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## Inside:

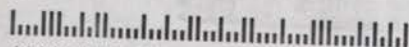
Controlling  
Weeds in Turfgrass

How Plants Grow

Interiorscape  
Market Update

Trends in  
Design/Build

# Step by Step



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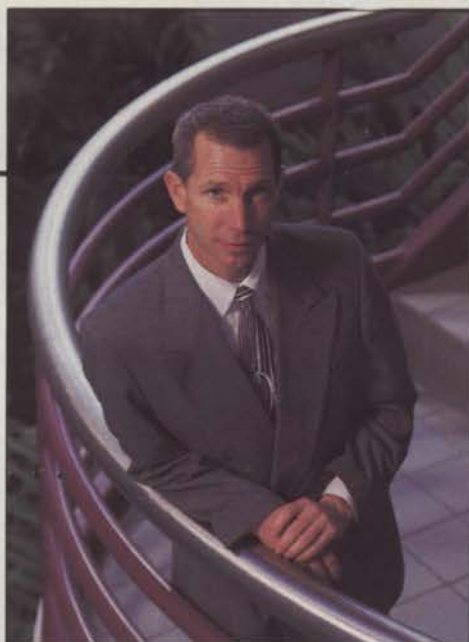


# Lawn & Landscape

More Than 60,000 Subscribers Monthly

## Cover photo

Kevin Anderson  
Prairie Village, Kan.



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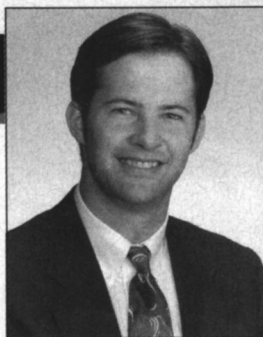
How a contractor figures the costs of labor for a job can be as important as controlling the amount of labor involved on the job.



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Bob West  
Editor

Here's a riddle for you: A woman had two sons in the same hour, on the same day, in the same year, but they're not twins. What are they?

I'm a fervent riddle fan, and I'm also down right adamant in my refusal to "give up" and check the answers before racking my brain for at least a few days seeking the solution. In fact, it probably wouldn't be too off base to say I turn harmless riddles into some personal wars.

Why would anyone claiming to be perfectly sane (at least most of the time) expend so much energy on such a simple game? It's not the fun of them that I find most rewarding, it's the educational lesson riddles present when you do discover the solution.

Think of any riddle you've ever solved. Now, think of your first reaction when you either figured out or were given the answer. I bet it was something along the lines of, "Of course! That was so simple."

That's the point of riddles – to present a problem with a simple, yet not-so-obvious, solution that is often not thought of because people are too entrenched in a particular manner of thinking that restricts their ability to consider new solutions. In short, a riddle is a mental trap that illustrates our tendencies to make the simplest of problems more difficult than they really are.

The people I've known who are the most accomplished riddle solvers are those people who approach each problem or quandary they encounter with a fresh perspective and minimal preconceived notions that have nothing to do with the facts of the problem.

Now think about how valuable these people are to an organization or company. How many times has your company, division, or staff labored away to solve a problem that in hindsight was really quite simple? How many times have you done this yourself?

What I, personally, find most frustrating about this behavior, is that I know I repeat it more than I should. And I imagine I'm not alone in that frustration. So I embrace riddles to remind me that the solutions to my problems don't have to be complex, convoluted algorithms that require a Harvard Ph.D. to solve. Oftentimes, the solutions are much more obvious if I'll just focus on what the problem really asks of me.

Oh, by the way, are you still wondering about the woman and her two sons? Well, she had triplets, hence they weren't twins. Pretty simple, eh? Now just imagine how many other simple solutions are out there in your business and your life if you can just force yourself to eschew your traditional mental path followed for examining and solving problems.

*Bob West*

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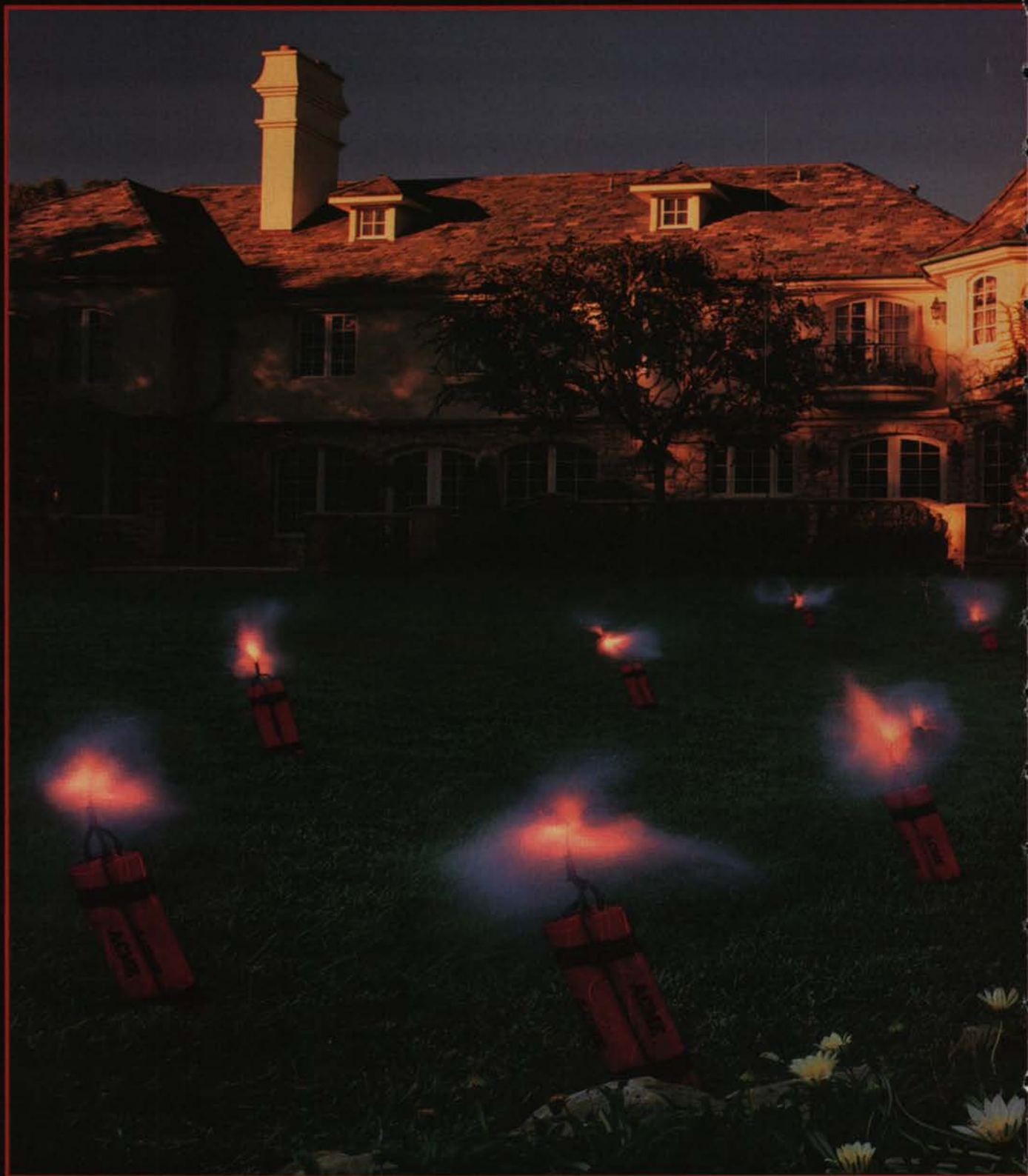
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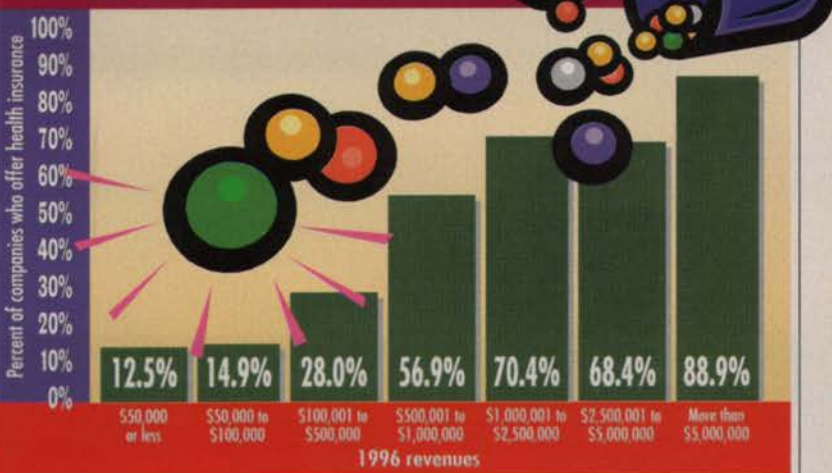
## BIGGER IS HEALTHIER . . .

One of the many issues contractors must deal with in today's labor shortage is, how much should be invested in benefits for hourly employees?

One of the most discussed benefits across all industries has been the issue of health insurance, and a recent *Lawn & Landscape* wage and benefits survey revealed that the larger the company becomes, the more likely it is to offer their hourly employees health insurance benefits.

The most significant jump in the number of companies that provide health insurance occurs once a company has surpassed \$500,000 in sales, leaping from 28 percent to 56.9 percent. Nearly 89 percent of companies generating more than \$5 million in sales offer health insurance.

## WHO'S INSURED?



(Credit: L&L Reader Survey)

## SCHOLARSHIP FUND HONORS PHIL CHRISTIAN

MARBLE HILL, Ga. – While the green industry lost a dear friend with the death of Phil Christian last year, that does not mean the industry won't continue to benefit from his commitment to bettering the professionalism with which contractors approached their jobs.

A fund has been established in Christian's name that will result in the award of an annual scholarship to be presented to a college student pursuing a career in the green industry. The scholarship will be awarded each year at the Associated Landscape

Contractors of America Student Career Days event.

"Phil always left a little something with us each time he visited," recalled Michael Byrne, president, Byrne Brothers Landscaping Inc., Middleton, Mass. "I am asking the industry now to give back a small amount for the wealth of information Phil gave to us."

Tax deductible donations can be sent to: The Gwinnett Foundation, attn. Phil Christian Memorial Scholarship, P.O. Box 148, Marble Hill, GA 30148. Questions about the fund can be directed to Joseph Estafen at 770/564-3451.

**Phil Christian (right) shared his industry expertise with such well-known executives as Husqvarna President David Zerfoss.**



## FAIRMOUNT MINERALS ACQUIRES GARICK CORP.

CLEVELAND – Fairmount Minerals acquired The Garick Corp., for an undisclosed price, in early January. Cleveland-based Garick, a landscape and nursery supplier, earned \$10 million in sales last year, Fairmount Minerals' President Chuck Fowler said.

The acquisition has been in the works for the past six months and was an investment opportunity for the Chardon, Ohio-based Fairmount Minerals, which reportedly earned more than \$100 million in sales last year, Fowler added.

For the past nine years,

Fairmount, a miner and manufacturer of sand and gravel, has owned 33 percent of the 17-year-old Garick.

"It's time to put the two horses together," Fowler said of the acquisition.

Gary Trinetti, president of Garick, said Fairmount has

*'The timing was right. It was a good strategic fit. As things progressed, it became a likely marriage.'*

been involved as a corporate investor since 1988, sitting on the board of directors and providing strategy and direction to the company.

"The timing was right. It was a good strategic fit," Trinetti said of the acquisition.

(continued on page 10)



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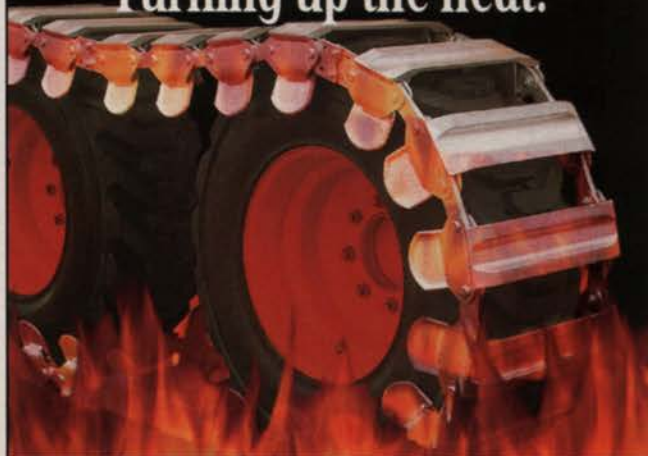
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## MARKET TRENDS

(continued from page 8)

"As things progressed, it became a likely marriage."

Trinetti, who will remain as general manager and vice president of Garick, said the acquisition will mean a consolidation of the companies' marketing efforts and provide "one-stop-shopping" where customers can purchase a wider variety of products from both companies.

"The company will become more customer-focused and easier to do business with," Trinetti explained.

Fowler said Garick's turf and landscape distribution business will become a division of Fairmount Minerals, which markets a number of similar products for golf courses.

The acquisition will also yield a stronger production and manufacturing base, Fowler remarked, and it means landscape contractors will be offered a much broader availability of product lines through Garick sources, he said.

"More realistically, we expect to grow using Garick's es-

(continued on page 13)

## ASSOCIATION NEWS

**P**rofessional Grounds Management Society elected new officers at its annual conference.

New PGMS officers are: Tom Riccardi, president; Randall Willis, 1st vice president; Kevin O'Donnell, 2nd vice president; George Van Haasteren, treasurer.

New board members for the **Green Industry Expo** are: Dale Elkins, president; Sam Farison, vice president, Michael Joyce, secretary/treasurer.

Joe Duncan was elected president of the **Ohio Turfgrass Foundation** at its conference. Other elected positions included: Dave Webner, president-elect, Randy Tischer, vice president and Lin Dunaway, treasurer.

The **Golf Course Superintendents Association of America**, **Professional Lawn Care Association of America** and **Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment** report that their Ambassador Speakers Program has been expanded into four northeastern states.

The **Professional Lawn Care Association of America** announced its 1998 officers as follows: Larry Messina, president, Bob Ottley, president-elect, Gerald Grossi, vice president; Michael Kernaghan, secretary/treasurer, Terry Kurth, immediate past president.

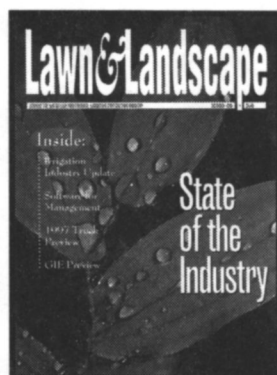
New **PLCCA** directors are: Vincent A. Tummino, Jon Cundiff, Gary LaScalea, Douglas A. Masters.

The **Associated Landscape Contractors of America** announced the 1997 Safety Award Contest. The contest covers the period of Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 1997. Contest applications are due by April 1. Call 800/395-2522 for more information.

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☐ Manager, Director, Supt., Foreman  
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(continued from page 10)

established distribution system to move our products through their organization," Fowler explained, adding that the Midwest is targeted for increased sales growth.

## TOCA, TERRA ANNOUNCE AWARD

NEW PRAGUE, Minn. — Good deeds promoting the green industry will begin to receive increased public recognition with the Turf and Ornamental Communicators Association's Environmental Communicator of the Year Award.

The program, sponsored by Terra Industries, Sioux City,

# 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.

**FEB. 14-18** Associated Landscape Contractors of America Executive Forum, St. Petersburg, Fla. Contact: 800/395-2522.

**FEB. 16-20** International Erosion Control Association Conference & Expo, Reno, Nev. Contact: 800/455-4322.

**FEB. 18** Connecticut Groundskeepers Association's Annual Turf & Landscape Conference & Trade Show, Hartford. Contact: 203/699-9912

**FEB. 23-24** Turf & Grounds Exposition II, Suffern, N.Y. Contact: 800/873-8873.

**FEB. 23-24** New York State Turfgrass Association Turf & Grounds Expo, Latham. Contact: 800/873-8873.

**FEB. 24-26** Western Pennsylvania Turf Conference & Trade Show, Monroeville. Contact: 814/863-3475.

**FEB. 27** ALCA University, Hudson, Ohio. Contact: 330/653-9191.

**MAR. 3-5** New England Turfgrass Conference & Show, Providence, R.I. Contact: 401/848-0004.

**MAR. 3-4** Colorado Association of Lawn Care Professionals Spring Training Conference, Golden. Contact: 303/850-7587.

**MAR. 12-15** ALCA Student Career Days, Raleigh, N.C. Contact: 800/395-2522.

**MAR. 18-19** Landscape Industry Show, Long Beach, Calif. Contact: 916/448-2522.

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\*All dates subject to change. Contact us for more dates and detailed class descriptions. Classes \$99 in advance, \$129 at door.

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# MARKET TRENDS

Iowa, will be presented annually to an "active green industry member for outstanding efforts in communicating the benefits of environmental stewardship to a particular audience within the turf and ornamental industry," according to TOCA.

"Efforts to enlighten the public about green industry efforts to encourage environmental stewardship are a worthwhile and necessary endeavor today," noted Den Gardner, executive director of TOCA.

The award, which will debut at the 1999 TOCA annual meeting, is open to any member of the green industry that is nominated by a TOCA member. A \$500 cash stipend will be presented to the winner.

(continued on page 16)

## PEOPLE

**J**acklin Seed promoted **Hiromi Yanagisawa** to senior vice president of marketing; **Tom Stoesser** to senior vice president finance; **Myron Lightbody** to senior vice president plant operation; **Glenn Jacklin** to senior vice president production and grower services. **Doug Brede** is senior vice president of research.

Ransomes America Corp. appointed **John Finlay** as director of national accounts for the turf and professional lawn care divisions.

Woods Equipment Company appointed **David W. Ferguson** to the vice president of sales and dealer services. Stens Power Equipment Parts promoted **Peter C. Ariens** to director of sales and **Scott R. Burgess** to director of marketing.

FMC Corp. named **James R. Collins** as specialty products director.

**Larry Humphreys** returned to The Scotts Co. as territory manager of sod grower sales.

Zeneca Professional Products named **Jerid T. Wendling** as territory sales representative for the western area of Florida.

Allmand Brothers Inc. announced that **James P. Smith** was appointed midwest regional sales manager.

American Cyanamid named **Mike Toce** as senior sales manager for the turf, ornamental and pest control groups.



Glenn Jacklin



John Finlay



Tiller



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Tilt-Tatch

Put your skid steer loader to work with Palm attachments.

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# MARKET TRENDS

(continued from page 14)

## LESCO, RIVERDALE DEBUT NEW HERBICIDE COMBO

ROCKY RIVER, OHIO — LESCO Inc. announced the upcoming release of a new herbicide formulation containing 2,4-D, triclopyr and clopyralid. Called Momentum, it will contain a new formulation of 2,4-D, called 2,4-D TIPA. This formulation of 2,4-D, manufactured by Dow AgroSciences, Indianapolis, is marketed exclusively through Riverdale Chemical, Glenwood, Ill.

The main difference between this and other formulations of 2,4-D is the very low odor and light amber color, according to Greg Chambers, senior prod-

uct manager for LESCO. Momentum will be widely available to contractors beginning on March 1.

## BRICKMAN PASSED TO THIRD GENERATION

LANGHORNE, Pa. — The Brickman Group announced a financial plan that will put Scott Brickman in control of the \$100 million contracting firm as president and chief executive officer.

The company entered into an agreement with financial investors in a deal that will allow Steve Brickman to leave the family-run company and pursue other interests. Dick Brickman, the second generation president,

will become chairman of the board. A letter from the company stressed that there would be no change in corporate values or culture.

## AGREVO REORGANIZES

MONTVALE, N.J.

— AgrEvo North America has realigned its Professional Products Group to include the company's Green Industry Group, a full line of turf and ornamental products used by golf course, lawn care, grounds maintenance and industrial vegetation professionals. New managers include

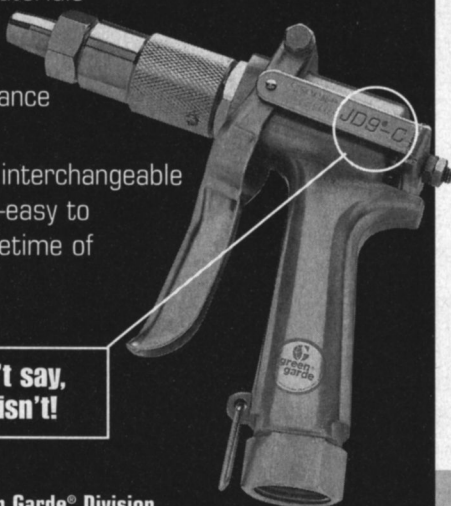
Curtis Orrben, national sales manager for the Green Industry, and Jim Widman, national accounts manager for Professional Products Groups. George Raymond, Bill German, Dave Buzzelli, Dr. Mark Coeffelt, Cindy Mannes will continue in their positions. **LL**

## MISSION STATEMENT:

**L**AWN & 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 18 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.

## Genuine "JD9®." The standard of the industry for over 25 years!

- Highest quality spray gun you can buy—**more sold than any other brand!**
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## Don't be fooled by imitations!

**im•i•ta•tion** (im/i ta/shen), *n.* 1. a counterfeit; copy. 2. bogus; phony. 3. fraud. 4. artificial; fake; false. 5. impersonation. — *adj.* 6. designed to imitate a genuine or superior article or thing.



All cars come with four wheels and a motor. But that doesn't mean they're alike. It's the same with spray guns. Before you buy a cheap imitation, ask yourself: How long will it last? Are parts available or interchangeable? Is it precision made? What kind of materials is it really made of? Does it have a warranty? Can I balance low price with performance?

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"I started with a lawn mower and built a million-dollar-plus, highly profitable, and highly respected landscape contracting business at a rapid pace—because of my Customer Attraction Secrets...now, my Free Report reveals my secrets, to those who qualify."

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 blowing 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. Last 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, 18 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 \$1.5 million 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.
2. How to **increase Val-Pak Coupon, direct-mail and Yellow Pages advertising results by 10% to 30%...** make your advertising much more productive and be able to accurately measure its value.

3. The 5 biggest mistakes 95% of the people in this business make when advertising and how to avoid them.
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 exceed \$1.5 million in annual sales? 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 "fry" 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.)

### How To Get Your Free Report:

Simply write "Report" on your business card or a sheet of your letterhead and FAX it to 937-847-8067 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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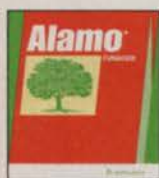


# mass necessary care industry been waiting for.

Even more importantly, look for Novartis to go beyond great products to bring you the technical information and leading-edge research you can use to grow your business. This is the basis of the Novartis Lawn & Landscape Partners Program.

Novartis also supports the long term goals of the GIE, and are proud sponsors of educational and supporting events at PLCAA, ALCA and PGMS.

To learn more about Novartis and the Lawn & Landscape Partners Program, call 1-800-395-TURF.



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Your Business.





## ZENECA BUYS CHLOROTHALONIL BUSINESS WITH ISK ACQUISITION

WILMINGTON, DEL. — Zeneca Professional Products boosted its share of the U.S. fungicide market with its acquisition of the chlorothalonil business of ISK Biosciences Corp., Mentor, Ohio. The acquisition, valued at \$410 million, will give Zeneca rights to chlorothalonil worldwide, including lawn and landscape uses in the U.S. Chlorothalonil is sold under the

trade names Bravo and Daconil 2787.

The acquired part of ISK's chlorothalonil business generated an operating profit of \$43 million from sales of \$240 million in the U.S. in 1996, according to ISK.

"We are delighted to have reached this agreement with ISK, with whom we have a long-standing relationship," said Michael Pragnell, chief

executive officer of Zeneca Agrochemicals. "The addition of chlorothalonil to Zeneca's range is an important enhance-

## The Deal

**HO:** Zeneca Professional Products, Wilmington, Del., ISK Biosciences, Mentor, Ohio.

**HAT:** Zeneca agreed to acquire the worldwide chlorothalonil business, including the U.S. turf and ornamental business, from ISK for \$410 million.

ment to our goal of attaining a leading position in the global fungal control market."

According to Vern Hawkins, fungicides product manager for Zeneca, Daconil represents approximately 10 percent to 15 percent of the estimated \$150 million golf and grounds fungicide market in the U.S., and complements the company's Heritage fungicide, which completed

its first full season of use in 1997.

"It provides dollar spot control that Heritage is not labeled for," noted Hawkins, "and it will make a good partner with Heritage in disease resistance management programs."

Completion of the purchase was expected by the end of January. — Paul Schrimpf

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simple with the HPI 2400 sod installer. It handles rolls 24" wide and up to 32" in diameter. It's easy to assemble, easy to use, and just about indestructible. Then again, what else would you expect from Brouwer?

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USE READER SERVICE #18



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*The science of controlling weeds just took a giant leap into the future*

Introducing

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Now, get the results you've always hoped for. Get the awesome performance of DowElanco's triclopyr and clopyralid chemistry combined with the fast action and effectiveness of phenoxies and dicamba.

**The result - Weed control unequalled by any other combination product available!**

Don't just burn back hard-to-control weeds like clover, wild violet and wild geranium. Knock them out completely.

## **Millennium™**

- Unequaled Performance
- State-of-the-art Chemistry
- Rapid Visual Response
- Total, Effective Control
- Amine Formulation
- Contains 2,4-D, Clopyralid and Dicamba
- It Doesn't Get Any Better Than This!

## **Cool Power™**

- High Performance, Cool Weather Weed Control
- Ester Formulation for Increased Plant Uptake
- Also Use For Spot Treating During Warmer Weather
- Controls Wild Onion and Wild Garlic
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## **Horsepower™**

- Highly Effective, Broad Spectrum Formulation
- Use in 2,4-D Sensitive Markets or When 2,4-D Limits Are Reached
- Increased Efficacy on Summer Problem Weed Species
- Amine Formulation
- Contains MCPA, Triclopyr and Dicamba

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**The Formulation Innovators**



## AGRIBIOTECH EYES MORE SEED COMPANIES FOR ACQUISITION

LAS VEGAS – Rapidly moving ahead with its expansion plans, AgriBioTech has acquired yet another seed company, making this its 17<sup>th</sup> purchase

since January 1995.

ABT announced Jan. 13 that it has purchased Seed Corporation of America for \$10 million. Officials from the aggressively growing

company with reported annualized net sales of about \$326 million, also said it has pending acquisitions with five more companies: Zajac Performance Seeds, Discount Farm Center, Ohio Seed Co., Van Dyke Seed Co., and Las Vegas Fertilizer Co.

On Jan. 9, ABT announced it had signed intent to purchase letters with Zajac Performance Seeds, Ohio Seed, Van Dyke Seed, and Las Vegas Fertilizer. The four companies' combined revenue was reported at about \$46 million.

According to an ABT press release, all three owners of Zajac will continue as employees of ABT with long-term contracts.

"The strong management

team of Zajac, coupled with its Oregon production operations and strong distribution base, will be complementary to AgriBioTech's existing turfgrass operations," according to the release.

John Zajac, president of 9-year-old Zajac Performance Seeds, said he expects to see the purchase go through ABT by March. The small seed company based in N. Haledon, N.J. with its warehouse in Albany, Ore., employs 12 full-time workers.

Zajac said he sees his alignment with the much larger ABT as a move to make his company stronger and produce better products for customers. — Denyse Fissel **LL**

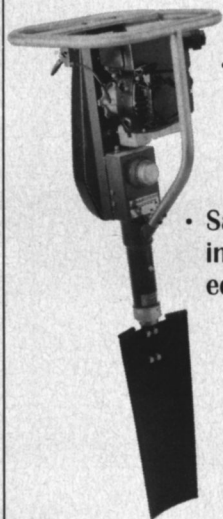
## The Deal

**HO:** AgriBioTech, Las Vegas, Nev.

**HAT:** Announced the pending acquisition of Zajac Performance Seeds, Discount Farm Center, Ohio Seed Co., Van Dyke Seed Co., and Las Vegas Fertilizer Co. Combined revenues of the five companies are estimated at \$46 million.

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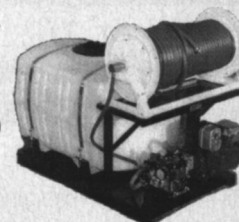
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Model  
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*Inside every Echo power tool beats our world-class, two-stroke engine - the heart of Echo's legendary performance and unsurpassed reliability. It's here, in the engine, that our rugged construction and intelligent engineering make the difference.*

*The result? Power equipment that exceeds professional demands for quality, durability and dependability. Echo Pro Performance. Built by the team that knows what professionals need. Maybe that's why more landscaping professionals choose Echo than any other brand of outdoor power equipment. For more information on Echo Pro Performance products call 1-800-432-ECHO (3246).*



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USE READER SERVICE #42

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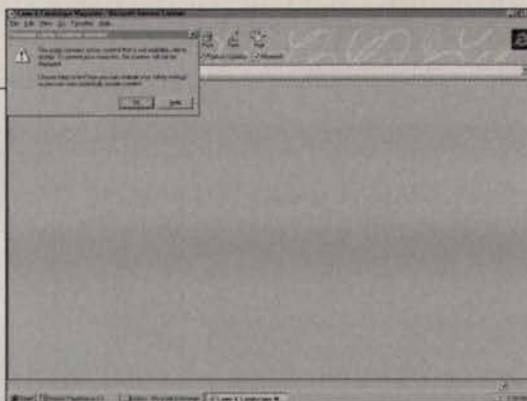


## INTERNET WARNINGS CAN BE FALSE ALARMS

THE CONCEPT behind Lawn & Landscape Online is to create a website that combines up-to-the-minute industry information and new Internet technology.

Warning messages from downloading plug-ins, such as the example seen here, shouldn't stop users from using the site.

Taking into consideration that new Internet users may not have all of the latest software available to view and interpret some of the more advanced files the site has to offer,



## No Other Landscaping Device Does More...

### The **Harley Power Box Rake®** for Skid Steers and Tractors



Model S-6 or S-8

- Rake and windrow rocks, roots or trash
- Condition the soil
- Instantly turn old lawns into new seed beds

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Get rid of those broken down single-use attachments and gain new ground this season with a **Harley Power Box Rake®**, model S-6 or S-8 for skid steers.

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  - **Bi-Angular Construction.** Rotate the carbide toothed power roller for left or right windrowing.
- Achieve excellent results quickly with the free step-by-step **Harley Power Box Rake®** instructional video.



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our site has established a middle ground between general usability and higher technology for a wide range of users.

All files and images that were created for the site were tested on the two most common browsers, Netscape and Microsoft Internet Explorer, to ensure that readers using either browser would get the same information with as little difficulty as possible. In doing so, we found that the best way to allow all users to access and interpret the interactive features of the site was to create an introductory page where new users could download the appropriate plug-ins to best view the site.

The introductory page for the L&L site offers downloads for Shockwave and for RealPlayer, the plug-ins necessary to view the streaming video and Flash animation used throughout the site. The site's introductory page links to the plug-ins' respective official pages; from there, users can download the appropriate files and, using the back button on the browser, return to the L&L site immediately thereafter.

Users can choose to not download the files and still browse Lawn & Landscape Online efficiently. There is an option on our introductory page that allows for viewing the site without the plug-ins – it merely warns that some files may not show up as intended.

In choosing not to accept these plug-ins, however, it is important to know what happens if you enter the site through the "normal" channels – that is, by clicking the "enter site" button that assumes you have the software installed. Your system will attempt to run the opening animation from the L&L page and, when it finds it does not have the necessary plug-ins, will try and install them for you.

This is neither a difficult nor danger-

(continued on page 28)



# Thanks for Naming Rain Bird® #1



## Contractors Rate Rain Bird #1 in Product Performance



In a recent independent study of 1200 contractors, the majority named Rain Bird® their irrigation manufacturer of choice. Other results indicate:

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USE READER SERVICE #16



(continued from page 26)

ous process, but because of the severe warning messages (see the example on page 26) that both Netscape and Internet Explorer offer when they encounter "unknown files" for the first time, many Internet users are frightened away from downloading the files. These messages are merely designed, however, to remove the cloak of responsibility from the two companies' shoulders should users encounter any difficulties installing the software.

Internet Explorer offers its warning as just that – a warning – and then asks to go forward with the installation process. If, at this point, you decide to install the plug-ins, it is perfectly safe to have Internet Explorer install them for you.

Once they have been installed, you can hit the back button on your browser and return to the L&L site.

Netscape offers a similarly sharp warning before the software installation process. After asking if there is a software installation necessary, the browser then goes to its installation page where it chooses the plug-in it feels is most appropriate to run the files it has encountered. Most of the time – not always – it chooses the correct plug-in to download and the files will run smoothly thereafter.

While Lawn & Landscape Online offers current interactive technology on the site, there are certain limitations brought about by slower systems trying to work with larger

files. Images and file sizes were intentionally kept small so the site could retain a high level of interactivity.

The streaming video clip, an introduction to the page by Lawn & Landscape Group Publisher, Cindy Code, is one example of a feature that may not work for all systems on all browsers. The clip is one of our larger files (1.33 megabytes) and can take anywhere from five seconds to 90 seconds to download, depending on individual system and modem speeds. Users with slower

modems (28.8 bps or lower) may find the video a little blurry and choppy. This is why the video clip is designed as an optional feature.

If Lawn & Landscape Online is difficult or frustrating for readers to use, the site loses all its value. Please feel free to e-mail us with comments, questions or feedback about Lawn & Landscape Online at [bcox@gie.net](mailto:bcox@gie.net).  
– Sydney Work

*The author is Internet Editor for Lawn & Landscape Online.*

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USE READER SERVICE #25



## IS TURF THE ANSWER TO TIRE DISPOSAL?

FEW THINGS bring home the message of waste in our country as starkly as a picture of a tire disposal site. Endless stacks of used, useless rubber paint a repulsive picture of our industrialized society.

Still, tires are a necessary evil, as long as vehicles need to roll down the road. All of which begets the question, "What to do with the used tires?"

Tire recyclers have found some creative solutions, but few are as interesting as the use of a crumbed form of old tires in the care of turf.

Presently, there are two companies marketing crumb rubber for turf — JaiTire Industries, Denver, Colo., and American Tire Recyclers, Jacksonville, Fla. JaiTire's product, Crown III, is promoted as a topdressing. Their claim is that once worked into the thatch, the product acts as a cushion for the crown of the turfgrass plant, preventing it from damage in heavy wear areas.

ATR markets crumb rubber

under the name Rebound, and it is sold as a soil amendment. The product must be added to soil before the turf is planted, and the company claims the product promotes turf vigor, reduces compaction and is a safer surface for activities such as sports.

**ABOVE GROUND.** The concept of using crumb rubber on turf started at Michigan State University, East Lansing, where turfgrass researchers discovered that the topdressing method provides benefits. Since 1990, John Rogers, MSU associate professor of turfgrass science, has been testing the effects of crumb rubber topdressing on turf.

MSU was awarded the patent to use crumb rubber as a turf topdressing last April, and is working with JaiTire on further research and distribution. Corny Snyder, JaiTire's director of marketing, said that the product is being used on nearly 1,400 sites across the country, from athletic fields to

*Most landfills have banned tires, but there are no special requirements for the disposal of crumb rubber.*

home lawns.

The product is applied about 3/4-inch thick across the lawn, nearly covering the turf in black crumb rubber. The product is then raked in, giving the appearance of a dark compost over the turf. It takes about two weeks for the rubber to get worked into the thatch.

Snyder indicated that because the rubber is actually lighter than the soil, it stays on the top layer, maintaining its benefits. At the same time, there haven't been any reports of problems with loose rubber running off or being shuffled off turf and creating a mess on sidewalks or driveways.

Other issues that would seem to be logical problems, such as heat build-up at the crown of the plant, have not proven to be an issue, according to Snyder. "On the contrary, the product seems to act as an insulator — the heat stays on the surface, but below the surface the temperature is normal," Snyder said.

According to research published by MSU, incorporated crumb rubber absorbs more heat in the spring, resulting in earlier green-up. Summer heat becomes less of a problem when turf density increases and shades the surface of the crumb rubber layer.

The product has also shown the ability to hold water in the soil, reducing the need for turf irrigation. Studies examining this effect are being started at Texas A&M, College Station, this year, Snyder noted.

However, there isn't any independent research available on the effect of the crumb rubber layer on pesticide efficacy as of yet, although there hasn't been any evidence so far that there are potential problems, according to Snyder.

Disposal, which is such an enormous issue with tires, is not a problem if turf or soil laden with crumb rubber needs to be removed. "Most landfills have banned tires, but there are no special requirements for the disposal of crumb rubber," Snyder noted.

**DOWN UNDER.** The Rebound product marketed by ATR has been

(continued on page 32)

Crumb rubber, when used as a topdressing as in this stand of turf, blends in well and is difficult to detect. The manufacturer claims that crumb rubber promotes greater wear tolerance.

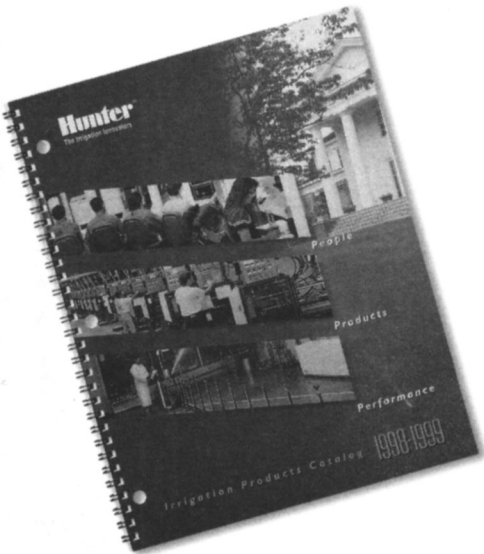




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| <input type="checkbox"/> Irrigation System Maintenance       | <input type="checkbox"/> Irrigation System Design           | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                               |

2) How many employees in your company are involved with irrigation? \_\_\_\_\_

3) What are your preferred brands or models for each of the following:

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# IN YOUR TURF

(continued from page 30)

marketed largely to communities and sports field maintenance managers for two reasons: the installation requires a complete renovation, and the most documented benefit is reduced compaction that results in a safer playing surface.

Turf Diagnostics and Design, an independent research facility in Olathe, Kan., backs up ATR's claim that a playing surface is safer when Rebound is amended to the soil. Testing indicated that a 30 percent reduction in the severity index, which is based on the likelihood of a head injury resulting from impact with the ground, is achieved.

Other benefits, such as improved drainage and stronger turf roots, may be a factor,

but the difference may not be great enough to warrant amending the soil for these reasons.

Jennifer Meyer, horticulturist, Brevard County Parks and Recreation, Merritt Island, Fla., said that comparably maintained fields with and without the crumb rubber have not differed significantly in terms of appearance and performance.

**THE HOMEFRONT.** These products have tested well in sports and athletic turf, but could they ever gain the widespread favor of professionals to help maintain homeowners' and commercial site turf?

One of the key elements of the discussion will be the state governments, who have the

*Snyder indicated that because the rubber is actually lighter than the soil, it stays on the top layer, maintaining its benefits.*

could be expanded, allowing the more extensive use of crumb rubber by a more diverse base of end users.

Crumb rubber may have applications beyond turf as mulch, which is being tested by Brevard County, according to Meyer. "It looks like pine

bark from a distance," Meyer observed, "so it has a pleasant appearance. However, the wire is still embedded in the rubber, and it's cut in large pieces so you can't use it in areas where kids play and could pick it up and throw it around. We're trying it in some background beds, and so far it seems to be working well." — Paul Schrimpf

responsibility of finding places to dispose of the more than a quarter million tires that are discarded each year. Some state governments have implemented a tire disposal fee that is funding grant programs designed to provide crumb rubber at no cost to park and recreation departments and athletic field managers. It is possible that these programs



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# IRRIGATION Q&A

## ASK THE DROUGHTBUSTERS

*Droughtbusters is a question and answer column provided as a service to the landscape industry by the Irrigation Association and Lawn & Landscape magazine. Please fax your questions for the Droughtbusters to 800/455-4320 or e-mail them to irricom1@earthlink.net.*

**Q** I am a landscape contractor based in the state of Washington who does principally residential landscape construction. What is the length of time generally required for a satisfactory pressure test of a residential irrigation system?

**A** In your neck of the woods, pipe solvent can take more than a day to set up completely. If you follow the directions on the glue can label and wait 24 hours before pressure testing, your systems should hold pressure for two to six hours.

The problem, according to IA member Marilyn Edlund of Edlund Associates, an irrigation consulting firm in Renton, Wash., could be that contractors glue when it's too cold or rush the pressure test.

"The colder it is, the longer it takes the solvent weld to set," she pointed out. "Most labels say wait 24 hours to achieve full strength depending upon temperature and humidity. It's wet and cool in Washington, and glue

takes longer to set here than down South."

Edlund recommended contractors backfill the pipe, but not the joints, tees or valves. Give the system at least 24 hours before pressure testing. If there is a problem, you can find it and fix it quickly.

When she conducts a pressure test, Edlund asks the contractor to pump up the system for six hours and drain it. Then pump it up again for two hours before the test begins. If the system holds for two hours after the test has started, the system has passed four hours of testing.

If the temperature drops below 40 degrees Fahrenheit, Edlund said contractors shouldn't glue pipe. If the nighttime temperature drops

below 40 degrees, Edlund recommends waiting two days before testing. "I've seen joints push apart after 24 hours of cementing because temperatures were too cold," she warned. "When it's cold, make a special effort not to move pipe once it has glued."

Just keep in mind that cement takes longer to set in cool and wet conditions. When it's cool and wet, finish the installation, don't backfill joints and valves, and give the welds 48 hours – if you can – to set. Then pressure test.

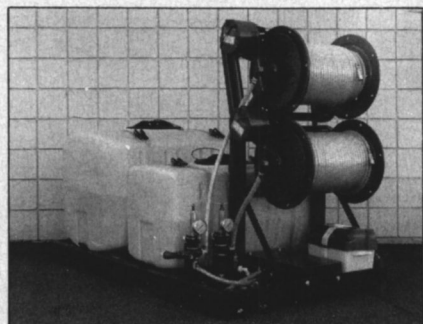
– Bruce Shank

*The author is president of IRRI-Com Inc., the communications agency for the IA.*



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## GETTING YOUR MOWER OUT OF HIBERNATION

THE BUSY spring season ahead demands mowers be inspected and ready for their grueling landscape maintenance schedule. As part of this inspection, mowers need to be cleaned and a routine review needs to be conducted. This routine can help save money, reduce downtime and improve the quality of the work the equipment performs.

If proper storage measures were not taken when the mower was put away for winter storage, steps must be taken now to get the equipment ready for spring. Using a checklist is a good idea and often one is included in the manufacturer's equipment manual.

Fred Hemmer, Toro customer service manager, Bloomington, Minn., recommended contractors begin a mower's examination by changing all fluids. "Long storage can cause build-up inside the gas tank, leaving impurities in the carburetor that can plug up orifices," he said. This can make the mower more difficult to start and can gum up the throttle and choke shafts, making the machine more difficult to operate.

"At worst, the impurities can cause the engine not to run at all," Hemmer warned.

Mower blades can also cause problems if they're not in proper working order, so con-

tractors should be sure to inspect each blade for necessary sharpening or replacement. Hemmer noted that checking the blades during the winter season instead of one week before the spring season begins could save a

company time by not being placed at the end of a long waiting list for blade sharpening or a needed part.

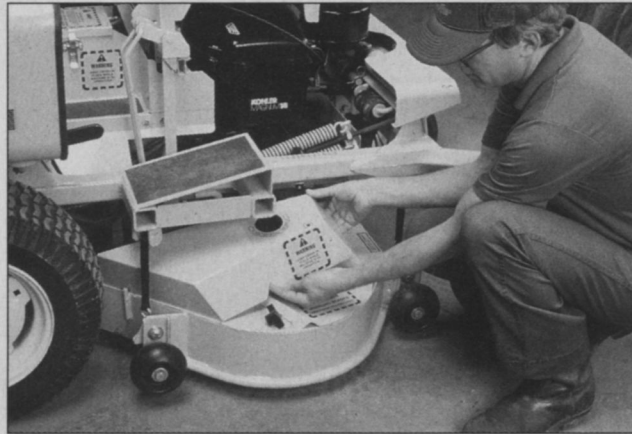
Don't forget, to inspect spark plugs, filters and equipment belts for signs of wear and cracked or frayed edges, Hemmer reminded. A tip for inspecting a belt is to bend it backward to see if there are any missing pieces, frayed edges or signs of being stretched out, he suggested. Also, make sure the

*Long storage can cause build-up inside the gas tank, leaving impurities in the carburetor that can plug up orifices.*

recommended air pressure is in the mower tires, he added.

The maintenance routine of a mower is not as intense as a car and can be accomplished within 30 minutes, said Billy Harms, service manager at Encore Mfg., Beatrice, Neb.

Harms said the most important item to inspect is the mower's safety system to ensure it is in prime working condition and would automatically



Getting mowers prepared for the upcoming spring season can be accomplished within 30 minutes. Photo: Excel

shut down should an operator slip or lose control of the mower. Typically, the system is electrical-based and, as part of its routine maintenance, requires adjustments and lubrications, he suggested.

Harms also recommended, like Hemmer, that the oil and filter be changed before taking the mower out of storage and using it.

"It is basically a good idea to change the oil in the spring if a lot of warming and cooling has taken place during the winter," Harms said, adding that such conditions can lead to condensation build-up.

This water can break oil down, causing it to lose its lubricating properties.

This produces friction, resulting in more wear and tear on engine parts and hydraulic drive parts, particularly the pump and wheel motor, Harms remarked. Water can also cause oil to foam, he added, plugging up a filter and leading to a blown filter gasket.

Harms also echoed Hemmer's advice that bearings, belts and blades should all be checked. "When inspecting belts look for damages, but also

make sure that belt slippage does not occur, reducing the mower's pulley and belt life," he noted.

Blades should be set at the proper height and blade spindles should be a high priority in an inspection to check for any side play – excessive side to side movement. If there is, there is no guarantee of a nice even cut, he said.

"The side play can be a detriment to the quality of a cut, causing scalping problems that leave a recognizable uneven cut and discoloration of the grass," Harms pointed out.

Also, check bearings in the wheels and check for side play. "If there is excessive motion, it can make the machine harder to control," Harms commented.

Lastly, contractors should be sure to inspect all pivot points for necessary lubrication and adjustments. Harms suggested that before putting the mower away for the next winter storage a fuel additive, or stabilizer, be mixed in the gas tank. He explained that the stabilizer keeps the fuel system in top condition and prevents the fuel filter from future clogging. —Denyse Fissel

*The author is Associate Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.*





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**FOUNDED:** 1987

**OWNERS:** Jon and Vicky Cundiff

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**SERVICE CALLS IN 1997:** 713 residential, 37 industrial/commercial

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**ACCOUNT:** 7,500 sq. ft. in residential, 42,700 sq. ft. in commercial/industrial

**EMPLOYEES:** 10 year-round, 2 seasonal

**1997 SALES:** \$675,000

**1998 PROJECTION:** 30 percent increase

## Executive Summary

**THE CONCEPT:** Turf's Up Lawn Service is committed to providing quality and professionalism in the satisfaction of our customers, who are number one.

**FUTURE CHALLENGES:** Increasing the overall client base, growing the proportion of lawn care customers who also receive tree and ornamental services and launching an athletic turf maintenance division.

**ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIPS:** Professional Lawn Care Association of America, Professional Lawn Care Association of Mid-America

## The Owners

**JON AND VICKY CUNDIFF**

**AGES:** 37 and 34, respectively

**BACKGROUND:** Both graduated from Northwest Missouri State University, Jon with a degree in marketing and Vicky with a degree in computer programming.



When Jon Cundiff, president of Turf's Up Lawn Service, Lee's Summit, Mo., talks about his lawn care company, the conversation inevitably comes back to one central theme: doing the little things that add up to a big difference.

"I have a philosophy in business about gaining that slight edge, that slight advantage," explained Cundiff. "(Basketball coach) Pat Riley used this philosophy when the Los Angeles Lakers finally beat the Boston Celtics in the playoffs. The previous year, he told the team that he wanted each player to improve each area of their games by 1 percent. They achieved that, and that's when they went on to win.

"The way we look at it is that we aren't trying to reinvent the wheel," he continued. "It doesn't have to be some revolutionary idea — it's the little changes over time that reap big benefits. And we talk about that constantly. If we did just this one thing, and did it day in and day out, look at what the end result would be."

From routing to caring for customers and employees, the little things have added up to more than \$675,000 in sales in 1997, with an anticipated growth of 30 percent in 1998.

**APPRECIATION FOR GREEN.** Cundiff developed his love for turf and business simultaneously, attending Northwest Missouri State University and working summers at the Kansas City Royals' baseball stadium under legendary groundskeeper George Toma.

Cundiff said the experiences he gained doing both have served him well as a successful businessperson. "With a marketing degree, you really get it all," he noted. "You learn how to develop a business plan, how to sell, how to run a business, accounting, business law — it was the best direction for me to take."

Along with gaining agronomic experience, working with Toma taught Cundiff that he loves to work outdoors. It also gave him an

Jon Cundiff (left) and Vicky Cundiff have grown Turf's Up Lawn Service from a one person operation to a solid competitor in suburban Kansas City, growing 30 percent per year to \$675,000 in sales in 1997. Credit: Kevin Anderson

# Step





*Numerous  
small successes  
have added up  
to big business  
for Turf's Up  
Lawn Service.*

*By Paul  
Schrumpf*

appreciation for excellence and a strong work ethic.

"Toma taught me that being successful is a day-in and day-out thing," said Cundiff. "You can't be the best one week and relax the next - it happens every day. We had a lot of pride in the work we did, and it was Toma

that instilled that pride in the crew."

Cundiff spent two years working for a couple of small lawn care firms and learning the business and marketing involved in the industry. He then spent the next two years selling cars.

"I was fortunate enough to work for a

dealer that provided excellent customer service, so I learned a number of valuable lessons," stressed Cundiff. "Taking care of customers and negotiating prices are skills I still use constantly with customers and suppliers."

In 1987, Cundiff began discussing reen-

*(continued on page 44)*

# by Step



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(continued from page 41)

tering the lawn care industry with his wife and business partner, Vicky. "I'd been talking about it for a long time, presenting my business plan to her," he said. "She just told me, 'If you're going to do it, do it now.'"

He started that first season out of his garage and a rented storage area, doing all the applications during the day and processing paperwork, telemarketing and following up on leads at night. His wife, an accountant, did all the billing and numbers work in the evenings after her day job.

Cundiff performed all the applications that year alone, netting \$7,000 for his efforts. He began his second year by hiring an applicator and working on getting the young business around the corner. His wife, who gave birth to twins that winter, left her day job to join her husband's venture full time.

Turf's Up is essentially operated by a husband and wife team, which in business can be either a well-oiled machine or a terrible failure. What makes it work for the

*'This business is so dynamic, and the people that I used to like to work for were the people that were constantly on the move.'*

Cundiffs is the couple's complementary personalities and their different roles.

"I'm more the visionary person - big dreams and big picture," explained Cundiff. "I'll come into the office with some idea and say, 'Can we do this?' And she'll give me all the logical reasons why or why not. It has a lot of advantages, and, frankly, I couldn't do it without her."

Another important aspect of successfully navigating a business and marriage is

not letting one invade the other. "We have a professional relationship and a home life - and we can separate the two," he stressed. "We're two different people at home than at work. We're also very active in our church and other activities, so we have many interests outside lawn care."

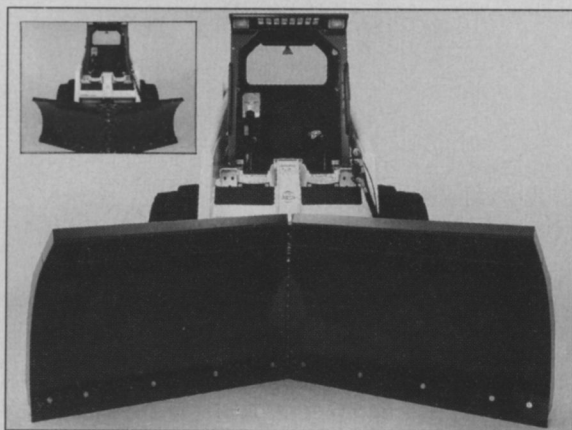
**FOCUS ON GROWTH.** Turf's Up initially generated business through telemarketing, but Cundiff said service and customer loyalty have driven yearly growth, which has averaged 25 percent to 30 percent since 1987.

Acquisition has also sparked growth for the company. Three times - in 1991, 1993 and 1995 - Cundiff acquired small lawn care companies to add business for Turf's Up.

Cundiff wasn't actively looking for acquisitions when he purchased the compa-

(continued on page 46)

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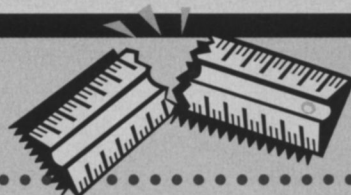
(continued from page 44)

nies, but good opportunities presented themselves and he took advantage of them. "I usually find these deals by word of mouth," he explained. "I go out and talk to my competitors at state association meetings, or sometimes even out in the field. I find out how they are doing, what their customer service is like, how they run their business. When it's been a good fit, we have pursued acquisition."

Each acquired company had from 250 to 300 customers, and Turf's Up was able to finance the deals using cash on hand. The deals were constructed so that Cundiff only paid based on the number of customers he could convert to Turf's Up customers. The deals were completed within a year of when the agreements were made, and payments were made in either two or four installments.

Company growth has also resulted from the addition of new services to the product mix. Seven years ago, Turf's Up began providing Christmas lighting, which has provided critical winter season cash flow.

## Measuring Impact



Industry involvement is important to Cundiff, and one of the projects he has spearheaded through participating in the Professional Lawn Care Association of Mid-America survey that will measure the economic impact of the green industry on the state of Missouri.

The project required raising about \$50,000 to fund the project, as well as coordinating the various turf, landscape, nursery and agricultural organizations to formulate the questions and develop a survey methodology. The survey will be performed this year and the results will be compiled by the end of the year. "We've found there's no concrete numbers on the total horticultural industry in Missouri, but this is especially true in the turf market," said Cundiff. The project was inspired by a similar survey performed in Kansas, where turf is the fifth largest crop. Cundiff estimates that turf will rank at least that high, if not higher, in Missouri.

It's been demanding, but Cundiff feels that "projects like this make it exciting to be in the industry — it's more than coming to work every day."

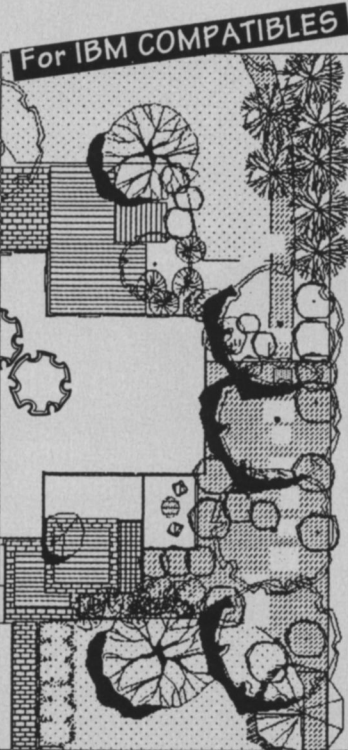
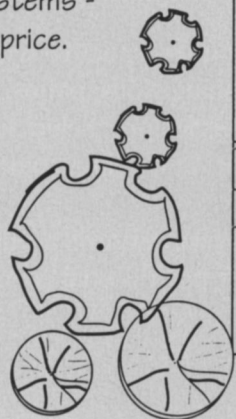
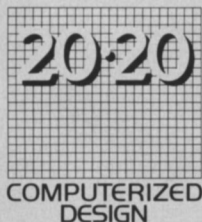
"At the time we started it, we were doing things like raking leaves and delivering firewood," said Cundiff. "The demand was there, but the labor costs were prohibitive. We looked at snow removal, but in Missouri we average about 3 inches of snow a

year, and we really didn't want the wear and tear on our equipment."

The primary advantage to holiday lighting is predictability. "We can start hanging lights in October when the weather is still nice, and once they are hung, you are essen-

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tially finished," noted Cundiff. "There are no 3:00 a.m. service calls."

Turf's Up provides the light fixtures, extension cords and timers, and the design scheme, puts up and takes down the display and stores the lights during the year for a set fee. "We use the transparent lights that get about 3,000 hours of use, so we replace the sets completely about every two to three years," said Cundiff. "Switching out the sets reduces service calls and results in a more satisfied customer."

Demand is always great for the service, but Cundiff said they will only accept 60 or 70 customers for the service each year. "The goal is cash flow, not growth, with Christmas lighting," he emphasized. "We don't want to lose our focus on who we are — a lawn service company."

The cash flow is positive for Christmas lighting. Cundiff noted that on average, the service delivers a profit of from 50 percent to 70 percent each season.

**UP WITH PEOPLE.** Cundiff enjoys providing a positive work environment and rewarding hard work, but the bottom line is the ongoing battle to retain employees in the face of 3 percent unemployment. Service technicians have stayed with Turf's Up an average of three to four years, and Cundiff said that the keys to their retention success has been training, providing a positive work environment and clear goals.

A successful and well-compensated employee at Turf's Up has to keep two primary

.....

*'This business is so dynamic,  
and the people that I used to  
like to work for were the  
people that were constantly  
on the move.'*

.....

goals in mind: quality service and a tight route.

Route efficiency is a major issue across the industry, and to help solve the problem Cundiff drew on a suggestion from one of his crew men. Each of the five geographic zones Cundiff carved out of his service area is sectioned off into several sub-areas, which has simplified the decision making process in day-to-day routing.

"Crew people used to spend an hour and a half in the morning figuring out their routing for that day," confessed Cundiff. "Now, it takes minutes to do what used to take an hour or more. It's also much easier to figure out how to incorporate a newly sold account."

Service technicians are not expected to sell new accounts, although they carry company literature on the truck and they are encouraged to talk to neighbors and interested passers-by about the company. Part of their compensation is based on productivity, which is what lends some urgency to well-planned routing.

Productivity is also at the heart of the company's yearly technician honor, the "Top Gun" award. One technician receives the award, which takes into consideration seven criteria: the total number of yards treated, total square footage treated, attendance record, promptness, file management, the general appearance of the truck, files and uniform and the technician's attitude.

To help ensure quality service and give technicians all the tools they need to succeed in the field, ongoing training is critical. "It literally takes months to get an individual up to speed," Cundiff recognized. He holds bi-weekly company meetings throughout the season with technicians to go over pest, disease and customer communication topics.

Benefits for employees include a SEP retirement plan for those who have been with the company for more than a year. Turf's Up puts aside 15 percent of a qualified employee's wage (over and above the amount paid to the employee) throughout the year. At the end of the year, the employee sits down with a financial planner and chooses from a variety of funds in which to invest the money.

**PLANNING FOR SUCCESS.** A big part of becoming successful for Cundiff has been yearly planning. The process starts about Oct. 15, when he and Vicky begin assessing the year's

(continued on page 50)

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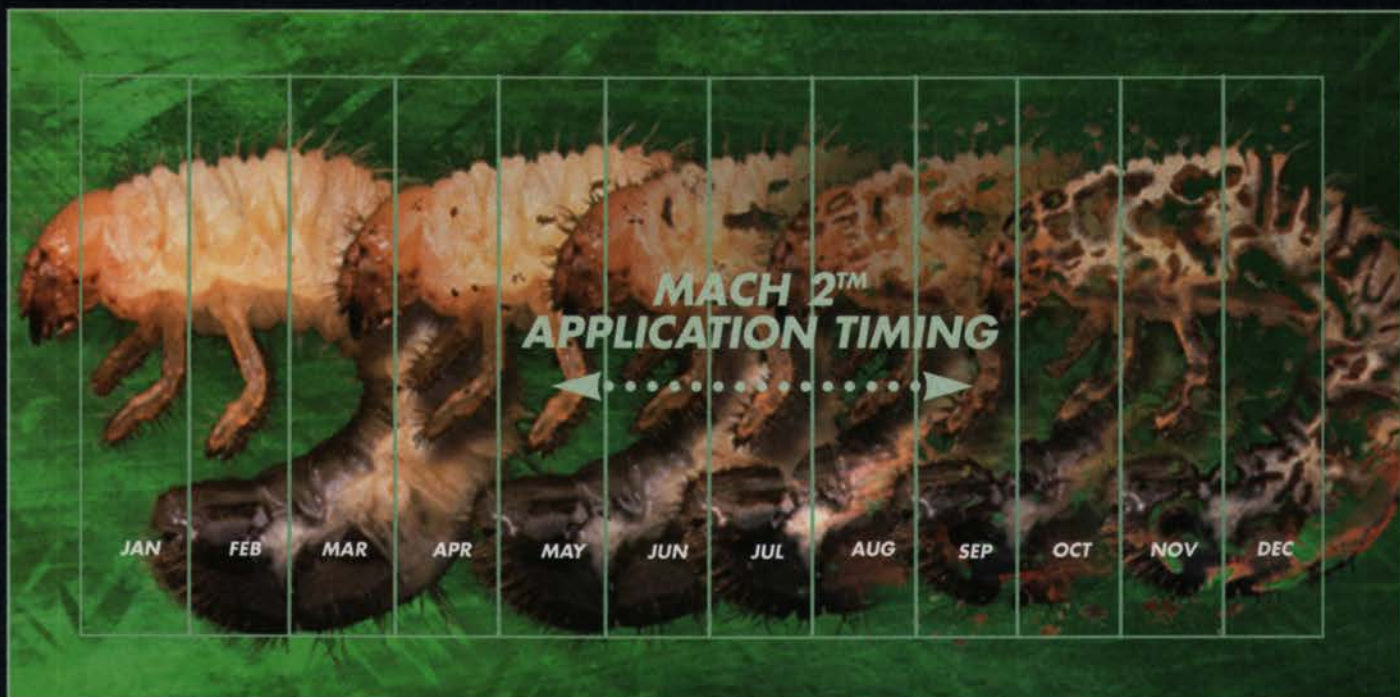


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(continued from page 47)

growth, equipment and labor needs for the coming year. The one-year plan, set in place the previous winter, is reviewed to see where the company met, exceeded and fell short of expectations.

The entire company gets involved in the process of setting a new one-year plan, as well as reassessing two- and five-year plans in a series of meetings the first two weeks of

January. Setting the goals gives the technicians and supervisors clear marks to aim for, and sets a benchmark for future planning, noted Cundiff.

A recent example of the company's long range plan in action was the implementation of a sports turf management division, which Cundiff plans to grow significantly in 1998.

**THE FUTURE.** Last year was the first full year for the company's fledgling tree and ornamental service, which accounted for 10 percent of the company's 1997 sales. The service was started as a result of customer demand, noted Cundiff.

"We had been sending out all that work to other companies, but it started becoming apparent that, considering the volume of work we were referring out, we could perform that service in-house."

One person was hired to run the division, which is plant health care-based. "We inventory the plant material and provide an individualized program based on the needs of the plant material," explained Cundiff. "Each plant has different insect and disease problems, so you need to work with customers closely and explain things to them."

The goal is to cross-market the tree and ornamental service with the top lawn service customers to generate business internally as much as possible. "I'm a firm believer in the theory that the top 20 percent of your customers generate 80 percent of your business," Cundiff explained.

With the fledgling sports turf maintenance division, Cundiff used his own experience working with the Kansas City Royals to acquire the contract for the Kansas City Wizards professional soccer team's facility late last summer. He's also been in touch with numerous parks and recreation commissioners and high school principals to discuss the potential for taking on the maintenance of their sports facilities.

Each year, Turf's Up has evolved and grown, a fact Cundiff stressed is critical to success. "Some people are afraid of change, but I'm not," he said. "The worst that could happen is that I could learn a lesson."

"This business is so dynamic," he continued, "and the people that I used to like to work for were the people that were constantly on the move. This is what will open up opportunities for my employees, and for all of us. I don't want to be a turtle in a shell - I want to keep pushing the limits." **LL**

*Turf's Up Lawn Service is located at 1813 S.W. Market Street, Unit 1, Lee's Summit, Mo., 64082. The phone number is 816/525-7600.*

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

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# More Than Sun, Soil & Rain

*Mother Nature  
can use some  
help to ensure  
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grow healthy  
and strong.*

*By Denyse Fissel*



**I**t takes more than just sun, soil and rain to grow healthy trees, shrubs and turf. Landscape contractors should be aware that their work plays an integral part not only in making sure plants look good when they are installed, but that they remain attractive during their growth.

Before planting anything, proper research must be done in order to ensure the species of plant is appropriate for the climate and soil, suggested Bonnie Appleton, associate professor of horticulture at Virginia Tech University, Virginia Beach. Appleton, an expert in trees and ornamentals, said she has seen too many specifications for design plans that used trees in places they did not environmentally belong, setting the contractor up for a long term problem.

"A lot of architects aren't local and don't know the area," she remarked. "If they don't know the microenvironment, they may not know the drainage patterns of the site or that there could be an existing plant or structure inhibiting light from the tree on their plans."

"If you have the wrong plant in the wrong location, it's not going to be successful," Appleton warned.

Another component of the research is the survey of quality nursery stock. Plants should be scrutinized to ensure they have

*(continued on page 54)*

Experts stress that proper pruning of a young tree will promote good branch spacing and is necessary when the goal is to achieve a full, healthy tree as it ages.



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DIMENSION 1EC <sup>b</sup>	0.5	100	86
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**USE READER SERVICE #45**

## plant growth

(continued from page 52)

received proper pruning and are disease-free, Appleton said.

Next is getting the tree in the ground, and Appleton drew upon her experience to relay that the biggest mistake after planting a tree is to neglect properly watering it. "During the first year, it has to be watered on a weekly basis," she said. There also must be proper mulching to guard against weed and turf growth, she added.

With a fine consistency of mulch, contractors should put no more under the tree or ornamental than 2 inches deep. For a coarser quality of mulch, no more than 4 inches should be applied to keep away weed growth, she suggested.

"The weeds and turf compete with the newly planted tree for limited soil moisture and nutrients," Appleton explained. Using too much mulch will cause the mulch to behave like potting soil and stimulate growth of weeds, she added.

Appleton is not a proponent of growth regulators and said they are not necessary if the right plant is planted in the right area. "Frequently, they are used because someone has the wrong thing growing somewhere in the first place," she commented.

Jeff Iles, assistant professor of horticulture, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, agreed that contractors can save time and trouble by making proper selection when installing plants. He suggested that a plant list be made as a reference to be consulted before planting.

"Putting plants in the right place can save a lot of problems," Iles said, noting that a tree could become diseased if it is planted in the wrong climate. A common mistake he pointed out in the Midwest is to plant a pin oak in soil other than the acidic soil it likes. "Oaks also are great for landscaping, but must be placed in full sun, and lindens, too, want partial or full sunlight," he added.

"The bald cypress does well in wet areas and would do well in such locations as a golf course or cemetery, and some variations of the flowering crabapple tree are very disease resistant," he pointed out.

Planting a tree that has droppings is not a good idea near a public access area. Maple trees are staples and popular for their fall color but probably not a good choice if looking to plant a tree near a parking lot.

(continued on page 56)

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(continued from page 54)

**PROPER PRUNING.** Proper pruning of a young tree promotes good branch spacing and is necessary when wanting to achieve a full, healthy tree as it ages, according to Iles. "Only prune pines to establish a leader branch, then let them go," he said.

When pruning a young tree, Iles recommended finding the central leader branch, narrowing it down to the main branch and removing branches that are crossing or rubbing against each other. Some trees have branch angles that are narrow and weak at the branch to main-stem union. Remove the entire branch when encountering one of these narrow branch angles. After removal, the tree can cope with the wound while still young and removal of the branch is less noticeable than in an older tree, he commented.

But, one of the worst things to do is take away the young, lower branches. Remove them in subsequent years, but not in the early years, Iles warned, because the lower

*'The best way to control pests is to have a healthy, strong-standing turf, and fertilizer contributes to that.'*

branches can set up problems for the tree such as spindley, weak branches susceptible to breakage.

Older trees need very little pruning and have reached a balance that makes the task unnecessary, Iles explained. Prune older trees only when needed, removing only those branches that might pose a threat to people or property or are rubbing, crossing, injured and decayed, he recommended.

"Tree topping is wrong. It should be outlawed," Iles said, warning that it hurts the tree and invites decay entry into the tree, while regrowth from topping results in very weak limbs that break off easily.

Iles said in dry climates, pines and spruces do well and pines do not require a lot of pruning maintenance.

When selecting the proper tree, the region and climate must be taken into consideration.

"People in general tend to look at the size and flower color but don't look at other features," he remarked.

Choices also must be made when deciding to plant shrubs. Oftentimes, contractors don't consider the heights to which various shrubs can grow and the maintenance involved in keeping them attractive, Iles said.

Shrubs, like trees, have to be pruned, and the lilac bush is one example where its spring flower will last longer if the shrub is

(continued on page 60)

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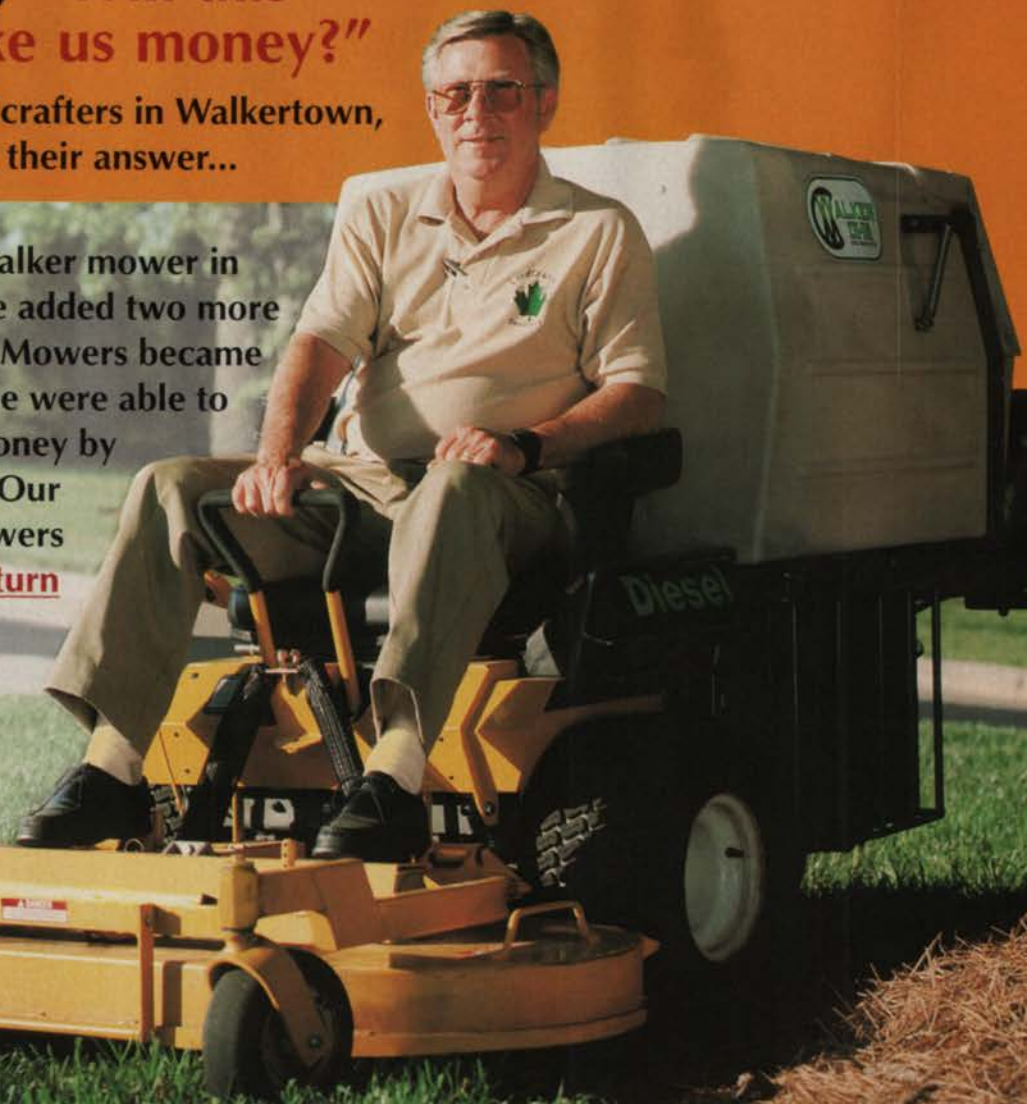


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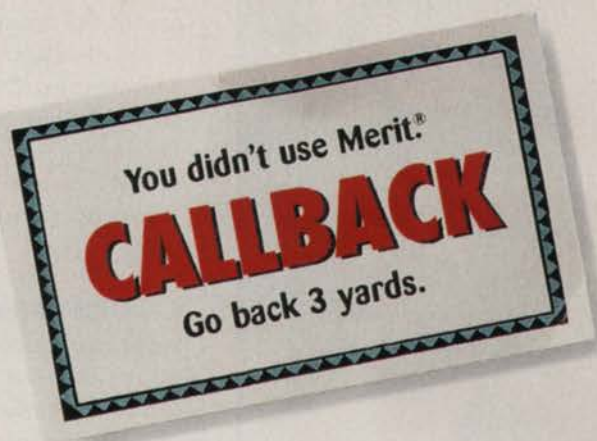
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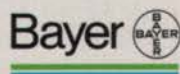






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**USE READER SERVICE #56**



## plant growth

(continued from page 56)

pruned and thinned out properly to allow light penetration, he commented. "Not all shrubs are sun-loving, and research should be done to make sure the type of shrub planted is appropriate to the region," Iles added.

**GROWTH MAINTENANCE.** Fertilization requirements vary based on the tree, but Iles recommends only fertilizing trees that suffer from nutrient deficiencies. "Most problems are not a result of a lack of fertilizer but more often are due to over or under watering, destructive pruning, construction injuries or injuries from people," he pointed out.

Iles said he is not a proponent of growth regulators and added that if a plant grows too quickly, its form may not look as favorable. "Genetic growth rates are built in," he added, "and it is not a good idea to tamper with them."

"I think the best thing we can do is give a plant what it needs," Iles said.

Tom Watchke, professor of turfgrass science at Penn State University, University Park, said growth regulators often are used along roadsides by the department of transportation to decelerate growth and lessen the frequency of mowing.

Some landscape managers also use regulators in the spring, when a growth spurt occurs, to maintain their mowing schedules, Watchke said. Depending on the product, regulators can decrease mowing 50 percent for up to four to five weeks, but, regulators also take away a plant's ability to recover if it is injured, he added. "Turf has a great propensity for healing itself and for quick recovery, which is a good defense," he said.

"The contractor needs to determine the turf's traffic before applying any growth regulator," said Charles Mancino, associate professor of agronomy at Penn State. "It is essential to allow the turf to keep growing in order for it to fill in its damaged areas," he said.

"When there is a lot of environmental stress, you wouldn't want to hold the turf

## The Right Choices

So much of a landscape's success is determined by the plant materials contractors use. Bonnie Appleton, associate professor of horticulture, Virginia Tech University, Virginia Beach, had the following plant-specific recommendations.

Appleton said an example of a commonly misplaced tree is dogwood, a tree that likes a moist, woody area, but is frequently planted in full sun and hot, compacted soil in the East and Midwest.

A frequent mistake is to plant Yew in an area of wet moist soil, whereas a better choice would be the inkberry, she suggested. — Denyse Fissel

back in any way," Mancino explained. A drawback in using a decelerator, is that some applications can result in a toxic effect, leaving the grass discolored, he added.

"The best way to control pests is to have a healthy, strong-standing turf, and fertilizer contributes to that," he said.

Proper turf fertilization, consisting of an appropriate balance of potassium, nitrogen and phosphorus, can reduce the recurrence of diseases and result in a healthier turf stand, Mancino explained. The amount of fertilizer needed depends on the soil type and the rate contractors want the turf to become established. The higher the sand content of the soil, the higher the fertilizer requirements, he said, explaining that sandy soil loses nutrients quicker and does not retain water as long as clay and silt soils.

"(Having sandy soil) doesn't change the turf, but you have to work harder at managing the needs of the turf," Mancino remarked.

Turf needs to be regularly fertilized, particularly if it is newly seeded turf. Establishing turf at a quicker rate is accomplished by giving any type of soil higher amounts of nutrients.

If the turf receives too little fertilizer, it can succumb to such diseases as dollar spot,

(continued on page 62)



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USE READER SERVICE #58



## plant growth

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and if the turf has too much fertilizer, it can suffer weak turf growth, producing very young plant tissue that can become susceptible to many types of stresses, weeds and forms of diseases, Mancino said.

When plants are young, their phosphorus needs are the highest, he said. Tips for fertilizing are to make sure the application of the fertilizer is in proper amounts or it could cause grass burns, and that fertilizer application is at the proper time.

"You want to match the nutrient application with the primary growth period of the turf," Mancino explained.

Turf seeds also should be of a type that is appropriate to the region and climate, he suggested. It is a good idea to contact a local seed distributor or university extension specialist to find out what species do best in an area, he added.

When seeding, landscape contractors should prepare the area with an adequate depth of topsoil. Mancino recommended

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*When pruning a young tree ... find the central leader branch, narrow it down to the main branch and remove branches that cross or rub each other.*

.....

that 3 to 4 inches of topsoil at a minimum should be laid and, ideally, there should be 6 inches of soil. One mistake contractors commonly make is laying only 1 to 2 inches of topsoil, which can result in a turf that starts out looking attractive, but soon runs out of soil, leading to problems such as disease and drought stress, he said.

Paul Rieke, professor of turf management at Michigan State University, East

Lansing, said the basics of good turf require having quality soil consisting of the proper mixture of sand, silt and clay, a good site with adequate sunlight, and proper soil drainage. Loosely compacted soil is favorable because it retains water and nutrients better, whereas overly compacted soil can be too hard to prepare for seed beds and can make grass difficult to grow, he explained.

"The more limiting the sunlight, the less probability of success in seeding," Rieke said.

Soil also must be free of substances that may be harmful to plantings of turf, such as residuals from former agricultural sites. In a larger area, there also should be good air movement. He explained that restricted air movement can enhance turf diseases such as brown patch and shaded areas can make turf more sensitive to diseases such as powdery mildew. **LL**

*The author is Associate Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.*

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# Controlling Weeds

## in Turfgrass



Many of the herbicides used for controlling annual grasses inhibit cell division in developing root tips.

*Using the right management strategies and the many product options available can result in fewer callbacks and more customer satisfaction.*

*By Bruce Branham*

**O**n the turf business, spring brings a new growing season and a concern with weed control. Now is an excellent time to consider a weed control program and decide which approach is the most economical and effective for the conditions and results desired. This article will discuss weed control products and strategies and provide some new ideas and approaches for turfgrass weed control.

**HOW IT WORKS.** In order to use herbicides properly, one must understand the principles that control their effective use. For preemergence herbicides, the principles surrounding their use are relatively simple. First, the herbicide must be applied prior to weed seed germination. Second, the herbicide must be applied at the correct rate and uniformly so that the herbicide forms a barrier to weed seed establishment.

The only factor determining the effectiveness of a preemergence herbicide is the concentration of the herbicide around the germinating seedling. If that concentration is sufficient to kill that seedling, then death of the weed will occur. However, if improper overlap or poor distribution of granules containing the herbicide results in an insufficient concentration of the herbicide around the weed seedling, then that seedling is more likely to establish and require postemergence treatment for control.

The controlling factor in the effectiveness of a preemergence herbicide

*(continued on page 68)*



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(continued from page 64)

is the herbicide's concentration at the soil surface. Many manufacturers and formulators have gone to lower active ingredient loadings on their granular products. By reducing the loading from 2.5 percent G to a 0.5 percent G, the producer has increased the amount of product applied by five times. If the particle size stays the same, this would increase the number of granules applied by

five times as well, dramatically increasing the likelihood of uniform application.

Postemergence applications are more complicated because the herbicide must not only reach the target, but must be absorbed by the target weed in sufficient concentrations to achieve control. Therefore, a variety of factors may influence the effectiveness of postemergence herbicide applications.

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*Because of their low water solubility and high soil absorption, (preemergence herbicides) tend to stick to the soil/thatch surface and not move downward with flowing water.*

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For effective postemergence weed control, three principles determine the effectiveness of the applications. First, younger weeds are easier to control than mature weeds. Second, the weeds must be actively growing at the time the herbicide is applied. It is always easier to control weeds when they are small than when they have matured with tougher leaves and storage organs from which they can regenerate new growth. Third, the herbicide must reach the site of action in the plant in sufficient quantity to achieve control.

This third principle is the most important because the application of the herbicide is only the first step in achieving satisfactory results. The herbicide must then reach the active site(s) within the plant where it can exert its effect.

If the plant is drought stressed, the herbicide will have difficulty reaching the active site for two reasons. First, the cuticle on the leaf surface, a waxy barrier, thickens to prevent moisture loss and is difficult for herbicides to penetrate. Secondly, during drought periods, plant growth slows and even stops. If a plant is not growing, it is not producing food and more importantly is not translocating that food nor the herbicide through the plant.

How do you make sure the herbicide reaches the active site? First, make sure the weeds are actively growing at the time of application. Second, always follow the label directions for the rate of application, paying

(continued on page 70)



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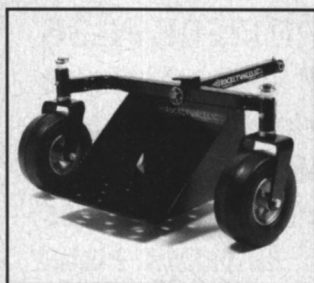
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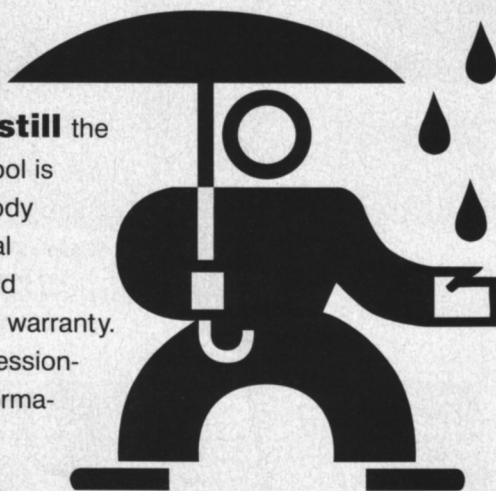
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USE READER SERVICE #65

## weed control

(continued from page 68)

special attention to any recommendations on tank mixing and spray additives. Third, apply the material properly and uniformly. For best postemergence weed control, the spray volume should be optimized to thoroughly coat the leaf surface of the weed without excessive run-off.

**PREEMERGENCE WEED CONTROL.** One of the rites of spring for homeowners and professional turf managers alike, is the application of a preemergence annual grass herbicide. Target weeds for this application are crabgrass—the principle annual grass problem—goosegrass in the transition zone, and, to a lesser extent, foxtails and barnyardgrass. These herbicides target all grass weed seeds, not just annuals. However, many perennial grass weeds resume growth from vegetative plant parts and are unaffected by a preemergence herbicide application. While preemergence herbicides will control germinating quackgrass and annual bluegrass, they have no impact on the established plants of these species.

Most preemergence herbicides are broad-spectrum products that control many different weed problems. Preemergence herbicides currently labeled for use in turf are shown in Table 1.

Many of the herbicides used for controlling annual grasses work by inhibiting a phase of cell division (mitosis) in developing root tips. These herbicides include benefin, trifluralin, dithiopyr, oryzalin, pendimethalin, and proflam. Other products, such as oxadiazon, siduron, atrazine and simazine, function by inhibiting photosynthesis.

A characteristic of many, but not all preemergence herbicides, is their very low water solubility and high soil absorption, as measured by the  $K_{oc}$  values in Table 1. It is nearly a requirement of preemergence herbicides that they have these general properties or they will not be very effective herbicides. Because of their low water solubility and high soil absorption, these products tend to stick to the soil/thatch surface and not move downward with flowing water. This keeps herbicides in place to intercept germinating weed seedlings.

These products rarely leach and loss of activity generally only results from microbial degradation. Periods of heavy rains following application don't result in leach-



HERBICIDE	TRADE NAME(S)	K <sub>oc</sub>	WATER SOLUBILITY
-----------	---------------	-----------------	------------------

#### GRASS HERBICIDES

##### Cool-season turfgrasses

benefin	BALAN	9000	0.1
benefin + trifluralin	TEAM and TEAM PRO	8000 (T)	0.3
bensulide	BETASAN	1000	5.6
dithiopyr	DIMENSION	1600	1.4
oxadiazon	RONSTAR	3200	0.7
pendimethalin	PRE-M, PENDULUM	5000	0.275
proflaminate	BARRICADE	13000	0.013
siduron	TUPERSAN	420	18

##### Warm-season turfgrasses

atrazine	Aatrex	100	33
benefin + oryzalin	XL	600(0)	2.5
metolachlor	PENNANT	200	530
napropamide	DEVIRINOL	700	74
oryzalin	SURFLAN	600	2.5
simazine	Princep	130	6.2

#### BROADLEAF HERBICIDES

isoxaben	GALLERY	570	1.0
----------	---------	-----	-----

Table 1.

Source: University of Illinois

HERBICIDE	TRADE NAME(S)	K <sub>oc</sub>	WATER SOLUBILITY
-----------	---------------	-----------------	------------------

#### BROADLEAF HERBICIDES

2,4-D	Many, used in mixtures	20	796,000
MCPP	Many, used in mixtures; Lescopex, Mecomec 4, Weedestroy MCPP-4	20	660,000
MCPA	Many, used in mixtures	20	866,000
2,4-DP	Many, used in mixtures	20(E)	750,000(E)
bromoxynil	Buctril		
clopyralid		6	300,000
dicamba	Banvel	2	400,000
triclopyr	Confront(triclopyr + clopyralid)	20	2,100,000

#### GRASS AND SEDGE HERBICIDES

MSMA, DSMA	Many		
bentazon	Basagran	34	2,300,000
fenoxaprop-ethyl	Acclaim	9490	0.8
halosulfuron	Manage	n/a	n/a

##### Warm-season turfgrasses only

imazaquin	Image	20	160,000
metribuzin	Sencor	60	1220
atrazine	Aatrex	100	33
diclofop	Illoxan	13000	0.8

Table 2.

Source: University of Illinois

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ing, but often may stimulate microbial degradation instead.

**WHAT TO USE?** Selection of a preemergence herbicide for annual grass control should involve several factors in the decision. Most important is performance. Performance includes length of control and potential for turfgrass injury. Length of control is the

most important performance factor because many of these herbicides can be viewed as working on an "all or nothing" basis.

While this is overly simplified, if the product is applied uniformly and at the correct rate, control should be complete, i.e. 100 percent, until enough dissipation occurs to allow some germinating seedlings to develop. Length of control is governed by

rate of application and rate of dissipation from the soil. Consult your local cooperative extension specialist or state turfgrass specialist for data on herbicide performance in your area.

Cost is also a very important factor in determining what herbicide to use. Cost should be computed as dollars/1,000 square feet. Any other comparison is not accurate. Cost per bag or other unit pricing is not a valid method to compare prices. Other factors that may be important are ease of handling and other weeds a product controls.

Note in Table 1, there are many preemergence grass herbicides but only one preemergence broadleaf herbicide. Isoxaben is a unique chemistry that provides preemergence control of a wide range of broadleaf weeds. The biggest advantage offered by isoxaben is its preventive action. Weeds never become part of the landscape because they are killed at germination.

**POSTEMERGENCE OPTIONS.** Postemergence herbicides are used to control broadleaves and grasses after they have emerged in the turf. These herbicides are more difficult to use and control varies depending upon environmental conditions.

When is the best time of the season to control broadleaf weeds? The answer depends on the weeds to be controlled. If there are a significant number of summer annual broadleaf weeds, then spring is the best time to control them based upon the principles mentioned. "Spring" is defined as the time when summer annual weeds are actively growing and young.

However, if a preemergence grass herbicide is used, choose one that will also control some summer annual broadleaves. The preemergence grass application will do double duty and pick up many of the common summer annual weed problems such as spurge and oxalis.

The best time to control the common perennial broadleaves often found in turf, such as dandelion, white clover and plantains, is immediately after germination when weeds are young and actively growing. However, there are situations where these weeds are mature perennial plants. The best time to control these weeds is in the fall. Why? Fall is the time when many perennial weeds

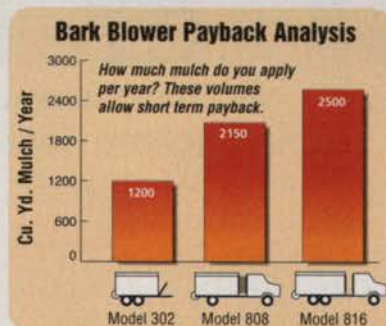
(continued on page 74)



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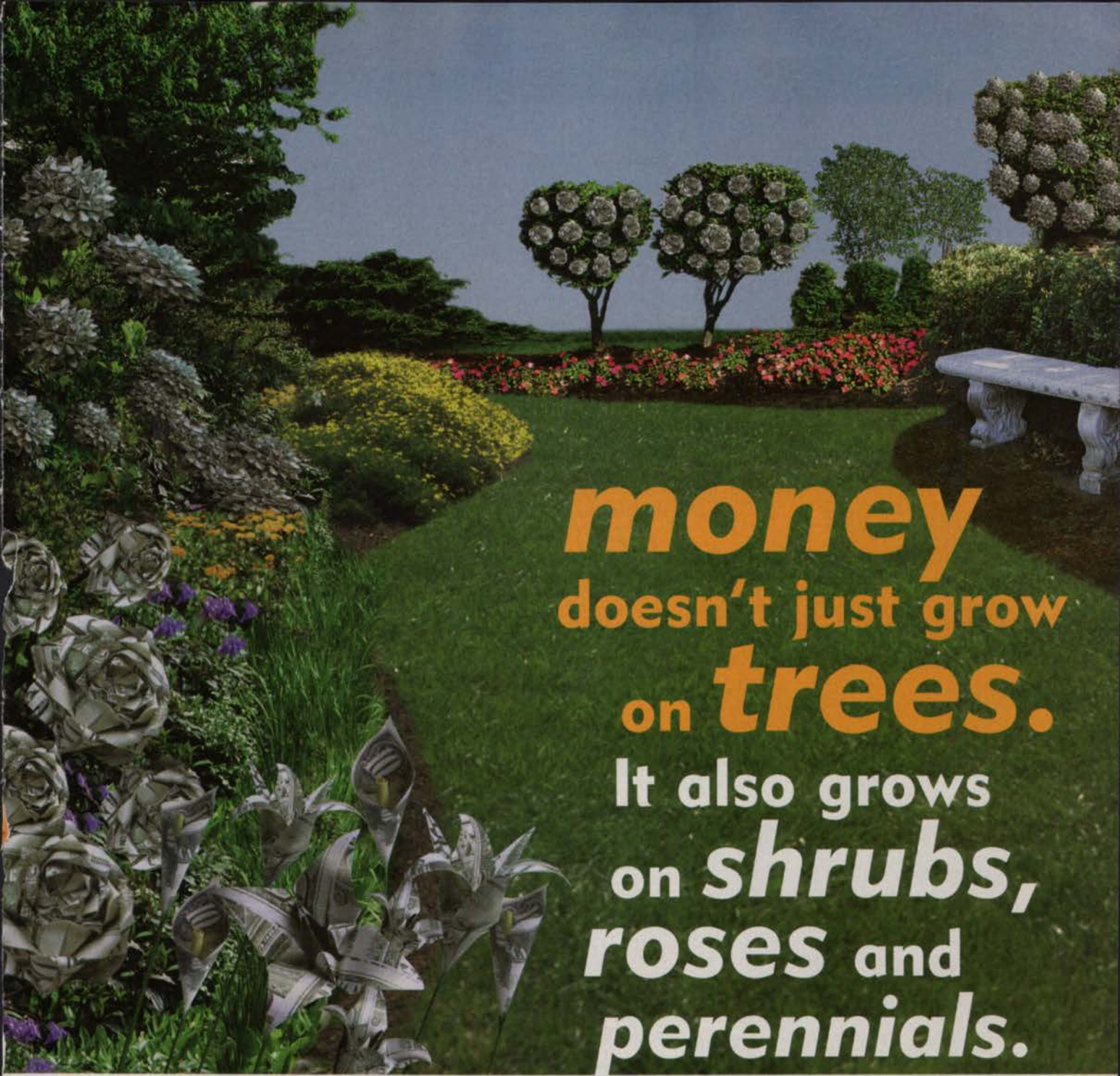
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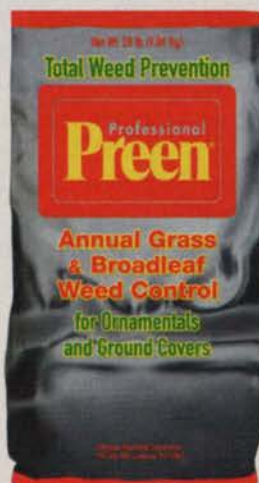




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## weed control

(continued from page 72)

are storing food reserves for the winter and early spring growth. The storage organ is usually the root system, and fall herbicide applications will be translocated from the shoot tissue to the root tissue, killing the entire plant.

In addition, fall is the only time of year when ester formulations of postemergence herbicides can be used safely. Every broadleaf

herbicide listed in Table 2, with the exception of bromoxynil, is an organic acid and is formulated as either an amine salt or an ester. Most have never applied 2,4-D, but instead, a derivative of 2,4-D in either an ester or amine form. Esters of 2,4-D and other organic acid herbicides are better herbicides because they penetrate the leaf surface and get into the plant more readily than

do amine formulations of the same active ingredient.

However, amines are the formulation of choice for most turf managers because amines are non-volatile, whereas esters are slightly volatile. Volatility – the process of the applied herbicide evaporating from the plant or soil surface and being transported as a gas – from a broadleaf herbicide can cause extensive damage to non-target plants. If a sensitive plant species takes in air containing the volatile ester herbicide, injury or death will result. Therefore, applications of broadleaf herbicides made in the spring or summer should be made using an amine

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USE READER SERVICE #72


.....

*When is the best  
time to control  
broadleaf weeds? The  
answer depends on  
the weeds that you  
want to control.*

.....

formulation of a broadleaf herbicide because volatility, which increases with rising air temperatures, is likely.

Non-target plants, such as flower and vegetable gardens or tree and shrubs near the turf, are very sensitive to these herbicides. However, in the fall, most plants are going dormant for the winter and temperatures are down, reducing the chance of volatility and the risk of volatility injury.

Contractors trying to control perennial broadleaves in the spring may encounter the opposite situation from that seen in the fall. Broadleaves in the spring are resuming growth and calling upon stored food reserves to initiate that growth. Thus, food is being translocated from the roots to the shoots and little of the applied herbicide may get to the root of the plant. The foliage may be burned off but the plant can regrow from stored reserves. 

*The author is a weed specialist at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.*



**T&O**  
**Service tech**

Landscape magazine for technicians and crew members working in the turf and ornamental industry.

survey report:  
 Technicians Discuss

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1997  
 What's  
**inside**

Published by Lowndes & Co.

**Your Opinion Matters...**  
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How often do you test your opinion in reflected company's purchasing decisions?



## Purchasing Influence

## Purchasing Influence

A recent reader survey conducted by TCO Service Task asked technicians and crew leaders how often their personal input was reflected in a company purchasing decision. The majority, 56 percent, said "always" or "most times."



## Practice Your Selling Techniques in the off season

**S**o you've made it through another tough season. Congratulations. Now you enter the more "relaxed" season and can kick back a little. After all, you've earned it.

Well, yes and no.

In very many years of management I have seen some very interesting occurrences that happened in the off season.

Many technicians do kick back. But there are some who actually take up their slack time to make money and learn more about the business. These are the technicians who I used to keep an eye on for promotions.

Most companies would like to ignore those but are limited by their

(See Selling Techniques on page 1)

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**survey report:**  
**Technicians Discuss Challenges, Issues**

to the May/June issue of T&O Service Tech, the Reader Poll asked our readers to tell us about their 1997 season. We also surveyed our readers by mail to find out what kinds of problems and challenges they faced most often, and to find out a little more about the companies they work for.

As in the past, weather would suspect, weather was cited as the major challenge, but it is true that many areas of the country faced unique weather patterns. In general, the weather was cooler across much of the East and Midwest, and growing conditions in those areas were ideal for turf and ornamentals. One technician said that cool summer temperatures and frequent rains in his region wreaked havoc on the mowing schedule, as grass grew remarkably fast.

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1997

## What's inside

### Eye on Equipment

The off-season is coming, which means that equipment will need to be prepared for storage.

**Tree Tip**

Analysis ...

## Moving Site Analysis ... 22

the second plan is to  
feature a complex set of dimensions  
to include.

Identification ..... 33

The oaks are among the most common of trees in the landscape.

#### Irrigation Maintenance - 4

It's important to pre-wash your car about one hour before freezing temperatures to give it a chance to cause damage.

**Identification** \_\_\_\_\_

**World** ...  
... is a common ...  
... in the South, while ...  
... many areas of ...

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**Readers:** Be sure to fill out the Reader Poll survey questionnaire featured on page 7 of this issue.

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October, November 1997

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**T**

he design/build segment of the landscape contractor industry has always been highly demanding as far as meeting the customer's expectations and digging for what is truly important to them.

Today, with a greater number of professional landscape firms vying for the high-end dollar, leading companies are noting trends in the market that are helping them anticipate the customer's desires and giving them an edge over the competition.

Some leading design/build contractors provided insight into some of these market trends.

**THE VISUAL THING.** One of the keys to getting the client to sign off on a design is giving him/her a vision of what their landscape can become. In the



Some contractors are using wildflowers as a low maintenance alternative in landscape designs.

highly competitive landscape contracting market, it can be difficult to provide a complete vision of a landscape in a short time frame.

Some design/build firms are gaining efficiencies by using computer aided design programs to a greater degree. Eric Keesen, executive vice president, Allen Keesen Landscape, Denver, Colo., said that by using such software the designers can work with a greater number of customers and more flexibility.

"There are always changes to the design, and the programs allow you to make changes so easily," explained Keesen. "Before, the designers were drawing all the changes in by hand. It's so competitive out there, you need to be able to react and make changes quickly."

Matthew Stano, president, Stano Landscaping, Milwaukee, Wis., recently purchased a design

(continued on page 78)

*Low maintenance landscapes, among several other trends, continue to be a leading customer demand in today's landscape design.*

*By Paul Schrimpf*

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(continued from page 76)

imaging product. "Hopefully, it will help customers visualize and accept the design we are trying to provide," Stano said. "And, hopefully, we'll ultimately close more deals."

Steve Coughlin, landscape architect, Barnes Nursery, Huron, Ohio, sees the trend and understands the benefit, but says he "hates to give up the individual touch. It's a double edged sword, because (hand-drawn

plans) do take a lot longer."

Morris Newlin, president, New Garden Landscape, Greensboro, N.C., said the video imaging is appropriate for a percentage of the clientele, but he still maintains that the personal touch is critical to selling many of his clients.

New Garden has found success in selling and drawing client interest using an area of

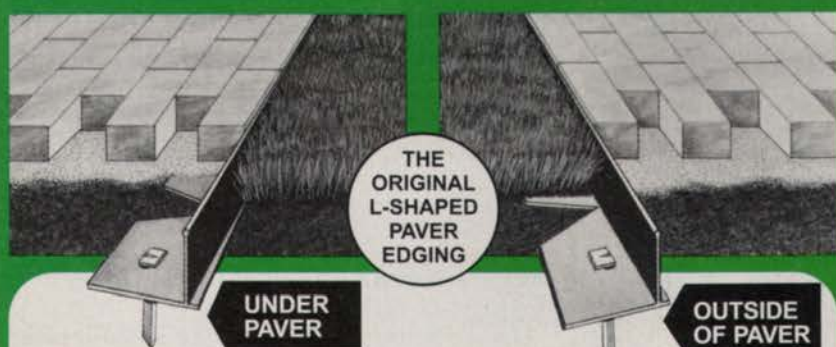
its retail garden center for demonstration gardens. The site contains eight fully landscaped "rooms" that depict different landscape schemes and uses of plant material. Clients are asked to come to the garden center for the second meeting, so the architect can show clients the plant material designated for their designs.

**LOVELY TO LOOK AT.** Every design/build contractor interviewed mentioned the ongoing emphasis on low maintenance landscapes. Busy working couples who are spending money want to enjoy the landscape, but they don't want to spend a lot of time maintaining it.

"The number one trend continues to be low maintenance," said Coughlin. "Customers have less and less time to maintain their properties, which is changing the se-

(continued on page 80)

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## Water Rules

Although its popularity has been documented for some time, design/build contractors are quick to point out that the water feature is still highly desired.

"Water features are still requested by many clients, even though they are high-maintenance items," said Steve Coughlin, landscape architect, Barnes Nursery, Huron, Ohio. "Even if it's something on a smaller scale, such as a fountain or small pond, people want water."

"The sound of a splashing brook or fountain, or a pond with aquatic plants and fish are highly demanded enhancements to the landscape," noted Morris Newlin, president, New Garden Landscape, Greensboro, N.C.

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## design trends

(continued from page 78)

lection of plant material and the way sites are prepared."

"Most residential customers are looking for low maintenance in their landscapes," admitted Stano. "But that can be tough to define. Usually, it means a diversity of color and a variation of plant material—especially perennials—and installation techniques such as using landscape fabric in beds (to reduce weed intrusion)."

"We will include annuals into the mix on a limited basis for color," Stano continued, "but we use perennials more extensively because we don't have to replace them year after year and they provide seasonal color interest throughout the year."

The use of perennials continues to be popular and challenges the designers trying to create the low maintenance design. Perennials present the classic "Catch 22"—they don't need to be replaced each year but most can't provide season-long color.

Stano said that mixing perennials and

annuals to create seasonal color interest has made it possible to create distinctive gardens that are low maintenance.

"Everyone is looking for a lot of seasonal color, so we use a number of perennials and evergreens as part of our plans," Newlin said.

Of course, using annuals is still a big item for many companies that design landscapes. Bill Davids, president, Clarence Davids & Co., Blue Island, Ill., said that annual color has been one of the strongest growth areas of the company, especially for commercial clients.

Davids also noted that company designers continue to favor turf as an element in the landscape. "Some companies have got-

*Every design/  
build con-  
tractor  
interviewed  
mentioned  
the ongoing  
emphasis on  
low mainte-  
nance land-  
scapes.*

ten away from turf and gone to wildflowers and native prairie, but nothing really ties the landscape together and is as functional as is turf," noted Davids.

Another low maintenance consideration is the use of shrubs. Stano recommends and uses dwarf or slow growing conifers in plantings to reduce the amount of growth and pruning requirements. He also recommends using enduring plants for harsh sites,

such as salt tolerant species near walkways and roadsides.

"The average lot size is also getting smaller, so smaller and lower-growing plant material is necessary," Coughlin observed.

On sites where low maintenance may at some point mean no maintenance, such as

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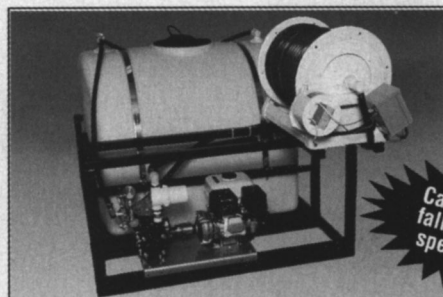
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some large commercial sites or remote areas, Stano has specified products such as root stimulants and polymers that hold water near the roots. After a year of what he believes has been successful use, he plans to continue to use these products in 1998.

"They are not inexpensive products to use, but when compared to the cost of replacing plant material under warranty, they pay for themselves if the plant survives," Stano noted.

Coughlin said that Barnes Nursery has been educating its customers on the important benefits of proper soil preparation using organic amendments, as well as the use of mulches in beds.

The low maintenance trend has pushed along another commonly mentioned customer desire — the "naturalistic" garden design. "We're seeing more and more prairie style landscapes instead of the areas of bluegrass we've seen over the years," noted Keesen.

This also has meant more interest in drawing nature into the landscape, Coughlin said. "Customers are requesting more plants that look nice and attract nature, such as

butterfly bush," he noted.

**HOLD THE WATER.** Xeriscaping is a trend that hasn't been a hot topic of discussion lately, but Keesen said is slowly picking up steam in Colorado. "Our capacity to supply water to this region is not going to improve in the future," he stressed.

Many office parks and major corporate headquarters are planning now to save water for restrictions and higher costs that are surely around the corner. A renovated or replaced landscape needs to have the irrigation system evaluated and either updated or replaced to save water.

"Homeowners' associations are especially interested in spending money now to have a system in place that will save them water expenses for the next 10 years," said Keesen. "Generally, it's installed in two or three phases to spread out the cost."

"Irrigation is almost a must in 90 percent of the upscale residential clients in our area," Newlin noted.

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

## Other Observations

**A**long with major trends, design/build contractors made these other interesting market observations:

**Uniqueness:** "Customers are more and more asking for the new and unusual," said Eric Keesen, executive vice president, Allen Keesen Landscape, Denver, Colo. "They are more pattern conscious and looking at textures, such as wall and paving systems, more closely. Clients really feel like there's no limit on what can be done — and really, there's nothing that can't be done, but it may not be realistic with their budget."

**Rooms:** The concept of creating outdoor "rooms" within a landscape is not a new idea, but Tim Knowles, landscape architect, New Garden Landscape & Design, Greensboro, N.C., said that designing with the idea of creating the effect of "rooms" has been very successful.

**Hardscapes:** "Hardscape features in the landscape are becoming increasingly popular with clients," said Morris Newlin, president of New Garden Landscape & Design. "Terraces, gazebos, arbors, and even the use of exterior or interior elements of the home within the landscape, such as stucco, enhance the design." — *Paul Schrimpf*

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# Do-It-All Machines

*Skid steers and loaders are a staple for landscape construction companies, and their versatility makes them suitable for a variety of other applications as well.*

*By Bob West*



**J**

ust as landscape maintenance contractors depend on mowers to get the job done, contractors focusing on landscape construction rely on skid steers and/or loaders in order to be productive.

"If much of your business is preparing landscape areas literally from the ground up, a skid steer is the workhorse that really gets 'down and dirty,'" explained Joe Dunn, manager of market research and development, John Deere Commercial Work Site Products Group, Raleigh, N.C.

**BASIC TRAINING.** Manufacturers are quick to differentiate between the capabilities and applications of skid steers from loaders.

"Skid steers are fixed wheel vehicles that skid when they turn," explained Larry Henkensiefken, products manager, Mustang Mfg. Co. Inc., Owatonna, Minn. "Wheel loaders have the same wheels, but they are articulated because they bend in the middle."

"We think skid steers offer contractors a number of benefits over loaders because skid steers are more compact, more versatile, and more agile," commented Kelly Moore, product development manager for skid steer loaders, Gehl Co., West Bend, Wis. "Wheel loaders are really the next step up from skid steers. They are better for lifting loads of 3,000 pounds or more or lifting materials higher because of their design."

"A loader is the right machine to use if the application is stockpiling materials in one location or loading trucks all day long," agreed Ray Szwec, compact equipment product manager, JCB Inc., White Marsh, Md.



**BULL MARKET.** Manufacturers across the board agreed that sales for skid steer products have

*(continued on page 84)*

(Top) Manufacturers report strong sales in skid steers with greater lifting capacities. Photo: Melroe Co. (Left) Difficult digging assignments may require high levels of hydraulic flow for increased power. Photo: Deere & Co.



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USE READER SERVICE #79



## skid steers

(continued from page 82)

been on the rise for the last few years.

"The skid steer market was considered to represent about 30,000 unit sales annually five years ago for North America," recalled Mac McPherson, president, Glenmac Inc., Jamestown, N.D. "Now, the market is probably about 50,000-55,000 units sold."

"Skid steers have really grown in popularity because of the labor savings they offer," Moore added.

This growing popularity was further supported by an independent survey of *Lawn & Landscape* readers that asked them how much money they spent on certain products in 1997 and expected to spend in 1998. While 9.5 percent of respondents indicated they purchased a skid steer or loader in 1997, 10.9 percent said they will buy one in the next 12 months, with an average expense of \$17,100.



Contractors demands for maximum versatility from skid steers forced manufacturers to adapt a universal attachment system so attachment tools work with a variety of skid steer machines. Photo: Deere & Co.

As the overall market continues to grow, manufacturers said they have seen much of the growth centered around the 1,350- and 1,750-pound categories of skid steers.

"The most popular machine size is still the 1,000-pound class, but the two sizes with the most growth are the 1,350- and 1,750-pound ones," observed Henkensiefken. "There's a definite trend toward the larger machines that have these higher lift capacities."

"These larger machines are selling more because when skid steers were first introduced to the market they were more of a luxury item in general and the 1,000-pound machines were most popular skid steers," Henkensiefken reasoned. "Today, skid steers are more

of a necessity because of the versatility of the equipment. So we're seeing a lot of second machine buyers. If they already have one

(continued on page 86)

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USE READER SERVICE #81



## skid steers

(continued from page 84)

skid steer, then they want the next one to have more power and lift capacity."

**ARRANGING THE BUY.** Manufacturers offer a number of suggestions to contractors shopping for a skid steer, starting with understanding what it will be expected to do.

"It's important for contractors to consider the operating capacity required for specific applications," cautioned Szwec. "If this is underestimated, the owner will soon realize the machine's limitations."

Szwec noted that the amount of hydraulic power available on different units is also important. "Skid steers offer high and low flow options. If the work required is mainly bucket and auger work, then low flow hydraulics will do," he said. "However, if a trencher attachment is part of the line up, then a high flow hydraulic option will be needed."

"The more hydraulics offered by a machine equal better performance and capa-

(continued on page 88)

# Attachment Adaptations

Obviously, the power and strength skid steers and loaders offer landscape contractors make them must-have products. But many manufacturers attribute the growing popularity of these machines to the extensive range of attachments that make skid steers and loaders so versatile.

"A skid steer is actually just a power unit that does nothing but run around until there's an attachment on it," observed Larry Henkensefken, products manager, Mustang Mfg. Co. Inc., Owatonna, Minn. "But rather than buying two or three pieces of equipment, contractors can get a skid steer or loader as a propulsion unit with a number of attachments and the utilization of the power from a cost evaluation perspective is a lot lower for a number of jobs."

Henkensefken estimated the cost for an average skid steer machine with a bucket set up at \$20,000, while the more than 100 attachments available range in price from \$1,000 for a pallet fork to \$14,000 for a coplaner.

"Skid steers are being used in more and more applications all the time, primarily due to the number of attachments that can be used," agreed Ray Szwec, compact equipment manager, JCB Inc., White Marsh, Md.

Mac McPherson, president, Glenmac Inc., Jamestown, N.D., noted that manufacturers have clearly recognized the importance of these tools.

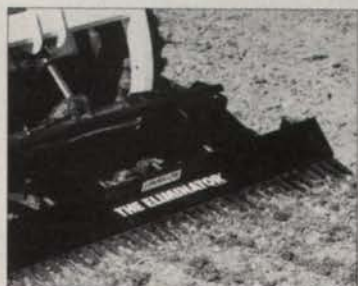
"Almost everyone manufacturing attachments or skid steers is using the universal attachment system now to be as flexible as possible," McPherson said. — Bob West

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USE READER SERVICE #84



## skid steers

(continued from page 86)

bilities," Moore agreed. "Hydraulic capabilities are especially important for the contractor looking at a range of attachments for a skid steer."

Moore also recommended contractors compare the operator comfort, visibility from the cab, and accessibility of the con-

trols for competitive units.

Brad Lemke, sales/marketing manager, ASV Inc., Grand Rapids, Minn., noted that contractors should also look at the effects of the machine on the ground, depending on where the machine will be used. "Low ground pressure is very nice, especially in residential areas if the machine has to be driven over a street, sidewalk or lawn," he noted, explaining that ASV's PosiTrack distributes the weight of the machine over the entire track at 2 psi on the ground, compared to some skid steers with 30 psi on the ground. "This system may cost \$10,000 more than another skid steer with comparable horsepower, but it will let contractors get into areas other machines can't go."

Henkensiefken noted that different machines may use different types of lift systems,



Manufacturers recommend that contractors shopping for a skid steer or loader start by identifying what their needs will be for that machine. Photo: Gehl

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although conventional pivot lift systems represent the majority of the market over vertical lift systems. "Vertical systems are lift-and-carry systems because they are lighter on the front-to-rear weight ratio," he explained. "This system lifts a little more

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weight with lighter machines and has faster ground speed, but pivot systems have a little more front-end weight, so they are better for digging."

And if skid steers' price tags are out of a contractor's range, then buying various at-

tachments and renting the actual skid steer is always an option, or vice versa.

"The rental market is growing rapidly," McPherson recognized. "This is an obvious first step into purchasing one of these machines, and it's also an excellent trial process

for what contractors may initially identify as a specialty attachment that they want to try out before purchasing."

*The author is Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.*

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# An Interior Perspective

As with the exterior landscape market, some interior companies' ability to grow is limited by their inability to attract and hire qualified technicians.  
Photo: Vern Goff

*Exterior landscapes are a necessity, but more commercial property managers are seeing the benefits of professional interior landscapes as well.*

By Bob West



As exterior landscape construction and maintenance companies see new competitors sprouting up all around them, many set their sights on the interior landscape market with hopes of boosting revenues through an additional service offering or two.

Experienced interiorscape contractors are quick to point out, however, that success outside a building's walls is nothing near a guarantee for success and profitability on the inside. "The exterior contractors I've talked to seem to think our job is easy," observed Connie Balint, president, Buckingham Greenery Inc., Buckingham, Va. "But we're talking about two very different industries here."

Different though the two industries may be, it's easy to see what is attracting exterior contractors to the interior industry after



talking with just a few interior landscape companies.

**BUSTING LOOSE.** Interior landscape has had its share of good and bad times as an industry, and although it has yet to enjoy the type of growth that has driven exterior landscape services into a \$45 billion industry, interior contractors nationwide continue to grow

(continued on page 92)







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LL



## interiorscape market

(continued from page 90)

their businesses.

McRae Anderson, president, McCaren Designs, St. Paul, Minn., estimated that the interior landscape industry produced a collective \$10 billion in revenues in 1997.

• • • • •

*'I've always had the philosophy that if you can take care of the people, then the plants will be fine.'*

• • • • •

However, Anderson, along with a number of his interior landscape colleagues, expect to see this number grow and grow rapidly over the coming years.

"If we could really get the message out about the value of plants inside a building,

I would guess we could increase business by 10 times as an industry, based on the limited overall market penetration we have now as an industry," Anderson asserted.

"Provided we can continue to market our industry with packages and plants for clean air, I still see the interior industry growing," agreed Chris Raimondi, president, Raimondi Horticultural Group Inc., Ridgewood, N.J. "I see a lot of opportunities for this industry if we use the clean air marketing message to our advantage more."

"From talking to interior landscape companies across the country, I think this is a real good time for our industry," affirmed Balint. "There is a lot of building renovation going on and new construction as well."

In addition to construction-driven new

business, Pat Heroman, president, Heroman Services Inc., Baton Rouge, La., said a strong economy has been an obvious boost to interior landscape sales.

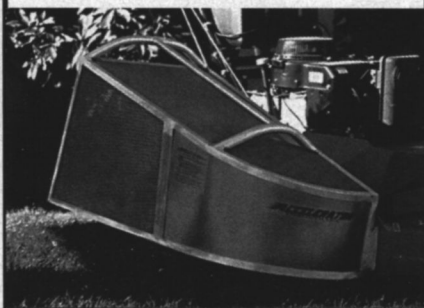
"Plants as a whole are doing real well right now, from interior landscapes to wholesale business to major chains' garden centers, such as Wal-Mart or K mart," Heroman noted. "Our services used to be considered a luxury, but companies aren't as tight with their budgets now as they were in the late 1980s. A company would really have to be doing bad work to be struggling right now."

**PEOPLE PROBLEMS.** Like the exterior landscape industry, interior landscape companies find their growth ability essentially limited by their ability to hire productive employees.

"There's enough work out there that I think we could double the size of our company if we had 10 more good people," Raimondi lamented.

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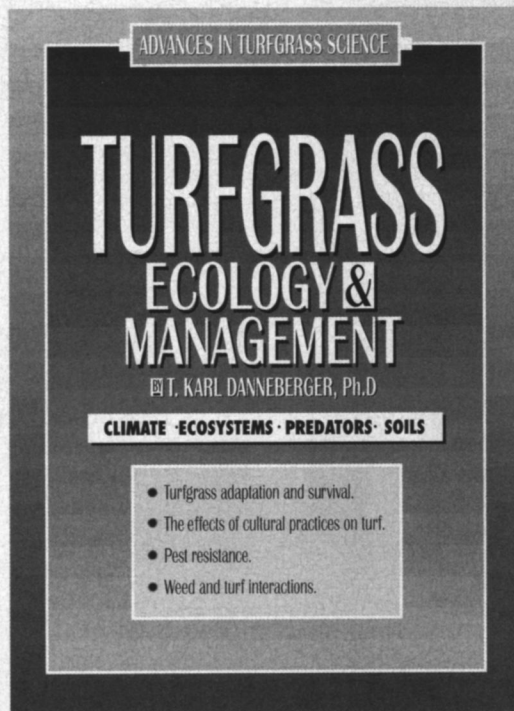


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is my biggest headache, and I think that's a problem that's only going to get worse," echoed Jo Ann Hilton, owner, The Plant Sitters, Minneapolis, Minn. "We ask an awful lot of employees – especially the technicians – and we don't pay them enough."

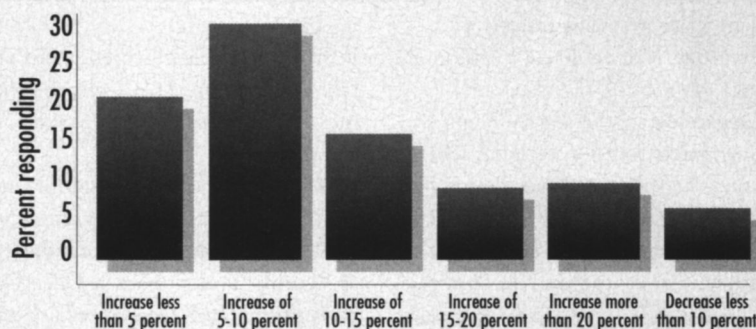
The interior landscape contractors interviewed for this article were quick to claim that hiring a qualified interior technician is much more challenging than hiring a comparable exterior technician.

"Interior technicians have to be real 'people people,' in addition to having the technical skills," commented Hilton. "We operate in people's offices, compared to being outside of a building all day."

Balint noted that this communication requirement reduces the amount of available labor to interior contractors. "We're feeling the labor shortage like exterior companies, but we can't hire anyone who doesn't speak English," she said, adding that she believes there's a greater emphasis on customer service and politeness for interior

## Pocketing Profits

A 1997 survey conducted jointly by *Lawn & Landscape* magazine and the Associated Landscape Contractors of America found that not only are interior landscape companies seeing overall growth in their companies' sales over the last few years, but this work is becoming more profitable as well. Nearly 10 percent of the respondents said their companies would increase profits by more than 20 percent in 1997, compared to 1996. Meanwhile, just 5.4 percent of the respondents anticipated a profitability drop off over the same time. — Bob West

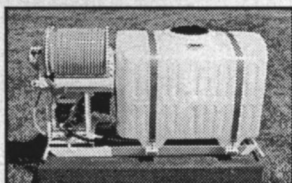


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LAWN & LANDSCAPE • FEBRUARY 1998

93



## interiorscape market

technicians because of the greater degree of customer contact they have with clients.

The effect of the labor shortage on his business has taught Heroman a lesson about being selective in the jobs his company takes. "Really focusing on our core customer market and staying there with the jobs we take is something we're learning the importance of every day," he observed. "We have learned that we can't expect to satisfy everyone who could be a customer right now."

And regardless of the service being offered to customers, interior contractors have learned that the key to each account is the technician and the level of service provided.

"I've always had the philosophy that if you can take care of the people, then the plants will be fine," shared Cindy Peterson, vice president, sales, McCaren Designs. "As long as the horticulturist and the company care for the customer, he or she knows that



Contractors noted that the 1990s have brought an increased appreciation of the value of interior landscapes among commercial property managers.

if there's a couple of wilted plants you will take care of them. That's why the quality of the people we hire is so important."

**COMING INSIDE TO PLAY.** Interior landscape contractors are certainly keeping an eye on the largest companies in the industry, such as Rentokil and TruGreen-ChemLawn, as acquisitions and mergers occur with increasing regularity.

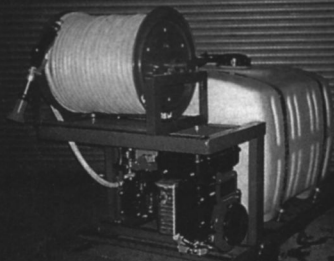
"All of these mergers are making things pretty exciting right now," observed

Raimondi, who sees these deals creating increased opportunities for the rest of the industry. "A whole new market has opened up for smaller companies looking to grow since there's very few medium-sized companies left, which I would describe as having five employees or more. And the larger companies generally aren't as responsive to the overall market conditions as the smaller companies are."

Hilton agreed: "I think there's definitely

(continued on page 96)

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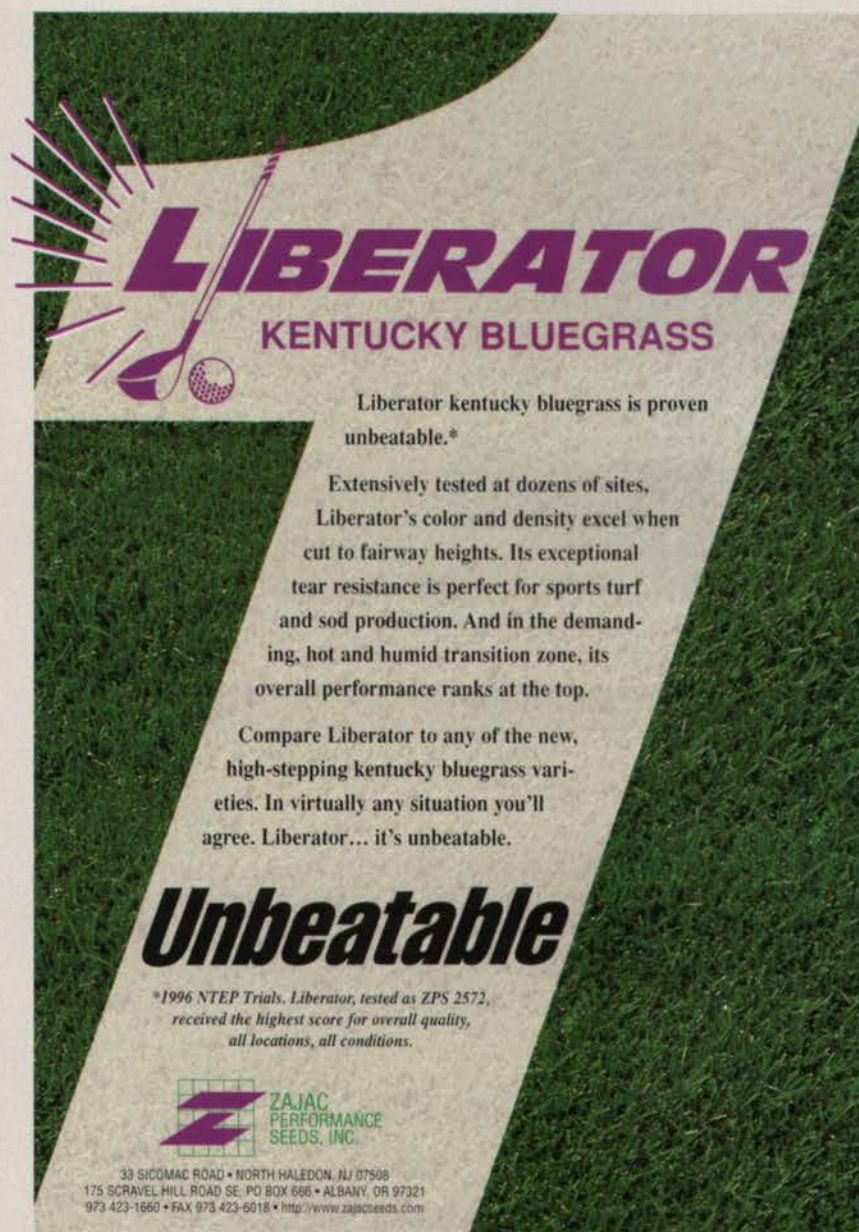
(continued from page 94)

still a place for the smaller companies because people always appreciate unique jobs, which smaller companies are oftentimes better suited to provide. The presence of these larger companies just creates an additional challenge for us to sell against."

The slowly growing presence of select exterior landscape companies in the interior industry isn't necessarily cause for concern

either. "I haven't seen a tremendous amount of exterior contractors doing interior work well – but that's because they don't know how to do this work yet," Raimondi noted. "For right now, I see exterior companies crossing the line as an opportunity to raise our standards and further separate ourselves from our competition."

(continued on page 114)



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## TPIE Turnout

**F** T. LAUDERDALE – When the Associated Landscape Contractors of America and Florida

Nursery & Growers Association announced they would join their two national interiorscape shows in 1998, there was some uncertainty as to how the industry would react.

Based on early figures from the first joint effort, the industry is thrilled with the combination of ALCA's educational conference and the FNGA's historically sold out trade show.

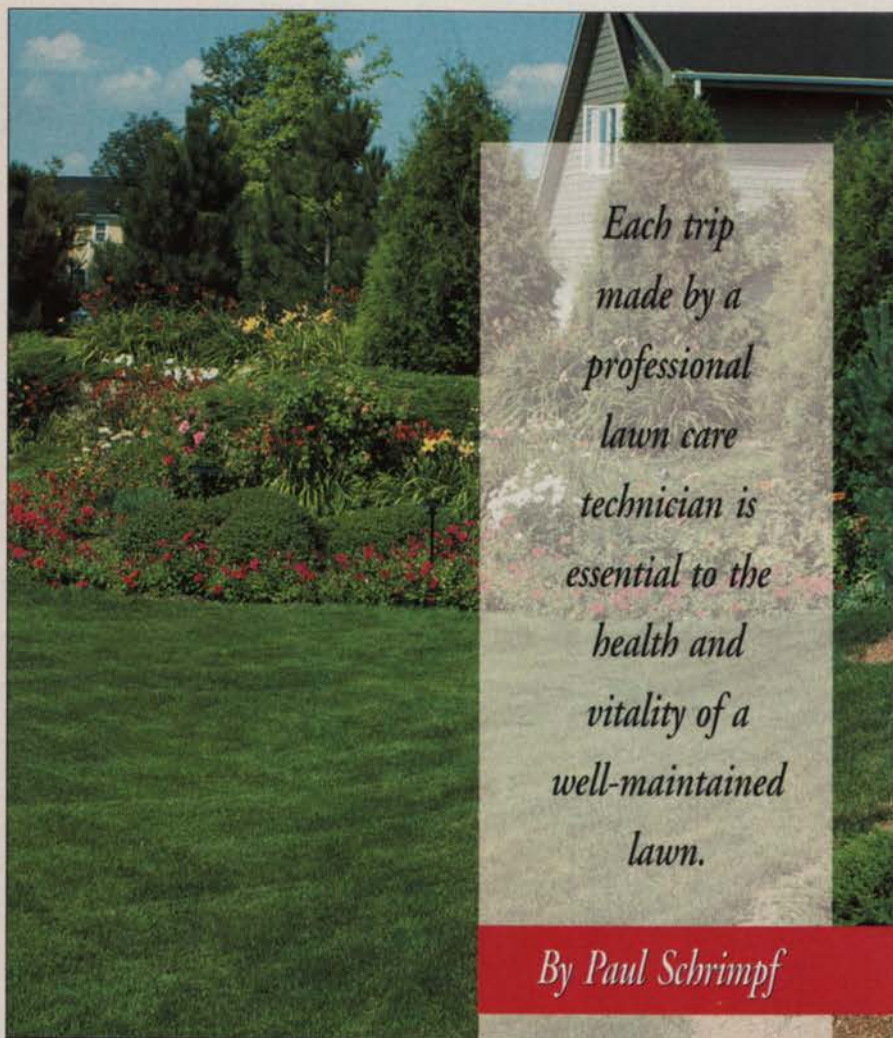
FNGA officials estimated that they drew more than 7,800 attendees to the event, although the final figures were not available at press time. This attendance surpasses the turnout of 7,528 in 1997. Meanwhile, the FNGA again sold out the booth space, and exhibitors regularly described the show as the best ever.

Lynn Gustafson of East Marsh Nursery, Pompano Beach, Fla., noted she took far more orders for plant material during the show than at any previous FNGA interior show.

From ALCA's perspective the show was a big success, drawing 124 people to the educational sessions that had never attended before, according to Cynthia Peterson, ALCA president and vice president of sales with McCaren Designs, Minneapolis. It was also ALCA's best total turnout at an interior event. — Bob West



# The Parts of the Plan



*Each trip  
made by a  
professional  
lawn care  
technician is  
essential to the  
health and  
vitality of a  
well-maintained  
lawn.*

*By Paul Schrimpf*

Professionals know that good lawn care is not an easy task. There are many factors to consider, from weather patterns to customer demands to the fickle and hard-to-predict infestations of weeds, insects and diseases.

To keep these forces from wiping out entire stands of turf, professionals have developed management practices that have proven over time to effectively keep turf free from damaging populations of insects and weeds, and healthy enough to fend off disease organisms.

**EARLY SEASON.** The first two service calls are the most critical for setting the turf up to thrive. Doug Hague, president, Lawn Classics, Findlay, Ohio, said the first order of business is to assess how well the lawn survived the winter to determine whether any reseeding will be needed. Lawn Classics' first application is generally a fertilizer and an herbicide combination to control crabgrass. The amount of nitrogen is generally low, because there will be some nitrogen carryover in the soil from the fall application. Fertilizer provides quicker green-up and vigor when the temperatures begin to warm.

The second application, six to seven weeks later, contains fertilizer and an herbi-

*Many of the problems contractors encounter with customers can be avoided by sharing the right information with customers ahead of time. This section is designed to help contractors better communicate with customers. Reprints of this section are available — call our reprints division at 800/456-0707 for more information.*

A consistent lawn care program includes fertilization, monitoring for pests and appropriate use of pesticides.



## Aeration: A Cure for the Aching Lawn

**A**t the recent Ohio Turfgrass Foundation conference in Columbus, plant nutrition expert Dr. Chuck Darrah, president of CLC LABS, Westerville, Ohio, was quizzing some lawn care service technicians about important nutrients in turf.

He described a lawn that was thin, not growing and not responding to traditional fertilizer treatments. He also noted that there was no evidence of insect or disease problems. He asked them, "What is the missing element in the turf?" The answer was oxygen.

The reason that the turf was not getting enough oxygen, he said, was the soil in his example was heavily compacted and unable to provide needed oxygen to the roots of turfgrass plants. The treatment that helps this problem in many cases is aeration.

A lawn care technician may recommend this procedure, in which a machine digs small cores of soil across an entire lawn. This allows the roots and soil to spread and increases grass root exposure to oxygen. When performed properly, aeration is an effective way to revitalize a compacted, oxygen-starved lawn. — *Paul Schrimpf*

cide that controls broadleaf weeds such as dandelion and plantain. Hague noted that his company, as well as many others, will spot treat broadleaf weeds when possible.

The key for the professional is to get the product down soon enough to stop emerging weeds from growing too large and chok-

ing out grass, but not so soon that the product loses its effectiveness before weeds emerge. Fortunately, the weed control products used widely in professional lawn care provide good windows of control.

In regions where grubs are a problem, some lawn care companies offer a preven-

tive grub control application in May or June. This reduces the likelihood that grubs will become large and damaging to turf in the late summer and fall months.

**SUMMER AND FALL.** About six weeks later, an application of fertilizer is applied to carry turf through the summer months, noted Hague. Some companies also scout for grubs in late July and early August and will make an application of a product that will knock down damaging grub populations where they exist. Monitoring for disease problems and, if necessary, making an application of fungicide is also part of the summer regimen for many companies.

The final application of the season is generally fertilizer alone, which helps the plants develop roots and regain strength where drought or diseases are a problem.

**DOWN SOUTH.** Winter is still part of the season for residents in warmer climates, which means that technicians will need to visit through the winter months as well. Winter weeds are the big concern, according to John Boyd, weed scientist, University of Arkansas, Little Rock. Technicians will monitor and treat for common winter weeds in November and February. **LL**

## Correcting pH Levels

**A**nother important consideration in the care of turf is maintaining a proper soil pH level. This is especially true when soil pH levels are too low. In soils with abnormally low pH levels, turf will have little response to fertilizer applications and have a thin, weak, unhealthy appearance.

When a technician is concerned that pH may be a problem, he or she may recommend a soil analysis to determine the actual pH level and the amount of lime needed to correct the low pH. Most lawn care companies rely on independent laboratories or university soil labs to run these two tests. The technician draws several samples within the problem area using a soil probe and prepares them to be tested.

If the results show that the soil is low in pH, the problem is usually correctable using one or more applications of lime. The amount used is contingent on how low the pH and lime test levels are in the soil. In the future, follow-up tests may be recommended to ensure that the pH stays at the desired level.

In most cases, a high pH level in the soil is not a serious issue, and sometimes cannot be corrected with a surface application. When high pH can be corrected, sulfur is the product recommended.

*Information for this article was provided by CLC LABS, Westerville Ohio.*

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



# The Cost of Labor

By Charles Vander Kooi

I have told more than 70,000 contractors across North America that I have yet to meet the contractor I can't make profitable if he or she will focus on just two things: the control of labor and overhead (see January 1998 issue of *Lawn & Landscape*, p. 87). Sad to say, most contractors focus on something else: getting work and expanding.

A major bonding company – an insurance company that guarantees a contract will be performed at the original bid price even if the contractor goes bankrupt – did a survey of contractors who had declared bankruptcy to see why they went bankrupt. Do you know how many contractors they found who had gone broke due to a lack of work? NONE! Do you know how many contractors they found who had gone bankrupt because they had taken on too much work too fast and for too cheap? LOTS OF THEM! A contractor's primary focus must be on the control of labor and overhead.

**RISKY BUSINESS.** The labor portion of any estimate is the greatest risk in estimating. I have never stayed up nights worrying if I had enough for materials in a bid. If you can't take off material from a drawing, get out of town. I have never stayed up nights worrying about the subcontractors. If I know what the subcontractors have included and if I have covered what they have excluded, I can sign them up and get them to do their work. Equipment follows labor, so if labor is right, then my equipment will be right. However, I have stayed awake many a night worrying if I had enough or too much labor in an estimate.

When I deal with labor on an estimate, I never deal in dollars and cents. Rather, I use production hours. Production hours are the most stable way of estimating labor for the long term.

I do not want to determine that I can plant a shrub for a \$1.50 or a tree for \$18 in labor costs. Rather, I want to determine how many hours it will take to produce a planted shrub or tree. If I can plant five shrubs per hour and I have 50 to plant, I will need 10 production hours to plant the shrubs. If it takes me an hour and 30 minutes to plant a tree and I have six trees to plant, it will take nine production

*How a contractor figures the costs of labor for a job can be as important as controlling the amount of labor involved on the job.*



# By the Numbers

hours to plant the trees.

I deal in production hours for three reasons. First, the dollars-and-cents labor costs become antiquated very quickly. You can show me labor for a job you did yesterday, but as soon as you give anyone a raise on that crew, your costs will be antiquated. If you had a foreman with five low-priced laborers – who lower your labor costs per hour – doing the work on one job, but on the next job that same foreman has only two low-priced laborers, your costs will be antiquated.

I know how many production hours are necessary to form and pour and finish small concrete slabs. I have been using those same production rates for three years.

Workers form and pour and finish small concrete slabs the same way that they did 20 years ago. Do you think that labor costs are the same today as they were 20 years ago? Of course not. What has changed? The cost of the labor per hour. I can use the same production rates and be current on my labor costs by multiplying the production hours by today's average wage.

The second reason I use production hours is that it is easier to vary production hours than to vary dollars-and-cents labor costs. For example, I can plant one tree every hour and 30 minutes if I can get a truck with the tree on it near the hole. I have 10 trees to plant, and five I can get near with a truck. I will need to tractor five

others into another area and carry them at least the last 50 feet. It will take an extra 30 minutes on those five trees. I can vary my final production hours by figuring 15 hours to plant in normal conditions and another 2½ hours for the five that are not normal. Total: 17½ production hours.

The final reason that I use production hours is because field people think production. Let's say that you have done a bid based on dollars-and-cents labor costs and you have arrived at a total labor cost of \$900 to do some planting. If you go to your foreman and tell him to get that truckload of plants planted for \$900, what will he say? "What do you mean by \$900? Who is paid what?"

But, if you have arrived at your labor costs by production hours multiplied by the average wage and you have calculated 80 production hours, then you can tell

**Figuring labor costs for a job in production hours lets the crew foreman understand exactly how long the crew should be on the job.**  
Photo: Kujawa Enterprises



the foreman that with a four-man crew working 10 hours a day, he has two days to do the job. Does your foreman understand that kind of goal? Of course he does, because that's the way the field people think: How many people are you giving me, and when do I have to be done?

**TOO LATE TO COST.** I love job costing, but the problem with job costing is that when you finally get the figures, the job is over. I have clients who know how much material needs to be installed in one day to stay on schedule. Based on the production hours in the estimate to install that material, they can determine how large a crew to send out to the job to finish the work in one day. They can check on that job in the middle of the day and quickly see what has been installed and the hours used to see if that job is on target. If the crew does not get all the material installed in a day, it is obvious to everyone that they are overrunning the estimate. However, this kind of labor control only happens when a contractor deals with labor on an estimate in production hours, not in dollars-and-cents labor costs.

Once I have arrived at the production hours for a certain type of work, I multiply those hours by the average wage for that crew. To find the average wage for bid purposes, I put together an average crew with their different hourly wages. These wages totaled will tell you the cost of that

## Fudging the Numbers

**1** do not add the fudge factor to the hours but to the average wage so that neither the owner, manager nor field people can see it and mess with it.

The following is an example of the process for calculating the average wage for a crew:

Foreman .....	\$12.00 per hour
Leadman .....	10.00 per hour
Laborer .....	8.00 per hour
Laborer .....	6.00 per hour
<b>Total Crew Cost .....</b>	<b>\$36.00 per hour</b>
<b>4 = \$9.00 per hour (average wage)</b>	

Average Wage .....	\$ 9.00
10% overtime .....	+ 0.90
<b>Subtotal .....</b>	<b>\$ 9.90</b>
10% Fudge Factor .....	+1.00

**Average Wage .....** **\$10.90 per hour**

— Charles Vander Kooi





crew for one hour's work. Then you divide that amount by the number of people on the crew to arrive at the average wage.

Next, add a factor for overtime to that hourly cost. For example, if you are working your crews 50 hours per week, you are paying them time and a half for 55 hours per week. That means you are paying for five hours of time each week from which you are receiving no production. In order to compensate, you will need to add 10 percent to the crew's average wage. (Five hours is 10 percent of 50 hours.)

To this figure I also add a "fudge factor." This number compensates for the difference between how long you think something will take and how long it really takes.

Say your foreman comes in and says he can't find the key to the skid loader. The crew looks in the ashtrays of the trucks and in their pockets. After 15 minutes with four people looking, the crew finds the key. It was in the ignition of the skid loader. The crew tries to start the skid loader, but it won't turnover. They've run the battery dead. Someone is sent to get the jumper cables out of a truck, but someone else has taken the jumper cables. The foreman sends someone to the nearest discount store to get jumper cables. (Sound like one of your jobs?) The crew hooks up the jumper cables,

but the skid loader still will not start. The gas tank is empty. Someone goes to the company truck to get the extra five-gallon can of gas, but someone else forgot to fill it up after they used it, so someone else heads off to a gas station. Four people just spent an hour to get the skid loader started. Where is that in your bid?

Or, here is my favorite. Rain clouds move over your job and it begins to sprinkle.

*The labor portion of any estimate is the greatest risk in estimating.*

However, there is blue sky all around. Your foreman looks up to see all the blue sky and determines that the storm will not last long. Then he says the worst thing he can say, "Let's get in the truck and wait it out." He was right, the storm only lasted half an hour, and they were going to get out and go back to work, but their favorite song came on the radio. It's another 10 minutes before

they get out of the truck and go back to work. Where is that time on your bid?

I suggest that if you know your crew's production rates and are very comfortable with them, you still add a 5 percent fudge factor to the average wage. If you feel moderately comfortable with them, add 10 percent. If you have never estimated in production hours before – and you will be trying to determine them as you estimate – add 15 percent until you get more comfortable with the process.

**PASS THE FUDGE.** Now, it is very important to add this fudge factor to the wage and not the net hours. The reason is because I want to hide the fudge factor from two different groups of people. The first is the owner or manager. Let's say you have a bid with 1,000 production hours and you would add 10 percent, or 100 hours, for the fudge factor. As you begin to think about the job, you might say, "I want this job. I need this job." With these thoughts in mind, what might you take out of that bid? The 100 hours of fudge factor. You get the job. How long does it take to do the job? One thousand one hundred hours. Crews are still

going to misplace the key to the skid loader, have trouble starting it and run to get jumper cables and gas. It is still going to rain and workers will still sit in the trucks. I know contractors, if they can see those fudge factors hours, they are going to mess with them.

The other group of people that I want to hide the fudge factor from is field people. Can you

imagine telling a foreman that he has 1,000 hours to do a job, but you have also added 100 hours for wasted time and mistakes. They will say, "No problemo. I'll take care of those 100 hours." **U**

*The author is president of Vander Kooi & Associates, Littleton, Colo. He can be reached at 303/697-6467.*



## PRODUCT PROFILE

### INSECTICIDE MAINTAINS TURF AND PROFITABILITY FOR A PENNSYLVANIA CONTRACTOR

IN THE EARLY '80s, chemical lawn care services boomed, with companies springing up across the country. Today, it is estimated that more than 6,000 companies specializing in lawn care and maintenance services were created in 1995 alone, according to industry estimates.

However, many companies specializing in the care and maintenance of residential and commercial turf began years before the "boom" in the turf business.



Specialty Spraying, located in Latrobe, Pa., is one of those companies. Its doors have been open since 1972. President Jim Walter bases his business on a philosophy of profitability without sacrificing customer needs.

"Profitability is always a factor," says Walter. "But the key to keeping customers is being able to deliver great service. My customers don't

Tackling turf insect problems was a major issue for Specialty Spraying. Credit: Bayer

want to hear excuses — they've paid for green, gorgeous lawns and they should have them, free of chinch bugs, grub damage and crabgrass."

Specialty Spraying treats all varieties and ages of turfgrass — from clients with new lawns that are primarily bluegrass to 25-year-old lawns with excessive thatch. Heavy thatch and grub infestation are two key turf problems for

this company.

With these turf problems, it's important for lawn care companies to deliver the service and quality of turf their customers expect while maintaining profitability. In the past, Specialty Spraying used products that at times took up to two to three applications in order to control their customers' turf insect problems. This situation resulted in numerous callbacks. The company began losing profits to these costly callbacks.

Then, Walter had the opportunity to try the then-new Merit Insecticide, manufactured by Bayer Corp., Kansas City, Mo. Walter was initially skeptical about using Merit because it cost significantly more per acre to apply than

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the products that they were currently using.

However, after reviewing plenty of research – reading university studies and other research that had been performed on the product – Walter decided to give the new chemistry a try “We started using Merit in 1994,” said Walter. “We treated a few lawns, and were very impressed with the results.”

Walter carefully tracked the cost of the product, weighing that against the cost of customer callbacks. Walter discovered that the effectiveness of Merit in controlling grubs and increasing customer satisfaction

was actually saving money and increasing profitability for Specialty Spraying. And they’ve been using it ever since.

Merit, which features the active ingredient imida-

sure to people, wildlife and the environment. Its low use rates and long residual activity make it convenient and cost effective for lawn care companies like Specialty Spraying.

“After the intense grub

control of grubs, with minimum call-backs.

“Plus, our employees appreciate the fact that Merit can be applied with minimal contact to applicators.”

Walter feels so strongly about Merit that he includes it in his sales presentations to potential customers.

He put together a special advertising piece that explains the benefits and successes that he’s had experienced with Merit.

“I have to deliver good service and great looking lawns to my customers,” he continued. “Merit is one of the ways I deliver professional results while staying profitable.”

– Larissa Dills



*‘Profitability is always a factor, but the key to keeping customers is being able to deliver great service.’*

clopid, used as a preventive product stops grubs from feeding before damage can start. Merit is a unique chemistry that is characterized by a low use rate, thus low expo-

sure pressure we experienced in 1995, we treated 713 of our clients’ turf areas, or 40 percent of our client base, with Merit in 1996,” commented Walter. “We’ve had excellent

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## NEW PRODUCTS



### LESCO Hydro Mowers

- 48-inch cutting deck model powered by 17-hp electric start Kawasaki engine
  - 54-inch cutting deck model powered by 20-hp electric start Kohler engine
  - 5-gallon fuel tanks
  - Twin ground speed control levers
  - Dual hydrostatic pumps and drive motors
  - Pneumatic caster wheels
  - Four-pin system for raising and lowering cutting deck
- Circle 208 on reader service card

### Trynex SweepEx Brooms

- Can be used on paver stones
- Polypropylene brushes feature removable sections for easy bristle replacement
- Mounting kits for skid steers, tractors, bucket loaders and pick-up trucks
- Modular design allows for adding sections to achieve various widths
- Year round maintenance uses
- Generates minimal dust and flying debris



Circle 209 on reader service card

### BioTrek HB™ Seed Inoculant

- EPA approved
- Effective in control of root diseases in turf and ornamentals
- Active ingredient, Trichoderma harzianum
- Protects roots against Pythium, Rhizoc-



## NEW PRODUCTS

tonia and Fusarium

- Provides protection for expanding root systems that extend from stand establishment through maturity
- Circle 210 on reader service card**

### GMB Truck Body from Omaha Standard

- Fits all 56-inch CA two- or four-wheel drive pickup trucks
  - recessed tie-down rings on the floor
  - Galvanneal steel construction with baked-on primer
  - BackMate storage unit behind cab
  - hinged side and tailgate for easy loading and unloading
  - Five-year warrantee
- Circle 211 on reader service card**

### Toro Mid-Mount ZTR mower

- Z252 Riding mower features a 22-hp Kohler engine with a 52-inch deck
- Z255 rider model is powered by a 25-hp Kohler engine and features a 62-inch deck



- Heavy duty tubular steel carrier frame with 4-point floating deck suspensions and off-set castor wheels
- Ground speed of 8.5

mph forward and 4 mph in reverse

- 9-gallon twin fuel tanks
- 3/4 inch extra wide diameter hand levers
- Foldup armrests
- Quick set height of cut adjustment allows operator to adjust cutting height from the seat

**Circle 214 on reader service card**

### Bandit Model 1890 Intimidator

- Hydraulic feed, drum-style chipper with two-wheel horizontal feed system
- Sloping infeed and reversible feed wheels
- 36-inch diameter drum with large chipper opening of 20 1/2 inches by 24 inches
- Standard model has single axle with 1200 x 16.5 tires and power options up to 130 hp
- Equipped with 32-cubic-inch hydraulic feed wheel motors

**Circle 215 on reader service card**

### Picture Perfect 98 by Eagle Point Software

- upgrade version of Picture Perfect
- user can scan photographs or blueprints of a house or building and add realistic photo images
- features voice assistance and on-line training
- more than 1600 new images added to the plant material library
- imports images from a scanner or digital camera
- automatic scaling feature for placing images

**Circle 216 on reader service card**

### Hydraulics version 1.00 software by Time Saver Technologies

- developed for irrigation professionals
- performs instant area, volume, distance, pressure velocity, flow, energy, power and weight conversions

## LITERATURE

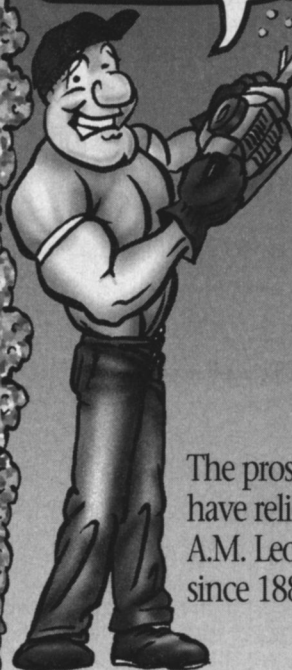
**G**empler's 1998 Catalog is a direct mail order for industrial grade horticulture and grounds maintenance supplies. The new 348-page master catalog features more than 5,550 hard-to-find products such as safety resource guides and training videos, magnifiers for pest identification and weather forecasting systems.

**Circle 212 on reader service card**

The maintenance tip guide from **Kano Laboratories Inc.** features 100 useful and easy maintenance suggestions for such problems as handling frozen brake cables, hot or frozen bearings, corroded bolts and tips for improving engine performance.

**Circle 213 on reader service card**

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# NEW PRODUCTS

- calculates the volume and usable capacity of any pond or lake in seconds
  - determines actual precipitation rates for design and complete area and volume computations
  - requires IBM compatible PC 486/33 MHz or better
- Circle 217 on reader service card**

## Bunton BZT 31 Zero Turn Rider

- 31-hp liquid cooled Briggs & Stratton Daihatsu gas engine



- 72-inch cutting width
  - Travel speeds up to 9.5 miles per hour
  - Electronic deck lift and height adjustment system
  - 24-inch by 12-inch tires
  - Optional rollover protection availability
- Circle 218 on reader service card**

## Pond Supplies of America pond skimmer

- Two new skimmer models - PondSweep 700 and 1500
  - Available for ponds as large as 700 and 1,500 square feet
  - 3, 1 1/4-inch washable and removeable mats can be stacked in the skimmer
  - 8-inch skimmer opening
  - Vertical uncut mat design
  - Bellows eliminate leakage around the sides and bottoms
- Circle 219 on reader service card**

## Shaver Mfg. hydraulic posthole diggers

- Provides a clear line of sight to the posthole while seated on a tractor
  - Reduces operator fatigue
  - Side mount designed for Shaver Model 510 "Ground Hog" and Model 1020 "Bear"
  - Universal mounting kit fits all makes and models of tractors
  - Boom hydraulically positions the digger inside the wheelbase of the tractor when traveling roads
- Circle 220 on reader service card**



## ATX Forms TaxSolver Software

- Business return forms include 1040, 1120 Corporate, 1120S Corporate, 1065 Partnership
  - Also includes 1099/W2 filer software, tax planner and depreciation module
  - Has a built-in spreadsheet program
  - Requires a 486 with recommended 8 MB RAM.
  - Works with Windows 3.1 and 3.11, Windows 95 and Windows NT.
- Circle 221 on reader service card**

## Woods Equipment Tractor Mounted Attachments

- Series of two-stage tractor

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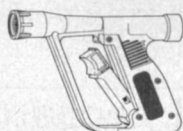
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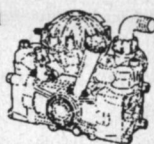


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## NEW PRODUCTS

mounted snowblowers

- Heavy, ribbon-type feeder augers
- Three-blade fan
- Hydraulically operated discharge chute
- Rear-mount scraper blades rated for tractors from 12 to 150 hp

- Has reversible, high carbon steel, curved cutting edge
- Features 72-, 84-, and 96-inch working widths
- Rated for tractors up to 60-hp

Circle 222 on reader service card

### Organica Neem Oil Insecticide Soap Concentrate

- EPA approved in 41 states
- Designed for use on shrubs, ornamentals and greenhouse plants
- Effective against wide range



of soft bodied insects and common pests

Circle 223 on reader service card

### Ditch Witch JT7020 Jet Trac System

- Carries 360 feet of drill pipe
- Features a 225-hp intercooled turbodiesel engine
- Enhanced hydraulics that deliver 70,000 pounds of pull-back
- Features include utility crane, all weather cab, power-assisted anchoring, hands-free pipe loading and dual speed carriage
- 360 degree rotating crane

Circle 224 on reader service card

### Exmark Allied Attachments

- Fits the Lazer Z™, Turf Tracer, Turf Tracer HP, Explorer or Viking Hydro
- 47-inch rotary broom with 18-inch diameter polypropylene tube brush

- Broom has manual blade angle settings of 10 and 20 degrees left and right
- 44- and 46-inch, two-stage snowblower features a chute with manual rotation, adjustable deflector, reversible cutting edge and skid shoes

Circle 225 on reader service card

### James Lincoln Turf Maker® mulcher

- Compact hydro-mulching unit
- Mechanical agitation
- Loads and mixes
- Positive displacement pump



- Dispenses 450 pounds of wood mulch per hour

Circle 226 on reader service card

### Facon Bull Hog 100 Wood Shredder

- Available in three model sizes requiring from 80 to 320 hp
- Powered either hydraulically by tractor PTO with internally mounted or separate engine
- Also available in a model with its own track carrier
- Designed for clearing land, yard waste, brush, stump piles

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# NEW PRODUCTS

and orchard removal  
• Also features hydraulic fork assisting in operation  
**Circle 227 on reader service card**

## MTD Pro Wide Track Dual Hydro Commercial Mower

- 20-hp Kohler Command V-twin OHV engine
- Dual hydrostatic drive
- Modular design
- 41-inch rear stance
- Dual hydrostatic control
- 2 ground-speed dash lever controls
- 1¼-inch tubing handle bars
- Four deck options
- 1-inch tapered roller bearing spindle shaft with top mount grease fittings
- 5-gallon plastic fuel tank
- Cutting heights range from 1¼ inches to 4 inches, adjustable in ¼-inch increments



ments easy adjustment cutting height in ¼-inch increments  
• Electric PTO  
• Quick attach/detach decks  
**Circle 228 on reader service card**

## Zajac Performance Seeds Coyote Tall Fescue

- Narrow leaf blade
- Compact growth habit
- Moderate endophyte level
- Resistance to fusarium patch and net blotch
- Adapts well in northern and

southern climates  
• Deep root structure improves heat, drought and cold tolerance  
**Circle 229 on reader service card**

## Ferris Industries SoftRide™ Zero-Turn Mower

- Foot operated deck lift
  - Greasable front caster roller bearings
  - Dual point floating front axle system
  - Independent suspension
  - Twin 4-gallon fuel tanks
  - Heavy duty engine cage
- Circle 230 on reader service card**

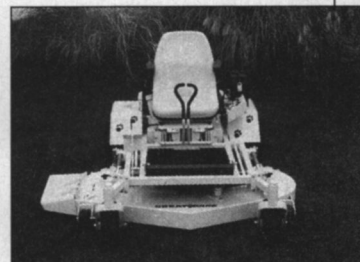
## Great Bend Buckets

- Four new commercial grade buckets ranging from 72 to 102 inches
- ¼-inch, heavy duty steel wear plates on bottom

• Double stacked cutting edge with ¾-inch by 6-inch bolt-on primary cutting edge  
• Clevis is built on top of the bucket for attaching a chain  
**Circle 231 on reader service card**

## Great Dane™ Zero-Turn Chariot

- Engines include 22-hp and 25-hp Kohler



- Decks for 52- and 61-inch-wide cut
- Weighs 1,180 pounds with 61-inch cutter deck
- Dual hydro-gear BDP-10L

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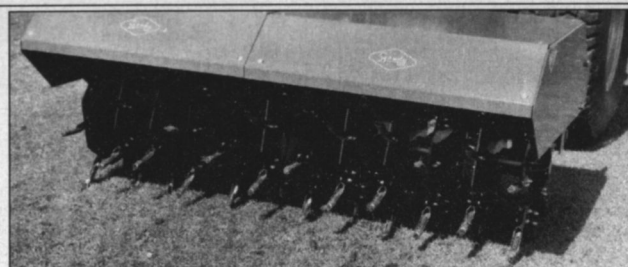
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USE READER SERVICE #106



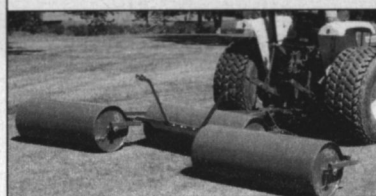
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## NEW PRODUCTS

pumps, dual Parker/Ross wheel motors with tapered axles

- Greaseable taper roller bearings in wheel hubs
- 1½- to 6-inch cutting height
- Foot pedal control with adjustable HOC stop, anti-scalping rollers
- 8-gallon fuel tank

**Circle 232 on reader service card**

### Bed Shaper's Attachment for Front-Mount Walker Mowers

- 90-degree beveled gear box
- Square steel tubing frame
- 1- to 4½-inch cutting depth
- 7 position lever for depth attachment
- 51 1/8-inch attachment width
- 21 3/16-inch front extension
- 16¼-inch disc diameter
- 15¼-inch extension beyond tire

**Circle 233 on reader service card**



### DewEze ATM-72 All Terrain Mowing Machine

- 27 hp, air cooled diesel engine
- Hydraulic floating mower decks
- Hydrostatic control and auto leveling system

**Circle 234 on reader service card**

### Garber Seed® PTO Seeders

- Models G-1 (1 bushel) and

G-3 (3 bushel)

- Choice of 3-point hitch mounting or trailer mounting adjustable bracket
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- Auxilliary hopper available

**Circle 235 on reader service card**

### Buckner Turf Irrigation Valves

- Features both plastic and brass globe valves ranging from ¾ inch to 2 inches
- Angle valves available in both plastic and brass
- Comes with or without flow control
- Plastic slip valves in 1-inch inlet size available
- Valves assembled with durable stainless steel hex head bolts
- Reinforced ribbed bonnet

- Flow ranges from 5 to 55 gallons per minute

**Circle 236 on reader service card**

### Global Mulching Brush Blade

- 9-inch diameter blade
- Brush blade for cutting and mulching



- Fits all major brands of brush cutters

**Circle 237 on reader service card**

### Martin Industries NuWay Kit-N-Caboodle Utility Trailer

- A model line of three, 85

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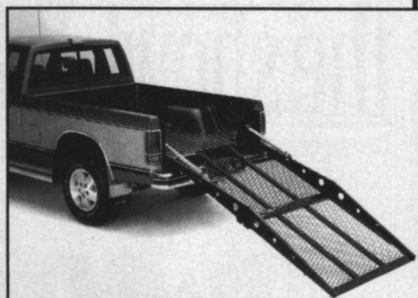
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USE READER SERVICE #109



## NEW PRODUCTS

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- Formed steel channel frames
- 5/8-inch, pre-cut plywood bed

- All trailer kits are U.S. Department of Transportation approved and with D.O.T. rated tires
- Class 1 coupler with safety lock

- Class 1 safety chain and prewired wiring harness
- Options include wood railing, heavy duty spring kit, tongue stand and spare tire brackets

**Circle 238 on reader service card**

### Stowramp from Innovative Industries

- 1,000 pound capacity
- Features an optional supporting beam in the middle of the frame for

heavier, more compact loads

- Made of steel and custom fabricated to any truck or van requirements

- Ramp bridges the tailgate so there is no weight on the tailgate

**Circle 239 on reader service card**

### Bush Hog Zero-Turn Mowers

- Available in 61-, 52-, and 48-inch cutting widths
- 90-degree dual path hydrostatic transmission
- Mowers available with 22-hp Kohler Command engine, 20-hp Kawasaki water-cooled gasoline engine or 18-hp Briggs and Stratton Vanguard engine

**Circle 240 on reader service card**

### Echo PB-60HT Backpack Blower

- 58.2cc engine



- Maximum air speed of 195 miles per hour
- Fully adjustable left hip mounted throttle assembly with cruise control
- Padded backrest and adjustable shoulder straps
- Weighs 22½ pounds
- one-year warrantee

**Circle 241 on reader service card**


### Landscaping Forms from NEBS

- Variety of forms designed for landscaping work
- Proposals forms
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- Landscaping work order/invoice forms
- Lawn maintenance invoices

**Circle 242 on reader service card**

### Monterey Perennial Ryegrass from Jacklin Seed

- Top 15 performer in 1994 NTEP trial
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- Endophyte enhancement content more than 90 percent
- Works well alone or in a variety blend

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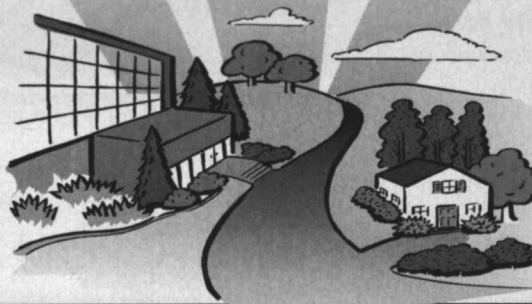
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## AVOID TROUBLE WITH SPRINGTIME STARTUPS

WITH SPRINGTIME on the not-too-distant horizon, it's time for contractors to start thinking about preparing for another season.

Included among those preparations will be bringing irrigation systems back out of their hibernation and making sure they are operating efficiently when it's time to put them to work. This is particularly important for those systems that were properly winterized and had all remaining water cleaned out of them.

**SPRING SHOWERS.** Contractors and manufacturers agree that starting systems back up in the spring isn't as complicated as shutting them down for winter in the fall season. However, that perceived simplicity can actually make startups much

more dangerous than they need to be.

"A lot of contractors don't pay enough attention when they're turning irrigation systems back on in the spring," related Larry Keesen, president, Keesen Water Management Inc., Denver, Colo. "This is a busy time of year, so contractors are in a hurry just to get all of the systems on in time so they have water when they need it."

Bryce Kinney, irrigation supervisor, H&R Lawn and Landscape, Stillwell, Kan., recognized that irrigation system startup is a deadline driven process, which forces him to schedule these jobs effectively, starting well ahead of time.

"We start with our commercial properties because we have more freedom in terms of when we start getting these systems ready," Kinney related, adding that some large commercial systems take two



**Some contractors recommend starting the spring by starting up more demanding commercial systems.**

crewmembers an entire day to start up. Residential systems, meanwhile, can be prepared at the rate of approximately eight to 10 systems per day for each crew member.

"The most difficult part of the whole process is when we take on a new system and we have to identify any problems with it and figure out the layout," Kinney added.

**SELLING THE SERVICE.** For some contractors, the winter weather isn't severe enough to warrant shutting the systems down entirely. This is the case

for Cupertino, Calif.-based Jensen Landscape Services.

Just because the systems aren't shut down doesn't mean this can't be a profitable time. "We use the winter as an opportunity to perform system run-throughs and basic preventive maintenance that is difficult to schedule during the season," noted John Ossa, irrigation superintendent.

Contractors who install irrigation systems but don't include at least one year's winter shutdown and spring startup along with the service are asking for trouble, warned Ron Tatton, Erickson Landscaping, Salt Lake City, Utah.

"What scares us is having someone else start up a system that we just installed and is still under our warranty," he admitted. "Some people turn those systems on too fast, and all of that air pressure on the sprinkler heads can just blow things apart."

Kinney said H&R Lawn and Landscape includes one system shutdown and one start up because of the warranty it offers covering the installation. "In addition, we put a disclaimer in the contract saying that our warranty is nullified if someone other than us services the system within the warranty period."

— Bob West

## Making a List

The following procedures should always be considered as part of the process of reactivating a sprinkler system that has been shut down for a winter season:

1. Before turning on any water to the system, make sure all manual drain valves are returned to the "closed" positions.
2. Open the system main water valve slowly to allow pipes to fill with water gradually.
3. Verify the proper operation of each zone valve by manually activating it from the controller.

4. Walk through each station on the controller, checking for proper operation of the zone. Check for proper operating pressure (low pressure indicates a line break or missing sprinkler), proper rotation and adjustment of sprinkler heads, and adequate coverage. Check and clean the filters on poorly performing sprinklers.

5. Reprogram the controller for automatic water. Replace the controller back-up battery if necessary.

6. Uncover and clean the system rain sensor, if applicable.

7. Flush and clean any in-line filters for drip irrigation zones.

*Information courtesy of Hunter Industries, San Marcos, Calif.*



(continued from page 96)

Heroman Services has encountered exterior contractors targeting interior jobs, but only in select cases. "For example, we're currently bidding on a large interior job with some exterior contractors who were attracted by the dollar volume during a slower time of year for them," Heroman noted. "They plan on figuring out how to actually do the job only if they get the contract."

Balint cautioned that any company just entering the interior landscape industry or planning for considerable growth must have clear plans for how to accomplish this.

"Interior landscape companies have to have a specific market niche they want to go after, especially if they're just starting out," she noted. "Plus, the interior market can be very price sensitive, so companies need to have a solid understanding of what they need to earn to survive."

Raimondi even noted that some interior companies have found success offering exte-

rior landscape construction and/or maintenance services. "I see us going more and more toward the exterior services with the goal of being a full-service horticultural company," he explained. "We're not necessarily looking for new customers by doing this, but we're looking to expand our utilization of our current customers."

**MARKETING MADNESS.** The future certainly looks bright for interior landscape contractors, but those interviewed for this article noted that contractors should not count on the strength of the economy alone to provide continued growth.

Many contractors predicted that the companies that can best utilize research and marketing packages touting the benefits of live plant materials inside buildings will have the brightest futures.

"We have to be able to show the customers that the money they spend on the landscaping and our interior service contributes

to their bottom line through productivity," Balint stressed. "We have to back this up with proven research so it's not just a sales pitch."

"Building managers are becoming very astute on issues relating to productivity," Raimondi agreed. "We need to use the clean air marketing package and other research to our advantage with pieces like the report on plants' effects eliminating particulate matter on horizontal surfaces."

Balint said she sees signs of progress that indicate contractors are successfully getting this message across to customers. "I've seen a change in the way designers perceive plants. They're seeing them as more of a design element," she noted. "I think this is from all of us making a grassroots effort I talking to more allied disciplines like architects, specifiers, designers, and facility managers." **U**

*The author is Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.*

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## MAINTENANCE SUPERVISOR

We are seeking an aggressive, customer oriented, self-starter to supervise our commercial maintenance accounts. The right individual should be able to deal with clients that expect a high amount of service and quality. If you meet these requirements, send your resume to: Operations Manager, Stan's Landscaping, Inc., 16464 West 143rd Street, Lockport, IL 60441.

## EXCITING CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR VEGETATION MANAGERS

Rapidly growing Vegetation Management Company is looking for experienced Division Managers to work out of our regional and branch locations throughout the U.S. Must have a minimum of two (2) years experience in Vegetation Management and/or a degree in horticulture/arboriculture/urban forestry or related field. Must be self-motivated, decisive, creative and have strong organizational skills.

WE OFFER: - Excellent starting salary  
- Company paid health insurance  
- Excellent working environment  
- Bonuses  
- Vacations  
- 401k Program

For career opportunity and confidential consideration, send or fax resume, including geographic preferences and willingness to relocate to:

DeANGELO BROTHERS, INC.

Attention: Paul D. DeAngelo

100 North Conahan Drive

Hazleton, PA 18201

Phone: 800/360-9333

Fax: 717/459-5500

EOE/AAP/M-F

## NEED GOOD EMPLOYEES? JOB HUNTING?

Need Good Employees? - advertise your openings, using Ferrell's *Jobs in Horticulture*, to cost-effectively connect with more than 2,000 readers and find qualified employees. *Job Hunting?* - find employment in the Green Industries with the twice-a-month newspaper that lists more than 200 positions and internships available nationally - NOW! 6 issues (3 months): \$24.95. Free "position wanted" ad for 6 & 12 month subscribers. Student rates available. MC/VISA accepted. Call: 800/428-2474 today! Visit our web site: [www.hortjobs.com](http://www.hortjobs.com)

## MIDWEST BRANCH MANAGERS

Kapp's Lawn Specialists is one of the fastest growing chemical lawn care companies in the Midwest. Our managers receive generous salaries and benefits, new personal vehicles, and a nice chunk of the annual profits! We are the leading lawn care company in some major cities! We have been in business for over 30 years. Join a fast growing company that *really cares* about its employees. Our managers packages average \$75k per year. Applicants must have branch manager experience and must be able to relocate. Send or fax resume to: Kapp's Lawn Specialists, Michael Markovich, 4124 Clubview Dr., Fort Wayne, IN 46804, Fax: 219/432-7892.

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

GreenSearch - Attention employers... can't find good managers and supervisors? Or maybe you're a job seeker looking for a new opportunity? We can help you! Serving all Green Industry company categories throughout the Southeast U.S. Candidates pay no fees. Call GreenSearch toll-free at 888/375-7787, Fax 770/392-1772. GreenSearch, 6690 Roswell Road, #310-157, Atlanta, Georgia 30328-3161. Web site: [www.greensearch.com](http://www.greensearch.com)

## BRANCH MANAGER "TRAINEE"

Are you branch manager material? But too inexperienced to be considered by a major chemical lawn care company. Kapp's Lawn Specialists has a short term training program. We are in several cities in the Midwest. Our training packages average \$35k per year and our branch managers packages average \$75k per year. Applicants should have assistant manager experience. Join a rapidly growing company that *really cares* about its employees. Send or fax resume to: Kapp's Lawn Specialists, Michael Markovich, 4124 Clubview Dr., Fort Wayne, IN 46804, Fax: 219/432-7892.

## LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS MANAGER

Expanding company, full service firm, headquarters 30 miles north of Boston in Georgetown, MA. Preferred candidates would have a minimum of 5 years management experience in the maintenance of commercial and single family developments. Responsibilities include: Client relations, managing, motivating, scheduling, training and staff development, supervise daily operations and quality control. This is an excellent career and earnings opportunity. Send confidential resume with salary requirements and references to: Attention: Manuel DeSouza, N.D. Landscaping, Inc., P.O. Box 114, Topsfield, MA 01983.

## MULTIPLE POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Western States Reclamation, Inc. is one of Denver, Colorado's leading environmental contractors involved in commercial landscaping, irrigation, revegetation and erosion control projects. The following positions are to be filled between January and March.

- **Project Manager:** Must have experience in scheduling, budget control, materials acquisition, and project correspondence. Requires minimum 5 years experience in landscape, irrigation, revegetation and erosion control. Degree in related field preferred.
- **Landscape Superintendent:** Must have up to 5 years of management experience on large commercial projects.
- **Landscape Maintenance Superintendent:** Must have experience with mowing, pruning, fertilization, and irrigation repair on commercial projects.
- **Irrigation Superintendent:** Requires up to 5 years experience with large mainline systems involving wiring, valves, clocks, layout, etc.
- **Reclamation Foreman:** Individual with experience in revegetation and erosion control projects. Must have 5 years experience with farm and heavy equipment.

- **Estimator:** Must have experience on large commercial landscaping projects up to \$3 mil/contract. Must be good with math, skilled in Lotus 1-2-3 and able to do digitizing and data entry. Position requires degree in landscape architecture, engineering construction or related field. Senior and entry level positions available.

We offer excellent benefits and profit sharing. Please send your resume with salary history to WSRI, 11730 Wadsworth Blvd., Broomfield, CO 80020 or fax to 303/465-2478. EOE by choice.

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## IRRIGATION MANAGER

Irrigation Manager needed for installations, repairs and service. Applicant must be experienced in all aspects of irrigation; year round employment, 401k, medical, dental and paid vacation. Bridgehampton, NY. Call Mike at Marders Nursery: 516/537-3700, or fax resume: 516/537-7023.

## ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

Assistant Professor, Environmental Horticultural Science Department. Full-time teaching position, tenure-track, academic year appointment. Develop and direct a turf management program, teach undergraduate classes, advise students, supervise enterprise and senior projects, and establish applied research activities in related areas. Specific courses to be taught will include beginning and advanced turf management, and may include landscape/floral design fundamental courses or other lower division horticultural fundamental courses. Salary commensurate with qualifications and experience. Preferred starting date: Fall 1998. Minimum qualifications: Ph.D. in Horticultural Science or closely related field; a demonstrated commitment to and involvement with the science and practice of ornamental horticulture; strong undergraduate teaching skills and academic background; and experience in turfgrass management. Additional experience in landscape design and landscape horticulture is highly desirable. To obtain an official application, send a resume and names of three references to Virginia R. Walter, Department Head, Environmental Horticultural Science Department, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA 93407; 805/756-2279, FAX 805/756-2869; vwalter@calpoly.edu (Refer to Recruitment Code 83045). Closing date: May 1, 1998. Cal Poly is strongly committed to achieving excellence through cultural diversity. The university actively encourages applications and nominations of women, persons of color, applicants with disabilities, and members of other underrepresented groups. AA/EEO.

## SOD FARM MANAGER

For farm located in Southwest Ohio. Turf and leadership experience required. Compensation includes good salary, medical, dental, retirement, house and bonus. Please fax resume and salary requirements to Mike Ward at 513/683-2128.

## LANDSCAPE DIVISION MANAGER

Well established full service, high end commercial/residential firm located in southern West Virginia has an immediate opening for a self-motivated, detail-oriented person with clear communication skills. Successful candidate must have proven leadership skills, ability to manage all facets of daily landscape operations and installations. Capable of supervising multiple crews, job estimating and sales. Generous compensation package and great working environment. Excellent career opportunity. Starting salary \$35k to \$42k with performance bonus plan. For confidential consideration, please send resume to:

### ASPEN CORPORATION

P.O. BOX 173  
DANIELS, WV 25832  
Or CALL 304-763-4573. FAX 304-763-4591

## LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT WANTED

Large Midwestern landscaping contractor looking for a customer oriented landscape architect to add to our staff. Individual must be willing to design, sell, and work in a fast paced environment. Our company has been providing professional landscape services in the Chicagoland community since 1956. We are offering the right individual a full benefits/salary package. Please send resume and salary requirements to: Operations Manager, Stan's Landscaping, Inc., 16464 West 143rd Street, Lockport, IL 60441.

## GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

### GROUNDS MAINTENANCE – SITE MANAGERS:

Davey Commercial Grounds Management, a division of The Davey Tree Expert Company – has a variety of career opportunities for experienced landscape/grounds maintenance professionals. Responsibilities include staffing and coordination of large on-site landscape maintenance projects. Qualifications: 5+ years field experience with solid horticultural skills in turf, ornamental and annual plant maintenance, personnel management, job scheduling and estimating. Top-rated candidates will be good communicators, organized, motivated, bilingual, customer-focused and understand an income statement. Excellent salary and benefit package available.

Send your resume to: "Davey – Grounds Management Opportunities: at 1500 N. Mantua St., Kent, OH 44240 or fax to: 330-673-5406.



## LANDSCAPE INSTALLATION FOREMAN

Carroll County Landscape is looking for an experienced foreman. Skills should include training, communicating and working well with crew members. Salary commensurate with experience. Benefits include profit sharing and continued education. Send resume to: P.O. Box 237, Wolfeboro Falls, NH 03896 or fax 603/569-2013.

## LANDSCAPE OPPORTUNITIES

Our continued growth has us searching for top quality people to join our team in the following positions:

- Landscape Maintenance Manager
- Landscape Designer
- Customer Service Manager
- Landscape Foreman
- Commercial Landscape Estimator

Self-motivation and experience required. Please fax or mail resume with recent salary history to:

LAKEVIEW LAWN & LANDSCAPE  
4477 County Road 1  
Canandaigua, New York 14424  
Phone: 716/394-6701  
Fax: 716/394-0962

## POSITIONS AVAILABLE:



Minor's Landscape Services, one of America's leading landscape companies is seeking talented individuals to join our growing firm. We are a full service landscape management company with opportunities in a variety of disciplines including maintenance, design, installation, irrigation and chemical application. We desire candidates for the following positions.

- Landscape foremen (Management & Installation)
- Landscape technicians (Irrigation & Chemical)
- Trainees for all positions

We offer state of the industry compensation packages including excellent salaries, benefits and possibilities for advancement. Please send your resume, or call:

Minor's Landscape Services, Inc.  
2550 Berner Street  
Ft. Worth, Tx. 76111  
(817) 740-9792

## STATEN ISLAND, NY EMPLOYMENT LANDSCAPE OPPORTUNITIES

Twin Industries, landscape design-build firm located in Staten Island, New York, seeks the following positions:

- Landscape Maintenance Manager  
Must have current NYS or NJ Pesticide License
- Operations Manager
- Purchasing Agent
- Irrigation Manager  
Design and supervise installations

All applicants must have a minimum of 5 years experience with references. Salary and benefits based on knowledge and experience. Please mail resume with salary requirements to: Twin Industries, 113 Ellis Street, Staten Island, NY 10307, Attn: William J. McDaid.

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[www.christmas-decor.com](http://www.christmas-decor.com)

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*The Complete Irrigation Workbook*, by Larry Keesen, offers a comprehensive look at irrigation design, installation, maintenance and water management including practical hands-on techniques. Each chapter contains questions and answers which can be used to test your own knowledge or as inhouse training tools for new and seasoned employees. Appendix includes detailed drawings of irrigation installations. Order yours today for \$24 per copy plus \$2.50 shipping and handling. Quantity discounts available. Call Fran Franzak, 800/456-0707.

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*We regret any omission.*

*\*Denotes regional advertising.*





In the ever-changing world of business and industry, one thing remains the same. Dodge is dedicated to people who are dedicated to their work.

For evidence look no further than our On The Job program, which gives qualified businesses commercial breaks, so to speak.

The program includes a new flexible financing and leasing

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# ON THE JOB

extended 100,000-mile/5-year Powertrain Care Plus<sup>SM</sup> service contract with Road Hazard Tire Coverage,\* or up to \$500 cash back.<sup>†</sup> And all that's over and above any national consumer incentives.



# An important commercial message from The New Dodge



What makes our On The Job program truly outstanding, however, are the capable commercial Dodge trucks it covers. The newly redesigned Dodge Ram Vans and Wagons, with more available Magnum<sup>®</sup> power, more safety features, and three different body lengths to choose from. Dodge



Ram Pickup,<sup>††</sup> available with an improved Cummins Turbo Diesel. And of course, Dodge Dakota,<sup>††</sup> the only pickup in its class with an available V-8. Whatever your next commercial venture, Dodge has an excellent way to help you sponsor it.

\*Service contract not available in AL, FL, MS, OK or UT. No refund if canceled. Some vehicles ineligible. There is a \$100 deductible for each covered repair visit. Tire coverage covers only complete or pro-rated replacement for original four tires, excluding spare. See plan copy and full details at dealer. <sup>†</sup>\$300-\$500 cash back, depending on model. <sup>††</sup>Select models only.

Always use seat belts. Remember a backseat is the safest place for children.



## The New Dodge

For still more hardworking info, call 1-800-WORK RAM. Or stop by our Web site: [www.4adodge.com](http://www.4adodge.com)



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Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Delivery Address for UPS \_\_\_\_\_

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City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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Position \_\_\_\_\_

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