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STATE OF THE INDUSTRY REPORT

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Labor is a major factor keeping many contractors from expanding their business, but low price strategies, Mother Nature and local market forces are also keeping everyone on their toes. In spite of this, business is up and continues to look good for next year.



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Sue Gibson
Editor

Information, now more than ever, is at a premium. Good, hard facts seem to be worth their weight in gold to forecasters, marketers and anyone interested in providing quality customer service. That applies to the staff of *Lawn & Landscape*. We've been asking for your opinions through wrap cover surveys, fax surveys sent to random samples of our readership, scientifically constructed surveys and even telephone conversations.

We really learn a lot through those telephone conversations, but obviously, we can't reach all 60,000 of you. Especially in the middle of the growing season.

We know you're busy people and we appreciate your cooperation in these and future surveys. For us, they're like feeling the pulse of an industry.

What we've learned in this year's crop of surveys is that the lawn and landscape contracting industry continues on its strong spiral of growth. Business turned out pretty well, after all, in spite of the dreary spring weather. Customers want more value (what else is new?), but are willing to spend their money for professional services. And most contractors see a very healthy 1997 ahead.

Some growth can be attributed to a healthy economy in general. While some markets in the country are still in the recovery room, others are so robust that locals don't want to forecast any slowdown for the near future. In fact, 90 percent of the respondents to our recent wrap cover survey are optimistic about 1997.

It appears that many areas have learned their lesson after the recent recessions. City fathers (and mothers) are focused on attracting a mix of businesses and industries. As a result, many metropolitan economies are more stable. And most are growing. This translates into good business prospects for the rest of 1996 and early 1997.

Although many contractors report increasing pressure from their customers for "value," they also note that quality service and professional management continue to keep them competitive and busy.

Many contractors also report growth from new services. Many new business opportunities are a result of outsourcing, as companies continue to bid out landscape services. Other opportunities arise in the demand for irrigation services, snow plowing, tree and ornamental maintenance, water features, hardscaping and landscape lighting.

Ironically, many contractors want to grow their business in those areas, but they're hampered by difficulty finding qualified employees and supervisors. The flip side to a good economy is low unemployment, which puts the pressure on professional contractors to attract and retain top-notch, dependable managers.

These and other insights are the focus of our "State of the Industry Report," which starts on page 16. We hope you find the information useful as you prepare for a busy 1997. — Sue Gibson

Lawn & Landscape

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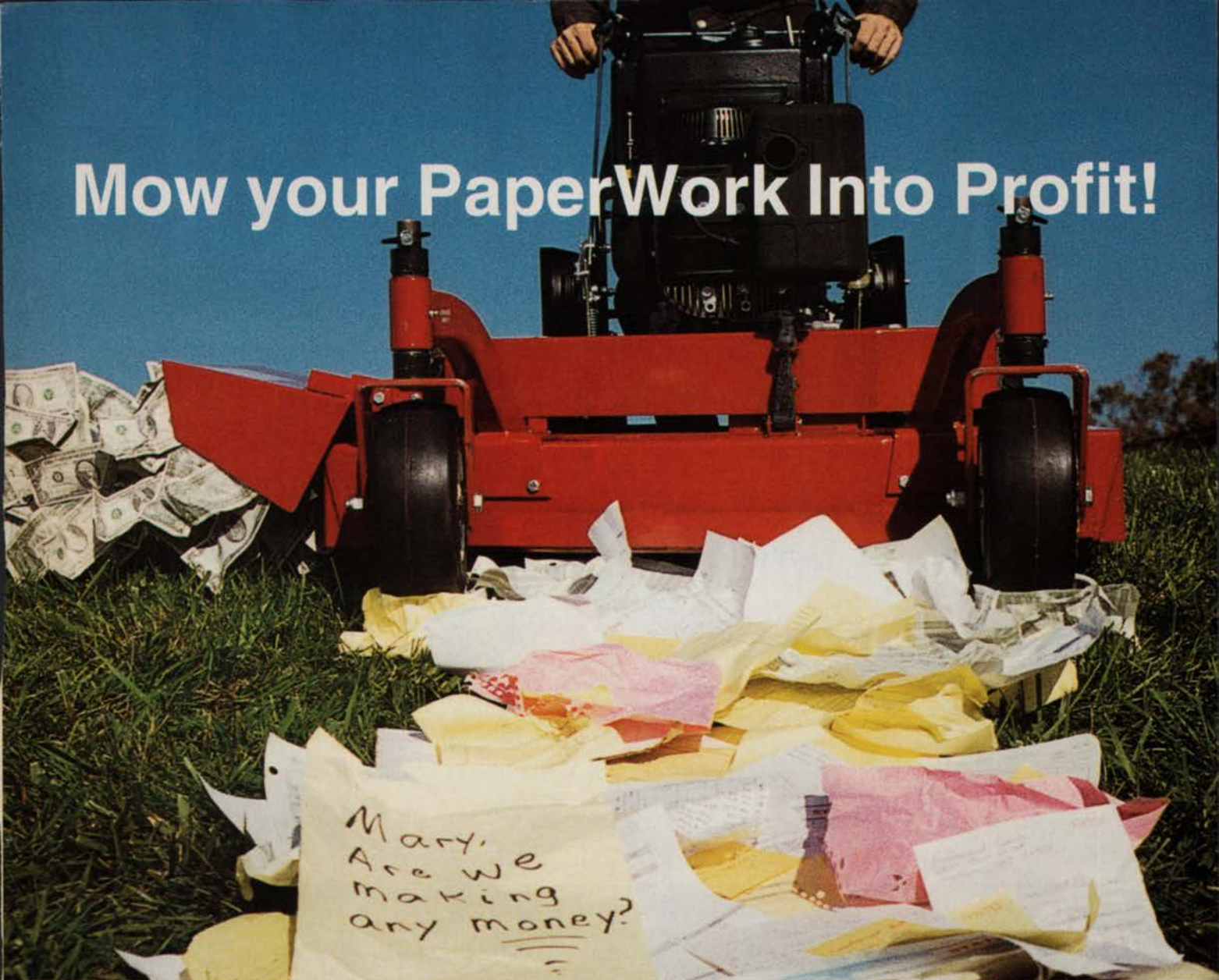
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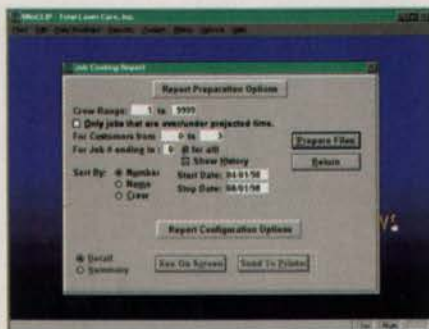
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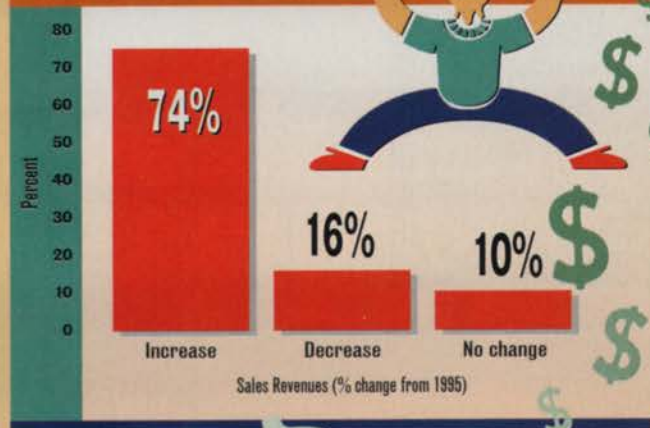
1996 SHAPES UP AS A GROWTH YEAR

In a recent survey conducted by *Lawn & Landscape* magazine, 74 percent of respondents reported that when 1996 figures are in the books they expect their company's sales revenues to show an increase over business in 1995. In fact, the average increase forecast for 1996 was nearly 22 percent. Only 16 percent of contractors expect a decrease in sales revenues, (an average of around 18 percent). The remaining 10 percent said they expect no change in their revenues this year.

"We have a lot of competition, and some of them are real lowballers," noted one respondent, "but we continue to turn down work even with our higher rates because of quality and reliability."

Another contractor noted a distressing trend: "Since customers started using lawn care as they do pest control, it has become a commodity to them, not a service. One size fits all."

JUGGLING FOR ADDED PROFITS



Source: *Lawn & Landscape*

RISE ADDRESSES IEI ISSUES AT STATE AND LOCAL LEVEL

Until recently, the debate over the medical validity of idiopathic environmental intolerances, formerly known as multiple chemical sensitivity, as a diagnosable illness has largely been based on the beliefs of those who claim to suffer from the "condition" and a handful of physicians in the medical community.

Concerned about the regulatory and economic ramifications of legitimizing IEI as a diagnosis in workmen's

compensation and disability claims, industry groups are talking to pesticide applicators at the state level about what IEI really is and how to bring science into this emotionally charged issue.

Attendees at a recent meeting of the Florida Pest Control Association heard representatives from Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment and the Environmental Sensitivities Research Institute talk about new research and issues regarding IEI and its potential effect on policy and legislation.

The symptoms and hysteria surrounding IEI can be traced back through history, explained Suellen Pirages, managing

director of ESRI. Today, IEI claimants blame exposure to pesticides, carpeting, fragrances, molds and fungi for a wide array of diffuse symptoms.

Pirages noted that, while individuals claiming to be suffering from IEI truly believe they are sick, the world's medical community has been unable to substantiate their claims of damaged health.

The Environmental Protection Agency, in a document published in June, said that the organization "accepts the concern and personal sincerity of these individuals' beliefs, but is not aware of any scientific evidence which would support them."

The World Health Orga-

nization, concerned about the focus on chemicals implicit in the MCS label and the lack of a scientifically defined cause or cure, initiated the new name. According to Pirages, WHO stated that IEI is not a

Today, IEI claimants blame exposure to pesticides, carpeting, fragrances, molds and fungi for a wide array of diffuse symptoms.

clinically defined disease and has no valid treatments. She noted that WHO dismissed the isolation techniques prescribed by doctors who diagnose IEI as inappropriate.

Despite what medical knowledge presently exists, pressure

(continued on page 10)

Fred Langley, manager of state government relations for RISE, discusses IEI issues with Florida lawn care professionals.



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USE READER SERVICE #77

(continued from page 8)

from a plethora of well connected and organized IEI support and lobby groups is successfully influencing the powers that be, especially at the state level, according to Fred Langley, manager of state government relations for RISE.

The efforts of IEI activist groups have been a factor in the creation of registries for "chemically sensitive" people in several states. This requires professional applicators to notify registered individuals in the event that pesticides will be applied to turf or ornamentals in landscapes within a certain distance from their home.

These notification registries have given IEI an implied legitimacy, which is resulting in

TRANSITION

The Toro Company created a three-person team to represent the office of the president. It consists of Toro chairman and chief executive officer **Kendrick Melrose** and group vice presidents **David McIntosh** and **Charles Lounsbury**.

Rentokil Group PLC made numerous management changes naming **Dick Cottrill** area managing director for the United States; **Terry Anderson** president, tropical plant services; **William Sadler**, president, U.S. personnel services; **Sally Briese**, regional vice president, tropical plant services; and **Janis Nau**, branch manager, Los Angeles.

David Hill joined Nibco as vice president of operations.

IMC Vigoro appointed **Steve Kuyrkendall** territory manager for parts of the southern United States.

Green Stuff Absorbent Products named **Blaine Hinds** technical sales representative for the eastern region.

David Holman was appointed general manager at Advanta Seeds West.

Tecumseh Products promoted **James Martinco** to group vice president.

David Jensen Associates selected **Phil Stuepfert** and **Donavon Corum** as landscape architects.

Lied's Landscape Design & Development named **Robert Lied** as president. **Tom Lied** will continue in his new role as sales and marketing director.



Terry Anderson



Steve Kuyrkendall

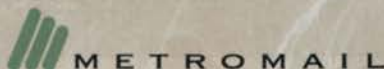


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- Others (please describe): _____

3. What were your approximate 1995 revenues?

- 0 - \$50,000
- \$50,001 - \$100,000
- \$100,001 - \$250,000
- \$250,001 - \$500,000
- \$500,001 - \$1 million
- + \$1 million

4. How many of your employees are:

- _____ Full time _____ Applicators
- _____ Seasonal _____ Maintenance

5. What percentage of your business is:

- _____ % Commercial/Industrial
- _____ % Residential
- _____ % Gov't/Municipal
- _____ % Golf

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2	22	42	62	82	102	122	142	162	182	202	222	242
3	23	43	63	83	103	123	143	163	183	203	223	243
4	24	44	64	84	104	124	144	164	184	204	224	244
5	25	45	65	85	105	125	145	165	185	205	225	256
6	26	46	66	86	106	126	146	166	186	206	226	246
7	27	47	67	87	107	127	147	167	187	207	227	247
8	28	48	68	88	108	128	148	168	188	208	228	248
9	29	49	69	89	109	129	149	169	189	209	229	249
10	30	50	70	90	110	130	150	170	190	210	230	250
11	31	51	71	91	111	131	151	171	191	211	231	251
12	32	52	72	92	112	132	152	172	192	212	232	252
13	33	53	73	93	113	133	153	173	193	213	233	253
14	34	54	74	94	114	134	154	174	194	214	234	254
15	35	55	75	95	115	135	155	175	195	215	235	255
16	36	56	76	96	116	136	156	176	196	216	236	256
17	37	57	77	97	117	137	157	177	197	217	237	257
18	38	58	78	98	118	138	158	178	198	218	238	258
19	39	59	79	99	119	139	159	179	199	219	239	259
20	40	60	80	100	120	140	160	180	200	220	240	260

6. Circle what percent of your business is:

Lawn Care	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Maint. Serv.	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Irrigation Serv.	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Pest Control	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Installation	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Trees & Ormmts.	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%

7. How much did your company spend in 1995 on?

Turf Chemicals \$ _____
Ornamental Chemicals \$ _____
Equipment \$ _____

8. How many does your business operate?

- _____ Walk Behind Mowers
- _____ Riding Mowers
- _____ Trimmers
- _____ Chain Saws
- _____ Blowers

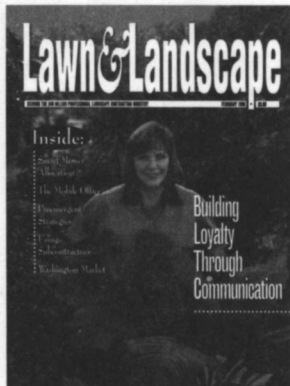
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- 4. Ornamental Shrub & Tree Service
- 5. Irrigation Contractor
- 6. Landscape Architect
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- 4. Others (please describe) _____

2. What best describes your title?

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OTF DEDICATES RESEARCH FACILITY

More than 400 industry professionals recently attended the dedication of the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation Research & Education Facility in Columbus. The 8,000-square-foot facility was designed and built to advance turfgrass research in Ohio.

The Ohio Turfgrass Foundation, the primary funder and driver of the \$366,500 project, hosted the dedication. Speakers included Dr. Luther Waters, chairman of the Department of Horticulture and Crop Science at The Ohio State University; Dr. Bobby Moser, Vice President of Agriculture/Executive Dean of the College of Agriculture, OSU; John Street, OTF executive director and OSU turfgrass professor; Ed Eaton, OTF president; and Ohio Rep. Priscilla Mead, from Upper Arlington. Equipment



and plant materials for the facility were donated by industry suppliers. Donations can be made by calling OTF Executive Secretary Julie Weller, 614/261-6750.

attempts to file disability claims by IEI "sufferers" across the country.

The legitimizing of IEI could also cause a flood of workers' compensation claims from pesticide applicators, according to Langley. IEI support and lobby organizations are targeting these claims to make the diagnosis more accepted by the medical community and the general public, eventually making it possible to file for worker's compensation based on an IEI diagnosis.

New Mexico will host the next state level conference that RISE will be holding. It is scheduled to be held on Oct. 23. — *Paul Schrimpf*

MISSION STATEMENT:

LAWN & LANDSCAPE magazine delivers superior, total coverage of the continually evolving professional lawn and landscape contractor market, from in-depth business trends and technical research reports to market analysis and new product introductions. For 17 years, L&L has provided industry presidents, business owners and top-level managers the most up-to-date information needed to effectively run their businesses.

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MARKET TRENDS

Parade in Pasadena, Calif., on New Year's Day. This is the first time the company has participated in the parade and its float will be entered in the "Extraordinaire" category for floats exceeding 55 feet. The float, which will measure 110 feet and move as four separate sections, will highlight ancient Egypt for introducing many irrigation techniques to the world.

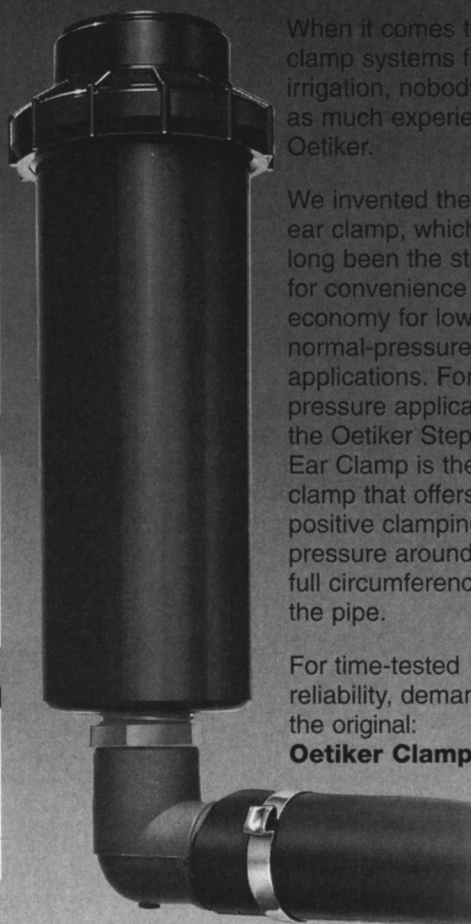
▼ TORO COMPANY BUYS JAMES HARDIE IRRIGATION

Two irrigation industry leaders joined forces in September when The Toro Company, Bloomington, Minn., agreed to purchase the James Hardie Irrigation Group, Laguna

Niguel, Calif. The purchase price of \$130 million will be finalized when the deal closes. The deal combines Hardie's expertise in irrigation valves and controllers with Toro's expertise in irrigation sprinkler heads. Hardie has 1,100 employees.

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USE READER SERVICE #16

ASSOCIATION NEWS

The National Landscape Association published updated editions of the *Landscape Designer and Estimator's Guide* and *Landscape Business Forms*. For information, call 202/789-2900.

The **Turfgrass Producers International** is seeking anti-turf articles so that it can provide the media with factual contradictions to the attacks. For more information, contact TPI at 800/405-8873.

The **Professional Lawn Care Association of America** will hold its 8th Annual Legislative Day on the Hill Feb. 3-4, 1997, with Robert F. Kennedy Jr., as the guest speaker. Also scheduled is a classroom session, "Strategic Management of Political Issues & Grassroots Politics" with Edward Grefe.

PLCAA completed its schedule for the 2nd Annual Management Conference & Golf Classic to be held in Tempe, Ariz., Jan. 17-19. For more information, call 800/458-3466.

The **Associated Landscape Contractors of America** formed the ALCA Educational Foundation to award scholarships and fund educational programming for the industry. ALCA also announced it has a new zip code at its Reston, Va., address. The new zip is 20191-3496.

The **American Association of Nurserymen** announced that 400 industry firms have joined its Lighthouse Fund, which was formed to increase participation in the industry's grassroots legislative action network. To become involved, call AAN at 202/789-2900.

JACOBSEN TEXTRON ACQUIRES BUNTON

Bunton Co., Louisville, Ky., will become part of Jacobsen Textron, Racine, Wis., in a deal announced last month. The purchase will position Jacobsen more strongly in the commercial landscape maintenance market, said Textron officials.

Bunton's 1995 sales totaled \$19 million; Textron's revenues exceeded \$9 billion. **LI**

CORRECTION

The photograph on page 24 of the September issue of *Lawn & Landscape* should be credited to Larry Kassell/Tee-2-Green.

CALENDAR

To ensure that your meeting date is published, send an announcement at least 10 to 12 weeks in advance to *Lawn & Landscape*, 4012 Bridge Ave., Cleveland, OH 44113.

OCT. 19-21 American Society of Landscape Architects Annual Meeting & Expo, Los Angeles, Calif. Contact: 202/686-8353.

OCT. 23-24 Pacific Hort Expo, and California Association of Nurserymen, Las Vegas. Contact: 800/517-0391.

NOV. 1-2 Tree Health Management, Seattle. Contact: 800/635-4294.

NOV. 1-3 New Jersey Shade Tree Federation Meeting & Expo, Cherry Hill, N.J. Contact: 908/246-3210.

NOV. 3-6 International Irrigation Exposition, San Antonio, Texas. Contact: 703/573-3551.

NOV. 7-9 Tree Care Industry Expo '96, Charlotte, N.C. Contact: 800/733-2622.

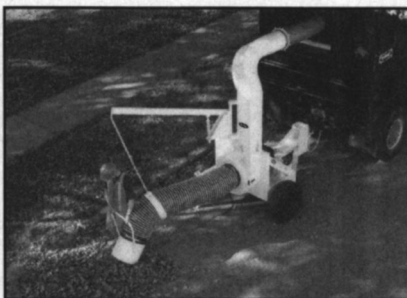
NOV. 12-15 Turf and Grounds Exposition, Rochester, N.Y. Contact: 800/873-TURF.

NOV. 13-15 Composting Council Annual Conference, Arlington, Va. Contact: 703/739-2401.

NOV. 17-21 Green Industry Expo, Cincinnati, Ohio. Sponsored by the Associated Landscape Contractors of America, the Professional Lawn Care Association of America and the Professional Grounds Management Society. Contact: 770/973-2019.

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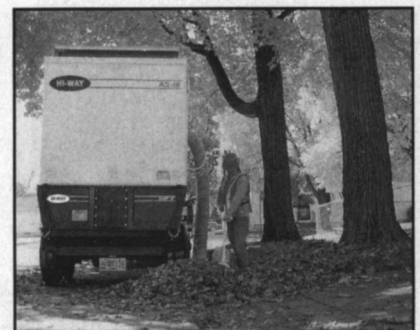
WINTER

When the deep freeze hits, arm yourself with the **Model P** deicing spreader. Mounted in the back of a standard pickup, the **Model P's** 8.5 hp engine uniformly casts material up to 40 feet and is ideal for spreading salt and sand on parking lots, driveways, cul-de-sacs, and streets.



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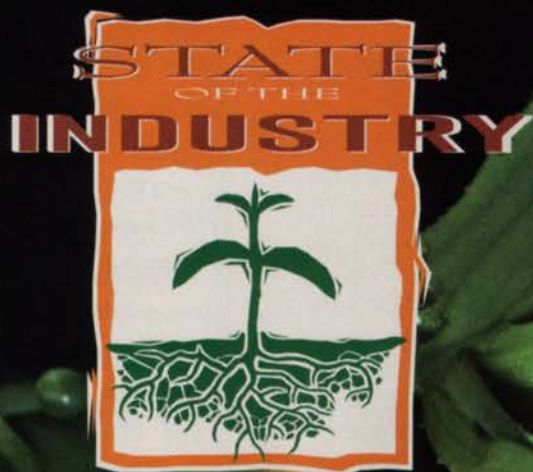
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USE READER SERVICE #72



Labor is a major factor keeping many contractors from expanding their businesses, but low price strategies, Mother Nature and local market forces are also keeping everyone on their toes. In spite of this, business is up and continues to look good for next year.

By Susan Gibson

Labor Crunch is Job 1



F

irst the good news: business is up. Lawn and landscape contractors in most areas of the country report that 1996 has been a good year for business. In fact, according to a recent survey of *Lawn & Landscape* readers, 74 percent are seeing an increase in business this year and they estimate that business will grow an average of 21.96 percent.

Now the bad news. A full 49 percent of the contractors responding to the survey named labor as a major factor limiting their ability to grow. From their comments, it's clear that many see this as a problem right now, and a problem that won't go away.

HARD TO FIND. Good people, at all levels of a contractor's organization, are hard to find, said survey respondents. Many contractors echo these sentiments:

"The big challenge is finding qualified people to add to our staff," said Ron Clark, marketing manager, Kurisu International, Portland, Ore. "It's a real tight labor market right now, and it's hard to find people who are willing to learn the business and work their way up through it."

John Meinert, president of John Meinert Landscaping, Pittsburgh, Pa., agreed that the workforce can be a limiting factor. "We talked for years about adding on irrigation as a service, but we needed to get the right people on board in middle management who could get the job done. I can get the college and high school kids who are looking for a summer job — it's the foremen and middle managers who are a big issue."

Experience, maturity and leadership are key factors that many contractors require. According to Glenn Bonick, president of Bonick Landscaping, Dallas, Texas, "Labor is terrible as far as experienced labor. The labor market is not growing. It's stagnant."

Dave Hanson, vice president of Environmental Care, San Jose, Calif., pointed out obvious, but sometimes unrealized, opportunities: "It appears as though the number of people trained to go into this industry is diminishing. It's not a glamour career, but there are a wealth of jobs and diversity with golf, construction, maintenance, nursery and other work. However, there is not a tremendous amount of interest from up-and-coming graduates to go into the green industry, an area where the job market is growing."

As long as the economy continues to improve, expect the labor market to remain tight. Future sources of experienced, knowledgeable labor may be developed through cooperative programs between individual contractors and schools, or through associations and their certification programs.

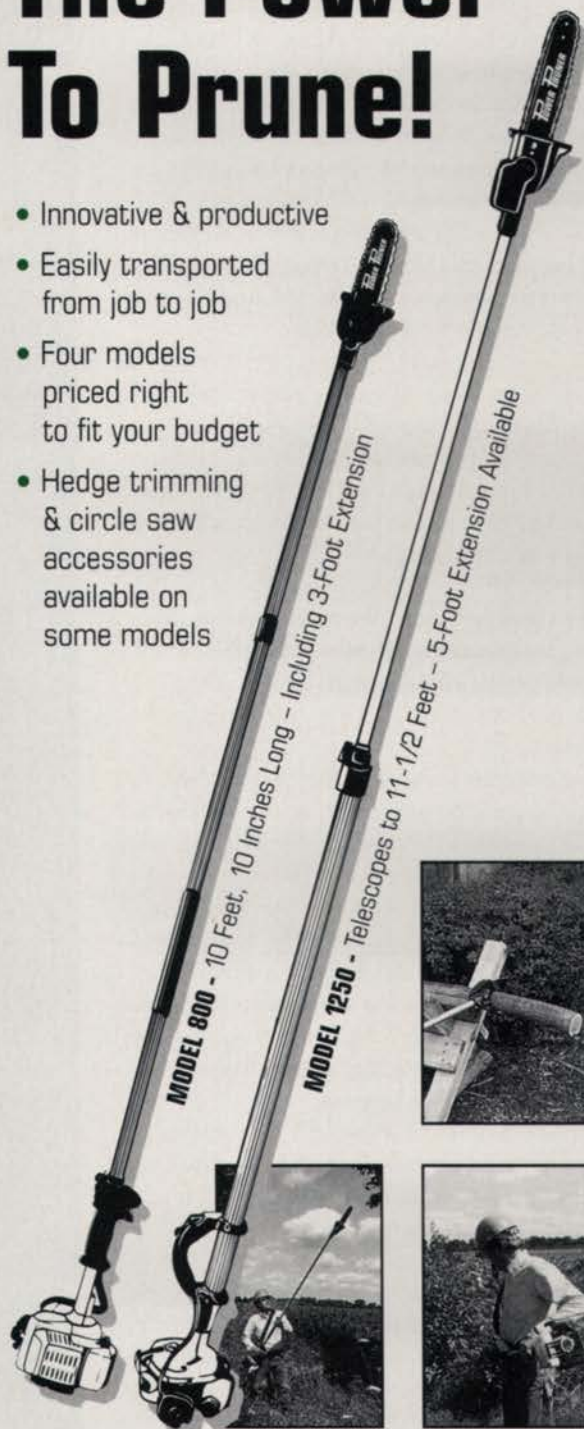
Drew St. John II, president of St. John & Associates, Hattiesburg, Miss., is finding that a working relationship with local two-year technical schools can be beneficial. "We look for students in the horticultural or landscape management programs for our field management." He pointed out that this kind of relationship allows him to take people out of the pipeline directly into his firm.

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TECHNIC TOOL CORPORATION

USE READER SERVICE #18

cover story

STATE
INDUSTRY



Bonick is optimistic about the Texas Association of Landscape Contractor's alliance with the Certified Landscape Technician program of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America. "I feel good about promoting that and hopefully, it will help our labor pool to become more skilled and proud of their jobs. Skilled labor should go up several notches. I see it as profitable for everyone."

GROWTH AREAS. Although last spring's weather had everyone wondering if it would be a tough year, most contractors report that they have caught up with applications and landscape maintenance visits. For many contractors, however, scheduling new projects was difficult. The cold, wet spring in much of the country necessitated a scramble to meet schedules. However, many contractors reported that sales picked up at a healthy pace once the weather improved.

The improvement in many local economies has generated good business in 1996. "We're seeing a real turnaround here on the West Coast," commented Wayne Richards, chief operating officer of Cagwin & Dorward, Novato, Calif. "Everybody feels good about the economy. While in the last couple of years things were tight, we now have a lot of opportunity and people are budgeting for landscape improvements. You can tell everyone's doing well when it is difficult to compete for employees."

Lawn & Landscape previously reported on the results of the latest Gallup poll, which looked into the use of lawn and landscape professionals in 1995. The poll, sponsored by a variety of industry organizations, forecast growth for professional contractors in 1996. Specifically, Gallup estimated that 23 million households in the United States planned to use professional landscape services this year.

Industry growth was mirrored in another industry analysis, this time by the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, Alexandria, Va. This August, OPEI's commercial turf forecast predicted a 7.5 percent increase in shipments of all 1996 commercial riding rotary turf mowers and a 6 percent increase for shipments of commercial intermediate size walk-behind rotary models. Shipments of both categories are also expected to increase further for 1997 models.

As far as growth in specific services, recent *Lawn & Landscape* contractor surveys have shown either real business gains or plans to add

GREAT GAINS IN '96

Survey respondents listed the service areas showing the greatest gains for them in 1996. The percentage of those naming each of the following services is listed here:

Mowing	20.9%
Pesticide application	14.3
Landscape installation	11.2
Landscape design	8.5
Maintenance work	7.6
Tree/shrub care	6.7
Irrigation installation	4.5
New turf installation	4.5
Snow removal	1.8
Lighting projects	1.0
Soil testing	0.6

(continued on page 20)

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USE READER SERVICE #20

cover story

STATE
OF THE
INDUSTRY



(continued from page 18)

the following services: landscape installation, tree and shrub care, irrigation installation, new turf installation, snow removal, irrigation maintenance, hydroseeding, dethatching/overseeding, organic waste removal, lighting projects and soil testing. In some cases, the manpower situation is the limiting factor.

"Although we've tried to add some services, few of them have stuck," noted Steve Hyland, president of Hyland Brothers Lawn Care, Fort Collins, Colo. "It's becoming more of a personnel issue. It's tougher to find irrigation people than it is to find applicators and it's tough enough to find applicators."

MUSICAL CHAIRS. Several contractors commented on the practice of picking up customers from competitors, either through pricing or perceived service improvements. Most agreed that high-end residential and commercial customers un-

derstand the value of quality service, but many said consumers see lawn and landscape services as a commodity. With that attitude, price rules.

"The high-end commercial companies are doing a more thorough job of pre-qualifying contractors," commented Richards. "They're not just shopping for the best price, they're looking at the total package and what they call the total cost of ownership. As a contractor, we have to offer responsiveness and consistency on which clients can rely."

"We're seeing a lot of what we call the 'double-switch' phenomenon," said Eric Cross, president of Duke's Landscape Management, Hackettstown, N.J. He explained this happens when Duke's loses a customer on price, the client gets substandard service from a low-price firm, then returns to Duke's to "clean up the mess."

He noted a trend of customers looking at the lowest bid, as opposed to judging contractors' work on quality and value. When a client leaves for a low bidder, Cross waits for their possible return. "If we're patient, we usually have the opportunity to work on the property again. Companies like ours that are stable and do high quality work must walk away from some of these bidding situations."

Easy market entry always plays a big role in the existence of low priced services, said Jeff Meyer, president of Desert Care, Phoenix, Ariz. "Entry into our market is easy so we're seeing a lot of new competition, but the companies you see staying around and succeed-

WHAT'S YOUR MAJOR LIMITING FACTOR?

Respondents to Lawn & Landscape's reader survey overwhelmingly named labor as the single most important factor limiting their growth this year. Here are the results:

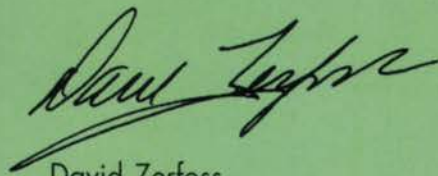
Labor	49.0%
Cash flow	19.6
Regulations	5.6
New firms	5.6
Price cutting	4.9
Insurance	4.5
Physical space	2.7
Competition	2.2
Workmen's comp.	1.4
Quality equipment	1.0

(continued on page 25)



**CHAIN SAW
SAFETY
AWARENESS
MONTH**

FOR THE SECOND year in a row, we're pleased to announce that October is Husqvarna Chain Saw Safety Awareness Month. Setting one month aside to draw additional attention to proper and safe operation of chain saws is a natural for Husqvarna, underscoring our unsurpassed commitment to customers. I encourage you to join us in our ongoing commitment to safety, and promoting Husqvarna Chain Saw Safety Awareness Month.



David Zerfoss
President
Husqvarna Forest & Garden

**CHAIN SAW
SAFETY
AWARENESS
MONTH**

Understanding

Chain Saw Safety

OCTOBER is Chain Saw Safety Awareness Month. Introduced by Husqvarna Forest & Garden Co., Charlotte, N.C., this represents the second observance of chain saw safety and highlights key safety messages critical to the users of chain saw equipment.

The introduction of this national awareness campaign by Husqvarna is not coincidental. Husqvarna has long been recognized as a leader in chain saw engineering and design. The company holds numerous chain saw patents and was the first to develop the inertia-activated chain brake now found on many chain saws.

While more than 1 million chain saws are sold in the United States each year, thousands of people using them have injuries requiring emergency room atten-

Vibration, Ergonomics and E-Tech... Oh My!

MANUFACTURERS and engineers of power equipment have a unique challenge. When designing equipment, they need to make the products more user friendly and more powerful than before, product weight notwithstanding.

Emissions, noise and ergonomic factors are key in today's equipment designs. These factors result not only from an environmental and physical safety perspective but from a legislative perspective as cities across the country are cracking down on products associated with noise.

The technology has arrived, however, to not only improve power but to make hand-held power equipment more user friendly. Borrowing on our European counterparts, many of today's chain saws and commercial trimmers are designed with low-vibration features. Basically this technology separates the handles and parts touching the body from the engine, shaft and cutting attachments.

"Users appreciate the fact that vibration has been reduced in both hands," said Mark Michaels, Husqvarna senior forestry product manager. "Low vibration technology came about because engineers listened to what the industry needed, giving lawn and landscape professionals the things they needed even before they were fully aware of the potential benefits."

With the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's new ergonomics rule looming, many landscape contractors are paying closer attention to factors like low-vibration. OSHA's proposed standard outlines potentially hazardous job activities - including the use of vibrating or impact tools or equipment for more than two hours.

As a result, new product prototypes are now tested for vibration and noise levels in labs. Ultimately, however, the user is the final judge of a product's quality.

The future will continue to bring an emphasis on environmentally conscious products, with low noise and emission levels. But you don't necessarily have to wait. Husqvarna just introduced its new 371XP chain saw with an exclusive Air Injection system which uses centrifugal force to remove sawdust, dirt and other particles from the air before it passes into the filter. By reducing the number of particles in the carburetor and cylinder, air injection lengthens the time between air filter cleanings and extends the life of the saw.

Also new are the patented E-tech™ engines from Husqvarna. Early tests indicate that the technology has the potential to reach reductions of at least 60 percent in combined HC and NOX emissions when compared to the 1995 CARB standards.

E-tech engines will be introduced on selected Husqvarna trimmers, brush cutters, blowers, hedge trimmers and edgers in 1997.

Learning From The Expert

tion. Many of these accidents can and should be avoided.

To promote awareness, improve equipment productivity and longevity and to protect the user of chain saw equipment, Mark Michaels, senior forestry product manager for Husqvarna and an experienced chain saw user, relates common sense usage and safety advice that can make a difference in the landscape.

SCRUTINIZE SAFETY FEATURES. For starters, use only chain saws boasting top-notch safety features. Saws should include features designed to reduce kickback, such as low-kickback chains, inertia-activated chain brakes and small-radius tips on guide bars. Also, a high power-to-weight ratio is recommended along with an anti-vibration system to reduce saw vibration in both front and rear handles, especially if the saw will be used on a regular basis.

A powerful saw with dampened vibration reduces operator fatigue, leading to safer use. Use an appropriately sized model — one suited for the specific job application as well as the individual's size and strength.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS. Before using a chain saw, make sure you're properly outfitted in safety gear. Protective apparel can dramatically reduce the extent of injuries if a chain saw accident occurs and should include a helmet, protective chaps or pants, eye and ear protection, steel-toed boots and work gloves.

LEARN THE BASICS. The chain saw is a powerful tool and its force shouldn't be taken lightly.

- Inspect the chain saw before each use and make sure the chain brake is operating properly. Test the chain brake after every work break and keep it free of oil and grease. Refer to your operator's manual for testing procedure.

Always use the proper procedure when starting the saw. Hold the saw firmly on the ground or solidly locked behind the right knee when starting the saw. The user should avoid starting the chain saw near

THE GAME of Logging and ArborMaster programs help loggers and arborists improve their chain saw productivity and safety. Competitions for arborists and loggers alike take place regionally and nationally. Like the Olympics, training for these competitions is arduous; requiring concentration and discipline.

While landscapes don't compare to forests, chain saw use on residential and commercial properties is quite prevalent and can be a time saver if used properly. Game of Logging and ArborMaster chain saw expert Tim Ard discussed some common sense reminders for landscapers using chain saws on the job.

Q. What's the number one mistake or error landscape contractors commit when starting up and using a chain saw?

A. Landscapers may feel it's only a small task or it's going to be just a couple of cuts. They forget that accidents are "unplanned events," and they forget to think about personal protective equipment and its need even for a minimal sawing task. They may not be as "uptuned" on saw maintenance if they just use it occasionally.

Q. What are the most common applications for a chain saw in the landscape?

A. Pruning and cutting back shrubs and ornamentals. Dead tree or wood removal. Storm and wind clean-up and tree pruning at least once a year on most contracts.

Q. When used properly, can chain saws serve as a labor saving tool?

A. Trying to safely and productively clean-up storm and ice damage of trees etc., with a hand saw and ax....? Undoubtedly, the chain saw reduces time and labor.

Q. What's most important to remember in Chain Saw Safety Awareness Month?

A. Plan ahead of your task. Remember, if you start the chain saw and begin a job without a plan in your head you're most likely not doing it right. You should have a complete plan and feel comfortable with performing that plan before you start the saw. Don't forget your head, eyes, ears, legs and feet — you're more important than the task. Protect yourself.

Q. What kind of professional training is necessary when using a chain saw?

A. There really aren't any requirements to date in the United States. OSHA requires the employer/employee to familiarize themselves with the equipment and its owner/operation manual. It states the employee should be trained in the use of the equipment and use proper personal protective equipment (PPE).

Q. What safety considerations are important when using a chain saw?

A. Know what "reactive forces" of push-back, pull-in and kick-back are before you operate a chain saw. You should also have an understanding of the saw's idle and high speed settings and its safety features. Always wear the proper PPE and read your operator's manual as a refresher before use.

Q. What protective clothing is necessary when using a chain saw — even for landscapers who just use the saw occasionally?

A. Safety glasses, ear muffs or plugs, a helmet if working under the tree, chain saw resistant chaps or pants and boots with ANSI approved toe and saw resistance.

Q. What about noise issues when using a chain saw? How can landscapers protect themselves and reduce possibly disturbing noise to their customers?

A. Have your saw properly tuned...it sounds less obtrusive — at least to me. Operators and bystanders should wear ear-muffs or plugs to reduce ear noise.

CHAIN SAW SAFETY AWARENESS MONTH

where it was filled with fuel. Use only the correct fuel/oil mixture in the chain saw for the best performance and maximum saw life.

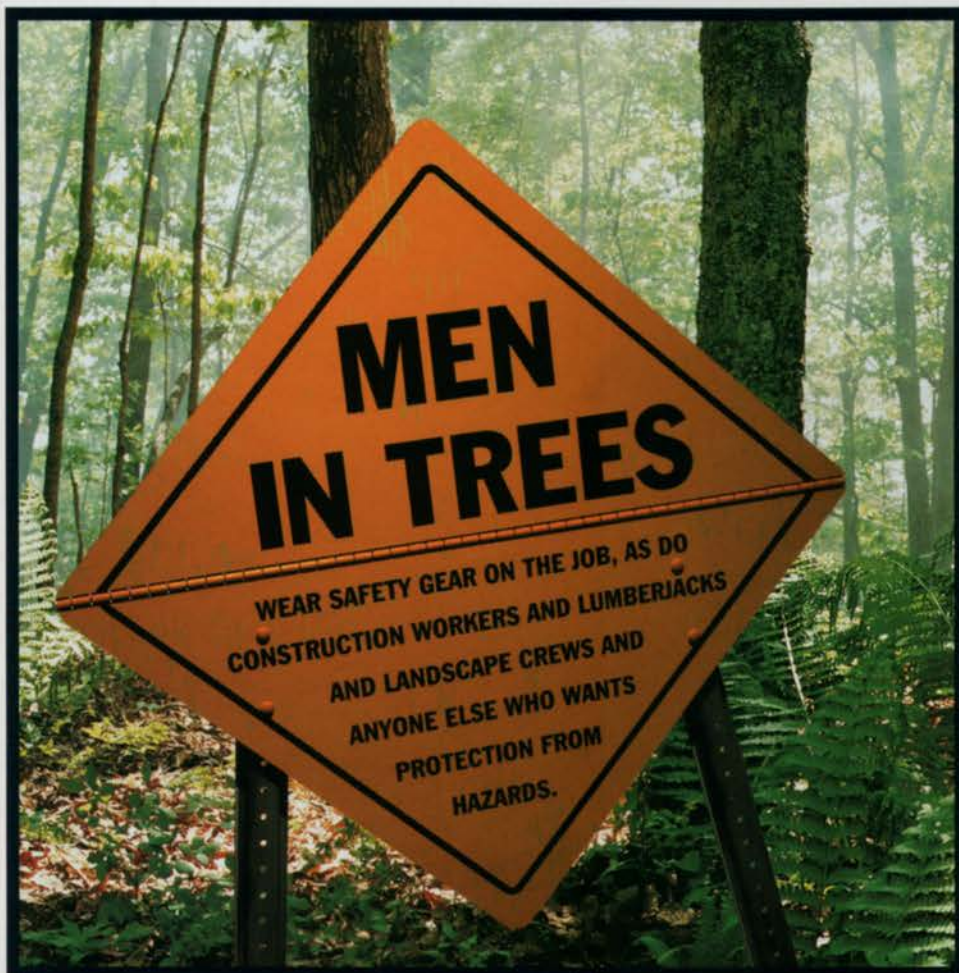
- Carefully plan cutting jobs to help avoid possible hazards such as dead limbs, electric lines, roads or other people. Remind customers to work safe distances

apart from others — equal to at least twice the height of the tree being cut down. Make sure help is nearby in case of an accident.

When cutting, stand on firm, level ground to one side of the cut. Hold the saw with both hands, keeping a firm grip on the saw with the right hand on the rear handle, the left hand on the front handle and the

thumbs and fingers encircling the handles.

- Protect yourself against chain saw kickback. Never modify or remove a chain brake. It's there to reduce the effect of kickback and prevent possible injury. The chain saw bar tip should never come in contact with any of the trees behind the one being cut. Such contact may cause the saw to kick back.



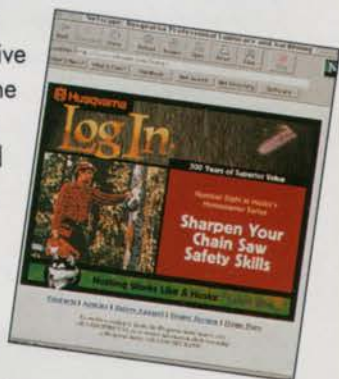
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Log In

LEARNING and understanding safety tips doesn't have to be boring. If reading a manual isn't your cup of tea, log onto the Internet and stroll through a variety of sites that will make learning more fun.

Husqvarna Forest & Garden recently launched its comprehensive Web site. The site includes an animated home page; a series of 13 articles that rotate; three pages devoted to



Husqvarna chain saws, trimmers, blowers and other products; an accessories page; and a page of information for dealers and prospective dealers.

The feature section of the Web site contains 13 different articles rotated randomly providing the landscaper with a different story during each visit. Product pages feature a selection of three or four models of equipment from each of the product categories and include animated illustrations of exclusive Husqvarna features.

Visit Husqvarna's Web site at www.husqvarna.com. Additionally, visit the Game of Logging/ArborMaster site at www.forestapps.com.



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 **Husqvarna**

cover story

STATE
OF THE
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(continued from page 20)

ing are the ones that provide quality service."

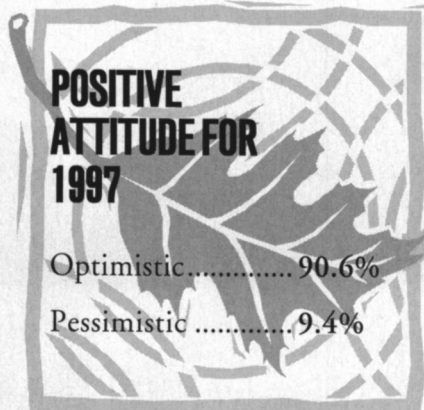
Price alone does not offer a competitive advantage, as many contractors have found. Service and convenience play a major role in building customer loyalty. St. John feels much of his growth is attributed to his organization's capability to do the work, rather than price it at a certain level. "Price is a consideration, but it's not number one. Scheduling and follow up is as important a competitive edge as anything."

EYE ON '97. There's no doubt that many customers buy on price, but many others are becoming more discerning of quality service. As their expectations of value increases, lawn and landscape contractors will be challenged to improve their operations and provide the value customers want.

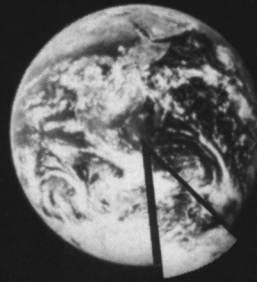
"The major challenge in the lawn care business is satisfying the customers and keeping them satisfied as their expectations of value increase with the quality of service we provide," said Chris Senske, president of Senske Lawn & Tree Care, Kennewick, Wash. "It's becoming harder to keep them happy and they expect more for each dollar."

While future growth depends on future economic swings, one area that contractors can control is their own operations. "We're looking at the next three or four years being pretty good with a strong economy," noted John Gachina, president, Gachina Landscape Management, Menlo Park, Calif. "Our challenges are all in operations — maintaining high quality, keeping high standards and

(continued on page 70)



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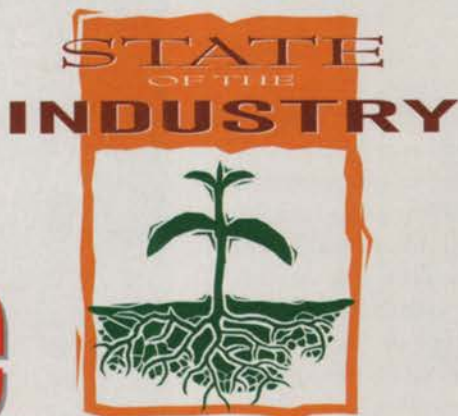
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USE READER SERVICE #23

Quality vs. Quantity:

The State of Landscape Irrigation



While much growth in landscape irrigation has come from installation, look to maintenance and renovation for future gains.

By Bruce Shank



Irrigation is an important part of your contracting business, vote this fall for more government, not less. Strong irrigation laws favor the contractor and protect him or her from the fly-by-night and do-it-yourself installers. Regulations on licensing, backflow, water conservation and strong building codes put irrigation in the hands of professionals skilled in irrigation design, installation and repair. Less regulation could result in greater customer reliance on the products and limited support services of large mass merchandisers.

CONTRACTING POOL. The Irrigation Association estimates there are approximately 8,000 irrigation contractors in the U.S. and another 30,000 landscape contractors performing irrigation services. Each year they install or retrofit more than 500,000 residential and 15,000 commercial irrigation systems at a total cost of \$1.2 billion. This does not include golf course and institutional irrigation systems having an installed

(continued on page 28)

Large commercial systems use superior components, which means higher margins for contractors.





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to ANSI B175.2-1990 Guidelines), which is ideally suited to meet the needs of the many communities that have enacted noise legislation. This exciting innovation in commercial backpack blowers will allow you to take full advantage of the labor savings afforded by a backpack blower without disturbing noise sensitive communities.

This new technology also makes the PB-46LN ideally suited for resort maintenance where excessive noise can be a problem with discriminating guests. Best of all, the new PB-46LN is made by Echo. It's powered by an industry tested and approved 44cc commercial grade engine that's built to take the abuse of long work days. The durable, yet lightweight frame, protects critical engine

components under demanding usage, but still allows them to be serviced with ease. The automotive type air filter, for example, can literally be replaced on a job site in a matter of seconds.

The Quiet 1™, another in a series of product innovations from Echo, the choice of professionals! For the name of your nearest Echo dealer, call 1-800-432-ECHO (3246). Or write: Echo, Incorporated, 400 Oakwood Road, Lake Zurich, IL 60047.

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STATE INDUSTRY



(continued from page 26)

value of \$350 million.

Irrigation represents nearly 10 percent of the \$14.2 billion spent by American homeowners on landscape installation and construction in 1994, as revealed by a Gallup poll sponsored by several industry associations.

Water is a resource that governments must protect. Historically, industry has not exhibited the level of responsibility necessary to guard limited water sources from overuse and contamination. Growing population places pressure on our national water resources to the point that government subsidized water prices are rising as demand exceeds supply. City water agencies have begun to buy water from rural irrigation districts when the value of the water exceeds the value of a crop produced by a farmer with the water. Higher water prices, in turn, encourage conservation.

A controversial study by the East Bay Municipal Water District in California stated that even though automatic irrigation systems have the ability to apply water more efficiently than other methods, their capacity to waste water exceeds other methods. This is precisely why training, certification and licensing are vital to water conservation efforts. The answer is not to limit automatic irrigation systems. Rather, it is to limit the number of unskilled and untrained operators.

RESIDENTIAL IRRIGATION. In 1994, there were 10 million single family, detached homes in the country with automatic irrigation systems. This is based upon 1990 U.S. Bureau of Census figures projected to 1994 at a 2 percent annual growth rate.

The IA estimates that 40 percent of new homes in the South and 70 percent in the West are currently built with automatic irrigation systems. This has increased since 1980 when,

for example, 30 percent of the homes in Phoenix, Ariz., had automatic irrigation systems.

The reason for the increase is twofold: the predominance of real estate developments in new construction and higher standards in landscape design and maintenance. Homeowners in developments protect their investments with deed restrictions for landscaping. Communities pass ordinances that require both planting and maintenance of landscapes. You can't do either in the arid West without irrigation.

The rule in the East and Midwest with automatic irrigation is quality over quantity. This ties present-day irrigation in these regions to the origin of automatic residential irrigation in Detroit, Mich. While you don't have to be Henry Ford to afford irrigation these days, most Midwestern homeowners have nice, landscaped front yards that are probably three times the size of subdivision front yards in the West. These larger systems



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USE READER SERVICE #28

cost more to design and install and they help support a healthy network of irrigation consultants in the East and Midwest.

EDUCATING CUSTOMERS. The growth of the residential irrigation market has created a new challenge for contractors — the irrigation aisle in the hardware store. Irrigation manufacturers today sell as many products to retail stores as they do to professional contractors, about \$400 million each.

That doesn't mean they are selling the same product to the weekend handyman as they are to contractors, though. Many manufacturers make a different line of products for the retailer because the margins are small.

The challenge is explaining to your residential customer why a product that looks like the one on the shelf at Plumbing Plus costs more from you. Since very few manufacturers make only contractor-grade products, an explanation for your customer is needed.

Just be prepared. Have both your product and the hardware store's product with you. Independent product tests have shown that not all plastic irrigation components are equally durable. They are built to specific tolerances. If the conditions exceed the toler-

ance, the head or valve will fail.

The real solution is designing and installing an irrigation system in which these tolerance levels are met. That is why training and certification are needed.

THE IRRIGATION

Association estimates there are approximately 8,000 irrigation contractors in the U.S. and another 30,000 landscape contractors performing irrigation services. Each year they install or retrofit more than 500,000 residential and 15,000 commercial irrigation systems at a total cost of \$1.2 billion.

COMMERCIAL MARKET. The good news centers on the commercial irrigation market. Commercial customers are less influenced by retail offerings. They protect a company asset and want a reliable system that supports a corporate image.

However, chances are they do not fully appreciate the role of irrigation in their landscape and need to be educated. They rely on the general contractors for their recommendations. These people have to be sold on irrigation first.

The commercial market is not as lopsided to the South and West as the residential market, although the South leads in both categories.

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USE READER SERVICE #84

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY



In 1990, the Northeast and Midwest separately matched the West in the number of retail and wholesale establishments. Commercial growth of irrigation in the Northeast during the late 1980s exceeded all other regions on a percentage basis.

In addition, the West felt the recession of the early 1990s more than other parts of the country. The South has a greater number of commercial establishments, but a lower percentage of them install irrigation systems.

Combined, there are 3.6 million commercial establishments. An estimated 450,000 of these have underground, automatic irrigation systems with an additional 15,000 systems being installed annually.

COMMERCIAL SYSTEMS. Commercial irrigation systems are typically much larger than residential systems and require the expertise

of both trained designers and contractors. Not only do they require skill to design and build, they also require larger equipment and superior irrigation components with higher margins for both distributors and contractors.

Commercial systems generally comply with building codes and meet industry standards. Since licensed contractors are the pri-

mary proponents and enforcers of these codes, they win the vast majority of commercial bids. In some cases, plumbing contractors or electricians are required for certain hookups.

Irrigation contractors could be trained and certified in these specific details. However, when local codes are firmly entrenched, the irrigation contractor should establish a good working relationship with these related trades. The other contractors are always on the job before the irrigation contractor, so they can have an important influence in the selection.

More important is the relationship between the irrigation contractor, the irrigation



Maintenance and renovation of residential irrigation systems appear poised for growth as more homeowners invest in landscapes.

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consultant/designer, the landscape architect and the irrigation distributor. Architects and consultants are involved months or years before installation.

TECHNICAL RESOURCES. To deliver accurate takeoffs, irrigation contractors must maintain contact with local distributors. Due to shrinking margins, fewer distributors offer free design. In fact, the trend in irrigation distribution is a modified form of "serve yourself." If you need help, an expert is available. If you don't, you can choose your own components and pay at a register.

Smart distributors offer classes for local contractors to answer common questions and enable contractors to obtain their needed parts quickly and correctly.

Many distributors sell irrigation design programs for personal computers to help contractors with simpler projects. These must be adjusted to meet local ordinances, but can

speed the planning, estimating and blue-printing steps.

Contractors can doublecheck sprinkler uniformity and precipitation with the "SPACE" program from the Center for Irrigation Technology in Fresno, Calif. This program may help you make a choice between one sprinkler or another.

Once a system is installed, the Irrigation Research and Training Center at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, Calif., can provide contractors with a program to help audit irrigated landscapes for efficiency and generate reports. In some communities, water districts will provide subsidies to commercial establishments that take measures to save water. The difference can be water



COMBINED, there are 3.6 million commercial establishments. An estimated 450,000 of these have underground, automatic irrigation systems with an additional 15,000 systems being installed annually.

savings of more than 30 percent and cost savings of more than 50 percent.

NEW TECHNOLOGY.

Water conservation has only just begun. New designs and technologies promise more efficient and

cost-effective methods for irrigation. Several innovative ideas are listed below:

1. *Low-volume drip.* Low-volume drip and trickle irrigation not only save water, but they can improve plant health and yield. Maintenance problems with early systems are being corrected as manufacturers begin to provide a "contractor-grade" of product that is less prone to clogging, breaking and vandalism. The industry is devoting considerable resources to developing buried drip

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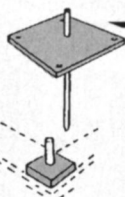
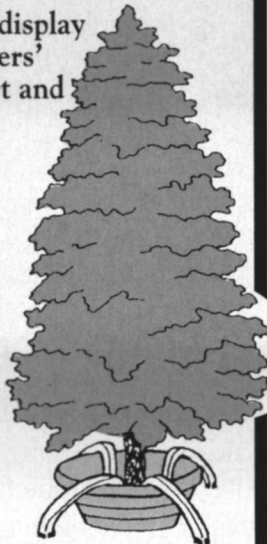
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USE READER SERVICE #31

irrigation market



emitter technology for turf and ornamentals.

2. *Injection systems.* Both sprinkler and low-volume systems can benefit from injection devices for fertilizers, soil amendments and pesticides. Spoon-feeding turf and trees produces healthier growth and reduces the environmental impact of the products on groundwater and runoff. Injecting mild acids can help keep drip lines clear of algae and organic debris.

3. *Backflow preventers.* Injection highlights the need for backflow prevention devices. They are required in most areas that depend on irrigation for landscapes. A bone of contention is the cost of some devices and the lack of control at retail outlets to ensure that do-it-yourselfers install the proper protection. Proper enforcement of irrigation system requirements and water conservation guidelines is found in only a handful of cities.

4. *Weather-based control systems.* Soil moisture sensors, rain shutoffs and weather input can perfect the delivery of water to landscapes. Affordable controllers are now available that take data from receptors in the field to accurately gauge the microclimate of an irrigation system.

A more practical solution for small residential systems is feedback from a regional weather station, fed to individual irrigation controllers by modem. A contractor can adjust the customers' irrigation schedules from an office computer so that no more water than necessary is applied to the landscapes the next day.

One company has developed an irrigation controller with a memory chip that contains historical weather data for specific regions. This data is applied by the controller to adjust schedules.

5. *Piggyback systems.* Another innovation is the concept of linking irrigation controllers to residential security systems. Water use could be tracked for each system and adjustments could be downloaded automatically through the security system's telephone hookup.

6. *Flow sensor systems.* Flow sensors are essential to detect breaks in heads and pipes or lack of water from the source. A warning

(continued on page 70)

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Using the

Soil Toolbox



Specialized products to repair soils, relieve plant stress and guarantee adequate irrigation can improve landscape health and save labor at the same time.

By C. Neal Howell



Compost is one of many products that improves plants' ability to grow. Credits: Rod Tyler

Y

ou're in a very competitive business. As a lawn or landscape contractor, don't you wish you had soil products that would give you an edge over your competition?

Most likely, you'll want products that save labor, make the job easier or provide greater customer satisfaction.

STARTING FROM SCRATCH. Starting a new lawn or renovating an existing lawn can be a real gamble. What can you do to improve the chances for a successful job? First, check the pH of the soil, because if it is too high or too low, you can't expect to get adequate germination and growth. Add lime or sulfur to adjust it to an appropriate level. (This can be a great add-on service, too.)

Consider existing vegetation, too, when you start new grass. Soil bacteria need nitrogen to decompose plant material and if you're rototilling in heavy grass or weeds, initial soil nitrogen levels will drop dramatically as the soil bacteria use available nitrogen to convert the plant residue. A soil test can steer you in the direction of adequate fertility levels and enable you to apply the right fertilizer prior to tilling or renovating.

Are there niche products available to help get the turf off to a good start? Manufacturers and suppliers say there are several products designed to solve specific problems.



Planting is the ideal time to add products that improve root functions, add fertility or increase water-holding ability.

system operating with a timer and a manifold system to ensure that all parts of the new lawn are covered. It stays in place until the lawn is well established before being removed, according to Randy Reid, president of Temporary Rain, Ingleside, Ill.

Another water management innovation is a product called "Hydretain." Richard Irwin, president of Ecolog USA Inc., Ocala, Fla., asserted that it "has been shown to increase seed germination in restricted water environments by more than 100 percent."

The product works by "pulling" water from moisture-laden air from within the soil. It holds available moisture within the plant root zone to reduce water usage.

Bill Brocker, PBI Gordon, Kansas City, Mo., noted that Bov-a-Mura, an organic-based product, is designed to speed germination and help achieve a better stand. According to Kyle Williams, Professional Lawn Care, Carey, Ill., organic products like the company's Soil and Plant Conditions can help new lawns become established.

"New lawns need all the help they can get," said Terry Boehm, business manager for United Horticulture Supply, Aurora, Ore. An ample supply of essential nutrients must be available when turf seed germinates. Otherwise, growth will be restricted, he noted. "Our MicroFeature™ is designed to ensure needed nutrients are present."

"Make sure you're adding a plant growth enhancer, not a retardant," added Mike Pierce, president of Dakota Peat & Blenders, Grand Forks, N.D. "If the carbon-to-nitrogen ratio is greater than 30-to-1, the material will act as a growth retardant."

According to Pierce, the Dakota peat will help enhance germination and growth due to its low (23-to-1) carbon-to-nitrogen ratio. If the organic material is not fully de-

composed, it will have a high carbon-to-nitrogen ratio (greater than 30-to-1) and actually slow growth rates.

Sodded lawns can benefit from all the products mentioned above, as well as from root enhancing products that can help sod establish itself more rapidly.

"Cyto-GRO can help turf quickly establish a root system capable of supporting the plant," explained Nick Clifford of Clifford Sales and Marketing, St. Louis, Mo. "New sod is in a very stressful situation, and often, root growth is slowed or is nonexistent due to the lack of essential plant hormones."

WATER FOR GROWTH. Watering, or the lack thereof, continues to be a problem in establishing a new lawn from seed or sod. Homeowners can be too busy or forgetful to water and when the soil or the sod dries out, they've lost the establishment battle.

Two interesting and innovative products are now available to help correct the moisture deficiency. Temporary Rain™ is a portable above-ground irrigation system that can be rented to cover a new lawn. It's a set-and-forget

RAISING FERTILITY LEVELS. Fertilizing established turf is a major consumer of labor. As a result, some companies combine fertilizers with other products for better productivity.

"We have fertilizer combinations with different pesticides which can be major labor savers," noted Doug Masters, sales and marketing manager with The Andersons, Maumee, Ohio. "Combination products like fertilizer with Merit™ can help control grubs, or fertilizer with crabgrass control can help eliminate separate trips across the lawn."

Fertility problems can be reduced by the use of fertigation systems, which apply small amounts of needed nutrients with water through the irrigation system. The system allows economical "spoon-feeding" of essential nutrients when turf needs them.

LANDSCAPE INNOVATIONS. Contractors take major hits each year when shrubs and trees

die back. Niche products can help you avoid some of the common new planting problems.

One of the newest products is mycorrhizal fungi, which helps transplanted trees and shrubs survive transplant shock and quickly adapt to their new homes.

According to Donald Marx, president of Plant Health Care, Pittsburgh, Pa., injection and transplant mixes allow the fungi to develop both on and in the plant's roots and can help in increasing uptake of nutrients and moisture.

Tree Saver™ mycorrhizal fungi inoculates 99 percent of trees and shrubs, he explained, while Turf Saver™ is designed for turfgrasses. Tests showed the turf treated with this inoculate showed an increased root depth of over 40 percent.

"Environment is the key," stated Pierce. "Dig a \$40 hole for a \$20 tree, mix 10 percent to 15 percent Dakota peat with the excavation material and then back fill." He

claimed this method will greatly increase the plant survival rate.

Plant growth stimulators and root growth enhancers can also help plants during the stressful time of transplanting.

Water is another matter altogether. "Hydretain, because it is a hygroscopic and humectant product, can help manage soil moisture and will greatly reduce both replacement and labor costs for hand watering," Irwin asserted.

Because water is so critical to new plantings, another new product, Tree-Gator Portable Drip Irrigation System, is said to help increase tree survival rates, said Scott Cissel, president of Spectrum Products, Raleigh, N.C.

CAVEAT EMPTOR. While many great products are introduced each year, there are also prime examples of *caveat emptor* (let the buyer beware). Testing weeds out many of

the impostors, but you are the final judge.

There will always be different opinions and preferences in the marketplace. It's true for trucks and it's true for lawn and landscape materials. If you have a problem, someone will have a product to help solve it. You may think that product is great, but others in other areas of the country may find its results less than adequate.

If a claim sounds too good to be true, do some checking before you invest heavily. The best advice is still to move cautiously, especially when your livelihood depends on the performance of the turf and ornamentals under your care. Use products according to label instructions and remember that if a little does some good, a lot of it may not necessarily do more good. **LI**

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

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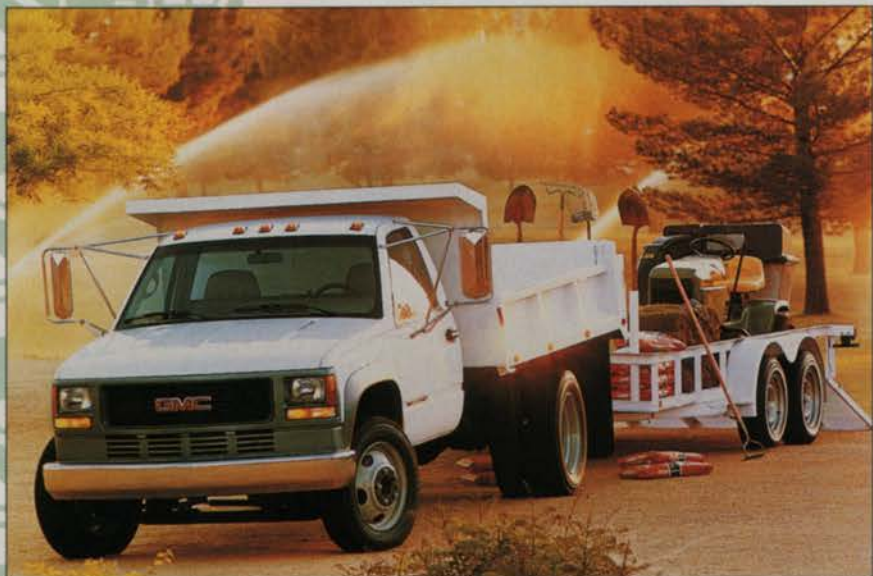
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Trucks for the landscape industry may not change a great deal, but manufacturers are working to improve the buying process for contractors.

By Bob West



Trucks are indispensable tools for contractors, but only if they meet the specific needs of a business. Credit: GMC Corp.

It's probably pretty fair to assume that if you're involved with the green industry you own at least one truck. And most truck owners have come to realize that trucks don't change a great deal from year to year. Manufacturers will even be the first people to admit this.

But that doesn't change the fact that many contractors view their trucks as the most important asset to their company. This makes buying a truck often one of the most important — and difficult — processes a contractor goes through, even though it may not happen every year.

BUYING THE BEST. Contractors buy most of their equipment from manufacturers who market exclusively to the green industry, such as mowers or trimmers. Truck manufacturers, however, market their products to a much broader audience worldwide. So one of the challenges associated with buying a truck can be finding a salesperson to work with who understands the needs of a landscape contractor.

Manufacturers have addressed this challenge by staffing their dealerships with at least one salesperson whose training focuses on commercial vehicles. "The contractors know best what it is that they do

(continued on page 42)

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Bobbie Anderson, owner of Anderson Lawn Care, told us:

"The week before Memorial Day we were asked if we were interested in taking on 15 bank locations in Elkart, Indiana. There was a catch; the previous mowing contractor had been fired, the grass was overgrown (almost 2 feet high in places), we had to complete the first mowing in one week, and rain was expected for the rest of the week. Without hesitation, we accepted the challenge and mowed the first bank the next day in pouring rain. The Walker ran through standing water, and in some places, grass that exceeded the height of the wheels. We mowed in conditions that our competitors literally stopped by the road to watch us work in... We have signed a 3-year contract with the bank and because of our performance secured additional select accounts in the community. Mowing with the Walker is just another way our service is set apart from the rest."

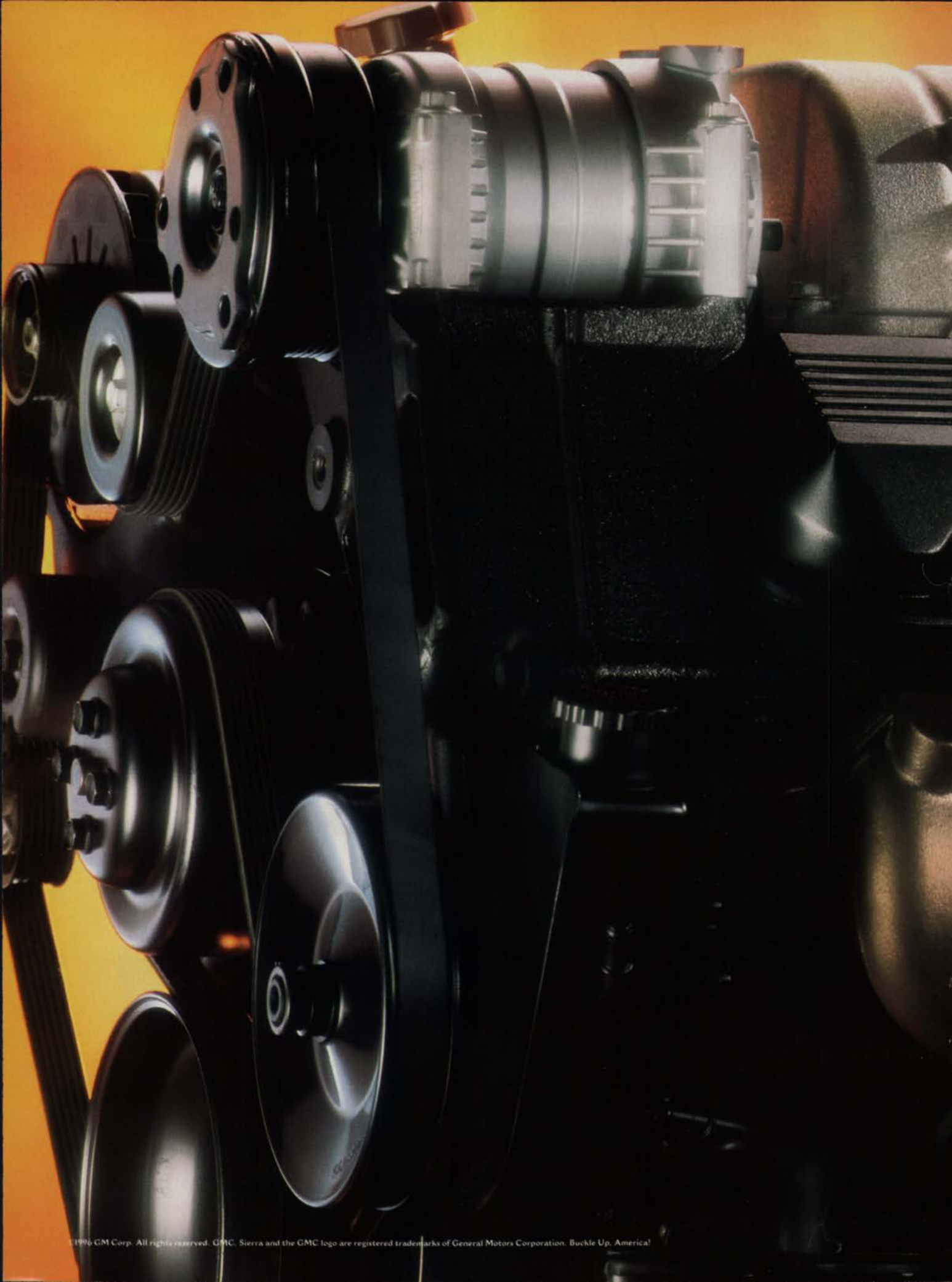
"There isn't another machine on the market that runs like a Walker."

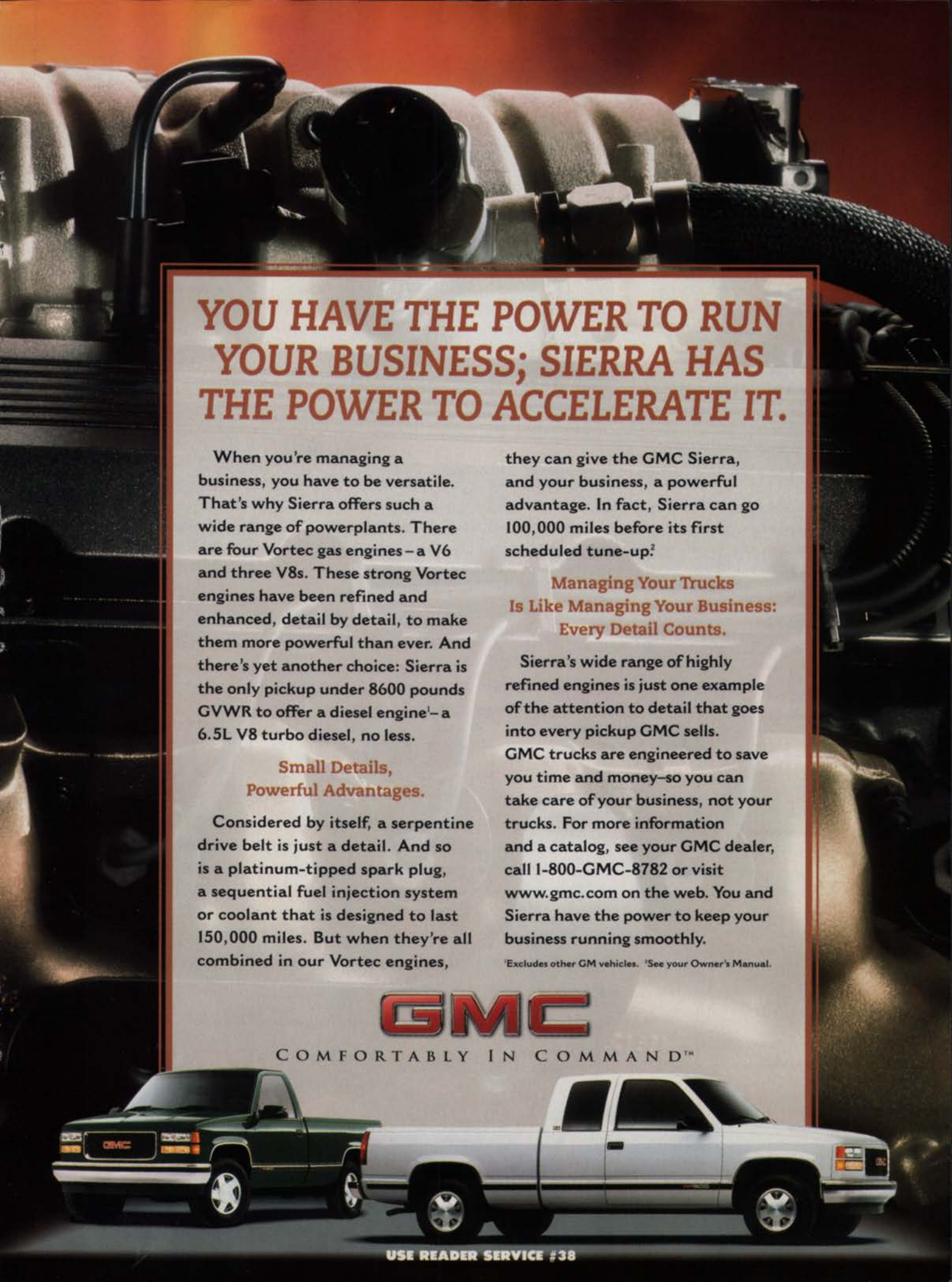
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USE READER SERVICE #38

(continued from page 38)

all the time and what they need the vehicle to do," noted Dwayne Page, a member of the Sierra Brand Team for GMC Truck, Detroit, Mich. "But they can also benefit from the experience the trained salespeople have acquired while helping other contractors purchase vehicles. And some dealerships will even specialize in vehicles for vocational uses."

Some of the decisions for specifications on a new truck can be made through basic conversations between the dealer and the contractor. This means contractors need to know what the truck will be required to do immediately, as well as what it may be used for later in its life.

"The dealer will work through job ratings with the buyers to figure out the parameters of their uses so they get the right vehicle," explained Alex Tsigdinos, manager of light truck public relations for Dodge

Keep in mind that customizing a vehicle is likely to increase the cost of the vehicle and require additional time before you will receive the vehicle.

Truck, Auburn Hills, Mich.

"Contractors are buyers with special needs," he continued. "A truck is a tool for them, and if it's not working properly, then they're losing money. As manufacturers, we need to be responsive to them and to their special needs."

"The key differentiation between buying a truck for commercial uses and buying a car is the truck's versatility," added Page. "Contractors need a truck that can grow with them as their needs change, and a lot of times they find their trucks can do more than they thought when they bought them."

Manufacturers may also offer contractors fleet service purchasing. For example, Ford Truck offers contractors purchasing a specified number of vehicles a year a fleet discount and registers that contractor through its fleet service.

CUSTOMIZING IS KING. The more a manufacturer can tailor-make a truck to fit a contractor's specific business needs, the more valuable that truck becomes. Manufacturers know contractors generally aren't looking to simply buy a model straight off the dealer's lot.

"Most manufacturers now are mostly

(continued on page 44)

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(continued from page 42)

selling incomplete trucks for commercial users," commented Joe Devlin, director of corporate communications for Mitsubishi Fuso Truck of America, Bridgeport, N.J. "We'll supply the cab and chassis and then work with various upfitters to meet the contractor's specifications."

Page emphasized the importance of contractors asking for the exact equipment they want for their vehicles. "A lot of customers say, 'It seems like my truck is the only one built like this.' They worry about being able to get what they want or being able to get replacement parts down the road," he explained. "But we build all of the trucks in pieces, so we have ways to support each of these unique needs."

Contractors must also be sure not to underspecify the requirements for their trucks. "A lot of contractors want to be able to plow snow in the winter, but the truck



has to be built correctly if they're going to hang a plow on it," noted Dave Tuttle, commercial account manager for Ed Mullinax Ford, Amherst, Ohio. "Many contractors will want more than they really need for a truck, but a lot of the problems I see are with contractors who want to save money and underspecify the requirements

State regulations are influencing more contractors involved in pesticide applications to purchase trucks with enclosure systems. Credit: Mitsubishi Fuso

for their truck, especially for plowing. It has to have things like a 4,000-pound front axle for plowing. If the specifications aren't worked out properly, they can end up voiding the manufacturer's warranty."

Truck manufacturers are also working now with a greater variety of upfitters to offer contractors the same type of one-stop shopping they try to offer their landscape customers. "This way, our factory will deliver the vehicle to the upfitter and it will then be delivered to the dealer fully equipped

(continued on page 46)



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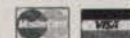
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PEPCO MicroPop™

truck preview

(continued from page 44)

and ready for use," remarked Page.

Keep in mind that customizing a vehicle for your own business is likely to increase the cost of that vehicle and require additional time before you will receive the vehicle. "All in all, if the contractors can afford to wait a little longer to get the exact truck they want, then they'll be better off," asserted Tuttle. "But they should know that even putting a body on a truck requires about eight weeks, which is about an average wait."

FRESH FEATURES. While truck designs don't change drastically from year to year, that doesn't mean manufacturers haven't incorporated new features.

Dodge Truck now offers an entirely new design for its Dakota pickup which borrows numerous design cues from the Dodge Ram.

"Professional users are looking for cargo capacity, so the vehicle can be a tool for them," according to Tsigdinos. "This truck has the largest payload and towing capacity in its class, and we've also significantly increased the torsional stiffness by 50 percent. This gives a much more predictable chassis to tune the suspension better and enjoy an improved road ride."

Tsigdinos said the Dakota also offers a V-8 engine with 230 horsepower, standard rear-wheel antilock brakes, a club cab option and auxiliary power outlets for portable phones, fax machines and computers.

Page pointed to the Sierra's speed sensitive power steering, dual standard air bags, four-wheel antilock brakes and safety reinforced doors as key features of the GMC Truck entry to this market. "This new power steering gives the driver a lot of power at low speeds for better maneuverability, but provides less power steering when you're going at higher speeds, so you still feel comfortable," he explained.

Devlin added that one area where change has taken place is with trucks for pesticide applications. "We see a lot of contractors going with enclosure systems to capture any spilled chemicals because of state requirements," he said.

But for the most part, Devlin said, it's not the accessories or available features that makes a truck attractive to a contractor. "Dependability and reliability are certainly the two most important criteria to any operator of a commercial vehicle, because down time is lost revenue." LL

Contractors should make sure not to underspecify truck requirements, which can result in voiding a manufacturer's warranty.

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

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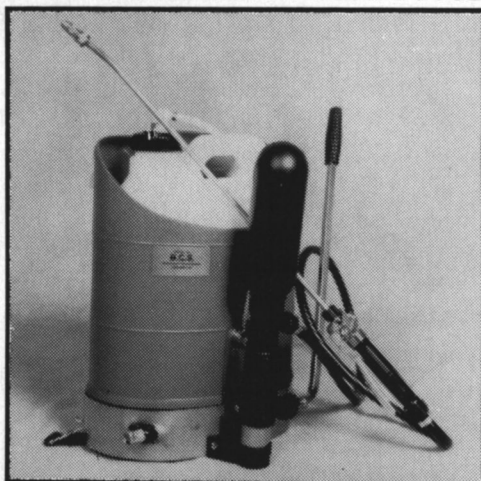
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How Effective is Your

Preemergence Herbicide?

Weeds sometimes appear along borders and peripheral areas, most likely due to application problems.



Scouting your existing accounts measures your preemergence herbicide's successes and failures. A proper assessment of its performance can reduce callbacks and anxiety next spring.

By Lynn Vopal

T

he annual inspection guidelines listed below can provide a lawn or landscape contractor with ways to measure how a preemergence herbicide holds up in critical, tough to control landscape areas.

ESTABLISH YOUR CRITERIA. You can determine if your current preemergence product is meeting your business needs and whether technician training is needed to improve the effectiveness of applications by following these steps:

1. Choose a sample of your customers that represents geographical variety. Also, select accounts with heavy sunlight or ornamental plants, as these are critical areas that can affect your evaluation. Sloped areas can also indicate where product solubility is affecting performance. Consult with your technicians about accounts that are challenging.

2. Identify situations that can alter preemergence herbicide performance, such as unusual mowing or watering habits by the customer. Extreme cultural practices can diminish a preemergence herbicide's effectiveness.

3. Note the preemergence herbicide application date. How early or late in the season were

you able to apply the product? Were you able to do an early application to avoid the spring rush? Assess the residual of your herbicide approximately 15 weeks following the application.

4. Review previous customer problems and complaints to determine common problems that could be associated with application practices.

5. Use this as an opportunity to monitor application consistency and technician performance. Include at least one account for each technician.

6. Gauge your technicians' comfort levels when handling the product. What are their primary concerns, complaints or suggestions? What are their predictions for the product's performance?

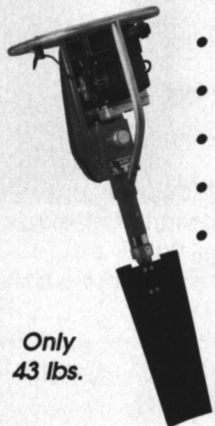
7. Determine your expectations for weed control. How many weeks of control do you expect from a single application? How often are you willing to apply a preemergence product? What percent of control are you expecting at the height of the weed season? Remember your expectations should reflect those of your customers.

ON-SITE EVALUATION. When visiting the sample properties, observe a number of conditions that will indicate the herbicide's effectiveness.

(continued on page 50)

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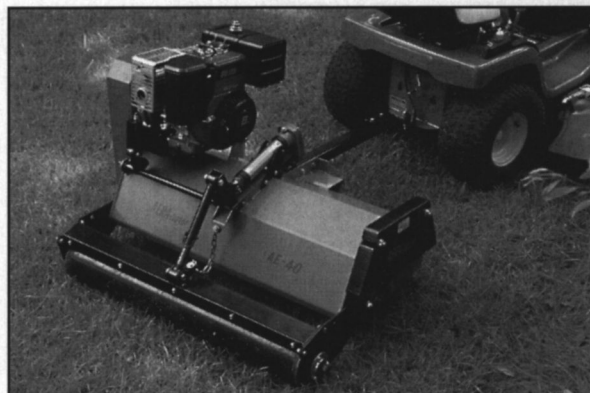


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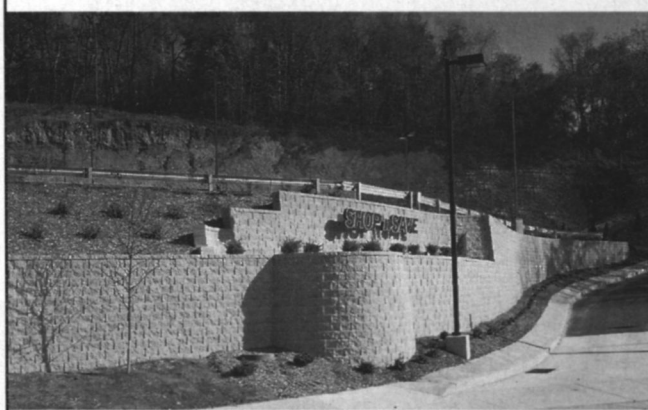
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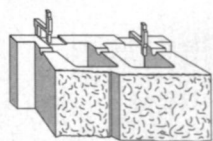
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herbicide use

(continued from page 48)

1. *Curb appeal.* How does the property look from the street? Are any problems immediately noticeable? Thicker, healthier turf will be a stronger barrier to weed proliferation.

2. *Hot spots.* Check out areas along curbs, sidewalks, driveways and anyplace else where cement or asphalt borders the turf. These materials are excellent heat conductors and cause more rapid herbicide breakdown.

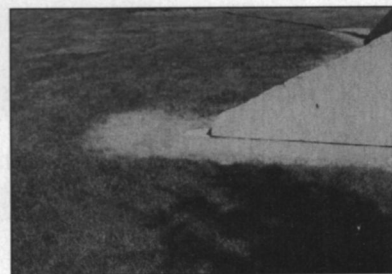
3. *Peripheral areas.* Usually, weeds appear in these areas due to application problems. One example is near a neighboring lawn, because the turf is less likely to receive a thorough treatment in that area.

4. *Macroenvironment.* Shaded areas can alter preemergence herbicide effectiveness, as can areas with a hotter, southern exposure where crabgrass germination can occur earlier than the rest of the lawn.

5. *Thin spots.* These are a common problem. When more soil than turf is present an area is more susceptible to weed germination.

6. *Ornamentals.* Some volatile preemergence herbicides that are not labeled for "over the top" applications may cause damage to surrounding ornamental plants. Look for evidence of ornamental damage.

7. *Reseeded areas.* In climates where fescues are commonly thinned out by summer turf diseases and consequently reseeded in fall, the preemergence herbicide may have been applied over newer spring seedlings. If so, is any phytotoxic damage visible?



Hot spots are caused when the heat conducted by concrete or asphalt shifts burns the turf, which causes more rapid herbicide breakdown.

MAKE IT RIGHT. If the results of your scouting were less than satisfactory, there are a number of ways to gain better control. To start, take a camera along on your investigation to document unusual situations or noticeable application problems. The photos are an excellent training tool for employees to help avoid common mistakes.

To prevent weeds in tough areas, use a preemergence herbicide with low water solubility. An example is prodiamine, which has an extremely low water solubility that keeps it in the top ¼-inch of the soil. Benefits of low water solubility include a long residual for lasting control of grassy and broadleaf weeds. A long residual also can ease fears of breakthrough during hot and rainy weather.

Volatility, or the evaporation of the herbicide, is also critical. A low volatility product is more effective and less likely to harm ornamentals.

Finally, as a service to your employees, provide them with products that are easy to handle. Preemergence herbicides that do not stain them, their equipment or the customer's property can improve their motivation to work with the product.

Annual assessments of your accounts can initiate ways of rethinking how you do business. Including a preemergence herbicide that helps you meet — or exceed — expectations is critical to managing a successful weed control program. **LL**

The author is a Milwaukee, Wis.-based writer for the turfgrass industry.

USE READER SERVICE #57

GIE Reigns in the Queen City



Green Industry Expo attendees and their guests can enjoy riverboat cruises, visits to area museums and plenty of fine dining nearby. Credit: Cincinnati Visitors & Convention Bureau

The seventh edition of the Green Industry Expo promises more education, equipment and entertainment for industry professionals.

By Bob West

G

reen industry professionals from across the country will converge on Cincinnati, Ohio, Nov. 17-21, to enjoy the seventh edition of the Green Industry Expo.

A sellout crowd of 250 exhibitors is expected to pack the Cincinnati Convention Center floor with products and services to make lawn and landscape contracting more productive and profitable.

The Professional Grounds Management Society, the Professional Lawn Care Association of America and the Associated Landscape Contractors of America are co-sponsoring the show for the seventh consecutive year.

Rags to Riches Horatio Alger Award winner Robert Farrell will kick off the Expo on Monday, Nov. 18 with the keynote address, "Give 'Em the Pickle," from 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. Farrell will share his philosophies of providing customers with the extra level of service that has made Farrell's Ice Cream Parlor successful enough to open 157 restaurants over 30 years without a single failure.

The trade show will be open from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Monday for a New Product Showcase, as well as 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday. The show will close Thursday, with a "try-before-you-buy" Outdoor Equipment Demonstration from 9 a.m. to noon at Schmidt Field. This event provides contractors an opportunity to learn about the equipment for themselves from approximately 40 exhibitors.

ASSOCIATION OFFERINGS. PGMS' social agenda is highlighted by its Brag Night from 8 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Monday. Other entertaining and networking events include a pre-conference tour Sunday afternoon to the Spring Grove Cem-

etry and Arboretum and the Cincinnati Zoo, the welcoming reception Sunday evening and the awards banquet and reception Tuesday evening.

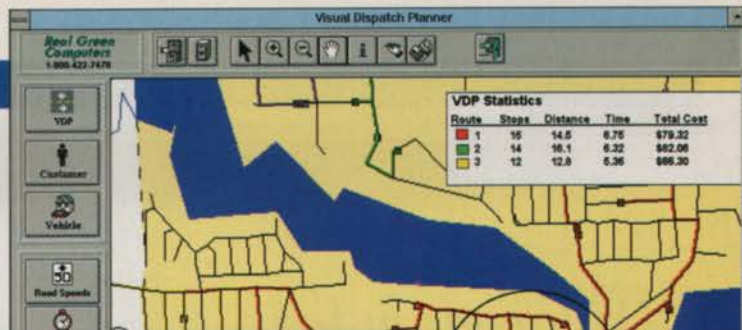
PLCAA hits the ground running in Cincinnati, leading off its slate of events with the President's Reception on Sunday, Nov. 17. PLCAA will also offer its popular breakfast roundtable sessions Tuesday and Wednesday morning and a new Popcorn Carnival examining the future of the green industry in the 21st century Tuesday from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

A Sunday tour of two area award-winning landscape firms, Groundmasters and Thornton Gardens, is sure to be popular with ALCA members and is followed up that evening with a welcome reception and casino party from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Tuesday evening brings the ALCA Environmental Improvement Awards Reception and Banquet.

CINCINNATI NIGHTS. Social opportunities abound on the Ohio River with riverboat cruises, elegant dining and the renowned Cincinnati Art Museum. Show attendees can also sample the Queen City's unique style of chili and visit the Contemporary Arts Center. Additional restaurants and entertainment venues are located across the river in Covington, Ky. **LL**



Keynote speaker Robert Farrell



New technology offers hand-held computers and in-depth route maps for use in the field. Credit: Real Green Systems (top)

Progressive firms usher in a new era by integrating computers into all facets of their businesses.

By Bob West

If you asked a group of landscape contractors to list the most important tools of the trade, how many would include a computer on that list? Not nearly as many as should, according to the computer software manufacturers.

Throughout this three-part series on software for the landscape industry one prevailing theme has come to the forefront — contractors, as a whole, are reluctant to realize the potential value of a computer to their businesses as a tool like a new mower or truck.

Instead, many contractors see computers as an unneeded expense that they don't have the time to learn how to use. "The green industry is way behind other industries in terms of becoming computerized," noted Bob Cohen, who recently left his position as president of Green Scene Landscaping, Los Angeles, Calif., to market proprietary management software developed by his firm to contractors.

(continued on page 54)

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This photorealistic "After" image was created entirely from the "Before" photograph using Pro Landscape.

4 Programs 1 Package:

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Photoscape technology includes hundreds of plant and other landscaping materials to create realistic photo-view plans.

TWO.

Easy-to-use professional tools simplify creating a detailed plan-view drawing of your Photoscape image.

THREE.

Estimating module automatically includes all plants and materials used in your Photoscape image and plan-view drawing.

FOUR.

Softdesk landscape marketing tools show you how to use new technology to build your business by closing more sales faster.

USE READER SERVICE #64

software series — part 3

(continued from page 52)

"I think the number of landscape contractors with computers is significant — there's no doubt about that. But the issue is how well do they use them," agreed Jerry Kiffe, general manager of Acacia Software, Westlake Village, Calif.

Some contractors have computerized their operations, however, perhaps for design, accounting or management purposes. "The ones who realize the value of good software to a business enjoy an extra advantage over their competitors who don't," explained Joe Kucik, president of Real Green Professional Computers, Walled Lake, Mich. "And even if it's just a 5 to 10 percent advantage, that's huge. It can be the difference between success and failure."

ORDER IN THE OFFICE. Much of the software available to landscape contractors handles other operational tasks than the design and accounting software profiled in the first two parts of this series. These packages can help to streamline the various management tasks which take so much time.

"Management is the coordination or control of the work process, and this software takes you back to the fundamentals. Managers often wonder, 'Where is the information that I have? Who has it? How do I get it to the next person who needs it?'" asked Brian Dontje, owner, UDS, Grand Rapids, Mich.

For instance, Mapping Assistant software from Real Green takes valuable information — the location of each of a day's route customers — and maps them into a daily route complete with directions and a graphical presentation for the crew each morning.

Contractors, as a whole, are reluctant to realize the potential value of a computer to their business. . . Many see them as unneeded expenses they don't have time to learn how to use.

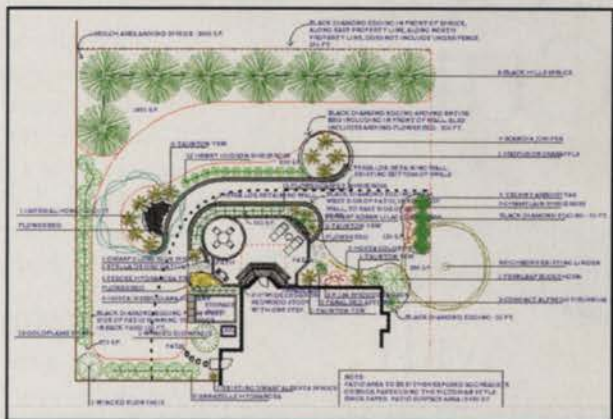
This software also enables managers to plot their customers on a map and see what specific geographical areas most of their business comes from. This can be particularly helpful with marketing plans. "Our Lawn Assistant software lets contractors cross-sell customers with a relational database. For example, this allows them to identify all of their current customers who are buying lawn fertilization but not tree care, and market directly to them," explained Kucik. "This eliminates mass marketing and only hits the

people who count. You increase your percent of sales and decrease the dollars spent to get them."

Cohen has developed software which takes a regular headache

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Pro Landscape Greenhouse feature automatically lists all materials used in your Photoscape and matches them with 2-D symbols for placement in your CAD plan view.

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The Greenhouse feature also links everything included in your design to the comprehensive estimating module.

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Available software helps contractors track the productivity levels of different crews and equipment. Credit: Kujawa Enterprises

for contractors — prenotification regulations for pesticide applications — and turns it into an effective marketing scheme. “We handled prenotification one week to 10 days ahead of time, and along with a notice that said what we would be doing on the client’s property and what it would cost, we included menus for them to order additional services or seasonal options,” he explained. “Customers appreciate not being pressured into making a decision. This system created a 20 percent boost to our business and reduced our receivables to about eight days with nearly 30 percent of our customers actually paying ahead of time.”

TRACKING TIME. One of the greatest challenges of managing landscape crews is knowing how they spend their time throughout the day and how long jobs take them to complete. This information is then used for determining payroll and establishing guidelines for estimating new jobs. Making a mistake here can be devastating to a contractor’s profits. Mobile computing equipment available from Sensible Software and CompuScapes automate this process and eliminate keypunching.

“Our module plugs into the dashboard in a truck and records when the truck is moving and when it’s stopped, how fast it’s driven and how far it’s driven,” noted Dave Tucker, owner of Sensible Software, Gaithersburg, Md. “Then the employee plugs the module into the central computer in the office and downloads all of this information each day. This provides better control over employees and costs.”

Tim Shields, president of CompuScapes, Atlanta, Ga., explained a system which puts hand-held computer technology in the hands of technicians. “Routing and scheduling software is built into the hand-held units so each morning they plug into the main computer and upload that day’s information to take with them.”

Debra Smeltzer’s need to be more aware of how each project was being handled by her employees led to the development of Plan Track software. “The program tracks each individual plant and what happens to it from the minute it arrives in our nursery all the way through the life of the project it is installed on,” explained Smeltzer, president of Greensleeves Inc., the Miami, Fla., based maker of the software. “It’s easy for the technicians to enter data such as when they fertilize, what gets pruned and who is responsible for each task.”

USE READER SERVICE #65

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software series — part 3

Such information can be particularly valuable when access to a project is limited, which is the case for many of the plants Greensleeves installs on cruise ships. "I can't be at every job every week, so this way I can still track what happens and identify mistakes without visiting the account as often," Smeltzer continued.

RECORDING ARTISTS. As government attention paid to pesticide applications increases contractors need to pay more attention to keeping records of their own applications. "Getting audited is a big worry for a lot of contractors," noted John Massaro, owner of Customized Business Software, Glen Rock, N.J. Massaro's Billmaster program offers a basic pesticide application form created as a compilation of numerous state forms. "There's space on the form for recording the information that auditors look for like the applicator's name, license number, product used, application conditions and so on. Contractors can also make up their own form tailored to the requirements of their state," he explained.

Daryl Kershner, president of Genius Software Development, Reading, Pa., commented on some additional benefits for pesticide tracking programs. "You can print reports for any time period to determine what chemicals were used and where, so if anything ever goes wrong you can see who may be affected," he said.

Software is also available to assist anyone growing their own plant material or maintaining a nursery yard. "The concern of anyone involved in growing is the growing time and production costs," explained Dontje. "Our software helps them develop a planning process and learn the quickest and cheapest way to grow something."

And if keeping track of equipment maintenance challenges or frustrates you, there's a software solution to handle that problem. "Just as you schedule service for a customer, contractors need to schedule service for their equipment," according to Gene Stipel, president of Landscape 2000, Massapequa, N.Y. "Once the contractor establishes a frequency cycle, the system operates hands-free. Each morning it generates a list of any necessary service to be performed that day."

'Contractors who realize the value of good software to a business enjoy an extra advantage over their competitors who don't. . . It can be the difference between success and failure.'

By establishing an entire maintenance history for each piece of equipment, contractors can not only run a more efficient service garage but can also see the costs associated with owning each piece of equipment for future product purchases.

LOOKING AHEAD. "Now we're seeing the second wave of computerization in the green industry," Massaro asserted, talking about the growing popularity of computers as business tools used for more than just word processing.

And as the tools grow more valuable, contractors are less reluctant to go anywhere without them. "Networking is the biggest thing to do now as companies connect their entire office into one system," Massaro explained. "And more contractors are moving now into laptop computers so they have the ability to move around."

Portability is obviously a key feature of the hand-held units as well, but some vendors temper their enthusiasm for their immediate marketability to contractors. "The digital and hand-held technology isn't really affordable enough yet for green industry consumers," admitted Tucker, "but when it is it will be very advantageous for some contractors to have continually updated information wherever they are." **LL**

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

USE READER SERVICE #66

PRODUCT PROFILE

PGRS CAN REDUCE WATER USE

THRIVING turfgrass absorbs water like a sponge. However, large quantities of water applied to turf at regular intervals can pose a significant monthly expense.

And considerations such as drought, water restrictions or environmental concerns may hamper frequent irrigation.

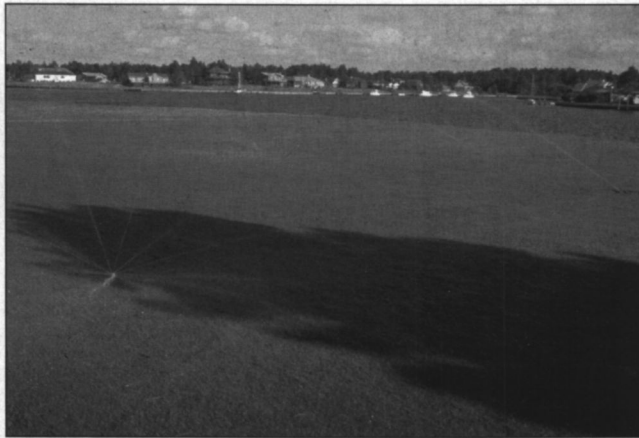
While an obvious solution may be to sacrifice turf quality by reducing irrigation quantity or frequency, an increasing number of turf managers and university researchers have found plant growth regulators offer a better solution. Not only are they useful for reducing turf mowing, there is growing evidence that PGRs reduce turf's water needs.

PGR TYPES. Today's PGRs fall into three classifications: Class A, Class B or Class C.

Class A PGRs interfere with the production of gibberellins (a type of plant hormone) late in their biosynthetic pathway, thus reducing growth and stem elongation. They are useful in moderately to intensively managed turf areas. Primo® (active ingredient trinexapac-ethyl) is the only Class A PGR commercially available.

Class B PGRs also block gibberellin synthesis, but interfere with their production very early in their biosynthetic pathways. These compounds also can be used on moderately to intensively managed turf. Cutless® (flurprimidol) and Scott's TGR® (paclobutrazol) are Class B PGRs.

The Class C PGRs are mitotic inhibitors, which prevent cell division or new growth for a defined period. Excellent seed head control is often possible with Class C PGRs, but turf color and recuperative potential can be diminished. Royal Slo-Gro® (maleic hydrazide), Embark® (mefluidide) and Limit® (amidochlor) are Class C PGRs.



Some contractors who started using plant growth regulators to save labor have found that they can also help reduce water use. Credit: Ciba

WATER SAVINGS BENEFITS. Robert Green, a turfgrass research agronomist at the University of California, Riverside, recently examined how a PGR might affect tall fescue water use. He determined that applications of Primo resulted in irrigation water savings and extended the interval between necessary irrigation.

In his two-month study, Green compared PGR-treated turfgrass to untreated turf. Both were exposed to either "ample" (every three to four days) or "restricted" (every seven to 24 days) watering.

He observed that treated turf had significantly better turf quality and color than untreated plots in both the ample and restricted watering scenarios. Turf quality and color showed the most drastic difference for turf that received less water, with the treated turf remaining healthy and green, while the untreated turf had less desirable quality and color. What this appears to mean is that turf managers can save water on PGR-treated turf by watering less often, without sacrificing turf quality and color.

Differences in turfgrass quality between treated turf and the control were less dramatic in frequently watered turfgrass, but the treated turf had superior color ratings.

The PGR saves water by reducing evapotranspiration, which is the combined loss of water by evaporation from the soil surface and by transpiration from plants. Green noted that treated tall fescue turfgrass used 13 percent less water than

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PRODUCT PROFILE

the control: "The water savings issue is huge, especially in this part of the country."

ON-SITE ADVANTAGES. Richard Wills, vice president of Lawnscape System, a lawn care firm in Ontario, Calif., also observed that turf treated with Primo needs significantly less water than untreated turf.

"We were involved with testing the product," Wills recalled. "Now we use it in many of our operations, including residential communities, golf courses and cemeteries. One of our clients is a large retirement community that uses more than 250 gallons of Primo a year."

He said Lawnscape started using the PGR as a labor-

saving measure. While he suspected the treated turf might require less irrigation, he had no idea how substantial

• • • • •

What this appears to mean is that turf managers can save water on PGR-treated turf by watering less often, without sacrificing turf quality and color.

• • • • •

the savings would be. "We have been able to reduce irrigation by more than 25 percent, and there has been no

effect on the turf's health or appearance."

Wills feels using a PGR is a win-win situation for his

company and his clients. Less labor is required to maintain his clients' properties, and they accrue smaller water bills, experience less wear and tear on their equipment and conserve a natural resource.

He explained, "I think PGRs are especially useful for commercial facilities or large acreage properties. If you work

out on paper what you spend compared to what you save, they will be cheaper every time."

Kevin Hicks, golf course superintendent at Desert Forest Golf Club in Carefree, Ariz., noted PGRs are especially advantageous to turf managers in areas where water is regulated or where water tables are low due to drought. "I live and die by water regulations. So, each drop counts." **LL**

Circle 224 on reader service card

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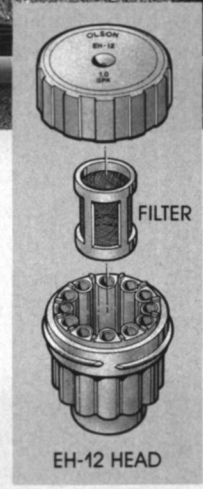
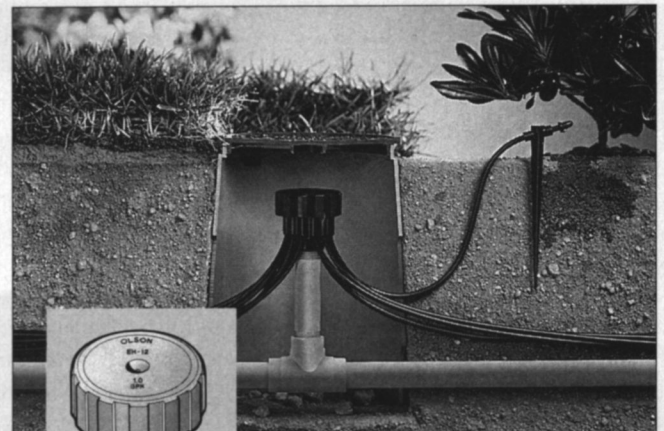
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USE READER SERVICE #69

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Dayton, Ohio- Are you frustrated by advertising that never makes the phone ring? By being beat out of good jobs by cheap bidders? Feeling like you're starting your business all over again every season? Stuck at a certain level?

A million dollar per year "entrepreneur of the year" says that most of his peers' and competitors' marketing is anemic, me-too-istic, dull, full of costly waste, and ineffective. Arrogant? Egotistical? Marty Grunder says: "React to me any way you like—but one thing is for sure, if you are in the landscaping business or maintenance business, whether you are small or large, my marketing methods can easily double or triple your business in just one year, provide better customers, help you target and get exactly the kind of business you want, increase profitability and stability, and absolutely mystify and trump your competitors."

Big talk? Yes, it is, but this Grunder wiseacre has been showing off—and baffling sceptics away—his entire life. As a freckle-faced, red headed Dennis-the-Menace type kid, he started his business with nothing more than a "push" lawn mower and chutzpah. That little business went to 75 regular customers almost overnight. As a full-time student at the University of Dayton, while his buddies drove to school in old "beater" cars and flipped burgers for pocket money, Marty arrived in his Grunder Landscaping Company truck and, at age 21, did over \$300,000.00 in business. This year he was named Young Entrepreneur of the Year by the Small Business Administration's Midwest Region, in the 1 to 25 employees category. Currently, Marty oversees a staff of 30, 15 trucks, a backhoe, an assortment of other equipment, and a diversified business doing everything from basic residential lawn maintenance to complicated commercial landscaping projects—and, this year, breaking the one million dollar mark in annual sales. He's also investing in land, lecturing from time to time, and working with other landscapers as their "marketing coach."

Million Dollar Marketing Secrets Revealed In A Free Report—If You Qualify!

Grunder DOES have "secrets" for building these types of businesses, too. Here are just a few examples:

1. How to **spark referrals**... how to turn "small accounts" into big business.
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4. How to stop the "price shopper" in his tracks. How to get good business without being the lowest bidder or offering cheapest price.



Here's the smart-aleck kid standing next to his first truck. Who'd have guessed he'd quickly create the biggest and best company in southern Ohio, confound established, entrenched competitors, and break the million dollar annual sales mark? Betcha he has a marketing secret or two in his pocket that you'd love to steal, if you could!

5. How to avoid the **fatal mistake** of confusing "marketing" with "selling".
6. **Forget** wasteful "**name recognition**" or "**getting your name out there**"—learn to "target," create and deliver a "market-matched" message," and **attract exactly the type and size of clients you really want.**
7. Why your "service" should never be the #1 focus of your marketing.
8. Powerful but simple letters and things to say to existent customers to **cause demand for a variety of additional, highly profitable services.**
9. The "**secret**" borrowed from the **fad-diet business that sells high-priced, high-profit landscaping work like crazy.**
10. How to get people working for you and with you to really contribute like a championship team!
11. How to use "**automated, autopilot marketing**" to bring in new business without you or anyone else even talking with prospects on the phone!
12. Even "poor boy" **dirt cheap marketing** strategies, like what to write on a simple postcard to bring in a flood of new customers.

13. The "**4-Page**" marketing tool used **6 to 10x a year that is guaranteed to increase your business by at least 30% year after year...automatically!**
14. How to position yourself as a "famous expert" in your area, get a ton of free advertising and "**fray**" the competition.

And there's a whole lot more. At the urging of a big-time, nationally respected direct marketing consultant and professional speaker who discovered and was "blown away" by everything Marty was doing, Marty prepared an easy-to-read but very complete, provocative Special Report—"How To Re-Invent Your Lawn-Garden/Landscaping Business With Million Dollar Marketing Secrets"—and you may be able to obtain a copy at absolutely no cost whatsoever.

Who Should Get Marty Grunder's Special Report?

Marty asks that you call for his free Report ONLY if: (1) you own your own business or are the President, CEO, manager or marketing manager for the business; (2) you make the decisions about advertising, marketing, and customer service investments; (3) you are currently unhappy with some aspect(s) of your business; (4) you recognize that in today's competitive environment, just "doing a great job" isn't enough to sustain a business; and (5) you are willing to make progressive innovative changes in your business if convinced, even reasonably assured that doing so will dramatically improve sales, profits, customer satisfaction, referrals, growth, and community prominence. (Please do NOT waste your time or Marty's money getting this Special Report if you are close-minded, change resistance, fully satisfied with your income, or just a curiosity-seeker without sincere interest in changing your business for the better.)

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Simply write "Report" on your business card or a sheet of your letterhead and FAX it to 513-847-8067 or, for even more information and to get your Report, call 1-800-399-7135, listen to a brief free recorded message, then leave your name, company name, and address as instructed. You can FAX or call anytime, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you prefer having your report sent confidentially to your home address, just let us know. Incidentally, requesting your free Report does not obligate you in any way; no salesperson will call to follow-up, nothing of the sort. However, this is a limited free offer, so please take care of it right now, while it's fresh in your mind.

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NEW PRODUCTS



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Circle 200 on reader service card

Woodace® fertilizer for landscape ornamentals from **Vigoro Industries®** contains Escote controlled release coated nutrients, Ibdu-XC slow release nitrogen and Perk micronutrients to provide controlled feeding for trees, shrubs, groundcovers and flowering plants.

Circle 201 on reader service card

The Pro 52 is a five-speed walk-behind mower from **Encore** with 12- to 16-hp engine selections available and taper lock pulleys for easy spindle changing without breaking the pulley. The Pro 52 includes a reinforced deck and 6-inch brake drums.

Circle 202 on reader service card

Phillips 66's new two-cycle motor oil with fuel stabilizer, Injex™ Plus, meets the needs of applications requiring a TC-

W3 oil, such as mowers, chain saws and trimmers. It is said to increase the shelf life of fuel/oil mixtures and help the mixture keep its combustion properties longer.

Circle 203 on reader service card

Air-O-Lator's Font'N-Aire fountain is a modular system for easy installation and maintenance. All units are furnished with ETL listed controls and a 3-year warranty. Units come in ½- to 5-hp size.

Circle 204 on reader service card

Holiday greeting cards from **Key Solutions** have green industry scenes and special themes to remind lawn and

landscape customers of good relationships throughout the year. They can also be used to thank customers for their business. Cards with bright envelopes and postcards can be personalized with a company logo or message. They are sold in packages of 25.

Circle 205 on reader service card

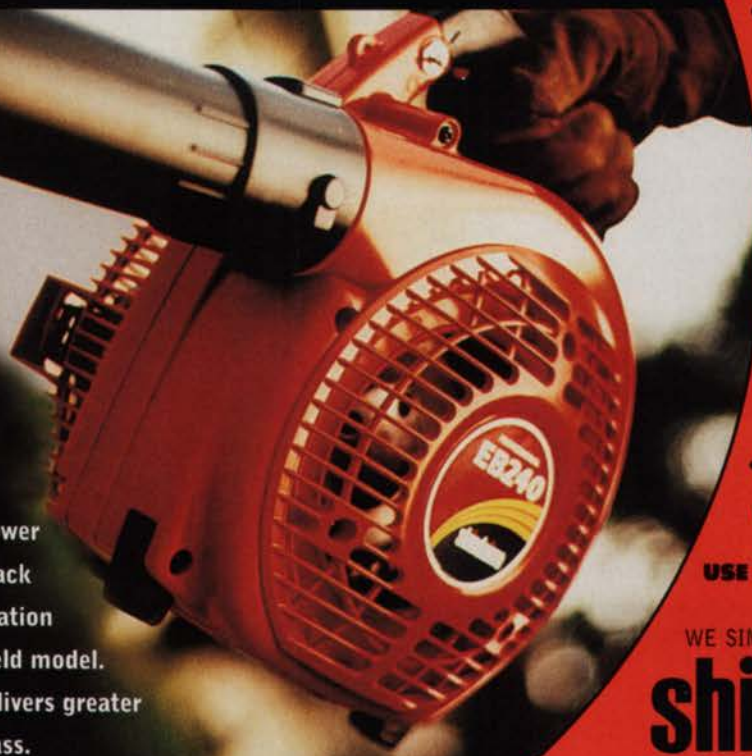
The ProGrind 900 Tub Grinder from **The Toro Company** has an advanced control electronics controller to monitor and direct all functions of the machine. A 100-hp Cummins



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- 7-day money back guarantee

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4BT engine powers the unit, while hydraulically controlled valves offer additional versatility.

Circle 206 on reader service card

The Eagle S-42 trailer-mounted aerial lift from **AmeriQuip** offers a 31-foot side reach and a 42-foot working height. Positive bucket leveling, 360-degree continuous rotation and easy portability equip the S-42 for a variety of



tasks. Fully proportional control valves with neutral position interlock allow simultaneous 2-function operation and complete feathering.

Circle 211 on reader service card

Shindaiwa's 357 top-handle chain saw weighs 9.1 pounds with a 35.5-cc engine

providing 1.8 hp. The 357 has a new secondary retainer for chain brake support and optional heavy duty, antivibration mounts for additional control.

Circle 212 on reader service card

The three models in the Professional BP 6100 Series of bypass pruners from **Corona Clipper** have a locking nut and self-aligning

LITERATURE

Hannay Reels has two eight-page, four-color catalogs complete with information and specifications on many of its spray hose reels, portable hose and electric cable reels for grounds maintenance, lawn care, tree spraying and other applications.

Circle 207 on reader service card

A.M. Leonard's Horticultural Tool and Supply Catalog features 80 pages of equipment essential to a contractor's business, including power and hand-held tools, wire tree baskets, various pesticides and protective clothing.

Circle 208 on reader service card

The Professional's Guide to Turf & Ornamental Plant Growth Regulation from **PBI/Gordon** lists potential PGR benefits and provides practical how-to information for using Ebmark 2S, Embark Lite and Atrimmec and other PGR products.

Circle 209 on reader service card

A four-page brochure from **Horticopia®** presents its Garden Workbench™ CD-ROM containing over 5,000 full-color images and information on more than 1,800 plants for plant identification support and assistance with plant selection for landscape designs.

Circle 210 on reader service card

Finally! A mower that cuts and trims at the same time.

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NEW PRODUCTS



pivot bolt design for changing blades easily in the field. The BP6190 has a 1-inch diameter cutting capacity while the BP6170 and 6140 handle 3/4-inch each.
Circle 213 on reader service card

The **Moldex 2300N95** particulate respirator with an exhalation

valve has a low breathing resistance rating with a polymesh outer shell for longer life. The naturally contoured face piece includes a molded nose bridge for a complete seal.
Circle 214 on reader service card

The Model TR48 tow-behind sweeper from **Sweepster** has a 24-inch diameter brush powered by a 5-hp Briggs & Stratton

engine to cover a 4-foot wide path. Both plastic and steel hoppers are available to hold 20 cubic feet of debris and 4 cubic feet of gravel, respectively.
Circle 215 on reader service card



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USE READER SERVICE #17

The Hooker™ Pro Model 38 aerator from **Way Easy** is 38 inches wide and mounts on the rear of walk-behind mowers to pull 3-inch deep plugs while the operator mows. The Hooker uses independently suspended tine rotors to operate on zero-turn mowers and in reverse for maximum mobility.

Circle 216 on reader service card

Bradco's 4-in-1 buckets lift, bulldoze, clamshell and backfill with the opening



bucket design. The bucket opens 32 inches and is available in 66- and 73-inch widths. The

unit functions as a dozer with the open bucket and the closed bucket can work as a grapple.

Circle 217 on reader service card

The 40-inch Aera-vator™ attachment for **Grasshopper** zero-radius outfront mowers joins the 60-inch model in offering quick aeration services with its hydraulic or electrical lift. The unit's PTO attachment

Hadco added a mushroom style fixture with a color impregnated black resin to its Nightlife® lighting collection. The fiberglass-reinforced, polyester material withstands temperature ranges of -40°F to 400°F and is available in two sizes and two mounting styles in both low voltage and line voltage.

Circle 218 on reader service card

NEW PRODUCTS

The YardTender™ 4- or 5.4-gallon backpack sprayer from **Professional Tree & Turf Equipment** has a spray that can reach more than 30 feet, plus mechanical agitation to allow use of wettable powder formulations. The polyethylene tank is treated with ultraviolet inhibitors to counter possible sun damage.

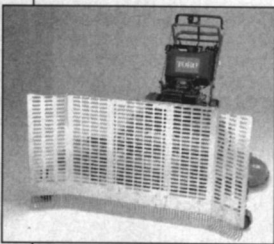
Circle 219 on reader service card

drive vibrates the tines in an oscillating motion in the soil to depths of 8 inches.

Circle 220 on reader service card

Terra Industries' Riverside Bison™ is a selective postemergence herbicide for control of broadleaf weeds that infest grass seed plots and conservation reserve program areas. The product is available in 2½-gallon and bulk package sizes.

Circle 221 on reader service card



JRCO's Leaf Blade plow is a 55-inch wide blade for moving large leaf piles. The one-piece galvanized steel blade fits most walk-

behind and riding mowers, has flat spring tines to comb the leaves and rides on two adjustable caster wheels.

Circle 222 on reader service card

Motorola's GTX™ series of mobile and portable trunked 2-way radios are available in 800 MHz and 900 MHz spectrum models.

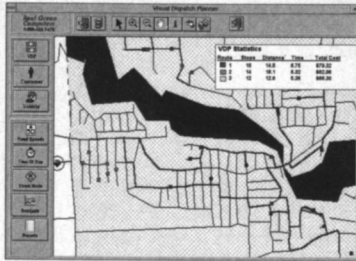
The radios offer numeric display on both portable and mobile models



with standard features such as scan, talk-around Private Conversation™ and telephone interconnect.

Circle 223 on reader service card

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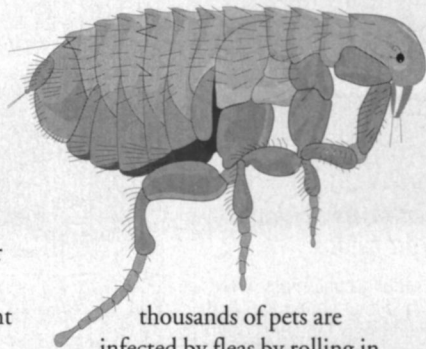
IN YOUR TURF

FLEAS ARE NO CIRCUS

THE GENERAL PUBLIC, especially pet owners, appear to take flea infestations in stride. In reality, they warrant more serious consideration since fleas can cause harm to pets and to pet owners as well.

Fleas can be a recurring problem for pet owners and landscape contractors if proper treatment is not applied at the first sign of them. However, they provide an excellent opportunity to offer value-added services and build better relationships with customers.

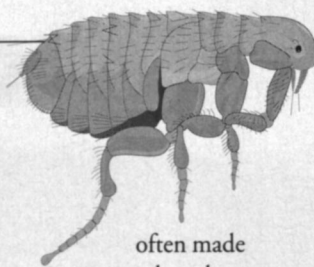
Each year, usually from April through October,



thousands of pets are infected by fleas by rolling in the dirt or walking through the grass. The pets then become carriers, transporting the fleas throughout the home and onto other hosts.

HOT WEATHER GROWTH.

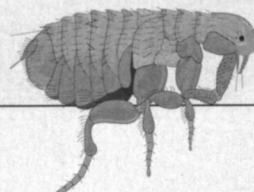
Fleas thrive in hot, humid weather — a time when most pets are outdoors. As the flea attaches itself to the pet, it bites through its skin, causing an irritation or lesion which is



often made worse when the pet scratches.

If the pet bites or swallows a flea, it could be infected with a tapeworm, a parasite that flourishes inside the flea. Such ailments can also affect children and adults, making flea infestation a problem which should be taken seriously. The lawn care professional can help alleviate this problem.

What makes flea infestations even more problematic is that fleas are susceptible to insecticides only during certain stages of their life cycle. Consequently, lawn care



professionals must not only be aware of the latest flea control methods, but should also understand the stages of development. When applied at the right stage, a pesticide can be used just once each month to eliminate the flea infestation.

The best time to treat a lawn for fleas is at least 24 hours after the lawn is cut. Many surface treatment pesticides provide a contact kill affecting the pest's central nervous system, and the lawn and the pests that dwell there must be settled for a treatment to be effective. This also decreases the probability of callbacks.

(continued on page 68)

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4	24	44	64	84	104	124	144	164	184	204	224	244
5	25	45	65	85	105	125	145	165	185	205	225	256
6	26	46	66	86	106	126	146	166	186	206	226	246
7	27	47	67	87	107	127	147	167	187	207	227	247
8	28	48	68	88	108	128	148	168	188	208	228	248
9	29	49	69	89	109	129	149	169	189	209	229	249
10	30	50	70	90	110	130	150	170	190	210	230	250
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16	36	56	76	96	116	136	156	176	196	216	236	256
17	37	57	77	97	117	137	157	177	197	217	237	257
18	38	58	78	98	118	138	158	178	198	218	238	258
19	39	59	79	99	119	139	159	179	199	219	239	259
20	40	60	80	100	120	140	160	180	200	220	240	260

Name _____
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1. Do you wish to receive (continue to receive)

Lawn & Landscape magazine?

YES NO

Signature (required) _____ Date _____

2. What is your primary business at this location? (please check one)

CONTRACTOR or SERVICES:

- Landscape Contractor (maintenance & installation)
- Chemical Lawn Care Company (excluding mowing maintenance service)
- Lawn Maintenance Contractor
- Ornamental Shrub & Tree Service
- Irrigation Contractor
- Landscape Architect
- Other Contract Services (please describe): _____

OTHERS ALLIED TO THE FIELD:

- Extension Agent (Federal, State, County, City, Regulatory Agency)
- School, College, University
- Trade Association, Library
- Others (please describe): _____

3. What were your approximate 1995 revenues?

- 0 - \$50,000
- \$50,001 - \$100,000
- \$100,001 - \$250,000
- \$250,001 - \$500,000
- \$500,001 - \$1 million
- + \$1 million

4. How many of your employees are:

- _____ Full time _____ Applicators
- _____ Seasonal _____ Maintenance

5. What percentage of your business is:

- _____ % Commercial/Industrial
- _____ % Residential
- _____ % Gov't/Municipal
- _____ % Golf

6. Circle what percent of your business is:

Lawn Care	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Maint. Serv.	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Irrigation Serv.	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Pest Control	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Installation	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Trees & Ommts.	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%

7. How much did your company spend in 1995 on?

Turf Chemicals \$ _____
 Ornamental Chemicals \$ _____
 Equipment \$ _____

8. How many does your business operate?

- _____ Walk Behind Mowers
- _____ Riding Mowers
- _____ Trimmers
- _____ Chain Saws
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- 2. Chemical Lawn Care Company (excluding mowing maintenance service)
- 3. Lawn Maintenance Contractor
- 4. Ornamental Shrub & Tree Service
- 5. Irrigation Contractor
- 6. Landscape Architect
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- 3. Trade Association, Library
- 4. Others (please describe) _____

2. What best describes your title?

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- Manager, Director, Supt., Foreman
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- Entomologist, Plant Pathologist
- Serviceman, Technician
- Scientist, Researcher
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10/96

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IN YOUR TURF

(continued from page 66)

RESISTANCE STAGE. Once a female flea has infected a host, she can lay up to 50 eggs a day and as many as 400 during her 25-day life span. The new fleas hatch in two to four days, emerging as worm-like larvae. Almost immediately, they begin to feed off organic debris and dried blood found in the feces of adult fleas. This phase lasts for up to two weeks.

They then proceed to a two- to three-week pupa stage, during which they are protected by a resilient outer shell. This shell shields the fleas from any harm until they reach full maturity.

It is during this last phase of the life cycle that the flea is most resistant to pest control methods. As each generation

of fleas emerges from the pupa stage, the infestation recurs, which is why many pesticides

• • • • •

What makes flea infestations even more problematic is that fleas are susceptible to insecticides only during certain stages of their life.

• • • • •

offer only a temporary cure.

Contractors should combine flea control products with insect growth regulators to

ensure fast knockdowns and long residual control. Together, these

products will provide flea control for several months. By contrast, pesticides that treat only adult flea problems can result in new infestations every few weeks, translating to dissatisfied customers, return visits and a loss in time and profits for the contractor.

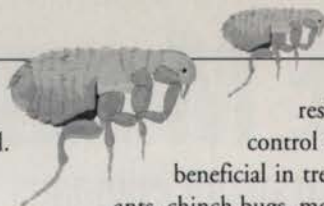
There are many products that work quickly and easily and provide long-lasting effects. For example, a new chemistry called bifenthrin and a synthetic pyrethroid called permethrin offer up to four weeks of

residual control and are beneficial in treating ants, chinch bugs, mole crickets and sod worms, in addition to fleas.

Lawn and landscape contractors looking to offer more services may want to weigh their pesticide options very carefully and keep informed of new products available to fight flea problems and other pest infestations.

By researching current flea control products and techniques now, you can be ready to offer the service as an add-on next spring, summer and fall. — Barry Schwartz **LL**

The author is marketing manager at APG Specialty Group, FMC Corp., Princeton, N.J.



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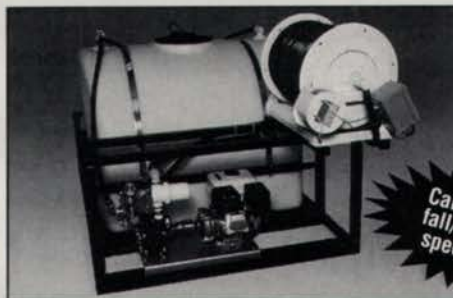
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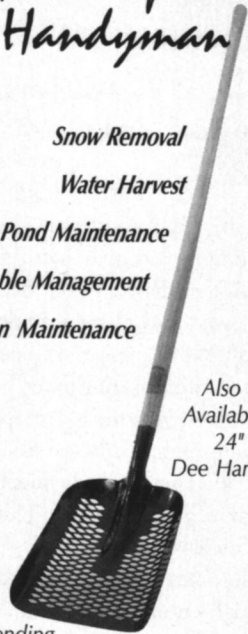
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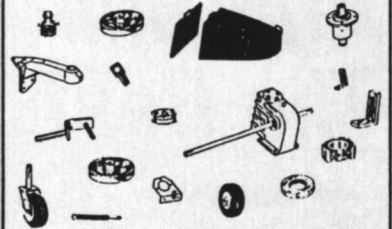
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cover story

STATE INDUSTRY



(continued from page 25)

finding quality people."

"I'm reasonably optimistic," said Rex Gore,

president, Clean Cut Inc., Austin, Texas. "Our industry has been maturing a little bit and customers have a better appreciation for quality work and a sophistication for what they buy. We're seeing a continued move to primary customers using fewer, better quality vendors. They view me as a competitor to just a few companies, as opposed to viewing me as one of 50 competitors. It doesn't make the work easier, but it does make it less frustrating with more customer loyalty."

This discriminating attitude can also affect high-end contractors negatively. Steve Pattie, president of The Pattie Group, Novelty, Ohio, noted there's been more shopping by the high-end consumer, which hurts companies like his that target those buyers.

In areas where there is little economic growth, the available market for contracting services remains stagnant, too, pointed out Bruce Moore, Eastern Land Management, Stamford, Conn. He's seen a limited pool of commercial clients switch contractors, which is a major source of growth for his company. While the number of commercial accounts does not necessarily rise, the potential for growth dollars from those clients does.

"In landscape management, we are being asked to provide more services for the client," explained Moore. "However, they are not necessarily horticultural in nature. Snow removal, parking lot striping/sealing and other site-related services are popular."

One thing never changes — any industry forecast is just an estimate. While many contractors are optimistic about the prospects for 1997, the smart ones are preparing for business to move either way.

"I'm cautiously optimistic for 1997," said Hanson. "The economy is picking up but it seems somewhat fragile. Companies are positioning themselves to react more quickly. Everyone's more educated to the fact that we are going to have upturns and downturns, and they need to react more quickly." ■

The author is Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine. Paul Schrimpf and Bob West contributed to this report.

irrigation market

(continued from page 32)

can be sent to a controller to shut down the station or to alert the property owner or irrigation contractor for repair.

LANDSCAPE PRACTICES. Research has documented the advantages of placing plants in similar irrigation zones to save water and improve plant health and performance. Mulching under the canopy of trees and ornamentals and using low-volume irrigation instead of spray heads can save water and reduce maintenance, such as weed and disease control.

Recycled water from treatment plants and household graywater are resources for landscape irrigation in the future. California has a law specifying what types of graywater can be used. It stipulates that the delivery lines be underground. Recycled water from treatment plants can be an important option for industrial parks and rights-of-way.

Ultimately, all irrigation systems need checkups. That means audits and updating. As contractors, your universe for maintenance is considerably larger than for new systems and retrofitting — 10.5 million existing systems vs. 515,000 new ones. Pay more attention to it.

Many irrigation systems lose part of their efficiency years after installation when broken heads and valves are replaced with mismatched versions. As landscapes change, so must the irrigation system.

Whether you install \$1,800 residential or \$20,000 commercial systems, the water that is saved by proper design and operation is just as valuable. It's becoming apparent that price of water impacts how seriously irrigation is taken in any community.

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There aren't many businesses today with a future like irrigation. You may not get rich overnight, but you'll know that you are doing environmentally friendly work. ■

The author is an owner of VERDEcom, Banning, Calif., which is the communications and research consultant to the Irrigation Association.

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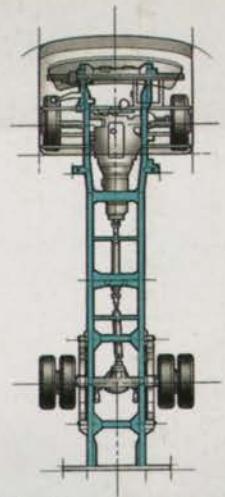
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