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USE READER SERVICE #60

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Quality Control
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Quality Control

While family fortitude is the basis for Tecza Environmental Group's birth and early growth, a value-based business focus carried it through entrepreneurial challenges. **26**

For the Love of Design

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Editor's Focus

"The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them." – Albert Einstein

The Value of a Visit

Despite the turnout of more than 5,000 attendees at this year's Green Industry Expo in Indianapolis, Ind., I can't help but to come away from the event feeling a bit sorry for those of you who didn't attend.

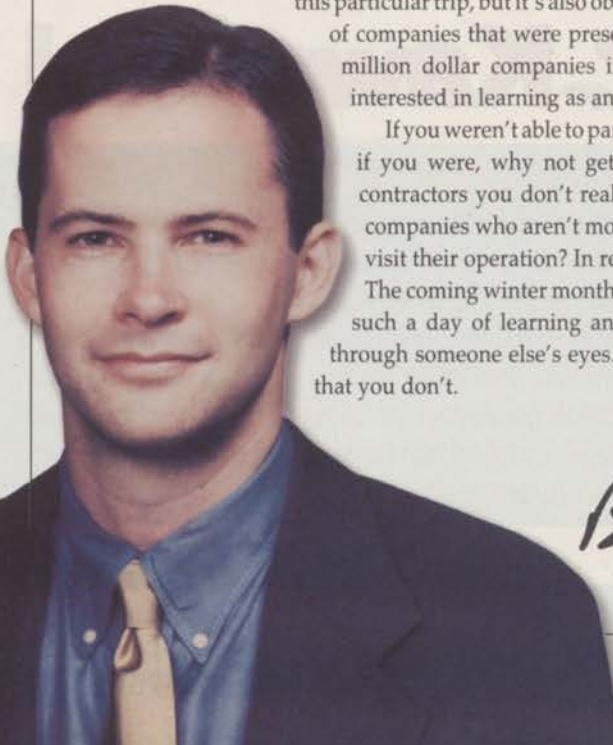
I doubt any of you who missed this year's conference actually did something during these three days that hurt your businesses, but, nonetheless, you are in a weaker position now than you were before the show. The problem is that if you didn't attend the show you didn't do anything to improve yourself, and the odds are that someone else in your market did.

What impressed me most about this year's show was the depth of sharing that took place in terms of ideas, philosophies, experience, lessons learned and mistakes made. I was particularly aware of this on the day before the conference began when the largest Indianapolis-based landscape company – The Engledow Group – opened its doors to more than 500 other contractors for an informative tour.

Engledow employees walked us through the majority of the operation, explaining how they handle various tasks, who handles them and the logic behind their processes. Attendees saw how the company organizes its maintenance yard and how equipment is stored for quick loading and unloading each morning. We also learned about the various positions within the company and what responsibilities accompany each one.

The beauty of tours like this is how they accelerate the learning curve for so many other companies by allowing them to avoid making many of the mistakes other companies have made. The value of these learning opportunities is illustrated by the number of organizations who boarded the buses for this particular trip, but it's also obvious when you look at the caliber of companies that were present. There were numerous multi-million dollar companies in attendance, and they were as interested in learning as anyone else on the tour.

If you weren't able to participate in this year's tour, or even if you were, why not get in touch with a couple of area contractors you don't really compete against or find some companies who aren't more than an hour or two drive, and visit their operation? In return, invite them to your facility. The coming winter months offer the perfect opportunity for such a day of learning and looking at your own business through someone else's eyes. There's no telling what they see that you don't.



Bob West

Lawn & Landscape

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Market Trends

IN THE NEWS

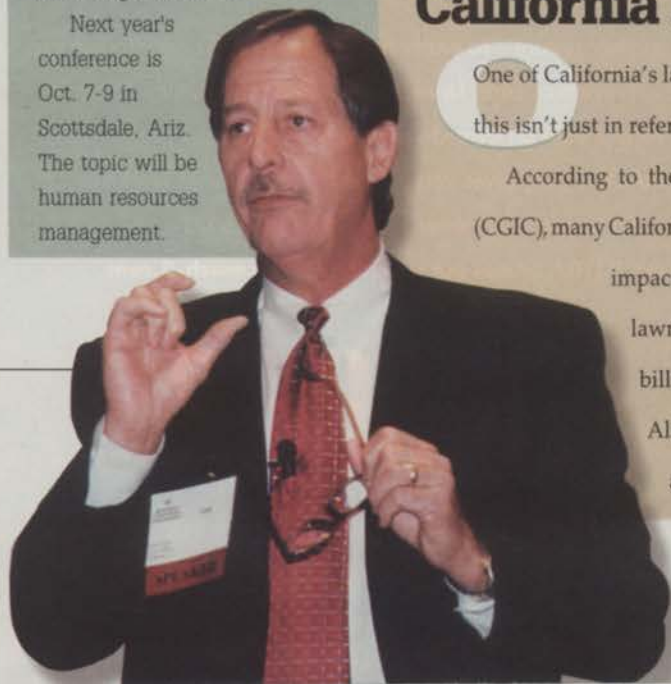
A Strategic Maneuver

Learning, sharing and planning for the future, 132 landscape contractors gathered at *Lawn & Landscape's* first Business Strategies Conference, Oct. 8-10 in Chicago, Ill., which featured in-depth financial management sessions, roundtable discussions and opportunities to consult with financial experts.

Industry professionals including Tom Oyler (below), Jerry Gaeta, George Koziarz and Pamela Jordan conducted sessions on topics including valuing your business, structuring compensation packages, budgeting techniques and tax opportunities.

"The inaugural Business Strategies conference served a market need for in-depth education on financial management," said Cindy Code, group publisher of *Lawn & Landscape* magazine. "We're pleased with the response and we're looking forward to next year's conference and exploring other targeted issues."

Next year's conference is Oct. 7-9 in Scottsdale, Ariz. The topic will be human resources management.



Estimated STATISTICS FOR CALIFORNIA

ESTIMATED ANNUAL SALES AND SERVICES:

AREA	DOLLARS
Residential landscaping	\$3,800 million
Commercial landscaping	\$2,500 million
Cut flowers	\$1,400 million
Houseplants	\$100 million
Golf courses	\$700 million
Parks	\$600 million
Highway landscaping	\$300 million
School yard landscaping	\$300 million
Horticultural waste	\$600 million
Out of state landscaping with materials purchased here	\$1,700 million
Miscellaneous	\$300 million
TOTAL	\$12,100 million

ESTIMATED ACREAGE:

AREA	ACRES
Residential front and back yards	680,000 acres
Commercial landscape and public works	205,000 acres
Golf courses	131,000 acres
Wholesale nurseries	67,000 acres
Parks	158,000 acres
Highway landscaping	72,000 acres
School yards	109,000 acres
Power line greenery	158,000 acres
Other	20,000 acres
TOTAL	1,600,000 acres

Source: CLIC Landscape Contractor

REGIONAL TRENDS:

California Dreamin'

One of California's largest industries is seeing green – and this isn't just in reference to the turfgrass.

According to the California Green Industry Council (CGIC), many Californians underestimate the green industry's

impact on the state's economy, but California's lawn and landscape industry represents \$12 billion in sales and employs nearly 130,000 people.

Also, California's landscapes cover more than 1.6 million acres of the state.



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Market Trends

(continued from page 8)

IN THE NEWS

Acres Acquires More Yards

NAPERVILLE, ILL. – One Chicagoland landscape company is initiating growth via its own version of industry consolidation. Instead of spreading its name nationally, The Acres Group, is expanding regionally through local acquisitions that match the company's geographic, service and customer base, noted Sherm Fields, vice president of sales and marketing.

The recent acquisition of the Bill Fenn Landscaping Co., Naperville, Ill., a \$600,000 dollar outfit, boosts Acres' annual revenue to more than \$23 million. This is the second partnership for The Acres Group, following the 1998 acquisition of the R. Glass Landscape Co., Roselle, Ill. This consolidation delivered \$10 million in annual sales, a staff of 250 and a fleet of more than 100 trucks and trailers to the company, he said.

A key for making such acquisitions is

identifying companies that share your business goals, Fields noted. "These are some great synergies," Fields explained. "Bill Fenn is well respected, and the properties that he was servicing mirror the accounts that make up our portfolio – townhomes, condos, high-quality commercial and multi-family sites."

The Acres Group services more than 30,000 townhomes through its three Chicago facilities – Naperville, Roselle and Wauconda –

and employs more than 450 landscape, construction and snow removal personnel.

As the industry continues to consolidate, The Acres Group will continue considering acquisitions as a form of growth, Fields added. "Locally, acquisitions supply us with additional depth and scope in a very competitive industry and are an opportunity for us to not become complacent." – *Kristen Hampshire*

(continued on page 12)

On the WEB

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Hummingbird Landscape Management – www.hummbirdlandscape.com

Landtech Contractors – www.landtechcontractors.com

Top Pro Specialties – www.topprospecialties.com

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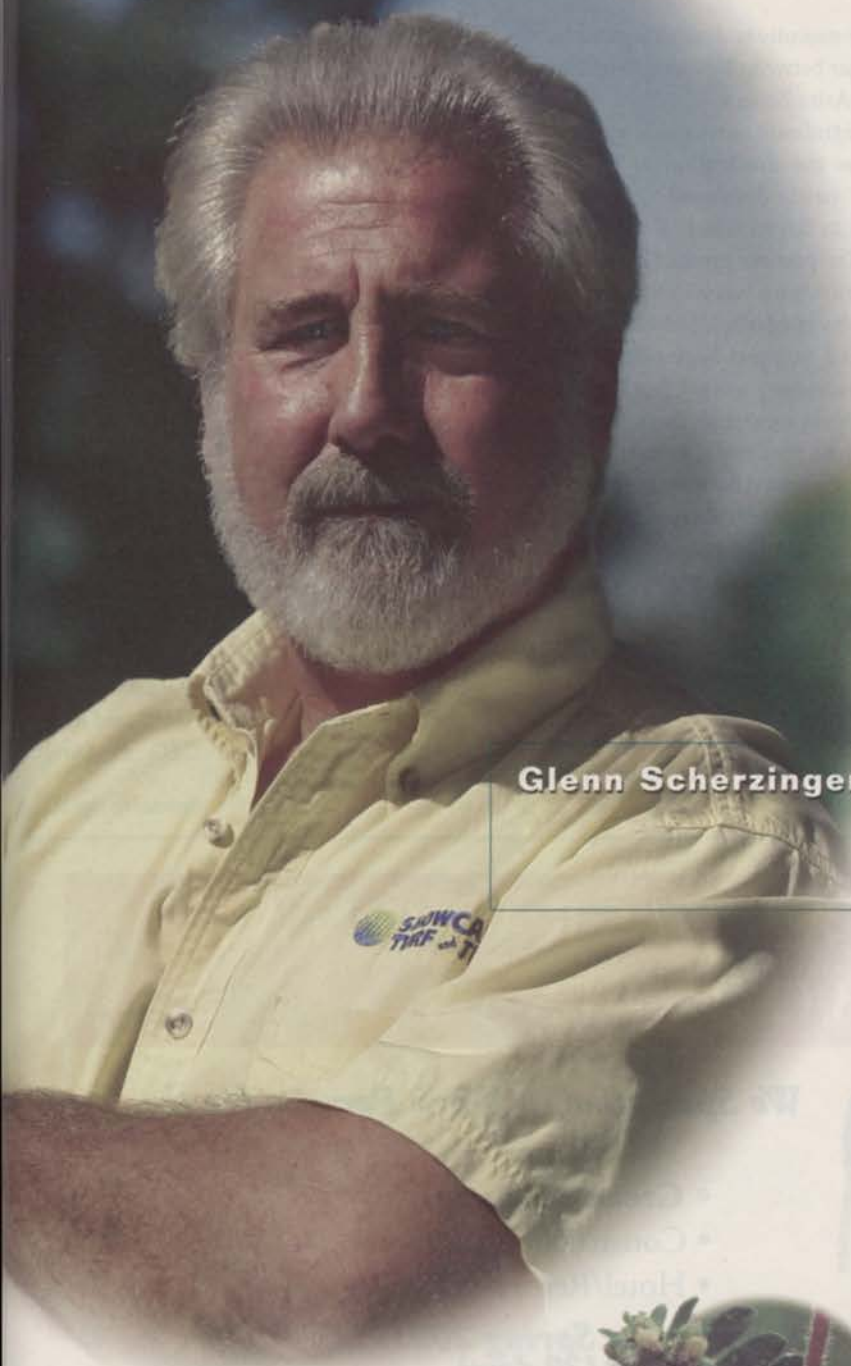
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Market Trends

(continued from page 10)

IN THE NEWS

U.S. Labor Rate Remains Low

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. jobless rate held steady at a three-decade low of 3.9 percent, the government reported. Of note in the lawn and landscape market, unemployment among Hispanics – a vital, industry workforce group – dropped to 5 percent, its lowest level on record.

The unemployment rate for other minorities remained near record lows as well – black unemployment was at 7.3 percent.

The low unemployment rate is not having an impact on wages, however, with average hourly earnings at \$13.89 in October.

IN THE NEWS

Syngenta Sells Fungicide To Bayer

GREENSBORO, N.C. – Pesticide manufacturer Syngenta continues moving forward as

company executives deal with completing the merger between Novartis Crop Protection and Astra Zeneca.

One significant move made by the company was the finalization of its sale of Novartis' newly developed Flint fungicide products to Bayer, which was announced Oct. 17. The primary product in this line for turf applications was Compass, which Novartis invested considerable research dollars in and was just beginning to launch when the company was notified by the European antitrust authorities that it would have to sell off the product for merger approval.

Bayer submitted the winning bid in what was characterized by sources familiar with the process as a very competitive bidding process with multiple pesticide suppliers making offers for the product. The acquisition gives Bayer another new chemistry to go along with its grub-control product Merit.

In addition, Syngenta's North American crop protection offices will be located in Greensboro, N.C., the current home of Novartis.

IN THE NEWS

Dow Extends Dursban Restrictions North

WASHINGTON D.C. – Dow AgroSciences Canada has agreed to voluntarily phase out most in-and-around-the-home uses of chlorpyrifos (Dursban) products in Canada. Voluntary withdrawal of these use patterns aligns with the recent agreement between Dow AgroSciences and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The stated goal is to achieve pesticide harmonization consistent with the North American Free Trade Agreement.

"While the safety of chlorpyrifos products, when used as directed, has been demonstrated by extensive study and 30 years of use, we are honoring the request of (Canadian officials) to implement the same phase out of chlorpyrifos as in the U.S.," said Rick Smith, president and CEO of Dow AgroSciences Canada.

(continued on page 18)

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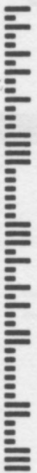
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Letters TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

I look forward with anticipation to every issue of *Lawn & Landscape*. Over a week's time, I've read it from cover to cover, passed on articles to associates and used it as a guide to how we're doing.

While I generally thought the "Uniform Appeal" article (*Lawn & Landscape*, October 2000) agreed with many of my values on the image we present, I was really surprised to see a picture on page 72 of a supposed field person in shorts. Despite the heat we deal with for about eight months of the year, I would never allow shorts. Why?

They are a safety hazard, period!

With all the emphasis our industry and trade journals have been placing on safety, we still see pictures of people on mowers, etc., without safety glasses and now we are promoting shorts.

One of these days we just might get all the pieces of a safety campaign in place and everyone on the same page. That one picture tells me judgment was lacking when assembling the visuals. I expected more professionalism.

Bob Thompson

BLT Landscape Services, Dallas, Texas

Editor's Note: Lawn & Landscape takes equipment safety very seriously and has chosen not to run photos and even advertisements in the past that portray equipment operators dressed unprofessionally or in a dangerous manner. In this instance, we felt the picture in question portrayed an individual with a professional appearance who was clearly not working in these clothes. However, we understand how some readers may think this image endorsed wearing shorts while in the field. That was certainly not our intention.

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Market Trends

(continued from page 15)

In Canada, the residential use patterns affected will be phased out according to the same timeline as the U.S. Sales of Dursban products will continue until existing stocks are depleted, with retail sales occurring until Dec. 31, 2001.

IN THE NEWS

OSHA Issues New Standard On Ergonomics

BELLEVILLE, Wis. - The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued a new ergonomics standard, and business groups are challenging the controversial new rules in court.

The standard requires employers to establish job-based ergonomics programs triggered when employees experience work-related musculoskeletal injuries or persistent signs or symptoms of injuries in jobs that include defined risk factors. The standard

CORRECTIONS

• The following photo credits were inadvertently omitted from the 2000 Leadership Issue: George Morrell (page 27) - Mary Buck, Duluth, Ga.; Russel Frith, Ron Kujawa, J.Landon Reeve and Wayne Richards (pages 31, 35, 46, 59) - Roger Mastroianni, Cleveland, Ohio; Bob Andrews (pages 41, 44) - Katie Murphy, Indianapolis, Ind.; Gary Clayton (page 50) - Powdershots, Snowbird, Utah; Linda Novy (page 55) - Norma Novy, San Rafael, Calif.; Tom Lied (page 63) - Jerry Maske, Sussex, Wis.
• The photo in *Distribution Divides (State of the Irrigation Industry supplement, page I11)* should have been credited to Century Rain Aid, not Hunter Industries.

also requires employers to provide employees removed from work due to ergonomic-related injuries with 90 percent of their pay and 100 percent of their benefits for 90 days, until they return to work or until it is certified that they can never return to their jobs.


General farming is exempt from the standard, but horticultural employers, including landscape architects, contractors who perform sod laying and turf installation and nurseries, who fall within certain other OSHA SIC codes must comply with the new rule.

Barring congressional action or a successful court challenge, the new standard will go into effect on Jan. 16, 2001.

IN THE NEWS

CLIP Conference Boosts Tech-Savvy

GAITHERSBURG, Md. - The 11th annual CLIP Conference attracted 372 landscape industry professionals who attended software how-to workshops, trend-focused seminars and networking roundtable discussions Nov. 14-17 at the Hilton, Gaithersburg, Md.

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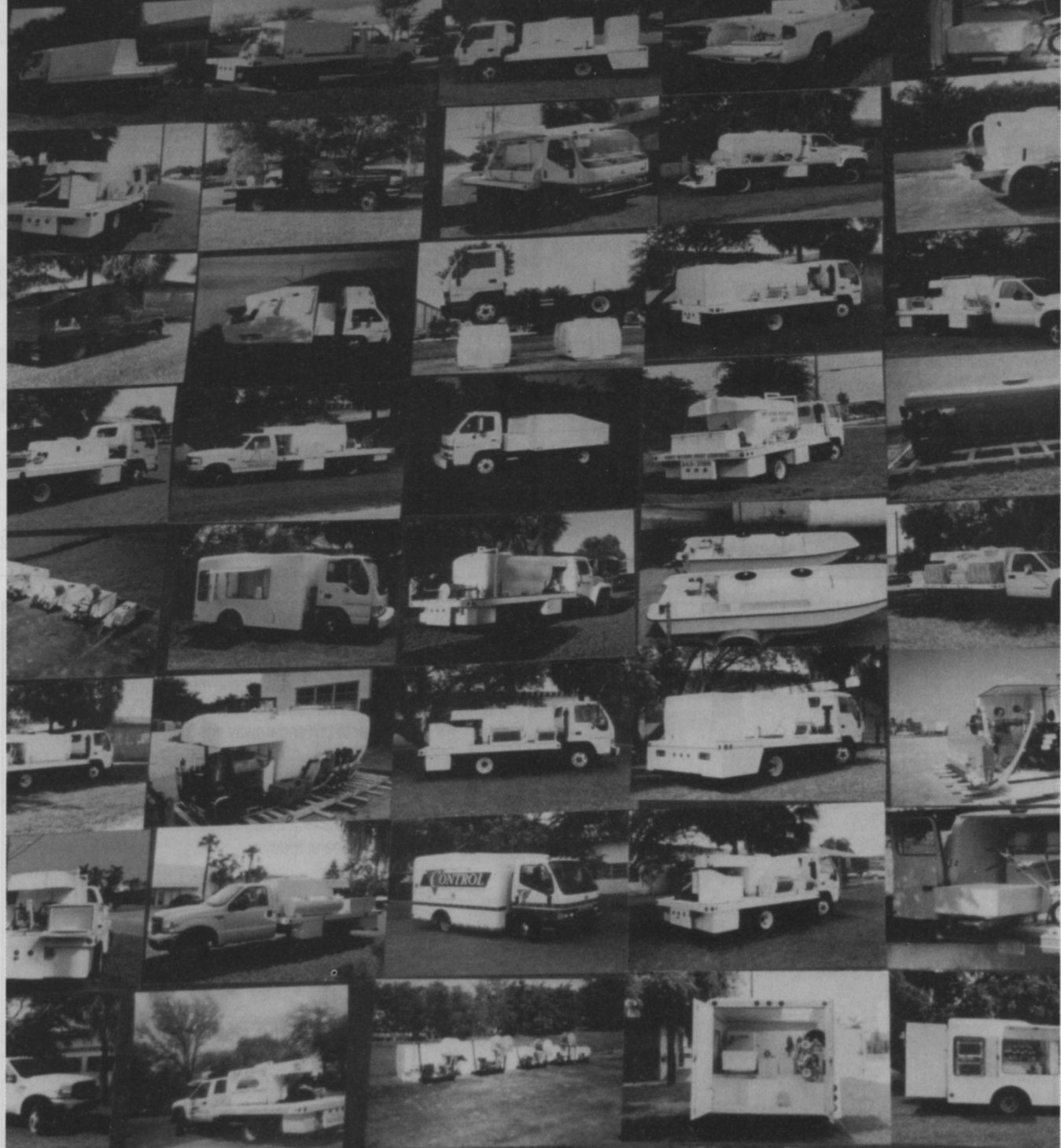
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Calendar

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.

JAN. 2-5 ProGreen Expo, Denver, Colo. Contact: 303/756-1079.

JAN. 3-5 Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association Convention and Trade Show, Minneapolis, Minn. Contact: 651/633-4987.

JAN. 3-6 North Carolina Green and Growin' Show, Winston-Salem, N.C. Contact: 919/816-9119.

JAN. 4-5 Eastern Regional Nurserymen's Association Expo, Secaucus, N.J. Contact: 800/376-2463.

JAN. 7-9 Western Nursery & Landscape Association Convention and Trade Show, Kansas City, Mo. Contact: 816/233-1481.

JAN. 8-10 Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association's Great Lakes Trade Exposition, Lansing, Mich. Contact: 800/879-6652.

JAN. 8-11 Annual North Carolina Turfgrass Conference, Charlotte, N.C. Contact: 888/695-1333.

JAN. 9-11 Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show (MANTS), Baltimore, Md. Contact: 800/431-0066.

JAN. 9-11 Eastern Pennsylvania Turf Conference & Trade Show, King of Prussia, Pa. Contact: 610/828-0253.

JAN. 9-12 Professional Landscape and Nursery Trade Show, Indianapolis, Ind. Contact: 317/955-0628.

JAN. 10-12 Illinois Landscape Contractors Association Design Seminar, Northern Illinois University Hoffman Estates Campus, Joliet, Ill. Contact: 630/472-2851.

JAN. 11-12 Indiana Nursery and Landscape Association's 2001 P.L.A.N.T.S., Indianapolis, Ind. Contact: 317/632-1234.

JAN. 14-16 Tennessee Nursery & Landscape Association

Convention and Trade Show, Chattanooga, Tenn. Contact: 931/473-3951.

JAN. 15-18 Michigan Turfgrass Conference, Lansing, Mich. Contact: 517/321-1660.

JAN. 17-21 The Sports Turf Managers Association's Annual Conference & Exhibition, Tampa, Fla. Contact: 800/323-3875.

JAN. 17-19 Mid-America Horticultural Trade Show, Chicago, Ill. Contact: 630/472-2851.

JAN. 17-19 Idaho Horticulture Convention & Trade Show, Boise, Id. Contact: 800-462-4769.

JAN. 18-20 GrowExpo 2001, Chicago, Ill. Contact: 888/888-0013.

JAN. 18-20 Tropical Plant Industry Exhibition (TPIE) trade show, Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Contact: 407/295-7994.

JAN. 19-20 Oklahoma Nursery and Landscape Association Trade Show, Oklahoma City, Okla. Contact: 405/942-5276.

JAN. 19-20 Plant Health Care Plant Biology Workshop, Frogmore, S.C. Contact: 888/290-2640.

JAN. 22-25 The Georgia Turf and Horticulture Expo: Grow and Mow Expo, College Park, Ga. Contact: 706/632-0100.

JAN. 22-25 Professional Horticulture Conference of Virginia and Trade Show, Virginia Beach, Va. Contact: 757/523-4734.

JAN. 22-24 Central Environmental Nursery Trade Show, Columbus, Ohio Contact: 800/825-5062.

JAN. 23-25 Mid-America Green Industry Council Convention, Kansas City, Mo. Contact: 816/561-5323.

(continued on page 22)

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USE READER SERVICE #34

Calendar

(continued from page 20)

JAN. 24-25 Maryland Turfgrass Council's Turfgrass 2001 Conference and Trade Show, Timonium, Md. Contact: 301/403-4234.

JAN. 25-27 The Gulf States Horticultural Expo, Mobile, Ala. Contact: 334/502-7777.

JAN. 29-30 Nebraska Nursery & Landscape Association Winter Conference and Trade Show, Omaha, Neb. Contact: 816/233-1481.

JAN. 29-31 Iowa Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show, Des Moines, Iowa Contact: 800/605-0420.

JAN. 31 Sacramento Landscape and Nursery Expo, Sacramento, Calif. Contact: 530/458-3189.

FEB. 1-2 Iowa Nursery & Landscape Association Convention and Trade Show, Des Moines, Iowa. Contact: 816/233-1481.

FEB. 1-4 Associated Landscape Contractors of America Executive Forum, Tucson, Ariz. Contact: 800/395-2522.

FEB. 1-4 Professional Lawn Care Association of America Management Conference, Bahamas. Contact: 800/458-3466.

FEB. 1-4 Associated Nursery & Landscape Association's Management Clinic: 2001. Louisville, Ky. Contact: 202/789-2900

FEB. 2-3 Arkansas Professional Landscape and Nursery Trade Show, Little Rock, Ark. Contact: 501/225-0029.

FEB. 6-8 Pennsylvania Landscape & Nursery Conference, University Park, Penn. Contact: 814/865-8301.

FEB. 7-9 Turfgrass Producers International Convention, Albuquerque, N.M. Contact: 847/705-9898.

FEB. 11-12 Lawn & Landscape School of Management, San Diego, Calif. Contact: 800/456-0707.

MARCH 7-11 ALCA Student Career Days, Ft. Collins, Colo. Contact: 800/395-2522.

JUNE 7-9 Snow and Ice Management Association Annual Snow & Ice Symposium, Denver, Colo. Contact: 814/835-3577.

JULY 12-15 ANLA Annual Convention, Cleveland, Ohio. Contact: 202/789-2900.

JULY 16-17 PLCAA Legislative Day on the Hill, Washington, D.C. Contact: 800/458-3466.

JULY 20-22 Power Equipment/Lawn & Garden Show, Louisville, Ky. Contact: 502/562-1962.

AUG. 3-4 Southern Nurseryman's Association Conference & Trade Show, Atlanta, Ga. Contact: 770/953-3311.

AUG. 17-19 Texas Association of Nurserymen Nursery/Landscape Expo. Dallas, Texas. Contact: 530/458-3191.

SEPT. 22-25 American Society of Landscape Architects Annual Meeting, Montreal, Canada. Contact: 202/898-2444.

OCT. 7-9 Lawn & Landscape Business Strategies Conference, Scottsdale, Ariz. Contact: 800/456-0707.

OCT. 10-11 California Association of Nurserymen Western Nursery & Garden Expo. Las Vegas, Nev. Contact: 800/748-6214.

NOV. 1-3 National Arborists Association, Columbus, Ohio. Contact: 603/314-5380.

NOV. 4-6 Irrigation Association Annual Conference, San Antonio, Texas. Contact: 703/536-7080.

NOV. 10-13 Green Industry Expo. Tampa, Fla. Contact: 770/973-2019.

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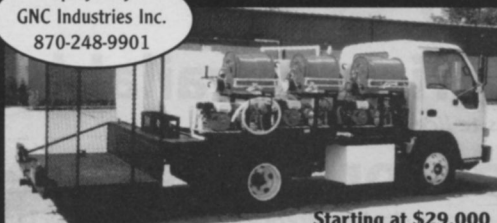


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BATTLING PESTS

Cultural Control



Insect I.D. features excerpts from Destructive Turf Insects, the book by Harry Niemczyk and David Shetlar, entomology professors at The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. For information on the book, call 800/456-0707.

QUARANTINE. Japanese beetle quarantines are currently operated by the USDA-APHIS-PPQP and states involved with shipping materials out of infested areas into uninfested areas. Though this has not stopped the slow progression of Japanese beetles westward, it seems to have slowed the process. Nursery plant and sod producers shipping plant material with soil out of Japanese beetle infested areas must obtain an inspection and certification. Often airports and rail yards are under quarantine and transporters must treat their containers before shipping.

The European chafer is a serious pest of nursery stock. Using planting stock certified free of this and other root pests helps further reduce their spread. Other than allowing the soil to dry out during the time eggs are developing, no other cultural controls have much influence on this turf pest.

THATCH MANAGEMENT. Thatch is a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it is a major obstacle to delivering control materials to target insects like grubs. On the other hand, thatch significantly reduces the potential for ground water contamination by pesticides and serves as a reservoir for insecticides applied to control pests such as chinch bugs, billbugs and mole crickets that live in it.

Black turfgrass atenius and Aphodius larval infestations usually occur in thatchy turf. Management practices that help reduce thatch and compaction may help in reducing the chance of infestation. Occasionally, when thick thatch exists and normal management practices are no longer effective, a complete dethatching or renovation (removal) may be necessary.

HABITAT MODIFICATION. Eggs and young grubs are very susceptible to desiccation in dry soils. Therefore, omitting irrigation during the time eggs and first instar larvae are developing is detrimental to the insects. While this tactic is generally impractical for golf courses, it may have some application in other turfgrass situations. If natural rainfall occurs, this approach is nullified.

Trees or shrubs highly attractive to adult Japanese beetles near turf should not be planted, especially along golf course fairways and surrounding athletic fields. Trees and shrubs most attractive to adults include: grape, linden, Japanese and Norway maple, birch, pin oak, horse chestnut, Rose-of-Sharon, sycamore, ornamental apple, plum and cherry, rose, mountain ash, willows, elms, and Virginia creeper. Trees and shrubs rarely attacked include: red and silver maple, tuliptree, magnolias, red mulberry, forsythia, ashes, privet, lilac, spruces, hydranges, and taxus (yew).

Masked chafer adults are attracted to lights at night and

grub damage is often common under or near street, athletic field, or other bright lights. Replacement with sodium vapor or yellow lights will reduce attractiveness.

TRAPS. Various traps have been developed to capture certain grub adults and mole crickets. Adult beetle traps use pheromones or chemical lures to attract beetles while mole cricket traps use sounds that mimic the call of males to attract females.

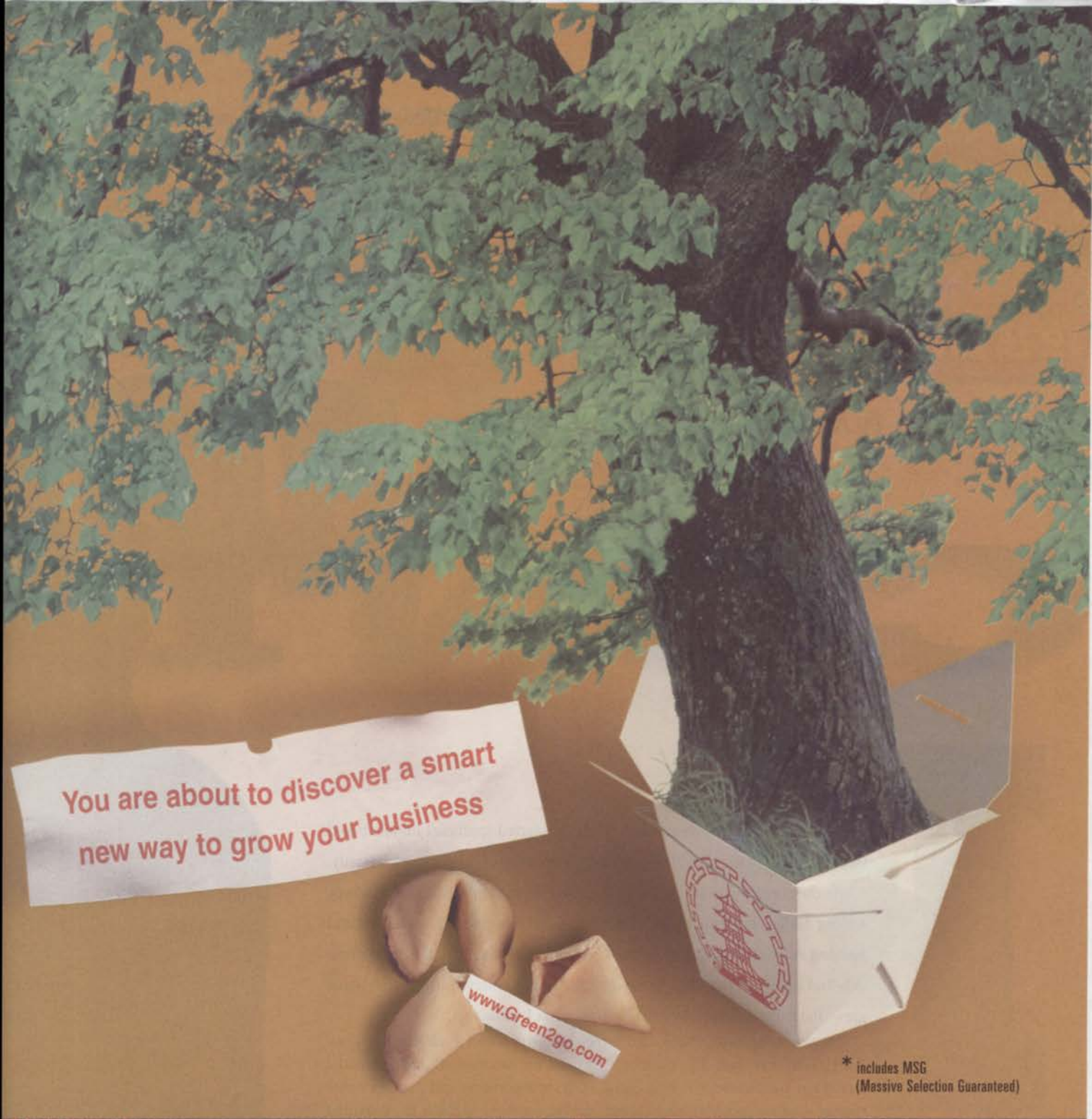
The commonly available Japanese beetle trap uses a beetle aggregation (floral) pheromone plus a sex lure to attract both sexes of beetles. Experimental tests with this trap indicate that the trap may attract beetles from ½ mile away, but can not collect all that are attracted to the area. When this trap is placed in the vicinity of susceptible ornamental plants, more damage can occur from feeding by attracted adults than if no trap is used. Japanese beetle traps are not recommended for control of grubs.

Mole cricket traps consist of a four to six foot plastic wading pool with water over which is suspended an electric caller or tape recorder that produces the trill call of either the tawny or southern mole cricket. Mainly females are attracted, but males will also respond. The crickets fall into the water in the wading pool and drown within a day or two. The trap is more useful for monitoring mole cricket flights than as a control measure.

RESISTANT/TOLERANT TURF. Turfgrass varieties with extensive root systems often have some tolerance to soil-inhabiting insects. Tall fescues can commonly tolerate annual grub populations in excess of 15 per square foot, while bluegrass-ryegrass blends may be damaged by eight to ten grubs per square foot. Among southern grasses, Cavalier® zoysiagrass is reported to have resistance to the tawny mole cricket.

Endophyte enhanced perennial ryegrasses and fescues have been shown to be quite resistant to leaf and stem attacking insects. However, the toxins produced by the endophyte, a fungal symbiont that lives between the cells of the leaf and leaf sheath, are not translocated to the root systems. Except for bluegrass billbug, soil-inhabiting insects such as grubs are apparently not affected by endophytic grasses.

Adults and young larvae of billbugs feed in and on the stems of grasses and therefore ingest endophyte toxins. There is ample evidence to show that endophyte enhanced perennial ryegrasses and fescues can significantly reduce populations of bluegrass billbugs. Overseeding or replacing the turf with blends of Kentucky bluegrass and endophyte enhanced grasses is an effective cultural approach for control of billbug. Generally, a turf stand with 30-40 percent endophytic plants is sufficient to control billbug damage. **LI**



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USE READER SERVICE #35



While family fortitude is the basis for Tecza Environmental Group's birth and early growth, a value-based business focus during second-generation ownership carried the company through some of its roughest entrepreneurial challenges.

Quality Control TECZA ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

by Nicole Wisniewski

Quality

CONTROL



Focusing solely on tree care, Adam Tecza Sr. started southeast Illinois-based Greenleaf Tree Surgeons in 1937 primarily as a means of supporting his family.

As the company grew slowly in the 1940s, Tecza identified new markets, adding design/build services in 1943 to respond to a growing, local need and opening Adam's Landscape Garden Center in 1949 to sell retail garden products and small nursery stock to his clients. As the nursery side of the business grew, the company became Adam's Nursery & Landscape.

Tecza and his wife, Stella, had three sons who entered into the business: Tony, Tom and Ted. The company focused on commercial and industrial landscape construction in 1968 along with incorporation and another name change - Adam Tecza & Sons Inc. One year later, a move to Elgin, Ill., provided room for the birth of Tecza & Sons Nurseries.

This is just the introduction of Tecza Environmental Group's 60-year story. Throughout the years, the company survived two recessions, a transition from first to second generation ownership and the planning of a third, an identity crisis and a few structural changes. The company learned from its mistakes and pressed on to become a nearly \$4 million enterprise, standing by a quality-conscious market niche.

TECZA ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

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GROWING GREEN. When Ted Tecza graduated in 1967 from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana with a degree in landscape architecture, he returned to his father's company to expand the business' design/build side. "We were doing small landscape plantings," Ted explained. "People would come into the nursery, pick out the

(continued on page 30)

Adam Tecza, Ted Tecza
and Ed Reier (from left to
right) focus on selling
maintenance and design/
build work to quality-
conscious clients at Tecza
Environmental Group.
Photo: Dan DalSanto,
Sunrise Photography

TECZA ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

HEADQUARTERS: Elgin, Ill.

FOUNDED: 1937

PRIMARY SERVICES: 52 percent installation, 46 percent maintenance, 1 percent lawn care and 1 percent trees and ornamentals. Seventy-one percent of the company's revenue is from residential clients, 22 percent from commercial and 7 percent from government/municipal.

1999 REVENUE: \$3.8 million

EMPLOYEES: 15 year-round, 85 seasonal - 98 percent Hispanic

EQUIPMENT: 20 trimmers, 18 blowers, 10 edgers, six chain saws, 12 hedge trimmers, 18 maintenance vehicles, 14 installation vehicles, two spray vehicles, 48 walk-behind mowers, eight riding mowers, eight tractor loaders, 22 equipment trailers and one brush cutter.

THE COMPANY

MISSION STATEMENT: To exceed client expectations through team effort. To provide quality landscape architecture, construction and maintenance services by being the "Model of Excellence" in the industry. To ensure corporate and personal growth while maintaining profitability and professionalism.

FUTURE CHALLENGES: To continue growing maintenance through existing and additional quality employees while maintaining level revenue in installation.

THE MANAGEMENT

TED TECZA, president. Ted received a degree in landscape architecture and then returned home to work for the family landscape business. In 1969, he became president of the company.

ADAM TECZA, vice president of construction. Adam has been with the company nine years. As part of a five-year succession plan, he will take over business ownership after Ted retires.

ED REIER, vice president of maintenance. Ed, who holds a degree in product design, worked at an Illinois-based landscape firm since the age of 15. He has been with Tecza for 13 years.

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USE READER SERVICE #73

Quality Control

(continued from page 27)

plants they wanted and then ask us to plant them or they would ask us for landscape design ideas. That's the type of landscaping we did - somewhat of a cash-and-carry type primarily for residential customers."

Ted first grew the design/build portion of the company by cold-calling clients and later through client referrals. In 1977, the

company enjoyed \$745,000 in revenue, hitting the \$1 million mark one year later.

These same clients "pulled us into the maintenance business," Ted said, and in 1982, Tecza Brothers Inc. was separately incorporated. "The more installations we did, the more clients would say, 'You've done a nice

(continued on page 32)

Tecza Environmental Group is beginning its transition into third-generation ownership as President Ted Tecza slowly moves out of his role as owner of the Elgin, Ill.-based company.

As the succession plan dictates, two different transitions will take place: stock ownership and day-to-day business operation in the next five years.

Ownership of the company will be passed over to Tecza's son, Adam, the company's vice president of construction, who started receiving up to 49 percent of stock in the business as a gift from his father four years ago.

The business operation section of the timeline will be determined by how Adam and Ed Reier, vice president of maintenance, continue to grow and become comfortable in their new roles.

"The succession plan will be somewhat fluid, whether it takes three, five or six years to make it happen," Ted said.

To ease this transition, Ted has been working with an industry consultant who gathered together five landscape company owners and their families to share different viewpoints on the joys and fears of succession planning and open up communication between the generations. "Dad has certain ways he likes to do things that have worked for him for so many years," Adam pointed out. "I think it's a new situation for him to have someone constantly questioning 'Why?' He constantly has to explain himself to me, and I think that's hard for a father to do with a son. But we have been getting along great throughout the whole process."

So far, Tecza employees are taking the succession well. But there are always a few questions to answer as people respond differently to future plans. "Ed (Reier), for instance, understands the separation of ownership and operations and the fact that he has a strong opportunity and his income can grow along with his growth in the company," Ted explained. "But I have a construction supervisor who has been with me for more than 20 years and he has already told me that when I retire, he's going to retire." — **Nicole Wisniewski**

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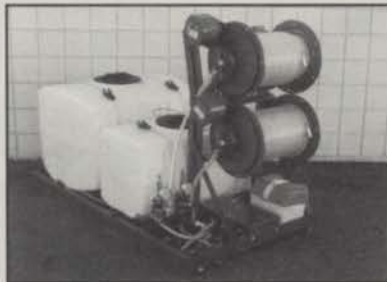
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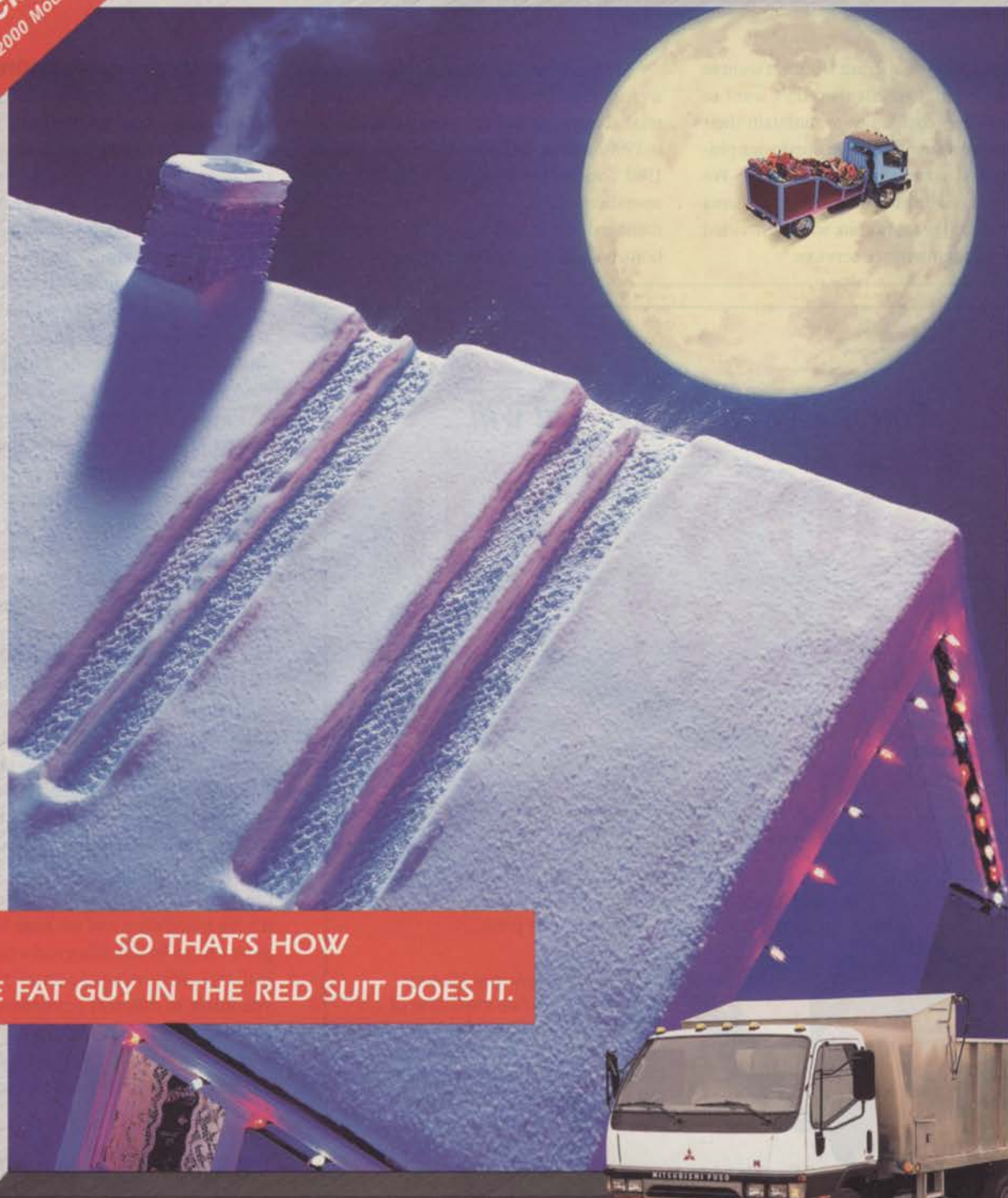


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USE READER SERVICE #36

Quality Control

(continued from page 30)

job and we really like it, but we don't want to take care of it.' Our clients didn't want to bring in other companies to maintain their properties because they liked our design philosophy and what we had done so far. We had good relationships with these clients that we didn't want to ruin, so we provided them with maintenance services."

At this point, all three Tecza brothers were moving up in the company or starting related enterprises. Tony, who passed away in 1990, started Anthony A. Tecza & Sons in 1980, Tom ran the nursery and garden center operations of his father's business, and Ted managed the landscape design, construction and maintenance operations.

THE SECOND GENERATION. Ted and Tom purposely kept the company split into four pieces – a garden center, a nursery, a maintenance company and a design/build company. "I'm a very process-oriented person and I wanted to have separate profit centers so I could really determine how each company was growing," Ted explained. "We probably could have done it with divisions, which is more or less what we have now, but at that time early in our business careers, four separate companies made it easier for us to track which one was doing well."

However, as the new, second-generation owners took over – and some third generation relatives became involved – the brothers' visions for future of the business started to differ. As a result, Tom and Ted split their businesses in half in 1985 – Tom took ownership of the nursery and garden center and Ted took the design/build and maintenance portions of the business, Adam Tecza & Sons and Tecza Brothers Inc., respectively.

"When the extended family came into play, there were different goals that each person had, and we discovered that ours weren't as compatible as they once were," Ted said. "One of the biggest dilemmas of a family business is that you grow up together so you have a relationship with one another. You then enter into a business and, quite candidly, although family love is important – it's the foundation and the basis of the company – it can be a blessing and a curse. It gets in the way of running a business. Not only do you adapt to different economic conditions and client needs, but you also have to adapt to changing personal philosophies as to what the business is, what its goals are and what each person's visions are."

THE RECESSION. Adam Tecza & Sons and Tecza Brothers combined sales were at \$1.75 million in 1979. But the U.S. economy took a major downturn in the early 1980s, throwing a curve ball at the company. Revenue dropped \$175,000 in 1980 and \$500,000 in 1982, despite the addition of maintenance services. But the business bounced back in 1985 with slow, steady growth for the next three years, eventually getting back to \$1.7 million in revenue, even with the added stress of ironing out family business issues.

During the following two years, revenue

(continued on page 34)

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USE READER SERVICE #22

Quality Control

(continued from page 32)

jumped to \$2.4 million in 1986 and \$3.1 million in 1987. But this growth didn't last long. Another economic recession was brewing, and when it hit, a roller coaster ride of revenue peaks and valleys ensued throughout the next seven years, resulting in the loss of almost \$1 million by 1994.

While the late 1980s took a bite out of Tecza's revenue, this downturn also can be attributed to the challenges Ted faced while making his mark on the family business history, which included letting go of some control and learning to trust his employees (see *Taking Care of Business* on page 80).

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the economy dictated the company's decisions in some respects, according to Ed Reier, Tecza's vice president of maintenance. Reier joined the company in 1987 as a landscape maintenance salesman. "We were trying to establish a niche based on quality service at that time," Reier said. "But the economy did not allow us to sell enough work based on quality. At times, the economy dictated what customers wanted whether they appreciated quality or not. They would say, 'We can't afford quality right now, but we have a need - the grass needs to be cut. Can you help us?'"

The company agreed to service these clients, even though Reier admitted that doing so soon hurt the business. "I think our idea of the perfect customer started to change a little bit - we started traveling too far to cut a client's grass and on the design/build side we started doing too much bid work. We were too concerned about keeping volume high in the early 1990s, and that contributed to higher attrition - we lost more customers every year because we lacked focus."

As a result, the company managers decided to step back in the mid-1990s and look at the clients they were serving. "This is when we decided that traveling to the lakefront (a one-hour drive) for a residence we were only at for one or two hours didn't make sense," Reier explained. "That winter we went out to a number of customers and explained to them that we couldn't give them a renewal on their maintenance contracts. We told them we chose not to come to their houses next year, and that was tough. After we explained that it was a business decision and keeping them as clients was costing us more money than it was worth, we gave

(continued on page 36)



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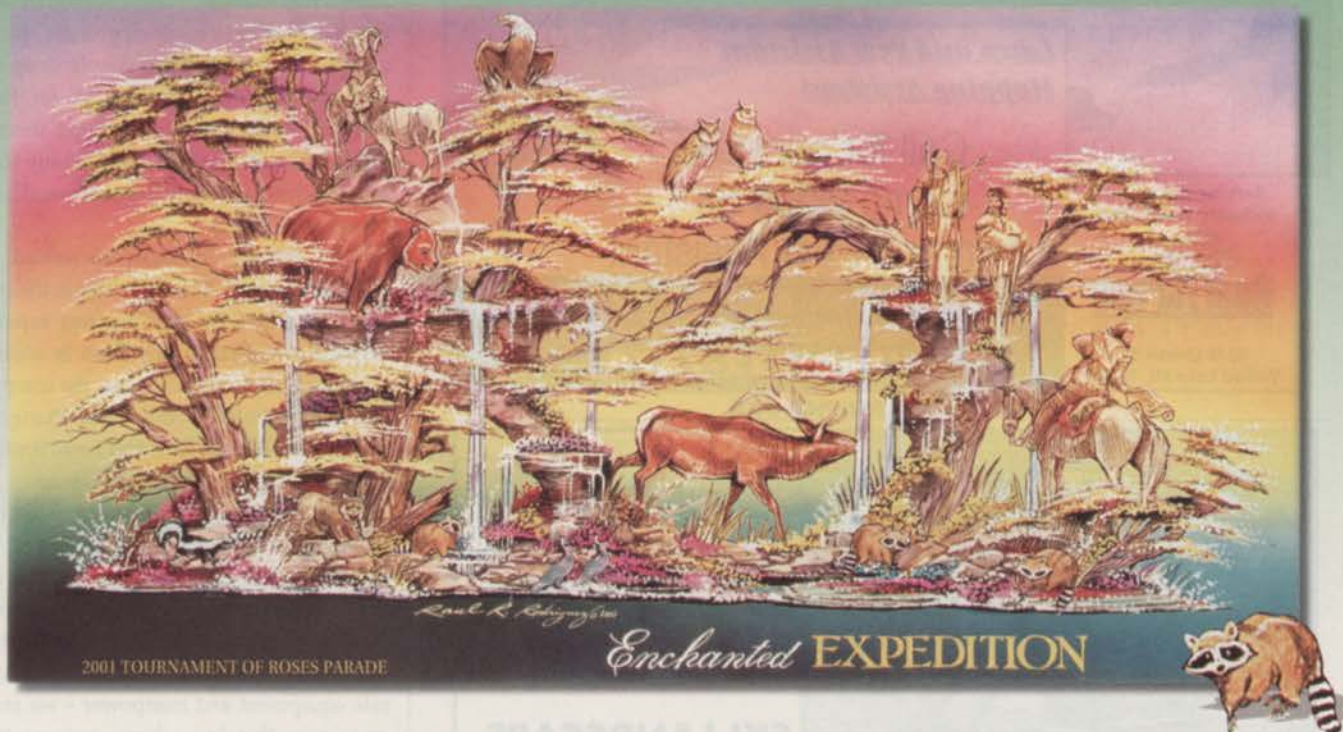
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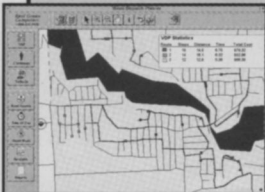
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Quality Control

(continued from page 34)

them names of other contractors that might be able to meet their needs, and they took it well. We handled it delicately because we didn't want to lose these customers or their referrals for possible future business."

On the design/build side of the business in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the company's client mix consisted of primarily commercial design/bid or pure bid work. "We really got beat up by doing that," Ted explained. "I had four landscape architects on staff and when we were designing and bidding, our overhead structure didn't support us as a pure bid contractor."

After the late 1980s recession, Tecza Environmental Group shifted its focus to design/build work. The company also began to function as a general contractor on its clients' design/build projects, handling swimming pools, tennis courts, gazebos, driveways, irrigation, night lighting, etc., in addition to plant material installation. "We became a single source," Ted remarked. "We made a decision to concentrate on pure design and not so much on bidding and a low number."

Plus, the now booming economy made quality-conscious customers favorable for contractors to chase. "There is enough work out there where people appreciate quality and don't mind paying a couple more dollars, and we decided to work for those people," Reier added, describing them as high-end residential and multi-family structures, such as apartment complexes and home owner associations.

The change in focus recouped the company's nearly \$1 million loss in the early 1990s, and by 1998 the company reported revenue of more than \$3 million. In addition to making structural changes, the company also implemented a final name change. In 1994, Adam Tecza & Sons and Tecza Brothers became Tecza Environmental Group.

"The separation was starting to get confusing to our customers," Ted admitted. "Internally, it was also affecting our team attitude. Rolling the two services into one company but two separate profit centers helped build a stronger sense of team. We have separate equipment and manpower - we rarely cross over that line where someone from maintenance will do construction or someone from construction will do maintenance."

Keeping maintenance and design/build

(continued on page 106)

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Quality Control TECZA ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

by Nicole Wisniewski

*A passion for design and
penchant for success molded
Tecza Environmental Group's
design/build division.*

Ted Tecza decided he wanted to be a landscape architect in the eighth grade.

"I was working with my dad on a very large estate and we were planting a bunch of trees," explained Ted, president of Tecza Environmental Group, Elgin, Ill. "I thought the whole experience was really neat. One day, the owner happened to walk by and I didn't think anything of asking this very wealthy client how he knew where to put all the trees. He explained how he got a landscape architect to design and plan it out."

From that point on, Ted stuck with this career choice, even to the extent of applying to only one college after high school graduation: The University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, Ill., a school with a good landscape architecture program.

As Tecza strengthened the design/build side of the business, he quickly realized the extent of the work involved in the process. "I was very naïve at the time and only wanted to work on designs," he said. "Then I discovered I had to sell the designs, install them, collect the money from them and then pay the bills from them. Soon, I was running this side of the business."

Design/build work, Ted's passion, is what drew him into the landscape industry. Today, despite the company's focus on expanding the maintenance side of the business to protect it from a potential economic downshift, the design/build roots of the company are what forced Ted to develop a client-focused niche and learn how to manage residential customers. These two solid company attributes, along with some structural changes made in the design/build process along the way, are what built a successful operation.

(continued on page 40)

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Dave Reier, Tecza's construction manager, reviews a design that was created by one of the landscape architects with whom Tecza Environmental Group works. Photo: Dan DalSanto, Sunrise Photography

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USE READER SERVICE #130

Quality Control

(continued from page 38)

BUILDING BLOCKS. The best business move Tecza made in the late 1980s was establishing a design/build focus, which includes "high-end residential customers in the Chicago area who want to spend \$500,000 in landscaping," described Adam Tecza, Tecza's vice president of construction. The landscapes typically are 12,000- to 17,000-square-foot homes

on 5 to 7 acres, Adam said.

Establishing this niche made it possible for Tecza to stop doing bid work, which didn't support the company's overhead or new quality-conscious image. "We do very little bid work unless its for a builder or developer we have a relationship with," Adam explained. "Our design/build pricing and qual-

ity work typically do not fit within the bidding arena, and the bid mentality is lowest price gets the job - we didn't want to play that game."

The company further strengthened its presence in the design/build arena in the early 1990s by outsourcing design work, which lowered overhead costs and enabled the company to develop relationships with more designers (see sidebar on page 42). "I must admit to a prejudice - I wanted to design," Ted said. "That's what I like to do, so outsourcing our design work was a major change for us."

The final modification that improved Tecza's design/build service in the early 1990s was the move to serving as a general contractor for all its clients. "We provide many services for our clients simply because the more we do for them the more they want us on site," Ted said. "The single source concept is very important to our clients - it makes their jobs easier. We want to make their lives easier by not bringing them any problems, but by solving their problems. So the more that we can do well for them, the more valuable we are to them."

Becoming a general contractor also set Tecza apart from the competition in the Chicago area, Adam said. "There aren't many companies in the area that will take on an entire project, including irrigation, hardscaping, plantings, tennis courts, swimming pools, night lighting, etc. We have a big database full of subcontractors so if the project includes something that is outside the house - even if we don't do it - we'll find someone to do it and we'll handle it for the client," he explained.

While playing the role of a general contractor can lead to profits, dealing with various subcontractors who handle different technical jobs, such as irrigation and lighting, can present challenges, Adam said. Tecza managers need to learn a little bit about many different trades so that they can answer client questions and properly organize the job schedule, ensuring that the right trades are on the job site in the right order.

"For instance, if tree preservation needs to happen on the site, we need to get in there and do deadwood pruning and fertilization and then block off the area around the tree so the carpenter doesn't drive on site and park his pickup truck underneath the tree to eat

(continued on page 42)



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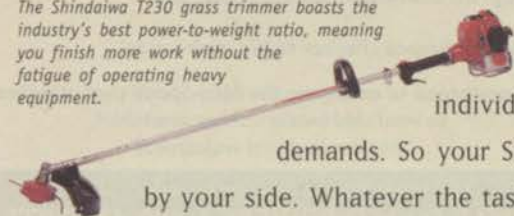
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Evening out the highs and lows of the so-called design/build season can be tricky, as proven by Tecza Environmental Group, Elgin, Ill.

"We tried to even it out, but many times in the mid-summer or early winter, we'd hit a low point," explained company President Ted Tecza. "This meant that as much as we tried to scramble to bring in designs, there was still hardly enough work to keep my landscape architects going."

The dilemma that ensued: Ted paid salaries and benefits to four landscape architects whether they were busy or

Outsourcing Design Work

not, which became an overhead issue.

This quandary was aggravated by the fact that two of these landscape architects also decided they wanted to work from home instead in an office everyday. "They didn't want the pressure that I put on them to complete as many plans as I needed them to complete," Ted explained.

Ted decided to outsource his landscape design work, eliminating that portion of his overhead and adding another 2.5 percent to the company's bottom line, he said. Instead of four, on-staff landscape architects, Ted now keeps in touch with six to meet the company's design needs. "During the busy season, I can afford to work with more people, and during the low season, I don't have to pay a landscape architect when I hardly have enough work to keep him or her busy," Ted said.

The only challenge with this approach is making sure these landscape architects "are

interested enough in doing my projects and don't put me off too long," Ted remarked. "Obviously, when I'm very busy, all of their other clients are also very busy."

To ensure these architects will be available when he needs them, Ted makes sure he has interesting projects for them to work on. "Right now, our specialty is a 12,000- to 17,000-square-foot home on 5 to 7 acres," he said. "And we include the full gamut of extras, including swimming pools, formal rose gardens, small parquet lawn areas for lawn bowling or croquet, arbors, guest homes, etc. These projects are very interesting to work on."

"And I pay my architects pretty fast," Ted continued, pointing out that this builds the contractor-landscape architect relationship. "I pay them soon after the design is finished so they don't have to wait to get a check for their work."

— Nicole Wisniewski

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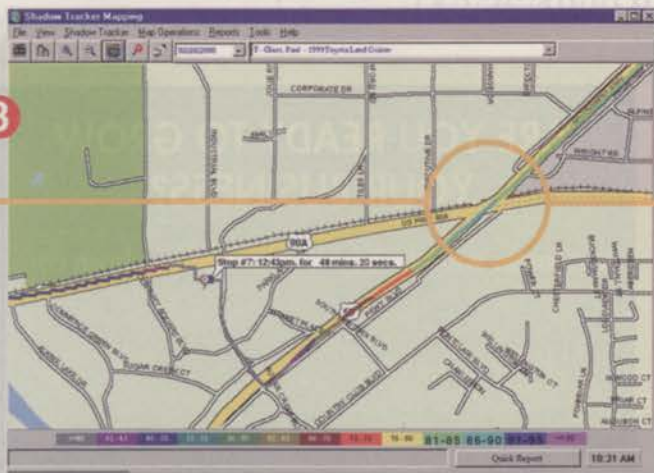
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11:22AM	11:27AM	00:05	L-Exxon Gas Station	0.00
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11:31AM	4:14PM	04:43	S-Your Company Office	0.00
4:14PM	4:17PM	00:03	In Transit	1.18
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USE READER SERVICE #63

Quality Control

(continued from page 42)

his lunch, compacting the tree's root zone," Ted pointed out.

By establishing a design/build niche, replacing bid work with quality-conscious, high-end clients, outsourcing design work and becoming a general contractor, Tecza recouped nearly \$1 million lost from the economic recession in the late 1980s and has continued to grow through client referrals.

As Tecza focuses on growing the maintenance portion of the business more aggressively - 18 to 20 percent, the design/build business will stabilize and grow by only 8 to 10 percent annually. The service split is currently 55 percent design/build and 45 percent maintenance, but Tecza managers expect that to become 60 percent maintenance and 40 percent design/build - very different from the company's early days of 80 percent design/build and 20 percent maintenance.

THE D/B CLIENT. Tecza Environmental Group's design/build clients are 90 percent

residential, and 80 to 85 percent of the company's design/build work is referral or repeat client business. "We do a good job for somebody and then they pass us on to somebody else," Ted said. "We've had clients for 25 or 28 years who we continue to work with. The majority of our clients have been with us 12 to 15 years."

But Tecza employees can't sit back waiting for client referrals to bring them additional work on a silver platter. Regular relationship-building is the key to maintaining and growing a business. This involves touching base with builders or architects the company has relationships with once a month or once every six weeks to see what projects they have coming up, Adam explained. "Our contacts will either mention our name to the people they are working with or they'll give us their numbers and we'll contact them to determine their needs," he said.

Since the company doesn't concentrate on low-cost, bid work and focuses on value,

its prices are higher. In a bid situation, Tecza's prices may be as much as 40 percent higher than the lowest bid and 15 percent higher than the next bid, Adam said. In a design/build situation, Tecza's prices may be 15 to 20 percent higher than the lowest price.

"Our work is very relationship-based," said Ed Reier, Tecza's vice president of maintenance. "Our clients will pay more for that relationship and, in turn, they end up with a better product in the field. The philosophy of having a quality organization has always been preached, but I think we're doing a better job at practicing that also. And the amount of referral work we get every year is proof of that."

Once Tecza establishes a relationship with its customers, selling these high prices to its clients isn't difficult. "Last year, my success rate was approximately 76 percent," Ted enthused. Adam, who is in his first year of design/build sales, has closed more than half

(continued on page 46)



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USE READER SERVICE #40

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USE READER SERVICE #42

Quality Control

(continued from page 44)

of the sales he has presented to clients.

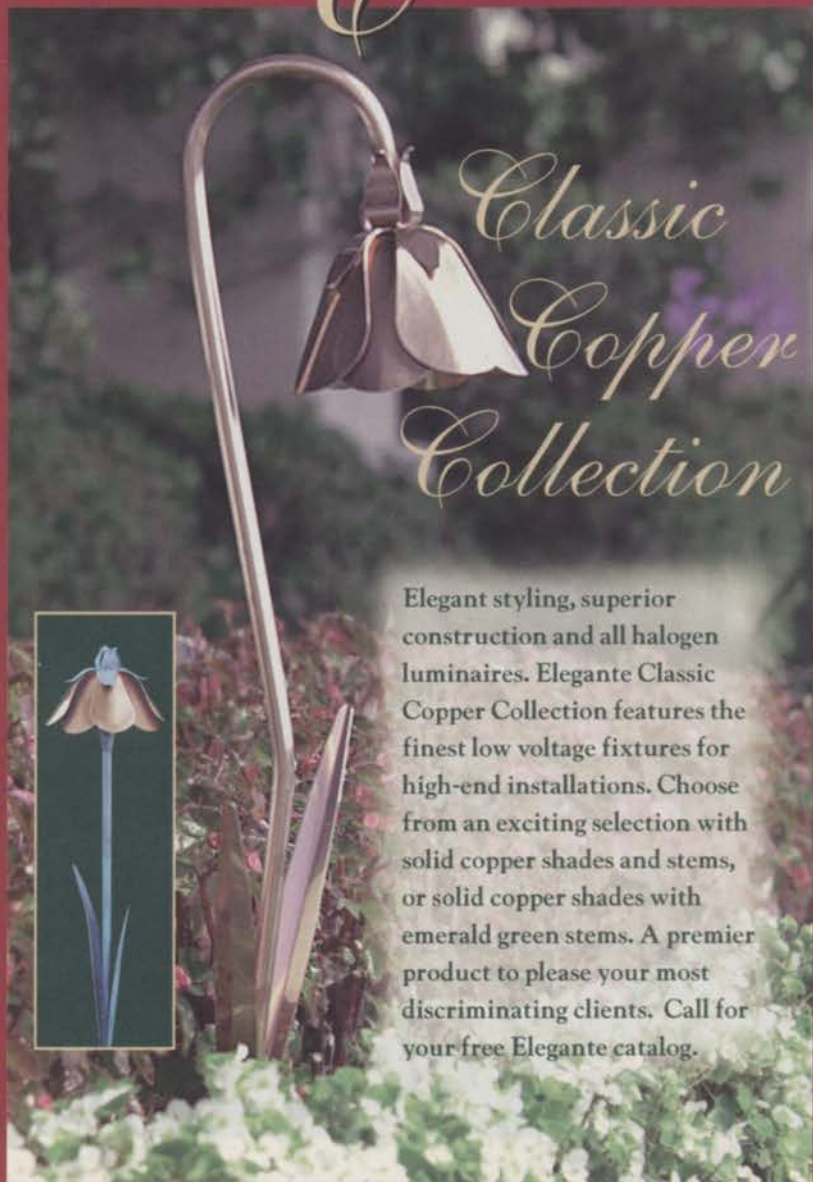
Once a client is referred to Tecza and fits the company niche, Ted or one of the landscape architects the company works with develops a conceptual landscape plan based on the client's information. If the client is satisfied, the architect creates a final drawing with plant material labels, but not be-

fore asking for a design deposit up front.

"We go into the conceptual drawing without any deposit, but once they want us to move into the final project or final plan, then we ask for a deposit anywhere from \$500 to \$2,500, depending on the size of the job," Adam explained. "For instance, a drawing for a 5,000-square-foot house could cost any-

where from \$800 to \$1,200 for the deposit based on the time required to do measurements and the challenges of planning the job based on the site conditions. If we're talking about a 15,000-square-foot house like a mansion and the architect will be spending a lot of time there taking measurements, the design costs more. Architects charge an hourly rate so drawing time is factored into the cost."

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AFTER THE SALE. After Tecza Environmental Group sells a design/build job and completes the landscape drawing or plan, the job information is entered into a report system by the receptionist or office manager. Then the information is passed on to the construction supervisor, who begins ordering all the plant material for the job.

The construction supervisor and staff, which includes five crews of three to five employees, have meetings every Wednesday to discuss the jobs taking place in the next 10 days. Sold jobs are placed on the schedule based on clients' needs and the company's other jobs and priorities.

"Once that job comes up on the schedule, we go out into the field and set up that job," Adam said. "The whole design/build scheduling process is fairly simple."

As the job continues, the original sales person is usually on the site every other day to evaluate its progress. "On a job that takes one month to finish, I'm probably talking to that client two to three times each week," Adam pointed out.

Constant communication is the key to dealing with residential clients, Adam insisted. "I try and talk to clients three out of every five days during their landscape installation projects," he said. "All last minute changes or plan revisions are brought up immediately so clients aren't surprised by things that appear different than originally planned, such as unexpected elevation changes or drainage problems.

"Rarely does something slip by unless we forget to write something down or make a phone call," he continued. "Though during a project we're on the job so much that we tend not to forget anything. On days we aren't at the property, we are usually on the phone with the client." 

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

USE READER SERVICE #41



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USE READER SERVICE #104



Quality Control TECZA ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

by Nicole Wisniewski

After fine-tuning its maintenance division, Tecza Environmental Group boosted revenue and found strength against future economic hardship.

in **Stability** **MAINTENANCE**

Ted Tecza admits that design/build work is his passion, "but maintenance is a very important part of the company too," insisted the president of Elgin, Ill.-based Tecza Environmental Group.

Throughout the past five years, the company focused on a dramatic push to grow its maintenance division, one that once resembled a business stepchild, representing only 20 percent of the service mix. Today, maintenance generates 45 percent of that blend and is showing signs of soon becoming the company's largest service offering at 60 percent of total sales.

Tecza drives this service offering reversal because he learned firsthand how a poor economy can impact a design/build-focused business.

"When the economy turns down, design/build is a high-risk business to be in because the clients disappear," Tecza said. "Maintenance, on the

(continued on page 52)

Todd Muhr, Tecza Environmental Group's spray supervisor, handles deep root tree fertilizer feeding on a maintenance client's property.

Photo: Dan DalSanto, Sunrise Photography



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USE READER SERVICE #17

Quality Control

(continued from page 50)

At Tecza Environmental Group, Elgin, Ill., computer software is not only used to track job costs and specifics, but also to track equipment repair costs, said Vice President of Maintenance Ed Reier.

The company sets up internal jobs the same way as external jobs, except internal jobs detail maintenance on equipment, such as mowers, instead of work done on clients' landscapes. "Any parts or labor used to fix a piece of equipment are applied to the internal job report," Reier said.

The challenge associated with this system is that "the information in the computer is only as good as what's reported by the guys in the field," much like an external job, Reier noted.

Daily time sheets alleviate potential information problems due to inaccurate records with field personnel, so mechanics fill out similar forms to track equipment repairs, noted Reier. "Time sheets show employees' hours and daily activities at various jobs so job costing can be done for each project," Reier said. But when the mechanic fills out a time sheet, the information is applied to the equipment the mechanic worked on that day to track repair costs, he said.

Tracking Equipment Costs

(continued on page 54)

Santos Ochoa, Tecza Environmental Group's head mechanic, repairs a mower (right). Photo: Dan DalSanto



The payroll manager then records time card information into the computer system. "Our office manager won't run employees their checks if they haven't turned in their time sheets for every week day," Reier said, adding that this system ensures receipt of all time sheets.

Each piece of equipment is put on a preventive maintenance schedule. A mower, for example, has a weekly schedule. "Because the mower is forced into the shop to get its blades sharpened, other maintenance can be performed, such as changing the oil, greasing the equipment or checking it for problems before it goes back in the field," Reier said. This detailed level of equipment cost tracking helps the company decide when a particular machine has outlived its useful life and should be replaced based on the amount of time and dollars being spent on its upkeep.

— Nicole Wisniewski

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USE READER SERVICE #59

Quality Control

(continued from page 52)

other hand, is very consistent. Plus, the cash flow is wonderful. Construction checks are big, but they tend to hit every 38 to 45 days, whereas maintenance checks are small but they come in regularly and end up covering our overhead on a weekly basis."

By pulling in its service area reigns and structurally changing the inner workings of its maintenance service system, Tecza Environmental Group is building a solid wall of protection against future economic hardship.

THE MILLION-DOLLAR BRICK WALL.

When the economy took a down swing in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Tecza Environmental Group's maintenance work leveled out while the design/build work dropped off more significantly. The company wasn't growing maintenance as aggressively as it is today - 18 to 20 percent annually, but it was still striving to hit the \$1 million mark with this service.

"We ran into that million-dollar brick

wall a couple of times," explained Ed Reier, Tecza's vice president of maintenance. "When we were close or when it looked like we were going to surpass it, our customer attrition jumped up and we lost a lot of work," he remarked. "We thought we lost focus of customer service—we knew something wasn't quite right."

Three years ago, the maintenance division initiated a structural change that helped alleviate this problem. At that point, Tecza employed 10 crews with two supervisors directing the day-to-day operations of four or five crews each. Two customer service representatives and one sales manager, who were not involved in the day-to-day operation of the crews, handled all sales responsibilities and dealt with clients while a maintenance manager was in charge of the crews and supervisors.

"The more levels of management we had, the more communication between them suffered," Reier said, relating this back to the

aforementioned service challenges. "Our laborers weren't being managed properly."

Additionally, the company was supporting a greater overhead structure by employing various levels of maintenance management, and "it wasn't allowing us to grow like we wanted to," Reier said.

To alleviate this problem, Tecza Environmental Group implemented a new management structure for its maintenance division and created a three-man account manager team. Today, account managers, similar to the supervisors in the previous model, are involved in day-to-day crew operation by aiding in scheduling, training and communicating with foremen on a regular basis. But account managers also take care of customer service by building client relationships, selling them additional work and handling contract renewals. And Reier, as head of maintenance, has assumed the responsibility of new maintenance sales.

(continued on page 56)

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Quality Control

(continued from page 54)

"Reworking our maintenance structure was the key change that helped us get over that \$1 million hump," Reier said, pointing out that this year the company will generate \$1.5 million in maintenance and projects \$1.75 million in revenue for 2001. "With three account managers, we hope to manage about \$2 million in maintenance work, about

\$630,000 or \$650,000 (50 to 55 clients) per account manager. Each account manager then will also sell \$200,000 to \$400,000 of enhancement work or add-on services to his or her current customers.

"We feel a productive account manager can handle \$900,000 to \$1 million worth of work and still have time to hold the clients'

hands and be there for service. Right now, we have the capacity to sell more work before we need to hire a fourth account manager."

THE MAINTENANCE CLIENT. Eighty-five percent of Tecza Environmental Group's maintenance work is within 20 miles of the office, and 60 percent of these accounts are within five to 10 miles of the office.

But pulling in service area boundaries to achieve this more contained client base presented a challenge when the company slimmed down its service routes 10 years ago. Reier had to tell any clients who lived more than one hour away and paid for maintenance services that took less than four hours to complete that the company could no longer afford to maintain their properties.

"But this helped us focus and concentrate on prospecting and cold-calling right here in our own backyard," Reier said, pointing out that the remaining 15 percent of maintenance clients are comprised of accounts large enough to occupy a crew or crews for an entire day. "We base this qualification on job hours, not job size. The property may be only 2 acres of turf but require four hours of detail work. Most of our design/build customers pull us in this direction. But we will not travel more than one hour unless the job hours are worth the drive."

A hefty percentage of Tecza's maintenance client base is comprised of multi-family structures, which the company considers residential work (Tecza's maintenance work is 71 percent residential and 29 percent commercial and institutional). Since so many residential clients request service for Thursdays and Fridays, the company is making a concentrated effort to increase its commercial maintenance work in order to even out the projects filling the Mondays and Tuesdays on its weekly schedule.

Reier plans on developing future commercial maintenance opportunities by building more relationships with property managers, associations and building management companies. "If you build relationships with property managers and exceed their needs, their jobs become easier," Reier said. "Most property managers care for more than one property. They don't want to deal with 10 different companies and 10 different account managers."

(continued on page 58)

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Quality Control

(continued from page 56)

"I contact each property manager I deal with every fall to ask them about other properties they manage that are going out to bid this year and whether or not they are having problems with the current landscape contractors they're using," Reier continued, pointing out that he tries to proactively present property managers with solutions

before problems occur. "We do the same thing when a property manager resigns by visiting with the board of directors or the property manager's boss to try and establish deeper relationships. We suggest other building or property managers we know who they can contact to possibly fill the

(continued on page 60)

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USE READER SERVICE #46

Once Tecza Environmental Group decided to expand its maintenance service, its systems improved, said company President Ted Tecza.

This stability provided the company room to expand into snowplowing. But Tecza practices caution as it builds this service by leaving itself room for error instead of growing at an obscene rate.

"If we are hit with rain during the summer and we cannot cut the grass on Tuesday, which is a client's normal day, but we get there on Wednesday, that's no big deal," Tecza explained. "If we are one hour late to plow snow and clients have to get out of their cars and walk to their front doors and get snow on their shoe tops, they are upset."

To ensure quality control in snowplowing and avoid unhappy customers, the company set up strict snowplowing rules. "We are very independent," Tecza said. "We only plow for our maintenance clients, and we only plow in close proximity to Elgin. Several years ago, when I had accounts that were maybe 15 miles away, we couldn't get there in heavy snow."

The company also doesn't sell to 100 percent capacity to allow for extra time if needed. "Our goal is to have excess capacity and trucks to allow for the big snow, the late snow and any other radical snow whether it's wet, heavy, dry or light," Tecza said, pointing out that he sells snow work in hourly increments. "I don't over-commit myself."

Tecza only plows for clients who fit into the hours he can sell in an evening. Beyond that, clients are put on a waiting list.

While snowplowing extends the company's services and helps retain employees over winter, Tecza refuses to view it as just an add-on service. "Snowplowing is a business," he said. "It's not something nice to do to fill out the winter hours or keep a few guys around. Those may be the motivating factors in the decision to sell snow work, but if you look at it from that standpoint you're not serious enough about it." — *Nicole Wisniewski*

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USE READER SERVICE #101



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Quality Control

(continued from page 58)

vacancy. This seems to work well – we've survived many property managers on one site."

FROM CONTACT TO CONTRACT. The first and most important step in Tecza's maintenance sales process is determining the needs of its clients. "If people call in looking for just a mow-and-go company, we suggest other contractors they can talk to," Reier said. "We have found our niche client, one who is quality-conscious and understands safe, reliable equipment, uniformed and trained workers and someone to talk to if problems occur – this all costs money and all goes into our pricing. If we can explain that to a customer and educate them up front, we can save each other a lot of time."

Most of the maintenance contracts Tecza Environmental Group's clients sign are two-year agreements. The company offers clients an incentive to sign these contracts, even though Reier said he hasn't had a problem convincing clients to do so. "If they sign a two-year agreement they are locked into a low or same-as-the-first-year price increase the second year," Reier said. "For instance, if we have to raise prices 3 percent the first year, we will guarantee a lower or equal percent, such as 2.5 or 3 percent, rather than a higher one, for the second year."

To encourage three-year contract agreements, Tecza offers clients who sign a three-year deal instead of a two-year maintenance contract a commitment to not raise the price for the third year.

"We try to convey the idea of a long-term relationship and hope our clients feel the same way," Reier said. "With longer agreements like this we also don't have to go out and renew all of our contracts every year. Rarely does a client object to signing up for a two-year agreement, but this is a client who appreciates quality and isn't always looking for a low price. In other words, the client isn't going out to bid every year."

Tecza Environmental Group steers clear of low-bid maintenance work, such as municipalities seeking contractors to cut the grass, medians and right-of-ways, Reier said. "Most of our clients are willing to pay 10 to 20 percent more to have Tecza do the work."

CREWS CONTROL. Tecza Environmental Group typically sends out two- to six-man crews to maintain the jobs it sells. Currently, the company has one two-man crew, one six-man crew, three four- to five-man crews and six three-man crews, Reier said.

Crew size is coordinated with equipment requirements. For instance, the six-man crew will drive a truck with an extended crew cab to hold six people and a 24-foot-long trailer. This crew is typically sent to multi-family complexes and will be there the whole day.

The two-man crew, on the other hand, has a truck without a crew cab but with an 18-foot-long trailer. "They are typically sent to single-family residences and spend one hour minimum on each property," Reier explained.

Tecza's average crew, which consists of three men, is at one or two sites daily, each taking about half a day to maintain. A site that warrants a three-man crew may be a smaller multi-family complex with 20 units instead of the 350-unit properties the company also maintains.

"We've experimented with different crew sizes quite a bit and

(continued on page 69)

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(Bus leaves from lobby promptly at 6:45
a.m.; shotgun start at 8:00 a.m.)

10:00 – 6:30 p.m. Registration Desk
Attendee Networking Lounge
Grounds Tour – Catamaran Resort
Contractor Workshop
Determining The Value of Your Business
(Steve Gaines)

5:00 – 6:30 PM Keynote Address
Setting The Vision For Your Company
Featuring Joe Tye

6:30 – 8:00 PM Welcome Reception

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12

7:30 a.m. Registration Desk
7:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast
8:00 – 9:00 a.m. General Session
The Power of Networking (Jim Paluch)
9:20 – 10:40 a.m. General Session
Keys To Effective People Management
(Charles Vander Kooi)

10:40 – 11:00 a.m. Refreshment Break
11:00 – 12:30 p.m. Concurrent Educational Sessions
M1 E-Commerce: Is It For You? (Bill Cox)
M2 Hiring Tomorrow's Leaders Today (Bill Hoopes)
M3 Understanding Service Agreements (Tom Grandy)
12:30 – 1:30 p.m. Networking Lunch
1:45 – 3:00 p.m. Concurrent Educational Sessions
M4 Putting Bite In Your Marketing Strategies (Jim Campanella)
M5 Effective Crew Management Practices (Tim Lynott)
M6 A New Approach To Estimating and Bidding (Jim Huston)

3:00 – 3:30 p.m. Refreshment Break
3:30 – 5:00 p.m. Concurrent Educational Sessions
M7 Using Financial Statements For Effective Management
(Robert West, Sr.)

M8 Winning The Recruiting Game (Bill Arman)
M9 Charging What You're Worth: Tips For Effective Pricing
(Tom Grandy)

5:00 – 6:30 p.m. Networking Cocktail Reception

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13

7:30 a.m. Registration Desk
7:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast
8:00 – 9:30 a.m. General Session
How To Get Them To Buy From You (Fred Berns)

9:30 – 9:50 a.m. Refreshment Break
9:50 – 11:30 a.m. Concurrent Educational Sessions
T1 Cutting The Waste Out of Operations (Tim Lynott)
T2 Winning The Recruiting Game
(Repeat Session) (Bill Arman)
T3 Taking Advantage of Tax Planning Opportunities
(Robert West, Sr.)

11:30 – 12:30 p.m. Networking Lunch
12:45 – 2:15 p.m. Concurrent Educational Sessions
T4 Putting Bite In Your Marketing Strategies
(Repeat Session) (Jim Campanella)
T5 Customer Service Solutions (Bobby Jenkins)

2:15 – 2:30 PM Refreshment Break
2:30 – 4:00 PM General Session
The Power of Networking (Jim Paluch)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10

9:00 – 3:00 p.m.
Pre-Conference Workshop

MANAGING A MULTI-CULTURAL WORKFORCE

The topic of how to effectively manage a multi-cultural workforce is one that grows in importance and in difficulty with each passing day. Green industry professionals are expending considerable time and resources to identify solutions to make managing a multi-cultural workforce easier and more effective. The educational program at the Managing A Multi-Cultural Workforce Seminar will include such important topics as employee screening and hiring practices, the H2B program, cultural assimilation, employee motivation, compensation and career path issues, and the legal ramifications of managing a multi-cultural workforce.

Sponsored by GTO International, Marcus Drake Consultants and SILC.

(Separate admission fee required; see page 7 to register)

What They Say About School of Management

"We had a great time at School of Management and made some excellent contacts. Thanks for doing a great job on the conference."

Scott Fay
Treasure Coast Irrigation
Hobe Sound, Fla.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11

2:30 – 4:00 PM
Contractor Workshop

**DETERMINING THE VALUE
OF YOUR BUSINESS**

If you are preparing to expand your company's business operations through acquisition, thinking about selling your company or just want to better identify your company's actual value, then this session is for you. In this informative session you'll review the many steps that go into determining the value of a business. From identifying your company's financial strengths and weaknesses and developing accurate financial reports to understanding how others value your business, this session will give you the tools to obtain the information that you need.

Speaker: **Steve Gaines**, KPMG,
Baltimore, MD

5:00 – 6:30 PM
Opening Keynote Session

**SETTING THE VISION
FOR YOUR COMPANY**

Joe Tye
Paradox 21



In this dynamic general session listen as noted author and teacher Joe Tye explains how you can set a vision of success for yourself and for your company. Learn how to take your aspirations for success and turn them into reality. Packed with practical action steps for helping entrepreneurs set and achieve a vision for their company, this session will help you create positive attitudes about change and uncertainty, and cultivate customer service and team leadership within your company. After this session you'll be ready to set the vision that will help your company prosper.

Sponsored by **Husqvarna**

6:30 – 8:00 PM
Welcome Reception

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12

7:30 – 8:00 AM
Continental Breakfast
Sponsored by



8:00 – 9:00 AM
General Session

**THE POWER
OF NETWORKING**

Jim Paluch
JP Horizons



Harness the power of networking and get the most out of the 2001 School of Management! In this interactive, high-energy session you'll play an active role and experience how a team approach to learning can benefit your business. This special session will help you set your learning game plan for the remainder of the conference and will steer you towards valuable industry contacts that you'll use during and after the conference. Arrive ready to learn and ready for some surprises.

Sponsored by

9:20 – 10:40 AM
General Session

**KEYS TO EFFECTIVE
PEOPLE MANAGEMENT**

Charles Vander Kooi
Vander Kooi & Associates



One of the most used phrases in business speak today is "people management skills." What are people management skills, and how do they impact your business? Find out the answer to this question by attending this informative session lead by noted management expert Charles Vander Kooi. In this session, you'll learn the fundamental qualities of effective people management. Learn how to identify different types of workers and different types of work styles and how they mesh with your management style.

Sponsored by

10:40 – 11:00 a.m. Refreshment Break

Sponsored by

11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Concurrent Sessions

M1 E-COMMERCE: IS IT FOR YOU?

E-commerce and the potential for driving revenue and expanding customer databases are setting the business world on its ear. Is your business prepared to enter into the e-commerce world? Find out the necessary steps you'll need to take if you are to successfully design and market a web site that will steer customers and revenue to your company. This session is designed for those contractors who want to make the web and e-commerce work for their company.

Speaker: Bill Cox, Cox Consulting, Cleveland, OH

M2 HIRING TOMORROW'S LEADERS TODAY

You've identified the candidate for the opening you've had for the last six months and you are bringing him or her in for an interview. Do you know exactly what you want from the position or what you are looking for in the candidate? You may have a list of required skills, but skills alone never determine overall job performance. Learn more about discovering the important intangibles – those often overlooked qualities that can make or break a candidate.

Speaker: Bill Hoopes, Scotts Lawn Service, Marysville, OH

M3 UNDERSTANDING SERVICE AGREEMENTS

Because they build vital relationships between contractors and customers, service agreements are the basic building blocks for profitable growth in the 21st century. In this session, Tom Grandy walks contractors through designing, pricing, and marketing – the essential steps to creating an effective service agreement.

Speaker: Tom Grandy, Grandy & Associates, Owensboro, KY

12:30 – 1:30 p.m.
Networking Lunch

1:45 – 3:00 p.m.
Concurrent Sessions

M4 PUTTING BITE IN YOUR MARKETING STRATEGIES

Are you ready to grow your current business operations? Whether you're expanding the services you currently offer or looking to grow established market segments, telemarketing can be a most effective growth tool for your company. Join us for this enlightening "nuts and bolts" session from one of the industry's up and coming entrepreneurs, and learn how you can put bite into your marketing efforts and increase your market share.

Speaker: Jim Campanella, The Lawn Dawg, Nashua, NH

M5 EFFECTIVE CREW MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Leading an effective lawn or landscape crew is no easy task. Personnel are the all important link in your company's service delivery chain, and you need them to perform consistently and at peak efficiency. This session will discuss a variety of practical, field-tested strategies and systems you can implement with your service crews to improve their overall performance and your company's bottom line.

Speaker: Tim Lynott, Lynott Landscape Consulting Services, Eldersburg, MD

M6 A NEW APPROACH TO ESTIMATING AND BIDDING

Who says you can't teach an old dog a new trick? In the area of estimating and bidding contractors are always searching for new methods of improving the accuracy and competitiveness of their bids. In this session hear from consultant Jim Huston as he walks you through a different approach to bidding and estimating that will help you write bids that make better economic sense for your company and your customers.

Speaker: Jim Huston, Smith Huston, Inc., Englewood, CO

3:00 – 3:30
Refreshment Break
Sponsored By



3:30 – 5:00 PM
Concurrent Sessions

**M7 USING FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT**

Your balance sheet and your income statement can tell you a great deal about how efficiently your business is operating. This session will help you understand how you can use these basic financial statements to better manage your business. You will learn the significance of your accounts receivable turnover, debt-to-equity ratio, gross profit margin and other key financial statistics that will tell you more about your operation.

Speaker: Robert West, Sr., West & Co., Cleveland, OH

M8 WINNING THE RECRUITING GAME

In a marketplace with record low unemployment, one of the greatest keys to successful recruitment is identifying and attracting what talent exists. In this upbeat session, learn how to prevail in today's war for talent by creating and implementing a plan that focuses on "fit" rather than on availability. Don't miss this fantastic opportunity to learn the winning ways of recruiting!

Speaker: Bill Arman, Environmental Industries, Calabasas, CA

**M9 CHARGING WHAT YOU'RE WORTH:
TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE PRICING**

The phrase "Sales up, profits down," sounds all too familiar to many contractors today. This session deals with the most basic of issues – how much do we have to charge to cover our costs of doing business while still generating a profit? Determine what the *real* cost of doing business is and how to maximize and ensure profitability.

Speaker: Tom Grandy, Grandy & Associates, Owensboro, KY

5:00 – 6:30 PM
Networking Cocktail Reception

Did You Hear About School of Management?

Here is what attendees of the 2000 School of Management in Dallas had to say about their experience at the conference.

"Even in the sessions that didn't apply totally to my situation, there was always something of value I learned. I can think of at least one thing from every session. That's value!"

"I brought employees, and they were able to learn from outside sources which is important to make a business profitable and grow."

"School of Management empowered me and gave me more confidence in putting together my organization."

See what you are missing? Register today for the 2001 School of Management!

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2001 SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

REGISTER ONLINE AT
www.lawnandlandscapeconferences.com

7:30 – 8:00 a.m.
Continental Breakfast

Sponsored by **GREAT DANE**

8:00 – 9:30 a.m.
General Session

HOW TO GET THEM TO BUY FROM YOU

Fred Berns
Power Promotion



How to use personal promotion to dramatically increase your sales and profits is the theme of this powerful presentation. The program focuses on how to communicate with confidence, differentiate yourself from competitors and make a maximum impact for a minimal investment of time and money. Included are "how to" steps and insights on polishing your sales presentations, turning contacts into contracts, overcoming procrastination and price objections, closing sales, upselling, and more.

Sponsored by **eXmark**

9:30 – 9:50 a.m.

Refreshment Break

Sponsored by



9:50 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Concurrent Sessions

T1 CUTTING THE WASTE OUT OF OPERATIONS

From route scheduling and sales follow-up to equipment and product inventory, keeping tabs on the vital elements of your company's day-to-day operations is essential to building a well-run and profitable organization. Learn how to properly analyze your company's operational structure and spot areas where waste and inefficiency commonly occur.

Speaker: **Tim Lynott**, Lynott Landscape Consulting Services, Eldersburg, MD

T2 WINNING THE RECRUITING GAME (RS)

For session description see Session M8.

T3 TAKING ADVANTAGE OF TAX PLANNING OPPORTUNITIES

The opportunity to take advantage of tax savings starts with planning and selecting the best form of organization for your business and, deciding how to withdraw your company's earnings. This session will explain in simple terms how you might reduce payroll and income taxes with timely and continual planning, and potentially save thousands of dollars in payroll tax expenses.

11:30 – 12:30 p.m.
Networking Lunch

Sponsored by



12:45 – 2:15 p.m.
Concurrent Sessions

T4 PUTTING BITE IN YOUR MARKETING STRATEGIES (RS)

For session description see Session M4.

T5 CUSTOMER SERVICE SOLUTIONS

In this session hear from a veteran of the service industry who has turned his company into a perennial customer service champion who will share his company's recipe for making customer service number one with your employees.

Speaker: **Bobby Jenkins**, ABC Pest & Lawn Care, Austin, TX

2:15 – 2:30
Refreshment Break

2:30 – 4:00 PM
Closing General Session

THE POWER OF NETWORKING

Jim Paluch, JP Horizons

End the 2001 School of Management on a high note and identify how the power of networking benefited you throughout the conference. In this session you'll hear fellow attendees share insights and predict how they will implement the ideas and strategies they learned at the School of Management. Bring your ideas and your notebook as you hear from some of the best business experts in the industry – your fellow contractors.

Sponsored by

shindaiwa

2001 SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT REGISTRATION AND TRAVEL INFORMATION

Lawn & Landscape Tournament of Champions Golf Outing

A Fundraiser for the Evergreen Foundation

Carmel Mountain Ranch Golf Club

Sunday, February 11

6:45 a.m.

Spend a morning testing your golf skills at the 3rd Annual Lawn & Landscape Tournament of Champions Golf Outing. Cost for the outing is \$100 and includes greens fees, cart rental, practice balls, lunch, prizes and transportation to and from the course. A portion of the registration fee will be donated to the Evergreen Foundation, a green industry non-profit organization devoted to promoting the development of public green space. **Advance registration and payment is required.** Registration deadline is **February 3, 2001.**

Sponsored by **WOODS**

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

Contractor Registration (Includes all educational sessions, conference materials, receptions, lunches, breakfasts, refreshment breaks)	\$245 per person
Contractor Group Registration (Three or more from the same company)	\$195 per person
Contractor One Day Registration	\$125 per person
Pre-Conference Multi-Cultural Workshop (Saturday, February 10, 2001)	\$95 per person
Supplier Non-Sponsor Registration	\$495

Special Events

Tournament of Champions Golf Outing Fundraiser for the Evergreen Foundation Sunday, February 11 (Includes greens fees, cart, lunch, prizes and transportation)	\$100 per person
---	------------------

CANCELLATION/SUBSTITUTION/REFUND POLICY

All cancellations must be made in writing. A full refund will be accepted if received before **February 2, 2001.** No refunds will be issued after February 2, 2001. Advancement payment is **required** for the golf tournament and no cancellations after February 7, 2001. *No on-site refunds.* Attendees can notify *Lawn & Landscape* at any time that another individual will attend the conference or social events in their place.

CONFIRMATIONS

All registrations postmarked by February 2, 2001 will be acknowledged by mail. Registrations received after that date should be picked up at the School of Management Registration Desk at the Catamaran Resort starting Sunday, February 11, 2001 at 10:00 a.m.

HOTEL INFORMATION

A block of rooms has been reserved for School of Management attendees at the Catamaran Resort. Located on scenic Mission Bay, the Catamaran Resort is the ideal location for your trip to sunny Southern California. Attendees should make their reservations directly with the hotel on or before **January 17, 2001** to receive the special conference room rate of **\$120** per night (single/double). Please ask for the School of Management Conference rate. For reservations call the Catamaran Resort at **800/422-8386** or **858/488-1081.**

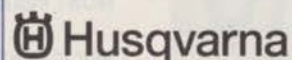
DISCOUNT TRAVEL INFORMATION

School of Management has arranged for special discount airfares to San Diego for the School of Management. To take advantage of the discount rates, please contact AAA Business Travel at 800/999-0038 between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM Eastern.

2001 SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT SPONSOR PARTNERS



CENTURY RAIN AID



Registration Form



February 11-13, 2001
 Catamaran Resort • San Diego, California

PHONE: Call 800/456-0707 and ask to register for the School of Management (weekdays 9 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. EST)
MAIL: Conference Registration, School of Management, 4012 Bridge Ave., Cleveland, OH 44113
FAX: Complete form and fax, with credit card information, to 216/961-0364 (24 hours)
ON THE WEB: Register on-line at www.lawnandlandscapeconferences.com
 (Please print or type. Form may be photocopied for additional registrants; one form per person)

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 Title _____
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Please Note: Registrations **will not** be processed until payment information is received. All faxed and phone registrations **MUST** include credit card information. There will be a \$25 fee for returned checks.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Conference Registration	Number	Total
Contractor Registration	\$245	=
Contractor Group Registration (3 or more same company)	\$195	=
Contractor One-Day Registration (Monday or Tuesday only)	\$125	=
Pre-Conference Workshop: Managing A Multi-Cultural Workforce (Sat. February 10, 2001)	\$95	=
Supplier Non-Sponsor Registration	\$495	=
Special Events		
Golf Outing	\$100	=
Fundraiser for the Evergreen Foundation		
TOTAL		= <input type="text"/>

(There is no advance registration for individual educational sessions. Seating for all sessions is on a first come basis. Lawn & Landscape reserves the right to limit the number of attendees per session.)

For Office Use Only
 Date Received _____ Registration # _____
 Payment Received _____ Type _____
 Amount _____ I _____ G _____

**SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
 REGISTRATION CHECK LIST**

- Completed Registration Form
- Included Method of Payment
- Made Hotel Reservation at the Catamaran Resort
- Called for Discount Travel Information
- Told a Friend To Register For School of Management



(continued from page 60)

have found that for our market and our customers, we have to have varied crew sizes," Reier explained. "When you've got big trucks and little trucks and crews to match, scheduling then becomes the key to your productivity."

To ensure that this system is effective, Reier pairs the same foremen with the same account managers daily. Maintenance accounts are divided into three regions: north, central and south. All the jobs in the northern region are given to one account manager and four or five crews. "This cuts down on travel costs and increases productivity," Reier remarked. "This way the account manager only has to keep constant contact with four or five foremen as opposed to 14 or 15 foremen over the course of all of his jobs that day or week, improving communication." ■

The author is Managing Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

Tecza Environmental Group's monthly budgeting review is its biggest asset as far as managing costs is concerned.

To track costs correctly, three different areas are monitored monthly: direct costs (labor, materials, equipment), indirect costs (gas and oil, replacement materials, supervisors' salaries) and administrative costs (advertising, promotions, travel, uniforms and upper management salaries). Indirect costs and administrative costs are considered overhead.

"Based upon history and net profit projections, we set percentages of revenue we expect to spend for each cost monthly and try to keep spending within those numbers during the course of a season," explained Ed Reier, Tecza's vice president of maintenance. "If we exceed these budgeted numbers, we reduce spending to keep the percentages in line, which ensures the net profit projection. We rarely cut employees to make this work - we cut back spending in other ways instead."

On the occasion that expenses are lower than planned one month, Reier said the company practices caution. "We have to be careful that we don't go out and buy something we didn't plan on buying because we didn't spend what was budgeted one month," Reier said. "What was spent toward the end of the month may show up in the next month's numbers."

The company also prints reports monthly showing all expense accounts and shares these numbers with employees. "If you're a manager trying to control spending on your own and you don't share the numbers with your team, you can't affect change," Reier said. - **Nicole Wisniewski**

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Quality Control TECZA ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

by Nicole Wisniewski

Tecza Environmental Group's marketing efforts are specifically directed toward quality-conscious clients.

A company's first impression can be its only chance in front of a potential client.

That's the reason Tecza Environmental Group's marketing plan communicates a top-notch first impression to potential clients and a repetitive, consistent message of quality to current clients, explained Ed Reier, who handles all the marketing, advertising and promotions for the Elgin, Ill.-based company, in addition to serving as vice president of maintenance.

"If included with a bid or maintenance proposal, a correctly represented brochure, for example, says so much about a company and can answer many client questions," Reier said, emphasizing that a brochure isn't the only way to make a good first impression. "Marketing is everybody's job in the company. It's the foreman's job when he smiles as he's going by the client's window with a mower or the laborer's job when he puts on a clean uniform in the morning. It's the mechanic's job when he takes pride in that mower or tractor or the receptionist's job when she answers the phone."

Conveying this message to the entire company is one marketing scheme that takes little to no money to implement – just time to communicate, in addition to hiring the right people, Reier said. This, in addition to spending 1 percent of the company's annual revenue – approximately \$40,000 – on targeted marketing in the right place at the right time consistently gets the Tecza Environmental Group message out to the right customers.

(continued on page 72)

On TARGET

A new, colorful logo accompanied Tecza Environmental Group's reorganization and name change in 1994. Photo: Dan DalSanto, Sunrise Photography



Hey, Weeds.

At home or at play...
There's no place for you to hide.

The Corsair logo features the word "CORSAIR" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. To the left of the text are three curved, overlapping lines in shades of blue and yellow, suggesting motion or a stylized 'C'. The entire logo is enclosed within a thin, light-colored circular border.

As a professional turfgrass manager, the more successful weed control options for problem weeds you have the better off you are. Riverdale offers two products, **Manor™** and **Corsair™**, that give you excellent selective weed control for both warm and cool season turf applications.

Manor

Manor (metsulfuron methyl), a postemergent herbicide, is specifically formulated to be 100 times more active than conventional herbicides and offers excellent selective control for a wide variety of grassy and broadleaf weeds, including clover, dollarweed and creeping beggarweed. Manor selectively removes bahiagrass from St. Augustine and Bermuda grasses. It can be tank mixed with other fungicides and insecticides. Other herbicides can also be added to broaden your weed control options. Manor is easy on your turf, causing little or no injury during the transitional times such as early spring and the late season.

Corsair

Corsair (chlorsulfuron), also a postemergent treatment, offers excellent control of both grassy and broadleaf weeds, including Virginia buttonweed, annual ryegrass and smutgrass. It selectively eliminates clump grasses like tall fescue from desirable turfgrasses.

Corsair's weed control spectrum makes it an excellent tool for winter weed control problems and during the transitional season times.

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USE READER SERVICE #116

Quality Control

(continued from page 70)

In 1994, Tecza Brothers Inc. and Adam Tecza & Sons merged to form Tecza Environmental Group.

A new logo had to be created to accompany the new name and marketing plan. To kick off the redesign, Ed Reier, Tecza's vice president of maintenance, asked two marketing companies to submit logo designs. After spending \$700 to \$900, Reier decided not to use any of the suggested logos.

Then Reier asked the marketing firm that was creating Tecza's new brochures to "spruce up the logo a little bit." The brochure designer, along with the help of company President Ted Tecza, who developed the color scheme, came up with the new logo.

"I wanted to pick a color that spoke to the industry," Ted said. "Green certainly does, but I modified to a teal because there's a lot of green trucks out there and teal gives us a unique color that is still within that green of the industry. A splash of magenta was then added to be eye catching."

The company painted its 35 trucks teal, adding the new logo. "Today, I still run into people who say they see our

trucks everywhere," Reier pointed out. "We don't have that many trucks, yet these people obviously remember them because the color is distinctive."

While the new colors are unique, one element of consistency remains in the circle and branch logo design, originally drawn by Tecza after he graduated from college, and represents the company's family business aspect.

"The three flowers facing you represent me and my brothers working together in the business," Tecza described. "The two flowers turned to the side represent my mother and father, and the buds on the branches are our children at that time. We've kept this in our logo throughout the years because it's an emotional, family-type thing. It obviously no longer applies with one brother having passed away 10 years ago and the other owning a separate business, and many people don't even know what it means, but it's part of the roots of the company and that's why we continue to use it." — Nicole Wisniewski



(continued on page 74)

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-Tim Clark, Executive Lawn & Landscape

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Quality Control

(continued from page 72)

ONE COMPANY, ONE MESSAGE.

What is today Tecza Environmental Group used to be two separate organizations under two separate names; Tecza Brothers Inc. was the maintenance business and Adam Tecza & Sons was the design/build business.

The logo for Tecza Brothers was red and canary yellow, Reier described. Adam Tecza

& Sons' logo was similar but had a blue background. "I simply took a typical red truck that you could buy in stock color and threw on a little canary yellow accent, but it was something non-descript," explained company President Ted Tecza.

In 1994, Ted combined these two companies under one name – Tecza Environmental

Group – to represent its full-service aspect and clear up client confusion about the relationship between the two companies. Today, with a new, bright teal and magenta logo, the company markets itself as one organization to all its current and potential customers (see sidebar on page 72). "We market this way because we feel every maintenance customer is also an installation customer and vice versa," Reier explained.

Reier started handling marketing early in his 13-year career with the company. As he moved from landscape maintenance sales and customer service to sales management, Reier seemed the obvious candidate for maintenance advertising and promotion manager. When the supervisor handling the same for the design/build division left the company, Reier took over that responsibility.

THE RIGHT PARTNERSHIPS. As Reier climbed up the company ladder, marketing responsibilities, particularly the busy work of coming up with stories for the quarterly newsletter and writing press releases, became too much work for one person to handle. Four years ago, Reier hired a marketing consultant to handle these details. The consultant's monthly fee, which is typically between \$700 and \$1,000, not including additional photography or advertising design work, is extracted from the company's marketing budget.

Reier meets with the consultant once or twice monthly to discuss upcoming plans and make marketing decisions. For example, every month the consultant writes two company press releases (announcing awards Tecza won, changes in the organization, etc.) and sends them to the relevant media.

The marketing consultant also handles all of the company award entries, which includes managing the project photography and writing a description of the landscapes being entered.

In addition to hiring this consultant, Reier employed an Ohio-based communications firm five years ago to take over the design and some of the writing for Tecza's quarterly newsletter, which the company has been distributing to its clients for 10 years.

"We used to do the interviews and photography ourselves – it was very time consuming," Reier said.

In this new agreement, Reier signed up
(continued on page 76)

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USE READER SERVICE #56

Quality Control

(continued from page 74)

for the semi-custom newsletter, which means the firm writes and produces the four-page, black, white and one other color (typically green) newsletter, and sends a version of it to Reier for approval before it's published. "We can use the articles they wrote or we can change them to fit what we have going on that season," Reier explained. "The changes are included in the newsletter cost, but you get a credit back if you keep one page as is."

While the relationship seems more expensive than Tecza's previous venture, Reier said it actually saves 40 percent in newsletter costs. His only concern was the number of other Chicago-based landscape contractors who were using the same company. "I didn't want a situation where I'm sending the Tecza newsletter to building managers who receive the same exact newsletter with the same exact articles from my competitor," Reier said. "The communications firm didn't assure me this situation would never happen, but they also said this was all the more reason to put some personality into each issue."

ADVERTISING THAT WORKS. The little advertising that Tecza Environmental Group places is direct and specific to its client niche.

For instance, a substantial portion of Tecza's maintenance accounts are multi-family structures or residential management companies, so the company places ads in *Condo Lifestyles* magazine, which is endorsed by the Illinois chapter of the Community Associations Institute, and of which Tecza is an associate member. "Many of our type of clients receive a copy of this magazine, so we know our ads are seen by the right people," Reier said.

Another example is the *Business Connector*, which is distributed to Chicago businesses. "This also creates a camaraderie with the other 25 to 30 businesses that advertise in the periodical," Reier said. "We'll call them up and say we saw them in the *Business Connector* and find out if there's any business we can do for each other."

Tecza spends little money on Yellow Page advertisements because they generate too many calls from the wrong clients.

SHOW TIME. To get a quality message out to the right clients, Tecza Environmental Group also purchases booths at three annual trade shows, one of which is the Business

(continued on page 78)



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Quality Control

(continued from page 76)

Exchange Expo that helps Tecza increase its commercial maintenance work.

To brighten up the show floor, Tecza decorates its booth with a truckload of hyacinth, tulip and daffodil bulbs. Having a distinct booth design enables the company to convey a message of quality service. "We probably see many of the same clients every year, but that's repetition and consistency," Reier said. "These people know we're there with a quality booth, and that says something about the services we provide."

"In raw costs, the booth isn't that much, but it takes a lot of time and effort," Reier continued. "The attendees see a plant that costs them \$10 at the store and we have 50 of them there to give away, but it may have only cost us \$150 for the whole display. It's not a lot of money, but it's a little extra effort to target the right clients." **LL**

The author is Managing Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

Every two years in June, Tecza Environmental Group asks nearly 200 clients for feedback on service highs and lows with a one-page survey.

Written in a rating format, the survey asks clients various questions. Last year, the company scored an average customer service rating of 7.7 on a scale from one to 10, said Ed Reier, Tecza's vice president of maintenance, adding that the company average a return rate of 30 percent. "The ratings help us track our service," he explained. "If our rating drops 2 percent, we have the ability to find out why so we can fix the problem and retain quality service."

Tecza Environmental Group also tracks attrition on a regular basis, which has averaged 13 to 15 percent annually for the past five years. "Not only do we find out why someone left us, but we ask them what we could have done differently to keep the account," Reier said. "I'd love to say change in ownership or someone moving or dying is the No. 1 reason we lose clients, but many times clients say something like the foremen on their properties didn't pay attention to job details like they used to."

The results of the client survey are reviewed during the company's strategic planning process. "We scrutinize what happened this year, what we should do differently and how we should control employment or handle a foreman who might be performing at a lower level than he should be," Reier explained.

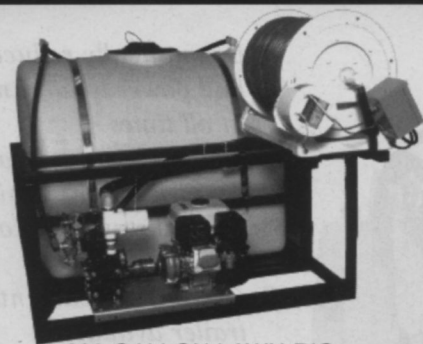
This information also helps Reier explain to employees how "they should perform within an acceptable range of budgeted job hours, yet still have quality and customer service in mind," he said, pointing out that the company budgets a job's hours for the entire year broken down by tasks, such as mowing and pruning. "The employees develop an understanding. They see hours budgeted by task, and in mid-summer when hours add up in a certain area, they know they have to start keeping them down so hours are left for fall clean-up. The employees know they have flexibility on how they work with these hours because we teach them the job bidding process so they can understand it and get a chance to actually think on the job." — Nicole Wisniewski

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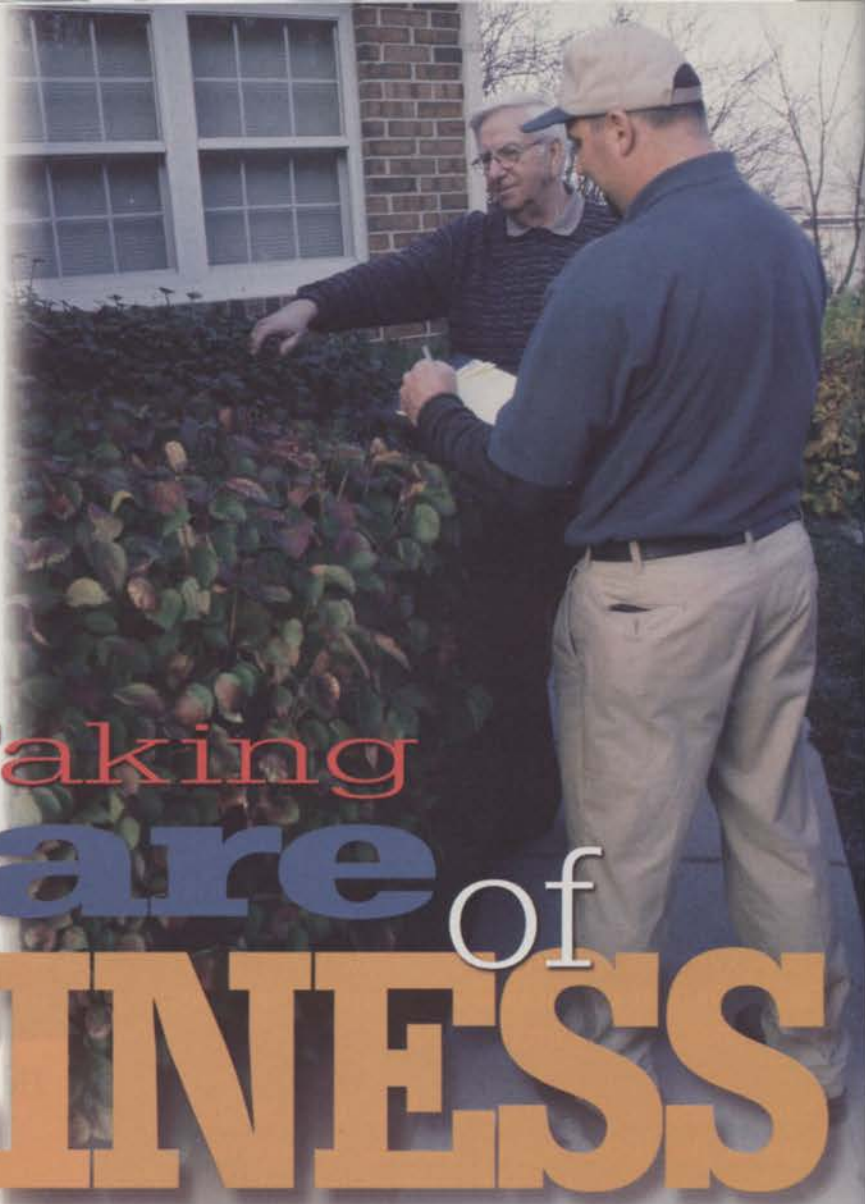
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Quality Control TECZA ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

by Nicole Wisniewski



Taking Care of BUSINESS

To grow the business, Tecza Environmental Group managers believe they must also provide each employee with a chance to grow.

Ted Tecza admits there was a time when he wasn't a very good listener.

"I had some good people working for me at one time who I just wouldn't listen to," explained Ted, president of Tecza Environmental Group, Elgin, Ill. "For many years, I was the hard-driving entrepreneur who didn't trust anybody and did all the work myself."

Due to Ted's controlling approach, the company struggled to retain employees and lost some of them to other Chicago-area landscape contractors. "Nobody wants to jump on board with a person like that," he said. "I limited my own potential."

As he grew into his position as the second-generation owner of the family business, Ted realized that the same ego providing creative energy to drive the company was the same ego he had to harness in order to keep the company moving. "Don't misunderstand me - it's the ego that gets you going," Ted said. "And I'm not saying that today I still don't have that ego - just the emphasis and drive of it have been changed and redirected."

Ted now believes that company growth cannot happen without employee growth. "It wasn't until I started to grow and change some of my philosophies

(continued on page 84)

Kevin Krutwig, one of Tecza's account managers, talks with a client (above). Throughout the year, Tecza managers encourage employees to share their ideas about all areas of business operation, including customer service. Photo: Dan DalSanto, Sunrise Photography

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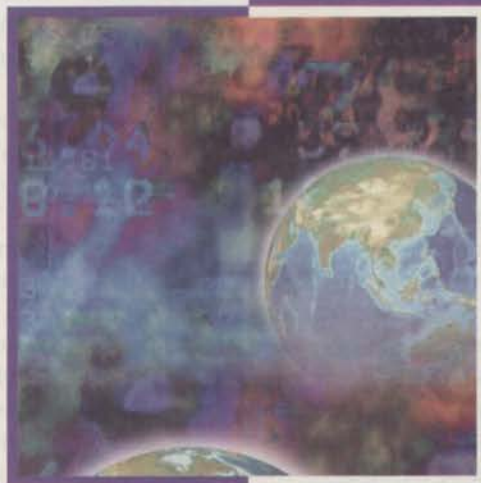
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PERSONALIZATION

Quality Control

(continued from page 80)

and viewpoints that the company could really grow. Today, not only do my people trust me, but I trust them."

SHARED VISION. For a company to grow and succeed, employees must be able to share opinions and work in a team environment, Ted pointed out. In addition, employees and managers need to share the company vision. "Without that shared vision, you're not all pulling in the same direction," he said.

To create this environment and communicate this vision at Tecza Environmental Group, the company managers initiated an involved planning process six years ago. The strategic plan involves four steps: departmental planning, strategic planning, operational planning and budgeting.

During departmental planning, each department supervisor meets with his or her employees to review department procedures. They tackle issues, including customer service, equipment, training and safety.

During the strategic planning session in December, the management team reviews the prior year's plan and evaluates its effectiveness, looking over volume growth, profit, the company mission, organization and structure, and the effects of the economy as they prepare next year's plan. Notes are prepared for the company-wide operational planning meeting in January, which is held off-site for two or three days and incorporates team building, brainstorming and training.

Throughout operational planning, all employees can share their ideas. As different strategies are discussed, the necessary steps to accomplish these tasks are identified. Then a person and date is assigned to each strategy and progress is tracked throughout the year.

The final budgeting process gives managers a chance to address income and expenses for the creation of an annual budget.

WALKING THE TALK. Though strategic planning happens only once a year, Tecza Environmental Group communicates its vision and encourages employees to share their ideas daily. This happens by tracking the progress of the strategies assigned to employees during planning and as employees go about their daily schedules.

"On a daily basis, we're talking about what we're doing, how we're doing it and how we can do it better," Ted said. "Our

Instead of several separate bonus programs for each division or employee, Tecza Environmental Group, Elgin, Ill., utilizes an overall master bonus to foster a team approach, said President Ted Tecza.

The bonuses are derived from 10 percent of the company profits. Then an employee's salary is multiplied by his or her company tenure, resulting in a number of points. (The company limits the tenure number to 10 years).

By adding the bonus points and dividing them into 10 percent of the company profit, a dollar value is established for each bonus point. Bonuses are determined by each employee's total points, based on the established point dollar value. For example, if each point is 1 cent, then 50,000 points is \$500 and 300,000 points is \$3,000. If employee X has a \$30,000 salary and has been with the company 10 years, then he or she has a total of 300,000 points and would receive a \$3,000 bonus.

"They know their bonus is coming long before it does, and it's rare that they are surprised about getting a bonus or not getting one," Tecza said. "Granted, there might be some laborer who's not listening or doesn't want to understand the information being shared throughout the year, but that's rare because we communicate this bonus regularly as it acts as a good employee retention tool." — Nicole Wisniewski

An Employee Retention Tool

strategic planning process begins to express our shared vision. But our vision is not cast in concrete, it is meant to be fluid and malleable to the whims and vagrancies of the market, and the changing needs of the internal customer—our employees—as well as the external customer.

"Along the way, we can't be afraid to say, 'Hey, maybe this isn't quite where we want to be. Maybe we need to redirect and go in a different direction,'" Ted continued. "Changing a little bit doesn't mean failure or that you're not as adept in business or don't have the business acumen you once had. It simply means you are open to making adjustments so that everybody is with you."

While some parts of the company vision change continuously, others remain consistent, such as job quality. Making sure quality is on employees' minds daily is challenging.

"When you talk about quality, you can't say you want to do a quality job and then tell the construction manager to go out and buy the cheapest trees he can find," Ted explained. "You can't tell the maintenance guys that the site must look pristine when they leave, but then tell them they have half the time originally budgeted to complete the job. Employees won't believe you when you say you want quality if your actions speak otherwise."

Tecza managers not only communicate this message of quality service to employees, they act on it. One way they do this is by taking care of their safety. Not only does the company wash its trucks every week and touch up paint jobs when needed to give employees pride in

the vehicles they drive, but it also constantly buys new trucks to replace the old ones.

"This is a commitment to our future," Ted remarked. "When we talk in our strategic planning about where we want to be in three years, a definite feeling of long-term stability is created. Employees see us taking our profit and reinvesting it back into the company."

"We have people that come to us and want to work here because they see we're in this for the long haul and we're not just taking the money and running," he continued. "So they can think in terms of not just having a job for this year and next year, but for 10 years."

To show employees they are reinvesting in their future, the Tecza management team has to be confident in profit and make sure various parts of profit are earmarked for certain reinvestments, such as new equipment and employee training.

The bottom line is something the Tecza management team watches very closely. During monthly financial reviews, the managers scrutinize month-end financial statements for the company as a whole and for each department, including revenue, expenses and net profit, Reier said.

"Because we watch the bottom line so closely, adjustments can be made on spending or in other areas 12 times a year," Reier explained. "For example, if we had to buy a piece of equipment that was unexpected, yet needed, we could plan to hold off on spending in that area for the next month or for the

(continued on page 86)

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Quality Control

(continued from page 84)

rest of the year to make up that cost. Or, if we see that we're getting 15 percent less work than we planned, we could spend less on materials, not hire the additional employees we budgeted for or wait one more year to trade in a truck to keep expenses down."

The company needs to carefully protect this bottom line because the employees' bonuses rely on it (see sidebar on page 84). "We have a strict budget and we report the budget figures to everyone monthly," Ted pointed out. "Each division is accountable for its own growth, and the master budget is broken down into division budgets so that employees can see how each division is doing. Employees can see how profits add up on a monthly basis this way. We then have a strategic update in August during the operating season. Part of that is a financial report I give right down to the bottom line."

HABLAS INGLES? Tecza Environmental Group employs a predominantly-Hispanic

workforce – approximately 98 or 99 percent, which is typical of companies in Chicago.

Managing this high level of Hispanic workers is challenging. One recurring complaint from clients is lack of communication with the employees who are on their sites, Reier pointed out. Consequently, the company recently started spending \$15,000 to \$25,000 annually on English and Spanish training, Reier said. Another \$10,000 is spent annually on additional training, such as industry seminars, job policies and procedures.

In past years, the company paid for its Hispanic employees to take English classes, Reier said. To encourage more employees to learn English, the company brings a teacher into the office to teach English classes to the Hispanic workforce and Spanish classes to the English workforce.

"The teacher spends half the day with each group in a classroom setting with flashcards and games," Reier said. "We want to have all of our foremen speak English.

"At our company, once Hispanic employees learn English, they become very valuable," Reier continued. "We need some people on site who can knock on the client's door and say, 'I'm here. Is there anything special you need me to do?' Finding and training the right people for this is our biggest challenge for the next couple of years. Rarely can we find someone who already has been trained by another company to speak English and is familiar with the whole process of how we work. So we are bringing them in as laborers and starting the training now that needs to happen to grow these people. We are probably three years out from where we want to be with this process."

The value of English-speaking foremen is driving the company to require this along with other skills for its Level One foreman, which is one of the classifications for maintenance foremen, noted Reier. "These levels are one, two, three and apprentice and hav-

(continued on page 105)

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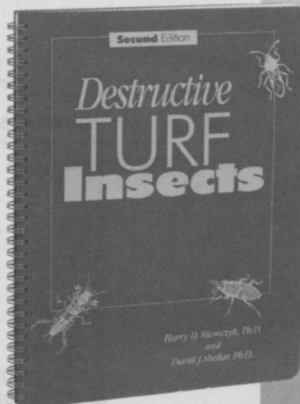
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by Kristen Hampshire

These business forms take the puzzle out of paperwork and provide contractors with samples to structure success.

Three Parts to a **Business Plan**

Building a landscape company that can stand up in today's competitive climate requires establishing a stable foundation and sturdy tiers within the operation – a solid infrastructure. A sound set of systems differentiates a business that runs without kinks from one that runs rampant.

However, details such as labor costs, property maintenance and employee assessments involve a few guidelines and some advanced planning. Creating a budget, alone, overwhelms some business owners.

The charts in this section of the Business Management Resource Guide offer a blueprint to alleviate some of this confusion. Paperwork can provide the checks and balances needed to ensure efficient operation, from balancing the books to consulting with customers. Adapt these models to your company framework, organize them to fit your structure or use them as a springboard for business brainstorming.

Either way, these tools will sharpen your business edge.

BUSINESS PLAN. Launching a successful business requires constructing a marketing plan that pinpoints goals, targets customers and identifies capital and financial needs. What kind of busi-

CONCEPT

- What business are you in?
- Why is it the right business for you to be in?
- What would you like your business to be famous for?
- What do you sell?
- Why will people buy from you?
- Who are your competitors?
- How can you stand out from the crowd?

CUSTOMERS

- Who are (and will be) your customers?
- What benefits do you (can you) provide them?
- How many of them are there?
- How many customers do you need?
- What are their buying patterns?
- Where do they currently buy?
- How will they know about you?

CAPITAL (OR CASH)

- How much capital do you need?
- How can you maintain cash flow and liquidity?
- How much working capital do you need?
- What kind of budgets should you follow?
- How can you control your finances?
- How much growth can you afford?

Pricing for the Green Industry

Charting PROGRESS

Landscape Maintenance Analysis Short Form

Date _____

Travel Time From _____ To _____

Travel Minutes _____ Travel Miles _____

Project _____ Location _____

Owner _____ Project manager _____

Building Type _____ Building Size _____

QUALITY: Economy: Average: Custom: Luxury:

Outdoor surface parking: _____ No. of parking spaces req.: _____

Lawnarea: S.F. _____

Landscape planning area: _____

Other area: _____

ZONING: Residential: Commercial: Industrial: None: Other:

Zoning Requirements _____

General Inspection	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Overall appearance				
Maintainability				
Repairs/replacements				
Code compliance				
Roads, Walks and Parking Lots				
Surface conditions				
Curbing				
Drainage and Erosion Controls				
Surface drainage				
Manholes, catch basins				
Retention, detention				
Drains				
Lawns				
Level				
Moderate slope				
Steep slope				
Plant beds				
Plant beds				
Flower beds				
Other plantings				
Trees				
Waste disposal				

Recording
details
provides
contractors
with useful
work
histories to
file for
future use.

RSMeans Landscape Estimating Methods

Business Management

ness do you want to run and who will use your services? A business plan helps owners define their company agenda and mold a strategy based on their mission statement. These Three Parts to the Business Plan outlined in ALCA's *Pricing for the Green Industry*, help form a business foundation from which contractors can begin to build and grow their companies.

HITTING THE BOOKS. Business owners want the year's end to find them wading in a profit pool, but the bottom line won't show growth unless the numbers in between balance. Devising an effective budget is crucial to a company's success.

This chart from *Pricing for the Green Industry* outlines a five-step budgeting process that businesses can incorporate to cultivate a healthy revenue. By forecasting spending habits, figuring overhead costs and describing revenue goals, business owners can plan their financial moves.

Five Step Budgeting Process

- 1. Determine the minimum amount of return on investment**
 - Profit necessary to retire debt
 - Profit necessary to replace equipment
 - Profit necessary for growth
 - Profit necessary to warrant the risk of business
 - Profit necessary to pay a fair share of taxes
- 2. Budget overhead using the zero-based concept**
 - Document planned expenditures
 - Involve employees
 - Establish a "watchdog" over each account
- 3. Determine your backlog by type of business**
 - Establish the backlog by revenue and cost categories
 - Determine the gross margin in your backlog
- 4. Determine new sales goals and convert those to earned revenue goals**
 - Establish the amount of required work to be sold and installed to cover planned overhead and profit requirements
 - Test these goals against your capacity to perform
- 5. Prepare a monthly income statement**
 - Seasonalize your budget by month so that you can track your activity regularly

THE PROPERTY PAST. Beyond budget bookkeeping lies a different, yet equally necessary, recording responsibility: job site maintenance. Observing, tracking and noting the condition of properties allows contractors to assess whether or not a job requires maintenance attention.

This Landscape Maintenance Analysis Short Form from *RSMeans Landscape Estimating Methods* (located on page 88) divides service components into sections: general inspection; roads, walks and parking lots; drainage and erosion controls; lawns; plant beds; trees and waste disposal. Contractors also can record the travel time and distance to the property and the quality of the project.

SIGN ON THE LINE. Contracts are an indispensable step in any business agreement. To ensure that contractors and customers understand job expectations, business owners should draw up a binding document for each account. Contracts serve as an

Pricing for the Green Industry

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Business Management

insurance policy in a sense, protecting companies from job-related communication blunders. If the client is aware of the job's requirements and fees in advance, there is little room for argument after completion.

This example contract (at left) from Landscape Images Ltd., Jefferson, La., also includes terms and conditions, such as insurance,

changes, scheduling and a warranty, so customers gain a clear understanding of the company's policies.

KNOCKING AROUND NUMBERS. Before signing the contract, most customers request a job estimate to approximate project cost. Estimates also are a comparison shop-

Contract Form

DATE: _____

OWNER: _____

ADDRESS: _____

AGREEMENT made on the day of _____ in the year _____

BETWEEN owner and Landscape Architect, Landscape Images, LTD.

LANDSCAPE IMAGES, LTD. Proposes to furnish all material and perform all labor necessary to complete the following work: _____

CONTRACT AMOUNT: The Owner hereby agrees to pay the total sum of \$ _____

PAYMENT SCHEDULE:

Down payment of \$ _____

Progress payment of \$ _____

Final payment of \$ _____

CONDITIONS OF PAYMENT:

Is agreed that the down payment is to be made before commencement of work. It is agreed that payments are DUE upon receipt of invoice. Final payment is due 5 days from date of completion of work. Any account not paid within 10 days from date of invoice will be deemed delinquent and shall be assessed a finance charge of 1.5% per month for each month it is delinquent.

CONTRACT AGREEMENT MADE BETWEEN THE FOLLOWING:

Landscape Images, Ltd.

The Owner/ Agent

Signature _____

Date _____

Signature _____

Landscape Images, Ltd., Jefferson, La.

Landscape Installation Estimate Sheet

Job Name: _____
Date: _____

MATERIAL

Plants _____
Hardscape _____
Non Taxable _____
Total Material _____ %

LABOR AND BURDEN

Direct Labor Hours _____
Load & Travel Hours _____
Total Hours @ \$ _____

TRUCKING LABOR AND BURDEN

Trucking Hours _____
Trucking Hours @ _____

Total Labor & Trucking _____ %

OTHER DIRECT COSTS

Subcontractors _____
Disposal _____
Other Direct Cost _____
Total Other Direct Cost _____ %

OVERHEAD CALCULATIONS

Material @ _____
Labor @ _____
Other @ _____
Total Overhead _____ %

Equipment _____ %
Break-even Price _____ %
Profit Applied Multiply by _____ %
Sub Total _____ %
Sales Tax _____ %
Selling Price _____ %

Durham Hill Nursery, Muskego, Wis.

ping tool for clients who gather several estimates in search of the lowest bid. Whether your goal is to cost-cut competitors or earn fair compensation for a job, knowing how much time, equipment and material a project requires can save you from poor-planning woes. Durham Hill Nursery, Muskego, Wis.,

devised a Landscape Installation Estimate Sheet that covers materials, labor, transportation and overhead.

CLIENT CHRONICLE. Customers can act as a success barometer for landscape companies. Satisfied clients result in high readings,

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USE READER SERVICE #66

(continued from page 91)

showering a business with more accounts. Contractors will better serve their customers if they know a little about their clients' history – more than vital statistics like name, address and phone number. Retaining forms that list the customers' previous services not only provides technicians background before going on the job, but also indicates po-

tential add-on services to suit the property.

This Customer Information Form from N.D. Landscaping, Inc., Topsfield, Mass., includes a comprehensive list of construction and maintenance services.

GET IT ON PAPER. What proves to be a useful organizational system for one con-

tractor might be useless for another. However, no matter a company's size or service niche, maintaining accurate records provides business background information that contractors can later use as a reference. **LL**

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

Customer Information Form

Scheduled Appointment Information Day _____ Date _____ Time _____
Name _____
Address _____

CALL SOURCE: Advertisement: Welcome Wagon New Pros Display CI Newcomers Other
Referred by: _____ Saw Vehicle Yellow Pages Referral

New Customer Existing Customer Add to Customer Information Change to Customer Information
 Mr. & Mrs. Dr. & Mrs. Mr. (only) Mrs. (only) Ms. Other

Customer Name: _____
Address: _____
Billing Address: _____
Telephone: Home Phone Number _____ Business Phone Number _____
Fax Number _____ Pager Number _____
Other _____

TYPE OF CLIENT: Residential Construction Maintenance Snow Commercial Other

TYPES OF SERVICES WHICH ARE/MAY BE OFFERED (Check only those that apply)

Construction/Contracting Services

- Landscape Design
- Brick Work Bluestone
- Granite Work
- Large Stone Retainers
- Large Stone Steps
- Bluestone Stepping Stone Path
- Natural Flat Stepping Stones
- Cobblestone Edging
- Peastone Walk with Cobbleston/Ryerson

- Steel Edging
- Installation of Ornamental Plant Materials
- Installation of Chipping Mulch/Pine Mulch
- General Grading/Lawn Installation/Drainage Work
- Renovation of Existing Lawn Areas
- Interlocking Wall
- Stone Wall
- Wood & Chain Link Fencing
- Drive Stake Fencing

- Silt Fence & Hay Bail Installation
- Field Grass/Wild Flower Installation
- Decks
- Pools
- Driveway
- Stone Venner
- Nightscaping
- Tree Work
- Timber Construction
- Irrigation Systems
- Water Feature
- Other

Maintenance Services

- Lawn Maintenance
- Lawn & Plant Pesticide Applications
- Spring/Fall Cleanups
- Full Service
- Snow Services
- Fertilizer Applications
- Aeration
- Plant Care/Pruning
- Bark Mulching
- Dethatching
- Overseeding

Note any pertinent information which should be noted about this customer and/or directions to new home: _____

Preparers Signature _____ Confirmation Signature _____ Date _____

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A look back
at the news
and issues covered
throughout
the past 12 months

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- UNI-WELD 500 THREAD CUTTING OIL**: A large jug of cutting oil.
- UNI-SEAL TEFLON PIPE JOINT COMPOUND**: A tub of pipe joint compound.
- CEMENT REMOVER FOR HANDS**: A spray can for hand cleaning.
- UNI-TITE PIPE JOINT COMPOUND**: A tub of pipe joint compound.

USE READER SERVICE #68

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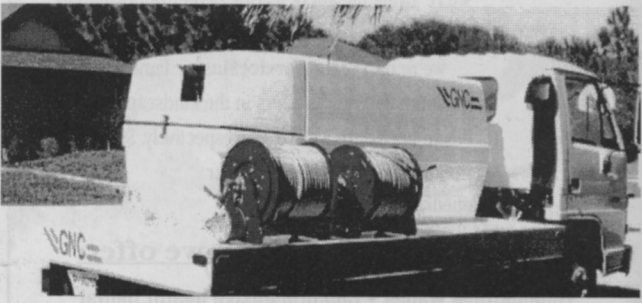
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Events Calendar – Locate industry events across the country.

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Weekly Features

Plant Of The Month – Author Barbara Ellis discusses Brassica, also known as ornamental cabbage in December's Plant of the Month feature.

Novartis TechNotes – Find weekly tips, soil temperatures from around the U.S., bug activity maps, growing degree days and more in this weekly feature.

GreenSearch PeopleSmarts – As revenue grows, so do employee numbers, expenses and headaches. Learn what it takes to manage growth and the various areas of business expansion affects in this month's GreenSearch feature.

ALCA Driver Safety Toolbox Talks – December's Toolbox Talks detail how to handle the intersection problem with right-of-ways, crossing traffic and turn preparation.

Find these features at

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Please e-mail your comments to shunsberger@lawnandlandscape.com. Lawn & Landscape Online is: Scott Hunsberger, Internet editor (shunsberger@lawnandlandscape.com) and Sydney Work, web department manager (swork@gie.net). Enjoy your visit to Lawn & Landscape Online!

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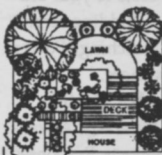
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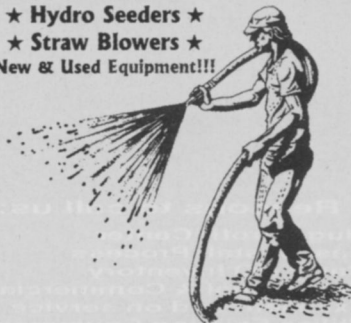
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Quality Control

(continued from page 84)

ing them allows us to base our foremen's pay on their skills, but it also shows them a specific way to make more money and grow within the organization."

A LITTLE T.L.C. Tecza Environmental Group retains 85 to 90 percent of its employees annually, according to Adam. "We have about 80 or 85 employees and we may have to replace 10 of them every year, if that," Adam said.

This rate reflects the company's family atmosphere, Adam remarked. "We're not pulling any strings or screwing around with our people," he said. "If someone in their family is sick and they need to go back to Mexico, we have a strict open door policy: They come in everyday, do the work, but if an employee's wife is having a baby and he needs three days off, they can go and come back and be ready to work."

Scheduling usually isn't a problem during these times because employees or jobs can be moved around on the schedule pretty easily, Adam said. If needed, the maintenance manager will run a mower for three or four days to cover a fellow worker's absence. "Whatever our employees need to do, very rarely does it impact what we've got going on at work," Adam said. "The setups that we have and the changes that we've made over the past four to six years are really working. We have a stable system running well."

To support its Hispanic employees, Tecza Environmental Group flies the Mexican flag along with the American flag in front of its office, pointed out Reier. "We try to understand the Hispanic culture so we know our employees' priorities and what's important to them," Reier said. "What's important for us may not be important for them and vice-versa. For example, they are very family-oriented, so we know how important it is for them to get home when they need to.

"We want them to know that if there is something that we can do or be sensitive to in reference to their culture, we are going to do so," Reier added. "We may not be paying them what the guy next door is, but we've found that pay doesn't matter when it comes down to how they are being treated." **LL**

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

Quality Control

(continued from page 36)

separate helps the company track costs more effectively, Reier said. "Maintenance is heavy in labor and equipment, but has little material costs, whereas construction has lower labor costs, but higher material costs," he said. "By keeping them separate we can micromanage each department individually and maintain competitive pricing in the market.

"The labor rates, for instance, are calculated differently in each department," Reier continued. "In maintenance, our labor rate is made up of labor costs, burden (workers' compensation, taxes, etc.), equipment costs and other overhead. As a result, we may charge a maintenance customer \$25 to \$30 per hour. But in construction, greater material costs, equipment and a lower percentage of labor make up a similar hourly rate that is calculated and budgeted differently."

LEARNING FROM THE PAST. Five years ago, Tecza Environmental Group decided to grow its maintenance operations faster

than its design/build operations to protect itself from any future economic downturns. According to the Tecza strategic plan, maintenance will continue to grow 18 to 20 percent annually, whereas design/build will stabilize, increasing only 8 to 10 percent. The service split is currently 55 percent design/build and 45 percent maintenance, but Tecza is expecting this to shift to 60 percent maintenance and 40 percent design/build.

"Maintenance is very consistent," Ted said. "Many of our maintenance contracts are two to three years so we don't have to sell the whole budget every year. And with maintenance you have checks coming in every week. Many times these checks are what end up covering our overhead on a weekly basis."

Ted won't plan growth based on a number he's trying to reach. He views growth as a process that moves with the economy and can be achieved only through the addition of new people. "I don't think that I want to grow quickly to \$10 million and then I'll be

happy," he said. "I view my long-term growth plans more from the standpoint of continuous growth in response to the available marketplace, which is very strong right now so we're taking advantage of it.

"I just want to maintain continuous growth at a profitable level while still maintaining our client relationships and quality," Ted continued. "Wherever that takes us, it takes us - whether that be \$6 million, \$10 million or \$20 million. It's not so much what we're growing to as that we are consistent in our philosophy of how we grow."

Reier echoed Ted's comments. "There's plenty of work out there," he said. "In fact, growth can get to a point where we have to slow it down to retain quality and maintain profit or even earn a little less. We'd rather slow down or even take a step back to make sure that we're around for another 60 years."

The author is Managing Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

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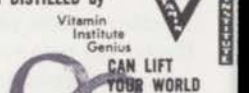
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