for a software provider who listens to the users and continues to upgrade and change with the industry. Others advise looking for a system devised by a lawn service or landscape contractor who is knowledgeable in computers, rather than one designed by a computer expert who is trying to make a program for the industry.

Company owners also need to understand that they will pay for support on an on-going basis. Fogarty estimated he spends about \$1,000 a year to get this support. "A computer does allow you to do things faster, but it's a big expense," he noted.

"It's an imperfect science," he concluded. "It involves human relations, too. When you computerize, you're married to the computer company. You need to expect common consideration from the software company. That relationship with the computer company people can make you or break you." ■

The authors are industry consultants with Key Solutions, a division of Iris Sales & Solutions Inc., Rocky River, Ohio.

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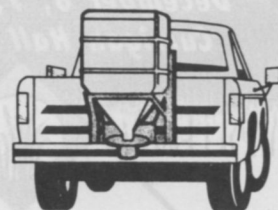


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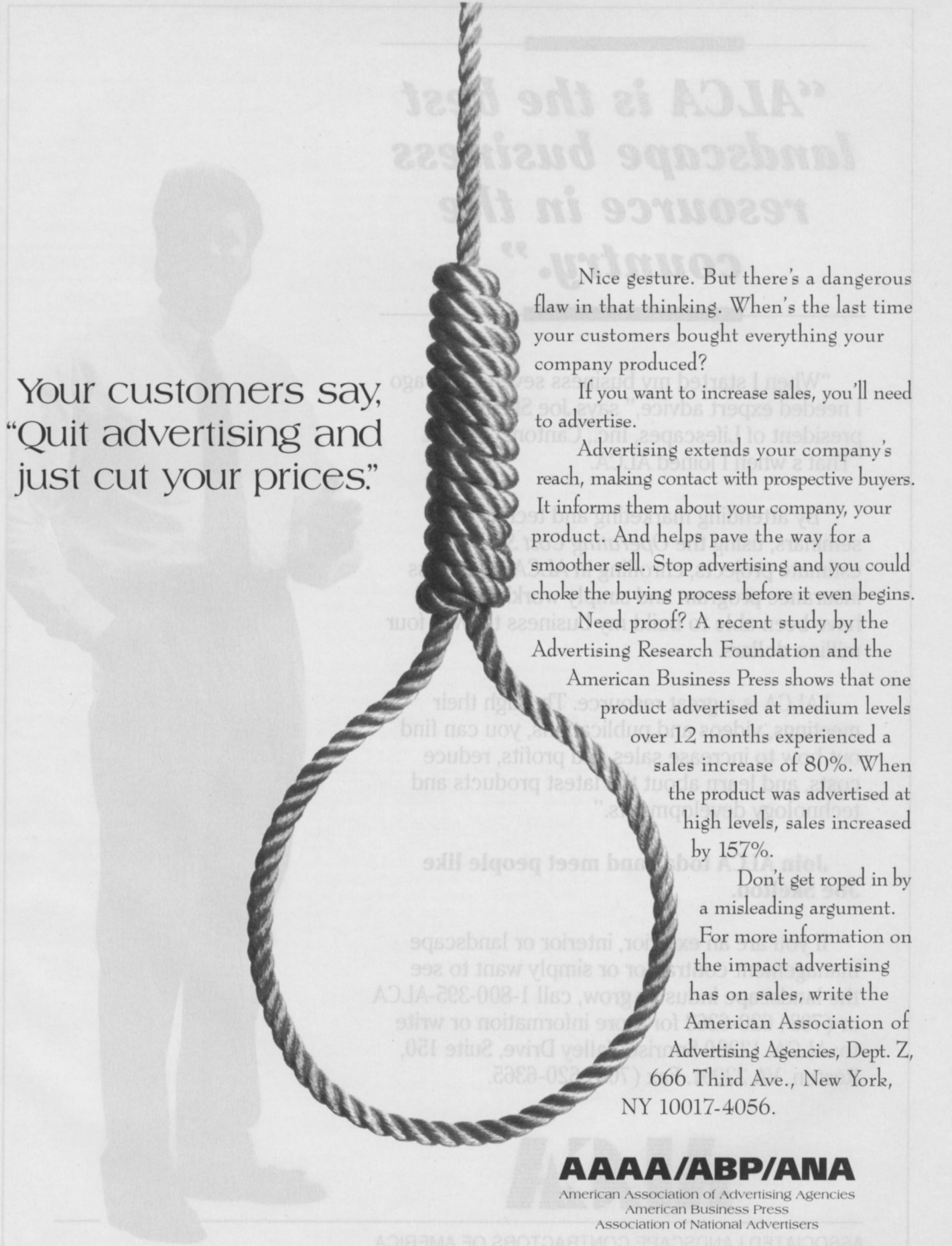
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Cover Story

(continued from page 29)

gration also remains unsettled. As of this printing, a bill reintroduced into the House as H.R. 2202 proposed sweeping changes in current immigration policy that include a lowered annual cap in legal immigration, restricted access for immigrants to public benefits, speedier deportation for illegal aliens and efforts to deter illegal immigration. The subcommittee that reported the original bill deleted a section that would have held employers responsible for unlawful hiring of aliens, even if the violation was committed without the employer's knowledge.

As it stands now, representatives of the American Association of Nurserymen have joined with the National Council of Agricultural Employers to develop a "temporary and seasonal worker program in the event that domestic labor shortages occur when immigration reform legislation passes Congress," according to AAN.

"I think the immigration issue is a major cloud over this industry," stated Brickman. "It appears the government lacks the conviction

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Ad Index

America List	67
American Cyanamid	9,10,11
American Isuzu Eng.	17
Badger	19
Carlson	18
CBS	18
Central Parts Warehouse	72
CENTS Show	5
Ciba	52,53*
Compuscapes	22
CoRoN	70
Creative Curb	63
Deere & Co.	40,41
Design Image	67
Easy Lawn	42
Emerald Green	14
Fabriscap	62
Georgia Turfgrass	71
GIE Show	25
Glen-Hilton	29,69
GMC Truck	20,21
Grasshopper	13
Greenline	42
HD Hudson	62
Highway Equipment	46
Landscape 2000	56
Lester Building System	63
Line Ward	72
Longhorn	69
Metromail	22
Mutton Power Equip.	29
National Lime & Stone	43
New Holland	78
Oetiker	34
OK Enterprises	24
Oldham Chemicals Co.	56
Olson	28
OTF	35
Polecat	19
Rain Bird	64,77
Real Green	14,72
Recreational Leisure	24
Regal Chemical	7,68
RISE	52,53*
Rocky Mountain Turfgrass	71
Sandoz	60,61
Sharp & Lube	44
SPS Consulting	24
Sure-Loc	28
Technic Tool Corp.	47
Tuflex	48
University of Georgia	69
Walker Mfg.	2
Wells Cargo Inc.	43

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to solve it," referring to rules that seem to put the burden of enforcement on employers.

The issues that are starting to overshadow the industry will create a paradox for consumers, said Joe Fahey, vice president of sales and marketing, Stihl Co., Virginia Beach, Va. "Some of the people who want the benefits of professionally landscaped grounds may not want to pay the costs of having it done. Many of those consumers don't want to deal with the downside of landscaping, only the upside."

The result of emission regulations will be anyone's guess at this point. "The technology could go in a number of different directions" to meet the requirements, Fahey noted. Recent equipment designs that make products more lightweight and powerful are "creating the types of products that make landscape work more efficient, that allow contractors to cover more ground in less time."

"Landscape contractors are like any other business — they are working to become more efficient," he explained. ■

The author is Editor of Lawn & Landscape Maintenance magazine.



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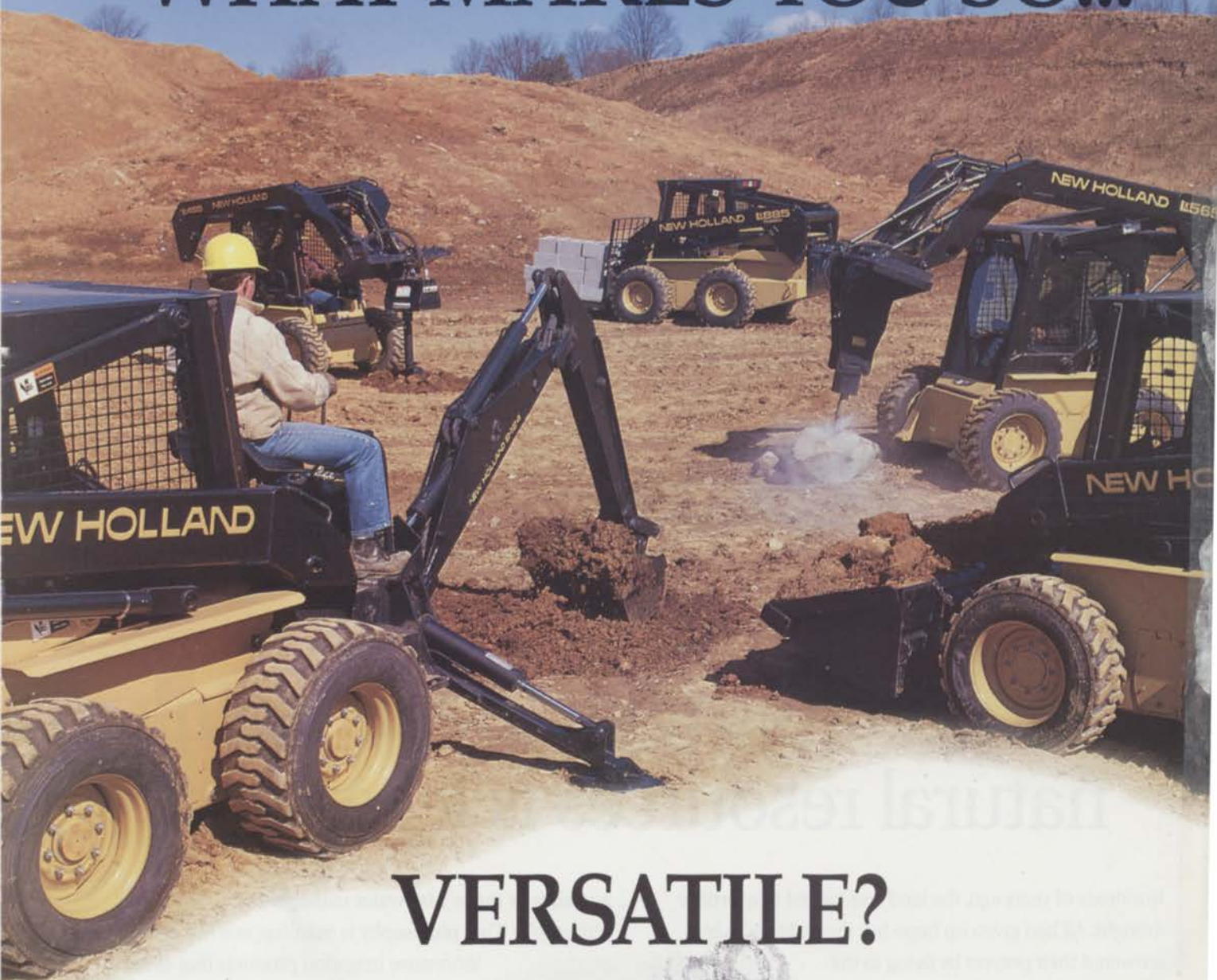


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