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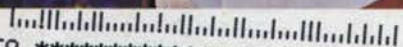
On-Site  
Operations

Selecting  
Turf Species

Workers'  
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Irrigation &  
The Future

# First *Thing's* First



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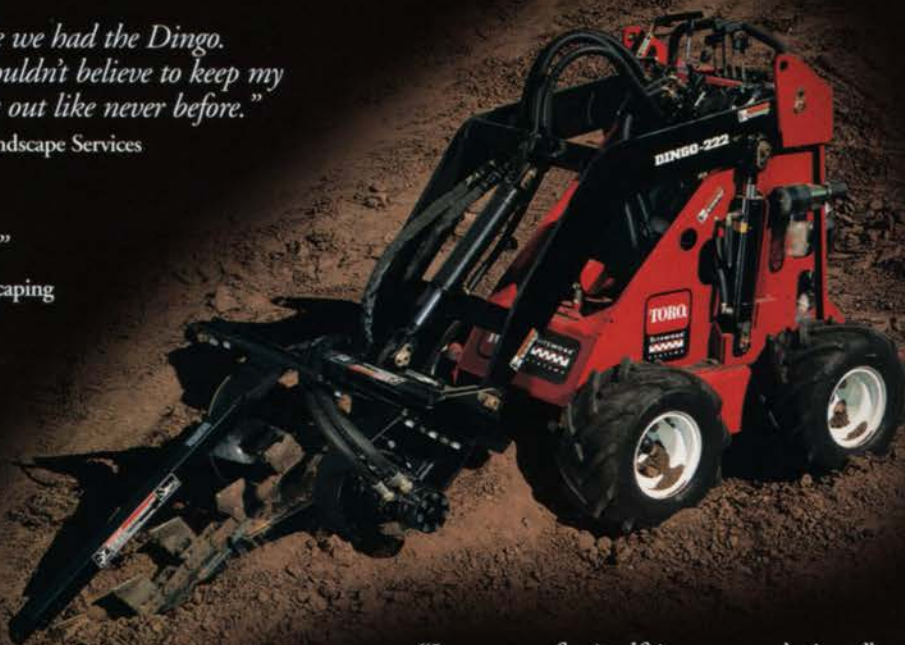
Tom Waltz, Harvest Landscape Services

*"It's constructed like a tank."*

Phil Pickett, Pickett Landscaping

*"If I met a skeptic, I'd tell them to try the Dingo. They'd be amazed. In our line of work, productivity is the name of the game and the Dingo gives us the ability to do a job with less people in the same amount of time."*

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## Cover Photo

by Paul Joslin,  
Upper Darby, Pa.

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S1



Bob West  
Editor

If your business applies pesticide products, then you had best take notice of what the state of New York did to TruGreen-ChemLawn.

The state's Department of Environmental Conservation levied its most severe fine ever – \$600,000 – against the lawn care company, primarily for a failure to adhere to posting and notification requirements (see page 8 for full story).


But the ramifications of this move may go far beyond a fine against one company. The state of New York has always been vigilant in its regulation of pesticide applications in the name of environmental health. This action speaks volumes about just how serious the state has gotten in its efforts to restrict pesticide use. In fact, a proposal to give local governments the authority to ban federal and state-registered pesticides made it through the New York Assembly and Senate before being vetoed by Governor George Pataki on July 27.

And the battle continues in New York. Legislation lurks in the Assembly and Senate that would dramatically expand posting and notification laws for lawn care companies and, ironically, make adherence to a true integrated pest management program significantly more difficult.

The legislative doings in New York should be of concern to any company applying pesticide products in any state, however, just as any user of hand-held power equipment should be closely watching legislative developments in California. These two states wield tremendous political clout and often serve as the launching pads from which national issues arise.

But, for many contractors, legislative issues are of little concern. For any number of reasons – belief that their voice carries little influence, lack of concern for events taking place hundreds of miles away, consumption with managing their own business – these contractors refuse to lend their time, energy and voice to the arguments being made in defense of their own businesses.

And has there ever been a time when this industry found itself under a more widespread attack? Efforts range from the aforementioned efforts in California and New York to the pending Environmental Protection Agency evaluations of key pesticide products.

Pesticide manufacturers and equipment suppliers employ considerable resources and have significant financial motivation to thwart such legislative attempts. But the producers of these products are not the voices that should be heard the loudest or that can speak with the greatest clarity. Unfortunately, the voices of those who use these products daily and depend on them to operate their businesses – the contractors – continue to remain largely silent, and speaking up when proposed legislation has already become a law is too late. 

*Bob West*

*"A crowd always  
thinks with its  
sympathy, never with  
its reason."*

– William Alger

# Lawn & Landscape

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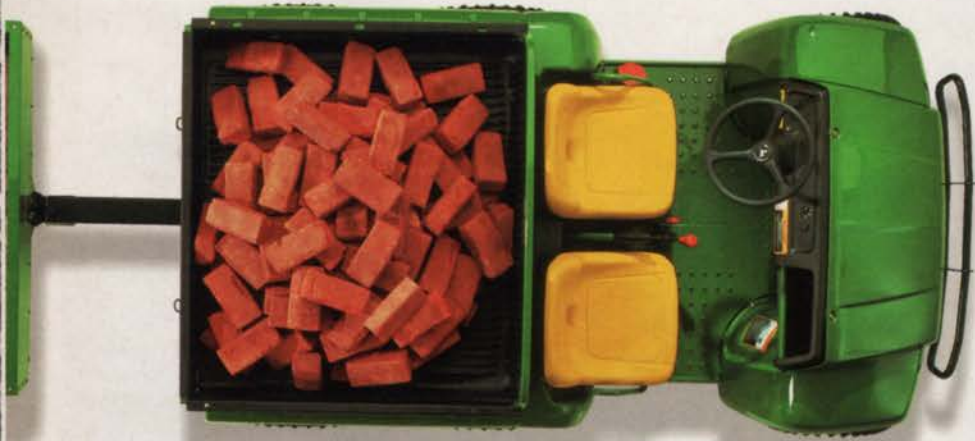
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## KEY INDUSTRY INDICATOR DOWN

Many economists look to the number of new home constructions on a month-to-month basis as a prognosticator of the economy's immediate future. After one of the strongest runs in history, housing starts have dropped in comparison to the preceding month for three out of the last five months. These numbers, combined with interest rates' climb over the 8 percent level for the first time in two years, have generated concern that the multi-year economic boom that has benefited the United States may finally be slowing.

In addition, June and July results marked the first decreases in housing starts from the comparable months in 1998 in the first half of this year, contributing to concern that housing starts will continue to drop off of 1998's pace.

## HOUSING STARTS SLOW



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Units (Thousands)	1,661	1,571	1,665	1,577	1,746
M/M % Change	5.7	-5.6	5.6	-9.7	-0.3
Y/Y % Change	-3.4	-3.4	8.0	2.3	10.3



(Source: The Dismal Scientist)

## PESTICIDE BATTLES HEAT UP

WASHINGTON, D.C. — "For almost three years, the Environmental Protection Agency has refused to implement the Food Quality Protection Act on the basis of sound science."

The industry will be pleased to note that those

words came from three members of the U.S. House of Representatives. These politicians, two democrats and one republican, are leading the fight to ensure that any EPA decisions affecting pesticide registrations are based on scientific research as opposed to default assumptions not based on facts.

"The FQPA established a new health-based standard for registering new pesticides and reregistering existing ones," noted the three congressmen, referring to the EPA's controversial risk cup assessment method that views all of a product's applications collectively. "In order to meet the new standard, EPA needs substantial quantities of new data. Yet, it hasn't issued any regulations specifying what information is needed from registrants/manufacturers."

The congressmen are all supporters of a bill, called H.R. 1592, that, if passed into law, would

require EPA to back up all of its decisions with sound science. A companion bill (S. 1464) was introduced by 22 senators in the Senate.

While FQPA calls for EPA to evaluate the safety of more than 9,000 pesticides in the next 10 years, Aug. 3 was the first deadline for EPA to have the first 3,000 evaluations concluded.

The agency reported it has completed this first batch of evaluations, and in doing so it cancelled the registration of two important agricultural pesticide products. Both of these products are members of the organophosphate family of pesticides, which has raised industry concerns that key lawn care organophosphate products may be in jeopardy.

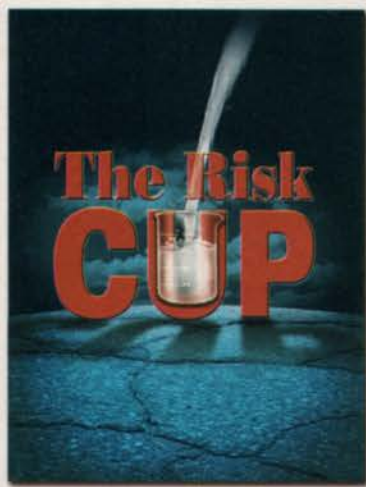
"Turf and ornamentals are essential to a clean environ-

ment," noted Allen James, executive director, Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment, in testimony before the

*"For almost three years, the Environmental Protection Agency has refused to implement the Food Quality Protection Act on the basis of sound science."*

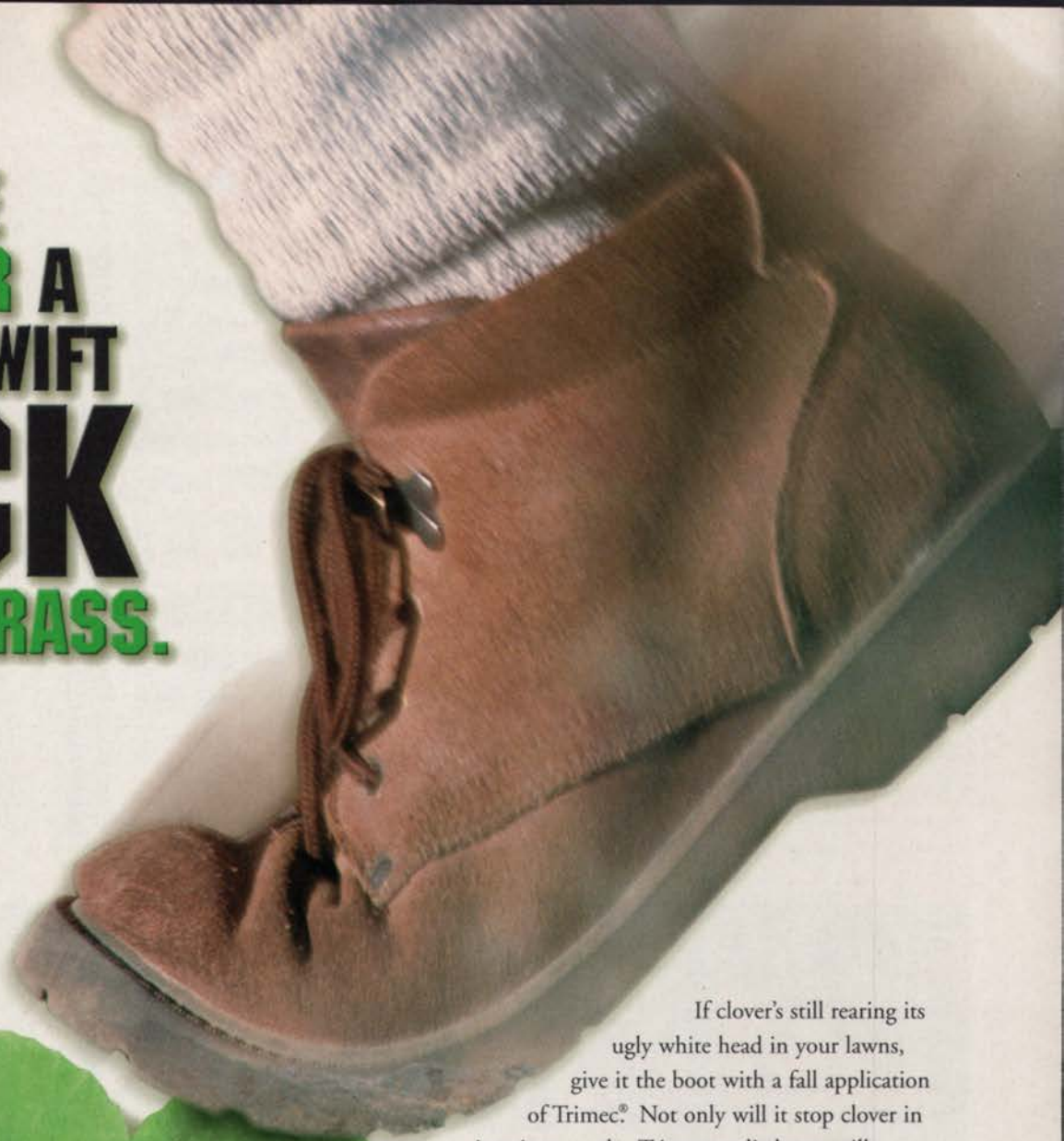
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture on Aug. 3. "In order to achieve these benefits, one has to fight off literally thousands of insect species, plant diseases and weeds. The loss of any pesticide product in a planned pest control strategy would reduce the array of products available to adequately manage pest problems."

(continued on page 10)





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# MARKET TRENDS

(continued from page 8)

## NEW YORK FINES TRUGREEN-CHEMLAWN

ALBANY, N.Y. – The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation levied a \$600,000 penalty against TruGreen-ChemLawn for alleged violations of the state's pesticide laws.

The penalty, the largest of its kind in New York state history, covers more than 60 alleged violations stemming from more than 35 applications of commercial lawn pesticides between 1994 and 1999. The bulk of the alleged violations dealt with a failure on TruGreen-ChemLawn's

part to adequately notify homeowners of the products applied to their property.

"This enforcement action sends a strong message to the lawn care industry and other pesticide users that the DEC is vigorously enforcing pesticide laws and regulations to protect the public and our natural resources," noted DEC Commissioner John Cahill. "As a result of this consent order, TruGreen-ChemLawn will study alternatives to traditional pest control methods that may ultimately help establish innovative industry-wide pest management practices that rely less on broad-spectrum pesticides."

The DEC suspended \$200,000 of the penalty, contingent on TruGreen-ChemLawn's

# 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.

• **SEPT. 14** The Southern Illinois University Turf Field Day, Carbondale, Ill. Contact: 618/536-7751.

• **SEPT. 16-18** Florida Nursery & Allied Trade Show, Orlando. Contact: 407/295-7994.

• **SEPT. 16-19** Lighting for Landscapes, Part 2, Troy, N.Y. Contact: 518/276-8716.

• **SEPT. 29-OCT. 2** American Society of Consulting Arborists Annual Conference, San Antonio. Contact: 301/947-0483.

• **SEPT. 30-OCT. 2** Lighting for Landscapes, Part I, Troy, N.Y. Contact: 518/276-8716.

• **SEPT. 30-DEC. 16** Arborists' and Tree Workers' Certification Preparation Courses, Brea, Calif. Contact: 909/656-3431.

• **OCT. 2** New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association Certified Landscape Technicians



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- 5. Irrigation Contractor
- 6. Landscape Architect
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#### II. IN-HOUSE LAWN/CARE MAINTENANCE

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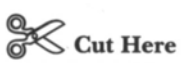
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**OCT. 2-5** Lighting for Landscapes, Part 2, Troy, N.Y. Contact: 518/276-8716.

**OCT. 3-5** ANLA 1999 Legislative Leadership Conference, Washington, D.C. Contact: 202/789-2900.

**OCT. 6** 1999 Washington Landscape Trade Show & Field Day, Puyallup, Wash. Contact: 425/644-7642.

**OCT. 6-7** Southern California Turfgrass Council's Turfgrass, Landscape and Equipment Expo, Costa Mesa, Calif. Contact: 800/650-9596.

**OCT. 6-7** The Turfgrass Landscape and Equipment Expo, Costa Mesa, Calif. Contact: 800/650-9595.

**OCT. 6-7** The National Landscape & Nursery

Expo, Baltimore, Md. Contact: 800/252-4757.

**OCT. 6-9** Interstate Professional Applicators Association Annual Convention, Sun River, Ore. Contact: 425/823-2600.

**OCT. 7-8** Dr. Alex Shigo's Modern Arboriculture, By the Book, Portsmouth, N.H. Contact: 603/436-4804.

**OCT. 8-9** ALCA Masters in Management for the Landscape Industry, Hartford, Conn. Contact: 800/395-2522

**OCT. 19-20** The Western Nursery & Garden Expo, Las Vegas. Contact: 800/517-0391.

**OCT. 25-28** Kentucky Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show, Covington, Ky. Contact: 606/623-6130.

**OCT. 27-30** California Landscape Contractors Association Annual Convention, New Orleans, La. Contact: 800/448-2522.

**OCT. 28** Sixth Annual Southeast Texas Grounds Maintenance Conference, Conroe, Texas. Contact: 409/539-7822.

**OCT. 29-31** New Jersey Shade Tree Federation's Annual Meeting and Tree Expo, Cherry Hill, N.J. Contact: 732/246-3210.

**NOV. 3-5** ERNA's Expo Fall '99, Atlantic City, N.J. Contact: 800/376-2463.

**NOV. 7** 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Education Conference of the National Institute on Park and Grounds Management, Kansas City, Mo. Contact: 920/733-2301.

**NOV. 9-12** NYSTA Turf & Grounds Exposition, Syracuse, N.Y. Contact: 800/

873-8873.

**NOV. 12-16** PLCAA's Lawn & Landscape Conference and the Green Industry Exposition, Baltimore. Contact: 800/458-3466.

**NOV. 13-16** ALCA Landscape and Grounds Maintenance Conference, Baltimore. Contact: 800/395-2522.

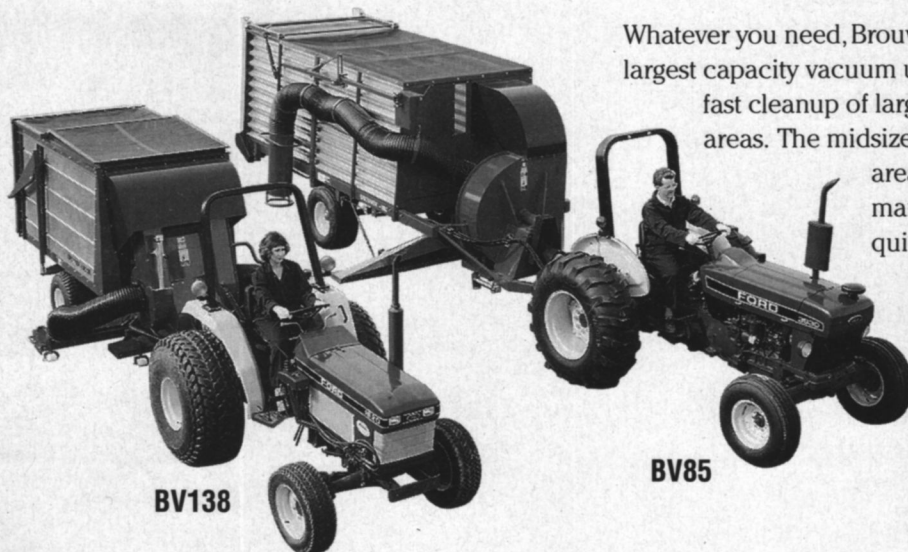
**NOV. 13-16** Green Industry Expo, Baltimore. Contact: 770/973-2019.

**DEC. 6-9** OTF Conference & Show, Columbus, Ohio. Contact: 740/452-4541.

**DEC. 6-9** IANJ Turfgrass Expo, Atlantic City, N.J. Contact: 973/379-1100.

**DEC. 7-9** Georgia Turfgrass Association's Conference and Trade Show, Atlanta. Contact: 770/975-4123.

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## MARKET TRENDS

implementation "of more extensive notification, written contract and lawn posting requirements," according to a release from the DEC.

The billion-dollar lawn care company also agreed to reduce its use of pesticides by 5 percent throughout the state by adhering to integrated pest management practices.

Bob von Gruben, executive vice president for TruGreen-ChemLawn, said, "We take very seriously our commitments and relationships with our customers and the DEC. During the nine-year period reviewed by the DEC, TruGreen performed more than 7.5 million service visits and reduced pesticide usage by over 50 percent statewide."

## ASSOCIATION NEWS

**C**lint Albin resigned from the **American Nursery & Landscape Association** to become a partner in the newly-formed Garden Center Management Group. Albin joined ANLA in 1990 as director of marketing and retail services. He also played a key role in the development of programs including The Management Clinic and Retail Specialty Tour.

The **Professional Lawn Care Association of America** is offering *Fundamentals of Turfgrass Management* by Nick Christians. The book covers everything from basic turfgrass science to establishment, mowing,

irrigation, topdressing, fertilization, pest management practices and more. For more information, call: 800/458-3466.

Charles Hart, president of The Chas. C. Hart Seed Co., was named 1999 president of the **Atlantic Seedmen's Association**. Hart is the fourth member of the Hart Seed Co. to assume the presidency of ASA.

The **Professional Grounds Management Society** announced a new board of directors. The posts include Randall Willis, president; Tom Riccardi, past president; Kevin O'Donnell, first vice president; George Van Haasteren, second vice president; Matthew Vehr, treasurer. The remaining board is composed of six regional directors and at-large directors and officers.

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## PEOPLE

**M**edalist America named **Myra Potts** turf specialist for the Southeast U.S. sales region.

Van Waters & Rogers announced that **Ronald Ostrander**, **Angela Ramos** and **Terry Johnson** joined the professional products & services business unit as turf and landscape specialists.

**Jeff Mariola** has been appointed to president at Rentokil Initial, Tropical Plant Services.

Green Mark announced **John Deming** as director of sales for the Northern California region.

**Harold Pinto** joined Textron Turf Care And Specialty Products as managing director.

**Dan Biddick** was appointed to sales representative for Wisconsin and Minnesota at National Seed Company.

American Cyanamid named **Kyle Miller** to senior technical specialist for the professional turf and ornamental products group.

Florists' Mutual Insurance announced the following appointments: **Beldon Burch** as an independent agent, **Joseph Robertson** to direct agent – field marketing representative and **Thomas Hoots** to direct agent – field sales representative.

Aqua Control named **David Thraikill** to marketing manager.

**Sam Gayman** joined the sales and marketing staff of Bri-Mar Manufacturing.



Ronald Ostrander



Angela Ramos

## STUDIES LINK HOME PRICE TO LANDSCAPE

GREENVILLE, S.C. – It's the information contractors have long sought – a home's landscape quality may be linked to its sale price, according to two studies conducted by a Clemson University professor.

*Landscape Quality and the Price of Single-Family Houses: Further Evidence from Home Sales in Greenville, S.C. and The Demand for Better Landscaping – A Hedonic Approach* are two studies researched by Mark Henry, professor of agricultural and applied economics at Clemson University on the subject.



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# MARKET TRENDS

According to Henry's studies, which relate between 200 and 250 Greenville home prices to their characteristics, location and landscape quality, houses that obtained an "excellent" landscape rating from a local landscape contractor

could expect a sales price about six to seven points higher (see chart, below) than equivalent houses with "good" landscaping. Improving the landscaping from "average" to "good" resulted in a home price premium approximately four to five per-

centage points higher when the house was sold.

"Like many home improvements, such as central air conditioning," Henry explained, "the value of superior landscaping is likely to be recovered, at least in part through an increased sales price when the house is sold."

The reason for conducting the studies, according to Henry, was because there are so few guidelines available to homeowners on the return in sales price that they might expect from added investments in their home landscaping.

"It's simple economics," Henry said. "I wanted to see what a

contribution to a product, such as a home, could do to its sale price. Could a return on investment be realized?"

Although the studies' results proved positive in Greenville, Henry admitted that the same type of results are not guaranteed for other cities across the United States until similar studies are done in those areas.

"The results of this study are reasonable for the time and geographic area and shouldn't be generalized," Henry warned. "For example, in Tucson, Ariz., where there are many rock gardens and not much lawn space, a study like this may not prove any connections between home price and landscaping quality." **LL**

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10,000	\$112,540	\$128,146
20,000	123,603	142,124
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40,000	135,753	157,628
50,000	139,913	162,971

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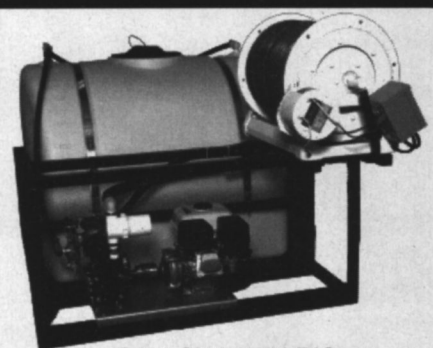
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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

I enjoy reading *Lawn & Landscape*. The articles provide good insight into the various niches people in the industry have carved out to make a good living. New products and equipment advertised and profiled are also informative.

However, I have to take issue with the advice from Kevin McSherry which you quote, "We normally look at a container and triple its size and that will become the size of the hole." This may be a good idea for small plants (especially ones that will grow to a much bigger size), but it is not necessary or practical when planting bigger stock. We recently planted four Norway Maples that were in 32-inch B&B trees. If we followed McSherry's advice, we would have dug four holes almost 9 feet in diameter.

We have been landscaping and planting trees for more than 20 years in our area and have never lost a tree that we planted at ground level. This is especially true for maples, which tend to root at ground level and, if planted

too shallow, will send roots along the surface of the ground and "bulge" all of the grass around the tree.

*Dave Francis, Montague Tree Farms  
Montague, MI*

To the Editor:

I love the *Lawn & Landscape* web site, especially the bulletin boards.  
*Blake Moore, Ferta-Lawn  
Woods Cross, UT*

To the Editor:

I just read your Editor's Focus in the August 1999 issue of *Lawn & Landscape* magazine.

You were "right on" with your analysis. It is precisely that attention to the customer that will allow companies to be successful in the future. Keep up the good work.

*Greg Adams, One Step Tree & Lawn Care  
North Chili, N.Y.*



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## Scian's Landscaping

**HEADQUARTERS:** West Berlin, N.J.

**FOUNDED:** 1984

**SERVICES:** 82 percent of sales are from commercial or multi-family accounts with 15 percent from single-family residential and 3 percent from government/municipal.

Maintenance services provide 43 percent of revenues with installation providing 17 percent, irrigation 13 percent, tree/shrub 11 percent and lawn care, exterminating and snow removal combining for the remaining 16 percent.

**1998 REVENUES:** \$3.25 million

**1999 PROJECTED REVENUES:** \$3.56 million

**EMPLOYEES:** 17 year-round; 69 seasonal

**CUSTOMERS:** 658 residential service calls and 651 commercial service calls were made in 1998. The average residential maintenance account is 2,426 square feet and the average commercial/multi-family maintenance account is 126,833 square feet.

## The Company

**MISSION STATEMENT:** To achieve a level of personalized service and quality which exceeds all customer expectations, with an unconditional commitment to excellence, honesty, integrity and professionalism.

**FUTURE CHALLENGES:** Staffing poses the greatest ongoing and future challenge for the company, on both the management and labor levels. The company's focus is on cultivating individual talent within the organization in order to provide opportunities for employee growth and advancement along w/ improving retention levels.

## The Owner

**BACKGROUND:** Began business as a teenager and slowly grew company while obtaining a criminal justice degree from Seton Hall University. Started Scian's Landscaping after one year in a corporate sales position.



Life on a lawn mower isn't what Mike Scian (pronounced Sigh-en) envisioned for himself years ago. Sure, he had made some money cutting neighborhood lawns while growing up, but the criminal justice degree he obtained from Seton Hall University (while driving 90 minutes home and back each weekend to keep cutting those lawns) was going to launch his career with the FBI, CIA or some other federal agency.

The only problem was that after Scian obtained that degree the federal government initiated a hiring freeze and wasn't in the market for any new employees. Scian tried his hand at corporate sales for 18 months, but found that job not to be challenging enough.

Scian decided to give the landscape industry his full attention, and in 1984 he, one full-time employee and two part-time employees earned \$187,000.

"We started out with 35 or 40 residential clients whose properties we did everything on," noted Scian. "That gave us a start, and then we took off."

**NICE PROBLEM TO HAVE.** Growth for the company was indeed rapid (see Scian's Growth Chart, page 26), and everything seemed to be going perfectly.

"Then, in 1993, I found out that the company was growing faster than we could financially manage it," Scian recalled. "We always had the cash flow to support the growth, assuming we could get cash in our hands quickly. Unfortunately, that wasn't always the case.

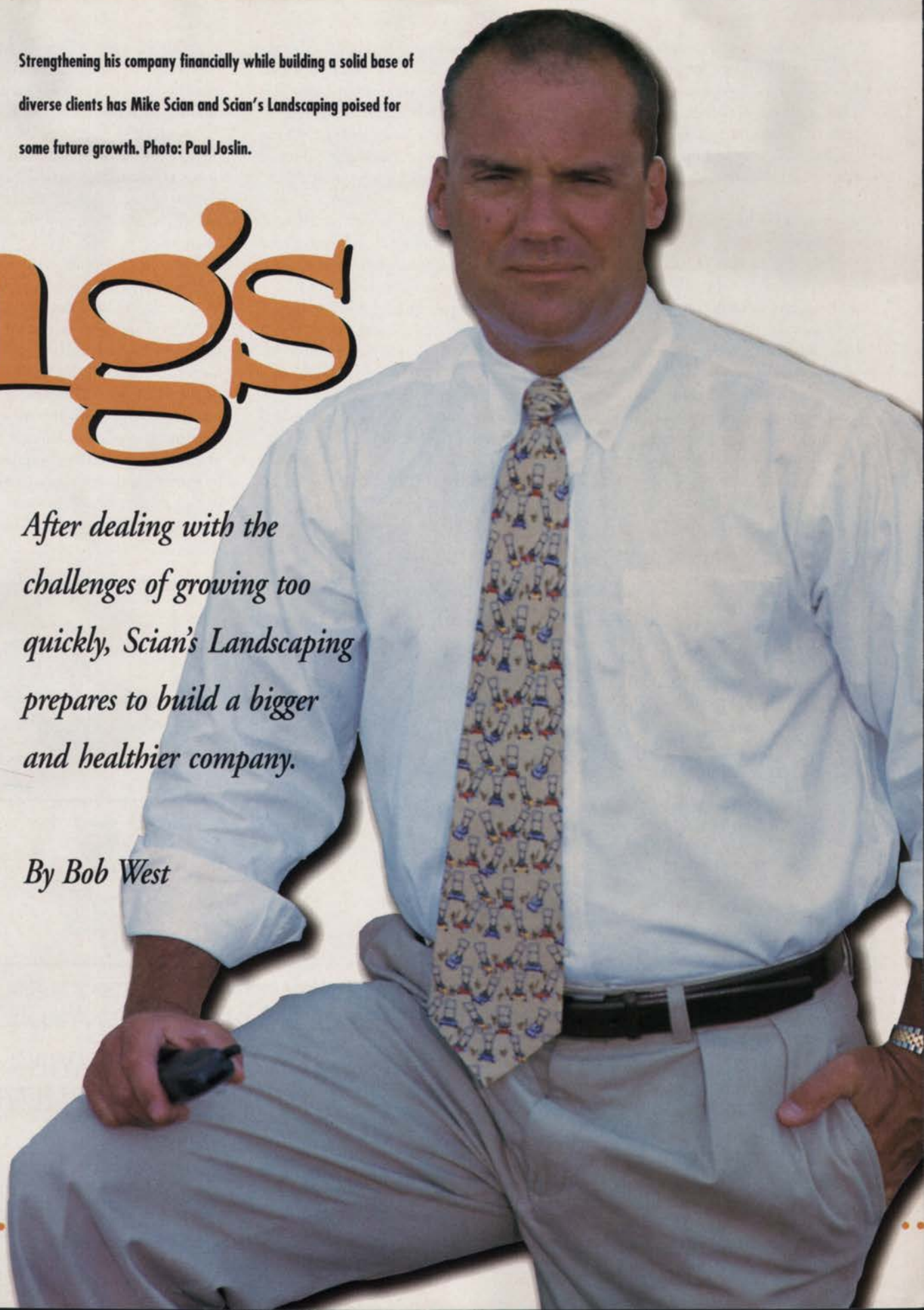
"I was using too much of what I would call credit capital or operating capital to expand the business instead of using that money to run the business, and that's critical for rapidly growing companies," Scian recognized. "Companies around \$500,000 or \$1 million in sales and that are growth oriented may not know

Strengthening his company financially while building a solid base of diverse clients has Mike Scian and Scian's Landscaping poised for some future growth. Photo: Paul Joslin.

# ng's

*After dealing with the challenges of growing too quickly, Scian's Landscaping prepares to build a bigger and healthier company.*

*By Bob West*



they're growing too fast because they get so caught up in keeping clients happy, making jobs look good and getting new business. Then, at the end of the year, the owner looks at the company's interest expense and there's no profit left over and the company can't fund any significant growth."

Fortunately for Scian's Landscaping, however, Scian reached this realization before any significant problems occurred.

"We realized that we had taken on too much short-term debt, so we didn't grow the business any further from 1993 through 1997 so we could focus on improving ourselves financially," he explained.

The challenge associated with this improvement plan was that financial institutions were not lining up to loan money to younger contracting companies.

"We weren't able to get any long-term capitalization or four- to five-year loans beyond \$50,000 credit lines because banks didn't trust the projections of such a young

company," Scian noted, adding that he takes a conservative approach toward using the company's current operating credit line, which is in the low to mid six figures.

"Not having a better balance of long-term and short-term funding was the most significant growth obstacle we encountered," he concluded.

In addition to scaling back growth while bolstering relationships with financial lenders, Scian brought on a full-time controller to manage the company's finances.

"Bringing on the controller let me focus on operations, and this was a move I probably should have made much sooner," he recognized. Scian and the controller meet briefly each day to discuss immediate issues and also have a weekly appointment to discuss more significant issues.

**GIVE THEM WHAT THEY WANT.** Now, Scian expects growth of 15 to 20 percent a year for the next few years, due in large part to the

company's improved financial position. At the same time, the company has also cultivated its customer base and honed its service offerings to pursue such growth.

"What we've tried to do is to offer all of the services the customer wants - maintenance, lawn care, tree and shrub care, pruning, mulching, irrigation, interiorscaping, and we just added exterminating this year," Scian noted.

Scian's company offers these services to a broad range of clientele, which differs from much of today's conventional wisdom.

"A lot of our business comes from corporate clients and condominium clients, and we need to balance this work better," he said, calling for equal sales from those two markets, compared to the current 2-to-1 ratio in favor of the condominium complexes. Scian hopes to accomplish this shift by growing the commercial sales while maintaining the condominium sales.

*(continued on page 24)*

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# PACK

USE READER SERVICE #22

(continued from page 20)

"Condominium work entails working with a property manager, which is fine, but these jobs also represent the potential for 500 homeowners on one job," Scian noted. "Meanwhile, corporate clients live and die by the efficiency and quality of the work."

"But we've also enjoyed huge growth in single-family residential maintenance that

we can't explain other than perhaps too many smaller contractors are biting off more than they can chew right now and they can't offer the total package of services.

"We doubled our single-family maintenance sales this year without any effort and we've been able to raise prices to coincide

*'Regardless of how much money a company has, it can only grow as fast as it can develop people from inside of its organization.'* – Scian

with our labor rates," Scian added.

While Scian understands other companies' effort to trade in residential contracts for landscape installation work, he said such a strategy could backfire on contractors.

"I want us to have a piece of everything in terms of services and markets," he explained. "Otherwise, when the construction market goes south, you might be able to layoff personnel but you're still paying for trucks and equipment that aren't working. And where are the dollars going to come from to pay for that overhead?"

Instead, the company will focus on maximizing the dollars generated via its current customers with hopes to boost profitability.

"About 90 percent of the work we do in our tree and shrub, irrigation, lighting and exterminating services are for our core maintenance customers," Scian explained. "Offering them these additional services boosts our relationship with them and helps us administratively because we don't have to have three salespeople in the field banging on doors to generate new work."

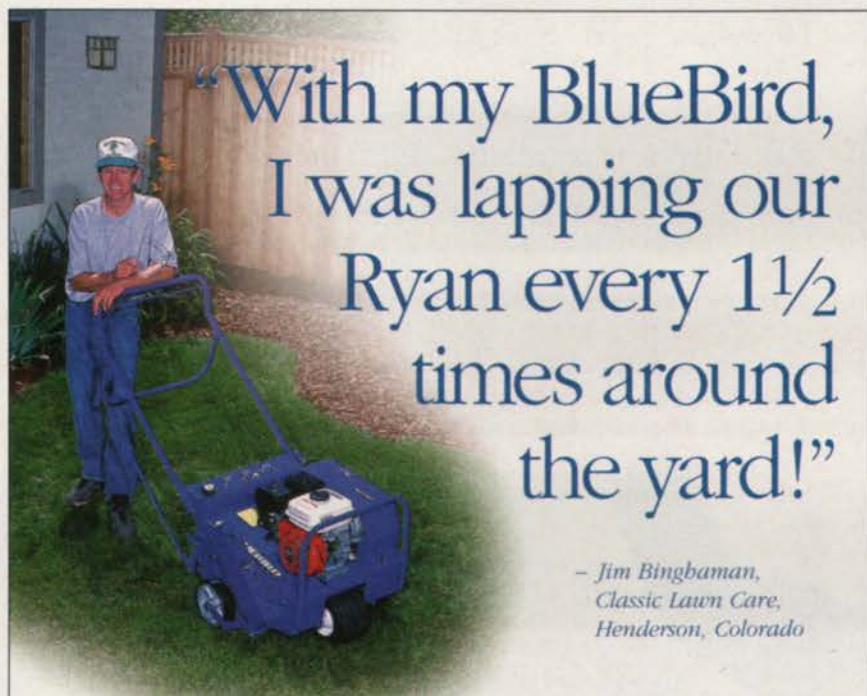
At the same time, Scian isn't interested in significantly expanding the company's service area outside of the Philadelphia market.

"I would guess that 98 percent of our work is in the 40-mile, tri-county area," he explained. "Of that 98 percent, 90 percent is within a 20-mile radius of our office, and that is the area we focus our marketing efforts on with one or two yearly direct mail pieces to specific zip codes we're already serving. Otherwise, spreading ourselves out would just increase our unproductive time."

**LETTING MANAGERS MANAGE.** Scian's education about the importance of properly capitalizing a business was only one key lesson he learned in the early and mid-1990s. The other lesson was that one manager cannot manage a \$2-million business by himself.

"I don't consider us a big company just because we have 35 trucks on the street each day, but I learned the hard way that I wasn't giving enough responsibility to people within the organization," he recalled. "And that is probably the hardest thing for someone to do with a company they started."

(continued on page 26)



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*– Jim Binghaman, Classic Lawn Care, Henderson, Colorado*

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*– Jim Ziegler, Rental City Boulder, Colorado*

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**USE READER SERVICE #41**

(continued from page 24)

Today, key contact people at Scian's Landscaping are the various division managers, and the company makes contacting them as simple as possible for clients.

"All of our clients have our division managers' cellular phone numbers and pager numbers," Scian added. "We ask customers to fax or e-mail the office with minor requests, which we'll respond to within 24 hours, but clients should be able to get directly in touch with key managers if they need to."

This decentralization of responsibility freed Scian up to focus on administrative and key sales responsibilities while also improving the service delivered to customers.

"Being on the phone with clients wasn't productive for me or the clients because I couldn't give them immediate response like our managers can," he pointed out. "Now, clients don't even have to call into the office when they have a service problem."

Providing managers with added responsibility has also aided in the company's development of personnel.

"Regardless of how much money a company has, it can only grow as rapidly as key personnel are developed from inside the organization," Scian remarked, adding that

each of the company's division managers have at least seven years experience with Scian's Landscaping.

"Bringing someone into a management position from outside the company is difficult to do because that individual isn't likely to be readily accepted by people already within the company who feel they have worked their way up," Scian added. "And, more importantly, that new manager doesn't know the company's operations because he or she hasn't experienced our successes and defeats as we have learned the best way for us to run the business." ■

*Scian's Landscaping is located at 444 Commerce Lane, Suite B, West Berlin, N.J. 08091. Phone: 856/768-5915. Fax: 856/768-5236. E-mail: scianslandscaping@msn.com.*

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

# Scian's Growth Chart

1984	\$187,000
1985	\$221,000
1986	\$300,000
1987	\$600,000
1988	\$1,200,000
1989	\$1,600,000
1990	\$1,800,000
1991	\$2,200,000
1992	\$2,500,000
1993	\$2,900,000*
1994	\$3,000,000*
1995	\$3,100,000*
1996	\$3,800,000*
1997	\$3,000,000*
1998	\$3,300,000

\* Company made the decision not to aggressively pursue growth from 1993 through 1997, although heavy snowfall in 1993 and 1996 generated increased dollars.

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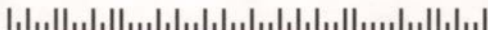
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**USE READER SERVICE #26**

# Choosing Turf SPECIES

One of the most critical decisions a turf manager can make is choosing the best grass for the customer. As with most decisions, research and background information are important in the selection process. If the grass species chosen turns out to be inappropriate, changing to another can be costly, labor intensive and possibly damaging to your professional reputation. Thus, it pays to consider the choice carefully.

First, interview the client. Ask questions such as "How much traffic do you expect on the turf?" "Is dark green color important, or will light green be acceptable?" and "How much budget is available for watering, fertilizing, mowing and pest control?"

In the interview, provide a long-term perspective for the client. The cost of seed and the time for establishment are small compared to the inputs required for maintenance over the coming years.

Steer the client away from the notion that the cost of installation and establishment time is the major reason for choosing a grass. You may wish to invest in a photo library consisting of color pictures of the various species adapted to your local area to show clients.

Successful grass selection begins with good landscape design, and selecting the right species for the right site is crucial. So, after the interview, perform a landscape inventory and analysis.

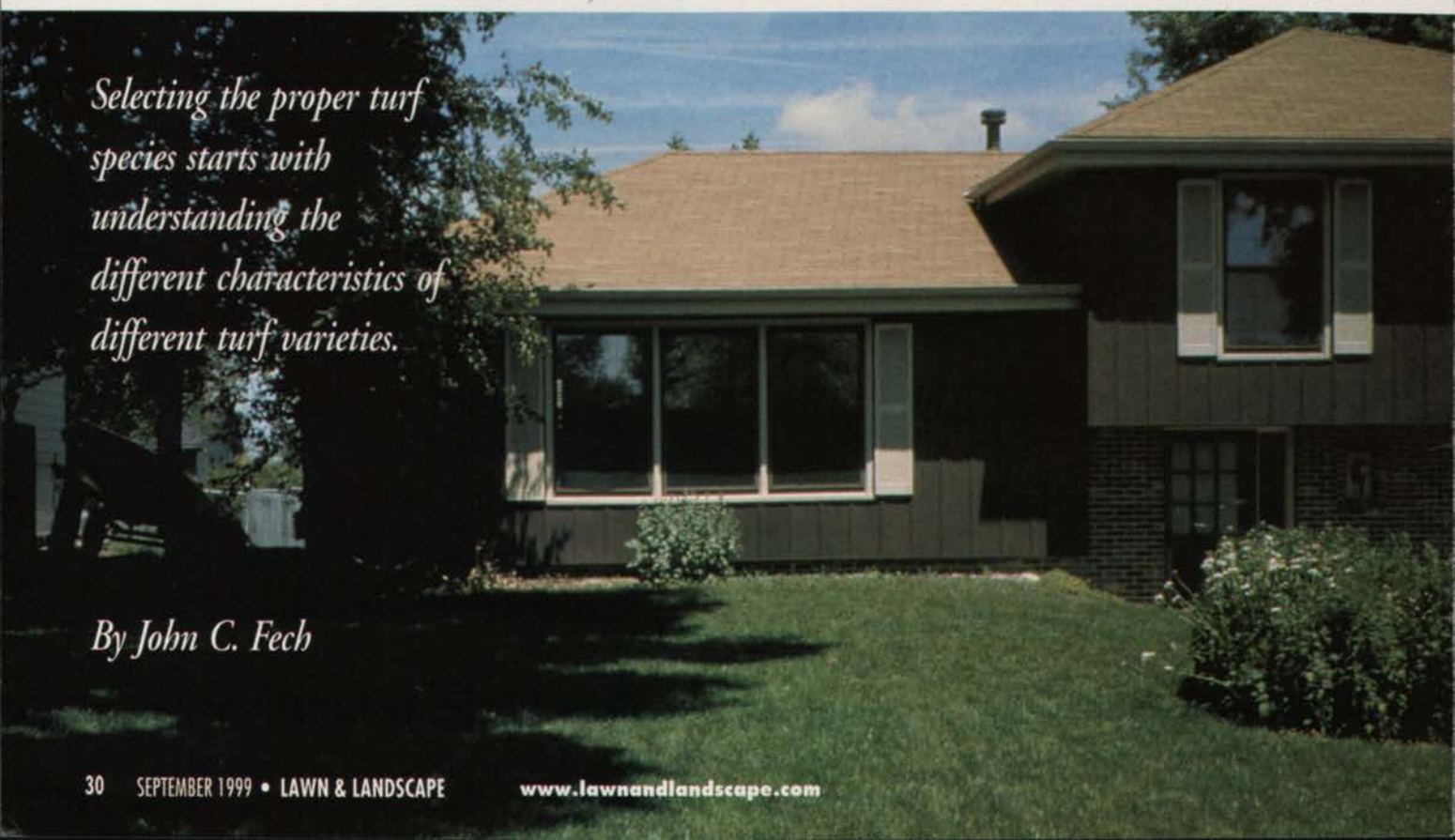
To inventory, walk through the landscape, gathering information. Identify opportunities and constraints of the area. Note wind patterns, existing trees and shrubs, existing turf, the condition of the turf, slope of the land, and shade/sun exposure.

Take a soil probe to the site and extract a few soil cores. Squeeze the soil to get a feel for clay, silt and sand content. Confirm your

*(continued on page 32)*

*Selecting the proper turf species starts with understanding the different characteristics of different turf varieties.*

*By John C. Fech*



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## selecting turf

(continued from page 30)

initial observations with a soil test. Virtually half of the turf plant grows underground, so it is critical to determine if the soil is suitable to encourage root growth. In general, most grasses prefer a slightly acidic to neutral pH, an organic matter content of 3 percent to 5 percent and enough pore space to permit drainage and air exchange.

The site inventory should be thorough, noting and photographing the features that make the site unique. Analysis can then be done to evaluate the importance of the condition. For example, an inventory might contain a note that the turf is diseased with powdery mildew, and that there are several large shade trees overhead.

The analysis would consider whether the trees should be removed or pruned, or if enough sun is received to allow any grass species to thrive.

In all cases, strive to put the right plant in the right place. This is especially important when considering traffic patterns. Wear tolerance varies among species, so take special notice of existing wear patterns or traffic flow markings in the existing landscape.

**MAINTENANCE NEEDS.** Combine the information gathered in the client interview and the notes/observations obtained in the site inventory/analysis to establish a target level of maintenance. In general, it will fall into one of several categories:

**Very Low Maintenance:** These are turf areas that receive no watering other than natural precipitation, no fertilization and are mowed at a fairly high height of cut. These turf areas are not much to look at, but serve their purpose. Rural cemeteries, airstrips, median strips and roadsides are typical uses for these low-maintenance turfs. Common bermudagrass, common bluegrass, buffalograss and forage-type tall fescues are good choices for very low-maintenance turfs.

**Low Maintenance:** Turfs in this level receive little to no watering, but enough to prevent drought stress. Irrigation frequency would be once every 21 to 28 days. Mowing height is fairly high, towards the high end in the desired range of each species. These turf areas typically are fertilized once a year. Industrial grounds, some home lawns, cemeteries, acreages, golf course roughs and picnic grounds are common sites for low-

(continued on page 34)

# NORTH CAROLINA LANDSCAPER HAS SUDDEN DEATH EXPERIENCE.

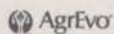
"I started to feel cold. I knew there was no time" says Kay.



For Kay Gambill, time was running out. The temperature was dropping, the weeds were growing, and she and her team had a 2 acre ornamental landscape to clear and re-build in Fayetteville, NC. "Cardinal Landscape works right through the winter" she explained "and that's when most systemic weedkillers quit. But not Finale® Herbicide. Where it'll take Roundup® a month or more, Finale does the job in a few days, even when the thermometer's below 40°. For weeds, it's a sudden death experience, winter as well as summer. Kinda gives you the shivers, doesn't it?"



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USE READER SERVICE #29

## selecting turf

(continued from page 32)

maintenance turfs. Common bermudagrass, zoysiagrass, common bluegrass, buffalograss, centipedegrass, bahiagrass, forage-type tall fescues, and fine fescues are good choices for low maintenance turfs.

**Medium Maintenance:** These turf areas receive a moderate level of inputs, including regular watering and frequent mowing, usually in the 2-inch to 3-inch range. These turfs are fertilized two to three times per year to encourage retention of green color and shoot, root and lateral growth. Golf course fairways, apartment buildings, office parks, athletic fields and most home lawns fall into this level of maintenance. Hybrid bermudagrass, improved zoysiagrass, premium bluegrass, bluegrass/perennial ryegrass mixtures, turf-type tall fescue, and St. Augustinegrass are good choices for medium maintenance lawns.

**High Maintenance:** These are turf areas that receive regular, high intensity inputs and require the greatest cost to maintain. They are frequently irrigated, and mowed at the lower end of the desired range in each species to produce a quality appearance. Fertilizer is applied frequently to these turfs, usually three to five times per year. In some situations, a "spoon feeding" regime is used, where fertilizer is applied every three weeks or so. Golf greens, estate grounds, upscale hotels, theme parks, some home lawns and certain office complexes are sites maintained at this level. Turf-type perennial ryegrass, premium bluegrass, hybrid bermudagrass and creeping bentgrass are good high maintenance turf choices.

**KEY TRAITS.** All of the factors in selection are interrelated to an extent. This is especially true if a turf species is maintained at a higher or lower level than is reasonable for the grass. For example, fertilization and irrigation affect mowing in that if you fertilize and irrigate a turf area heavily, the grass will require more frequent mowing. On the other hand, turf varieties that prefer moderate maintenance will generally become thin and open if fertilized and irrigated sparingly. In the latter scenario, drought stress and weed invasion due to an open stand will likely result.

Each species of grass has unique characteristics and attributes. More specifically, cultivars within a species express quite a range as well. The research group that is perhaps most interested in these differences is the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program. This program evaluates cultivars of turf in dozens of sites in each part of the nation to determine what grasses are best suited for each locale. (Information and summaries of research studies are available through NTEP, Beltsville Agricultural Research Center - West, Building 002, Room 013, Beltsville, MD 20705.)

The investigators at NTEP use the following factors and descriptions to guide their evaluation efforts:

.....

*It is important to remember that a magic grass - one that uses little or no water, seldom needs mowing and withstands heavy use in a deeply shaded area - simply does not exist.*

.....

**Genetic Color** - Shades of color range from light green to dark green. Americans generally prefer darker green grass, while Europeans prefer lighter green grass.


**Leaf Texture** - Describes the width of the leaves. Coarser-textured grasses, such as St. Augustinegrass, have a tougher "feel" and are not as thin or fine as perennial ryegrass or fine fescues, for example. Also, finer-textured grasses are often better for use in low-cut turf such as golf course fairways.

**Density** - This measures the amount of grass plants in an area. The larger number of plants per unit area, the greater the density. Grasses with high density ratings often give the lawn a more carpet-like look.

**Growth Habit** - This varies from upright to low growing along the soil surface. More upright growth requires more mowing. Some species, such as tall fescue, inherently have a more upright growth than low growers like Kentucky bluegrass. Plant breeders have changed this somewhat by developing "dwarf" or slower-growing tall fescues.

**Uniformity** - Having a lawn that is uniform in color, texture, density and growth habit is pleasing to the eye and desired by most people.

(continued on page 36)



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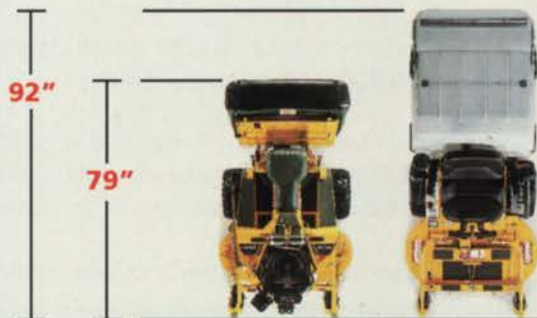


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**USE READER SERVICE #32**

## selecting turf

(continued from page 34)

**Disease/Insect Resistance**— This relates to the turfgrass' ability to resist disease and insect attacks. Some plants are more resistant to these pests because of their genetic makeup. Also, naturally occurring fungi, called endophytes, live within certain tall fescue, fineleaf fescue and perennial ryegrass varieties, helping these grasses repel insects.

**Drought Resistance**— This is the ability of a turfgrass to survive and/or thrive during drought conditions. The most desirable grass will maintain its green color and good quality during prolonged drought. However, for basic survival during drought, grasses often lose their green color and go dormant.

**Water Use Efficiency**— The amount of water needed by a turfgrass to maintain a certain level of quality or to provide acceptable performance. The water needs of turfgrass on an athletic field, for example, are often greater than the needs of a home lawn because of the "wear and tear" on the athletic turf. Also, turfgrasses vary widely in their water use efficiencies. Some grasses, like tall fescue, are large water users but have a deep root system to reach water that other grasses cannot reach.

**Heat, Cold Tolerance**— The turfgrass' ability to survive extreme winter and summer temperatures.

**Rate of Establishment**— How quickly the turfgrass produces 100 percent ground cover. This is especially important in resisting weed invasion, controlling erosion and recovering from disease or insect damage.

**Shade Tolerance**— Trees are a major part of the landscape. Therefore, we need grasses that can survive and thrive in shaded areas.

**Traffic/Wear Tolerance**— This characteristic is important in parks, athletic fields, golf courses, playgrounds and home lawns.

**Thatch Production**— Some grass types produce thatch, or dead roots and stems, faster than soil microorganisms can decompose the thatch. Thatch is a place for diseases and insects to thrive, and it prevents water from reaching the turfgrass' roots.

**Nutrient Use Efficiency**— Turfgrasses have varying nutrient use efficiencies, and the intensity of use and management will influence the turf's nutrient needs.

Grasses are divided into warm- and cool-season species. Cool-season grasses are generally grown in areas where frosts and freezing temperatures are routine for a signifi-



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# Turfseed Market Report

**N**ow is the time that contractors look toward the turf they've been fighting to save all summer and make a critical decision — is it too late to save the turf and time to consider a renovation job.

Two factors influential in this decision are the quality and cost of the available turf seed. Based on early harvest reports, contractors in different parts of the country will find themselves faced with different situations.

One challenge a number of contractors may find themselves faced with is being able to purchase a satisfactory amount of seed as soon as they want it.

"The weather hasn't been very cooperative during the turf seed harvest, and the timing of how soon this seed is available depends on how well developed it is," explained Mark Lauge, product manager for seed, LESCO, Rocky River, Ohio. "The suppliers are all trying to cram an enormous volume of seed through a tiny funnel of processing and distribution."

**RYEGRASSES.** "The annual ryegrass is coming in very well, and perennial ryegrass is coming in with a strong to average crop," noted Kevin Turner, director of seed research and production, The Scotts Company, Marysville, Ohio.

"I would say the yields on perennial ryegrass have been good thus far, especially considering that we had one of the wettest winters this century with more than 50 inches of rain from Oct. 1 to April 1," commented Mike Baker, senior vice president and general manager, Pennington Seeds, Madison, Ga. "But then the rain shut off and we had three of the driest summer months in years."

Baker observed that the increased popularity of overseeding for golf courses, sports turf and other quality turf mixes has driven the perennial ryegrass market to record levels in recent years, but this growth has also limited seed distributors' ability to develop significant inventories.

Gayle Jacklin, assistant vice president of domestic marketing/special projects and accounts, Jacklin Seed/Simplot Turf & Horticulture, Post Falls, Idaho, estimated this year's perennial ryegrass crop at 170 million pounds for the industry across the U.S. "And the quality of the crop looks real good right now," she added.

"The light disease pressure on this year's crop makes it much improved over last year," agreed Baker, recalling the significant rust disease pressures present last year.

"Prices have moved down about 6 to 8 percent for perennial ryegrasses this year," commented Baker, adding that heavy fall demand could drive prices back up. "Looking at the summer weather from Kansas City on east, there should be excellent use because of how little rain there has been."

Ronnie Stapp, executive vice president of seed operation for Pennington Seed, was quick to caution customers against purchasing mixes that include imported seed from Europe or New Zealand.

"This imported seed can lower the prices of some mixes, but the quality of this seed doesn't compare to the quality of the seed raised here," Stapp noted.

**FESCUES.** "We've already harvested some fine fescues, hard fescues, chewings fescues and tall fescues, and the quantity appears to be better than last year's crop," noted Keith Laxton, director of customer service, Seed Research of Oregon, Corvallis, Ore. "But the wet winter was conducive for some weeds, like *poa annua* and annual bluegrass."

Laxton predicted slightly depressed pricing for various fescues this year due to increased carryover inventories, but he, too, said depressed markets in Europe will make European farmers turf seed sellers rather than buyers.

**BLUEGRASSES.** The annual U.S. crop for bluegrasses totals about 70 million pounds, according to Jacklin.

"About 65 percent of that crop is proprietary bluegrass, and the quality of that seed looks very good right now," she explained. "We went into this year's harvest with one of the lowest carryover inventories of recent years, and pricing is all over the board right now with the elite varieties priced higher and the middle of the road varieties priced more competitively."

"I think a factor that may be hidden in this crop because of the weather is the impact of the field burning restrictions," pointed out Turner. "This is a continuing issue that people need to be aware of, and we need to be prepared for some poor yields next year as well on the dry-land crops."

Jacklin noted that advancements in proprietary bluegrass breeding have cut into the perennial ryegrass market for golf courses to some degree, but that bluegrass seed stills goes primarily to residential and commercial properties.

"The market bluegrass sells into for the most part is the sod market, and some of those key sod markets, like Michigan and the mid-Atlantic states, are real strong right now," Jacklin added. "The sod farmers were cutting sod through the winter because the weather was so mild, so they've had to buy a lot of seed and get a lot of new sod started." — *Bob West*

## selecting turf

cant portion of the year, while warm-season grasses are grown in regions where mild to hot weather predominates. Buffalograss, zoysiagrass and creeping bentgrass are exceptions in that they are often grown successfully beyond traditional boundaries.

*Cool-season grasses:* The most widely grown cool-season grass is Kentucky bluegrass with

its medium-textured, green to dark green turf of good density. The aggressive sod forming habit of bluegrass is attributable to its strong rhizome development, lateral spreading potential and excellent recuperative potential. It has fair high temperature tolerance and good to excellent cold temperature tolerance. Some cultivars are pest susceptible.

Tall fescue has the coarsest texture of any cool-season grass, as well as the lowest shoot density. The recuperative potential is quite low, as it is a bunch grass and does not spread laterally. Tall fescue has a very extensive root system that is used to draw on soil moisture reserves and resist insect feeding damage. Thus, it is considered pest resistant and drought tolerant. It has fair cold temperature tolerance and good to excellent heat tolerance. Tall fescue is used on home lawns, low budget athletic fields, acreages and highway turfs.

A group of grass species possessing needle-fine texture is the fineleaf fescues. The group is made up of hard fescue, sheep fescue, creeping red fescue and chewings fescue. Although there are minor differences, they are grouped together for practicality. Except for creeping red fescue, these are bunch grasses and do not spread significantly. They are medium to dark green and exhibit good to excellent shade tolerance, and are predominantly mixed with shade tolerant cultivars of bluegrass for use in turf areas that receive three to six hours of sun per day. Fine fescues are used on home lawns, cemeteries, golf course roughs and parks.

Perennial ryegrasses are also commonly mixed with Kentucky bluegrass with wear tolerance and quick establishment as the desired results. Ryegrasses are shiny, medium to dark green and fine to medium in texture. They germinate rapidly, making them useful in sports turfs. They have fair cold and warm temperature tolerance. Like the fescues, they are bunchgrasses and do not spread laterally. Perennial ryegrasses are used in home lawns, athletic fields, golf fairways and tees and on campus grounds.

Creeping bentgrass is a very low, very fine textured grass. It has good cold temperature tolerance and fair heat tolerance. It spreads readily through rhizomes. Bentgrasses are susceptible to a wide range of fungal diseases, and, along with a requirement for very frequent mowing, it is considered a high maintenance grass. It is used primarily on putting greens.

*Warm-Season Grasses:* Bermudagrass is one of the most widely used warm-season species, due to its many uses. Common bermudagrass is a bit coarse, having medium texture, while hybrid Bermudagrass is medium-fine.

(continued on page 96)

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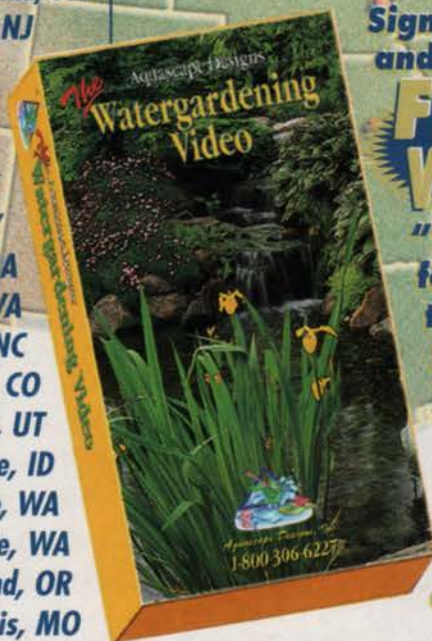
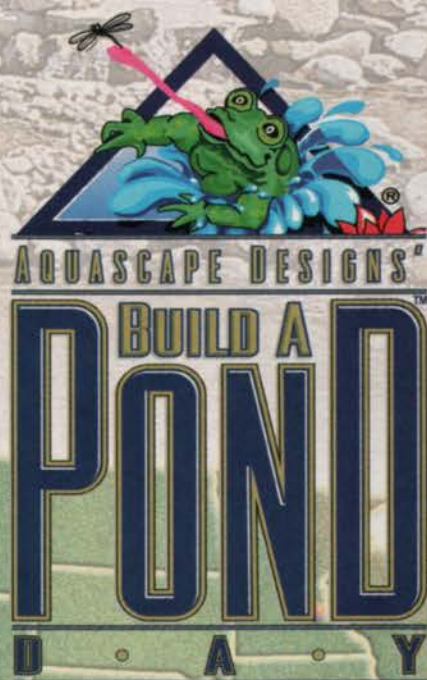
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USE READER SERVICE #36

# The Future

*The irrigation products of the millenium and beyond are currently being discussed and developed.*

*By Nicole Wisniewski*

is **Now**

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ost of the time, the future is closer than it appears to be, as is the case with irrigation system technology.

Future product design concepts — some being implemented and discussed now — are completely viable, meaning that the products of the future will be available, according to irrigation manufacturers and contractors, within the next five years instead of the next five to 10 years.

Many factors are driving these design changes, particularly water conservation and irrigation limitations, and the ultimate future result will be a smarter irrigation system.

**DRIVING DESIGN CHANGES.** As the federal government demonstrates a greater commitment to environmental issues, contractors are being asked to do more with less water.

“Because landscape irrigation is a very visible user of large quantities of water,” according to John Ossa, business development, Jensen Landscape Services, Cupertino, Calif., and chairman of the Irrigation Association Water Management Committee, “members of the green industry will either learn to be more efficient irrigators or face punitive water use restrictions.”

While the Sunbelt states will always have a greater need for irrigation vs. those in the Midwest and North, all irrigation systems will have to become more efficient, Ossa said.

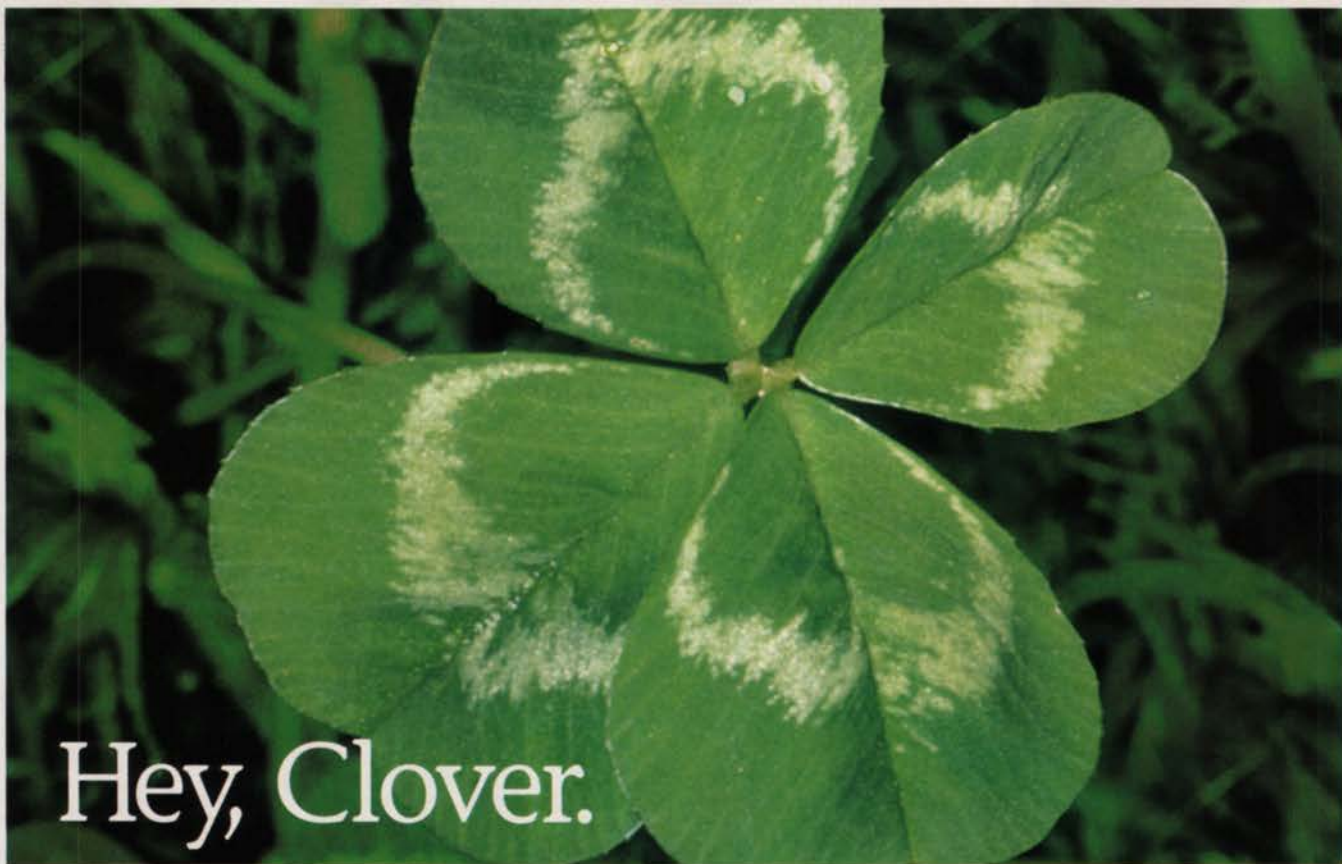
“In California, for example, much of the most populated areas are located in a true Mediterranean climate, meaning there is no summer rain,” Ossa explained. “This, combined with high property values in these areas, puts a premium on efficient irrigation systems and management.”

“The focus in the West and South should be on recycling and conserving water rather than building new power plants and water treatment plants,” pointed out Dirk Lenie,

*(continued on page 44)*

**Water conservation and irrigation limitations are driving design changes in the irrigation systems of the future. The result will be much smarter irrigation systems. Photo: Toro Irrigation**





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## irrigation

(continued from page 42)

director of marketing sales for residential, commercial and government irrigation, Toro Irrigation, Riverside, Calif. "This is an important part of irrigation management as there will be continued pressure on keeping government budgets down, meaning less construction of water treatment plants and the greater the need for conservation and efficient use or use of alternative sources. And, based on the infrastructure in the East, irrigation needs to be more efficient with regard to pressure and application."

Irrigation limitations alone won't be able to aid in water conservation without good irrigation management, Lenie said.

"Just because legislation attempts to make water use more inconvenient doesn't mean it's making the system more efficient," Lenie explained. "Having legislation doesn't always mean that good irrigation practices will be used, especially if there is not more

(continued on page 48)

## Salt in the Wound

Irrigation limitations will become more restrictive in the future, especially in California and Florida, due to good irrigation water being polluted by seawater, claimed John Ossa, business development, Jensen Landscape Services, Cupertino, Calif., and chairman of the Irrigation Association Water Management Committee.

"This is happening because people are pumping in water for irrigation from underwater lakes and as the pressure on those cavities increase, sea water located 1 to 2 miles away moves toward the area," Ossa explained. "Salinas, Calif., near Monterrey, is the vegetable capital of the

world and is located several miles inland. Yet, the seawater has worked its way very close to the farmers' crops. Soon, farmers may be pumping seawater into their crops, killing them. This will continue to result in the greater restriction of water use, especially as the Sun-belt states grow in population. In most areas already, the water supply is finite."

A current strategy being implemented to eliminate this problem, according to Ossa, is something called groundwater recharge, or the pumping of treated water back into the aquifer.

"Another suggestion in a case like this is to bring water in from outside areas to help alleviate the problem," added Dirk Lenie, director of marketing sales for residential, commercial and government irrigation, Toro Irrigation, Riverside, Calif. — *Nicole Wisniewski*



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USE READER SERVICE #57

## irrigation

(continued from page 44)

focus on customer education starting with those who develop the laws."

**THE SMART SYSTEM.** According to Lenie, the smart system, a concept that has been dis-



*Sensors will play a key role in the future of the smart irrigation system, as will satellites and computers (especially in larger systems), wireless communication and wireless irrigation.*



cussed for years, still has many possibilities – most of them focusing on more efficient irrigation.

"Maybe the controller will talk to the sprinklers individually instead of all at once

giving them all something different to do," Lenie explained. "Or maybe sprinklers will be told to irrigate in a half-circle today and then in a full circle tomorrow. Maybe sprinklers will be tied to a soil moisture sensor and react based on input from the sensor."

Sensors will play a key role in the future of the smart irrigation system, as will satellites and computers (especially in larger systems), wireless communication and wireless irrigation, pointed out Brian Vinchesi, design engineer, Irrigation Consulting & Engineering, Pepperell, Mass.

"It would be nice if someone could design a sensor or combination of sensors to measure soil moisture or rain," Ossa said. "Sensors are available now, but people don't have confidence in them. The threshold of trust hasn't been crossed with

sensors yet because they are still so new. But a better combination of sensors takes the decision making out of a person's hands and lets the controller modify changes."

Irrigation application hardware will become more efficient in the future, Ossa pointed out.

"Presently, manufacturers talk in terms of matched precipitation rate, but the reality for spray heads is that they are matched in terms of flow rate, not precipitation," Ossa explained. "Spray heads in the future will have improved irrigation profiles, which will enable matched precipitation rates. Also, there will be an increasing reliance on secondary water supplies, which may dictate some changes in hardware components, meaning sprinkler heads will be constructed to withstand a lesser grade of water."

A smart system may also mean implementing more types of system components

(continued on page 50)

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USE READER SERVICE #42

## irrigation

(continued from page 48)

that have already entered the market with some success. For example, sprinklers with infinite trajectory adjustment make the sprinkler better able to handle wind and withstand slopes, Lenie said, adding that products of the future will be built at a higher quality and will last longer than products of today.

There will also be greater uniformity of sprinkler heads, resulting in a system that wastes less water and distributes it better, Vinchesi suggested.

"In less than five years, there may even be no sprinklers at all once subsurface irrigation, an irrigation system that will send water directly to the soil, comes into play," he added.

Smarter controllers can also better a smart system. One of the main problems with controllers, according to Ossa, is that they are programmed in minutes and hours.

"Crop need and consumptive use is ex-



Continued improvement in the quality of sprinkler heads of all types will provide contractors more options to choose from when selecting different water sources. Photo: Rain Bird

pressed in inches of water or acres per foot," Ossa explained. "But what does that mean in minutes? I think controllers will change the most over the years. They will become more user-friendly – do more technical things as well as become simpler to use."

**ADDING COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY.** Ossa assumes computers will play a greater role in irrigation systems of the future.

"Computers play a big role in irrigation systems now, especially in large, central systems, which have multiple systems linked

via modem to a central computer," he pointed out. "This type of system gives the operator the ability to check the whole city's parks and conduct a remote shut down of all controllers due to weather changes."

However, even though computers are already an important tool for golf courses and some large commercial and municipal sites, Lenie believes that the commercial market remains far behind the golf market as far as innovative irrigation design is concerned, and residential irrigation develop-

(continued on page 52)

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## irrigation

(continued from page 50)

ment is behind commercial irrigation development. Vinchesi doesn't expect computers to play an increased role in smaller commercial or residential irrigation systems for another five to 10 years.

The keys to a computer irrigation system, according to Lenie, will be the user interface, ease of use (possibly a completely automatic system) and cost.

"The water/energy savings of home management computer systems will need to offset the costs," Lenie stated.

"Maybe the management of this type of system is done offsite and information is fed into a black box at a subscriber's home," Lenie enthused. "Maybe users will be able to go into a web central location and find out how much irrigation they need. Global Positioning System technology will also come more and more into play."

Computer technology will also have an affect on the way irrigation systems are serviced, Lenie said.

"As new technology is used more and more, new skills will be required," he commented. "Also, technology offers the opportunity of doing remote trouble shooting and the possible sending of visual 'How to Fix' e-mail over the web."

**GOING WIRELESS.** The most desired element of future irrigation systems would have to be the elimination of wire in irrigation valves, according to Ossa.

"Currently, valves use solenoids with two pieces of wire in each one that go back to the controller," Ossa described. "This is a problem when adding valves, especially if they are located far away from the controller where wire and power are unreachable."

Since all valves require two wires – a common wire and a power wire – Lenie said there are many possibilities for a wireless irrigation future.

"The future may be stand-alone, battery-powered valves," Lenie remarked. "And if we could eliminate the communication wire to the control system, communication may become possible via cell phone, phone line or radio. And different types of frequencies can be used to help prevent interference." **LL**

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

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*A supplement to*

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# Control

**1999**



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*Building a plowing operation around a well-defined system ensures that all employees and subcontractors understand their responsibilities. Photo: Ariens*

G

reat companies are not built on great people. They are built on great systems.

Nowhere are systems more important than for contractors in climates with regular snow. Contractors that fight snow and ice storm events must have some sort of system in place to attack the storm methodically if they are to be profitable.

In most parts of the country, the total number of snow events is less than 15 annually. With such a small number of times working a snowstorm, developing a system that everyone can memorize is not possible because there just aren't enough occasions to practice how to operate in times of crisis (which is exactly what most snow or ice storms tend to be). Therefore, a system should be in place so that everyone knows what is to be done during any given snow event.

Assuming that you have a number of pieces of equipment working a snow event, and assuming that some of these are subcontractors, a system can be developed that will work for most storms. For purposes of this article, we will assume that you are a medium-sized contractor using 25-plus pieces of equipment (or would like to be in this position). How should such a system operate? Your system may vary slightly from the one described below, however, this system is in place in several states and operates satisfactorily.

*Calling All Plows.* Most contractors operate a reverse pyramid system for calling out plowers. One



person is responsible for deciding that the crew has to get rolling. Once that decision is made, calls are placed to those that are in charge of a particular geographical area. These area supervisors then call out the crew leaders who are responsible for one to four plow routes. The crew leaders call out those plowers that work under them. Area supervisors can usually handle four to five crew leaders. Crew leaders can normally handle four to five routes. Each route can consist of upwards of four plows (or pieces of equipment). Plowing accounts are plowed in turn and normally done on a set schedule

# A Snow operation system

# snow & ice control

depending upon when the customer's property needs to be cleared.

Once you have three area supervisors, you need a dispatcher to keep track of (and have control over) everything and everybody in the field. The person who decides to start plowing also calls the dispatcher to work the radios and phones. Most plowing operations put the dispatcher in charge of operations during a snow event.

Areas of responsibility are as follows: front-line plowers make certain that the accounts assigned to them are plowed in a fashion consistent with what the customer wants done. Crew leaders plow some accounts themselves (although not as many as the front-line plowers), and check to see that the accounts assigned to their route are plowed correctly. This might include doing some touch up work by tucking corners, cleaning up feathers and squaring off piles. Area supervisors have a couple of accounts to plow, but most of their responsibility is to

fill in the gaps when front-line plowers break down, don't come out to plow or cannot plow during an event. Additionally, the area supervisors are responsible for taking care of callbacks and special requests from dispatch. Ultimately, the customers' satisfaction is the responsibility of the area supervisor. Additionally, the area supervisor should be considered an overhead expense and not a direct expense to the plowing route's profitability.

Assuming that you are paying subcontractors and plowers by the hour, the area supervisors should be responsible for collecting the hours worked during each snow event. Front-line plowers turn their hours into the crew leaders, who turn these hours (and their own) into the area supervisor. The area supervisor turns all hours for his/her people into dispatch, either in person or via phone. The area supervisor should also report whether or not all accounts have been plowed as directed and be responsible

for recording who plowed what account and when (if your record keeping demands these details). If some accounts are being charged per hour per piece of equipment, then the area supervisor records these times and turns them into dispatch.

It is also a good idea to have the front-line plowers call your office to report their hours worked too. This way you have a method of double checking to be certain that all hours have been recorded accurately. If there are any discrepancies, you will catch them immediately if the hours are reported twice. If your subcontractors are billing you monthly, it is often hard to go back and reconstruct plowing events that may have happened almost 30 days ago. In the event of a dispute, the area supervisors' records should prevail. After all, they are getting paid extra to handle this important reporting function.

If you have an assigned dispatcher, there should be regular contact between dispatch

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and the area supervisors. Constant updates about the status of each route and area will ensure that there are no surprises when you begin to wrap up the plowing for that particular event.

Some companies require the dispatcher

can stay on top of what still needs to be done. Additionally, the dispatcher can then move people around to make certain that all accounts are properly cleared in a timely fashion. Normally, if a route is completed and it seems like it is time to begin sending

*Dispatch Duty.* Once the decision has been made to mobilize for a snow event, the role of the dispatcher can be enhanced greatly. In addition to overseeing the progress of the plowing operation, the dispatcher can call out the sidewalk crews and the salting crews. These crews typically go out to work some time after the plowers begin operations.

The dispatcher can contact the sidewalk crew members and the salt truck operators. Sidewalk crews generally don't live together and must meet somewhere to begin their work. If that meeting place is your warehouse or office (and assuming that the dispatcher is located in that building), the dispatcher can record start and end times for the crews. It is also a good way for the dispatcher to know who hasn't show up for sidewalk work. Then the dispatcher can begin the process of calling in alternate workers to fill in for the conveniently missing crewmember.

## Contractors that fight snow

- and ice storm events must have some sort
- of system in place to attack the storm
- methodically if they are to be profitable.

to check with all area supervisors at a specified time to assess what still needs to be plowed. If possible, the area supervisors should be able to communicate with each other during the snow event. This way they

people home, the dispatcher can make that decision depending upon the status of other routes. Having a competent dispatcher is the key to the success of any ongoing plowing operation.



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## snow & ice control

Additionally, the salt truck operators normally will not have full and ready trucks at home and must be called in to begin their work. This work will include checking the truck fluids, filling the salt/sand hoppers and proceeding to their first stop. Assuming that the salt truck operators can communicate with the dispatcher, they can be dispatched to on-call customer locations when a request comes in for service. The dispatcher usually pays close attention to what has been plowed and can dispatch the salt truck or sander truck to locations that are plowed and ready for deicing product.

At the end of the snow event, and if the system is in place and operating, everyone involved will feel a sense of accomplishment. Chaos is avoided with an in-place system, and rough spots throughout the snow event can be smoothed over if a successful system is utilized.

Fatigue is a normal occurrence in the snow and ice control industry. Not having

a system in place can exacerbate that fatigue and cause tempers to flare from an apparent lack of organization.

Additionally, having a system in place allows for controlled growth. Once a good system works, adding to it is easy. Adding more area supervisors becomes a matter of hiring or promoting someone. Then they just blend into the system and growth continues smoothly.

At some point you may have to add another layer of management, however that addition then becomes a natural extension of the system already in place. And, unless you have 40-plus snow events during the winter, this system should be written down and available to all that work within that system. You cannot expect everybody to remember what is to be done if you do not have the opportunity to practice the system you have in place, and most contractors don't have the luxury of using their system regularly because of the nature of

the snow business.

Great companies are not built upon great people. There simply are not enough great people to go around. Great companies are built on great systems. Once the system is in place, let it work. Then get some sleep. **LI**

*The author is president of Allin Companies in Erie, Pa., and is a respected consultant to the snow industry. Mr. Allin is a Founding Charter Member and the Board President of the Snow & Ice Management Association. Mr. Allin can be reached at 814/455-1752 or by email at john@allinco.com*

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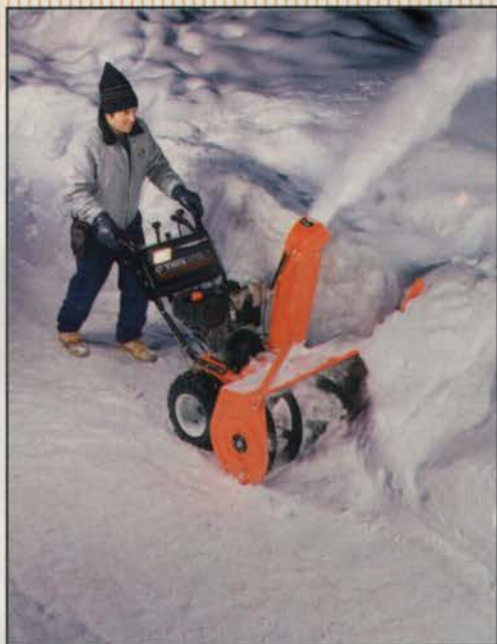
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The snow removal contractor who plans to be successful in the pursuit of bids needs to invest time and energy in getting to know the client. Photo: Arians

nce the snow starts to fall, contractors have to be prepared for the onslaught of calls from residential and commercial customers who desperately need to be shoveled out of the driveway or have a path cleared to their businesses.

When the rush hits, contractors have to have their pricing set, crews set up and plans of attack for major storms ready. With the proper preparation and knowledge, contractors may be able to have a relatively smooth and profitable winter season.

by *Angela Dyer*

*The Price Point.* Contractors have several options when pricing their services.

"For commercial properties, we price by square footage," stated Jay Goldberg, president of Cedar Glen Property Maintenance, Burlington, Vt. "For residential properties, we have a standard driveway price that we usually use. If the size varies from job to job, we will price each job by the hours worked on the job."

Similarly, Mark Shearholdt, president of Certified Maintenance Services, Manchester, N.H., said that he prices jobs based on the time spent on them.

"We base our pricing on our rate for each minute," commented Rick Kier, president of Pro Scapes, Syracuse, N.Y., "I place a dollar value on each minute. We look at the job and evaluate how many minutes the job will take."

Kier continued by explaining his pricing structure. He charges \$165 per hour for a standard truck. This comes out to \$2.75 for each minute.

"We have prime-time hours - 3 a.m. to 7 a.m. - and off-time hours with different prices," Kier

added. "If the job doesn't have to be completed until 7:30 a.m., we charge \$137 per hour. If we have until 8 a.m. or later, we charge \$108 per hour."

Alan Steiman, CEO of Alan Steiman's Landscape, Northboro, Mass., explained that there are four ways to charge for snow removal services.

- *Price by hour using the cost of the equipment.* According to Steiman, this is the least profitable because the contractor can't make more money than he originally agreed to.

- *Price per inch of snow.* This requires knowing how the production cost figures into every inch of snow on a property.

- *Price per push.* Every time the plow is pushed, there is a flat charge.

- *Price seasonally.* According to Steiman, determine a price by the average number of snowfalls each

# Snow

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# specifics

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## snow & ice control

year. This may not be the most profitable in a year with a lot of snowfalls, but during a year with less snowfall, this pricing structure can be very profitable.

"Most contractors price by the inch," Steiman noted. "This is profitable and easy. This way, customers won't question prices either, as they would with an hourly cost."

*When the Storms Come.* A snowstorm is what every snow removal contractor is in business for. So when a major storm hits, the drivers have to be prepared to complete their work as quickly as possible.

"We start at midnight and are always done at 7 a.m.," Goldberg stressed. "Then we also have properties like restaurants that just need to be ready by 9 a.m. If we have a big storm, we bring in more subcontractors to get everything done on time."

Steiman added that having a good property mix is important so contractors can work around the clock.

"We typically don't have delays because we are watching the radar and preparing for a big storm," he continued. "We are in place the minute the storm hits."

To avoid any troublesome delays and complaints from customers, Kier has added a clause to his contracts. After a bad storm one year, he received quite a bit of feedback from customers. Some relayed that if they would have known they were not going to be plowed immediately, they would have plowed the snow themselves. Others said they would have paid anything to get snow-plow service.

"So now in our contracts, there is a box with two options," Kier explained. "At the top of the box there are two choices for special events, which include deep snow, ice storms, wet, heavy snows, etc. The customers have to choose one of the two choices. The first is that we perform the work and charge what Pro Scapes deems to be fair and reasonable. The second choice says not to

perform any work unless the customer calls to advise Pro Scapes what to do. And, even if Pro Scapes is called, the customer understands that there may be delays."

*Residential vs. Commercial.* Snow removal contractors target residential customers, commercial customers or sometimes both, and there are several differences between the two types of work.

"Residential properties require a lot more attention to detail," Kier noted. "With residential, we need a good system of keeping track of details. For example, we keep notes on where customers want the snow piled. This information is stored in our computer so whoever is plowing can see the notes for each property each time they plow."

Kier explained that he prefers commercial customers because the work is not as demanding and there is less paperwork because there is less billing per dollar.

"Residential is much easier and must

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less of a challenge," Goldberg countered. "Residential properties usually need plowed by 7 a.m. and then we don't have to go back until 5 p.m. to get the snow cleared out again. With commercial, the business usually has to stay open all during the day."

Shearholdt added that on residential properties, less diverse equipment is needed. "Contractors don't need as many sanding and salting trucks. They also don't need loaders and backhoes."

Goldberg explained that the clients determine which type of property contractors generally prefer.

"We target customers who want the job done no matter the cost," he explained. "These are easy customers to work with because they just want the snow gone. Our No. 1 clients are companies that have freights coming in and out all day long. They want us to do whatever we can to keep it clear."

A challenge with any property, however, is dealing with sidewalks.

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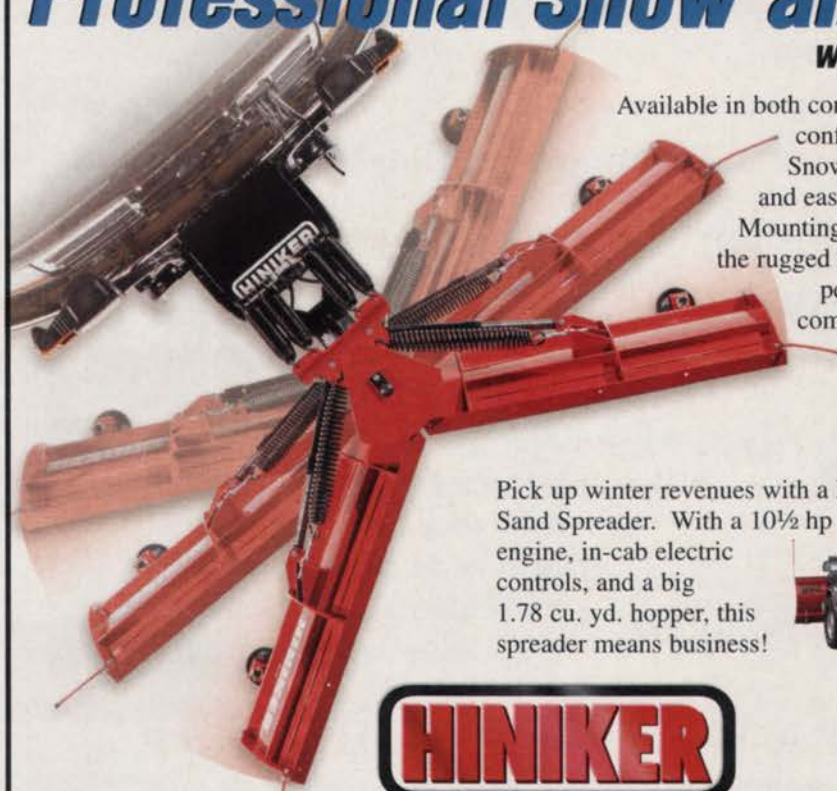
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S11

## snow & ice control

"For sidewalks, we charge \$32 based on one man and a shovel," stated Kier. "It is important to know the average prices in your area. Our rate is high enough for a profit and to pay well."

"We try to avoid properties with sidewalks or we try to get the owners to take care of them," Goldberg added. "We don't include sidewalks in the contracts, then we offer a separate price for the sidewalk and they have to pay for the service each time. A lot of people won't pay this per-time price so they will do it themselves or hire someone specifically for the sidewalk work."

"The key to success in this industry is planning ahead," Goldberg continued. "By Aug. 1, we have all of our snowplowing services sold for the coming winter. Then we can set up our crews and have everything in place when the first snow falls." **LL**

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

## restrictions & conditions

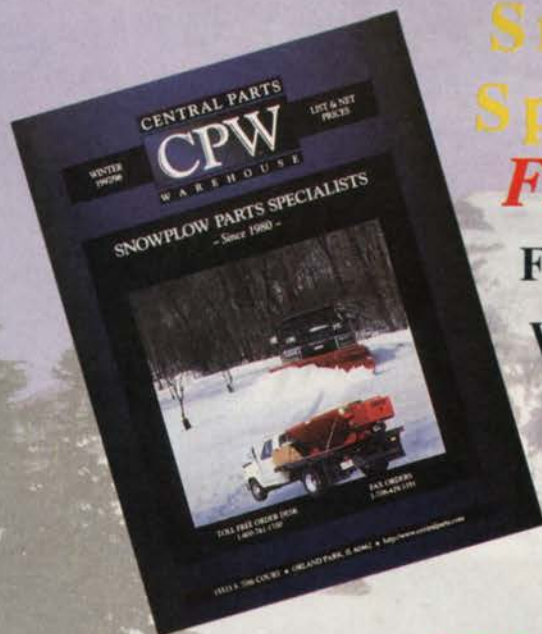
**S**ome snow removal contractors find it beneficial to set up restrictions in the contract to keep them from venturing out into dangerously cold temperatures. But customers may or may not be responsive to such restrictions.

"We just added a temperature restriction last year," noted Rick Kier, president of Pro Scapes, Syracuse, N.Y. "I didn't have to enforce it, but it was in the contracts if we needed it. Our restriction is that we don't send out the shovel crews if the wind chill is zero degrees Fahrenheit."

Similarly, Jay Goldberg, president of Cedar Glen Property Maintenance in Burlington, Vt., just started adding a restriction to the contracts for his upcoming winter season.

"We won't shovel in temperatures lower than -10 degrees Fahrenheit," he continued. "The way we sell it to customers is by asking them if they would want their husbands and kids out shoveling in those temperatures."

"We should be able to set some restrictions, but, unfortunately, our clients don't want to hear about it," countered Alan Steiman, CEO of Alan Steiman's Landscape, Northboro, Mass. "They just want the job done no matter what." — *Angela Dyer*



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Smart

# snowplow

selection

N

othing goes faster than the summer months, so now is the time for contractors who make snowplowing their business to prepare for a rematch with old man winter. There are many types of snowplows on the market, and the features of these various types of plows are important when making the decision to purchase new snow-removal equipment.

As the twenty-first century approaches, snowplow manufacturers have been working hard to develop new plow technologies that save time, make the plow easier to handle and maneuver and, in general, make plowing faster and easier. Conditions are rarely perfect when plowing; so manufacturers of snowplow equipment must consider the variables

and incorporate solutions for a number of situations. Contractors should be able to make a smart plow purchase once they are educated in the differences between plows, the important features to look for when buying a plow and the best technologies available from snowplow manufacturers.

*Straight vs. Plow.* Snowplowing technology made a huge advancement and revolutionized the snowplow industry with the introduction of the V-Plow more than a decade ago. Although the straight plow is still available and widely used, the V-plow is quickly taking over as the preferred choice in snow removal equipment among professional snowplowers.

The V-plow differs from the standard straight-blade plow because it is made up of two halves, or wings, that can be independently adjusted to multiple positions based on snow conditions, plowing location and the individual operator's needs.

When both wings of the V-plow are in the forward position, the plow forms a scoop that carries more snow and controls the snow better than a straight-blade plow. A straight-blade cannot achieve the scoop position, and because of a straight moldboard, the snow has a tendency to spill over the ends of the plow.

The wings of the V-plow can also be retracted (toward the truck) to form more of a V shape which will push through deeper snow more easily and with less stress on the vehicle. A straight-blade plow requires more power from the vehicle to push through deep snowdrifts and often results in the

When making the decision to purchase snow-removal equipment, contractors should pay attention to the different equipment features. Photo: Western Products







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## snow & ice control

vehicle sliding sideways on the surface, rather than pushing through the snow.

It is important to note that a V-plow can also function like a straight plow. Because the wings are multipositional, they can be positioned straight across the front of the vehicle when the conditions are suitable for this type of plow.

Straight-blade plows are often used in an angled position to windrow large, obstacle-free areas. This type of plow is effective such large parking lots or other open areas because the plow pushes the snow to the side in rows, one blade-length at a time. The snow that is pushed to the side piles up on top of unplowed snow and all of this snow is plowed on the next pass.

Straight blade also tend to cost less and weigh less than the V-plows.

When shopping for a plow, whether it be a V-plow or a straight-blade plow, there are a few important features to look for, including the size, strength and durability

of the blade, the blade trip, the controls, the undercarriage system, the mounting system and the hydraulic system.

**Size Matters.** Most often the bigger the plow, the bigger the truck needed to carry it. Snowplow manufacturers take this into consideration and most offer a wide variety of sizes. Plows can range in size from 6½ to 11 feet wide. Compact to mid-size trucks will use a plow of 7½ feet or less. Half-ton trucks will have plows ranging from 7 to 7½ feet, and three-quarter-ton trucks and larger will use plows in the 7½ to 11-foot range. Having the wrong size plow on a truck can mean excessive wear and tear on the vehicle and reduced plow performance. A plow that is too heavy or too large for a truck may overload the front axle and present safety issues like reduced braking distance and reduced steering control.

**Strength vs. Durability.** Snowplow blades can be made of steel, which is the most

common, or plastic. Depending on the design, features on steel-blade plows come in various strengths. For example, high-strength steel may be used for the push frame and push beam hook, while a mild- or common-strength steel will be used for the actual blade or center section. Plows designed with high-strength steel are stronger, more durable and react better on unpredictable surfaces.

The steel blades can be finished by paint or powder coat, or a baked-on, two-part epoxy paint. Care has to be taken with painted and powder-coated finishes so that they don't chip, as this can lead to rusting and/or rust bubbles, which will shorten the life of the plow. A powder-coat finish consisting of phosphate pretreat and TGIC polyester provides a hard, high-gloss surface that is smooth and slick. A UV-resistant finish is also important to ensure the color won't fade or degrade when subjected to the ultraviolet rays of the sun.

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Snowplows are available in plastic and steel. The plastic blades, although lighter in weight, are not as strong as their steel counterparts and may require additional bracing. Photo: Snow Wolf

it at a moment's notice. There are four types of controls: switchbox, joystick, touchpad and handheld.

The switchbox is relatively easy to use, economical and reliable but rather unattractive. Joysticks have the ability to operate more than one function at a time and are easy to use, but they need to be securely

There are two types of plastic snowplow blades - clear and color-impregnated.

Plastic plows have their advantages and disadvantages. Plastic has a lower coefficient of friction and lower moisture absorption so the snow tends to roll off more easily. This can result in less fuel consumption when plowing. Plastic plows won't rust or dent and can be replaced relatively easily if necessary. Plastic is also lighter so some models do offer weight savings. However, this is not always the case, as the plastic blades are not as strong as their steel counterparts and may require additional bracing.

**The Trip.** The blade trip is another important feature because snowplowing often occurs under conditions of poor visibility and in areas with unpredictable surfaces. The blade trip is designed to assist in these tough conditions with the use of a spring-loaded system that causes the moldboard at the bottom of the blade to pivot forward and bounce, or "trip," over unmovable obstacles.

There are two basic styles of tripping blades - a full moldboard trip and a partial moldboard trip. A partial trip means just the cutting edge up to 6 inches will trip and bounce over the obstacle. If the obstacle is more than 6 inches tall, the moldboard might not go over. A full moldboard trip means the entire blade will pivot when an obstacle is struck. This allows the plow to easily maneuver even in the most uncompromising conditions.

**Controls.** Operator fatigue is common since contractors often work all hours of the day and night through changing and unpredictable weather conditions to ensure roads are safe and driveways, parking lots and sidewalks are accessible. It is important that they have complete control of the plow and can make changes and adjustments to

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— Charles McIntire, Elkton, MD



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mounted inside the cab. Touchpads and hand-held units do not require mounting and vary in functionality and ease of use.

**Undercarriage Structure.** Because the V-plow is new to plow manufacturers, it is important to take a look at the undercarriage used to mount the plow on the vehicle.

Most manufacturers have developed adequate undercarriage structures for the straight-blade plow. However, with the advent of the V-plow, most manufacturers have not yet developed mounting systems specific to this type of plow, and continue to use the systems designed for the straight-blade plow. This method is not as effective. The plowing forces are much greater on a V-plow, therefore, the V-plow requires a stronger and more advanced mounting system.

**Mounting Systems.** Most of the newer mounting systems allow the operator to drive right up to the plow vs. the older, more difficult way

of manually lifting the plow with another piece of equipment. The drive-up removable mount system means the vehicle can be restored to its normal appearance when there is no need for the plow.

Many plow manufacturers have mounting systems that still rely on the use of locks and pins, and some require two people to complete the mounting process. However, newer systems are becoming available that do not involve pins, locks or other removable parts that can get lost in the snow.

**Hydraulic Systems.** There are two types of hydraulic systems, and it is important to consider which system is appropriate for the plow and the vehicle. The belt-driven hydraulic system is driven off of an engine-mounted belt for power up/down. This type of system can cause an additional draw on the engine and can affect vehicle emissions. This system is slowly being phased out, as mounting them under the hood is

increasingly difficult because of limited space.

The more common hydraulic system is run by the vehicle's electrical system via an electric cable reel system, which is usually a power up/gravity down system. Advances in DC motors have reduced the electrical load and made this the standard system in plowing. It is important that the mounting system/hitch has a consistent down force to keep the plow on the ground.

When considering electrical systems, it is important to look for heavy gauge electrical cables that go to the electric motor to minimize electrical power losses. For commercial applications, a second battery may be added to handle the demands of plowing for long periods of time. It is also important to look for hydraulic systems that are shielded from outside elements such as moisture, dirt and corrosion. **LL**

*The author is marketing manager for Boss Snowplows, Iron Mountain, Mich.*

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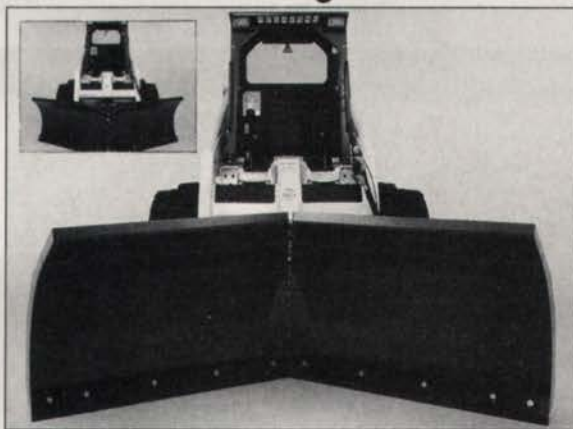
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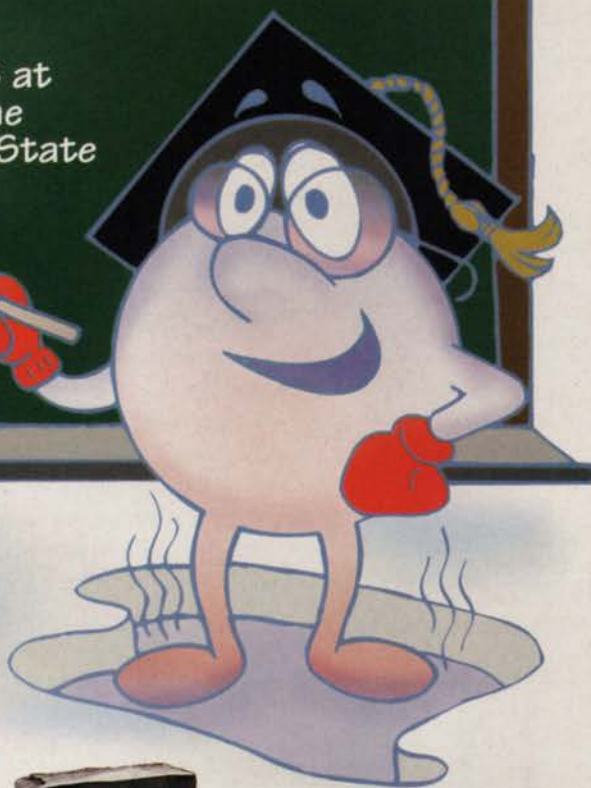
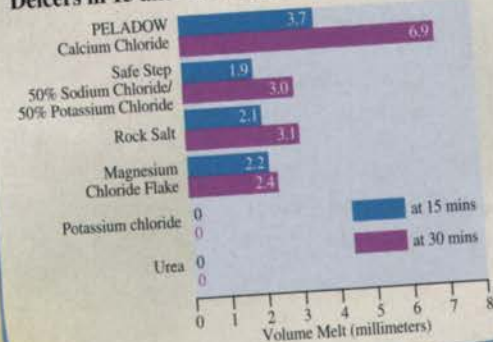
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Customer demands for higher levels of service and clean surfaces at all times are driving the accelerated use of deicer products. Photo: Western



# T

he use of chemical deicer products for snow and ice control is growing dramatically each year. As we learn more about the cost of traditional plowing and sanding methods for snow and ice control in terms of dollars, the environment, service levels and safety, when compared to the correct use of deicer products, one can understand why their use is growing.

Also accelerating the use of deicer products are customer demands for higher levels of service and clean surfaces at all times or at least soon after a major storm event is over. Without the use of deicer products, ice on bare surfaces would be almost impossible to control, and at a very high cost when temperatures are below freezing.

The use of deicer products allows the user to lower the freezing point of water and, thus, eliminate the freezing of the moisture present, thereby, facilitate the removal of snow and ice or prevent its build up to start with. This is accomplished by either totally melting the snow and ice or by preventing its bond to the surface so it can easily be plowed off.

Because this process sounds simple and actually is, obtaining a basic understanding of the products and how to use them is often skipped. All too often the use of deicer chemicals is approached with the idea that "I don't need anyone to tell me how to

plow snow," which, in all likelihood, is most likely a true statement. In fact, learning how to use a deicer product has nothing to do with plowing snow just as learning how to use a new carpenter's tool is nothing like teaching one how to do carpentry.

**Product Selection.** Too often, a user will buy the cheapest product available without giving any thought to performance, total cost of use – not just purchase price – or even how they are going to use it. All of the above should be considered when purchasing a deicer product.

Consider these questions: where is the deicer going to be used? Will the product be next to flowers, trees, grass or shrubs? What is the impact of the deicer to the surrounding plant life? What does the product do to concrete, vehicles, shoes and pets? Are there any hazards associated with handling the product? Is the material readily available?

These and other questions should be asked about all available products before making a purchase. A reputable distributor with a good product will have

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a lot of pertinent information about his or her product available to the buyer.

**Product Performance.** Many times, contractors assume that all deicer products are the same and that they all work well. Unfortunately, this is not true. Not all

pared to another readily available product under like conditions. This performance characteristic is called melting capacity. To compare the melting capacity of different products, ask your distributor how much total deicer product would be required to melt 1 pound of ice at a specific tempera-

ity information as a way to determine application rates under various conditions. The use of melting capacity information to determine application rates will almost always result in the over use of product. Many other factors, such as sun exposure, ground temperature and traffic, enter into melting results in real world applications. Use melting capacity ratings only for the product selection process.

All too often the use of deicer chemicals is approached with the idea that "I don't need anyone to tell me how to plow snow."

products are created equal, nor do they perform equally under like conditions.

For example, at 20 degrees Fahrenheit one readily available deicer product would require the use of approximately 45 percent more product for similar results when com-

pared to another readily available product under like conditions. The answer should be a number, and the smaller the number the better. The smaller the number the less product you will have to use to obtain desirable results.

However, do not use this melting capac-

**Product Characteristics.** There is a wide range of performance and other characteristics associated with each and every deicer product available on the market today. They all have associated purchase prices, corrosion to some degree and environmental characteristics. Handling, dispersing and storage of each product should be considered. Will you have to buy special equipment, or is the product hazardous?

All of these questions should be considered when selecting a deicer product for



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use. Here, again, the supplier should be happy to supply you with data and answers to these questions.

**Knowledge.** This is all leading to the fact that taking the time to learn about the different deicer products and seeking training will save contractors time, money, energy and frustration in the long run. Ask a lot of questions and pursue answers. Ask the same questions to all suppliers about their products and how they compare to other products.

Many suppliers have data on competitors' products and would be happy to share the information with buyers. Compare and sort data. Be aware that you may receive conflicting information. When that happens, ask more questions.

**Approach.** Consider deicing products tools with limitations and not a panacea. Deicer products, like any tool when used

correctly, can make your job easier and less costly to achieve the desired level of service goals. As with any tool, to get the most out of the material, follow a few basic rules.

**Know when to use deicer.** Use the product with realistic expectations and, if something goes wrong, ask why? Did I misuse the tool, or was the product used at the wrong time or both? Oftentimes, when one looks at poor results obtained with a deicer product, the failure is not the fault of the tool but with the misuse of the tool.

**Learn how to use the material.** As with any tool, gain experience and learn from the practice. When an application achieves the results expected, know how the product was applied and what the weather conditions were so you can repeat your actions under similar conditions.

**Don't Repeat Mistakes.** On the other hand, if results received from a particular action were less than desirable, know what you did and the weather conditions at the

time of application so you don't repeat your actions under similar conditions. In other words, if the product didn't work, know what you did, why the application didn't work, ask yourself and your supplier questions, and have an idea of what to change next time to fix the problem.

Maintaining records of applications and results achieved will help you learn from experience and achieve a successful deicer program quickly. On the other hand, without some kind of records (experience) to learn from, one may never get beyond continually guessing about application rates and the results to expect.

**Put it away.** As with any tool, deicer products have their time, place and limitations. Knowing what these are is the key to a successful program. Keep in mind that the right tool used at the right time and used correctly reduces waste, increases efficiency and increases profits or reduces impact to the budget.

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**Temperature.** Another common mistake is making operational decisions based on air temperature rather than ground or surface temperature. In reality, the temperature of the air doesn't impact ice control, but the ground temperature does count. We have all seen storm events where the snow falls and nothing accumulates because the warm ground melts the snow as it lands.

On the other hand, we have also seen applications of deicer and/or sanding materials that were wasted because the ground temperature was not below freezing. This often happens because air temperature was used to make decisions and not ground temperature.

Winter operation decisions should be made based on ground temperature and not air temperature. Ground temperatures may be obtained in many ways and at many different price ranges. Devices range from hand-held non-contact thermometers to truck-

mounted non-contact thermometers to fully instrumented Roadway Weather Information Systems located in many places including airports and highways.

**Record Keeping.** When keeping records of deicer chemical use and weather conditions during a storm event there are a minimum of five pieces of information that one must know when the storm is over to analyze and learn from experience. These five pieces of information can be easily remembered with the acronym TAPER and can be explained as follows:

**T - "T" is for temperature.** What was the temperature at the time of each application of deicer product? What was the coldest temperature during a given storm event? If at all possible, use ground temperature.

**A - "A" is for application rate.** How much material was put out for each application? This answer should be in terms of gallons (liquid deicer) or pounds (dry de-

icer) per square yard, per acre or per lane mile. Use the unit of measurement that best fits your operation. Know this not only on a per application basis, but also be aware of how much total product was used for this specific and total storm event.

**P - "P" is for product.** Simply put, know what you are using and know the material's characteristics. Learn from the questions asked during the purchasing process. Know what specific product you are using, and know what is in it. For example, know the product's concentration if it's a liquid or know the product's percent active ingredient if a solid. If not 100 percent active, what else is there? What other trace chemical is in there and in what concentrations?

**E - "E" is for event.** In this case, it would be a storm event. What was the total amount of snowfall, freezing rain or sleet. This is important to know to make a correlation between the actual storm event, total amount of product used and results obtained, which is the letter "R".

**R - "R" is the results obtained in simple, easy-to-report terms.** Knowing what one did not only in terms of incremental steps, but overall as well, is key in gaining experience quickly.

Even though record keeping may seem quite difficult, in the long run, maintaining this information is much easier than not doing it at all. Devise a simple form and use simple codes to record data. This process must not be cumbersome or the record keeping will not be accomplished.

Common mistakes are made because of the misconception that contractors think they can simply put deicers out and they will work. Nothing could be further off base. Remember the tool analogy and remember that the more one knows about a tool the better off they are and the better the results will be.

Ask questions on the best deicer product or tool for your use. Seek information on the product's correct use and learn from everything you do and every application you make. By avoiding these common mistakes you can quickly have a very successful winter operations program. This will require some effort, but the rewards will be great. **LI**

*The author is president of Ice & Snow Technologies, Walla Walla, Wash.*



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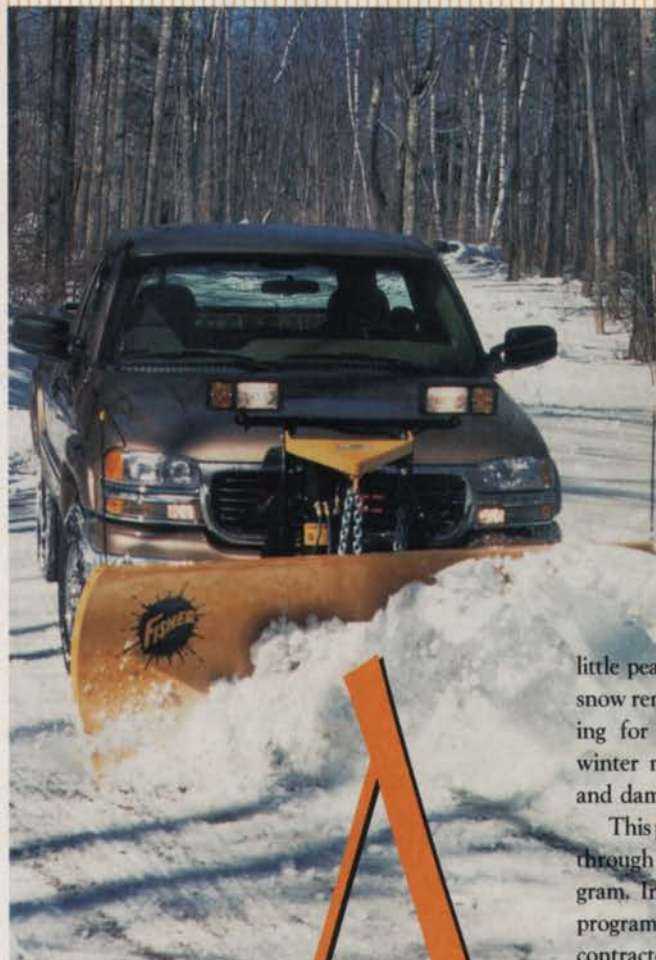
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USE READER SERVICE #174



*With the proper equipment coverage, contractors can go about snow removal without having to think about whether or not they are insured should a problem occur. Photo: Fisher Engineering*

little peace of mind is what any snow removal contractor is looking for during those grueling winter months when accidents and damages can occur.

This peace of mind is achieved through a good insurance program. In making sure that the program is appropriate for the contractor's needs, they need to simply know what coverage to have, how much to have and what sorts of questions to ask an insurance agent.

With the proper coverage, contractors can go about snow removal without having to think about insurance needs, and know that they are protected should a problem occur.

*The Necessary Components.* According to Bruce Strachan, president of Strachan Casale, an independent insurance agency in Twinsburg, Ohio,

contractors should have two main types of insurance – automobile liability and general liability.

“Automobile liability is the commercial automobile policy, which includes liability and damage to the vehicle,” Strachan noted. “Also, be sure to notify the agent that the equipment will be attached to the truck because then the plows may need to be insured specifically.”

“General liability insurance includes two parts: premises and operations and completed operations coverage,” Strachan continued. “Premises and operations includes ‘doing what you do when you do it where you are doing it.’ For example, if the contractor is cleaning the sidewalk and someone gets hurt because of flying debris or ice, the damages would be covered under this because the accident isn’t relating to the auto policy. Completed operations coverage is for once the job is finished and the crew has left the site. The contractor will be covered if someone slips and falls.”

Jay Michaud, president of Witness Tree Landscaping, Williston, Vt., explained that he carries a commercial lines policy that covers his equipment, general liability and an umbrella policy.

“Under the umbrella policy is where most of my snow removal problems would fall,” Michaud stated. “Also, under the general liability policy, I have finished goods insurance. For example, if I plowed and dropped deicing material, then I left and someone slipped and fell, the damages would be covered under this policy.”

Once the types of coverage needed are deter-

A

by Angela  
Dyer

Policy

protocol

## snow & ice control

mined, the actual amounts of the policies need to be decided upon.

"There isn't any standard for how much coverage a contractor should have," remarked Doug Jessup, president of Corpo-

coverage. It is hard to determine how much is necessary so we recommend \$1 million even though some carry only \$300,000."

*Care, Custody & Control.* A gray area in

"This is a difficult area to understand because every adjuster handles it differently," Jessup commented.

"For example, if someone takes in their shoes to be repaired and they are ruined while in the repairman's care, then his or her insurance will not cover the damages," Strachan remarked. "Although the process is the same, there is more of a gray area for contractors. If a contractor is cleaning snow off of a parking lot and while working on the surface, the blade hits the pavement and becomes damaged, will it be covered? Some insurance companies say no, however I say

'yes' because the contractor is only working on the snow and not the lot and is therefore not responsible for the lot itself."

According to Strachan, the most important thing to know in regards to care, custody and control is how each individual agent handles the issue. This way, there won't be any surprises.

"We damaged an expansion joint on a parking deck and at first our insurance agent refused to cover the \$8,000 damages," lamented Norm Detrick, president, Reliable Snow Plowing Specialist, Macedonia, Ohio. "The insurance company claimed that the parking lot was in our care and custody because of what our job is. We finally won the suit, but this is an important subject to talk to your agent about."

In some cases, Jessup will broaden the general liability coverage so that more is covered to protect the contractor.

Talking to the agent and asking specific questions is key to having an effective insurance program and being aware of what is and is not covered in a policy.

Strachan stressed that contractors should ask their agents what coverage is needed in the off-season.

"Contractors should tell their agent where their equipment is stored in the off-season because it may not be covered under the regular auto policy since it is not attached to the vehicle in the off-season," Strachan added. "Just be sure to ask the agent a lot of questions."

*Minimizing Liability.* Using common sense is the most obvious way to reduce liabilities

With the proper coverage, contractors can go about snow removal without having to think about insurance needs and simply know that they are protected should a problem occur.

rate Assurance, an independent insurance agency in Mission, Kan. "Typically, these contractors have lawn or landscape businesses so they are covering their automobiles already because of the summer work. We see a lot of people with \$1 million in

many contractors' insurance plans is a clause called care, custody and control.

Strachan explained this as damage that occurs to a property that is under the care, custody and control of the contractor. Some insurance plans will not cover this.

# SIMA

Snow & Ice Management Association, Inc.

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...on joining the association or on its annual Snow & Ice Management Symposium, contact SIMA at 814/456-9550 or check it out on the web at <http://www.sima.org>.

## Subcontractor stipulations

**W**hile snow removal contractors have to be prepared for winter with the proper insurance, they also have to make sure that their subcontractors are covered as well. If the subcontractors are not insured, the contractor could end up in hot water.

"Subcontractors have to give the contractor evidence of insurance and their liability has to be equal to the contractor's," said Bruce Strachan, president of Strachan Casale, an independent insurance agency in Twinsburg, Ohio.

Jay Michaud, president, Witness Tree Landscaping, Williston, Vt., echoed Strachan's comments. "Any subcontractor that works for us has to have at least an equal amount of insurance. If someone is close, I may take a gamble, but if it's just a one-man operation with a truck and he only has \$100,000 coverage, I can't take that risk."

Doug Jessup, president of Corporate Assurance, an independent insurance agent in Mission, Kan., explained that contractors need to require a certificate of insurance from the subcontractors. "More importantly, have you as the contractor named as an additional insured on at least the subcontractor's general liability. This requires the subcontractor's insurance company to notify the contractor if the insurance were to become expired or if it has been cancelled, for example." — *Angela Dyer*

when doing work as a snow removal contractor. However, there are a few other ways to minimize accidents while contractors are on the job.

"Reducing liabilities requires good management," suggested George Hohman, president, Turfscape, Northfield, Ohio. "Let the employees know that management is watching out for any damages they create. Contractors can't do a lot to change the damages made to turf because that is just something that will happen. Just use common sense

and don't rush through the jobs."

Michaud recommended that contractors do not push the drivers too hard. "We have sleeping quarters for them and we rotate drivers during a storm," he added. "We could be up for 24 to 48 hours, so we feed our drivers and have them take naps. If the equipment is maintained and contractors have responsible drivers, the company should be successful."

Jessup explained that training is a major factor as well. Workers should be trained to operate the equipment and operate it in inclement weather, according to Jessup.

"Give drivers enough time to do the job safely," Jessup continued. "When they rush, accidents are much more likely to happen. Also, don't overbook and try to be in two places at once. Keeping the same drivers on the same routes can be helpful so operators can get used to the same properties.

"Don't overbook your contracts, and try to minimize the time spent on the roads,"

echoed Doug Freer, president of Lawn Lad, Cleveland Heights, Ohio. "Also, be sure the drivers take their time and don't rush through a job."

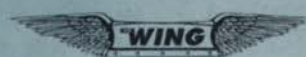
Another key point for avoiding liabilities is to keep all of the equipment maintained, according to Jessup. "A preventive maintenance program will save money in the long run."

Above all, for a contractor to reduce liabilities, have an effective insurance program and keep peace of mind during the winter, they should use their agent as a counselor, according to Strachan.

"The agent should tell the contractor how to be prepared," he added. "The contractor has to tell the agent what they do and how they run their business because different coverage is needed with different equipment." **LL**

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

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## manufacturer listing

### Arctic Equipment Manufacturing

1170 York St.  
London, Ontario, Canada  
N5W 6C9  
Phone: 519/452-3406

### Ariens Company

655 West Ryan St.  
Brillion, WI 54110  
Phone: 920/756-2141

### Cargill Salt Division

PO Box 5621  
Minneapolis, MN 55440  
Phone: 612/742-4712

### Daniels

15N365 Old Sutton Rd.  
East Dundee, IL 60118  
Phone: 847/426-1150

### Fisher Engineering

7777 North 73<sup>rd</sup> St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53223  
Phone: 414/362-3926

### Flink Company

502 N. Vermillion  
Streator, IL 61364  
Phone: 815/673-4321

### Henderson Manufacturing

PO Box 40  
Manchester, IA 52057  
Phone: 319/927-2828

### Hiniker Company

PO Box 3407  
Mankato, MN 56001  
Phone: 507/625-6621

### John Deere

P.O. Box 12217  
Durham, NC 27709  
Phone: 888/669-7767

### Kubota

3 Hutton Centre Drive, Suite 880  
Santa Ana, CA 92707  
Phone: 714/557-3663

### Ledex Industries

1100 South Service Rd.  
W. Oakville, Ontario, Canada  
L6L 5T7  
Phone: 905/465-4044

### Pro-Tech Welding & Fabrication

711 West Ave.  
Rochester, NY 14611  
Phone: 716/436-9855

### Snow Wolf

6022 Pillsbury Ave. South  
Minneapolis, MN 55419  
Phone: 800/905-2265

### Snowman Snowplows

PO Box 78  
Bloomfield, IA 52537  
Phone: 888/766-6267

### Southford Truck Equippers

PO Box 174  
Southbury, CT 06488  
Phone: 203/267-6337

### Steiner Turf Equipment

PO Box 504  
Dalton, OH 44618  
Phone: 330/828-0200

### Swenson Spreader

PO Box 127  
Lindenwood, IL 61049  
Phone: 815/393-4455

### TruckCraft

5751 Molly Pitcher Highway  
South  
Chambersburg, PA 17201  
Phone: 717/375-2900

### TrynEx International

PO Box 69  
Royal Oak, MI 48068  
Phone: 248/546-5101

### Walker Manufacturing Company

5925 East Harmony Rd.  
Fort Collins, CO 80525  
Phone: 970/221-5614

### Western Products

7777 North 73<sup>rd</sup> St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53223  
Phone: 414/362-3926

#### EDITOR'S NOTE:

*Lawn & Landscape attempted to contact and include all manufacturers of snow and ice equipment. A company's inclusion or exclusion in this guide should not be viewed as a comment on its products.*

*The following pages list the various spreaders, plows and snow throwers offered by the above manufacturers.*

# Snow & Ice

# CONTROL

# buyers' guide



## HOPPER SPREADERS

### FISHER ENGINEERING

MODEL	MOUNTS ON:	MADE OF:	DESIGNED FOR:	CONVEYOR	SPINNER
8 ft.	Pickup	12-gauge steel or 16-gauge stainless	N/A	12 inches	12 inches
8 ft. HC	Dump, platform	16-gauge stainless steel	N/A	16 inches	14.5 inches
10 ft. HC	Dump, platform	12-gauge steel	N/A	16 inches	14.5 inches

### FLINK COMPANY

MODEL	MOUNTS ON:	MADE OF:	DESIGNED FOR:	CONVEYOR	SPINNER
LMC 5 Series,	Chassis or dump	Stainless steel & steel	N/A	24 inches	20 inches
LMC 5H Series	Chassis or dump	Stainless steel & steel	N/A	24 inches	20 inches
FM	Pickup, 1 ton, super duty	Stainless steel & steel	N/A	16.5 inches	14 inches
8609, 8610	Dump body	Stainless steel & steel	N/A	19 inches	18 inches

### HENDERSON MANUFACTURING

MODEL	MOUNTS ON:	MADE OF:	DESIGNED FOR:	CONVEYOR	SPINNER
FSH-I, FSH-II,	N/A	10-gauge steel	Sand and salt	24 inches	20 inches
FSH-III					
FSP	Pickup and utility duty dump trucks	14-gauge steel	Sand and salt	14 inches	12 inches

### HINIKER COMPANY

MODEL	MOUNTS ON:	MADE OF:	DESIGNED FOR:	CONVEYOR	SPINNER
810, 850	Full-size pickups	Mild steel granular deicers	Salt, sand and	Chain	Steelother

### SOUTHFORD TRUCK EQUIPPERS

MODEL	MOUNTS ON:	MADE OF:	DESIGNED FOR:	CONVEYOR	SPINNER
Ice-O-Way Low Profile LPS6, LPS8, LPS6SS, LPS8SS	½ ton trucks and larger	Mild steel and 304 stainless steel	Spreading sand and/or salt	10-inch wide steel pintle type chain with 3/16-inch by ¾-inch cross bars	12-inch spinner with four flights spreading aggregate
Ice-O-Way Low Profile Swing Chute	¾ ton, 1 ton trucks and larger	Mild steel and 304 stainless steel	Spreading sand and/or salt	14-inch wide steel pintle type chain with 3/16-inch by ¾-inch cross bars	14-inch spinner with four flights spreading aggregate

### WESTERN PRODUCTS

MODEL	MOUNTS ON:	MADE OF:	DESIGNED FOR:	CONVEYOR	SPINNER
8 ft. (gas & hyd)	Pickup	16-gauge stainless steel	N/A	12 inches	12 inches
8 ft. (gas & hyd)	Pickup	12-gauge steel	N/A	12 inches	12 inches
8 ft. HC (gas & hyd)	Dump, platform	12-gauge steel	N/A	16 inches	14.5 inches
10 ft. HC (gas & hyd)	Dump, platform	12-gauge steel	N/A	16 inches	14.5 inches

## SNOW PLOWS

### ARCTIC EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURING

MODEL	LENGTH	MOLDBOARD HEIGHT	MATERIAL:	PLOWING WIDTH*	COMPLETE WEIGHT	MOUNTING TYPE	REMOVABLE LIGHTS & POWER
78 inches	78 inches	25 inches	12-gauge	68 inches	500 lbs.	Fixed	No
84 inches	84 inches	27 inches	10-gauge	73 inches	639 lbs.	Fixed or Detachable	Yes
90 inches	90 inches	27 inches	10-gauge	78 inches	654 lbs.	Fixed or Detachable	Yes
96 inches	96 inches	27 inches	10-gauge	83 inches	669 lbs.	Fixed or Detachable	Yes
102 inches Commercial	102 inches	27 inches	10-gauge	88 inches	690 lbs.	Fixed or Detachable	Yes
120 inches XHD	120 inches	36 inches	10-gauge	104 inches	1,120 lbs.	Fixed	No
90 inches	90 inches	29 inches	3/8-inch U.H.M.W. poly	78 inches	688 lbs.	Fixed or Detachable	Yes
96 inches	96 inches	29 inches	3/8-inch U.H.M.W. poly	83 inches	698 lbs.	Fixed or Detachable	Yes
102 inches	102 inches	29 inches	3/8-inch U.H.M.W. poly	88 inches	743 lbs.	Fixed or Detachable	Yes
108 inches	108 inches	29 inches	3/8-inch U.H.M.W. poly	94 inches	755 lbs.	Fixed or Detachable	Yes

\* at full angle

# snow & ice control

## DANIELS

MODEL	LENGTH	MOLDBOARD HEIGHT	MATERIAL:	PLOWING WIDTH*	COMPLETE WEIGHT	MOUNTING TYPE	REMOVABLE LIGHTS & POWER
Wing Plow	N/A	31 or 41 inches	7- or 10-gauge	12,14,16,18, 20 or 24 feet	1,550 to 4,300 lbs.	Quick disconnect or bucket mount	N/A
Pull Plow	N/A	19 inches	3/16-inch steel	70,80,90 or 96 inches	250 to 350 lbs.	Speed hitch	N/A

## FISHER ENGINEERING

LD Series	6 ft., 9 in.	23 inches	14-gauge HS	68 inches	525 lbs.	Detachable	Yes
LD Series	7 1/2 feet	23 inches	14-gauge HS	73 inches	635 lbs.	Detachable	Yes
RD Series	7 & 7 1/2 feet	26 inches	11-gauge	73 & 78 inches	710 & 715 lbs.	Detachable	Yes
HD Series	8 & 9 feet	29 inches	11-gauge	83 & 94 inches	855 & 925 lbs.	Detachable	Yes
EZ-V Plow	8 1/2 feet	28 1/2 inches	12-gauge	93-96 inches	920 lbs.	Detachable	Yes
Municipal	9 feet	34 inches	11-gauge	94 inches	1,690 lbs.	Detachable	Yes
Municipal	10 feet	34 inches	11-gauge	104 inches	1,790 lbs.	Detachable	Yes

## FLINK COMPANY

10-38	10 feet	38 inches	10-gauge	8 feet, 10 in.	1,875 lbs.	Pin and Quick Hitch	N/A
11-38	11 feet	38 inches	10-gauge	9 feet, 8 in.	1,920 lbs.	Pin and Quick Hitch	N/A
10-44	10 feet	44 inches	Poly	8 feet, 10 in.	1,820 lbs.	Pin and Quick Hitch	N/A
11-44	11 feet	44 inches	Poly	9 feet, 8 in.	1,870 lbs.	Pin and Quick Hitch	N/A
12-44	12 feet	44 inches	Poly	10 feet, 7 in.	1,920 lbs.	Pin and Quick Hitch	N/A
10-48	10 feet	48 inches	10-gauge	8 feet, 10 in.	1,915 lbs.	Pin and Quick Hitch	N/A
11-48	11 feet	48 inches	10-gauge	9 feet, 8 in.	1,920 lbs.	Pin and Quick Hitch	N/A
12-48	12 feet	48 inches	10-gauge	10 feet, 7 in.	2,025 lbs.	Pin and Quick Hitch	N/A
459 S(TE)	10 feet	36 inches	7-gauge	8 feet, 10 in.	1,395 lbs.	Pin and Quick Hitch	N/A
459 U(TE)	10 feet	42 inches	7-gauge	8 feet, 10 in.	1,462 lbs.	Pin and Quick Hitch	N/A
454 SU(TE)	11 feet	42 inches	7-gauge	9 feet, 8 in.	1,730 lbs.	Pin and Quick Hitch	N/A
455 (TE)	12 feet	42 inches	7-gauge	10 feet, 7 in.	1,857 lbs.	Pin and Quick Hitch	N/A
10PA 45(TE)	10 feet	45 inches	Poly	10 feet, 7 in.	2,275 lbs.	Pin and Quick Hitch	N/A
PR-936	9 feet	36 inches	10-gauge	7 feet, 9 in.	1,140 lbs.	Pin and Quick Hitch	N/A
PR-1036	10 feet	36 inches	10-gauge	8 feet, 8 in.	1,190 lbs.	Pin and Quick Hitch	N/A
PR 458 LD(TE)	9 feet	36 inches	10-gauge	7 feet, 9 in.	1,195 lbs.	Pin and Quick Hitch	N/A

## HINIKER COMPANY

1850	8 1/2 feet	30 inches	Mild steel	88 inches	890 lbs.	Drive-in Quick Hitch	Yes
2751	7 1/2 feet	30 inches	Mild steel	77 inches	708 lbs.	Drive-in Quick Hitch	Yes
2801	8 feet	30 inches	Mild steel	82 inches	721 lbs.	Drive-in Quick Hitch	Yes
2851	8 1/2 feet	30 inches	Mild steel	87 inches	746 lbs.	Drive-in Quick Hitch	Yes
2901	9 feet	30 inches	Mild steel	92 inches	759 lbs.	Drive-in Quick Hitch	Yes

## KUBOTA

T2083	N/A	11.4 inches	Steel	36.4 inches	55 lbs.	Quick attach/mount kit	N/A
T2748	N/A	17 inches	Steel	41.5 inches	130 lbs.	Quick attach/mount kit	N/A
FZB2019	N/A	N/A	Steel	51.9 inches	245 lbs.	N/A	N/A
GF2748	N/A	N/A	Steel	42.38 inches	90 lbs.	N/A	N/A
FZB2019	123.2 & 131.5	16.5 & 15.2 in.	Steel	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
L2040	N/A	17.4 inches	Steel	63.5 inches	N/A.	Rigid	N/A
FZB2019	N/A	20 inches	Steel	62.5 inches	N/A	Rigid	N/A

## LEDEX INDUSTRIES CORP.

Avalanche SnowPlow	8.5 to 24 to 24.5 feet	24-50 inches	Corrosion resistant steel	N/A	485 to 3,960 lbs.	Quick connect/any bucket or OEM coupler	N/A
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## PRO-TECH WELDING & FABRICATION

SP-Loader Model	10 to 30 feet	50 inches	3/16-inch steel	Fixed 90 degree pusher	2,200 to 4,500 lbs.	Patented Quick Change Attachment System	N/A
Sno Pusher FOP-Fold Out Model	16, 18 or 20 feet	50 inches	3/16-inch steel	Fixed 90 degree pusher	3,650, 3,850 and 4,050 lbs.	Patented Quick Change Attachment System	N/A
Sno Pusher BSP- Backhoe Model	10, 12 or 14 feet	38 inches	1/8-inch steel	Fixed 90 degree pusher	1,300, 1,450 and 1,600 lbs.	Patented Quick Change Attachment System	NA

## PRO-TECH WELDING & FABRICATION (continued)

MODEL	LENGTH	MOLDBOARD HEIGHT	MATERIAL:	PLOWING WIDTH*	COMPLETE WEIGHT	MOUNTING TYPE	REMOVABLE LIGHTS & POWER
SSP-Skid-Steer Model Sno Pusher	6,8,10 or 12 feet	38 inches	1/8-inch steel	Fixed 90 degree pusher	650, 800, 950 and 1,100 lbs.	Bolt-on/Interchangeable OEM coupler	NA

## SNOWMAN SNOWPLOW

60 LD	6 feet	23 inches	12-gauge	N/A	370 lbs.	2-inch square receiver	Yes
70+SC	7 feet	23 inches	10-gauge	N/A	415 lbs.	2-inch square receiver	Yes
70+R	7 to 8 1/2 feet	23 inches	10-gauge	N/A	475 lbs.	2-inch square receiver	Yes
70+RS	7 to 8 1/2 feet	23 inches	20-gauge	N/A	485 lbs.	2-inch square receiver	Yes
80+R	8 feet	23 inches	10-gauge	N/A	535 lbs.	2-inch square receiver	Yes
80+RS	8 feet	23 inches	10-gauge	N/A	545 lbs.	2-inch square receiver	Yes

## STEINER TURF EQUIPMENT

BD358	31 inches	21 inches	N/A	53-58 inches	248 lbs.	Front mount quick hitch	NA
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## SNOW WOLF

Snow Wolf	6 to 9 ft. in 6-inch increments	30 inches	11-gauge steel	5 to 9 ft.	100 lbs. per foot of width	Skid steer mount	N/A
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## WALKER MANUFACTURING

Dozer Blade	19 inches	18 inches	10-gauge steel	46 inches	90 lbs.	Front mount	N/A
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## WESTERN PRODUCTS

Sport Utility	6 1/2 feet	23 inches	16-gauge	70 inches	425 lbs.	Detachable	Yes
Standard	6 1/2 feet	26 1/2 inches	11-gauge	68 inches	560 lbs.	Detachable	Yes
Standard	7 feet	26 1/2 inches	11-gauge	73 inches	575 lbs.	Detachable	Yes
Standard	7 1/2 feet	26 1/2 inches	11-gauge	78 inches	590 lbs.	Detachable	Yes
Standard	7 1/2 feet	27 inches	3/8-inch	78 inches	614 lbs.	Detachable	Yes
Poly			polyethylene				
Pro	7 1/2 feet	28 inches	11-gauge	78 inches	695 lbs.	Detachable	Yes
Pro	8 feet	28 inches	11-gauge	83 inches	710 lbs.	Detachable	Yes
Pro	8 1/2 feet	28 inches	11-gauge	88 inches	730 lbs.	Detachable	Yes
Pro	9 feet	28 inches	11-gauge	93 inches	750 lbs.	Detachable	Yes
Pro Poly	7 1/2 feet	29 inches	3/8-inch	78 inches	730 lbs.	Detachable	Yes
Pro Poly	8 feet	29 inches	3/8-inch	83 inches	745 lbs.	Detachable	Yes
MVP v-plow	8 1/2 feet	28 1/2 inches	12-gauge	94 1/2 inches	880 lbs.	Detachable	Yes
Heavy Weight	9 feet	33 inches	7-gauge	98 inches	1,277 lbs.	Detachable	Yes
Heavy Weight	10 feet	33 inches	7-gauge	109 inches	1,335 lbs.	Detachable	Yes

## SNOW THROWERS

### ARIENS

MODEL	HORSEPOWER	WIDTH
ST1336LE	13 hp OHV	36 inches
ST1132LE	11 hp OHV	32 inches
ST928LE	9 hp OHV	28 inches
ST824DLE	8 hp LH	24 inches
ST724	7 hp OHV	24 inches
SS522E	5 hp 2 cycle	22 inches
SS322	3 hp 2 cycle	22 inches

### KUBOTA

MODEL	AUGER SPEED	WIDTH
TG2742 2-stage front mount	157 rpm	42 inches
TG2738 a single stage front-mount	974 rpm	39.5 inches
TG2742 2-stage	160 rpm	42 inches
TG2742	168 rpm	42 inches
F2450CB-1	280 rpm	52.5 inches
B2650	903 rpm	50 inches
B2660	903 rpm	60 inches
BL2660	540 rpm	61.5 inches
L2052-1 front commercial	N/A	62.25 inches mount
BL2660 2-stage rear mount	N/A	61.5 inches

### JOHN DEERE

828D	8 hp	28 inches
1032D	10 hp	32 inches
724D	7 hp	24 inches
826D	8 hp	26 inches

\* at full angle

# snow & ice control

## STEINER TURF EQUIPMENT

MODEL	HORSEPOWER	WIDTH
SB348	N/A	49.5 inches

## WALKER MANUFACTURING

MODEL	HORSEPOWER	WIDTH
42-inch two-stage	20-25 hp	42 inches

## TAILGATE SPREADERS

### FISHER ENGINEERING

MODEL	MOUNTS ON	MADE OF	DESIGNED FOR	CONVEYOR	SPINNER
Speedcaster	Full-size pickups	Polyethylene	Salt	N/A	15 inches
Speedcaster 2	¾ ton, 1 ton trucks	Polyethylene	Salt	16 inches	16 inches
Low Profile 1000	Full-size pickups	Polyethylene	Salt	N/A	10 inches
Low Profile 2000	Full-size pickups	Polyethylene	Salt	N/A	10 inches

### FLINK COMPANY

MODEL	MOUNTS ON	MADE OF	DESIGNED FOR	CONVEYOR	SPINNER
VCT 11 & 12	Dump body	7-gauge	Salt or sand	6-inch auger	18-inch poly
VCT 13	Dump body	7-gauge	Salt, chloride, cinders	Twin 4-inch augers	18-inch poly
VCT 20	1-ton dump body	7-gauge	Salt or sand	6-inch auger	18-inch poly
VCT 90	Dump body	7-gauge	Granular material	9-inch auger	18-inch poly
RF 8, RFH 8	Dump body	7-gauge	Granular material	96-inch roll spreader	96-inch roll spreader
HD-6	Dump body tailgate	various steel	Ice control, seal coat	Full-width agitator	Full-width agitator

### HENDERSON MANUFACTURING

MODEL	MOUNTS ON	MADE OF	DESIGNED FOR	CONVEYOR	SPINNER
TGS-II	Standard and utility dump bodies	Mild or stainless steel	Salt and sand spreaders	Hydraulic 6- or 9- inch driven augers	18-inch hydraulic spinners

### HINKER COMPANY

MODEL	MOUNTS ON	MADE OF	DESIGNED FOR	CONVEYOR	SPINNER
236	8 foot dump body	Mild steel	Salt, sand and other granular deicers	Cross auger	Poly or steel

### SWENSON SPREADER COMPANY

MODEL	MOUNTS ON	MADE OF	DESIGNED FOR	CONVEYOR	SPINNER
S Series	1 ton and large dump trucks	304 stainless steel or carbon steel	Salt, sand or combinations inch continuous flited, reverse flited or combinations	4-, 6- and 9- inch augers	18 inch poly or 7 gauge steel single or dual

### TRUCKCRAFT

MODEL	MOUNTS ON	MADE OF	DESIGNED FOR	CONVEYOR	SPINNER
TC-130	Dump body	Aluminum and stainless steel	Salt, sand	Stainless steel auger	12-inch stainless stainless steel
TC-130 + TC-300 (dump body and spreader)	60-inch CA	N/A	N/A	Stainless steel auger	N/A
TC-130 + TC-310 (dump body and spreader)	60-inch CA	N/A	N/A	Stainless steel auger	N/A

### TRYNEX INTERNATIONAL

MODEL	MOUNTS ON	MADE OF	DESIGNED FOR	CONVEYOR	SPINNER
SnowEx Mini Pro SP-575	Standard receiver hitch, utility mount and three-point hitch	Polymer	Sand, salt and other deicing materials	flighted auger	10-inch steel
SnowEx Pivot Pro SP-1075	¾- to 1-ton pickups, 1-ton stake trucks, dump trucks and SUVs	Polymer	Sand, salt and other deicing materials	flighted auger	10-inch steel transmission
SnowEx Sand Pro SP-1875	Trucks and SUVs	Polymer	all types of material	2-stage auger	12-inch powder-coated steel

### WESTERN PRODUCTS

MODEL	MOUNTS ON	MADE OF	DESIGNED FOR	CONVEYOR	SPINNER
Pro-Flo	Full-size pickups	Polyethylene	Salt	N/A	15 inches
Pro-Flo 2	¾-ton, 1-ton	Polyethylene	Salt or sand	16 inches	16 inches
Low Profile 1000	Full-size pickups	Polyethylene	Salt	Auger	10 inches
Low Profile 2000	Full-size pickups	Polyethylene	Salt	Auger	10 inches

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# On-Site Operations

**T**urning a large account into an on-site operation is not based on the size of the property or the amount of revenue it brings in, according to Dan Foley.

As president of D. Foley Landscape, Walpole, Mass., and one who has successfully provided an on-site maintenance service at his company since 1994, Foley should know. Although Foley has only four main on-site properties, the work amounts to 47 percent of the company's total maintenance revenues.

"We were becoming more and more successful with our larger clients and adding this service just played into our strengths as a company," Foley enthused.

If contractors have customers who have special needs, desire a vast amount of services or have many acres of landscape that need to be maintained and detailed, they could be candidates for on-site service. Before rushing out to sell on-site work, however, contractors need to look at all areas of their company and the pros and cons of on-site maintenance.

**WHO QUALIFIES?** A client needs to have certain characteristics to warrant on-site service.

"Our on-site operations are full five- to six- day endeavors," Foley explained. "We have site managers that report directly to the site 38 to 39 weeks out of the year. The sites are set up with trucks and maintenance equipment that are custom-tailored to the site's needs."

Foley's four on-site clients include one college and three large condominium properties. He said he tries to reach two

*(continued on page 56)*

• *Landscape contractors discuss the pros*  
 • *and cons of providing on-site services to*  
 • *their commercial clients.*

• *By Nicole Wisniewski*

One of D. Foley Landscape's on-site managers discusses site plans with the customer. On this large commercial site, the site manager uses a golf cart to get around, in addition to his site truck. Photo: Dan Foley





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## on-site operation

(continued from page 53)

different markets when selling his on-site maintenance service: properties that already have an in-house grounds crew and have trouble managing it and clients where work is getting busier and the property manager isn't handling it well. These types of clients include commercial and industrial clients, condominiums and apartments and private colleges and high schools.

Commercial clients are the best targets to sell on-site service to because they have the acreage necessary to warrant the daily attention — at least 12 acres of turf, Foley said, mentioning his smallest on-site client's property size.

"If there's not enough acreage to mow, then the employees can get lost in the detail work and get bored," Foley said.

**SELLING ON-SITE WORK.** When selling on-site work, contractors need to communicate

## The On-Site Chart

A potential on-site client should have:

- Phone and fax capabilities available to the contractor.
- On-site storage space to store equipment or available acreage for a trailer.
- A large acreage of landscape to maintain — above 12 acres.
- Daily landscaping needs — not just mowing, but detail work as well.
- Location. If a client is close to the office, selling the job as a regular maintenance service may cost the contractor less vs. selling the job as an on-site operation.

and put to contract an agreement of exactly what is expected of them and what services are included in their on-site service.

Jeff Sousa, president, Sousa's Landscape Management Co., Bermuda, has two large resorts as on-site clients. The Coral Beach Resort, the larger of the two at 75-acres, requires three people five days per week and an arboriculturist and an assistant arboriculturist two days per week due to the amount of trees located on the property.

The Elbow Beach Resort is a 55-acre property (about 30 acres maintained), yet there is more detail work required on the property, including seasonal color, hardscaping and interiorscaping. Therefore, this site requires four employees who report there seven days per week.

For Sousa, selling these services was simple. When he was 18 years old, Sousa worked with the grounds crew at Elbow Beach Resort. When he was ready to sell his on-site service, he simply called up his old manager and asked if he could come in and offer him a proposal. He knew from keeping in touch with the resort that the manager was disappointed in his current in-house staff because, as Sousa explained, they had become "complacent, unionized and lacked professionalism."

"We went in and cleaned the place up," Sousa enthused. "The resort next door —

(continued on page 58)

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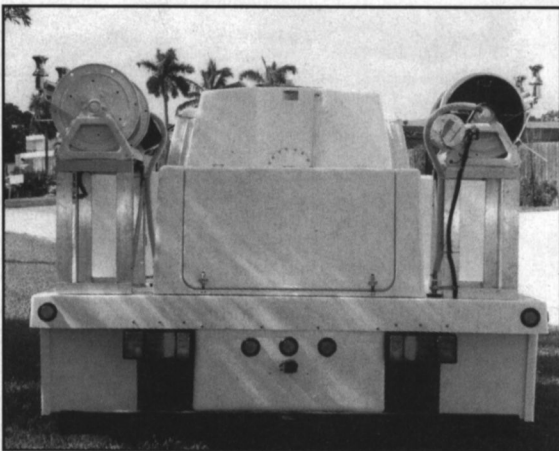


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## on-site operations

(continued from page 58)

The Coral Beach Resort – noticed our work and soon after became another one of our on-site clients.”

Now, Sousa said that 30 to 40 percent of his full-service landscape company's revenues come from his on-site work with just these two resorts.

Key points Sousa brings up while selling

his on-site service include having professional and knowledgeable people, including certified arboriculturists and horticulturists, on staff; the use of professional, commercial equipment and new products, including zero-turn mowers, growth regulators, the latest pesticides, etc.; daily, uniformed visibility; and a price that is compa-

rable to what potential clients were paying their in-house staff, yet without the hassle of daily employee management or picking out and purchasing equipment for them.

“The larger resorts are sold on outsourcing their landscaping work because they don't have to worry about things like

(continued on page 62)



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## Contracts & On-Site Work

**W**hen contractors add on-site services to their companies, they naturally feel much better knowing their customers are going to stick around for awhile to warrant the extra money spent on manpower and equipment, according to Jeff Sousa, president, Sousa's Landscape Management Co., Bermuda.

“We recently extended our one-year contracts into three-year contracts,” Sousa said, admitting he was nervous having his clients sign only one-year contracts when he first started on-site work at his company five years ago. “With three-year contracts, contractors can rest assured that the additional site-specific equipment they purchased will not go to waste.”

Dan Foley, president, D. Foley Landscape, Walpole, Mass., agreed, noting that all four of his clients requiring on-site crews are on two- to three-year contracts.

A detailed, site-specific contract also alleviates the problem of on-site clients attempting to get a contractor to do more than what's written in the contract – additional installation work, for example, Sousa said.

“Certain clients are used to having an in-house crew to boss around,” Sousa noted. “We try to resolve this by having one of our salespeople visit the site periodically to find out how things are going and talk to the client about additional services he or she would like for an additional cost.” — *Nicole Wisniewski*

USE READER SERVICE #48

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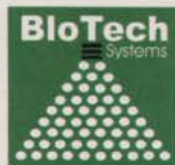
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USE READER SERVICE #49

## on-site operations

*(continued from page 58)*

equipment," Sousa pointed out. "We go to the general managers at large resorts and tell them we can do the job better and more economically. We guarantee our physical presence and we become an 'in-house' team with pagers and cellular telephones so that the customer knows how to get a hold of these employees and gets to know who they are working with."

Foley, on the other hand, manages his four on-site properties a little bit differently. All four sites have one site manager who takes care of everything in the contract and has direct contact with the customer. In the spring, when things get a little busier, the site manager doesn't do all of the work by himself, but he or she is responsible for dispatching a crew from the home office to assist with different spring tasks. Two of the four sites, which are larger in size, warrant a site manager and site assistant manager based on need and schedule at different times of the year.

According to Foley, he is one of only three landscape contractors who do on-site work in Massachusetts. So, a challenge of selling on-site work for him is educating his customers on what an on-site service constitutes, and then getting them past the disbelief that only one or two people can do all the work. That's when selling the use of professional commercial equipment can be beneficial, Foley said.

**EQUIPMENT & ON-SITE STORAGE.** A natural part of on-site work is being able to store equipment on the property. Foley said a part of figuring out whether a client is a good candidate for on-site work is finding out if they have storage space for contractor use or can provide space on the landscape for a ground-level storage container.

"At our college site, they have a facilities garage and they gave us one of six bays," Foley pointed out as an example.

Sousa's crew was provided with the existing grounds crew's storage area with electricity. The area holds all his equipment for the site, such as chippers, shredders and backhoes. There is also space for a trailer on-site and room to store trucks.

"We keep the basic equipment on-site and then bring in other stuff as needed, such as a crane," Sousa said.

Both Sousa and Foley buy new equip-

*(continued on page 64)*





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## on-site operations

(continued from page 62)

ment to suit the specific needs of the on-site client, whether it be investing in walk-behind mowers for a condominium's small, tight areas or large zero-turn riding mowers for open areas on a college campus.

Foley said he can usually save money on the trucks used exclusively for on-site properties.

"We'll either buy a used truck or retire one from our mobile fleet with high mileage," Foley explained. "Trucks that are getting up there in miles will last longer on an on-site property because they are only driving maybe 2,000 miles per year because they're remaining on one site. The same works for some equipment as well. If an on-site property warrants a walk-behind for tight areas, yet I know it will only get about two hours of use per week, I'll retire one from my mobile fleet and replace it with a new one there instead of buying new for the on-site property."

Buying new equipment can get costly, but Foley said with on-site

(continued on page 101)

## Managing the Large Install Project

**M**aintenance and full-service commercial accounts aren't the only ones to warrant on-site crews. The large residential or commercial installation or design/build project needs the same amount of pre-planning and daily on-site attention, according to Nathan Dirksen, production coordinator, Dennis' Seven Dees Landscaping, Portland, Ore.

Currently, Dennis' Seven Dees Landscaping has 23 on-site installation or design/build projects. Like an on-site maintenance project, Dirksen said his clients are visited by the same crews everyday through the duration of the project.

"We have approximately 84 people working on our 23 projects," Dirksen explained. "Our typical residential site has three employees — a foreman, leadman and crewperson — and our typical commercial site needs about six people. Periodically, a salesman will show up on the job to see how things are going and answer any questions the customer may have."

This isn't a strain labor-wise on the company's employee pool because Dirksen said he gets to forecast how many employees will be dedicated to each on-site project weeks in advance.

On-site installation or design/build projects also warrant temporary on-site storage space for machinery.

"On commercial sites, we'll rent temporary fencing and store plant material and large, heavy equipment there," Dirksen said. "On residential sites, we'll usually store equipment in the backyard."

The only difference, according to Dirksen, between an on-site installation project and an on-site maintenance project is that his installation employees report to the main office at the beginning of each day to be dispatched to the site, while on an on-site maintenance project, employees report directly to the job site daily. — *Nicole Wisniewski*



Many landscape contractors believe that winterizing their equipment is one important step in ensuring a smooth spring start-up. Photo: The Toro Co.

Preparing  
commercial  
equipment  
and clients'  
landscapes  
for winter  
hibernation is the  
key to a smooth  
spring start-up.

**A**

few years ago, at the end of the season, Gary Ground, president, Forsyth Lawn Co., Forsyth, Ill., emptied the gas in a piece of machinery he had and ran it dry – or so he thought.

That spring, Ground found a varnish-like substance coating the carburetor – a result of shutting off the machinery before all of the gas had been drained from the carburetor.

“I can’t afford to ruin another piece of equipment like that,” Ground stressed, pointing out the importance of properly winterizing machinery to minimize any springtime problems.

Spring is usually much smoother for a landscape contracting company when equipment starts up clean and customers’ trees aren’t suffering from winter sunburn or their bushes haven’t been damaged by rabbits or rodents.

One way to avoid equipment and landscape problems come springtime is to prepare in advance. Winter is usually a good time for machine and landscape preparation, which for most East and Midwest companies is after Thanksgiving.

**EVALUATING EQUIPMENT NEEDS.** Most landscape contractors, no matter their size, cannot afford to sacrifice any pieces of their equipment fleet, so winterizing them is key part of making sure they run well with little downtime in the spring.

“I start preparing my equipment for winter in July and August,” remarked Blaine Bunting, president, Bunting’s Landscape & Nursery, Bishopville, Md. “We start evaluating how each piece of equipment is doing by conducting a company-wide review to determine how much downtime each machine has cost us and determine potential repair problems and costs each machine will warrant before spring. Once a machine becomes costly from a downtime perspective, then we trade it in and replace it before it costs us any more money.”

Next, Bunting said he lists all of the units that need repairs. He starts scheduling the repair and repainting of the equipment and retains between 60 and 70 percent of his employees over the winter months to take care of these equipment needs.

“Trying to hire a new force the next spring and

*(continued on page 68)*

By Nicole

Wisniewski

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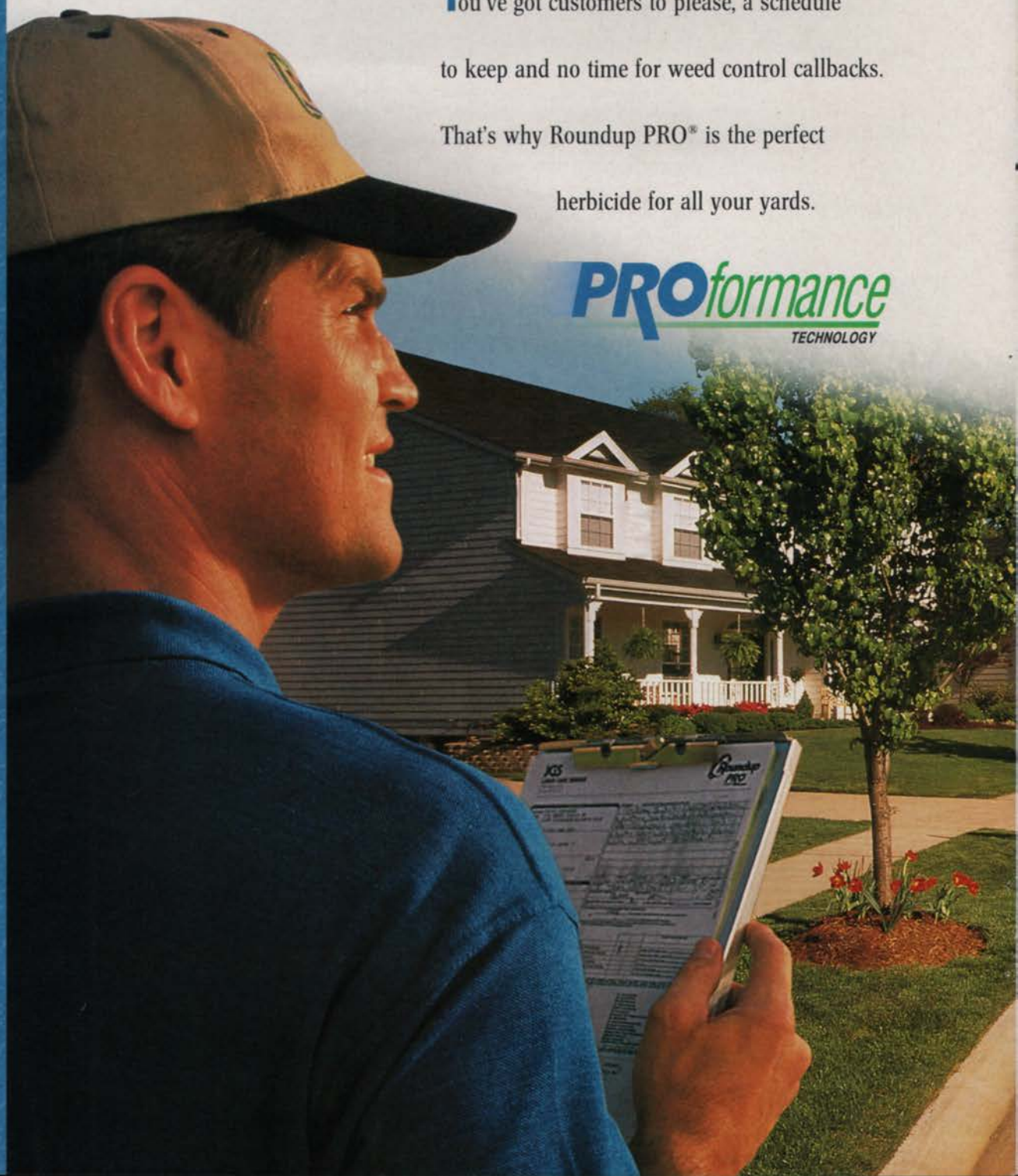
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**USE READER SERVICE #54**

## winter preparation

(continued from page 65)

retraining them costs too much, so we try to keep as many people around as we can," Bunting said. "I try to take a portion of the funds from the spring and summer and put that aside as a winter fund to pay employees over the winter season, which is only three months for us."

Besides planning for repairs, landscape contractors need to clean up their equipment. Mark May, president, Maywood Landscaping, Erie, Pa., said he makes sure all of his equipment is power-washed and degreased so that oil leaks and oil that has coated and dirtied the machinery is cleaned up.

"Doing the oil change while the engine is still warm is important," suggested Brett Paladino, co-owner, Countryside of Wyckoff Landscaping, Wyckoff, N.J. "The oil will flow freely and carry away more impurities than if the engine were cool."

May also keeps his employees around for a short time to do equipment maintenance work right after Thanksgiving. Then his company closes for the winter.

"My employees maintained these machines all season, so being there to put them to rest for winter is important to them," May said.

Another important area to address is the gasoline left in the equipment at the end of the season. Some landscape contractors drain their equipment, but most, such as Ground, would rather use gasoline stabilizers to keep the gas from going bad.

"This is especially important to do on the machines that we run a little bit throughout the winter, such as generators and compact utility loaders," Bunting said. "We still drain the gas from mowers and trimmers that we know we won't use all winter long."

Paladino suggested adding a fuel stabilizer to the last tank of gas in the equipment at the end of the season because this lubricates the interior of the engine, especially the gaskets. He then drains the fuel system completely and runs the engine until the system is empty.

"We also remove the spark plugs and put a tablespoon of oil into every spark plug hole," Paladino continued. "Then we rein-

## Retaining Customers

**R**etaining customers over the winter months can be a challenge, especially in an area where contractors are competing with many other contractors for the same customers.

Mark May, president, Maywood Landscaping, Erie, Pa., sends out a note with his customers' November bills thanking them for the opportunity to provide them with his landscaping service that year. He also mentions how he's looking forward to the coming spring.

"I make sure to mention in the note that if they need a change in the level of service they are receiving or a change in service variety, they should give me a call before spring arrives," May explained. "Then, in mid-February, we follow-up the note with a telephone call asking our customers if they would like anything changed in their service for the coming year. If they start talking, then we're assured that they are customers for the coming year. If they aren't responding well to the call, then we have a chance to ask if they had problems with the service and have anything that needs to be corrected."

This "proactive" approach, according to May, helps him retain 95 to 97 percent of his customers over the winter months annually.

"We just make sure our follow-up calls are made when it is sunny outside and not bitter cold, so customers are thinking spring," May said, adding that he is also going to send out holiday cards this year to his customers so that they are thinking about him over the winter.

Blaine Bunting, president, Bunting's Landscape & Nursery, Bishopville, Md., also sends out a reminder to his residential, long-term customers in mid-February in the form of a newsletter and a follow-up call.

Instead of or in addition to sending out company service information, some contractors keep in touch with regular customers by just providing extra services over the winter. Gary Ground, president, Forsyth Lawn Co., Forsyth, Ill., keeps in touch with his regular customers by being available for phone calls over the winter months and by personally offering a snowplow service to them.

Lied's Landscape Design & Development, Sussex, Wis., retains customers by offering a variety of winter services, from snow removal and holiday decorating to tree planting, tree pruning and hardscaping, according to Jim Spotts, production superintendent.

"We have come up with some creative and successful ways to keep our customers happy over the winter months," Spotts enthused. — *Nicole Wisniewski*

stall the plugs but do not attach the plug leads. Lastly, we crank the engine two or three revolutions. This will allow the oil to coat the engine and its cylinders."

As an extra safety measure and to make sure his equipment is in good shape come springtime, Ground will start all of his equipment every three weeks throughout the winter and run it for about 15 minutes. He also makes sure to store his equipment safely in a trailer that is kept inside of a garage for extra protection from the cold winter temperatures.

**GETTING LANDSCAPES READY.** Most landscape contractors provide a fall maintenance program as a service to their clients. This can include winterizing irrigation systems and preparing properties for the holiday

months. Since Bunting's winters in Maryland aren't very severe, his winter preparation involves planting winter annuals, such as winter pansies, and re-mulching to tidy up the property and give it a clean look.

But contractors who live in areas that get plenty of snow must protect certain landscape plants, trees and shrubs from the winter weather.

Ground makes sure to blow debris out from behind shrubs and mulch all of his customers' beds.

May said he prefers seeing the perennial beds taken care of in the fall rather than waiting until spring to tidy up materials. This means removing spent foliage and that year's blooms and mulching over the root crowns to protect them. This starts about

(continued on page 70)

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## winter preparation

(continued from page 68)

mid-October, once the plant material is spent right after the leaves start to fall. Annual beds can also be taken care of in mid-October, once there have been one to two decent frosts. He also makes sure to thin and prune deciduous shrubs, such as lilacs, to remove old wood and encourage new wood to grow.

"I winterize clients' turf by applying a fertilizer that is strong in phosphorus in two applications – one in September/October that will stimulate early formation and strong growth of the roots," Paladino said. "Applying the fertilizer at the right time is important because the cool weather will dramatically aid the turf in allowing it to root itself deeper and stronger. Timing of the 1-inch application will also help the turf recover from the hot weather. A second fertilizer application done in November/December boosts growth for the upcoming spring."

As far as snow is concerned, Paladino also applies a fungicide to certain lawns,

especially his high-profile clients, to provide the turf with the strength to defend against snow mold and other diseases.

"A second application of fungicide can be made if the ground is not frozen," Paladino added.

Lied's Landscape Design & Development, Sussex, Wis., takes its fall clean-up one step further, according to Jim Spotts, production superintendent.

"We put tree wrap on all smooth bark trees to guard against sunburn and fall fertilization," Spotts stated. "We also put hardware cloth about 2 feet high around the stems of plants susceptible to mice and rabbits, such as burning bush, flowering crabapple trees, witch hazel, hawthorns and fruit trees."

After leaf clean up, Spotts protects any broadleaf evergreen groundcover plants, such as winter creeper, by putting evergreen bows over them.

Both May and Spotts make sure to take

steps to protect their customers' roses. In mid-November and early December when the roses are dormant, May cuts them back to an appropriate height (approximately 15 to 24 inches), trims the material stem and brings in extra bark mulch to place at the plants' roots to give them more protection against the cold.

Spotts protects his clients' roses by mounding soil about 12 to 18 inches over the graft union of each rose where the plant is grafted into the root stock – an area that is more susceptible to cold damage. He then removes the soil in the spring.

Lied's Landscape Design & Development also schedules many tree and hardscape installations over the winter months as an additional service for their clients, Spotts said. These services include planting large trees as frost ball plants.

"By putting hay down on the ground during fall clean-up to keep the ground from freezing, we can plant trees in the

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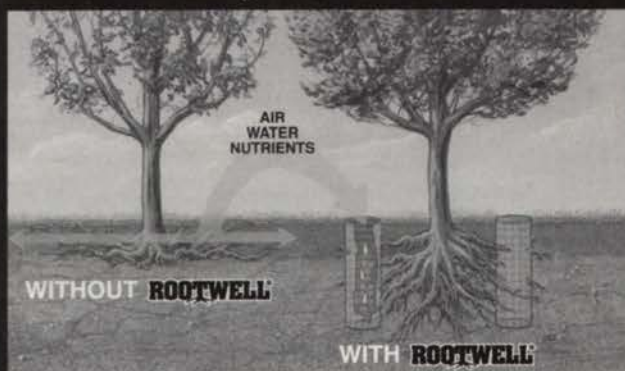
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The only way to avoid equipment and landscape problems is to prepare for the spring when winter is just beginning.

customer's yard in the winter and retain a 90 percent survivability rate," Spotts pointed out. "The trick is placing hay around the tree in the nursery and then waiting until the temperature drops to 20 degrees or below. Then we dig out the tree and let it freeze before planting it in the customer's yard. The tree is dormant and hardly knows it has been moved come springtime."

This service appeals to Spotts' clients because moving a 5- to 6-inch caliper tree in a machine across frozen turf doesn't damage their landscapes, he said.

Since the past two winters have been very mild due to the effects of El Nino, Spotts said the alternative to planting large trees has been installing hardscapes.

"We've been putting in retaining walls over the winter," Spotts enthused. "We'll

put hay on the area before winter to protect it from freezing. Then we'll put in the wall."

**WINTER EMPLOYMENT.** "I'm lucky to retain 20 percent of my employees for the spring," lamented May, who shuts his company down during the winter months.

Many contractors find hiring and training a new crew every spring to be a waste of time and money, so retaining employees over the winter months becomes important.

Spotts said Lied's retains a good number of employees because of all the winter work they provide for their customers, including snow removal, holiday lighting, tree pruning and tree and hardscape installation.

Besides having his employees work on

repairing equipment, Bunting keeps his employees busy during the winter months by having them spend one day each week during January and February in company improvement brainstorming sessions.

"Employees come up with ways the company can be improved," Bunting said.

How does Bunting choose the employees who are going to remain employed over the winter months?

"We choose those with experience and particularly those who've invested a great amount of 'sweat equity' during the spring and summer months — going above and beyond during the peak months, working together as a team," Bunting said.

"I just make sure to tell them in advance that they do run the risk of little hours because of the lack of work to do," Bunting said. "But we usually keep them busy." ■

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

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*A good fertilizer program starts with an understanding of the nutrients essential to healthy turf.*

*By Jerry Stoller*



How many times have lawn care companies seen a yellowing plant and tried to restore it by applying more nitrogen? Nitrogen is supposed to green-up the plant, but it doesn't always work. When it doesn't, not only is there still a problem, but the situation also creates a dissatisfied customer and a frustrated contractor.

After discontent, then what? Hopefully, the customer exhibits some patience and the contractor has the desire to learn how to avoid that situation again.

Turf health and appearance relies on more than just the presence of adequate (or excess) nitrogen, which means the importance of micronutrients in a total and complex fertilizer program deserve attention, too.

**NITROGEN (N).** Nitrogen is the single most important nutrient that determines plant growth. This is due to its effect on stimulating plant growth hormones. Too much nitrogen will, however, increase disease incidence in plants. Two to three

applications per year (at lower amounts) is usually preferable to larger amounts for a single application. Most fertilizer contains significant amounts of nitrogen.

**PHOSPHATE (P).** Phosphate is the nutrient that promotes "energy" inside of the plant. Over many years of fertilizer use, phosphate levels in the soil will be adequate. Good root health depends on adequate phosphate.

**POTASSIUM (K).** Potassium has many functions inside of a plant. One of the main functions is the regulation of cellular pH. This controls the digestion system of the plant.

**N-P-K.** These percent of these three nutrients in a fertilizer is represented by the numbers prominently displayed on the front of most fertilizer bags. Very seldom are they insufficient when plant food is regularly used. They are the meat, potatoes, and bread of the plant's diet. They are referred to as major nutrients.

What about the milk, salad, fiber and vitamins of a plants diet? They are called micronutrients. Although they are used in small amounts, they are nevertheless necessary to the health of the plants. Following is the description of micronutrients.

**THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS.** There are 16 essential elements needed in a complete and total nutri-



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ent program to produce any crop. Carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and some nitrogen come from air and water. Nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium, sulfur, zinc, boron, manganese, copper, iron, molybdenum and chlorine all come from soil and fertilizer applications.

It's important to note that all of the aforementioned nutrients are important throughout the growing season.

**Zinc**—Zinc deficiency is the most common of the micronutrient deficiencies in the United States. It occurs in many crops and in many soils. Zinc deficiency is one of the easiest to diagnose—either visually or by soil or tissue testing—and to correct.

Certain soils are naturally low in total and available zinc, such as calcareous soils (pH 7.0 or above), acid leached soils, coarse sands, low organic (muck) soils and over-limed soils.

Excess phosphorus can induce zinc defi-

ciencies, whether or not the interaction between zinc and phosphate occurs in the soil external to the plant or in the metabolic process within the plant. High phosphate applications or retention restrict zinc uptake. Then zinc will combine with soluble phosphates to form zinc phosphates, which cannot readily be dissolved. Iron and manganese, either in excess or deficiency, may be contributing factors in zinc deficiencies.

Zinc as a plant nutrient is important as a growth hormone and in seed and grain formation. It is particularly important in the maturation date of plants, in the height of plants and in protein synthesis.

**Iron**—The most important functions of iron in a plant are to promote formation of chlorophyll, the green pigment of the plant that functions in photosynthesis or starch production. Chlorophyll is the enzyme mechanism which operates the respiratory

(continued on page 76)

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RONSTAR <sup>d</sup>	M	H	NR	M	M	NR	NR	NR
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## dealing with NPK

(continued from page 73)

system of living cells. Iron is not readily translocated from old to new leaves, so a constantly available source is needed during the entire growing season.

High soil pH and the presence of free calcium carbonate (lime) induce iron chlorosis – even though high iron levels may be present in the plant.

Iron is found in abundance in most soils, but mostly in a form that is unavailable to the plant. This deficiency of available iron adversely affects plant growth.

Low soil temperatures can retard the growth rate of the plant's root system and restricts the uptake of iron. As a rule, iron deficiencies in the field tend to diminish as temperatures increase and soil moisture decreases. Improved aeration encourages greater microbiological activity with greater root growth and exposure to soil iron.

Generally, a foliar application of iron is better than a soil application since it is not necessary to get involved with the soil's

chemistry or tie-up problems of iron with phosphate, magnesium and others.

**Magnesium**—Magnesium participates in the activity of enzymes, assists in the translocation of phosphorus in the plant and is found mostly in the chlorophyll-bearing tissues of a plant.

Adequate supplies of magnesium are governed not only by the absolute level of magnesium but also by the calcium:magnesium ratio. A large excess of calcium relative to magnesium may induce a magnesium deficiency. When magnesium is dissolved in the soil solution, it is absorbed through the root system by diffusion or ionic exchange. The competition from nitrogen, calcium and, particularly from potassium, interferes with the uptake and absorption of magnesium.

The rapid uptake of nitrogen fertilizers, when greater in ratio than the available magnesium, causes a deficiency. Just as in other non-mobile nutrients, the critical use

period of magnesium is within the first 40 days of growth.

**Manganese**—Manganese is the predominant metal iron in the metabolism of organic acids. In higher plants, manganese activates the reduction of nitrate and hydroxylamine to ammonia. It is part of the important enzymes involved in respiration and protein synthesis, and it generally serves as an activator for a variety of enzyme reactions, such as oxidation, reduction, hydrolysis and group transfer.

Manganese has particular interest as it relates to photosynthesis. It may have a direct or indirect influence on chloroplast—the location of the conversion of sunlight energy to chemical energy.

Manganese deficiencies occur in sands, peats and muck, alkaline (pH of 6.5 or above) and particularly in calcareous overlimed soils, and well as soils with low organic matter.

**Copper**—Copper is required in small



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*Turf health and appearance relies on more than just the presence of adequate (or excess) nitrogen, which means the importance of micronutrients in a total and complex fertilizer program deserve attention, too.*

.....

amounts in plant tissue for normal growth. The only other known essential element required in a lower amount by plants is molybdenum.

Copper's function in plant growth cannot be replaced by any other element, as copper is an enzyme activator and becomes a component of certain enzymes that function in respiration and in photosynthesis. Copper itself is not a component part of chlorophyll; however, it is part of the en-

zyme system that becomes chlorophyll.

**Sulfur**—Sulfur should exist in one part for every 10 to 12 parts of nitrogen. Without sulfur, the plant cannot use its nitrogen — 1 to 12 is about the chemical ratio of protein to the plant.

One pound of sulfur for every 12 pounds of nitrogen must come from somewhere.

Normally, sulfur becomes available in two ways: fall-out from rain or from the decomposition of organic matter. Since about 90 percent of the sulfur in the soil is contained in the organic matter, one can say, then, that the higher the organic matter of the soil, the less probability of a sulfur deficiency. Consequently, since sandy soils are low in organic matter content, the addition of sulfur is going to be more important than it would be on high organic soils.

**Molybdenum**—Molybdenum is the other plant nutrient that is necessary for the plant to convert its nitrogen to protein. Ninety percent of the nitrogen used by a plant is picked up as nitrate nitrogen even though it may be applied as ammonia or urea. This nitrate nitrogen has to be transformed into protein. If it does not convert into protein, nitrogen is unusable by the plant. So, when nitrogen remains in the nitrate form, there is rapid vegetative growth with weak cell walls causing the plants to fall over and lodge or fail to bear much fruit.

Molybdenum is the only nutrient that shows a greater deficiency problem on acidic soil than on alkaline soil. That means the greatest dollar return for molybdenum is no high nitrogen using plants in acid soils. As the pH is increased, molybdenum deficiencies become greater. **□**

*The author is president of Stoller Enterprises, Houston, Texas.*

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# Coping with Workers' Comp

**F**ew things can disrupt a smooth-running green industry company more than an on-the-job injury. And if the injured worker is a key player in a company's daily operations, the impact can be devastating and very difficult to bounce back from quickly. There is a fine line employers must tread between humanely providing for the injured worker's best interests and getting the business running normally as fast as possible in a way that is cost efficient.

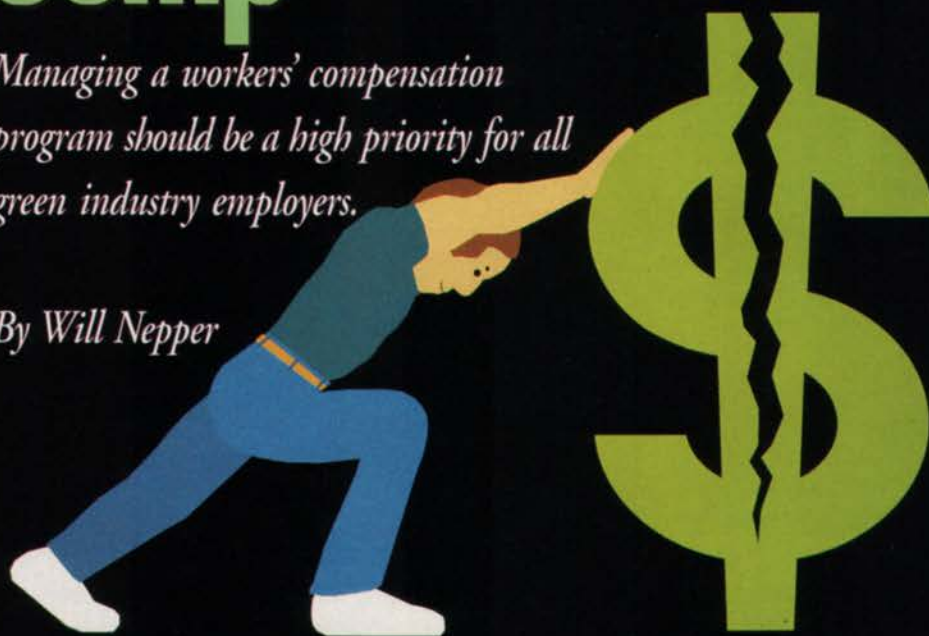
Like most specialized industries, the green industry brings with it a very specific set of considerations that set it apart from other businesses. When one considers green industry water marks, such as heavy physical labor, operation of heavy (and potentially dangerous) products – it makes sense that a workers' compensation program be a high priority to all green industry employers.

**FIRST STEPS.** Choosing the right agent for your needs is a good place to begin proactive preparation, according to Mark Davis, president of Midland Claim Administrators, Dallas, Texas. "Work with an experienced agent because there are very specific risks related to the green industry and statutory requirements of workers' compensation coverage can vary greatly from state to state," Davis explained. "It is extremely important that your agent understand the various jurisdictions, whether or not independent contractors are used and various other matters, to make certain that you have adequate coverage when a loss occurs. Working with an agent

*Managing a workers' compensation program should be a high priority for all green industry employers.*

*By Will Nepper*

Contractors should work with an experienced workers' compensation agent because there are very specific risks related to the green industry and workers' compensation coverage can vary greatly from state to state.





*'An injured worker has two years to report an injury, so if employers hear of an accident they should try to obtain all of the information as soon as possible.'*  
— Caine

who is familiar with the green industry is half the battle."

Sometimes, bringing in an outside party to assist in managing your workers' compensation program is a good idea, according to Cathy Bennet, vice president of group rating, Compensation Consultant Inc., Dublin, Ohio. "A third party administrator can certainly assist in keeping costs down," Bennet explained. It may also save on manpower and bring expertise to the situation.

Some contractors, however, find that having an internal employee managing a workers' compensation program works nicely. Tom Fochtman, co-owner of CoCal Landscape in Denver, Colo., is one of these contractors. Who, after all, knows your business better

than someone submerged in it?

"Our office manager spends about 50 percent of her time handling human resource matters. This includes the administrative side of the workers' compensation program," Fochtman noted. "She handles all claims, speaks with doctors and communicates with the employees on upcoming appointments. She handles all of

the paper flow and all the communication with the workers' compensation carrier."

In some cases, splitting the duties between an outside party and an internal employee may also work, as it has for Tierra Verde Landscape Inc., Huntington Beach, Calif. "I have a broker who manages the insurance end of workers' compensation, and then my field superintendent manages

it from our end, taking care of the paperwork," explained Allen Chariton, president.

**SAFETY IS CRUCIAL.** A major part of putting together an effective workers' compensation program is establishing a safety standard for the company. This can mean anything from a company handbook outlining guidelines to on-site training procedures for new employees. Considering safety first is a common proactive method to preventing unnecessary on-the-job injuries.

"A safety program is essential," Davis explained, "specifically involving occupational accident-related risks."

According to Davis, specific risk-related training, such as proper use of protective clothing, proper lifting techniques and safe driving tips can help to prevent accidents.

Some contractors, like Bob Thompson,

*(continued on page 82)*

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## workers' compensation

(continued from page 79)

vice president, BLT Landscaping Services, Dallas, Texas, integrate standardized safety expectations into company policy. "Company rules and standards are contained in our employee handbook, in addition to our safety manual," Thompson said. "The two manuals are used twice a year for training."

Thompson also pointed out that having your policies in writing is helpful when you notice that employees are being negligent, such as not wearing safety glasses or not wearing a seat belt. "Not only are they reminded that these things are required, but they are also shown where the requirement exists as part of the company policy, within whatever document is applicable," he said.

Fochtman takes safety one step further by assembling an in-house safety committee and holding weekly tailgate meetings, monthly safety meetings within different divisions and quarterly company-wide safety seminars that all employees attend.

(continued on page 85)

## Before Injuries Occur... Communicate!

**B**efore an on-the-job injury occurs is when employers should communicate with employees about company procedures and practices in regard to workers' compensation. Often, an injured employee may fear asking stupid questions. Or sometimes they may put off filing a claim until it is so far after the fact that investigating the injury may be difficult. Informing employees of the basics will make procedures far easier to deal with in the unfortunate circumstance of an injury. Here is a list of things you should speak to your employees about:

- What workers' compensation is. Silly as it may sound, sometimes it is necessary to

explicitly define the term. You may be surprised by how many people only have a vague idea of what it is and how it benefits them.

- What to do when an injury occurs.
- Who to call if they have questions.
- Where to go for medical care.
- When lost wages will be received.
- The amount of disability checks and an explanation for this amount.
- What will happen with medical bills and an explanation for this as well.
- How your return-to-work program works.
- Finally, employees should be very clear to your expectations of their adherence to safety procedures as dictated by company policy.

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## Speaker Lineup Announced for 2000 School of Management

The educational program for the 2000 Lawn & Landscape School of Management is taking shape and attendees won't be disappointed. Lawn & Landscape is pleased to announce that it has secured commitments from several well-recognized industry consultants to join the speaker faculty.

These experts will help attendees walk through the nuts and bolts of their operations and help them improve efficiencies in vital areas such as strategic planning and improving the estimating and bidding process.

Leading off the breakfast workshops on both days of the conference will be noted management consultant and author Jim Huston of Smith-Huston, Inc. Huston will walk attendees through the strategic planning process and provide tips on how to develop an effective strategic plan for their company or division. This is a can't miss session for contractors looking to gain the long-term edge over the competition.

The Vander Kooi name is synonymous with excellence in training and the School of Management is pleased to welcome Jerry Gaeta of Vander Kooi & Associates as the Monday Afternoon (Feb. 14) General Session speaker. Gaeta will share with attendees the "Vander Kooi System" on effective estimating and bidding techniques. This in-depth session will explore how the areas of labor costing, overhead allocation, equipment costing and pricing systems impact the estimating and bidding process. When the session is done contractors will have learned proven methods on how to more accurately estimate and bid jobs.



Jim Huston



Jerry Gaeta

## Taking the Steam Out of Stress: Dr. Stephen Douglas to Deliver Keynote at 2000 School of Management



Dr. Stephen Douglas

the 2000 School of Management. Douglas takes an extraordinarily humorous approach to the

serious subject of stress through examples of real-life situations. This is not a clinical presentation but rather an exercise in taking a different view of stressful situations and how to reduce unproductive stress from your daily routine. Among the ideas discussed during Douglas' presentation are how not to worry about many things we worry about, reducing your approach to perfectionism as well as working with other's unrealistic expectations of us. This unique, stress-less presentation is one you certainly don't want to miss.

Stress is an inevitable part of everyone's life and how you manage that stress is very important to your personal well being and success. Hear nationally acclaimed clinical psychologist Dr. Stephen Douglas address this topic on Sunday, February 13 as the keynote speaker at

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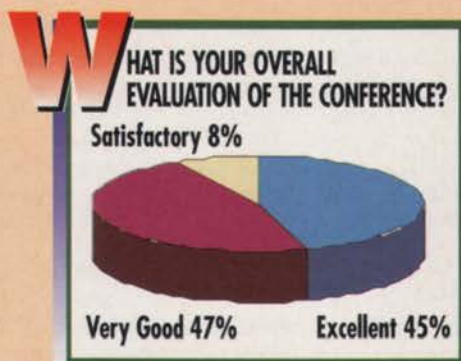
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"I have seen excellent results after implementing the ideas I learned at the School of Management. I would recommend at least one person in every company attend the conference. If you don't you are missing an opportunity of a lifetime to interact and learn new management ideas."

**Kevin McSherry**  
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"The School of Management Conference was extremely informative and well-organized. The speakers really knew 'their stuff' and the topics timely. My partner and I learned some fresh ideas that will certainly help our business grow."

**Susan Wright**  
Let Go... Let Us Lawn & Garden Care  
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(Source: 1999 School of Management Attendee Survey)

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(continued from page 82)

"Our driving record was poor," Fochtman explained. "Often very preventable, sloppy accidents were occurring, so now we kick our season off by renting out a parking lot and putting our drivers through an obstacle course. We've moved safety to the No. 1 area of concern for our company."

**COMMUNICATION & REVISION.** Another way to improve a workers' compensation program is to educate employees on standard filing procedures. According to Molly Caine, claims supervisor for Compensation Consultants Inc., the employer should teach the employee how to process accident information and who to report accidents to.

"Often, injured workers don't know what to do and they may direct an accident report in the wrong manner or maybe they don't report it at all," Caine explained. "Many employers don't know that an injured worker has two years to report an injury, so if they hear of an incident they should try to obtain

all information as soon as possible."

Michael Prokop, loss control account manager, CNA Insurance Companies, Chicago, Ill., recommended employee meetings to "explain the company's occupational injury management philosophy, assign responsibilities and review procedures."

"The employer should emphasize that the plan is designed to provide high-quality care for injured employees and get them back to work," Prokop explained.

Once a workers' compensation program has been implemented, regular check-ups on the program can make sure it is running as effectively as possible. This will often mean periodical revisions to the program based on the company's growth and number of employees.

"Growth and experience contribute to changes made in our workers' compensation program," Thompson said.

**CONTROLLING COSTS.** A big part of fine-

tuning a workers' compensation program is controlling compensation-related costs.

"No claims is the ultimate control," according to John Allin, president, Allin Companies, Erie, Pa. "This requires company-wide participation in being certain that safe practices are in place and followed."

Thompson cited good communication with the insurance agent as step toward better cost efficiency. "We have a very close working relationship with our agent. This has been well worth the effort for keeping our premiums low," he said.

Some contractors find that closely monitoring safety, as mentioned above, has a direct impact on their bottom line. "We were to the point where we were actually making less money because our modification was higher," Fochtman explained. "We were paying deductibles, and we were paying to fix trucks. It definitely has an affect on your bottom line, and it can be a dramatic affect. As we have grown we have become a

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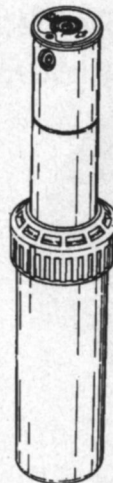
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more viable account. And with an enhanced record that shows we've improved on safety, insurance companies will be more competitive on their rates when quoting them to us."

**PROTECTING AGAINST FRAUD.** It's not pleasant to think about, but abuse of workers' compensation *can* occur in green industry companies and protecting your company from fraudulent claims is a good idea.

Fraud can mean more than simply claiming an injury that never occurred. It can also mean embellishing a minor injury into a major one or claiming an injury that is not work-related as one that is.

"Contractors need an investigator who can secure the right information and evaluate to determine if it is a case of an unlucky person or someone who makes their living this way," Davis said.

"If fraud is suspected, or in the case of any filed claim, immediately notify your agent," Davis suggested. "The absolute

## Keys to Claims

- 1. Keep accurate records of payroll divisions.** This helps to speed up the paperwork red tape involved with filing claims.
- 2. Carefully review and track the progress of workers' compensation claims.** The best way to improve your company's approach to workers' compensation claims is to look at claims from the past and examine the impact they have had on your company.
- 3. Implement an occupational injury management program, which helps bring injured employees back to some form of constructive employment as soon as possible.** You can save yourself a lot of headaches and even more money if you can quickly reintegrate injured employees back into the fold as soon as possible.
- 4. Select an in-house claims coordinator.** This helps your company to process an injury claim as quickly as possible and shows your employees that you are concerned enough to move immediately when an injury occurs.
- 5. Select a designated medical provider.** Preferably, your medical provider should be knowledgeable about the exposures of your business and be located in close proximity to your company.
- 6. Implement a supervisory accident investigation procedure.** This duty should go to personnel who are knowledgeable about your business' exposures, as well as safe work habits. An established investigative procedure can help prevent future injuries and at the same time deter would-be fraudulent claims. — *Courtesy of CNA Commercial Insurance*

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moment a claim occurs, you need to get a professional in there—someone who understands the varying aspects of fraud. In the green industry, we also need to get someone who understands the risks specific to the industry and the way that every industry can lend itself to someone manipulating a fraudulent claim.”

Davis also pointed out that accident investigation should not get in the way of providing the most expedient treatment to someone who has had a valid injury. “We can give treatment to someone while we investigate the possible fraudulence—one does not stop the other from occurring.”

Bennet viewed speaking to witnesses about an accident whenever possible as an important part of a thorough investigation. Unfortunately, witnesses won't always be available, in which case an employer will have to find other ways to play detective.

“If you have someone trimming a lawn or working by themselves, it's easy for them

to say that they have hurt their back when there are no witnesses around,” Davis noted.

“There may be certain situations that wave a red flag to employers,” according to Caine. Being alert to these types of situations is the investigator's responsibility.

**FIELD ADVICE.** A good way to sculpt a workers' compensation program that works best for your company is to look at what other contractors in the green industry are doing.

Chariton recommended “staying in tune with your employees” as well as educating and thinking about safety.

“Accept the fact that dealing with workers' compensation is more than an evil necessity,” advised Thompson. “This can impact the bottom line and assist in taking better care of the employees. You have to think safety first, and you've got to convey this message to the employees so they realize this is something that is of value to them.”

“Work with all of the different resources

available to you,” offered Fochtman. He included the insurance company as well as state agencies among these resources.

Allin advised companies also consider implementing “an aggressive drug policy that virtually eliminates the possibility of drug and alcohol abusers being on the job.”

Allin also recommended contractors get their insurance carrier involved in managing the workers' compensation program. “They have people on staff who work with companies to reduce claims,” Allin said. “If you demand that they visit you and if you make the changes they suggest, you should see a reduction in claims activity. The changes may cost money—but it is money well spent.” **LL**

*The author is a Contributing Editor to Lawn & Landscape magazine.*

*This article is the second in a three-part series. Next month's article will address loss control strategies.*

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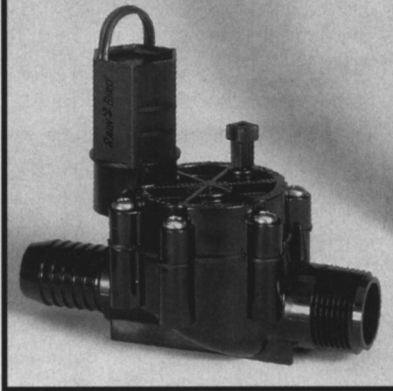
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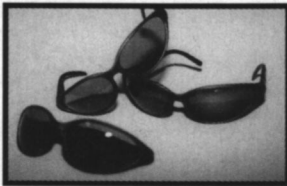
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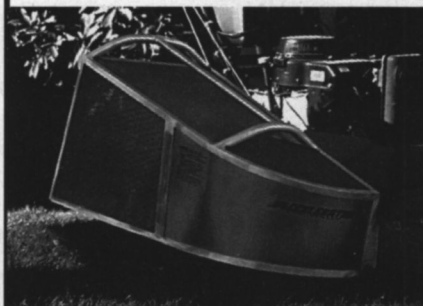
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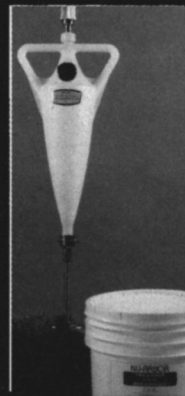
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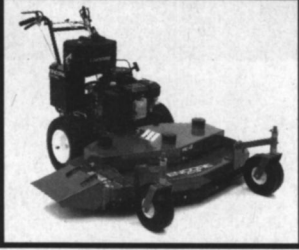
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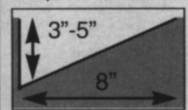
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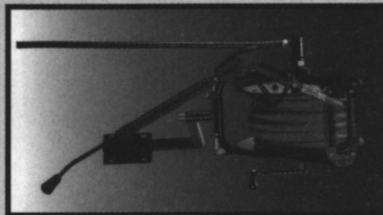
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# selecting turf

(continued from page 38)

Cold temperature tolerance is poor, while heat tolerance is good. All Bermudagrasses are aggressive spreaders, giving it excellent recuperative potential and rapid establishment. Because it tolerates close mowing and a wide range of soil types, it can be used on home lawns, athletic fields, golf courses, parks, cemeteries and industrial grounds.

Zoysiagrass is similar to Bermudagrass in that it has rhizomes and stolons, but differs with regards to cold tolerance, stiffness and growth rate. Some zoysia species have good cold temperature tolerance, and all have good to excellent heat tolerance. The growth rate is slow, and is quite stiff and tough compared to other grasses. The texture is medium, and the color is medium green color. Zoysiagrass has a deep root system, allowing it to avoid drought stress in many situations. Zoysiagrass is low growing and tolerates a low mowing height. It can be used on home lawns, school grounds, athletic fields, golf course fairways and tees and airfields.

A low maintenance, medium coarse grass, centipedegrass spreads by short, leafy stolons and forms a mat of low-growing stems and leaves. Centipedegrass is light to me-

dium green in color. The cold temperature hardiness is quite poor, while heat tolerance is good. The shade tolerance is intermediate, better than bermudagrass. The recuperative potential is poor, due to its slow growth rate and spreading ability. Centipedegrass makes a good, tough turf where a low maintenance home lawn is desired. It can also be used in cemeteries and parks.

St. Augustinegrass forms an attractive blue-green, low growing turf of medium density and very coarse texture. The stems appear a bit compressed or squeezed together in the middle. This species spreads rapidly by stolons and has a medium to medium-deep root system. This allows for rapid establishment and good recuperative potential. Its poor low temperature tolerance limits usage where frosts commonly occur, yet is quite heat tolerant. It exhibits good shade tolerance, the best of the warm-season species. This feature allows for use on shady home lawns, cemeteries, parks and industrial grounds.

One of the few turfgrasses native to the United States, buffalograss is the quintessential low maintenance warm-season turf.

Adapted to the central part of the U.S. from Texas to Minnesota, and Colorado to Illinois, it is grey-green in color and possesses a medium to fine texture. Improved cultivars provide a turf-type medium density. The cold and heat tolerance is good to excellent, while pest resistance is excellent. It requires no irrigation once established, and has a very low fertility requirement. It is slow growing and slow to establish, which limits its ability to recuperate from stress or injury. Therefore, buffalograss is limited to usage on low maintenance home lawns, golf course roughs, acreages, airfields, industrial sites and cemeteries.

An important point to remember in the selection of turfgrass is that a "magic grass" – one that uses little or no water, seldom needs mowing and withstands heavy use in a deeply shaded area – simply does not exist. The challenge for the turf manager is to use information to match the attributes and features of potential grass species with the needs and desires of the customer. **LL**

*The author is an extension educator at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Neb.*

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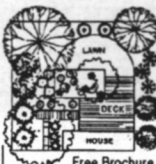
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# CLASSIFIEDS

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## DIVISION MANAGER

Green Touch Services is a full service landscape installation and maintenance company serving the Metro-Indianapolis market. Due to the continued expansion our company is experiencing we're seeking Division Managers for our Lawn Care and Tree Care divisions. All appropriate certifications, a proven performance record and a minimum of 5 years industry experience are required. Budgeting, routing, supervisory and customer service skills are a must. Our focus is on high quality work and customer service. Compensation includes salary, performance bonus, profit sharing and benefits. Relocation package available. Forward resume to:

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# CLASSIFIEDS

## on-site operations

(continued from page 64)

### JOIN OUR GROWING TEAM

GreenScapes Landscape Architects and Contractors, a progressive full service design/build landscape company, is seeking motivated professionals to fill key management positions:

**Nursery Manager** needed to manage 65-acre nursery, order plant material, care for field and container stock, pull and oversee loading of trucks, supervise staff. Good attitude and plant knowledge required. Must have experience in nursery field production or container management.

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4220 Winchester Pike  
Columbus, Ohio 43232-5612  
e-mail: [grnscp@aol.com](mailto:grnscp@aol.com)  
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### DIVISION MANAGER

#### DIVISION MANAGER.

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### LANDSCAPE ESTIMATOR/SALES

Full service landscape management firm in Houston, Texas, is currently seeking to fill the position of Landscape Estimator. Position involves seeking new clients, compiling and preparing estimates (utilizing computer software), and overseeing design staff. Must be a "team-player," self-motivated, professional with good communication skills and a distinct attention to detail. Send resume to: Pampered Lawns, Inc. (Attn: Rodney), 5602 Centralcrest, Houston, TX 77092.

### NORTHWESTERN LANDSCAPE COMPANY

The Northwest's fastest growing private commercial landscape and maintenance organization. 15 plus years of continuous growth. We are currently looking to fill key management and supervisor positions. Must be committed to integrity, professionalism, the pursuit of industry excellence and have a desire to make a difference in a growing company. Company vision and mission statement will be provided upon request. Excellent pay and benefits, including 401k. Send or fax resume (Attn: President) to: 253/848-8187, P.O. Box 1118, Puyallup, WA 98371.

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- **Retail Sales** – sell all phases of the nursery operation plus all types of garden products and gifts
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- **Landscape Sales** – experienced individual with excellent sales background in the landscape field, good tree and shrub knowledge required, strong ethics
- **Production Project Managers** – manage upscale landscape jobs from inception to completion, client contact, ability to read plans, manage crews and possess heavy equipment knowledge
- **Irrigation Manager(s)** – for installations, repairs and service. Experience in all aspects of irrigation; customer service skills required. Year-round employment

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work, it's not a problem.

"The job will work out if it is large enough and it is priced right," he advised.

Having the on-site client provide telephone access is also helpful, Foley said. If not, cell phones, pagers and two-way radios can also be used for communication.

"Our college site gave the site manager an extension on campus with voicemail so we keep in touch with him that way," Foley noted. "Soon, they may also give us a computer with email access."

**CHOOSING YOUR WORKFORCE.** All on-site properties need a site manager, according to Foley and Sousa.

"My experience is that there's a greater chance that detail work may go unnoticed when you send out a two- or three-person crew," Foley said. "One site manager will take a higher ownership of the property and a higher level of accountability."

The disadvantage to having strictly on-site employees is that a contractor may be sacrificing some of his or her all-stars because those are the people who are being promoted to site manager positions, Foley said.

While Foley rotates site managers into different positions every three years to keep them from getting "stale," Sousa doesn't have a limit on how long the site managers stay on a property because of the relationship already built with the client, but he does rotate the rest of the site staff every three months so they don't become complacent or feel separated from the company.

The site manager position, Foley pointed out, isn't for everyone. The right candidate should have structure and organization.

"Site managers need to be confident enough to do the work on their own," Foley explained. "People who can't function without daily camaraderie are not good site manager candidates."

The main difficulty with expanding on-site services, according to Foley and Sousa, is the lack of good employees.

"You always need to get the people first and then sell the work while they are in training – not the other way around," Sousa stated. "Before we expand our on-site work, we need to find more good people." **LL**

*The author is Assistant Editor at Lawn & Landscape magazine.*

Check us out online: [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com)

## MANAGING THE H2-B PROGRAM

AS AN OWNER of a commercial and residential landscape management and maintenance company for more than 10 years in Austin, Texas, we know the labor concerns of the green industry first hand. As business owners, we have felt the pressures of ensuring that our labor force was legal, in place and with valid social security numbers.

We have had our own labor shortages and needed to find a solution as well as improve our employee turnover rate. We employed laborers with documents that enabled us to fill out I-9 forms, thus we felt certain that we had a legal workforce. The Immigration Naturalization Service told us otherwise. We quickly realized we had to find a solution. We discovered the H2-B program and have successfully utilized it within our company for five consecutive years. Although complicated, bureaucratic and time consuming, we discovered a solution.

The H2-B program allows us to recruit individuals from Mexico to work for what we can establish as our peak season. In the past, we found that we needed additional laborers from March through the middle of December. Most of our laborers want to return to Mexico for the Christmas holidays and

are not ready to return until early spring. As a landscape contractor, that works great for us. From the Christmas season through February we are able to perform our contracted work with our full-time laborers and do not feel the financial strain of excess employees. No only does this program allow us to employ legal laborers, it does not require that we employ them longer than 10 months of the year. The H2-B program is perfect for our business.

Soon, our business associates and competition heard of our labor solution and asked that we assist them in this endeavor. With this, we started Foley Enterprises and have obtained work visas for not only our own company but for many others. Any labor-oriented industry with a seasonal need is eligible for H2-B visas.

So little is known about this program that during our first year with work visas, the INS

picked up one of our landscape crews even though they had all of their appropriate paperwork on them. We then went to the station and informed the INS agents they had incorrectly detained our employees. This type of visa was unfamiliar even to them. They realized their mistake and quickly released our employees with an apology to our firm.

Due to the program's lack of exposure in the industry, many contractors are confused by it or doubtful that it works. Many potential clients have gone to an immigration lawyer for a second opinion. The lawyer, out of his or her unawareness of the program, advised them that it couldn't be done. Many clients are simply afraid of being duped or that they somehow will divulge information that could come back to haunt them.

With the economy as it is now, the lack of available labor is a frightening situation. The INS knows this and is ready to take action against any company hiring illegal laborers. The H2-B program is like a form of labor insurance. You can sleep

at night knowing the next day's work can be completed without interruption.

This program allows contractors to have legal, temporarily immigrant laborers for up to 10 months of the year. When the visa expires, the worker is required to return to their home but can return to the U.S. the next year if the employee should be re-certified. INS will not simply renew the visas but has to evaluate the employing company's needs each year.

The visas cost \$750 each when purchasing three to 10, and \$700 when purchasing 11 to 20. The cost decreases \$50 for every 20 visas bought. This amount can be divided into three payments. Also, there are no housing requirements to worry about with this visa. The contractor does, however, have to pay prevailing wages, which are set by the U.S. Department of Labor and are based on what the industry as a whole is paying its laborers.

The process is not an immediate solution and can take up to 120 days to produce visas. Contractors considering using the H2-B program should begin this process as early as November to be assured certification for the end of February the following year.

— Terry Foley

*The author is with Foley Enterprises, Austin, Texas.*



### 5 Keys to Success

H2-B Program

1. Allows you to employ legal laborers
2. Workers employed March to December
3. Acts as a form of labor insurance
4. No housing requirements to worry about
5. Contractor must pay prevailing wages





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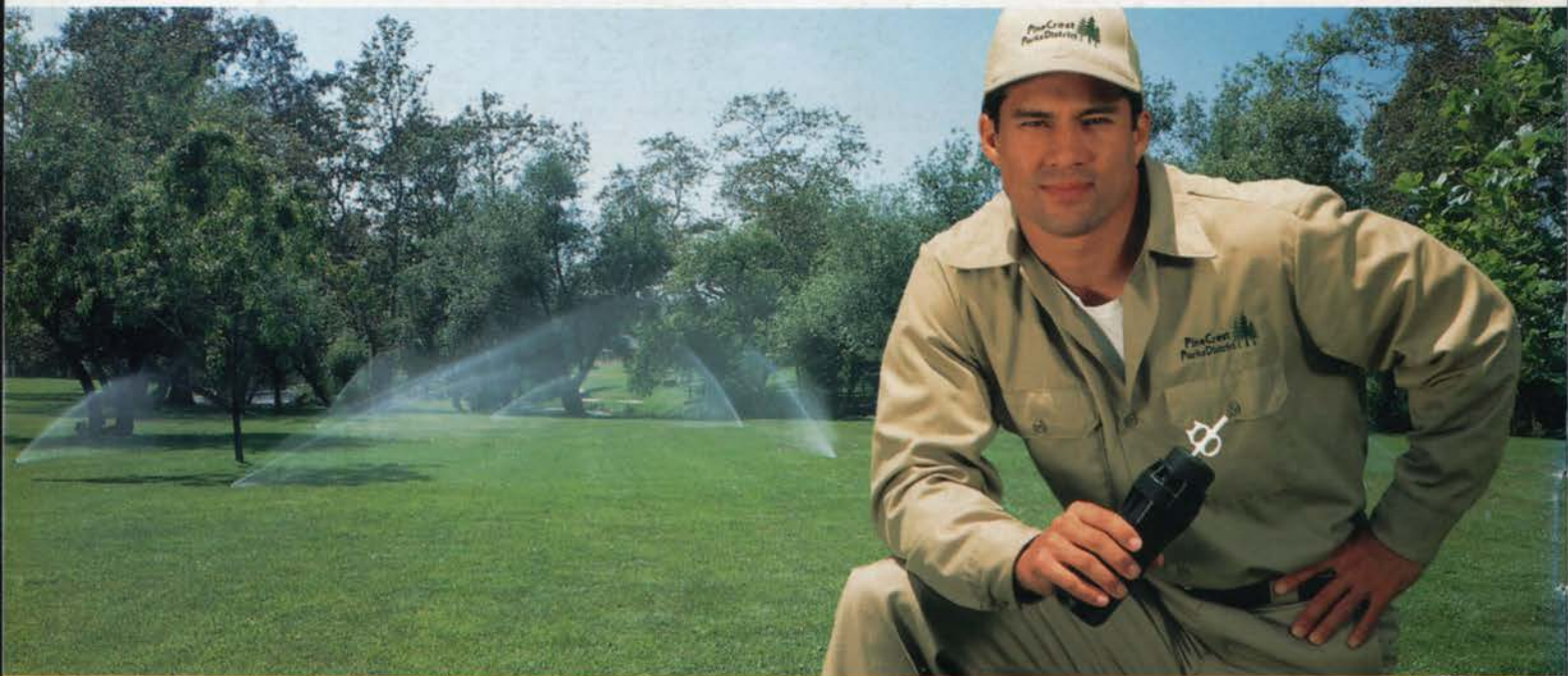
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