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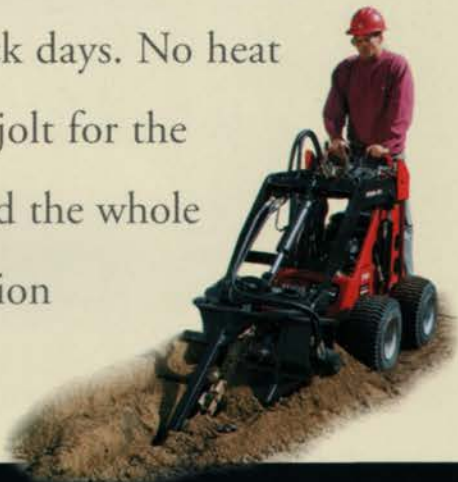


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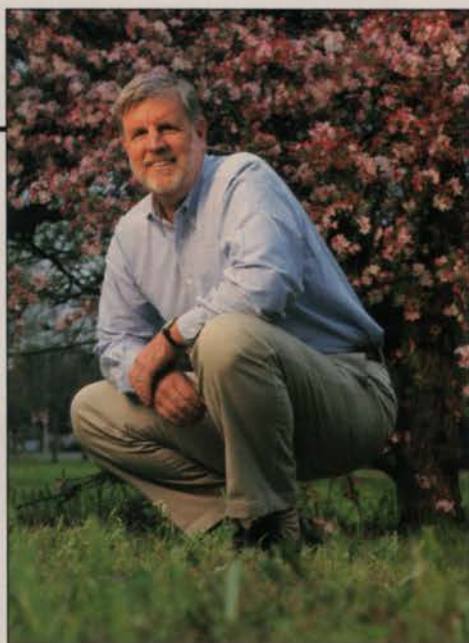
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Cover photo

by Sue Tallon
San Francisco, Calif.



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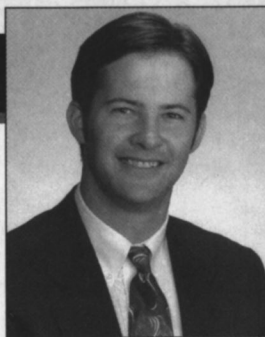
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Bob West
Editor

H

ow important has networking been to the development of your business? If you're a contractor whose business is well established as a successful organization, then it's likely you've reached that position in part because of ideas "borrowed" from other contractors.

If you're just getting your feet wet in the industry, then it's just as likely that you find yourself looking for any opportunity to learn from the experiences of others who have gone down the same road of business growth before you.


Such sharing of information among contractors is commonplace among green industry contractors, and, I suspect, it is one reason for the widespread, rapid growth of professionalism and profitability within the industry over the last decade. Granted, a bullish economy like we've enjoyed can make business easier, but it doesn't carry any guarantees with it.

What makes this networking even more interesting to observe is that it often occurs between companies that can find themselves in competition with one another at times. While some people may be somewhat reticent to swap tricks of the trade with another player in their market, I would argue that this may actually be the most effective type of networking that takes place.

Yes, sharing an idea with a competitor could make them a better company and make business more difficult for your own organization. So what do you do? There's two choices - do nothing and let that company improve itself more rapidly than your company does, or force yourself to generate new, even better ideas or business practices.

Many of our readers commented to us that they were surprised to see how forthcoming Environmental Care was about its business strategies in the December issue of *Lawn & Landscape*. The company showed little hesitation sharing such ideas. Instead, it was happy to share information that could be used by other companies to improve their businesses, thereby bettering the industry as a whole. Plus, as one ECI manager pointed out, "Just because someone knows how we do something doesn't mean they can necessarily do it or do it better."

Should a competitor of ECI's improve upon an idea ECI initially developed, that would challenge ECI to find an even better solution for that particular problem. How can that be bad for business?

On a sidenote, I'm a big fan of quotations that capture particularly insightful business philosophies in a few words, such as the one from Henry Ford above. In the coming months, look for more that I come across, and feel free to send any personal favorites along by calling 800/456-0707 or e-mailing bwest@gie.net. 

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Lawn & Landscape

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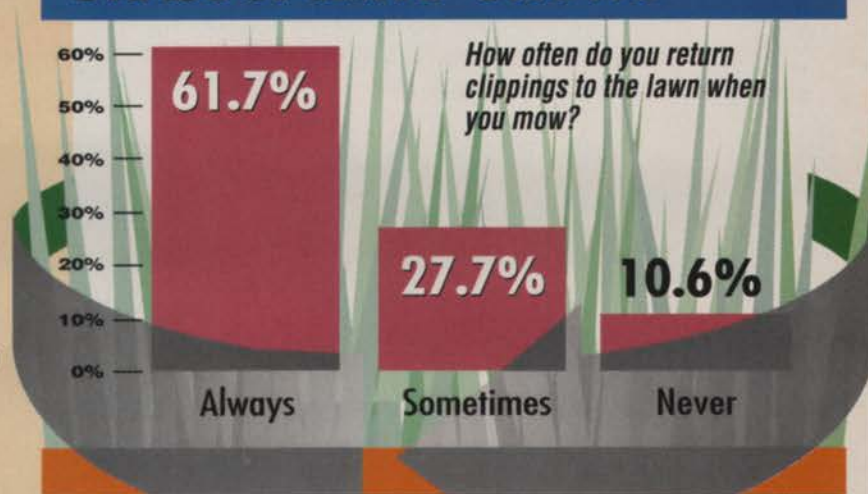
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MANY HAPPY RETURNS

Whether for convenience, productivity or a sense of environmental responsibility, a majority of landscape maintenance contractors who mow turf say that they return clippings to the turf when they mow. A recent reader survey of the readers of *T&O Service Tech* magazine, *Lawn & Landscape's* sister publication, revealed that nearly 90 percent of lawn maintenance contractors leave clippings at least some of the time, and nearly two-thirds indicated that they always return clippings. Reasons given for this trend by respondents included the cost of disposal, reduced time on the site and a reduced need for fertilizer.

GRASSCYCLING GROWS



(Credit: T&O Reader Poll)

BOLUSKY TAPPED TO HEAD FNGA

WASHINGTON, D. C. — The American Nursery & Landscape Association put out the Help Wanted sign last month, but it won't be easy to find someone who can fill the shoes of its departing director of government affairs, Ben Bolusky.

After 12 years in that position, Bolusky has been chosen to fill the executive vice president position with the Florida Nursery & Growers Association, based in Orlando.

"Everyone here (at ANLA) has been very supportive," said Bolusky, "and it's an excellent opportunity to continue working in an industry I truly admire and enjoy."



Ben Bolusky

Bolusky was expected to stay with the ANLA through the end of April and start his new position May 15, working with outgoing Executive Vice President Earl Wells until he assumes the position full time on July 10. Wells will be retiring after serving the FNGA for 13 years.

"Ben met all of the criteria we set forth in our search for an executive vice president," said George Finora, president, FNGA. "With his association experience and familiarity with regulatory and legislative issues, Ben was the best person for this position."

"Ben has been a highly valuable member of the staff for 12 years," said Robert Dolibois, executive vice president of ANLA, "and this is a

great opportunity for him. The FNGA maintains a significant legislative presence here in Washington, so we'll still be in contact with him and he'll still be involved in the industry and the organization.

"He always did an outstanding job of building relationships

'It's an excellent opportunity to continue working in an industry that I truly admire and enjoy.'

— Ben Bolusky

for the organization," Dolibois continued. "I will miss his very positive and optimistic personality — the cup was always at least half-full from his perspective, and you need someone like that in an organization."

Dolibois said that the search for a replacement will not be limited to green indus-

try experienced candidates. The election year will generate a number of legislatively savvy individuals who leave campaigns early or become available as candidates bow out of races in the spring and summer.

The timing of the move is also ideal, as the 105th Congress winds down legislative activities and its members prepare for campaigning. "We'll continue to step up pressure on Congress over the guest-worker bill, but at this juncture we don't expect there will be any

major legislative issues that will arise in the next three months," explained Dolibois. "We anticipate that by the time the new congress reconvenes we will have a successor that will be competent and up to speed to succeed Ben." — Paul Schrimpf

(continued on page 10)



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MARKET TRENDS

(continued from page 6)

ANDERSON OUT AT RENTOKIL

RIVERWOODS, Ill. — Although details are unknown, Rentokil Environmental Services has confirmed that Terry Anderson, who had been president of the \$88-million interior plantscaping since August 1996, is no longer with the company.

Dick Cottrill, Rentokil's area managing director of the United States, refused to comment other than to confirm that Anderson is no longer with the company. Cottrill will serve as acting president until a replacement is hired.

PEOPLE

The Scotts Company named **Dan Paradiso** director of marketing for the professional turf division. Scotts also named **Wayne Horman** marketing manager of seed and fertilizers, **Mike Bandy** as marketing manager of control products and **Nikie Schooley** as market coordinator.

Riverdale Chemical Company hired **Curtis Clark** as marketing manager.

Steve Busash joined Americalist Lawn Care in the marketing division.

Stano Landscaping appointed **Mitchell Rolsky** vice president of operations.

Eugene Kosack joined Landscapers Supply as executive vice president sales, marketing and business development.

Yanmar Diesel American hired **Steve Bindl** as sales engineer.

Deborah Ellman was named director of public relations for LasTec.



Curtis Clark



Dan Paradiso

TURFGRASS BOOK IN THE WORKS

ATHENS, Ga. — Keith Karnok, professor, depart-

ment of crop and soil sciences, University of Georgia, is preparing a book that will describe all turfgrass cultivars that have ever been commercially available in the U.S. The book will include general

species information such as adaptation, use, management and data from the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program. For more information, call 706/542-0931.

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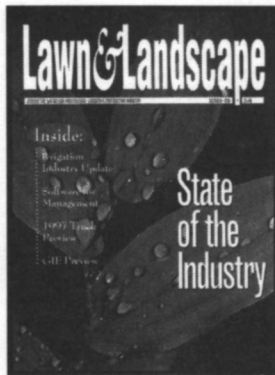
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(continued from page 13)

TANAKA ENGINES CLEAR CARB TIER II HURDLE

KENT, Wash. – The hand-held equipment maker Tanaka is the first manufacturer to receive certification for a two-cycle engine under the California Air Resources Board's Tier II emissions rules. Called the PureFire, the engine incorporates internal modifications and a type of catalytic muffler to achieve the reduced level of emissions.

Jim Elmer, Tanaka spokesperson, said that the new engine will go into production this summer and will debut at EXPO '98 in Louisville, Ky.

(continued on page 16)

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.

MAY 29-31 The 8th Annual Business Christmas Decorating Seminar, Pittsburgh. Contact: 412/281-6352.

JUNE 4 Tree Health Care Seminar, Memphis, Tenn. Contact: 205/348-3001.

JUNE 4-7 Florida Nurserymen and Growers Association Annual Meeting and Convention, Palm Beach. Contact: 800/375-3642.

JUNE 15-16 Environmental Horticulture Integrated Pest Management Conference, San Luis Obispo, Calif. Contact: 805/756-2830.

JUNE 18-21 Outdoor Power Equipment Institute's Annual Meeting, Colorado Springs, Colo. Contact: 703/549-7600.

JUNE 25 Selecting, Planting and Maintaining Urban Trees, Riverside, Calif. Contact: 909/787-5804, ext. 1621.

JULY 8-9 Understanding Modern Arboriculture, Portsmouth, N.H. Contact: 603/436-4804.

JULY 8-9 Pennsylvania Landscape & Nursery Association Central Pesticide Institute, New Cumberland. Contact: 717/238-1673.

JULY 16-18 Turfgrass Producers International convention & field day, Tysons Corner, Va. Contact: 847/705-9898.

JULY 20-21 PLCAA Legislative Day on the Hill, Washington, D.C. Contact: 800/458-3466.

JULY 25-27 International Lawn, Garden & Outdoor Power Equipment Expo, Louisville. Contact: 800/588-8767.

JULY 28-30 Penn Allied Nursery Trade Show, Fort Washington, Pa. Contact: 717/238-1673.

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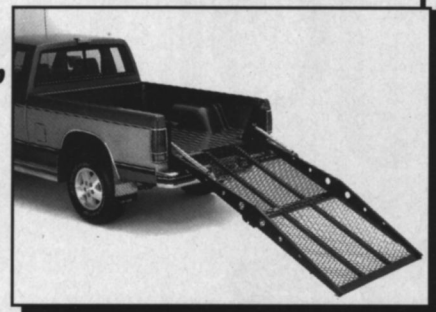
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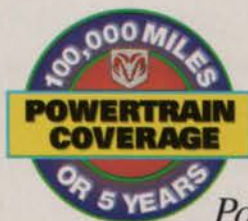
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USE READER SERVICE #15

MARKET TRENDS

(continued from page 13)

ASSOCIATION NEWS

Associated Landscape Contractors of America is accepting nominations for three awards programs. The ALCA Landscape Contribution Award honors corporations or developers for creating landscape awareness through a dedication to high standards of excellence in their interior and/or exterior space. Deadline is July 1.

ALCA is also accepting entries for its interior and exterior Environmental Improvement Awards program, recognizing contractors and clients for their commitment to creating landscapes and beautifying the environment. Deadlines are August 17 for exterior project entries, and September 21 for interior entries.

For more information, contact 410/796-0040.

The Professional Lawn Care Association of America introduced the Expertise Exchange Program, which allows members to contact industry leaders to get help with some of their most difficult business management problems. For more information, call 800/458-3466.

The American Nursery & Landscape Association announced the election of Richard Gooding as president of the National Landscape Association, the landscape division of the ANLA. Kent Gordon England joined the leadership of the NLA as Region VI director.

The American Society of Landscape Architects formed ASLA Press, an in-house publishing operation. Publications will be information-based products and services to assist landscape architects in their roles as land planners, designers, teachers, managers and business owners. The first publication by ASLA Press is the Business Indicator Survey-The Map of the Territory.

The Pennsylvania Landscape & Nursery Association's 1998 Guide to Pennsylvania Nursery Stock is now available. An on-line version can be accessed at www.plnanurserystock.com. To receive a copy of the guide, call 717/238-1673 or e-mail the request to plna@plna.com.

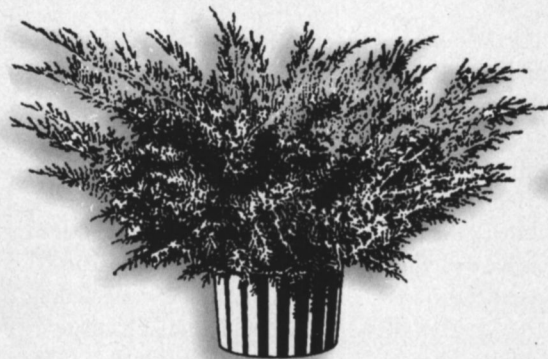
The Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council is accepting nominations for its Distinguished Service Award, presented to one individual that has exhibited outstanding service and commitment to the turf industry. The deadline for nominations is August 1. For more information, call 814/863-3475.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The name of Chris Loman, Autodesk, was misspelled in the April article, "Plugging in to Automation."

The photos accompanying the April article, "Light Up Your Night," were courtesy of Lumiere Design.

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USE READER SERVICE #26

EXTENSION AGENT WEATHER REPORTS

MAKING predictions about the potential effects that past weather can have on future pest and disease activity can be an elusive proposition for university research and extension people who regularly discuss these issues with lawn and landscape professionals and the public. Weather can turn on a dime, and the activity of damaging pests and diseases can confound even the most experienced people in the field.

"We can usually get an idea as to whether the insects will be out earlier in any given year, but in terms of abundance, we really have a hard time making any predictions," noted Dan Potter, professor of entomology, University of Kentucky, Lexington.

Still, *Lawn & Landscape* asked some of these respected individuals to offer their best predictions about what might happen in the future. This article reviews some of the points they made.

EL NINO EFFECT. For much of the country, the El Nino weather pattern that ruled the air this winter brought milder than normal temperatures. Rick Brandenburg, entomologist, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, said that the warmer temperatures could generate greater populations of insects.

"We've certainly had good weather for overwintering," noted Brandenburg, who added that mild temperatures combined with rainy weather in many areas of the Southeast

could result in very high populations of fire ants in urban areas. He tempered the prediction by also mentioning that the positive environmental conditions "also hold true for the natural enemies as well as the pests."

What the mild winter will do to the populations of other insects remains to be seen. David Shetlar, entomologist, The Ohio State University, Columbus, said that different species of insects have varying degrees of tolerance for winter conditions.

Grubs, for instance, may come up to the surface during extended periods of warm weather to begin feeding. If the temperatures take a sudden dive, the grub may not have enough energy reserves left to tolerate the cold snap. In addition, grubs develop a natural "antifreeze," according to Shetlar, that keeps their body fluids from forming fatal crystals that can kill the insect. When the weather warms, their bodies convert the fluid back into sugars, leaving them vulnerable to crystalizing.

"Have we had enough warm weather to cause insects to break dormancy and eliminate their antifreeze? Have the grubs expended too much en-

ergy? I certainly don't know for sure, and only time will tell," said Shetlar.

TREE TALK. Because trees often don't reveal the effects of environmental stress for months or even years after their occurrences, making any predictions that should raise immediate concerns is difficult. Bob Olive, superintendent at Auburn University's Mobile, Ala., experiment station, noted one thing to look for. In his area, there was a lack of rain during the fall as deciduous trees went into dormancy. "We may see some stress symptoms, such as some unusual dieback, during the spring," he said.

In areas where flooding rains occurred, trees can be damaged at the roots as the water robs them of oxygen. Another factor at work according to Jeff Iles, assistant professor of horticulture, Iowa State University, Ames, is the tree's response to flood stress. Trees in this environment will release carbohydrates and sugars,

which "seem to act as an attractant to problem pests," he said.

In these cases, it can be difficult to get the tree to recover. Iles suggested applying a low nitrogen fertilizer, aerating the soil and mulching in the root zone. Also, don't forget to water during extended dry periods to help the tree regenerate roots and recover, he noted.

The warmer winter may have one other tree effect – an increased incidence of disease. Jean Woodward, extension plant pathologist – ornamentals, University of Georgia, Athens, explained that the early leafing combined with a wet, cool spring could give diseases a jump start on the season.

THE WEEDS. University researchers indicated that the timing of the emergence of weeds seems to be pretty close to on schedule, although it appeared earlier in the season that crabgrass could emerge as early as two weeks before the average.

Fred Yelverton, professor of weed science at North Carolina State University, said that the warmer than normal winter kicked emergence in early but that a cold snap that struck the country in March acted to reset the clock. "Weed emergence is essentially back on schedule," he said. — Paul Schrimpf



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LANDCARE USA RELEASES PROSPECTUS

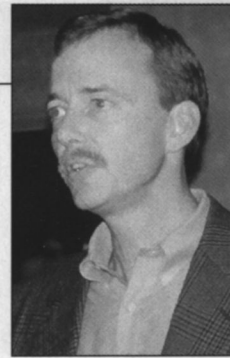
HOUSTON, TEXAS – LandCare USA has taken the next step in its grand plan to develop a publicly traded national landscape firm, while the rest of the industry continues to react to the development of this organization composed of: Arteka Corp., Eden Prairie, Minn.; D.R. Church Landscape Co., Inc., Lombard, Ill.; Southern Tree & Landscape Companies, Charlotte, N.C.; Ground Control Landscape, Inc., Orlando, Fla.; Trees Inc., Houston, Texas; Desert Care Landscaping, Inc., Phoenix, Ariz.; and Four Sea-

sons Landscape & Maintenance, San Jose, Calif.

The prospectus, a 104-page document obtained by *Lawn & Landscape*, outlines the company's current composition and its plans for growth. Such a document is required to be filed with the Securities Exchange Commission in order for a company to issue public stock. While the document provides a clearer picture of the group, company executives are still limited in their ability to comment on certain



Linda Bengte



Hal Cranston

that will merge to form LandCare USA completed 1997 with combined revenues of more than \$118 million, gross profits of more than \$25 million and net income of \$5.8 million.

• From 1995 to 1997, the seven merging companies' combined revenues increased at a compound annual growth rate of approximately 10 percent.

• LandCare USA will pay the owners of the seven companies a combined total of \$27.2 million in cash and 5,162,645 shares of common stock to acquire their companies. (These shares are sepa-

(continued on page 25)

specifics before the stock offering occurs, which is scheduled for the middle of May (under the symbol GRW on the New York Stock Exchange).

Following are some highlights of the prospectus:

- The company plans to offer 5,000,000 shares of common stock at a price between \$10 and \$12.
- The seven companies

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Yet nowhere in this emerging scenario is there a place for old fashioned high dose chemicals. Their day has come. And gone.

So where, exactly, does this leave you, your customers and your business?

One thing's sure. The damage that insect pests do to your customer's lawns and flower beds isn't about to stop.

And although your customers will, increasingly, want to be reassured that the insecticides you are using are not the old fashioned, high dose varieties they read and hear about in the news, they'll still want to minimize insect damage in their particular yard or garden.

Any successor to yesterday's insecticides must therefore reconcile the twin vital goals of effectiveness and low dosage.

Meanwhile, with current legislative trends and other recent fast moving developments, it's high time for a low dose alternative.

Now.

The pyrethroid alternative.



The obvious alternatives to current high dose insecticides are pyrethroids. These are synthetic versions of naturally occurring insecticides found in members of the chrysanthemum family, and were

industrially synthesized by AgrEvo group companies many years ago. They offer a number of advantages, including low dosage, low environmental impact and very high effectiveness (after all, in their original form they're nature's first choice against insect pests).

As pioneers in this field, we have developed some of the most successful and widely used pyrethroids, including the most potent pyrethroid of all. The one that sets the world standard, the one we believe is the only practical successor to today's high dose formulations. The one called deltamethrin.

The king of pyrethroids.

For many years, deltamethrin has been the broad spectrum pyrethroid insecticide of choice everywhere in the world except the United States (because of patent restrictions). It combines a unique list of advantages, including very low dosages, high effectiveness and no odor.

More than 70 million acres cultivated in over 100 countries are now protected by products containing deltamethrin. Not to mention millions upon millions of homes, business institutions and public buildings.

Now it's approved for use here in the United States. And we've launched it under the brand name DeltaGard™ to help make it as overwhelmingly successful in Paris, Texas as it is in Paris, France.

In fact, thanks to an exceptionally broad spectrum of insect activity, we predict that DeltaGard will soon become everyone's

favorite insecticide.

Yours, as well as your customers.

A very active advantage.

Unlike other pyrethroids, DeltaGard consists of a single active isomer (isomers are molecules which have the same chemical composition but different structures in space). Of the 8 possible isomers given by nature to deltamethrin, AgrEvo chemists were able to isolate and industrially produce the one with the highest insecticide power. This unique feature makes DeltaGard the world's most potent pyrethroid.



Result? DeltaGard is effective at extremely low rates (0.06 to 0.13 lbs./AI/acre, depending upon insect targets). This is exactly the kind of product your customers have been asking for, because just a little goes a long, long way. And in test after test, DeltaGard has proved extremely effective against ticks, leaf-feeding caterpillars (armyworms, bagworms, cutworms and gypsy moths), leaf-feeding beetles (elm leaf beetles and Japanese beetles), billbugs, chinch bugs, mole crickets, and a broad spectrum of other surface-feeding insects.

Active Ingredient Comparison

Active Ingredient (AI)	Pounds of AI/A
DeltaGard	0.06 to .13
Dursban	1 to 4
Diazinon	4

DeltaGard Formulations

DeltaGard from AgrEvo is now available in two general purpose formulations to cover all the applications where old fashioned, high dose insecticides were used. In both formulations at labeled use rates, active ingredient concentrations are among the lowest in the world.

DeltaGard™ T&O Granular Insecticide

These are water soluble granules which are many times more effective than current high dose insecticides at controlling a broad spectrum of perimeter pests. Yet you'll use up to 50 times less active ingredient than traditional formulations.

DeltaGard™ T&O 5 SC Insecticide

An ultra low dose, exceptionally broad spectrum DeltaGard liquid suspension concentrate spray which leaves no odor. A true 'general purpose' insecticide, labeled for use on turfgrass and ornamentals.



Field trial: Chewing Insects - Billbugs (New Mexico)

Active Ingredient	Pounds per 1000 Sq. Ft	Percent Control
DeltaGard 0.1G	3	78% after 22 days
Dursban 1G	4.6	0% after 22 days

DeltaGard GC Granular Insecticide provides superior control with 1/10 the active ingredient when compared to Dursban.

Field trial: Sucking Insects - Mealybugs (Nebraska)

Active Ingredient	Pounds per 1000 Sq. Ft	Percent Control
DeltaGard 0.1G	3	97.5% after 37 days
Talstar 0.2G	2.3	56.3% after 37 days

DeltaGard GC Granular Insecticide provides superior control with 2 times less active ingredient when compared to Talstar.

Field trial: Black Cutworm - (Ohio)

Active Ingredient	Pounds of A/A	Percent Control
DeltaGard 5SC	0.04*	100% after 7 days
Dursban 0.5 G	1.1	94% after 7 days

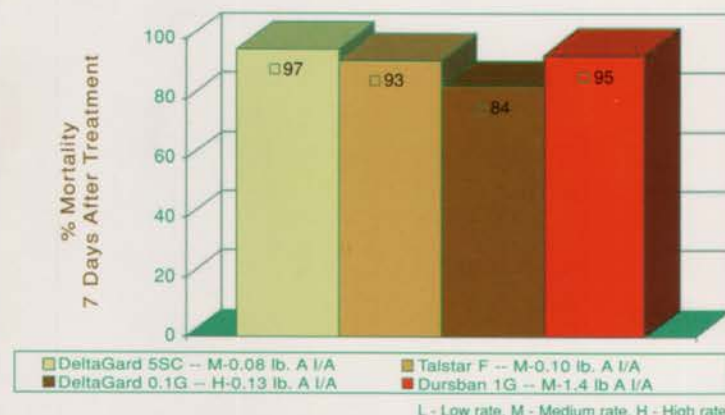
* Below label rate

DeltaGard 5SC provides superior control with less active ingredient and lower rates when compared to Dursban.

How DeltaGard stacks up

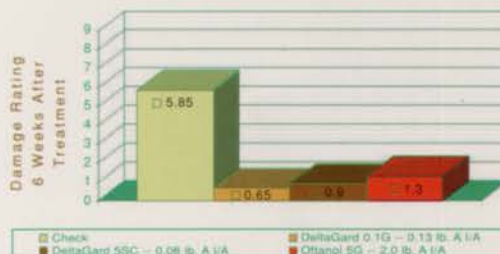
Even at very low application rates, DeltaGard has proved highly effective against a broad spectrum of insects. Here are the results of field tests, demonstrating how a small amount of DeltaGard active ingredient at labeled use rates, is as good or better than large quantities of old fashioned, high dose insecticides.

Hairy Chinch Bugs ■ July, 1995 ■ Athletic field in New Hampshire ■ Dr. S. Swier



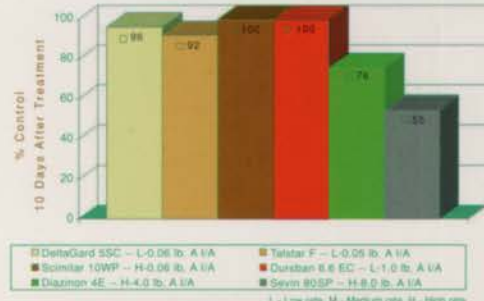
10.8 times more active ingredient in Dursban 1G (chlorpyrifos) required to provide equivalent control as DeltaGard 0.1G

Mole Cricket Nymphs ■ August, 1996 ■ Fox Squirrel Country Club, NC
■ Dr. Rick Brandenburg ■ Surface Application



15 to 25 times more active ingredient in Oflanol 5G (ipofenphos) required to provide less control than DeltaGard 5SC and 0.1G

Fall armyworm larvae ■ October, 1997 ■ Bermudagrass, Dallas, TX ■ Dr. J. Reinert



6 times more active ingredient in Dursban required to provide similar control as DeltaGard, and 133 times more active ingredient in Sevin (carbaryl) required to provide less control than DeltaGard

About AgrEvo.

AgrEvo is a pioneer in the use of environmentally sensitive pest control methods (in fact, it was an AgrEvo group company that first produced deltamethrin in the early 1970s). We're part of one of the world's largest crop production and environmental health organizations, with operations from New York to New Zealand. Right now, AgrEvo group companies are helping protect over 70 million acres of agricultural land - together with tens of millions of homes, offices, businesses and public buildings - in over 100 countries.

Our product line includes a portfolio of specific and general purpose insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides for the professional market. And with our worldwide research and development program, we continue to pioneer the 'less-is-more' approach which has proved so popular among our customers.

About time.

As you can see, DeltaGard is in a unique position to become the natural successor to the older classes of insecticides in all the insecticide applications that make up a large part of the lawn and landscape maintenance business. It's a lot more effective, at significantly lower rates, when used as directed on the label. And it has been proven worldwide for decades.

In this brochure, we've presented you with some positive answers to the high dose insecticide questions that are likely to come with increasing frequency over the coming months. For more information on DeltaGard, please contact your authorized AgrEvo distributor, or call 1-800-843-1702.



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AgrEvo USA Company
2711 Centerville Road
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(continued from page 20)

rate from the 5,000,000 that are to be sold publicly.)

- The public stock offering is expected to ultimately yield approximately \$47.2 million for LandCare USA.

- The company hopes to obtain a bank line of credit of at least \$50 million following the stock offering.

- The company's board of directors will include Pat Norton, former CEO of Barefoot Grass and a one-time candidate for LandCare USA's CEO position.

- The company will operate more than 1,300 vehicles and the merging organizations will bring together more than 2,500 customers.

- The company will look for efficiencies of scale from areas such as equipment purchases and insurance, which represented combined costs of \$5.9 million and \$5 million, respectively, in 1997.

- Trees Inc., the \$50-million tree care company in Houston, will draw the high-

est acquisition price of more than \$11 million in cash and more than 1.8 million shares of stock.

The key to LandCare USA's future will obviously be the success it achieves in enacting its acquisition strategy. "Acquisition targets will have the scale, customer base, expertise and management necessary to be a core business into which the

company can consolidate other acquisitions in that geographic area," read the prospectus, with high population areas such as the Pacific Northwest, Southern California and Northern Virginia being of particular interest. "Special emphasis will

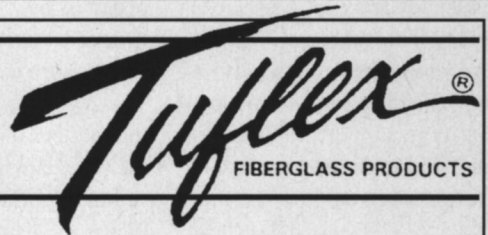
be placed on diversifying the company's operations geographically to serve the needs of large regional and national property owners and managers and to minimize the effect of seasonality in the colder regions served by the Company."

The prospectus also sheds light on the business mix of LandCare USA. Landscape maintenance comprises 75 percent

of its revenues, including Trees Inc.'s \$50 million of tree care and line clearing business. Landscape installation represents the remaining 25 percent. Among the six companies other than Trees Inc., however, landscape maintenance represents approximately 60 percent of the service mix, and growing this number will be one of the company's goals.

'The Company expects to face competition for these acquisition candidates ... that may lead to higher acquisition prices.'

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USE READER SERVICE #19

BREAKING NEWS

LandCare USA recognizes this balance has potential for significant variation. "Trees Inc. derived approximately 96 percent of its revenues from 20 utility customers, three of which accounted for approximately 54 percent of its total revenues," noted the prospectus. LandCare USA hopes to expand Trees through other companies after additional mergers create suitable market density to support the equipment and expertise costs of tree services.

RISK FACTORS. The company also identified what it sees as its primary operating challenges in the future, in a section entitled, "Risk Factors," which is a required part of

any prospectus.

Included among the 22 risks were those related to its acquisition strategy. "The Company expects to face competition for these acquisition candidates, particularly from a few relatively large public or private companies that have begun or may begin to pursue the acquisition of landscape and tree service companies... This competition may limit the number of acquisitions that the Company is able to consummate and may lead to higher acquisition prices."

And smaller contractors concerned about the ability to compete against an organization with such deep pockets may in fact have the upper hand in some situations.

Mergers Seminar Draws the Industry's Big Guns

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The industry's largest players were all in attendance at The Landscape and Lawn Care Industry Mergers and Acquisitions Institute.

TruGreen-ChemLawn, LandCare USA, Environmental Industries, The Brickman Group, Ruppert Landscape Co., ISS and the Davey Tree Expert Co. all had representatives at the two-day event, which presented an overview of the mergers and acquisitions process. In addition, many contractors commented on the number of financial companies in attendance, such as Chase Capital Partners, Butler Capital, and KPMG, indicating interest in the green industry.

The 81 attendees heard presentations on topics such as "What Buyers are Looking For," "Funding and Financing Your Acquisition," and "Structuring and Negotiating the Deal." — *Bob West*

"Some of the Company's competitors may have lower overhead cost structures and could outbid the Company for land-

scape and tree service contracts by offering their services at a lower price than is profitable

(continued on page 28)

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BREAKING NEWS

(continued from page 26)

for the Company," according to the prospectus.

The company spent the weeks leading up to the stock

offering on a nationwide barnstorming tour wherein it paid visits to institutional investors to answer any questions. — Bob West

LL

The Industry Sounds Off

Lawn & Landscape was the first magazine to cover news of LandCare USA's and TruGreen-ChemLawn's recent acquisitions ("Lightning Strikes Twice," March 1998, p. 24). And the Quick Fax Survey that accompanied that issue generated a wealth of thought-provoking responses.

When asked how concerned they are about their ability to compete against national companies, better than 40 percent of respondents indicated either "very concerned" or "concerned." But, at the same time, almost 58 percent of respondents indicated the development of national landscape maintenance companies is good for the industry.

Finally, respondents were asked which of the following companies will be the largest five years from now: the landscape management division of TruGreen-ChemLawn, LandCare USA, The Brickman Group or Environmental Care. TruGreen-ChemLawn was the clear favorite, garnering exactly 50 percent of the votes. LandCare USA and Environmental Care tied with better than 21 percent of the votes each.

Following is a taste of the comments respondents included:

Are you concerned about your ability to compete?

- "As long as we provide quality service at a fair price, we will keep and grow the business."
- "The bigger the company, the more cheaply they bid the work just to keep their employees working."
- "I cannot imagine how a publicly traded company can compete with a smaller, privately owned company in regard to quality. Volume is its objective, so quality will be its weak spot."
- "Larger companies traditionally suffer the pains of growing through acquisition. Each occurrence opens a door for the smaller, personal service organization to acquire new clients."

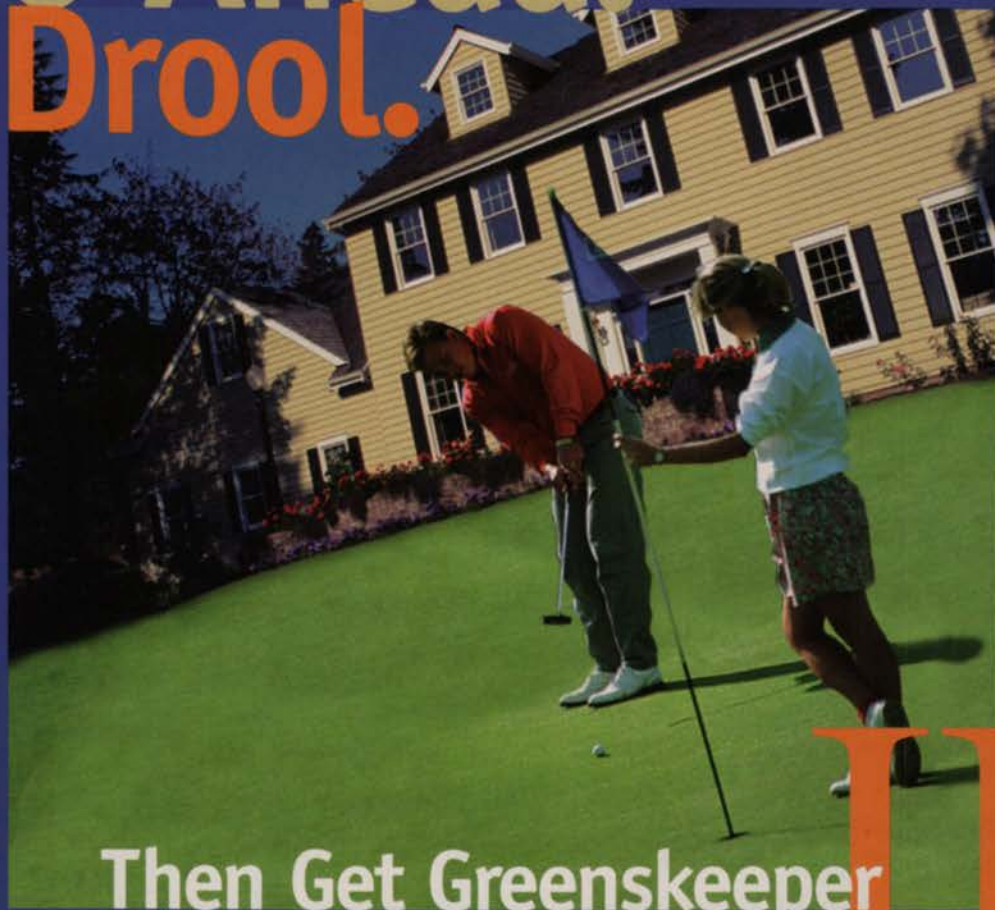
Is the development of these companies good for the industry?

- "Yes, it brings more respectability to the industry and offers a model for smaller firms looking to improve their business practices."
- "It's good if they spend a part of their budget on educating customers, research and environmental issues that affect us all."
- "It will help change the public's perception of the industry from the current image of uneducated, unqualified "anybody can do it" labor to a trade requiring licensing, certification and professional business."
- "Look at Microsoft — do we want the same type of monopoly?"
- "No — it can create unionization of companies, forcing salaries, benefits and collective bargaining through the roof." — Bob West

For more responses, check "The Industry Sounds Off" article on Lawn & Landscape Online — www.lawnandlandscape.com.

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II

USE READER SERVICE #113

Building

Jensen Corporation

HEADQUARTERS: Cupertino, Calif.

FOUNDED: 1961

PRIMARY SERVICES: Landscape design and installation is 100 percent of the business, which is 50 percent commercial/industrial, 40 percent government/municipal and 10 percent residential. It provides a wide range of contracting services focusing on specialty niches, including the construction of parks, corporate campuses, recreational areas, plazas, libraries and complex residential projects. A sister company, Jensen Landscape Services, operates as a separate landscape maintenance company.

EMPLOYEES: 55 year round; 10 seasonal

1997 REVENUES: \$10 million

Executive Summary:

THE CONCEPT: Companywide teamwork allows Jensen Corp. to provide high quality landscape projects that consistently meet expectations.

The Principals

Scott McGilvray, President

AGE: 53

BACKGROUND: McGilvray, with Wasson, purchased Jensen Corp. from its founder, Fred Jensen, in 1982. He holds a masters in business administration from Stanford University, and worked in an executive position with Levi Strauss & Co. before pursuing a green industry career.

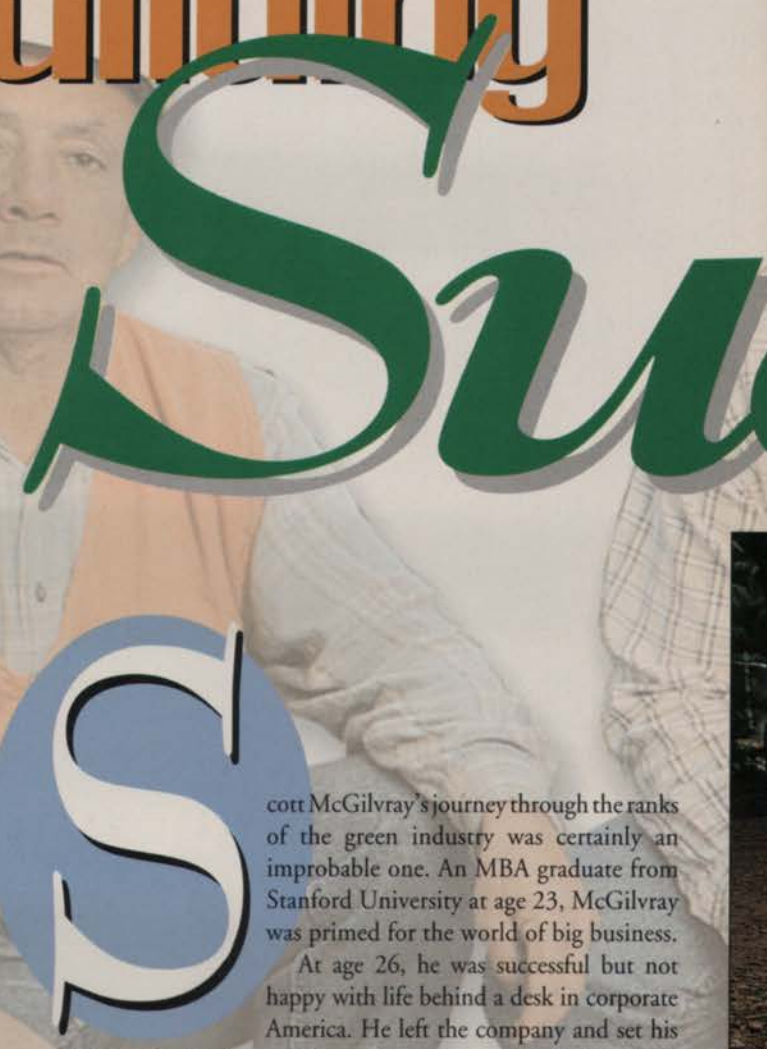
Duane Wasson, Chairman

AGE: 55

BACKGROUND: Wasson worked for Jensen Corp. as its chief estimator before purchasing the company with McGilvray. He holds a B.A. in architecture from the University of Illinois.

Driven by a highly experienced team, Jensen Corp. has maintained strong profitability in the highly volatile landscape construction market.

By Paul Schrimpf



Scott McGilvray's journey through the ranks of the green industry was certainly an improbable one. An MBA graduate from Stanford University at age 23, McGilvray was primed for the world of big business. At age 26, he was successful but not happy with life behind a desk in corporate America. He left the company and set his sights on the landscape industry for a career path. Today, he is president of Jensen Corp., Cupertino, Calif., a landscape construction firm that generates from \$7 million to \$10 million in commercial, municipal and residential landscape construction contracts annually. But it was a long road to success.

At a time when the green industry career path was not nearly as defined as it is today, McGilvray started learning the industry at the bottom rung. He drove a truck for a green waste hauling company for minimum wage. He also spent time at a landscape maintenance company working on a few large estates and a route of small properties, and then later as a test gardener for *Sunset* magazine.

His next job would train him for his eventual green industry field of choice, landscape construction. As an installation project manager with Cupertino Nursery, he learned the ins and outs of planning small landscape jobs, installing them and finishing them under tight timelines and small budgets.

Eventually, McGilvray landed a position at Jensen Corp.

ccess

Project management teams are at the heart of Jensen Corp.'s success. Pictured left to right are laborer Gabriel Pena, superintendent Glenn Berry and foreman Ramon Mendoza. Photo: Sue Tallon



Owner Fred Jensen gave McGilvray and chief estimator Duane Wasson the opportunity to manage the company while he took extended leaves, and both proved capable leaders. When Jensen decided to sell the company, McGilvray and Wasson successfully pitched Jensen on a deal, and in 1982 the partners took over the business.

A BID FOR GROWTH. Jensen Corp. made several important changes over the next decade, including purchasing a new facility in 1986 and forming a separate landscape maintenance company, Jensen Landscape Services, in 1988. Another significant change was to focus the company on government and municipal landscape projects.

McGilvray attributes the success of Jensen Corp. to the longevity of its management staff. All of the top managers have been with the company 10 years or longer. This experience is critical, especially since more than 90 percent of the company's installation contracts are won by having the lowest bid.

(continued on page 34)

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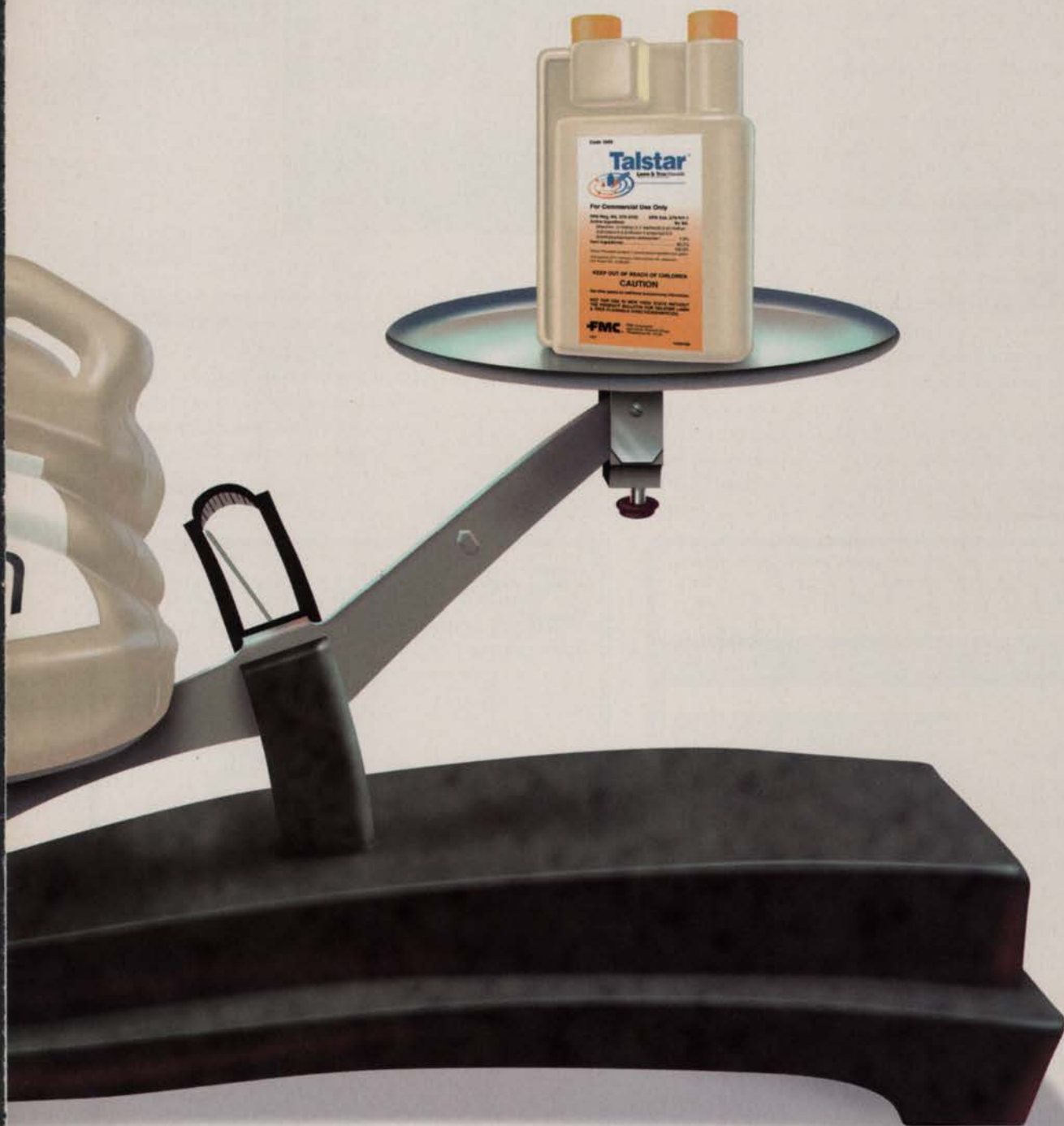
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cover story

(continued from page 31)

Keeping projects within a given bid presents challenges many times since the architect can't always anticipate every nuance of a particular landscape site. When something on a plan is left off or not adequately addressed, such as necessary drainage, McGilvray explained that the company will engage in "value engineering."

"During the course of the work, we often find out there were some gray issues the architect left out," explained McGilvray. "For example, we may discover a drainage problem on the site. We'll value engineer the landscape budget by suggesting seeding rather than sodding. Then, you can move the cost savings over to solve the drainage problem. You're saving money, and solving other problems that would likely jeopardize the value of what you're building."

CITY HALL SUCCESS. The low-bid monster is particularly ugly in the public sector, McGilvray lamented, where many municipi-



At Jensen Corp., bonuses are based in part on each person's ability to work as a team to make the entire company successful.

Photo: Sue Tallon

palities do everything they can to avoid the competitive bid market.

Despite this, the municipal landscape market is one that the company has been working in heavily for a number of years. The experience Jensen Corp. has working within the municipal process gives it a leg up with community officials when it comes to bidding and executing these types of

projects, McGilvray noted.

"A lot of these projects, such as community parks, are almost are a little too small for a guy with big equipment, and he really doesn't want to be bothered with it," he pointed out. "On the other hand, a small contractor will not have the equipment and won't really understand how to do the grad-

(continued on page 36)

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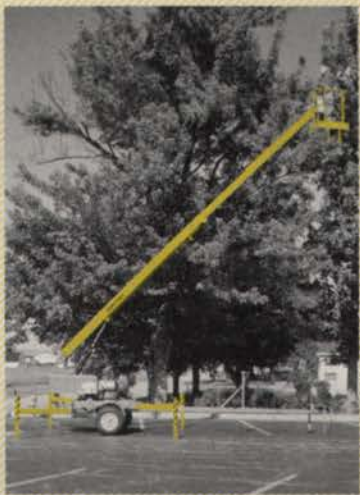


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USE READER SERVICE #27

(continued from page 34)

ing or drainage, or deal with light poles and play equipment that has to be installed."

This lack of understanding tends to force contractors to artificially inflate their bids and put them out of contention, McGilvray said.

Jensen also works hard to understand the client's needs and to stand ready to make changes when necessary.

"We take the burden of working with the architects, calling them and explaining that the client's needs may have changed and suggesting that they come out to the site and see if it can be addressed. We all work together as a team to build the best project we can for the real needs of the customer."

The plan development process can take from a few months to more than a year to complete, which can make it a challenge for Jensen to know whether the park is meeting the current neighborhood's needs.

"When we put up the safety fence and start the work," he continued, "the neighborhood starts to show up, and we really

Paying the Bills Pays Off

Through the good times and the bad times at Jensen Corp., one thing has remained constant at Jensen Corp. — the bills are paid on the 10th of the month. This simple policy, combined with quantity buying power, has created a very beneficial relationship between the company and its suppliers. Nursery suppliers have given Jensen the flexibility to change orders at the last minute for clients when necessary, and generally are more attentive to the company's needs.

"If we had 250 of one shrub grown for a project, and the owner wants to make a change, the nurseries will do it without tacking on a back charge or restocking fee," said McGilvray. "And, we'll still get a good price on the new material because we buy so much. The flexibility allows us to make those decisions as late as a week before that phase of the project is finished.

"Not only is it a good business practice, but paying bills on time reduces overhead and paperwork in the office," McGilvray concluded. — *Paul Schrimpf*

want them to talk to us. The park is for the people who live there, and good communities accept input before and during park design and construction."

TEAM BUILDING. The success of Jensen Corp.

revolves around the sense of teamwork that permeates the organization. It can be maintained only through hard work, training and having the right people in the right positions.

(continued on page 84)

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USE READER SERVICE #70



The Search

For the Best Cure

Using traditional and non-traditional products, researchers and contractors are searching for more options in the treatment of pests and disease.

By Paul Schrimpf



The turf industry has experienced a revolution in the types of products that lawn care companies have at their disposal for controlling diseases and insects. Similarly, tree and ornamental care practices and products have undergone changes in methods and products of choice.

The foliar application of pesticides is still used by many maintenance contractors, but research at the university level is focused on alternatives to this method, including soil and trunk injection. Research is also building on the success that many contractors are having with non-traditional products, such as horticultural oils and insecticidal soaps.

With the strong emphasis on plant health care and integrated pest management in tree care, contractors agree that the more options they have, the better they can care for customers' trees.

CLOSER LOOK. Like products in the turf industry, pesticides for trees are receiving a great deal of scrutiny from the government, end users and university researchers. Tried and true chemistries, such as organophosphates and carbamates for insects and daconil for diseases, are still relied on to fill the need for consistent and proven insect control. Now more than ever, though, users and universities are exploring some of the alternatives that are becoming available.

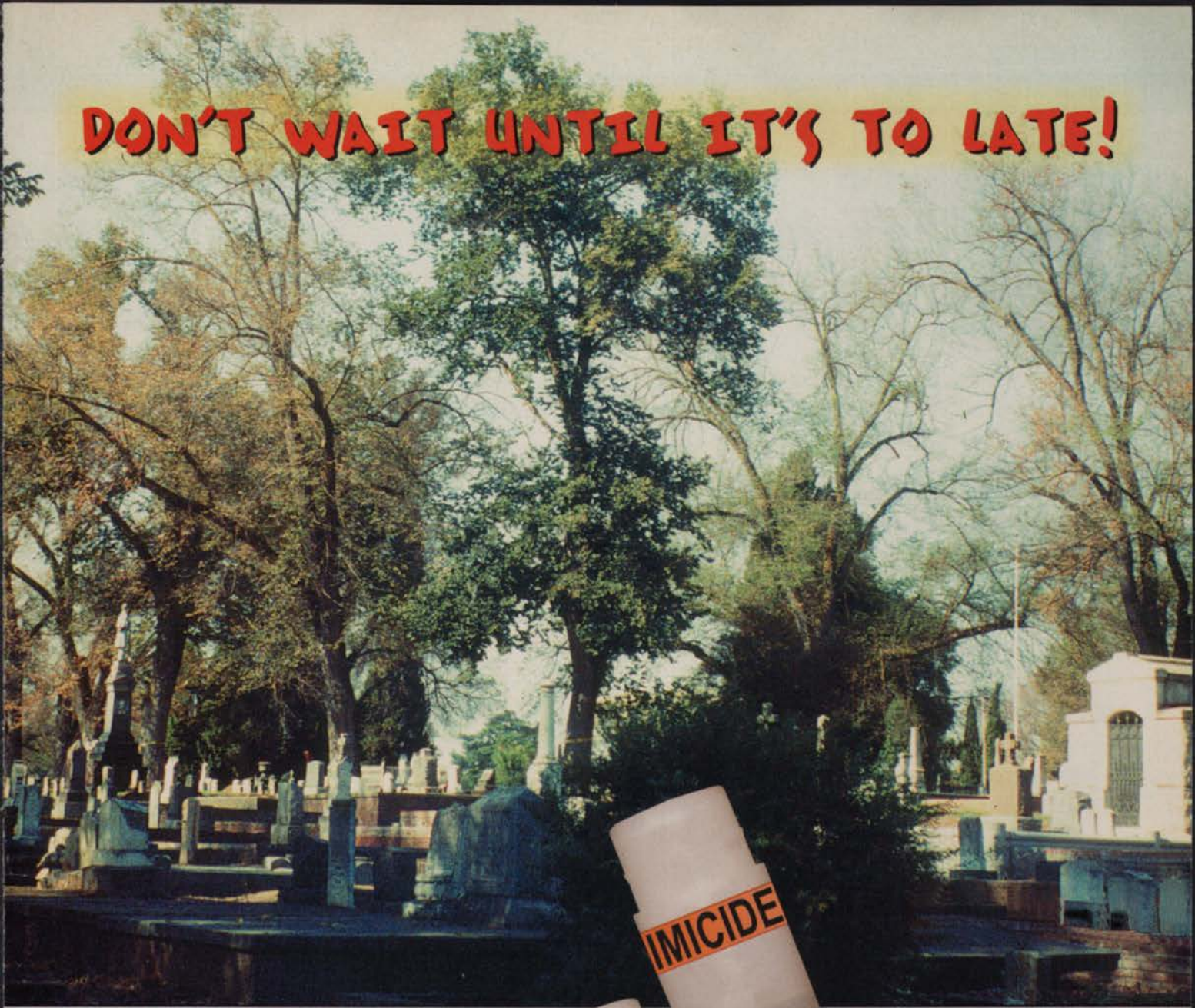
Cathy Zahirsky, pesticide programs coordinator, The

(continued on page 40)



As tree care services are provided by a growing number of lawn and landscape contractors, manufacturers and university researchers are testing products and delivery systems that are both effective and convenient to use. Photo: Davey Tree

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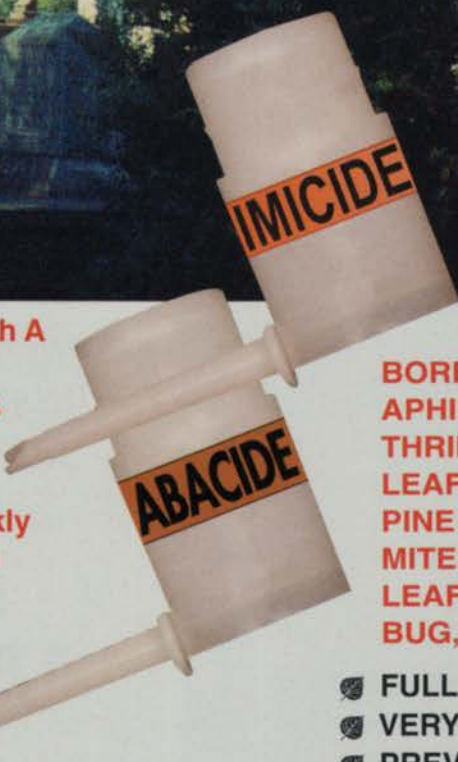
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USE READER SERVICE #30

(continued from page 38)

Getting the Right Rig

So, you've decided to get into the tree care business. Join the club, because it's a growing area of business that has been taking off over the past few years.

In fact, manufacturers of spray rigs for lawn and tree care report that the most significant rise in purchases of tree care spray equipment has occurred over the last two years.

"It's especially true for equipment to spray larger trees in the 100-foot range," said Ron Revis, sales manager, Westheffer Co. Inc.,

Lawrence, Kan. "Sales of this equipment make up about 20 percent of our sales, which may not sound like much, but that's five times more than we sold two or three years ago."

Besides the technical expertise required to set up a program and recognize tree problems in the field, contractors will also need an appropriately apportioned truck. Manufacturers of spraying systems for trucks are quick to note that tree care requires a totally different setup for storing pesticides, and the pumping system must provide significantly more psi pressure and gallons per

minute volume than a system designed for lawn care.

The main reason for this is both efficiency and liability. "To spray a 100-foot tree, a contractor needs to generate 60 gallons per minute at 800 psi to create a solid stream," explained Tom Sayward, owner, Tuflex Manufacturing, Pompano Beach, Fla. "This allows enough product to drip through the canopy and provide good coverage without creating a lot of mist that causes drifting."

Drift is one negative to an inadequate pump, but so is reduced productivity. "Most guys in the business want to be able to pull the trigger, make the application and move onto the next site," stressed Sayward. "The right equipment allows them to do that."



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The other consideration is the number of tanks that will be required, which varies depending on the type of program to be implemented. Tanks for the water, fungicide, insecticide and fertilizer would be optional, as would an additional tank for horticultural oil, an add-on that Sayward said is gaining in popularity.

If you're concentrating your efforts on clients with smaller trees in urban settings, then a less powerful, lower volume unit may be appropriate. The manufacturers said that a thorough review of your goals with a tree care program, your client base, the kind of applications you'll be making and the equipment you already own would be factored into any recommendation they make. — *Paul Schrimpf*

Davey Tree Expert Co., Kent, Ohio, explained that the company has placed an even greater focus on its screening program to test the viability and use of new chemistries. "We have three primary concerns with this testing — protection of the environment, applicator safety and efficacy," Zahirsky stressed.

Before any efficacy tests are run, Davey first learns all it can about the chemistry in question. "We call the Environmental Protection Agency for information, we contact medical sources and a variety of pesticide databases to get the information we need," said Zahirsky. If the chemistry falls within predetermined risk parameters, the product goes to the company's research facility in Ohio for efficacy testing.

If this round of testing proves successful, then the product is moved on to field testing for a season. Chemistries that pass all of the testing are added to the company's treatment booklet, and the products are then available to the company's branches for use.

Along with new chemistries, such as Conserve, Davey is putting some of the more established products, such as pyrethroids, chlorpyrifos and diazinon, through the same regimen of testing, Zahirsky said.

On the university side, alternative products are getting a closer look due in large part

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USE READER SERVICE #37

focus: trees & ornamentals

to the EPA's plan to closely scrutinize pesticide use patterns as part of the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996, noted Mike Raupp, professor and chair of the department of entomology at the University of Maryland, College Park.

"In the future, we could end up losing some of the products that the industry relies on so heavily," Raupp cautioned. "We need to be prepared to have alternatives."

Raupp said the department's research includes studying nematodes for insect control, as well as comparing species of trees and shrubs for natural resistance.

Classes of products that aren't new but that are seeing ever increasing usage for the control of scale and aphid pests are spray-applied horticultural oils and soaps. Although proven effective, Frederic Miller, extension entomologist, University of Illinois Cooperative Extension-Countryside Office, has been experimenting with a tank mix of horticultural oil and a reduced rate of Dursban for insect control.

Miller said the results have shown that the oil plus reduced rate Dursban combination is as effective as applying Dursban at the full rate. Although it isn't legal in most states to apply such a mixture, experimentally the combination has shown promise.

INJECTING LIFE. "There have been some big changes in the way we apply pesticides to trees," noted John Gibson, tree and ornamental program manager, Swingle Tree Co., Denver, Colo. "We're trying to get away from the traditional foliar application and change over to soil-injected products."

There are two primary drivers of this trend. "Customers perceive soil injection to be a safer method of applying pesticides, and it is so much less weather dependent," explained Gibson. "And, because of the duration of control and the ability to treat in inclement weather, being able to do soil injection has allowed us to extend our season by as much as 40 to 55 days."

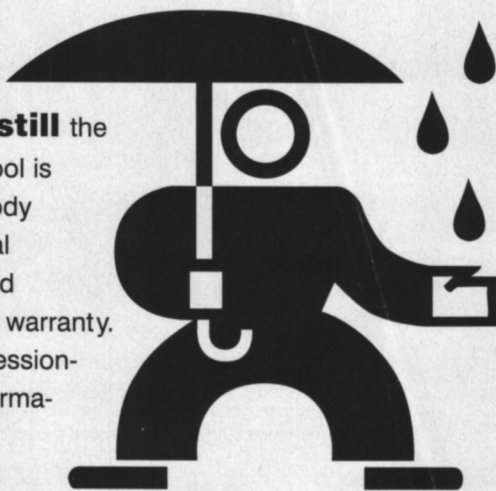
"We've been switching to soil injection slowly so we don't have to spray," concurred Bob Biel, partner, K & B Tree and Lawn Care, Beaver Dam, Wis. "With spraying pesticides, you're at the mercy of the weather. We do soil injection treatments as soon as the frost is out of the soil. It puts some flexibility in the program."

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"We've been in the business of tree care for 25 years, and our history had always been to spray trees," agreed Roger Albrecht, director of franchise development, Nitro-Green, Atlanta, Ga. "Now, we've evolved to the point where we won't spray larger trees, and we only spray where necessary. The scariest thing is the liability issues that come with spraying."

Soil injection of chemistries like imidacloprid (Merit) is convenient and highly effective, according to contractors, but does require some customer education, Gibson noted. "It can be difficult to get customers to convert from a spray program," Gibson said. "You have to explain that a soil injection treatment early in the

.....

Like products in the turf industry, pesticides for trees are receiving a great deal of scrutiny from the government, end users and university researchers.

.....

year will cover them in the upcoming season and why the injection product will cost more to apply. They have to comprehend the value of the application and not simply look at the dollars."

Gibson said that Swingle's goal is to convert the majority of customers to injection application, and at this point they've gotten about half of their customers on the injection program. "It was about 10 percent three years ago," he recalled.

Reducing spray-applied pesticides has also been a goal of university research exploring the possibility of soil injecting some of these same chemistries.

"I think that the traditional means of applying pesticides via spray is not going to be acceptable in the near future," predicted David Tatum, extension entomologist, Mississippi State University. "We're looking at

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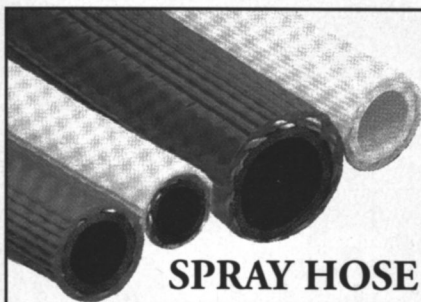
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Unfortunately, not every chemistry is effective as a soil-injected product. The plant must be able to take up the product

Reducing spray-applied pesticides has been a goal of university research that is exploring the possibility of soil injecting some of these same chemistries.

through the roots and then deliver it to the parts of the plant that the target pest infests. One chemistry that Tatum has found success with is orthene, an insecticide.

Tatum conducted a two-year study using a soil-injected formulation of orthene, and observed the effects of the product on aphids on crape myrtle and river birch. In both cases, the injections were effective in suppressing aphid populations, he said.

MICRO WAY. Microinjection, injecting active ingredients directly into the trunk of a tree, has also gained in popularity as a cure for specific tree problems.

"We'll do a trunk injection treatment for difficult problems such as bronze birch borer or dutch elm disease," explained Gibson. "When we're considering a trunk injection product, we really weigh the product's ability to work in that format, and we'll test it in-house to see how well it works and whether we get the results we expect."

"We've done some microinjecting of nutrients in cases where the tree was older and sicker, and they've been effective for us," noted Ed Walter, president, Washington Tree Service, Seattle, Wash. **LL**

The author is Managing Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

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What's New in Trunk Injection?

Another alternative to traditional spray and soil injection is the use of delivery systems that place the active ingredient directly into the trunk. As this method grows more accepted in the lawn and landscape industry to cure a variety of tree maladies, manufacturers are adding products to their lines.

Nate Dodds, director of marketing, J.J. Mauget Co., Arcadia, Calif., said that the company is working on getting new combinations of materials registered for the market, including fungicide-pesticide formulations. "We're focusing our development efforts on getting more of the low toxicity chemistry into the trees," Dodds said.

Dodds said that the majority of lawn and landscape contractors who use microinjection cite insect problems as the main reason for using the products, followed by micro-element deficiencies and fungus problems. "In general, it's more difficult for contractors to accurately diagnose disease problems, which makes them less confident in making a treatment recommendation such as microinjection," said Dodds.

Chip Doolittle, president, Arbor Systems, Omaha, Neb., said that the company's recently registered abemectin-based insecticide has performed well against spider mites, and Arbor Systems is conducting research that may lead to registration for the control of lepidopterus caterpillars, including the gypsy moth caterpillar.

Roger Webb, president, Tree Tech, Williston, Fla., said the company recently received registration for its microinjected abemectin-based product, as well as a new bactericide for the treatment of leaf scorch and other tree bacteria problems.

Webb also noted that his company and Novartis have reached an agreement that will allow Tree Tech to sell a microinjected version of Novartis' Vanquish herbicide. The product would be available for use in right of way tree clearance or for killing non-native trees in environmentally sensitive areas.

— Paul Schrimpf

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LAWN & LANDSCAPE • MAY 1998

45



• Proper timing and
 • knowledge of a variety
 • of techniques is
 • necessary to properly
 • prune deciduous shrubs
 • in the landscape.

• By Luke Messinger

Pruning Deciduous Shrubs

This smokebush (*cotinus*) has been continuously sheared, causing aggressive, unattractive shoot growth that is also detrimental to plant health. Photo: Messinger



In many landscape designs, shrubs are the unsung heroes, filling a critical role balancing expanses of turf and large, dominating trees. These special plants have their own requirements for care, which include regular pruning to ensure the continued health and vigor of the plant. This article examines some of the techniques and timing involved in the pruning of deciduous shrubs.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES. A few basic tools are required for deciduous pruning: bypass pruners for shoots and twigs up to 1/2-inch wide; triple-edged hand saws; loppers for branches up to 2 inches wide; and hedge shears for shearing purposes only. Keep pruning tools clean, sharp and in good working order. Make clean cuts and avoid bark tears.

Now, let's look at the various pruning methods commonly used on shrubs. Each method relies on specific techniques, timing and a knowledge of several characteristics possessed by each shrub. Each method has its own merits in the right place at the right time and, most importantly, on the right shrub.

Renewal: This involves the removal of 1/3 of the oldest wood near ground level. Use this method on multi-stemmed, upright shrubs. Remove less than 1/3 of the wood on plants that have been neglected, over-pruned/sheared or those under severe stress. Renewal pruning is not

(continued on page 48)

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(continued from page 46)

recommended for some single-stemmed shrubs, including some viburnums, daphne, Japanese pieris, burning bush and service-berry. The key is to be sure the shrub can regenerate new shoots.

Rejuvenation: This involves removing all stems back to near ground level. This technique is great for old, neglected, mis-

shapen, deciduous shrubs. It's not suitable for some plants, so contractors need to consult reference manuals. Once a plant has been rejuvenated, begin renewal pruning. Abelia, barberry, cotoneaster, shrub dogwoods, forsythia, honeysuckle, spirea, shrub lilacs and weigela are good candidates for rejuvenation.

Shearing: This is used for formal hedges and topiary. Shape hedges wider at the base to prevent the shading of the lower branches. Prune a current season's growth after a flush of growth (usually late spring). Light touch-up shearing can take place again around mid-summer as growth dictates, but avoid late summer shearing.

Shearing should be reserved for landscape designs that warrant it and on tolerant plants. Unfortunately, most deciduous shrubs are not suitable for shearing since the results can be devastating. The resulting growth and energy required to seal over pruning wounds can be at the expense of a plant's ability to overcome stress.

Developmental/Shaping: This technique involves removing branches and twigs at their point of origin vs. cutting the shrub down to size (shearing). This provides a more natural approach to single-stemmed shrubs. The goal is to thin out the interior of the plant and maintain a natural appearance (thus the importance of knowing the plant's natural habit). Use thinning cuts to remove the oldest and largest branches without compromising the natural shape of the plant.

Regardless of the size of the branch, avoid leaving stubs. Cut branches back to their point of origin or to within 1/4-inch of a living bud. You can control the direction or length of stems and twigs through this selective pruning. Keep in mind the natural habit of the plant. As a plant develops, shaping can be accomplished with relatively few cuts. Shaping can also serve as a natural alternative to shearing for altering the width or general shape of a plant slightly.

With shaping, be selective in your cuts as you visualize the mature size and habit of the plant over the course of several years, and selectively prune the shrub to keep it a manageable size. This will leave the plant with a more natural appearance.

MAKING THE CUT. In spite of the assortment of tools, methods and terminology, deciduous shrub pruning requires only two types of cuts – thinning and heading.

Thinning cuts remove entire branches, either at the base of a plant or at a side branch. Heading cuts shorten a branch or stem, usually with a cut back to the next lower bud (node). Since plants respond

(continued on page 50)

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differently to either of these cuts and because of the wide variety of plants found in most landscapes, knowing when and how to use them becomes even more important.

Common deciduous shrub pruning methods include developmental/shaping, renewal, rejuvenation and shearing. They are not the only methods, but they represent the basic deciduous shrub pruning resources suitable for most landscape maintenance programs.

To use these methods effectively, contractors must learn the techniques of each method and at what time of year they should be performed. It is also important to know what methods are suitable for each plant. Since most landscapes contain a variety of plants, contractors have to develop a variety of pruning strategies in order to care for each particular plant. Also, depending on the reasons for pruning, several pruning techniques may be required over the course of a plant's life.

RESPONSES TO PRUNING. Pruning is a wounding process that causes plants to react in a variety of ways. Contractors must anticipate how a plant will react to wounds caused by the various pruning methods. To do this, consider how plants grow.

Most deciduous shrubs produce new growth at the outermost (terminal) buds. Terminal buds produce hormones (auxin) that direct the growth of lateral buds further down the branch. When the terminal bud is removed, lateral buds can be stimulated to grow as a result.

On some deciduous shrubs, a heading cut encourages aggressive top growth, which can have a tremendous impact on the natural habit of the plant. Sometimes the altered habit and growth are desirable, as with formal hedges or topiary. This type of growth is usually not desired if a more natural appearance is the goal. If the heading cuts are not repeated yearly following each flush of growth, the plant eventually develops a

top-heavy, "leggy" appearance with little foliage near the base of the plant.

When entire branches or stems are removed with a thinning cut, the result is much different. The result is new growth near the base or interior of the plant that will help maintain the natural appearance of the plant without excessive top growth.

WHY PRUNE? To determine what pruning method is best for a particular plant, contractors must decide why they are pruning. Obviously, pruning is for size reduction. But contractors must also pay attention to plant health, development and aesthetics.

Pruning should begin soon after planting to provide the best chance of maintaining the shrubs at a desirable height and desired appearance. Often, pruning is not considered until a plant becomes too large.

Pruning should also play a supportive role in plant health. As some deciduous shrubs

(continued on page 52)

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(continued from page 50)

mature, the oldest wood can become more susceptible to disease or insect infestations. Periodic removal of the oldest wood provides an opportunity for growth of healthy, young wood. This young wood can also increase flower fruit and ornamental bark features that can diminish on older wood.

Certain characteristics inherent to each plant impact the recommended pruning method. These characteristics include plant habit and branching structure, when the plant flowers, whether it flowers on new or old wood, ability to generate new growth, size and rate of growth, and the purpose of the plant in the overall landscape design.

Plant health, previous pruning, growing conditions and plant maturity can influence a plant's habit. Determine how the plant grows naturally and compare that to how it is growing now. Try to determine the plant's natural structure. Multi-stemmed shrubs have many branches originating from the base near the ground. Single-stemmed

plants usually have a central main trunk structure with branches arising from one to three main stems. The branches sometimes originate close to the ground, but upon examination, there will be a central main trunk. Some mounded plants offer slight variations of the two.

Know when the plant flowers and whether the flowers appear on new wood. Most spring-flowering shrubs flower on wood produced the previous year. Many summer- and fall-flowering shrubs produce buds on the current season's wood.

This will help determine what wood to cut and prevent the removal of developing buds.

The mature size of the plant is important to know in order to help identify potential large plant/small site conflicts. Many low growing plants only need occasional touch-up pruning. If growing in an appropriate site, large shrubs may only require occa-

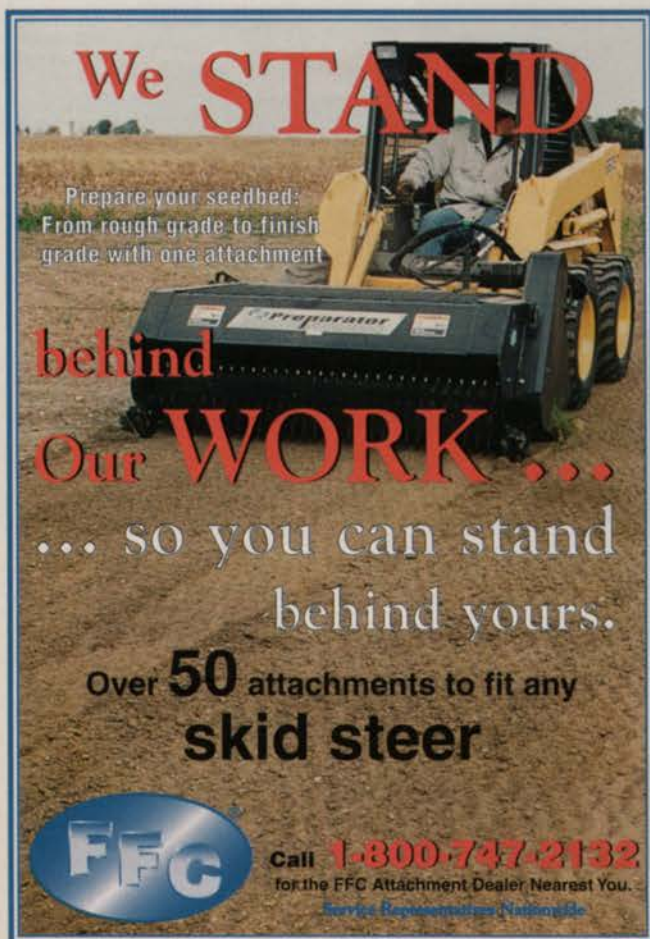
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4. Prune branches that detract from the natural shape of the shrub.
5. Proceed with an appropriate pruning method.

sional pruning. Anticipating a plant growing too large for a particular site provides more pruning options.

Evaluate plant aesthetics and look for a decrease in vigor, which is often indicated by a decrease in plant growth, flowers or fruit production.

(continued on page 54)



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(continued from page 52)

Then evaluate plant health and locate diseased or dead wood. Pruning can encourage new, vigorous shoots with improved flower production and increased disease and insect resistance.

Also, the intent of the entire landscape design must be taken into consideration, especially the relationship of the plant to the surrounding plants and structures. Not all shrubs are intended to be pruned small or in formal hedges.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING. Knowing when to prune is crucial. It requires an awareness of a plant's seasonal cycle. In summer, healthy plants produce energy through photosynthesis. Most of this energy is stored and used the next spring as the plants grow, leaf out and flower. At this time – usually early spring to early summer – stored energy levels are at their lowest, leaving the plant a bit vulnerable until the newly emerged leaves begin to produce more energy.

Knowing when a plant has high or low stored energy reserves is crucial in determining what time of year to prune. Timing is also dependent upon what method of pruning and what type of cuts will be made.

Dormant pruning: The dormant season is anytime between when the leaves fall and when new growth begins the following spring. This is considered the best time for most types of pruning, except for shearing. Dormant pruning makes sense because a plant's energy reserves are capable of generating new growth the following spring. Also, it's easier to view the branching structure and framework during dormancy.

Hold off pruning until mid-winter in colder climates. A drawback to dormant pruning is a reduction in flowers on early spring bloomers.

Spring/early summer pruning: This method is recommended for some plants, but dormant pruning is preferred for overall plant health. Pruning after flowering works

well with early spring-flowering shrubs that are in good health. But beware of giving the flower effect precedence over the structure and health of the plant. A minimal decrease in flower production for renewal pruning is a small price to pay for plant health.

Late summer to fall: Other than light touch-up work, pruning is not recommended during late summer to fall. This is especially true for total rejuvenation pruning. It can encourage new growth that won't harden off in time for winter. **LL**

The author is Public Relations Director at The Dawes Arboretum, Newark, Ohio.

For shrubs that flower on new or old growth, read the May feature article on ornamentals at *Lawn & Landscape Online* at www.lawnandlandscape.com.

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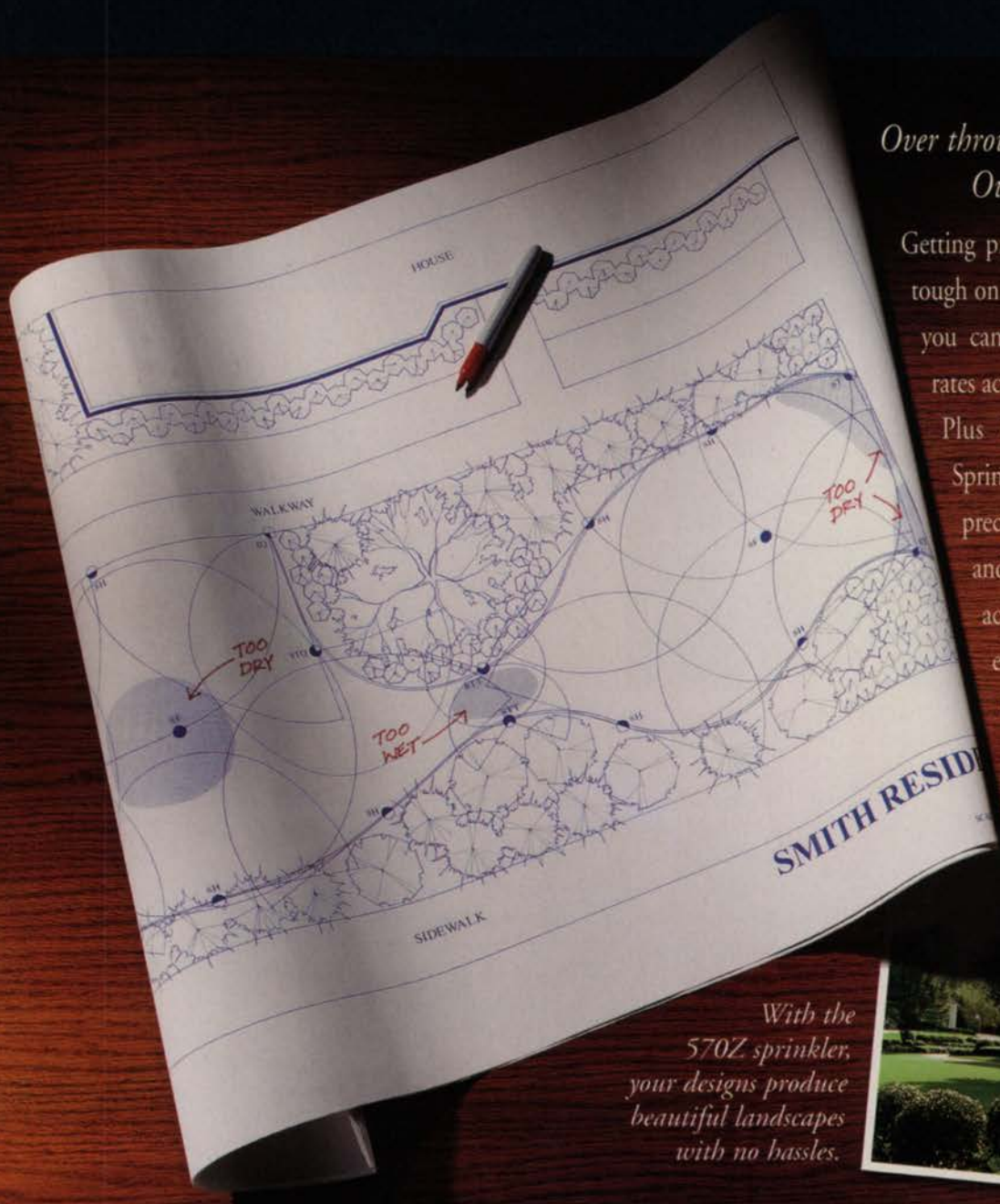
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In a Bottle



- Many species of ornamental shrubs that
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- care time by half.

When used properly, plant growth regulators can reduce the amount of mowing and pruning required on a site.

By Paul Schrimpf



In the heat of fulfilling all those spring maintenance contracts, have you ever stepped back and thought to yourself, "If I could only stop the turf and plants from growing for a couple of weeks, I could get back on schedule."

Well, outside of installing plastic plant material and artificial turf, you're never going to achieve zero growth in your customers' landscape during the growing season. However, some landscape maintenance contractors have found success managing the growth of turf and ornamentals using judicious applications of products known as plant growth regulators.

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TAMING TURF. No one ever promised that the mowing aspect of landscape maintenance would be easy to plan and execute, but weather fluctuations, equipment failure and scheduling hassles can make the job a real nightmare.

(continued on page 58)

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Source: J. Reinart, Texas A&M University, Dallas, TX, 1996.

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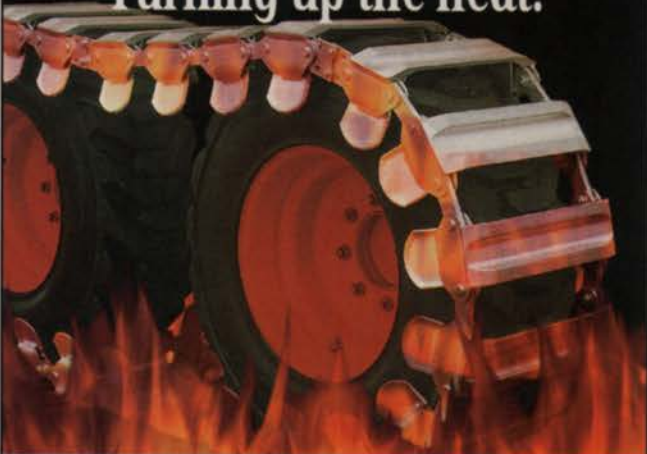
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USE READER SERVICE #58

mowing & PGRs

(continued from page 56)



Contractors that use plant growth regulators to slow down the growth of turf say that they get the most benefits in terms of reducing clippings when they apply in the spring. Photo: John Deere

This is where turf growth regulators can play an important role, say contractors who use the products as a part of a regular maintenance program.

Several years ago, Jim Grow, vice president, Pennink Arrimour, Huntingdon Valley, Pa., began "experimenting" with the use of PGRs in turf. The first test was not successful, he noted, because the amount of nitrogen that accompanied the application offset the effects of the PGR.

After a few seasons of tweaking, however, Grow has established some guidelines for when and where using a PGR makes sense.

The first consideration that comes into play is whether a PGR can be tank-mixed with other products and tied into a regularly scheduled application. Normally, the PGR would be mixed in with the preemergence and broadleaf weed control application and applied after the second cutting. Since the company will occasionally do a fall preemergence weed application and skip the spring application altogether, the PGR is not always an option.

"With our program, there's no additional cost for the labor to apply the PGR since it's tank mixed," said Grow.

Applications are made to the entire site, rather than spot treating. "We tried to spot treat at one time, but we weren't happy with that," explained Grow. "We still had to visit the site, so it didn't really save us time or trouble."

The main advantages that putting down the PGR provide are flexibility and fewer clippings. "Without the PGR, we would have to double-cut and do extra work to disperse the excess clippings," Grow noted.

Grow emphasized that this is not an application that allows a contractor to skip a mowing altogether. "That's a misconception that a lot of people have about PGRs," he said. "You can't really do that. All they do is extend the window within which you need to cut next time. Instead of having to cut every seven days, if you get rain

(continued on page 60)

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(continued from page 56)

or are delayed on another site, you can extend that window to eight or nine days. With the spring schedule being what it is, that's a great asset to have."

Grow couldn't put a dollar number on any tangible savings, but he said PGRs are worth using if they save managers some

aggravation. "I try to make this a break-even proposition for the company - we don't make any money from doing it, and it's very difficult for us to show a savings in labor or time, Grow explained. "But if it can keep our production people sane, then I'm happy and it's a benefit to the company."

David George, exterior division manager, The Engledow Group, Carmel, Ind., also commonly uses the product to slow the spring growth surge. George will also specify a PGR in cases where there is unusually small areas of turf to maintain,

"We see using a PGR in the spring as an equipment and people stress reducer," said George. "It doesn't create a great windfall of savings, but it has become an important tool in our mowing program."

ORDERLY ORNAMENTALS. Proper shrub pruning (see p. 46) can be a time-consuming process, especially when long stretches of shrubs border walkways and require a lot of

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'Without the PGR, we would have to double-cut and do extra work to disperse the excess clippings.'

attention. This is the type of situation that calls for the use of PGRs said Larry Neuhoff, director of landscape maintenance operations, Landtrends Inc., San Diego, Calif.

"We have one stretch of hedges that runs for more than three miles along a street," explained Neuhoff, who added that the company has been using PGRs for six years. "We use PGRs to reduce the amount of pruning these shrubs require."

Because Landtrends' policy insists that shrubs are pruned selectively rather than simply sheared, a pruning job is a highly labor-intensive process, Neuhoff explained. The PGR is applied to slow down the growth of these shrubs and reduce the number of times that technicians are sent out to prune.

When pruning is required for these shrubs, crews first go out and actually perform the work. Then, 1½ to 3 weeks later, a spray crew returns to the site and applies the PGR. "The time period after cutting is critical," warned Neuhoff. "If it's done too

(continued on page 62)

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USE READER SERVICE #55

mowing & PGRs

(continued from page 60)

soon or too late it will not be effective."

He estimated that the number of prunings required per year is literally cut in half or more. "Without the PGR, we would be trimming the shrubs every four to six weeks," noted Neuhoff. "With the product, we can extend that window to one per quarter."

One word of caution from Neuhoff was that he generally limits PGR use to durable species of shrubs such as boxwood, taxus and privet. He also said that it's critical to read the label to ensure that the shrub will not suffer phytotoxicity from a PGR.

Another ornamental use that Neuhoff has for ornamental plant growth regulation is on ivy. PGR applications slow the growth of ivy used in topiary hedges and help reduce the amount of trimming required to keep ivy to a specified height on the sides of buildings, he said.

Bill Gordon, president, Signature Landscape, Olathe, Kan., said that the company uses PGRs on shrubs in low-profile areas to

Spring Application Makes Big Impact

Bruce Branham, associate professor of turfgrass management, University of Illinois, recently conducted a two-year study looking at the impact of applying the turfgrass growth regulator Primo every four or six weeks throughout the growing season to gauge the product's effectiveness in reducing turf growth.

The results revealed that the biggest impact on growth was achieved from the first application, reducing the growth by as much as 40 percent to 60 percent and suppressing growth for four to five weeks, according to Branham. The growth was measured by comparing the weight of the clippings generated by mowing the treated turf as compared to the clippings gathered from an untreated control plot. — *Paul Schrimpf*

reduce their pruning requirements. "We spray them in June after a pruning when there's no stress on the plant, and we have had good success in controlling growth," Gordon explained. "We'll touch up the

treated hedges in fall to finish up the season, and that's all that will be required." **LL**

The author is Managing Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

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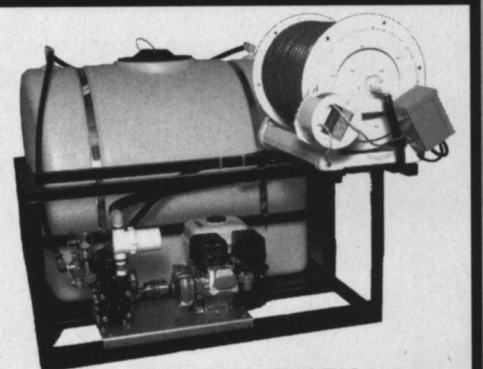


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USE READER SERVICE #63

The strategic use of ornamental color can be a particularly effective tool for catching individuals' attention, but designers should be careful not to use so much color as to detract from the rest of the landscape.

Photo: Arteka Corp.



The key to designing effective entranceways is catching visitors' attention without overwhelming them.

By Bob West

F

or many building contractors or commercial property owners, designing or building the appropriate structure is critical to an organization's success. However, the best building in the world is worthless if no one ever enters it.

That's where landscape designers' roles become key – designing a landscaped entryway that catches the attention of passing traffic (be it pedestrian or vehicular) and guiding these people into the building.

FUNCTION FIRST & FOREMOST. “An entranceway has to be obvious. That's the most important thing,” asserted Jim Klein, landscape designer, Stiles Landscape Service Co., Pompano Beach, Fla. “People need to be able to see it so they know where they're going.”

Landscape designers and architects are essentially in universal agreement about the importance of focusing upon an entranceway's function during the design process. And they note there are a number of options available for achieving the desired effect.

Jim Catlin, a landscape architect with Anthony Bertotti Landscape Inc., Novato, Calif., is a proponent of extending the building's architectural features out into the entranceway. “One approach is to integrate the structure into the landscape by using a predominant feature of the structure – such as an archway – or developing a design relationship between the construction and landscape materials,” he noted. “This repetition of materials creates a sense of extension and continuity as opposed to having disparities in the colors and materials.”

(continued on page 66)

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(continued from page 64)

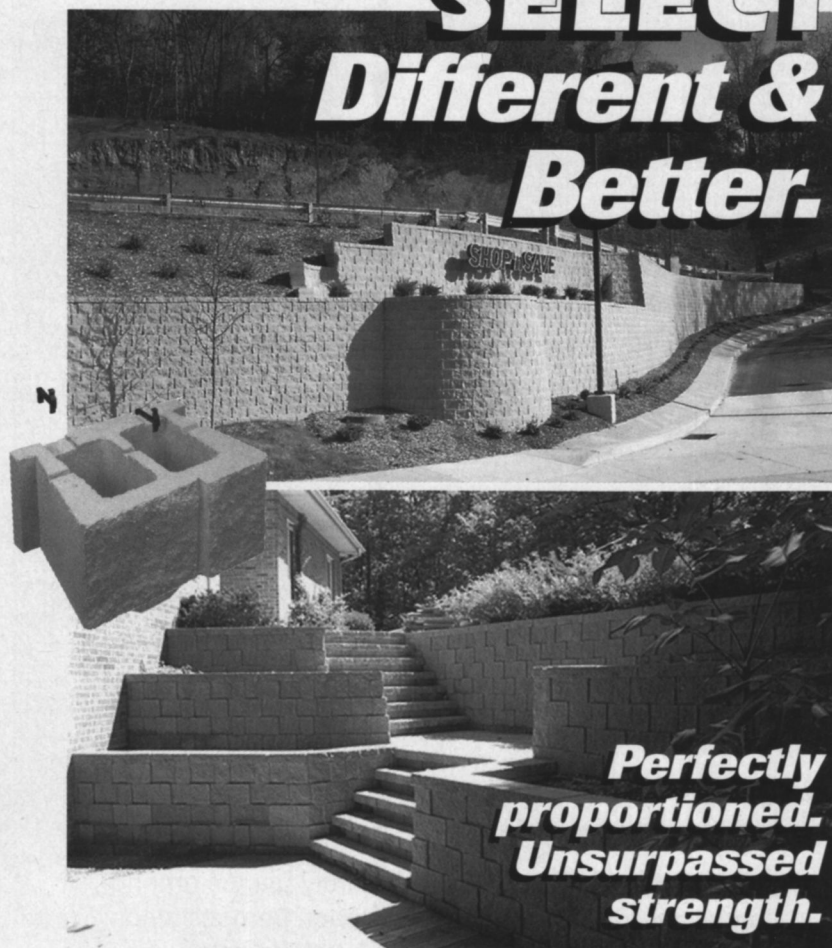
The use of landscape color is certainly not to be discounted, however. "In the Pacific Northwest where the climate is gray so much, we need to use color to make an entranceway pleasant," countered Catherine Firth, manager, landscape architecture services, The Mitchell Nelson Group, Port-

land, Ore.

Firth was quick to point out, however, that relying too heavily on annual color is a common mistake that can create long-term problems for the client. "Annuals are used too much on commercial projects," she



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commented. "They can be a nightmare because of the expense of change-outs and because they don't hold the soil back when it rains, leading to a muddy mess."

Instead, she recommends minimizing the use of annual color to a few, select accent points, and being more creative with the use of other plant material with interesting characteristics. "A landscape doesn't have to have flowers to be attractive," Firth pointed out. "I like to use plants that have interesting patterns even when they don't have leaves. Star magnolias and Japanese maples are interesting to look at because of their structures and the smooth, light-colored bark that shows up on gloomy days."

Another common approach to direct visitors to an entrance is the use of different varieties of plant materials, according to Leonard Statile, president and chief executive officer, Statile & Todd Inc., Springfield, N.J. "If the design calls for one type of shade tree in the islands in the parking lot, switching to another type of tree around the entranceway can create a change in terms of variety and texture that the eye will be drawn to," he said.

It's also important to note that designers can influence the use of an area via the design. "If you put an ash urn, a garbage can or a bench in an area, people will come," observed Firth, emphasizing the importance of designing with such considerations in mind. "An entranceway should be a space to move through. If the goal is to design staying space as well, create spaces on either side of the entranceway that are inviting but pull people about 10 feet off to the side and out of the traffic's way."

GET ON THE SCALE. As important as an entranceway is to a landscape, it shouldn't be over emphasized at the expense of the building or surrounding landscape.

"The scale and dimension of an entranceway is very important, so every-



thing appears in proportion to its context and people feel comfortable in the area," noted Catlin, adding that he generally builds the scale for an entranceway around a 6-foot tall person. "If I'm going to use an overhead structure, such as

an arbor, I think people are generally more comfortable if it is higher than the reach of their hand. Otherwise, they may feel they have to duck beneath it."

Statile believes an effective entranceway creates a sense of space or enclosure that gives visitors the perception of "having arrived somewhere." Using a structure of some sort in the landscape can be one way to achieve this effect.

"Anything that creates an enclosed area, such as an arbor to drive beneath or a pergola to walk through, can create a sense of arriving somewhere," he explained.

"The size of the entranceway has to work in concert with the architecture," Statile continued. "On a commercial site bringing vehicular traffic through the entranceway, it should be larger than what would be in front of a residential complex."

Klein agreed that too much emphasis could be placed on making an entranceway

noticeable. "The designer has to remember what is behind the entranceway," he said. "If it's a 20-story office complex, then the entranceway can be pretty complex. But if it's single-story residential units, then you don't want to use 60-foot tall palm trees down the median strip."

Firth also noted that the type of traffic the entranceway is designed for can influence the scale a great deal. "If it's for vehicular traffic that is passing by at 35 miles per hour, then the entranceway has to show up from 1/8th of a mile away," she stated. In these situations, she likes to layer landscape

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elements to catch people's attention and direct their eyes toward identifying signage.

"You can start with taller evergreens in the back, and then use some flowering trees in front of them," Firth explained. "Then comes the sign with some accent color around it."



HARDLY UNIMPORTANT. Although not as flashy as seasonal color or as obvious as 15-foot-tall pergolas, hardscape materials can be just as effective when it comes to creating an effective entranceway.

"Hardscapes can make the design successful by themselves," Klein asserted, talking about the difference between using rustic cobblestones and simple poured asphalt. "Hardscapes are just as important as the plant material because they set the tone of the landscape and create the setting for the plant material."

"The treatment of hard surfaces can be

particularly important when it comes to designing for vehicular traffic," added Catlin. "Using repeating colored bands of concrete pavers or brick bands to surround an area or create a line to cross over can accent the entranceway and catch people's eye much better than a plain, broom-finished driveway. It creates a much better product for little more cost."

Catlin also maintained that function and expected traffic types should be considered when it comes to selecting a hard surface. "The hard surface should be long lasting and good for all kinds of footwear, as well as

other traffic like wheelchairs," he pointed out.

MAKING THE SALE. As important as the entranceway is to the overall success of the structure behind it, clients aren't always quick to understand the need for such an additional investment.

"It is hard to sell entranceways," noted Firth, "but once clients see a good one, they're sold."

"A lot of times, the budget is paramount," recognized Catlin. "Sometimes, we have to convince the client that it's easier to justify a more costly detail in the entranceway than to install something such as a fence or some benches elsewhere in the landscape, especially in areas where the entranceway is important to direct people into the building." **LI**

The author is Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

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USE READER SERVICE #66

Profitable Pricing

By Jim Huston

T

he seasoned estimator faces some unique challenges and risk factors when bidding maintenance projects. The first challenge is to analyze and accurately identify operational costs as well as general and administrative costs. The second challenge is a marketing one. Where is the market regarding the price for maintenance work in your part of the country? I call this market pre-disposition. And how should you present pricing information to your customers? Does the customer want a lump sum price proposal, or will the work be billed on a time and materials basis? How do you include non-site time for travel, loading/unloading vehicles, cleanup, etc.?

A GOOD PLACE TO START. For smaller commercial or residential projects billing less than \$500 per month, the easiest place to start is to determine our maintenance package crew and equipment requirements for a "generic" or typical day. For purposes of this example, we will use the following two-person crew.

<u>Labor</u>	<u>\$/%</u>
Leadman/driver	\$9.00/hr.
Laborer	\$7.00/hr.
Labor burden	30.0%
OTF (45 hours/week, 9 hours/day) ..	6.0%
RF (risk factor)	10.0%
OPH (overhead per hour)	\$7.00
<u>Equipment</u>	<u>CPH</u>
Truck and trailer	\$5.00
36-inch mower	\$3.00
21-inch mower	\$2.00
Blower	\$2.00
Edger	\$2.00

Second, determine the average amount of drive time, load/unload (non-site) time per day for this crew if it only worked on the type of jobs for which the maintenance package would be used.

We estimate that this crew will average 1.5 hours per person off-site and 7.5 hours on-site during a typical 9-hour workday. That is a total of 3.0 hours of off-site time per day for the crew.

We are now ready to cost out our maintenance package.

The repetitive nature of maintenance jobs demands that contractors price them accurately.

By the Numbers

We first calculate our Phase I production costs. Notice that I round up to the nearest whole dollar when more than a few cents appear in our M/L/E (material, labor or equipment) columns. I included an overtime and risk factor in the crew average wage, which I rounded up to \$9.50.

To obtain Phase I production labor hours, subtract drive time and non-site hours from the total paid labor hours for the day. In our example, there are 18 total paid labor hours for the crew for the day. After we subtract the three off-site hours, the result is 15 on-site production labor hours.

We then calculate the "average" number of hours that the mowers, blowers, trimmers and edgers will be used during the 15 on-site production hours.

Next, subtotal the M/L/E costs.

Phase II general conditions are calculated next. The crucial off-site time and the truck and trailer time are included here.

In this example, it is assumed that lunch and break times are not paid and are not included in the production or general condition labor hours. If, for example, a 15-minute break in the morning is part of the paid eight labor hours per day per man, include it in general condition labor hours.

$2 \text{ men} \times .25 \text{ hrs/day} = .5 \text{ hrs/day}$

Subtotal Phase II general condition costs.

Draw a double line below this, and...

Subtotal Phases I and II M/L/E costs.

You are now ready to add the Phase III markups and margins to the bid.

There are no materials involved on these maintenance jobs and, therefore, no sales tax markup on materials.

The 30 percent labor burden is then calculated and added to the total labor for the bid.

Subtotal your bid once again.

Add equipment to your labor and labor burden totals.

Subtotal. This subtotal is the total direct cost (TDC) amount in the bid.

Calculate your general and administrative (G&A) overhead cost to add to the bid.

Subtotal the bid. The break-even point (BEP) for the bid is arrived at when you add G&A overhead to the total direct costs in the bid.

Add profit and a contingency factor (if desired) as a straight percent or as a profit per hour amount.

You have now arrived at your final price for a "generic" day for your maintenance package. In our example, this crew needs to bill out \$462 every day to be profitable.

CURB TIME. To calculate the "curb time" rate for estimating smaller jobs:

Divide the total daily desired price by the on-site (curb time) production hours.

The total daily price of \$462 divided by the 15 production hours equals \$30.80 per curb man-hour. Round this up to \$31 and multiply this rate by the number of people on the crew. This translates into $\$31 \times 2$ which equals \$62 per curb crew hour.

You can now bid smaller jobs by first estimating the crew's curb time at a particular job. If you want to bill on a "time & materials" (T&M) basis, be sure to charge the curb time rate to reflect the hours spent on the job. If you are going to add non-site time to the bill, divide the \$462 crew billable goal for the day by 18 hours instead of 15 hours. The rate drops to \$25.67 per man-hour. Just be sure to bill all 18 hours each day and reach the daily billable goal of \$462 for the crew.

Pricing a job site that requires 30 minutes curb time:

$30 \text{ minutes of curb time} \times \$62 = \$31 \text{ per visit to the job site.}$

Remember that curb time starts when a crew pulls up to the curb (at the site being bid) and ends when it drives away.

Note the impact that estimated drive and non-site time has on the crew rate of \$62 if it increases or decreases. (See box at right)

Do not include

materials or subcontractors in your curb time rates, as they can greatly confuse the matter. I would encourage you to mark up materials a minimum of 20 percent (10 percent for overhead and 10 percent for net profit) above your costs and subcontractors a minimum of 15 percent (5 percent for overhead and 10 percent for net profit) above your costs.

A. Drive and non-site time drops from 1.5 to 1.0 hours per day per person.

Total production time – 16 man hours

Step (1): Total price for a day = \$462 = \$28.88/man-hour

Step (2): Round up to \$29 and multiply \$29 by number of crewmembers.

$\$29 \times 2 = \58 (crew hourly curb time rate)

B. Drive & non-site time increases from 1.5 to 2.0 hours per person per day.

Total production time – 14 man hours

Step (1): Total price for a day = \$462 = \$33/man-hour

Step (2): Multiply by crew size.

$\$33 \times 2 = \66 (crew hourly curb time rate)





Market predisposition can significantly influence the rates a contractor can charge for various services.
Photo: Vern Goff

PROFIT ANALYSIS. The daily route billable goal: If a route cannot consistently bill \$462 per day as determined in our example, you should examine it to see what job(s) is causing the problem. To do so, determine your per minute rates as follows:

Jobs priced at the TDC or BEP levels should be adjusted as soon as possible. However, be careful. The goal is to make the route profitable and to maximize the billings on a particular route. If a job is priced at the TDC or BEP level, and it is a large part of a route, be careful about increasing its price if you think you might lose it.

It goes without saying that if a job is priced above the desired \$1.03 per minute rate, you should probably leave the pricing for that job alone.

MARKET PREDISPOSITION. Maintenance markets become predisposed toward certain pricing levels. I usually see maintenance crews billing out between \$22 to \$30 per hour around the country. However, certain

Crew curb time minute rate: Divide the billable goal for the day by the crew curb time minutes.

Step (1): Billable goal for the day \$462
 Crew curb time minutes = 7.5 hours X 60 minutes = 450 minutes
 \$462 per days over 450 minutes = \$1.03 per minute

Step (2): Multiply the average amount of crew minutes spent on each job by \$1.03. Increase under-priced jobs as soon as possible. Inform crews about the amount of time they should spend on each job. If you cannot raise prices until next season, set job time limit goals for your crews and examine production methods for inefficiencies.

Step (3): Calculate BEP and TDC per minute rates. These rates will help examine jobs within a route. They will also help identify which jobs are priced at breakeven and which ones only cover direct costs.

- A. BEP per minute rate:

BEP amount	\$416 divided by
Crew curb time minutes =	450 minutes = \$.924 per minute
- B. TDC per minute amount:

TDC amount	\$290 divided by
Crew curb time minutes =	450 minutes = \$.644 per minute

high-tech markets in New England see commercial maintenance billing rates of \$40 to \$45 per man-hour. San Diego County in Southern California sees this rate drop to \$13 to \$14 per man-hour.

After conducting estimating workshops throughout California, we noticed that maintenance rates varied dramatically from region to region due to market predisposition. For example, residential maintenance just north of San Francisco was priced between \$31 and \$33 per man-hour, and commercial maintenance in Los Angeles at around \$20 per man hour.

Rates consistently dropped as you got closer to the Mexican border. Market forces of supply and demand for labor appeared to be the prevailing factor driving maintenance rates down. The further south you went, the more available labor became at reduced prices. Market predisposition reflected the supply/demand forces active in the market. The wise contractor should pay attention to market predisposition, especially when bidding jobs outside of their normal area of operations.

CONCLUSION. Successfully bidding smaller maintenance projects is easier and a lot less risky when you have the right tools. Identifying

such benchmarks as billable amounts for routes, hourly curb time rates and per-minute rates can significantly reduce the risk in the bidding process. Understanding market predisposition can also provide a competitive edge at the bid table.

These methods are also applicable to bidding larger maintenance projects. However, each phase (i.e., mulching, fertilization, mowing by mower size, trimming, etc.) will have its own separate bid worksheet like the one used in our example. The principles are the same. There's just more detail and risk.

Contractors who consistently use these methods not only have the tools to reduce their risks and to bid today's jobs accurately, they also have the tools that will ensure that they are still in business and around to bid tomorrow's jobs as well. **□**

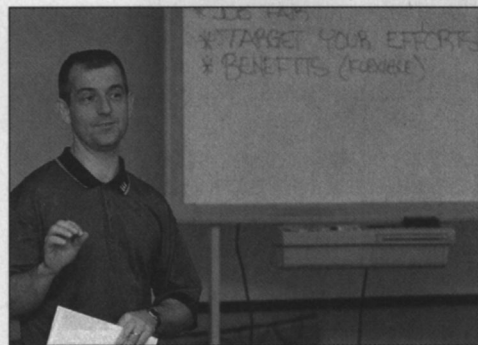
The author is president of Smith Huston Inc., Denver, Colo. He can be reached at 800/451-5588.

Disclaimer: The labor rates, equipment costs and other figures used in this article are industry standards and should be adjusted to reflect production methods and costs for individual companies.

Contractors Prepare for the Future

Leading contractors from across the country came together to share their thoughts on the future of the professional contracting industry.

By Bob West



(Above left) Husqvarna President Dave Zerfoss talks with contractors about the solutions equipment can provide to their labor challenges. (Above) Moderator Jim Paluch presents another issue for the group to discuss. Photos: Bill Webster

W

hat lawn care and landscape contractor in business today isn't challenged by issues such as personnel recruitment and retention, rising insurance costs and being prepared for the increasingly competitive industry?

Fifteen contractors spent two-and-a-half days at the North American headquarters of Husqvarna Forest & Garden, Charlotte, N.C., addressing these issues at the second Industry Roundtable sponsored by Husqvarna and *Lawn & Landscape* magazine.

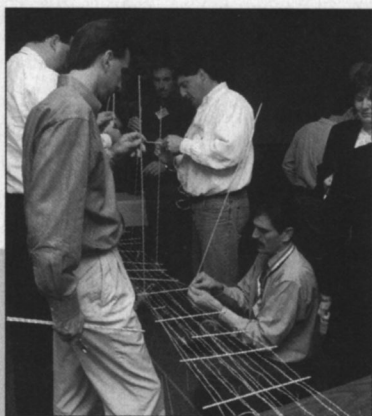
Following are some of the contractors' thoughts on a wide range of topics:

EFFECTIVE RECRUITING APPROACHES:

"I think the most important thing is to offer a professional organization with a lot of communication and to care about who the employees are as people." — *Bill Gordon, Signature Landscape*

"We need to look for people who appreciate the immediate satisfaction doing the jobs offers — people who want to put their mark on a property." — *Mike Rorie, Groundmasters*

(continued on page 74)



(Above) Husqvarna's Mark Michaels (kneeling) and some of the contractors engage in a bridge building exercise. (Left) Attendees Larry Neuhoff (back to camera), Tim Lynott (left), Michael Byrne (middle) and Phil Lundy (right) discuss effective incentive programs.



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industry roundtable

(continued from page 72)

"You have to show people the keys to their growth and convey that there is a career path with the company." – **Mark Arrimour, Pennink Arrimour.**

"We have 2.8 percent unemployment, so the traditional methods can't be relied upon as much. We recruit at three or four local Hispanic churches." – **Chris Kujawa, Kujawa Enterprises**

"Remember, a lot of times we're dealing with people at or near the poverty level. What are they looking for? Stability, a regular paycheck and language familiarity – a sense of doing a good job isn't as important." – **Jack Hasbrouck, The Groundskeeper**

"We get college graduates involved in recruiting so we have them recruiting on a peer basis. We send them back to their own schools and pay their expenses." – **Tim Lynott, Chapel Valley**

"An added benefit to using current employees is that when they are recruiting they're also selling themselves on your company all

over again." – **Jim Paluch, JP Horizons**

"We pay a \$250 bonus to employees who recruit a foreman who stays with us for six months. That works well, but you can end up paying often enough that employees see it as more of a right than a bonus." – **David Harting, Nanak's Landscaping**

INNOVATIVE HIRING PRACTICES:

"The approach has to vary based on the position you're hiring for." – **Brian Moore, The Brickman Group**

"The first impression is critical. We always start with a tour of our facility." – **Harting**

"We have a panel of people – foreman

At the Table

The second Industry Roundtable sponsored by Husqvarna Forest & Garden, Charlotte, N.C., and *Lawn & Landscape* magazine brought together 15 contractors from across the country to discuss some of the most critical issues facing their companies. The roundtable, which took place at Husqvarna's North American headquarters, was moderated by Jim Paluch, JP Horizons, Cleveland, Ohio.

Participating contractors were:

- ★ Mark Arrimour, Pennink Arrimour, Huntingdon Valley, Pa.
- ★ Peter Bowman, Four Seasons Landscape & Maintenance, San Jose, Calif.

and account managers – interview candidates. It impresses them and shows them how important this position is to the company." – **Frank Mills, Hillenmeyer Nurseries**

"Hiring has to be pushed down to the field-level people. They're often the best at



"Yesterday, I serviced over 270,000 square feet of home owners' lawns. I left the building at 7:30 in the morning and returned around 4:45. The most difficult thing I did all day was pour the fertilizer into the spreader. Best of all, I'm over 50 and didn't even feel worn-out."

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- ★ Michael Byrne, Byrne Brothers Landscaping, Middleton, Mass.
- ★ Michael Currin, Greenscape, Holly Springs, N.C.
- ★ Bill Gordon, Signature Landscape, Olathe, Kan.
- ★ David Harting, Nanak's Landscaping, Orlando, Fla.
- ★ Jack Hasbrouck, The Groundskeeper, Tucson, Ariz.
- ★ Chris Kujawa, Kujawa Enterprises, Cudahy, Wis.
- ★ Phil Lundy, Northwest Landscape Industries, Portland, Ore.
- ★ Tim Lynott, Chapel Valley Landscape, Woodbine, Md.
- ★ Frank Mills, Hillenmeyer Nurseries, Lexington, Ky.
- ★ Brian Moore, The Brickman Group, Long Grove, Ill.
- ★ Larry Neuhoft, Landtrends, San Diego, Calif.
- ★ Chuck Richardson, Gator Landscaping, Longwood, Fla.
- ★ Mike Rorie, Groundmasters, Cincinnati, Ohio

measuring whether or not someone will be able to do the work. Also, people will work harder to help someone they're responsible for bringing into the company." — *Phil Lundy, Northwest Landscape Industries*
 "We think there has to be a formalized

process or strategy with assigned duties for who first greets candidates, who follows up with them. Plus, let them know your company is a selective place to work." — *David Zerfoss, Husqvarna*
 "We're going to put together a list of our employees and their history of promotions to show that people do move up." — *Michael Currin, Greenscapes*
 "I like the idea of having each supervisor come up with a list of three people they would like to have working with them, and then making them personally responsible for pursuing those people." — *Harting*
 "It's a good idea to have one sheet that summarizes the employee benefits the com-

pany offers so you can put them all in front of applicants." — *Steve Wood, Husqvarna*

INCENTIVE PROGRAMS THAT WORK:

"There has to be buy in from the employees with measurable goals that they believe in and that they helped develop." — *Wood*

"We tried to develop a program tied into hourly production, but it really cost us in quality." — *Gordon*

"The key is what we call Expectation Theory. You have to define the job and set specific goals. You can tell someone to plant the color on a project, or give them 16 flats to plant in one day." — *Hasbrouck*

"The scoreboard is the way we're going. We think being open book is a no-brainer, and then you can compete internally against the margins, profits and sales. Everybody makes it or doesn't as a group." — *Rorie*

The author is Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.



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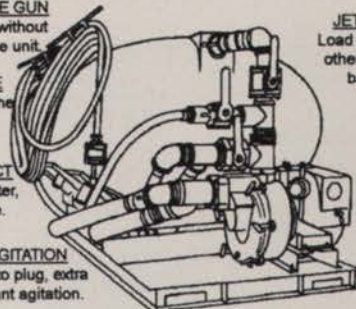
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(continued on page 78)

LITERATURE

Destructive Turfgrass Insects, Biology, Diagnosis and Control by Daniel Potter and available from **Ann Arbor Press**, is a new reference book written specifically for the professional turfgrass manager. Along with full descriptions and control strategies for the most important insect problems in turf, this 334-page publication contains 32 pages of full-color pictures to aid in the identification of insect species in their various life stages, as well as chapters covering the value and benefits of turfgrass, integrated pest management strategies, monitoring strategies and using pesticides safely. Potter is a professor of entomology at the University of Kentucky.

Circle 201 on reader service card

C-LOC engineered vinyl sheet piling brochure is available from **Crane Plastics Co.** The erosion control product is ideal for shoreline bulkheads, wave breakers, retaining walls and footbridges. The free, four-page color brochure provides a chart listing of C-LOC physical properties and plan views.

Circle 202 on reader service card

Landscapers Supply has released its Spring/Summer edition catalog with more than 2,500 parts for ground care supplies and maintenance equipment. The 267-page catalog carries items such as engines, engine parts, accessories and mower parts at wholesale prices. There is also a special section dedicated to closeout items, and a frequent buyer program that can save contractors money.

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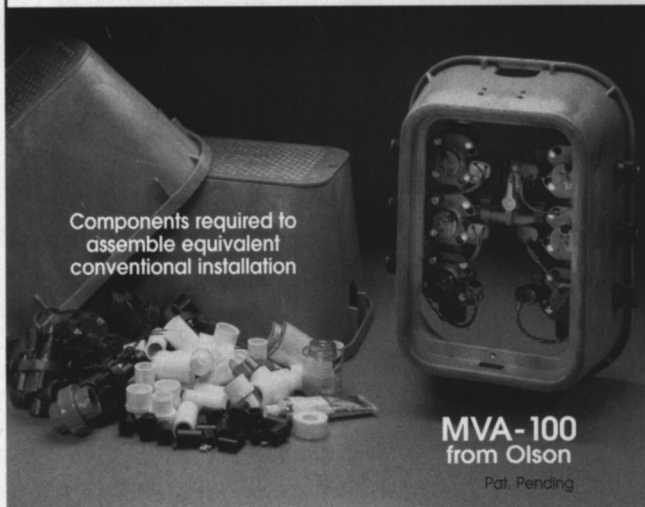
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(continued from page 76)

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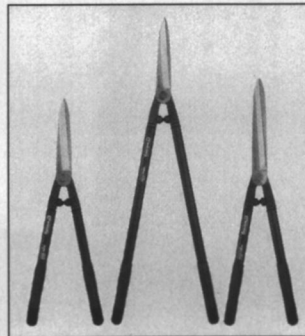
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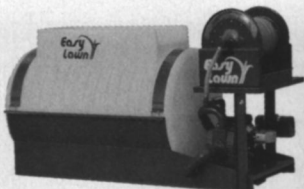
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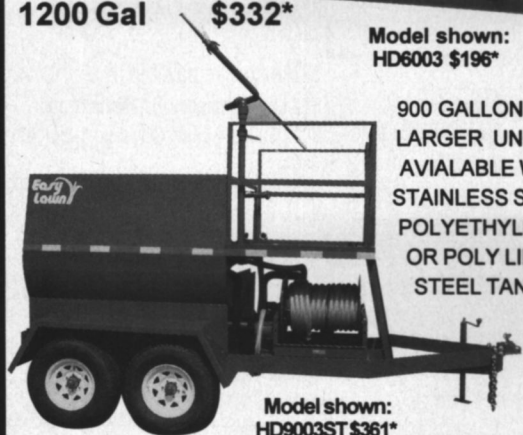
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(continued from page 36)

McGilvray cited three principles that keep good employees around: consistency, respect and an equitable bonus program.

"First of all, they need to understand that when they work hard there will be another job for them to go to," said McGilvray. "Second, we insist upon people being treated with respect. Anyone who can work 40 hours a week in landscape construction deserves the unqualified respect."

He also believes strongly in bonuses for everyone based on company performance only. "There is no bonus for individual greatness," he explained. "For example, we can't have people competing for the best jobs, nor should someone in the field be penalized for having to complete a job that an estimator made a mistake on. You have to love the bad jobs even more than the good jobs to keep them from hurting you."

Proper training is also an important element of retention. Glenn Berry, a superintendent who has been with the company

since 1996, spent his first seven months in the labor pool learning about company operations. McGilvray and general superintendent Bill Turano monitored his progress.

"Scott and Bill would ride along with me, asking questions to see how much I was learning about the process," said Berry. "They also wanted to make sure I could handle working on more than one site at a time. They have an open door policy about asking questions and solving problems."

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The author is Managing Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

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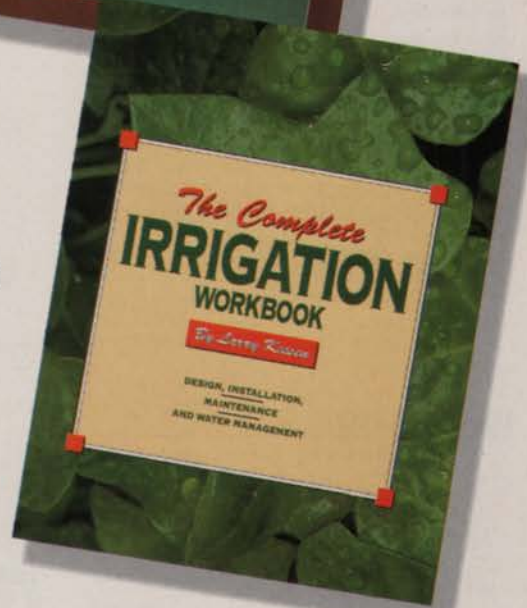
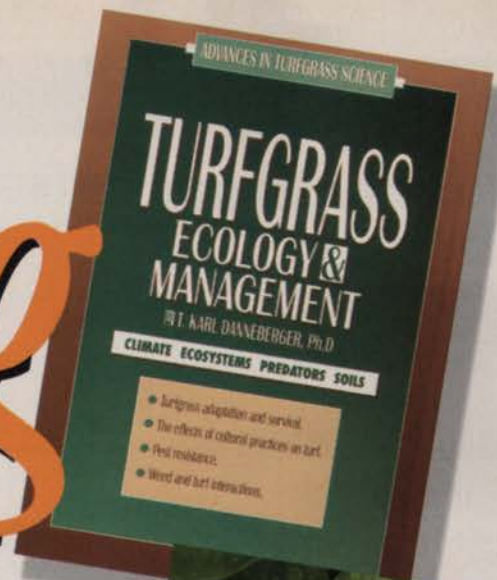
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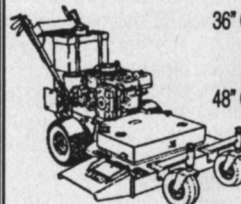


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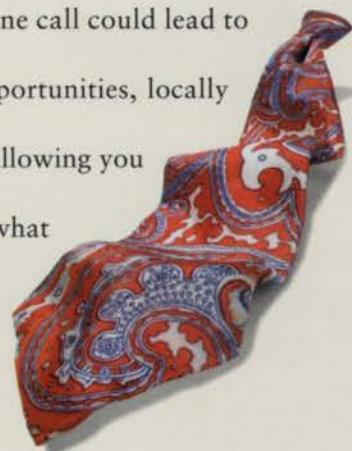
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