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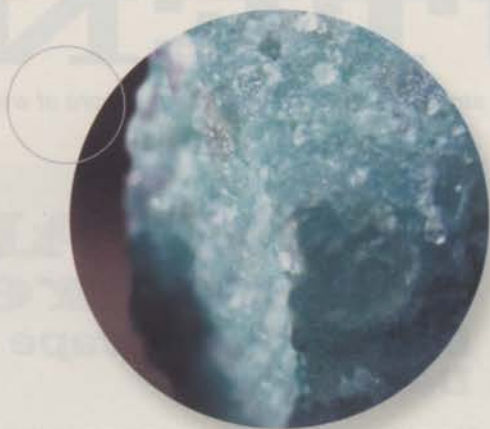
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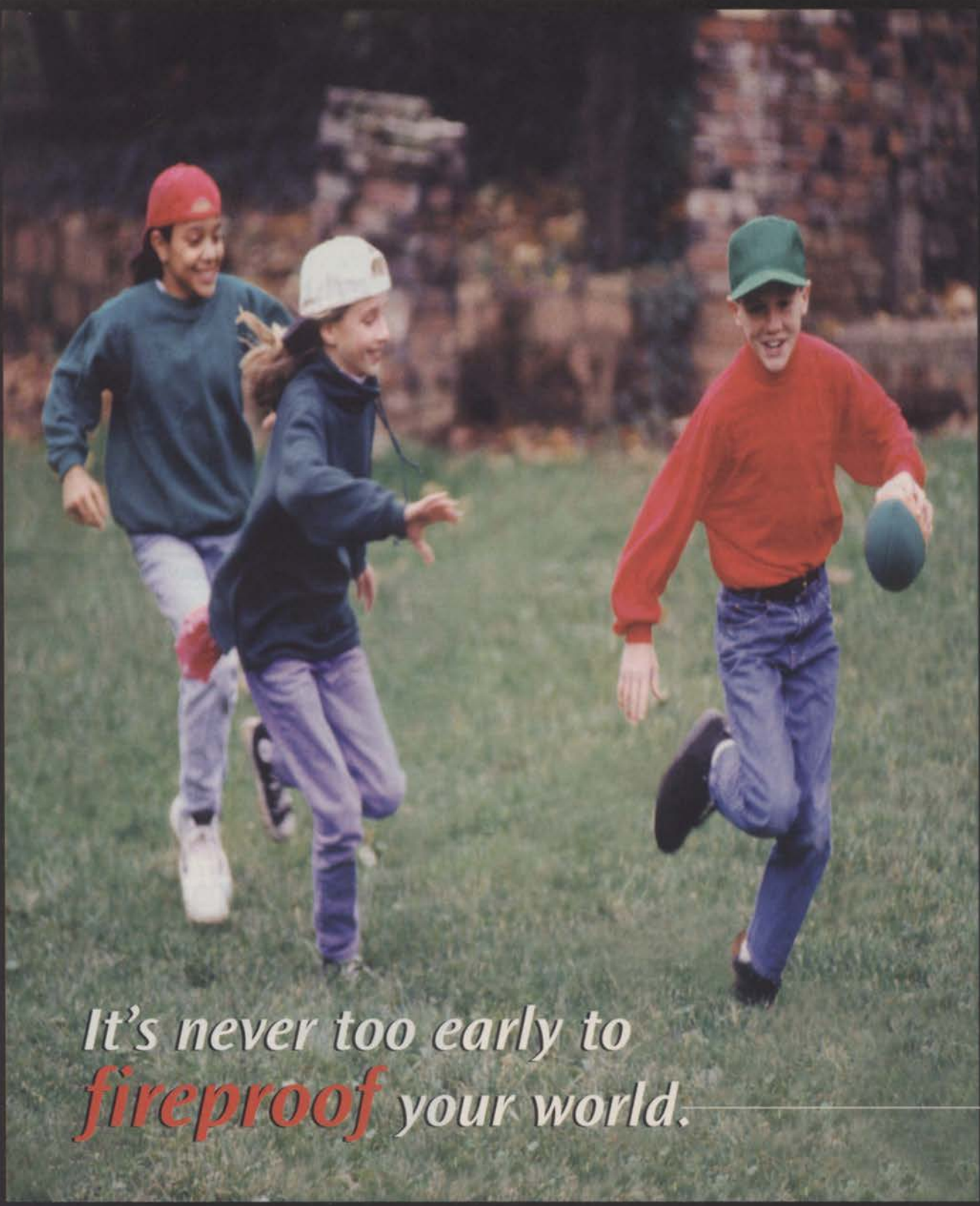
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"If you're not a part of the solution then
you're part of the problem." – Dr.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Mark Your Calendars Now

There's no lack of events for you to attend in this industry. Conferences, trade shows and equipment demos can be found on every month in the calendar and in most states. But there's one event held every year that you all need to think hard about attending even though you probably won't see a single new product and you might not learn one thing that will help your business.

The event is the Legislative Day on the Hill, produced by the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA), and it will be held in Washington, D.C., on July 14-15. PLCAA has held this event for 14 years, and it's time for everyone concerned about the future of their business and this industry to get involved in Washington.

Attendees at the Day on the Hill spend a day caring for the turf, trees and shrubs at Arlington National Cemetery, a noble cause given the fact that that's where so many of our military veterans lie today. But what takes place the next day has tremendous potential to shape our industry's future. Lawn care and landscape professionals just like you visit their senators' and congressmen's offices to explain our side of the story for key issues that affect us.

These men and women take time away from their businesses and spend their money to defend this industry and make sure that elected officials get the full story when they think about issues like water use restrictions, telemarketing no-call lists, immigration reform and other matters that could place severe restrictions on your business, depending on what politicians do. Yet how many of you call your politicians, write them letters or visit their offices to make sure your point of view is heard?

I know the answer. And that's one of the biggest reasons why we continually come out on the short side of new legislation. The truth is that elected officials don't really know this industry exists, let alone how substantial the industry is, how many jobs it represents or how much money it contributes to public coffers via taxes. How would they know if we don't tell them? So you can imagine how likely politicians are to consider how our industry perceives certain issues.

Let's fix this situation. I don't expect to see everyone in Washington this summer, but we need to get more industry professionals involved. The same goes for industry suppliers as well since there's no doubt they benefit from a healthier industry. We at *Lawn & Landscape* stand to benefit as well, so we need to get more involved, too. I'll be in Washington this July, and you can plan on reading more about the Legislative Day on the Hill in our magazine and on our Web site.

I hope some of you will join us in our nation's capital this summer. You have the opportunity to help your business, strengthen your industry and take part in the most amazing governing process in the world.



Bob West

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USE READER SERVICE #14

Forming Your Culture

Contrary to popular belief, a company's culture is not formed by publishing eloquently written mission statements in handbooks, by decorating office walls with beautifully framed renditions, or by distributing cool, laminated pocket versions of the statement. Culture may be "defined" by these processes, but it is certainly not formed in this way.

Forming a culture is surprisingly simple. So simple, in fact, that it can occur without much effort. In fact, many CEOs and leaders don't realize their culture is shaped and refined every day. Here's how it happens: A business starts off with a good product or service and grows. At some point, the founders develop a set of lofty principles to define their culture and mission. The business does well and managers (not leaders) are hired or promoted quickly to accommodate the growth. These same managers are instructed to preach about the mission and company principles, refer to them in employee meetings, share them with customers, and publish them in company memos. Being the humans that they are, these managers (and, oftentimes, the CEOs) set about "leading" in their own style and fashion. Without realizing it, from their everyday actions and attitudes, the managers who preach the gospel of the culture begin to routinely make decisions that are inconsistent with the company's core beliefs.

It usually starts off small and, perhaps, insignificantly. But employees are watching and when they see a pattern of actions that don't match the words, trust is broken and the cancer begins to grow. If allowed to continue, the culture eventually becomes politically motivated, bureaucratic, and arrogant.

Many companies unknowingly make decisions that are counter-cultural. Managers do not always understand that culture is the result of their everyday decisions and actions. Culture is shaped primarily by what a company chooses to measure and control; what it pays

attention to; how it handles organizational crises; how managers coach and develop people; how employees are compensated and rewarded; and the processes by which the company selects, promotes, retains and terminates people.

On a secondary level, a company's culture is further defined by the physical work environment; rituals and events the company chooses to celebrate; organizational structure; and, to a degree, the written mission statement. *Every company has a culture.* Even a seeming lack of culture is a culture. While an organization's leaders may not be able to articulate a company's culture, the employees always can. We experience this time and again when we conduct employee opinion surveys. We also find that the companies with healthy cultures breed happy, productive employees who have intense loyalty that doesn't waiver, even during tough times. These same employers naturally attract, develop, and retain talent better than their counterparts, and their leaders aren't spending an inordinate amount of time solving "people" problems.

Is your culture living up to your expectations? If not, consider these four culture-enhancing strategies:

1. *Hire only those people whose actions, experiences and lives exemplify your core values.* You cannot change inherent attitudes in people, so hire people who believe in your values, philosophy, and mission. Establish a comprehensive, effective process for identifying and hiring talent. Take time to get to know the people before you bring them into the "family." Be vigilant and do not compromise your standards.

2. *Take the temperature of the workforce on a regular basis.* If you want to know how your employees really think and feel about your company – the culture, pay, benefits, recent changes or management, have an third party conduct a confidential employee opinion survey. You may be surprised by the results. (Note: If you conduct a survey, be ready to listen and willing to respond to employee concerns. To do otherwise diminishes your credibility.)

3. *Walk the talk.* Once organizational values are well defined and articulated, ensure all leaders in the company make decisions and treat people consistent with these values and the company culture and philosophy. Do not tolerate arrogance. Aggressively confront and eradicate cultural abuse.

4. *Periodically conduct an organizational assessment.* Carefully review company systems, processes and policies to ensure they promote and encourage the values and culture you are trying to build.

Perhaps the greatest words of wisdom to heed as you address cultural change and development were spoken by Arthur Ashe, the renowned sportsman, author and humanitarian: "To achieve greatness, start where you are, use what you have, do what you can."

Does culture matter? You bet it does. If you don't believe me, ask employees at Southwest Airlines, General Electric or PepsiCo. Or, better yet, take a look at their bottom lines. **LL**



Jean Seawright is president of Seawright & Associates Inc., a management consulting firm located in Winter Park, Fla. For the past 15 years, she has provided human resource management and compliance advice to employers across the country. She can be reached via e-mail at jplleggi@seawright.com or at 407/645-2433.



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USE READER SERVICE #15

TELEMARKETING TROUBLES

The Phone Zone

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a new, national do-not-call list in near unanimous fashion, elevating this issue to a higher level and increasing the odds of this restriction on telemarketing efforts throughout the country.

The proposal, which passed 418 to seven, would allow the Federal Trade Commission to collect fees from telemarketers to fund the creation of a national registry that consumers could place themselves on so they don't receive any telemarketing calls. Initial estimates say that the list will cost up to \$16 million to create. Funding for this program will have to come through a House/Senate compromise initiative that is still pending.



REGIONAL REPORT

Green & Growing

BOSTON – A recently concluded study by the New England Nursery Association shows the New England horticulture industry contributes \$4 billion a year to the regional economy – continuing its history of growth even in a sagging economy.

According to Jesse O'Brien, president of the association, "Despite tough economic times, the industry is thriving. We are providing good jobs, paying good wages. Tax revenues from the green industry continue to rise, supporting state and local governments. As a whole, green industry income in New England has risen 10 percent over the past three years."

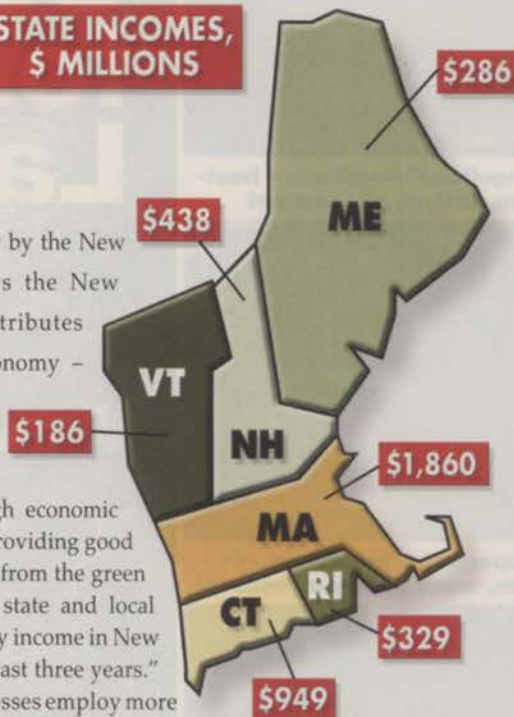
New England green industry businesses employ more than 131,000 people in the region and estimate that there are at least another 36,000 more jobs – full time, part time and seasonal – that still need to be filled, O'Brien noted.

Regionally, the horticulture industry pays an estimated \$2.24 billion in wages, and generates approximately \$4 billion in gross income, according to the survey. "That's a growth in income of 10 percent and a growth in wages of 33 percent since the most recent survey was done three years ago," O'Brien pointed out.

"All in all," O'Brien said, "throughout New England, the environmental horticulture industry remains a strong contributor to the local economy, involving many long-time, family-owned businesses. Of the businesses surveyed, two-thirds of all firms saw their income increase since the previous survey, and those increases have averaged 31 percent per firm."

For specific findings in each state, visit www.nensyassn.org.

STATE INCOMES, \$ MILLIONS



BREAKING NEWS

Home Depot Hits Big D

What started in Atlanta simply created more questions. Once the nation's second-largest retailer opened three Home Depot Landscape Supply stores targeting the professional landscape industry in northern Georgia, speculation ran rampant about the company's long-term plans.

The company's recent announcement of its plans to open five stores in the Dallas/Fort Worth area this year confirmed the expectations.

"The vitality and sophistication of the Dallas/Fort Worth market is what brought Home Depot to Texas in 1984," explained Todd Williams, president, Home Depot Landscape Supply (HDLS). "It would be hard to find a better place to showcase our new landscaping business."

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Market Trends

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In an exclusive interview with *Lawn & Landscape* magazine, Williams noted that the plans for Dallas were already underway last year before the Atlanta stores' performance could be evaluated, but he noted that those initial stores have reaffirmed the company's belief that it can grow by supplying professionals. "If you talk to the customers we're serving now, they feel that we're meeting their needs, whether that's providing product delivery or making sure the product mix is there with paving materials, live goods, landscape supplies, etc.," Williams asserted.

Williams is also excited about improving the model for this new business based on what they've learned in Atlanta. "Moving into Dallas gives us a chance to refine the concept," he noted. "As you present a new concept to customers you've never served, you hope you hit on all cylinders, but you know you're going to have to make some changes."

Obviously, chief among these concerns is figuring out a business model that serves

(continued on page 20)

Association NEWS

Turfgrass Producers International (TPI) announced the new officers for the organization. Elected officers serving one-year terms are: Stan Gardener, president; Ed Zuckerman, vice president; and Art Campbell, secretary-treasurer. Individuals named to three-year terms on the TPI board of trustees include George Brandt and Randy Graff.

The **Professional Grounds Management Society** (PGMS) elected its new leaders: Milton Hallman, president; Todd Cochran, president-elect; Chris Fay, vice president; Ellen Newell, treasurer. Newly elected to the PGMS Board of Directors was Donald Bottger.

The **Green Industry Expo** Board announced its slate of officers and directors for 2003. New officers are Ken Taylor, president; Tom Davis, vice president; Gerald Grossi, secretary/treasurer. New directors are Roger Braswell, Jon Cundiff, Mike Dietrich, Steve Glover, Kevin O'Donnell and George Van Haasteren. The 2003 Green Industry Expo will be held in St. Louis, Mo.

The **Associated Landscape Contractors of America** (ALCA) selected John Allin, chief executive officer, Allin Cos., Erie, Pa., to serve as chairman of the ALCA Board of Governors through 2005. The Board oversees testing for Certified Landscape Professionals and Certified Landscape Technicians throughout the United States and Canada.

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USE READER SERVICE #18

Market Trends

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consumers and professionals equally well in these 5- to 7-acre facilities. "We've been able to make corrections to this concept," Williams explained, pointing particularly to improvements that help the stores serve consumers and professional customers simultaneously. "A big concern we have for the trade is not alienating the landscape contractor by gearing too much toward the residential customers."

But HDLS stores will continue to cater to both customer types. "These stores let us reach out to a consumer that was a challenge because of how our Home Depot stores were set up," Williams said. "Now we have reach and breadth. Serving both customers also lets the contractor see products displayed that they wouldn't normally see, and that lets them be as impulsive as consumers."

Key to the company's sales efforts is its wide range of offerings, such as power equipment along with nursery stock, fertilizers and irrigation supplies. "That gives us the

(continued on page 22)



L&L

Book Report

Cashflow Quadrant

by Robert T. Kiyosaki and Sharon L. Lechter

If you went on vacation for a year, would your business still be running when you returned – or would it be running ragged?

Robert Kiyosaki poses this question in *Cashflow Quadrant*, a book that differentiates the "self-employed" and the "business owner" and why entrepreneurs should strive for the latter to gain growth and independence in their organizations.

The self-employed are company hat racks, wearing so many caps, playing so many roles, that the business depends on their daily intervention to exist. Business owners, on the other hand, implemented the systems and key personnel to allow them to step back and take that vacation.

"Self-employed people have to keep working, because if they stop there is no business," defined Doug Hart, chief financial officer, Signature Landscape Services, Redmond, Wash. "The business owner starts developing a broad base of assets that will continue to pay income even though they are not actively involved in the day-to-day business."

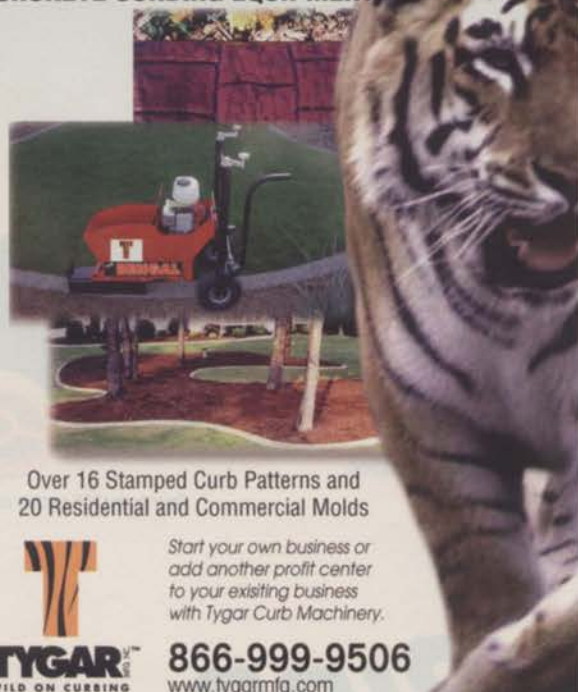
The 240-page book explains the importance of systems, delegation and planning in three parts – setting up systems, bringing out the best in a business and finding financial success.

The book's principles are relevant, and its solutions lie in creating systems.

"We have a goal that we want to grow and then be able to either step away from the business or sell it in 10 years, and we can't do it as a self-employed, small business," Hart notes, adding that training and planning will redirect his company's path. – Kristen Hampshire

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USE READER SERVICE #21

Market Trends

(continued from page 20)

advantage of being the one-stop source so that when landscape contractors buy the product they need to deliver to their customers they can also rent the tools they need," Williams explained. "That adds a level of convenience that differentiates us in the market."

On a tour of an HDLS facility in Duluth, Ga., last fall, a number of nursery

rew wholesalers selling primarily to landscape contractors dismissed the new store as being too consumer oriented and too small to satisfy contractors' needs. Williams disputes those notions. "We're not all about holding product on behalf of the grower," he explained. "That's not a good way to get return on our investment."

"Once a customer gets over the fact that we're not as big with physical space as some

other places, we think they'll realize that doesn't mean we can't bring in the product they want and replenish it in our inventory the next day," he continued. "So, inventory turn is a big issue here. The more space you have, the greater the tendency is to fill it up. This business is about turning what you need when you need it and not having excess inventory when you don't need it."

Clearly, Home Depot brings a proven in-

People

Bobcat named **Mike Ryan** the company's new president.

James Reeve became chief executive officer at Chapel Valley Landscape Co. Also, **Lawrence Conrad** became regional sales manager for the company's Virginia region.

Steve Chicken will work out of Ipswich, England, as the new managing director of European operations for Textron Golf, Turf & Specialty Products.

At Ruppert Nurseries, **Chris Davitt** was promoted to president and chief operating officer.

Tanaka hired **Doug Hellebuyck** as regional sales manager.

John Ossa was named Gardeners' Guild's new president.

Lynne Knauff joined North American Green as marketing manager.

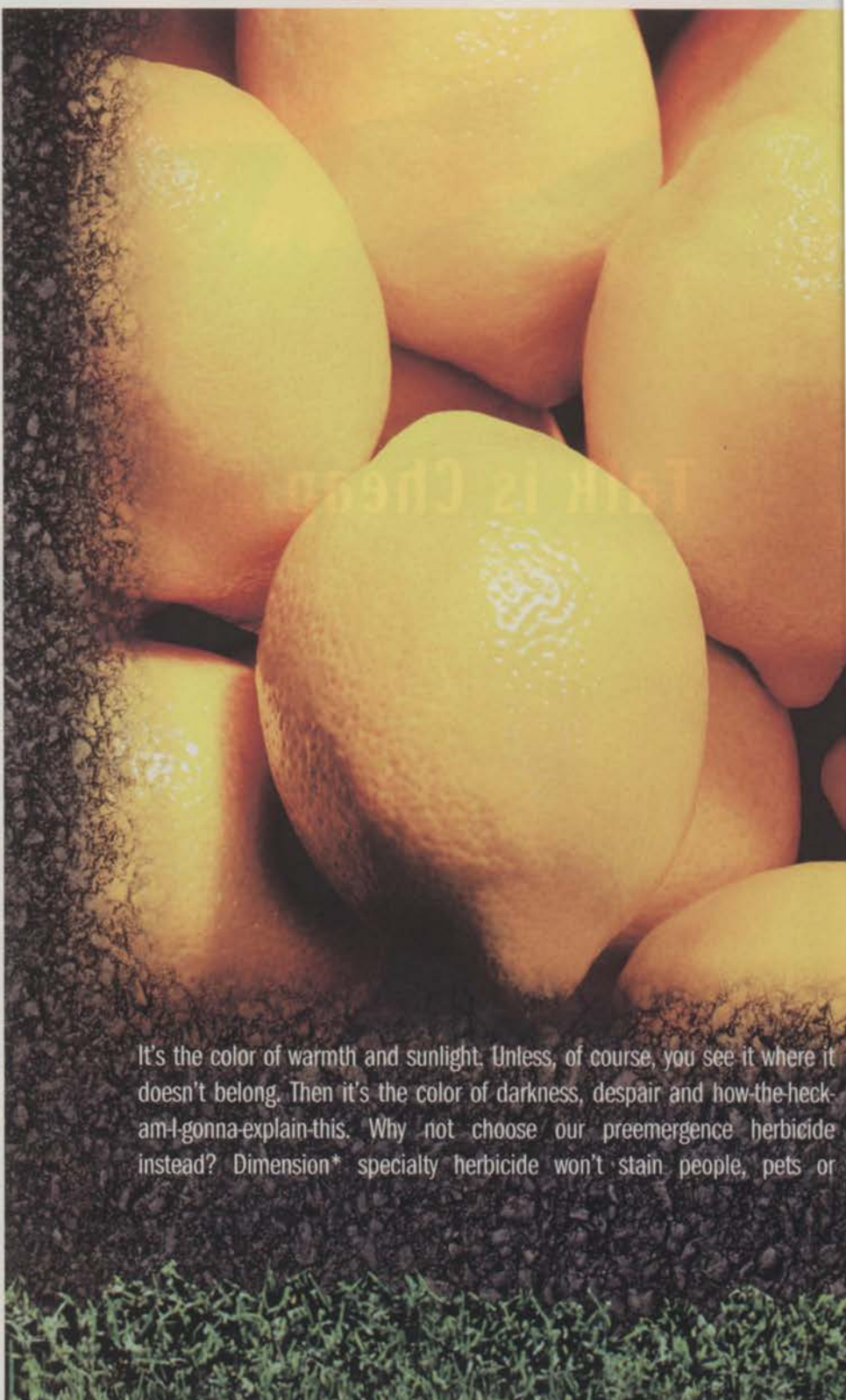
At Eagle Point, **Michael Lyons** was named vice president of client relationships and will lead the company's effort to focus more on helping clients achieve success with technology.

Steve Herbst was promoted to product manager for trimmers, power blowers and shredders at Echo.

In several changes, Allmand promoted **Sherri Ellsworth** to sales coordinator, **Doug Dahlgren** to product manager, **Tom Martin** to southwest district manager, **Brad Allmand** to northwest regional sales manager, **Tom Castrop** to northeast regional sales manager and **Steve Allmand** to western regional sales manager.



Lynne Knauff



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MISSION STATEMENT

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ventory management history to the business, and that's just one of the advantages Williams is counting on. "Our experience coupled with our buying power through 1,500 stores can really help us," he pointed out. "Add to that our ability to create an instant delivery infrastructure that's in concert with our stores, and we have some other advantages."

Williams wouldn't comment about future growth plans for HDLS other than to

say, "We have real high expectations on the performance, but we're refining the model before rolling out any more stores."

He did say that Dallas was a logical expan-

sion market for a number of reasons. "Dallas/Fort Worth has been a great growth market over the past decade, and I don't think anyone thinks that is going to change," Williams explained. "Plus, there are similarities in the climate there with Atlanta, so we can leverage our vendors and our experience in this market without changing a whole lot."

Despite its certain big plans, Williams pointed out that the company is focused on doing things properly instead of doing them rapidly. "The consumer business is about transactions," he noted. "With the trade, it's about relationships, so we have to prove ourselves to the landscape trade and start to create the relationship and cement it over time so they can rely on us. That takes a little bit of time, and we think we can buy that time with the flow of retail customers."

In addition, while these stores already include some equipment sales and rentals in their mix, Williams pointed to that as another area of business that takes time to master. "Anything is possible with equipment, and that's an area we're going to assess as we go through this spring," he related. "Will our product mix in terms of the equipment we sell change? Definitely. But I can't say how it will change."

Servicing equipment is another possibility for HDLS stores, in good time. "Servicing equipment is something we'll consider getting into when we know we can meet the customers' needs," Williams asserted. "The customer has an expectation that we have to meet, and we won't do anything unless we can meet that need." — Bob West

CONSTRUCTION REPORT

Housing Starts Continue Rising

WASHINGTON — U.S. housing starts climbed again in January, rising 0.2 percent to their highest rate since mid-1986, the government said, as low mortgage rates helped fuel demand for new homes.

Total permits to start housing construction, an indicator of builders' confidence

(continued on page 26)



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Market Trends

(continued from page 23)

in future business, fell 5.6 percent in January due to a drop in authorizations for multifamily homes, the Commerce Department said. But single-family permits – the largest category of housing starts – rose to a new high.

Housing starts edged up to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1.850 million units January from a revised 1.847 million rate in December. Overall starts were at

their highest since May 1986, while single-family starts reached their highest rate since November 1978.

Overall starts outpaced expectations of analysts polled by Reuters, who had forecast a 1.771 million rate for the month.

"The basic message is that builders continue on a roll. There's nothing like cheap money to stimulate housing," said Robert Dederick, economic consultant with Northern Trust Co., Chicago, Ill.

Regionally in January, there was a 9.9 percent rise in starts in the West and a 3.8 percent rise in the South. The Midwest saw an 11.9 percent drop while the Northeast experienced a 16.7 percent decline.

Overall permits fell to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1.781 million units, but in the single-family category they edged up to record 1.415 million rate.

BUSINESS BASICS

Links in Employee Development

Bill Arman, vice president and regional manager, ValleyCrest Cos., Calabasas, Calif., believes that when all employees know what their company stands for, they are better able to fulfill that vision. In his presentation at the 2003 Lawn & Landscape School of Management, Arman outlined five major concepts that help create this collective mindset.

1. *Vision.* When entrepreneurs first start businesses, they probably have a sense of
(continued on page 28)

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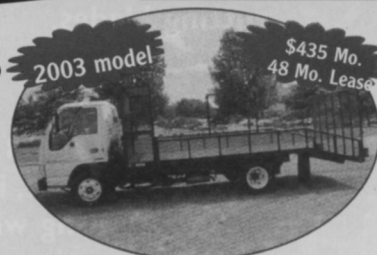
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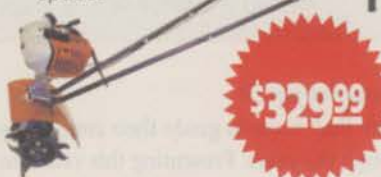
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Market Trends

Mattingly's MESSAGE

EDITOR'S NOTE: Every month, industry consultant Jack Mattingly will offer suggestions on key tasks for contractors to focus on. Here are his March thoughts.

Contractors in the Midwest and North only have a short time before spring clean-ups commence. And those in the Sun Belt might actually be experiencing an increase in workload as the snowbirds vacation in the winter. With time running out, contractors need to make sure they are well organized and prepared for spring. Here are some areas to consider this month:

★ *Involve your employees when compiling this year's financial budget.* Ask supervisors to give their best "guesstimate" as to how much labor and materials they will require in upcoming months. Also, obtain their input relative to vehicles, equipment, tools, etc. By involving them in the budgeting process, you will achieve buy-in, which will make it easier when you hold them accountable to the budgets. If this is your first attempt at budgeting, don't panic. Budgeting is an "art" and the more you do it, the better you become.

★ *Solicit qualified referrals from your existing clients.* Supervisors and managers should call each client or, preferably, stop by and see him or her. The call might go something like this: "We are planning for the spring and have a couple of openings for one of our crews. Would you know of anyone who would be interested in our services?" Your objective is to increase your business and sign new agreements before spring. Further, track your efforts via a chart on the wall listing all your clients, the company contact for each client, and results and comments along with the dates of these occurrences. This will hold managers accountable.

★ *Aggressively seek improvements.* Think efficiency and lower costs. Solicit ideas from your employees. Develop a simple form that enables them to give their opinion in two areas: 1. "List the things we did well last year," and 2. "Provide suggestions on how we can improve our efficiencies and lower our costs." You will be pleasantly surprised at the feedback you receive. Also, don't require a signature. It should remain anonymous for best results. Then, gather your key people and share all the information. As a group, determine the action you want to take. Assign a person to be responsible for each improvement implementation and determine a completion date. Again, hold the person accountable.

★ *Continue shop duties during this time of year.* Are you going through all equipment and ensuring it is ready to go? Filters, oil, bearings, spindles, grease fittings, blades, equipment numbers, cleaning, painting, etc.? You should be able to go into your shop today and see the pieces that have been refurbished and ready to go, lined up or hung neatly on the wall. Determine what is left to do and assign people to complete those tasks. Break it down in small bites such as "complete maintenance on all 61-inch walk-behind mowers by X date."

★ *Plan ahead and be prepared.* In this economy you need to become the low-cost producer. Operation efficiency is critical. Remember, the competition will not go away.

Jack Mattingly is a green industry consultant with Mattingly Consulting. He can be reached at 770/517-9476 or online at www.mattinglyconsulting.com.

(continued from page 26)

where they want to guide their companies through the years. Presenting this vision to employees during training and orientation helps ensure the goals outlined become realities. "A company vision gives a clear sense of what the ultimate goal looks and feels like and serves as an inspirational ideal, giving employees something to aspire to," according to Arman. For example, a vision

statement could read, "Our company will be a recognized leader in client satisfaction, committed to working as our clients' problem-solver and trusted partner." Thought a painstaking and time consuming process, creating a vision statement aligns all employees' goals.

2. *Mission.* Unlike a vision, a company's mission statement should be revisited everyday to give employees a clear understanding



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
of what day-to-day operations should accomplish. "Our company's mission is to handle every landscape we care for with accuracy and artistry, and approach all of our clients with a willingness to listen and help," Arman noted. A mission statement can strengthen crewmembers' pride in their company. Each time they greet the owner of the property or put the finishing touches on a mulch bed, they can directly relate their position with the purpose of the company.

3. *Values.* Knowing the company's values is one more link in the chain of developing strong employees, and Arman suggested that having four or five guiding principles is a good foundation. From honesty and integrity to creativity and the willingness to learn and perfect new skills, values form a company culture and can create common bonds between employees and employers, as well as illustrate to clients what is important within the organization.

4. *Behaviors.* Creating a company culture that advocates positive, consistent reinforcement teaches all employees to conduct themselves in a manner conducive to moving the company toward its vision. Arman illustrated that having a properly organized chain of command is important in making sure everyone understands the behaviors expected in the company. But negatively reinforcing employees who aren't performing as expected is less than effective. Giving positive feedback when earned and suggesting areas of improvement when necessary changes employee behavior faster and more effectively and keeps morale up.

5. *Results.* For employee development, results come in many different forms.

Beginning with a vision statement and mission statement, companies can measure success by determining how well their goals are being met and employees have an outline for what the company expects overall. Communicating values and behaviors to employees, along with detailed job descriptions ensure that everyone in the company knows their part in the total success of the organization. Also, Arman suggested using training sessions as opportunities to link employees' individual responsibilities with the organization's ultimate goals.

With everyone interested in moving in the right direction – and knowing what that direction is – personal and professional success is guaranteed. – *Lauren Spiers* 

MARCH 10 New York State Turfgrass Association Western Regional Conference, Buffalo, N.Y. Contact: 518/783-1229.

MARCH 10-11 Illinois Landscape Contractors Association's Foremanship Training and Spring Seminars, Rockford, Ill. Contact: 630/472-2851 or www.ilca.net.

MARCH 12-13 16th Turf & Irrigation Conference, Milwaukee, Wisc. Contact: 262/786-3301.

MARCH 12-13 Landscape Industry Show 2003, Long Beach, Calif. Contact: 800/448-2522 or www.clca.org.

MARCH 13-16 ALCA Student Career Days, Raymond, Miss. Contact: 800/395-2522 or www.alca.org.

MARCH 17-20 6th Annual New England Regional Turfgrass Conference & Show, Providence, R.I. Contact: 401/848-0004 or www.TurfShow.com.

MARCH 19 Snow & Ice Solutions: One-day business seminar at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J. Contact: 732/932-8451 or <http://ce1766.rutgers.edu/>.

MARCH 25 Practical Pruning: A Workshop for Arborists, Davis, Calif. Contact: 800/752-0881 or www.extension.ucdavis.edu/agriculture.

APRIL 3 New York State Turfgrass Association's Adirondack Regional Conference, Lake Placid, N.Y. Contact: 518/783-1229.

JUNE 12-14 Snow & Ice Symposium, Buffalo, N.Y. Contact: 814/835-3577 or www.sima.org.

JUNE 17 New York State Turfgrass Association Cornell University Field Day, Ithaca, N.Y. Contact: 518/783-1229.

JULY 15-20 American Nursery & Landscape Association Convention & Executive Learning Retreat, Boston, Mass. Contact: 202/789-2900 or www.anla.org.

JULY 16-18 Lawn & Landscape's Sales & Marketing Bonanza, Cincinnati, Ohio. Contact: 800/456-0707.

JULY 29 2003 Midwest Regional Turf Field Day West Lafayette, Ind. Contact: 765/494-8039 or www.mrtf.org.

JULY 31-AUG. 2 SNA 2003 – The World's Showcase of Horticulture, Atlanta, Ga. Contact: 770/953-3311 or www.sna.org.

AUG. 6 Illinois Landscape Contractors Association's Annual Outdoor Summer Field Day, Ball Seed, N.H. Contact: 630/472-2851 or www.ilca.net.

AUG. 8-10 ALCA Productivity Symposium, Atlanta, Ga. Contact: 800/395-2522 or www.alca.org.

AUG. 13 Wisconsin Nursery Association Summer Field Day, Manitowoc, Wis. Contact: 414/529-4705.

AUG. 15-17 Texas Nursery/Landscape Expo, Dallas, Texas. Contact: 800/880-0343 or www.txnla.org.

SEPT. 7-11 51st Annual Florida Turfgrass Conference and Show, Tampa, Fla. Contact: 800/882-6721 or www.ftga.org.

OCT. 3-4 Middle Tennessee Nursery Association Trade Show, McMinnville, Tenn. Contact: 931/668-7322 or www.mtna.com.

OCT. 8-9 Southern California Turfgrass Council Turfgrass, Landscape and Equipment Expo, Pomona, Calif. Contact: 800/500-7282 or www.turfCouncil.org.

OCT. 17-20 International Lawn, Garden & Power Equipment Exposition (OPEI), Louisville, Ky. Contact: 800/558-8767 or www.expo.mow.org.

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The State of Affairs

Trade associations serve a number of purposes. They help members buy products at discounted rates. They provide various educational opportunities. They put industry professionals in touch with their peers.

The best, and often the most valuable, associations also enable small businesses spread all over the country to speak with one loud voice where it often matters most – Washington, D.C., and anywhere else laws are made.

The landscape industry has struggled in the past to find its voice, but the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA) hopes it can change this. On Jan. 1, PLCAA announced the hiring of Gary Clayton as its new executive director, a move that enabled Tom Delaney to return to his former role, vice president of government affairs.

Delaney held the top spot at PLCAA for the last four years, but he's excited to focus on legislation at a time when he says legislative issues are becoming more local. "I don't see any new federal issues that concern us right now," he observed. "The key area to worry about is the states."

And there are a number of key issues Delaney has his eyes on.

Water quality – "We have to watch what's going to happen on water issues," he emphasized. "Fertilizer runoff, non-point source pollution, quantity and quality of water is going to be something for us to watch."

Fertilizer – "Several states are looking at fertilizer preemption since we don't have federal legislation for it like we do with other pesticide products," explained Delaney, noting that many states focused on fertilizers after the Minnesota ban on phosphorous went into place last year.

Neighborhood notification – "We're going to have to watch for mimicking of [the prenotification law] passed in New York."

Pesticide restrictions – "I'm also concerned about what's going on in Canada because we've got some U.S. environmentalists working up there," Delaney noted.

"So we'll probably have to deal with the same issues of having aesthetic and cosmetic thrown in our face, which means we'll have to do a better job of talking about the benefits of the services we provide ahead of time."

Telemarketing – "We need to watch that to see how much further that issue will go since [legislators] are talking about a national do-not-call list."

Overall, Delaney knows about the lawn care industry's chief battle. "My primary concern is that the majority of our customers and potential customers want to have their lawns taken care of by a professional," he maintained. "There could be some erosion in people's interest in lawns and people could feel that they aren't pro-environment if they hire a lawn care company."

But good warriors learn to avoid fights they can't win. "There's no way to reverse how the industry feels about pesticides," Delaney suggested. "These products have their image, although we can buffer that somewhat. We need to concentrate on the value of a well-maintained landscape. Trying to make people think pesticides are good is too much of an uphill battle."

The industry can win more battles by enrolling more soldiers from the ranks of lawn care professionals. "So, one way lawn care companies can help is to train and be more self regulating so that their employees understand the scenarios they may encounter and they're prepared to handle them," he continued. "Then, we need to have a good network of industry people who are willing to go the extra mile to testify, track these issues and talk to regulatory people."

PLCAA has gotten more people involved in legislative issues through its annual Day on the Hill event in Washington, D.C., and that event has spawned similar events in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and New Jersey. Delaney would like to see more such state-oriented events developed. "Too many legislators don't know what the effect of this legislation might be on their constituents' businesses, and we have to tell them," he pointed out. "We need to make these elected officials aware of us and our businesses." – Bob West

The author is Editor/Publisher for Lawn & Landscape magazine, and he can be reached via email at bwest@lawnandlandscape.com.



Tom Delaney



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riage with suspension that dramatically improves traction, operator comfort and overall productivity.

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R-Series Posi-Track	RC-30	RC-50	RC-100
Power, Gross (hp):	31.5	50	99.5
Operating Capacity* (lb):	800	1,500	3,800
Ground Pressure (psi):	2.5	2.7	3.5
Travel Speed, max. (mph):	6	8	10

*50% Tipping Load

USE READER SERVICE #27

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Nursery Market Report

AWARD WINNERS

Florida Plants of the Year

Florida is known for sunshine, citrus and foliage. In fact, the state's environmental horticulture industry brings in an estimated \$9.9 billion in sales annually.

In an ongoing effort to encourage the use and production of Florida-grown plants, the Florida Nurserymen & Growers Association (FNGA) selects and promotes a group of top performers as its Plants of the Year.

The 2003 class includes: Stokes' Aster, Sandpaper Vine, Evergreen Paspalum, Yesterday-today-and-tomorrow, Beautyberry, Little Gem Magnolia and Schefflera Luseane. Here is more on each selection.

STOKES' ASTER. A butterfly magnet, *Stokesia laevis* features 2- to 4-inch flowers in deep blue to lavender to white on stalks that reach 16 to 24 inches high.

Stokes' Aster can be used in mixed borders or massed in perennial beds in full sun or light shade. The plant is hardy in



U.S. Department of Agriculture Zones six to nine.

SANDPAPER VINE. *Petrea volubilis* is a flowering vine that is hardy in USDA Zones nine to 11. Its mature height is 35 feet, but it may be maintained at 10 to 15 feet tall and wide.

With large, coarse-textured leaves and amethyst flowers from late winter through summer, this climber likes full sun.

EVERGREEN PASPALUM. This ornamental grass can be used in the landscape as an accent, a tall ground cover or in mass plantings. For best results in massing, plant 4 feet apart.

Growing 3 to 4 feet tall and wide, this dark green bunch grass has broad blades when irrigated and roll up when dry. *Paspalum quadrifarium* is hardy in USDA Zones seven to 10.

YESTERDAY-TODAY-AND-TOMORROW. *Brunfelsia grandiflora* bears masses of large, flat flowers that open purplish-blue and fade to light blue, then white. This dramatic shrub can be used as a specimen plant or color accent.

Hardy in USDA Zones eight to 10 and growing 5 to 8 feet tall and wide, this evergreen shrub has slightly glossy leaves and it flowers continually through summer.

BEAUTYBERRY. This native deciduous shrub, *Callicarpa americana*, grows 4 to 7 feet tall and wide and is hardy in USDA Zones seven to 10. The small pink flowers attract butterflies and are eventually replaced by clusters of magenta fruits.

Ideal as an accent or in mass, this plant thrives in shade, but it flowers and fruits abundantly in more sun.

LITTLE GEM MAGNOLIA. *Magnolia grandiflora* 'Little Gem' is an evergreen tree ideal for use as a compact specimen. Hardy in USDA Zones seven to nine, the tree's mature height is 30 to 40 feet and spread is 10 to 15 feet.

Dark green leaves with bronze coloring on undersides are smaller than a standard Magnolia's. Fragrant white blooms 6 to 8 inches across appear in spring and sporadically in summer.

SCHEFFLERA 'LUSEANE.' *Schefflera arboricola* 'Luseane' is hardy in USDA Zones nine to 11. The shrub usually grows 2 to 3 feet tall and wide and can be used in a container or as a ground cover.

Tiny leaves, dense foliage and medium light tolerance makes this a valuable item for shaping and training. — Ali Cybulski



Stokes' Aster (upper right) attracts butterflies to its flowers in hues from blue to lavender.

Sandpaper Vine (left) is a climber that may grow up to 35 feet tall.

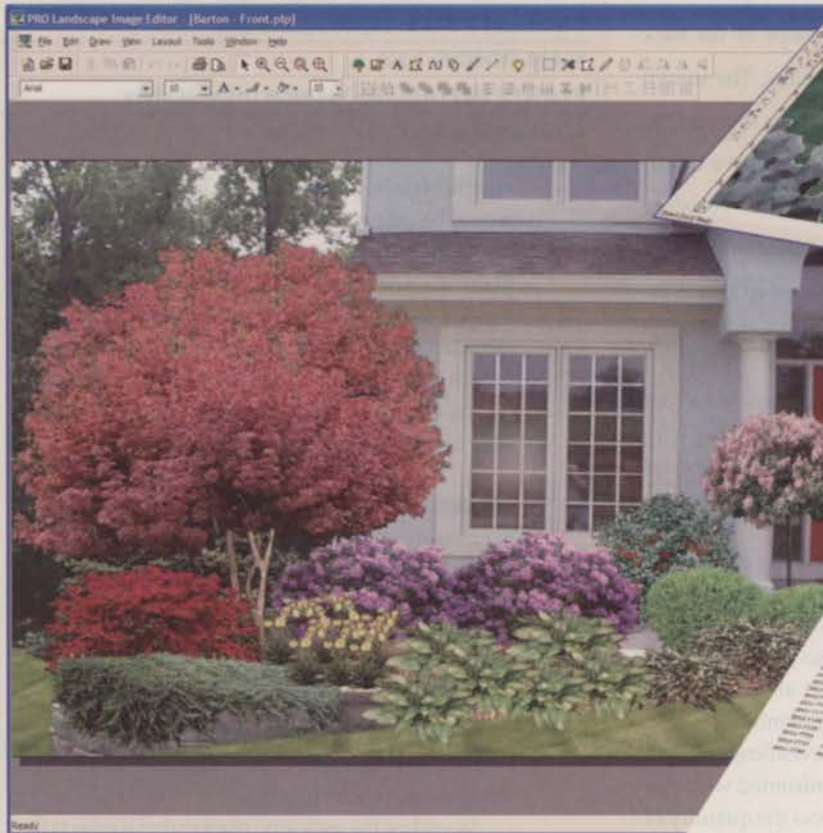
Photo: Florida Nurserymen & Growers Association

The author is Contributing Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at acybulski@lawnandlandscape.com.

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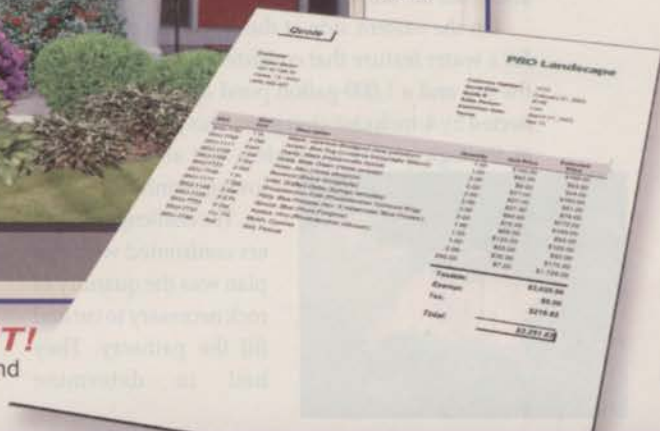


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Item	Description	Quantity	Unit Price	Amount
1	Excavate 4' x 4' x 12"	1	\$150.00	\$150.00
2	Grass seed (Kentucky 31)	100	\$1.50	\$150.00
3	Plant 100 plants	100	\$1.50	\$150.00
4	Plant 100 plants	100	\$1.50	\$150.00
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100	Plant 100 plants	100	\$1.50	\$150.00
Totals:				\$2,250.00
Excluded:				\$1,000.00
Tax:				\$50.00
Total:				\$3,300.00

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What Are You Waiting For?

USE READER SERVICE #28

PROJECT: Buck Residence

LANDSCAPE COMPANY: Schnetz Landscape

DESIGNERS: Bill Schnetz, Nick Armitage and Pat Roop

PROPERTY SIZE: 20,000 square feet

MAN-HOURS: 3,200

PLANTS INSTALLED: Varieties listed in story

AWARDS: CLCA President's Award

As with some residences in the San Diego area, the Buck residence features a steep slope in the backyard that the client wanted to utilize. The design objectives were to produce a landscape that had the feel of a high mountain area, and to create a transition from the tropical look of the pool area's existing plant material. In addition, the client wanted to enjoy the outdoor space, so we planned an area at the top of the garden for her to admire the view.

ROCKY PLANNING. The initial plan was to cut into the slope and retain the resulting banking with dry-stack quarry rock. Timber steps would be set into the slope so the client could climb the corners and cross the slope.

On the eastern side of the slope, the plan called for a water feature that consisted of a bog garden at the top and a 1,000-gallon pond at the bottom connected by 4-inch cast-iron pipe. This pipe was to leak at strategic points to create a wet area for water-loving plants.

water-loving plants.

The challenge designers confronted with this plan was the quantity of rock necessary to cut and fill the pathway. They had to determine



A mountain and ocean view provides a cozy spot for the homeowner to relax and enjoy the environment. Plants installed on the walkway to the top of the slope vary based on the altitude. Photo: Schnetz Landscape



whether hauling an estimated 120 to 160 tons of rock would be cost effective.

As the project began with the removal of existing plant material, the designers researched and reviewed various means of moving the rock up the slope. After much soul searching, they modified the design idea. The new plan called for a wooden deck walkway, eliminating excess soil and excavation. This cut the amount of rock needed in half.

CLIMBING THE GARDEN. Garden construction began with building the retaining walls for the planters. Sixty tons of rock had to be moved by hand to the rear slope from the frontyard drop-off point.

The water feature on the east side was also fine-tuned from its original concept. Cast-iron pipe was brought to different points of the raised bed, where small, individual water features were built. This allowed us to contain the water and create micro-environments for water plants.

Ascending the walkway, plant material reflects the altitude gain. The palate changes from tropical plants to *Rhaphiolepis indica*, *Ceratostigma plumbaginoides*, Meidland roses, *Ceanothus* and *Prunus*.

At the highest altitude, *Cedrus Deodora* and

Pinus thunbergii dominate, with *Vinca* major as the ground cover. More roses add color and scent. *Rumohra adiantiformis* grow in the shady areas under the deck.

The slope garden and pool gardens finally were tied together with a natural, stone patio and fire pit constructed match the dry-stack walls. The original stucco walls were veneered with the same flagstone, and a stone staircase connects the wall to the wooden walkway.

The landscape caters to the property's spectacular views and the client regularly walks to the top to have her coffee in the morning. — Nick Armitage

The author is the construction supervisor at Schnetz Landscape, Escondido, Calif., and can be reached at 760/591-3453.



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Feels like an ordinary rotor.
Must be an ordinary rotor.**

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USE READER SERVICE #29

TREE PLANTING

The 10 Commandments

Trees evoke all kinds of images – Arbor Day, Earth Day, the coming of spring.

But before dreaming about the cool, summer spots blossoming shade trees provide, contractors must ensure healthy starts by following 10 planting fundamentals.

1. Locate logically – Trees need room to develop root systems underground and branches above ground. Don't plant trees that will grow too large in small areas. Also, avoid planting under power or telephone lines or too close to buildings.

Site suitability determines which trees to plant. The designated site may be in the lawn, near a patio, along a street or sidewalk, in a garden, in sun or in a shaded spot. Soils may be clay, sandy, saline, compacted, wet or dry. Whatever the situation, contractors need to determine if the spot is suitable for growing a healthy tree.

Consider planting for energy conservation. Deciduous trees shade the west, south and east sides of the home in summer and evergreen trees provide winter windbreaks along the west and north edges of lots.

2. Choose carefully – Clients may want trees for privacy, increased property values, windbreaks, shade, sound barriers, fall color, flowers, fruit or bird habitats. Combine this information with knowledge about the site to choose effective species.

Also consider that fast-growing trees often are weak and subject to storm damage. Think about the mature size and shape of trees and learn whether their roots might invade sewer lines or lift and crack sidewalks. Avoid planting trees that are likely to harbor insects or diseases.

3. Dig diligently but cautiously – Before digging, contact a utility company to mark the location of any underground lines. Contractors can be liable for damage done to such lines.

To prepare the site, mark a circle or square at least three times the diameter of the tree's rootball. Excavate the area. In clay soil, dig to a depth of 2 to 4 inches shallower than the height of the rootball. In sandy soil, dig to a depth equal to the rootball. Leave the bottom of the hole firm and undisturbed.

Add 25 percent by volume of a coarse organic amendment, such as sphagnum peat, compost or aged manure to the excavated soil. Mix it well with the excavated soil – this becomes backfill.

4. Plant properly – Try to plant trees when the weather is cool, cloudy and humid, but not windy. If you can't plant right away, keep the tree in a cool, shady, protected spot and keep the roots moist. Soaking bare root trees and shrubs in a bucket of water overnight before planting helps.

Remove plastic or metal containers from the rootball. Place the tree upright in the center of the planting hole. If the tree is in a fiber pot, tear off the sides. If the roots of a containerized tree are potbound, tease out some of the roots and shallowly slit the rootball's sides with a knife.

For balled-and-burlapped trees, cut any rope tied around the trunk and pull the burlap away. Cut any reinforcement wire, removing as much as possible, but be sure the rootball stays intact.

Backfill the hole; continue until roots are covered and most of the backfill is used. Don't tamp the soil afterward.

5. Fertilize frugally – Don't put fertilizer into the planting hole; it may cause root injury. In spring, fertilize young trees lightly.

6. Water well – Water the soil at relatively low pressure and let the water settle the soil. If the soil settles below grade, add more backfill. When finished, the planting area should be well soaked and moist backfill should barely cover the top of the rootball. Watering frequency depends on the soil, not the calendar. Dig with a trowel on the edge of the planting area. Soil that feels moist and holds together when squeezed doesn't need water. Overwatering drives air from the soil, causing root suffocation while frequent, light watering promotes shallow root development. In addition, mulching will reduce watering frequency.

Send trees into winter with a good supply of moisture by watering them thoroughly in fall. Water during extended warm, dry winter periods to prevent drought damage to roots, particularly for trees planted the previous year.

7. Prune prudently – A newly planted tree needs only minimal pruning. Prune out only dead, diseased or injured branches. (Do not use pruning compounds on cuts.) Research shows that transplanted trees establish quicker when as much foliage as possible remains.

8. Stake sensible – Trees can be staked too tightly or for too long. Don't stake small trees or those not in the wind's path. Rigid staking is actually counterproductive – research shows trees don't develop normally if they are not allowed any sway.

9. Mulch meaningfully – A forest tree provides its own mulch with several inches of leaves on the ground. Imitate this by mulching the planting area with 3 to 4 inches of wood chips, chunk bark, straw, pine needles or shredded leaves.

10. Wrap in winter – Use wraps on deciduous tree trunks around Thanksgiving time; remove the wraps around Easter. Do this for the first two to three seasons to protect young trees from winter sunscald. – Robert Cox

The author is extension agent, horticulture, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension, Denver, Colo.

Don't plant trees that will grow too large in small areas.

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TALL, WET GRASS?
TIGHT SPACES?
PUNISHING PACE?**

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USE READER SERVICE #30



On

Paper



System Set-Up

Though most landscape contractors are getting geared up for busy spring work, taking one last look at all systems might be a wise step, particularly when it comes to scheduling holiday lighting work.

Most landscape contractors who perform this service tend to rush through the task, getting set-ups and take-downs done just in the nick of time. But the key to completing jobs efficiently is scheduling them as far in advance as possible – yes, even in spring for fall scheduling.

Drew Quinio, operations manager, Plantscape, Pittsburgh, Pa., shared some scheduling logistics.

First, before scheduling begins, Quinio appoints one full-time leader to be in charge. This “Christmas coordinator” is responsible for all paperwork, phone calls, scheduling, vehicles and staff. Once a job is sold, the coordinator assigns it an order number and record on the scheduling form, which also holds key data, like the client’s name, address, phone, primary client contact and salesperson.

After grouping jobs together to minimize travel time, the coordinator can decide on the total number of crews and crew sizes needed each day. This information is printed on the form, leaving room for comments or special notes.

Salespeople log their chosen installation date and projected man-hours for each job on a large, centrally located wall calendar. The coordinator can record these on the scheduling form and create a tentative schedule. Salespeople should aim to sell jobs as “week of” instead of a specific date for scheduling flexibility and then clearly note the job entries on the form as “firm” or “week of.”

The coordinator can keep a subtotal of daily man-hours and immediately close the days that have reached their assigned limit. Then, he or she will make necessary adjustments to formulate a final weekly schedule.

Once a weekly “final” schedule is developed, post it in a central location, like the wall calendar. Distribute copies to all key people involved, such as sales, managers, design crews and warehouse staff. – *Ali Cybulski* **II**

The author is a Contributing Editor to Lawn & Landscape and can be reached at acybulski@lawnandlandscape.com.

On Paper highlights contractors' business forms. To view additional such documents, visit the Business Tools section at www.lawnandlandscape.com. If you have a form you think contractors would benefit from, contact Nicole Wisniewski at nwisniewski@lawnandlandscape.com or 800/456-0707.

SCHEDULING HOLIDAY CREWS

CLIENT NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

CLIENT CONTACT: _____

DATE TO BE INSTALLED: _____

PROJECTED MAN-HOURS: _____

TOTAL ACTUAL MAN-HOURS: _____

CREW LEADER: _____

SALESPERSON: _____

ORDER NUMBER: _____

CREW:

1. _____

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10. _____

FOLLOW-UPS

COMMENTS

DATE: _____

COMPLETE MAN-HOURS: _____

SIGNED: _____

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TOUGH TECHNOLOGY.

Silverado technology is tough technology, designed to bring you a more dependable, longer-lasting truck. That's why Silverado was the first full-size pickup ever built with a hydroformed steel front frame* — an innovation that makes our frame exceptionally tough, strong and durable.

And now, specific Silverado models are available with QUADRASTEER four-wheel steering, making Silverado with QUADRASTEER the most maneuverable full-size pickup you can get.† At highway speeds, the front and rear wheels turn in the same direction for added stability when passing or changing lanes while trailering.

LEGENDARY POWER.

The broad and powerful lineup of engines available in a Silverado is something CAR AND DRIVER always applauds, and who are we to argue? Silverado has six legendary Vortec[™] gas engines to choose from. The Vortec 8100 Big Block V8^{††} cranks out a full 340 horses while the mighty Duramax[™] Diesel^{†††} generates 300 horses and 520 lb.-ft. of torque to handle the biggest jobs.

BROAD RANGE OF MODELS.

Silverado isn't just one truck. It's a whole lineup of trucks that are precision-engineered and built to our high quality standards. Whether your Silverado is light-duty, heavy-duty, long box, short box, regular cab, extended cab, crew cab, two-wheel drive or 4x4, it can help you get the job done, and get it done right.

As CAR AND DRIVER'S Best Pickup for 2001, 2002 and 2003, we didn't just set the benchmark. We built the bench. Silverado. The Truck. From Chevy. The most dependable, longest-lasting trucks on the road.***

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HEAVILAND ENTERPRISES

HEADQUARTERS: Vista, Calif.

BRANCHES: Poway, Calif.

FOUNDED: 1985

2002 REVENUE: \$3.35 million

2003 PROJECTED REVENUE: \$4.1 million

SERVICE MIX: 75 percent commercial/industrial; 25 percent government/municipal

EMPLOYEES: 88

GROWTH DECADE

1993 – \$1.8 million

1994 – \$1.84 million

1995 – \$1.62 million

1996 – \$1.57 million

1997 – \$1.93 million

1998 – \$1.99 million

1999 – \$2.28 million

2000 – \$2.68 million

2001 – \$3.23 million

2002 – \$3.33 million

2003 – \$4.1 million projected

EQUIPMENT ARSENAL

34 trimmers

31 blowers

12 edgers

5 chainsaws

40 hedge trimmers

35 maintenance vehicles

32 21-inch walk-behind mowers

6 36-inch walk-behind mowers

1 48-inch riding mower

Nuts

Bolts

M

Heaviland Enterprises is nothing if not progressive. If there is an industry pulse, it is right, smack on top of it. If there is a punch, the company

already has it beat. In perpetual motion, Tom Heaviland pushes forward to find solutions before issues like labor, growth or legislation develop into sore spots. He anticipates them like a tornado warning and he plans for them like he would a cross-country trip, charting routes, pit stops and mile markers in a connect-the-dots course to his final destination.

He is a keen navigator – an energetic captain. And he enjoys a challenge.

"I love the industry," declared the president of the Vista, Calif.-based operation. "It is a challenge because there are so many moving parts to do the volume that we are doing, and with the equipment, the vehicles, the labor, the materials – all the moving parts it takes to produce the volume. It's a risky business. But that's the fun. That's the challenge – and that's what I enjoy."

Competitors notice this momentum, too, and see Heaviland Enterprises popping up on desirable bid lists in the greater San Diego, Calif., area, pointed out Glenn Wilhite, regional manager, The Brickman Group, San Diego, Calif. A long-time industry friend, Wilhite's father and Heaviland's late father, Ron, shared lunch regularly. The two sons met each other about eight years ago and have enjoyed a professional and personal relationship since.

"For most companies, I would say the business came and then you learned how to be a businessman," Wilhite generalized, noting the "big, infectious smiles" that characterize both father and son. "Tom and Ron were businessmen first. They were always on the bell curve ahead of where they needed to be. They asked the right questions and had the right plans in place before the growth got there."

THE TAKEOFF. Wilhite recalls a philosophical conversation he recently shared with Heaviland over lunch. Times are changing, they agreed. People are changing. "We were deciding whether it was good or bad change, and then we started to laugh and said, 'Now we are sounding like the same people we used to laugh at years ago.'"

"But things sure are changing real fast," Wilhite remarked.

And the Heaviland Enterprises company snapshot is quite different than when it started as a "small, struggling company" in the Palomar Airport Business Park. Tagged PABSCO, Heaviland and his father purchased the business and managed a few commercial properties in the corporate subdivision. This was in 1984, when Heaviland was playing professional hockey for the Hampton Aces and had never considered the green industry his next trade, though he admitted his hockey skills left him "big on heart and short on talent."

"My dad and brother and I were getting ready to play golf at Torrey Pines where they have the Buick Open," he remembered. "My dad was

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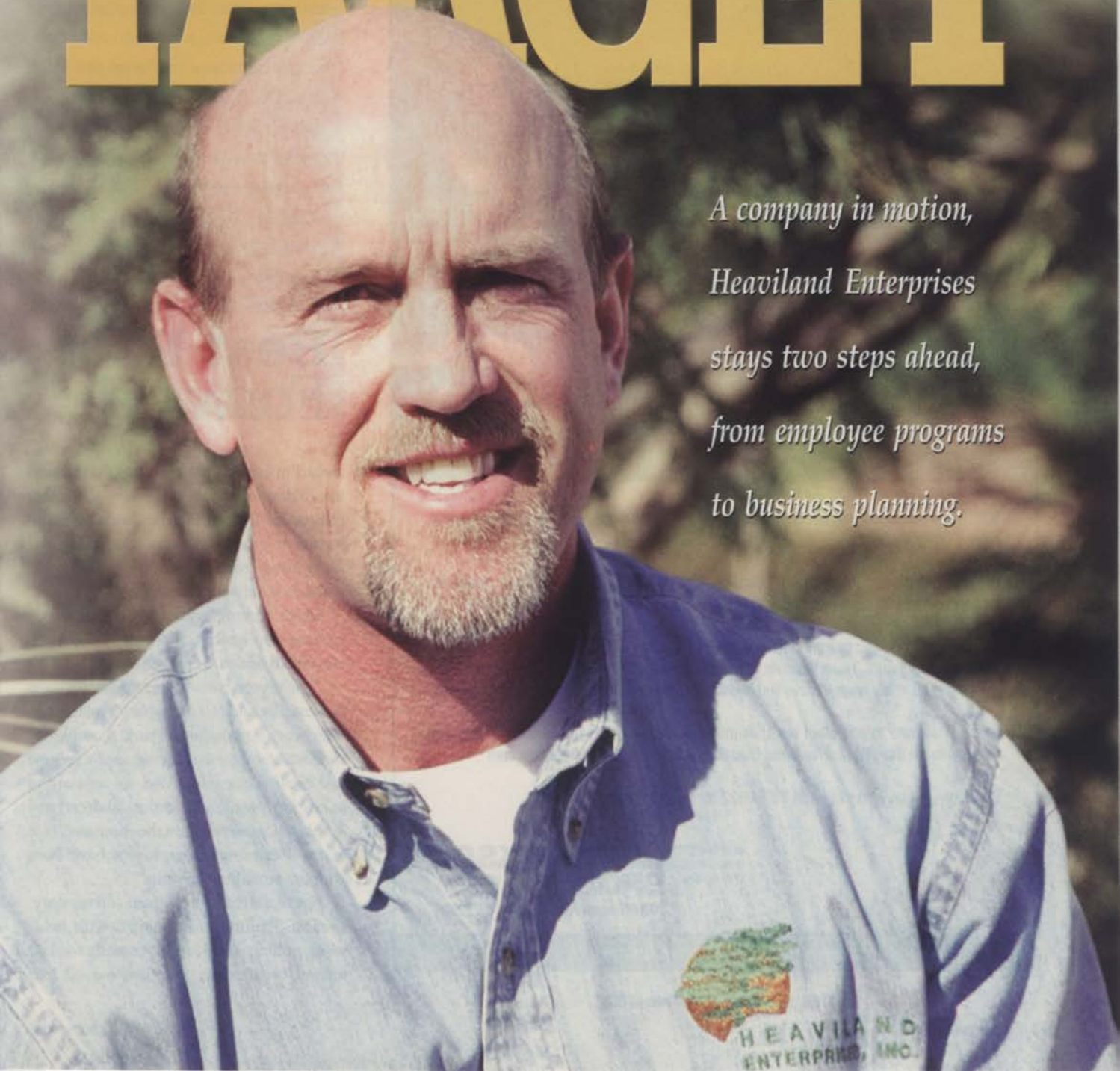
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talking about this small landscape company that was for sale. I said, 'I'd be interested in looking at it with you.'"

Seventeen years later, the company roster includes 88 employees and the business generated \$3.25 million last year with projections for a 15-percent increase in 2003. Growth steadily inched up 15 percent the past five

years, except for last year's 4 percent, Heaviland said, noting softening sales.

The secret is focus, and Heaviland sticks to his forte: commercial maintenance.

"It is what we do best," he said simply. "There is so much potential in commercial maintenance in Southern California, and I don't see the need to venture into other

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Employees are a step ahead in safety at Heaviland Enterprises, thanks to a company program that subsidizes a portion of workers' shoes. Worn out boots are a safety hazard, and Tom Heaviland, owner of the Vista, Calif.-based operation, noticed that many crew members were wearing boots that probably weren't protecting their feet.

"We were finding that employees were wearing cheap boots that were not safe and (the shoes) weren't lasting," Heaviland remarked.

Now, workers can spend the same amount on their footwear and purchase a better boot. Each year, Heaviland doles out gift certificates employees can use at several local shoe stores. The company picks up \$40 of the tab, and the employee handles the rest. "So, if the shoes are \$80, we pay \$40 and they pay \$40," Heaviland explained. "For the same price they were paying before, they can get a good pair of boots that are guaranteed." — *Kristen Hampshire*

Best Foot Forward

areas. I'm in more of the mindset that I would like to develop strategic alliances with other companies like an interior landscape contractor or a tree contractor vs. pulling our focus away from commercial maintenance, which is what we do well."

Large account wins and long-time employees also foster the company's growth, Heaviland added.

"The key contracts we secured gave us some volume," he said of the company's milestones. "One was a large industrial park. A couple city contracts also gave us some significant volume and boosted our sales. Also, we are starting to hire key people and our key laborers have eventually grown within the company. Two of my longest-term employees have been with me more than 15 years."

Heaviland credits a company success story, Gerardo Ramirez, who started with fieldwork, pulling weeds, and eventually worked toward certification and then moved into

irrigation. "He is fluent in English, he got married, he bought a house, he has a family – he is a real success story," he said proudly.

Employees like Ramirez are hard to come by these days, Heaviland commented, describing a significant difference between the "old school" and new hires. He notices a younger incoming workforce – one characterized by a "What are you going to do for me?" attitude and a fickle demeanor.

"We have to find ways to motivate and offer incentives and give these guys opportunities, because they will get 50 cents somewhere else and then, boom, they are gone," he described.

Education and communication help build a work culture that empowers employees and encourages their input – this environment breeds long-term employees, Heaviland figured. A dedicated safety and training manager spends time with crews daily, training them on equipment, administering tests, holding safety meetings and answering in-field questions.

Regular employee surveys gather feedback – a valuable tool as Heaviland steers the company toward progress rather than letting it stall and sputter. One survey focuses on morale, asking questions like: Are you happy? Do you like your supervisor? The next questionnaire hones in on personal preferences, so the company can feed its employees' personalities into its practices. It solicits details like: What do you enjoy doing in your spare time? What type of sports do you enjoy? How many kids do you have?

"We really try to get a lot of input from (employees)," Heaviland said, noting that younger generations are receptive to this approach. "It used to be, 'Here is what we are going to do and this is how we are going to do it.' Now, it is, 'You tell us what you are going to do and how you are going to do it. What kind of equipment do you want? Let's bring in some samples and let you pick out what you think will work best for your job.' There is a lot more communication now."

Heaviland's employees would agree.

The point is to put people first, and with a 100-percent Hispanic workforce, tapping into cultural innuendoes, such as a preference for carne asada over hot dogs and hamburgers at picnics, solidifies the company's connection with its employees.

"You have to look for ways to keep them – good training and providing opportunities

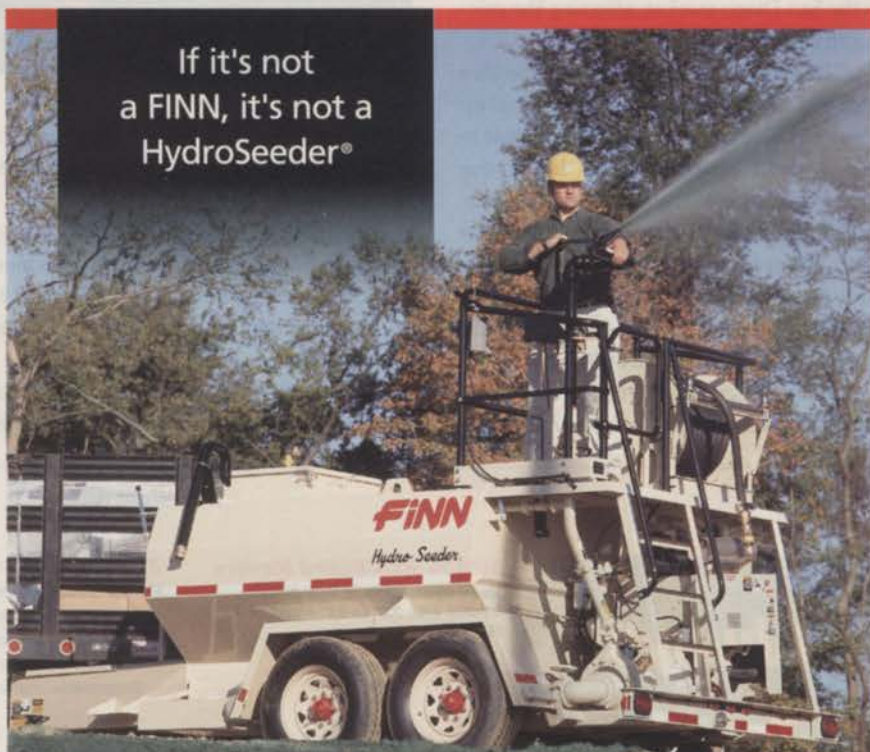
so they see there is room for growth," Heaviland reemphasized, adding that these are other mile markers closer his multi-branch growth destination.

THE PASSENGERS. Labor issues aren't confined to incentive programs and satisfaction surveys. Unreliable employees zap effi-

ciency, and Heaviland realizes the importance of clockwork systems now, especially, as skilled workers are lured to higher paying trades like construction. Today, employees simply cost more.

"It's difficult, because the quality of worker coming through the doors isn't the same type of quality we had a few years

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ago," Heaviland remarked, "although we are starting to see it ease up a bit."

What is not easing up is competition and pricing. Proximity to the Mexican border allotted the region inexpensive labor for some time, but in an employee's labor market, skilled workers aren't a bargain. In addition, an influx of companies from the Los Angeles and Orange County areas have set up shop in the San Diego market, affecting the pricing structure, Heaviland noted.

"The client is used to a low, competitive price and now the labor market has jumped up drastically in cost and we haven't been able to increase our contracts to reflect that, so our gross margins have shrunk due to that disparity," he said, noting a 45-percent gross margin target he hopes to boost this year. "Where we make it up is in the indirect and overhead costs. We are still showing a pretty decent net profit compared to industry standards."

The indirect and overhead savings Heaviland refers to fall in areas like equip-



Gerardo Ramirez, like many Heaviland employees, has found opportunity and a career path in the organization. Photo: Dee Abercrombie

ment, which he turns over quickly, and the building, which he owns and leases back to the company.

And client education will play a large role in aligning the pricing structure to meet increased labor costs, he noted. "We need to educate our clients that (our employees) are more than just workers."

Heaviland compares his \$24 man-hour rate to a Midwest company, which might

charge \$35. He knows his number is low, but by no means is he the bottom of the SoCal pricing spectrum – quite the contrary. The rate was figured by considering labor, equipment and overhead, and then calculating how much the company needs to charge to make a profit.

Of course, some jobs require more manpower – and certified landscape technicians

(continued on page 46)

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Cover Story

(continued from page 44)

might cost a client more – so the rate is flexible. “For example, LegoLand is a high-profile account that demands a certified landscape technician or a high-paid foreman to oversee the crew,” Heaviland explained. “That will bump up the man-hour rating vs. a small, industrial property that doesn’t demand a whole lot of attention to detail. Man-hour ratings can fluctuate depending on the specific type of job.”

But Heaviland’s enterprising streak prompts him to consider alternatives to make the most of man-hours. Where does efficiency fall short? Where are the cracks and crevices that cost the company time – and money?

Cloning might be the answer. An additional location in Poway, a northern San Diego city, represents 40 percent of the company’s overall revenues, a good portion of these dollars stemming from a city contract. Opened three years ago, 25 employees are based at the office, which functions as more of a satellite than a branch. “We are working toward a branch setup where they

would have their own administrative staff and sales staff,” Heaviland noted, explaining that these functions are centered at the home office in Vista.

But Poway is a success story, and Heaviland plans to repeat the structural formula that created such a well-oiled machine. “It is kind of the yard stick,” he described of the location. “It is the benchmark by which (the rest of the company) is judged.”

The “very efficient and highly productive” setup can be attributed to its internal structure, which will serve as a business model as Heaviland drives the company to its next stop on the growth map. Heaviland envisions an A, B and C location – A is Poway, B and C are Vista, with plans to break off C from the main branch. Each location will be staffed with an account manager, field manager, irrigation technician, enhancement crew, mowing crew, and trim and detail crew.

Heaviland expects to reinvent the formula in the next five years to tighten organization at Vista and spread the company’s

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reach beyond northern San Diego, where its accounts currently are focused.

“As we hire account managers, we will break them off geographically and they handle an area,” he said. “Those geographic regions will somewhat blend tighter together and form a North, Middle and South.”

THE DESTINATION. Market dynamics are an undeniable impetus for change at Heaviland Enterprises, but so are environmental concerns – a California constant. Water conservation tops the list, and Heaviland won’t sit while legislation passes.

“Water is a scarce commodity here,” he said matter-of-factly. “We’re kind of the last group on the pipeline, San Diego. Our industry is highly dependent on water and we

(continued on page 166)

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GREAT DANE

It's about time.

by Nicole Wisniewski

Andrew White perfects his focus on hardscapes and landscape installation in North Carolina.

The WAYSIDE Way

Andrew White ran a Cincinnati, Ohio-based company with his brother for seven years. The company grew to a point where it had nine divisions and White wasn't focusing on his core interest, which was landscape construction and installation.

So, in 1986, White left Ohio's plains for North Carolina's mountains and bought Asheville-based Wayside Nursery, which was started in the 1920s and was made up of a retail nursery and landscape division.

To focus the company's services, White closed the nursery portion of the business in early 1987 and changed the name of the company to Wayside Landscape Services to better reflect its new focus – an 85 percent construction and installation and 15 percent maintenance service company.

Today, White's ideal job is one that includes hardscaping, irrigation and planting for residential clients, and he wants to keep the company at its current manageable revenue of \$500,000.

BASIC BEGINNINGS. When White left Cincinnati, he had two options – to start his own business or buy an existing company. "I was leaning toward starting my own business until I found [Wayside] for sale," he said. "It had a good history and client base that went back many years. The company also did similar work to what I wanted to do – primarily construction and planting – so I felt I could build on this. The company was also being sold for a reasonable price because the brothers who were running it wanted to sell it fairly quickly. Essentially, I thought I would start out further ahead by buying this business and tweaking it rather than starting from scratch."

Going from working in a large company in Cincinnati to running a small one in Asheville brought its own set of challenges. "At first, I started running things as if I were in a big market like Cincinnati," White said. "But I learned quickly that I had to get a handle on the market capabilities here, define my objectives, establish a niche and separate myself from others in the area."

Since then, White has focused the company on his main interest – landscape installation and construction.

By being so focused, White has also perfected how he offers construction and installation services. In North Carolina, any site improvement project more than a certain dollar amount – \$30,000 – requires a building permit to make sure the project is constructed and installed safely. Since

(continued on page 50)

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Andrew and Marsha White, owners of Wayside Landscape Services, Asheville, N.C.
Photo: Wayside



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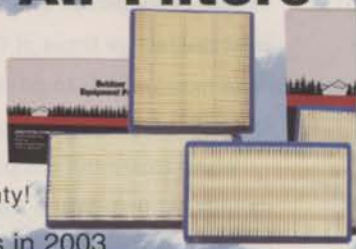
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First Look

(continued from page 48)

White also is a licensed general contractor, he can procure building permits without going through other contractors. Though there's no real way to speed up the building permit process, White has learned how to simplify it. "We've learned to be extremely thorough with the application," he said. "We don't try to make assumptions that the inspector or code administrator knows what we're trying to do on a property. The application and plans need to be complete, thorough and professional so people reviewing them have an easy time and can see that we've done our homework. I have to prove in the application that I know what I'm doing and have it all written down."

After obtaining focus and refining his core competencies, White started developing systems for each area of the business – from the way the company answers the phone to the way a crew cleans up a job at the end of the day. "We are developing a customized, sys-

(continued on page 52)

While Andrew White said one of Wayside Landscape Services's strengths is ensuring a high level of quality and demanding that employees work fast and productively, one of the company's weaknesses is the high stress levels that can result from focusing on this strength.

One of the ways to find the right balance and manage stress is to "put the company to sleep" twice a year – around the end of July and early August and between mid-January and mid-February, White said. "I've kept data for every minute every person's worked here and I know when our most productive and least productive times of the year are – and these are those two times," he said. "The morale tends to go down at that time because of the heat or the weather and doing high quality work in a productive fashion is nearly impossible."

White closes the company and employees are given time off during those periods. At first, White feared that he might lose employees during these breaks or lose money, but he was surprised when the opposite resulted. "Before we were almost losing money because we were trying to grind something to fit into those time periods – now we're maximizing those times of the year," he said. "And employees love it because they get some badly needed time off. A long weekend usually isn't enough to finish home improvement projects or truly relax." – Nicole Wisniewski

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First Look

(continued from page 50)

tematic approach to each task so that we can all be doing things the same way on properties and so that we can train employees on the way we like things to be done," White said.

To do this, White tries to imagine what type of instructions a typical person would need to do a particular task and then writes down each and every step involved as he's

doing it, including a tools and materials list. All these systems are going into a procedural handbook that White is compiling.

To ensure Wayside's five full-time and eight seasonal employees are trained in these procedures, the company conducts 15- to 30-minute paid weekly training meetings. Employees come in earlier one day of the



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week and White provides breakfast and goes over a pertinent topic. Once an employee learns a task, he or she conducts one of the weekly training meetings related to that topic and also is responsible for bringing in juice or donuts.

SAFETY SAVVY. In addition to being trained properly, employees also have to be informed of safety measures while operating equipment and driving vehicles. To convey safety messages to employees, Wayside displays safety procedures posters where all employees can see them and provides protective equipment, including plastic latex disposable gloves and eye and ear protection, in the office and in all company trucks.

Then, to continually reinforce safety messages, Wayside puts weekly reminders in everyone's paychecks, such as tips like, "One of the best ways to avoid accidents is to expect them." Other notes include advice about driving in particularly bad weather or comments on something White observed and didn't like during a previous week, such as putting a tool against the back tire of a truck.

White also ensures that all his employees who drive vehicles know the safety features. Before employees start using company vehicles, he obtains Department of Motor Vehicle checks on them. "Our insurance agent does these checks for us free of charge," White enthused. "If an employee has a bad driving record, we do not let him drive the company vehicles."

Once employees are able to utilize company vehicles, White makes sure to include constant reminders about vehicle safety and operations. "We have an employee orientation handbook that lets new hires know about our vehicles," he said. "We have radios in the trucks and we offer advice on their use and what to do if a battery fails, etc. Each vehicle contains a first-aid kit, eye and ear protection, latex gloves and the handbook." **LL**

The author is Managing Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine, and she can be reached at mwisniewski@lawmandlandscape.com.

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Maintenance Contracts

by Bob West

A contract is a necessary evil. Here are some improvement tips.

Joe Vitale knew he was in for a fight when he bumped into one elusive client.

"I met a lady whose lawn I'd agreed to cut at a very good rate as a favor," he explained. "I cut her grass weekly for a month, two months, three months. I'd send bills. I'd call her house, but I'd never receive payment.

"One day I was cutting the grass of a client across the street from her house, and I caught her coming out of her door," he said. "I asked her when she might be able to make a payment, and she said, 'Oh... I didn't want you to cut my grass. I only wanted it cut one or two times.'"

For that reason, ensuring the terms of a service agreement are in writing is a golden idea. "Whether you're in maintenance or design/build, a contract is necessary to protect yourself," said Vitale, president, Vitale Landscape, Roselle Park, N.J.

Still, the thought of creating a contract seems to immediately instill fear in most landscape contractors. "I think their concerns are more psychological," observed Jack Mattingly, an industry consultant with Mattingly Associates, Alpharetta, Ga. "They hear the word contract and they start thinking about attorneys and all of that."

And while Mattingly recognizes that few contractors have actual contracts and their value can be overstated in many cases, they can benefit a company if they're done correctly.

DON'T OUTDO YOURSELF. Plenty of different things can go into contracts: what work you're going to do; how much you're going to charge; what equipment will be used; who will do the work; when the work will be done. The list can go on forever. But the reality is that the only things you should put into a contract are those things that need to be there.

"The best contracts are only one page long," shared Mattingly. "They say what I'll do, when I'll do it, how much I'll charge you and when you'll pay me."

John Biehler uses contracts all the time in his business, and he sticks to the basics as well. "The most basic things a contract should include are service length, description, frequency and price," suggested the president of Suburban Landscape Management, Wichita, Kan.

But within those basics, Biehler reminded, contractors should be keen to detail. "We take for granted that we know what we mean, but clients might not," he pointed out, adding that defining the meaning of providing weed control can help avoid problems down the road. "The clearer things are to the customer, the better."

Mattingly explained that the type of customer and your geographic market often dictate what goes in a contract.

"I think you'll scare a lot of residential customers if you put too many details in there," he related. "But then there

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Maintenance Contracts

(continued from page 54)

are some markets, like Atlanta, where the high-end commercial clients want pages and pages of stuff."

Still, simplicity makes sense when possible, especially considering the fact that most contracts aren't really contracts at all.

"I'd call these more of agreements instead of contracts," maintained Mattingly. "They've all got a 30-day cancellation clause in them, so they essentially say that, 'I'll keep working for you as long as you keep paying me.' That's not really a contract."

These 30-day clauses are too widely used in the industry to get away from them today, but Mattingly noted that one way to put more teeth into these documents and make them more meaningful is to write the 30-day cancellation clause with "cancellation with cause" language.

"That means the cancellation has to have cause or a reason," he pointed out. "Let's say the cause is weed pulling, so then I've got to get written warning as the contractor that

we're going to get cancelled because of our poor weed pulling. Then I have 10 days to correct the problem. If I don't do this, I can

"The most important reason for having a contract is a late payment clause. That should say, 'If you do cancel me in the middle of the contract, who owes who how much?' – Jack Mattingly

then get 30 days notice."

Still, this isn't a perfect option. "Writing a contract based on opinion can be hard," added Mattingly. "What constitutes poor weed pulling?"

Even if you don't get that specific, at least make sure the terms of the work are spelled out and agreed upon. "Often, customers assume certain things are included," commented Vitale. "They may think landscape maintenance means complete property care. Does it?"

PROTECTING PAYMENT. Regardless of how specific your contracts are, there is one thing they should all do: ensure you get paid.

"Our biggest problem without a contract was not getting paid," related Vitale. "Sometimes we'd have two, three or four months go by without receiving a check. Now our contracts say that we will terminate the service on the 15th of the month if we haven't been paid for the previous month."

"The most important reason for having a contract is having a late payment clause,"

(continued on page 58)

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Contracts are tricky and, oftentimes, intimidating. Contractors aren't attorneys, after all, and the truth is that they don't usually like dealing with attorneys. So how does a landscape contractor make sure that his company has a good contract?

Jack Mattingly is a consultant who has seen many landscape companies' contracts – good and bad – through his work at the Alpharetta, Ga.-based Mattingly Associates. He shared some key contract tips with attendees at the 2003 Lawn & Landscape School of Management.

- *Spend a little money.* "Have the contracts printed on a good printer and on good paper," he suggested. "You want your contract to stand out when it's on the desk with all of the other contracts."

- *Don't make everything part of the contract.* "This is particularly important for jobs like mulching," Mattingly

said. "This should be a separate charge instead of being rolled into the base monthly fee so that you don't end up playing the bank and providing a 0 percent loan to your customer on the cost of the mulch throughout the summer. Charge for this when you do the job."

- *Put the price at the top.* "You know the client is going to look for the price first," Mattingly observed. "Make it easy to find by putting it at the top and take the discussion from there."

- *Be vague when possible.* "For example, most properties don't need to be edged weekly, so don't say you'll edge weekly unless the client asks for it," Mattingly offered. "Say that you'll edge as needed. This can be a good way to control your costs without sacrificing quality."

- *Include late-payment penalties.* "This is the best reason to have a contract," Mattingly emphasized, adding that most companies charge 1 to 1.5 percent for late payments. "You need to spell out the payment terms and what happens if they aren't met." – **Bob West**

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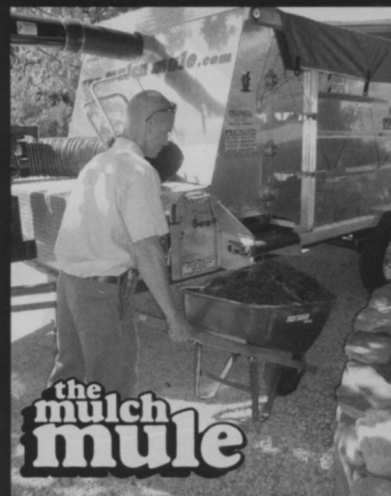
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USE READER SERVICE #50

Maintenance Contracts

(continued from page 58)

agreed Mattingly. "That should say, 'If you do cancel me in the middle of the contract, who owes who how much?'"

"You have to have the clause that says, 'I'll be compensated for the amount of work I've done to this point,'" he continued. "That takes care of that 12-equal payment type of contract where the mulch went down in the spring and you haven't been paid in full for it yet because the cost is being spread out over the course of the year. You shouldn't end up losing money just because you got your contract cancelled."

IT'S IN THE DETAILS. You don't have to spend much time thinking about contracts before you realize that writing these documents presents almost as much opportunity for creating problems as it does for solving them. That's why clarity matters so much when writing a contract.

"The No. 1 key is clarity," asserted Vitale, who consulted with a consumer affairs at-

torney when creating his firm's contract. "You have to be specific in terms of exactly what you will vs. won't do."

Biehler agreed that being specific makes a lot of sense. "Sometimes you also need to state in the contract what you won't do," he recommended. "For example, our contracts point out that typical irrigation system maintenance is not included in the base fee."

The whole issue of providing a base fee option to the client creates other questions as well, such as exactly what work that includes and how often that work will be performed. "Decide if you want a contract to be performance based or not," explained Mattingly. "Are you going to cut the grass 'as often as necessary' or are you going to commit to cutting the grass a set number of times for a certain price. There are pros and cons to each approach."

Of course, what matters in these situations is what the client expects. "What generally happens with frequency contracts is

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that neither the client nor the contractor keeps track of the different mowings anyway, and if you do it creates a nightmare in the office," Mattingly pointed out. "If you do keep track and you go over the number of mowings in the contract, the client doesn't want to pay for an extra cut. At the same time, if you commit to 28 times but you only cut 27 times, are you going to write the client a check for the extra cut?"

These situations illustrate why Mattingly recommends using less specific language for this part of the contract. "I prefer to say that, 'We'll cut as needed. And we've estimated this will take 32 cuts for the season, but the ultimate key is performance based—no extra charges or refunds.'"

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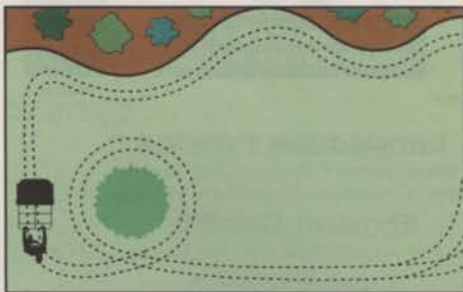
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Maintenance Contracts

(continued from page 60)

And once all of the words are right, pay a little attention to your contract's appearance. A good contract helps build a company's image.

"Some contracts get real overdone graphically," Mattingly observed. "The fonts aren't good, there are misspellings and the overall presentation is awful. Contractors should consider how the contract looks when you're not reading it."

A professional-looking contract can even be a sales tool. "If you're the low bid and your contract looks cheap compared to the others, the client might not think you can do the work," Mattingly pointed out. "But if you're the low price and your contract looks professional, that tells the client you know what you're doing." ■

The author is Editor/Publisher of *Lawn & Landscape* magazine, and he can be reached at bwest@lawnandlandscape.com. Enloe Wilson also contributed to this story.

The issue of getting paid is one that concerns many contractors for obvious reasons, but it's most problematic when dealing with residential customers. That's why Jack Mattingly, an industry consultant with Mattingly Associates in Alpharetta, Ga., believes contractors should encourage homeowners to pay by credit cards.

"I recommend that contractors bill residential customers by credit cards," he explained. "If the customer doesn't have one, then you don't want them as a client. And this way you make sure you don't get into chasing down bills and dealing with receivables."

A common complaint about credit cards is the charge assessed to users, but Mattingly said a careful review of your numbers shows how little that cost matters. "The credit card charge is just pennies compared to not having your receivables as part of your cash flow." — **Bob West**

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by Nicole Wisniewski

TRY a **Turf** TRIP-TIK



Seasoned contractors and university researchers share what they predict to be 2003's testiest turf troubles.

Pack these tips in your spring luggage or risk losing your way around clients' lawns.

Ask any lawn care operator (LCO) to describe his or her last vacation and the depiction will probably include words like "fun" and "frolic."

However, talk to travelers who didn't thoroughly plan their voyages and you're likely to hear words comparable to "disastrous" and "disappointing."

Unfortunately, most people don't associate planning with pleasure. They're so busy daydreaming of tropical beaches and adventurous amusement parks that they forget they need to prepare for those activities – how they are going to get there, what the weather will be like, what they are going to wear, how much money they'll need, etc.

Then when the impending trip nears, they awake from trances and panic about unpacked suitcases and last minute chores. Ultimately, they forget supplies for the trip, end up buying high-priced necessities on the road, and pay increased costs for airfare, car rentals and hotels – all because they didn't plan.

Similarly, ignoring how winter weather conditions will affect this year's insect, disease and weed problems can leave LCOs paying more for continuous curative control and losing healthy turf, not to mention their way around a perfectly good landscape.

Don't let unexpected turf troubles spoil a well-scheduled and green-filled spring season. Tuck these tips from seasoned contractors and university researchers into your turf Trip-Tik, and gain some guidance.

CLUB MIDWEST. Four distinct seasons, golden plains as far as the eye can see, a collection of great lakes – these are just a few reasons vacationers travel to the heart of the country. In fact, some frequent Midwest visitors, like billbugs and chinch bugs, find this U.S. region a trendy locale and show no signs of packing up and leaving despite increased pressure from local LCOs.

(continued on page 66)

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USE READER SERVICE #58

Regional Lawn Care

(continued from page 64)

Summer droughts are the reason these pests are kicking back in their lawn chairs and staying awhile, pointed out David Shetlar, entomologist, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.

"Unfortunately, since billbug and chinch bug damage was rare in the 1990s, many lawn care specialists are not well trained to detect it," Shetlar explained. "Most turf managers confuse billbug damage with drought, disease, greenbugs or white grubs. But billbug-damaged turf turns a whitish-straw color rather than the yellow caused by greenbugs and soil under damaged turf is solid, not spongy as in white grub attacks."

To confirm billbug raids, Shetlar advised LCOs to grasp the affected turf and pull upward. If the stalks break easily at ground level and the stems are hollowed out or full of packed sawdust-like material, billbugs are to blame.

Billbugs' favorite meal is Kentucky bluegrass and they like to eat from late-June through August, when summer drought stress is common. Light infestations in lawns often produce small dead spots that look like dollar spot, Shetlar described, and heavy infestations can result in complete turf destruction, usually by August.

But if the Midwest faces a wet spring and dry summer – as it did the last two years – LCOs can expect significant billbug damage in June and July.

Because of their armor-like bodies and ability to hide from insecticides by boring into grass stems, Shetlar suggested LCOs begin treating billbug-prone neighborhoods two to three weeks before they expect the first migration and not more than three weeks after they confirm billbug migration. First migrations normally occur in late April or early May.

Billbug's evil brother, the chinch bug, has been causing damage later than normal – August and September instead of June and July – during the last two Midwest seasons. Shetlar blames wetter than normal April and May days, which encouraged white fungus disease to decimate the developing chinch bugs. "This insect needs dry and warm conditions to develop well," he said.

LCOs can easily control chinch bugs if they detect them early. Telltale signs are irregular patches in perennial ryegrasses and fine fescues that turn yellow and then straw-colored and increase in size despite watering. "Chinch bug feeding blocks the water and food conducting vessels of grass stems," Shetlar explained. Proper turfgrass maintenance and April or early May preventive insecticide treatments can control chinch bug populations in problem areas.

The good news for the Midwest is that white grub populations have been generally down, especially in non-irrigated lawns. "Lawn care operators can likely breathe through another year of relief since it usually takes two to three seasons for grub populations to recover to damaging levels," Shetlar said, adding that if June and July receive normal rainfall, the white grub populations will begin to increase, but likely will not be at destructive levels over vast areas. "However, if they are maintaining lawns in irrigated areas, grub prevention procedures are likely warranted."

MOLDY NORTHEAST ADVENTURES.

Vacationers come for the fall foliage – leaves in shades of crimson, terra cotta and gold – but locals balk at the snow mold damage that results from heavy Northeastern winters.

"We've already received a lot of snow cover, so I would expect that unless the snow melts fast, we will see some snow mold damage in the Northeast," pointed out John Thrower, owner, J&J Greenscape, Williamsville, Vt.

According to the University of Illinois Extension, Rockford, Ill., during early spring's wet, cold weather, snow mold sticks out as matted, crusty turf areas. As conditions dry out, snow mold will gradually fade but infected areas remain as weak or dead turf. The potential for snow mold increases on lawns with excessive thatch, shade, poor drainage, and excessive debris (such as leaves or straw).

The problem with snow mold is that there isn't much LCOs can do in the spring. "You

(continued on page 71)





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(continued from page 66)

have to pretreat in the fall and if you haven't and get snow mold problems, you have to renovate the large patches of turf that were damaged," Thrower said.

Snow mold usually results in lawns that don't melt snow rapidly and dry out - shaded areas, for instance, Thrower explained. "It happens to every property with north facing lawns and a lot of evergreen cover since the sun will get through deciduous trees unless they are thick," he said.

Not only does excessive snow cover cause snow mold, it also results in increased sod webworm and chinch bug populations. Thrower uses curative pesticide applications to control these pests.

In 2002, Thrower also battled red thread diseases in his residential clients' bluegrass, fescue and ryegrass lawns because of a cold, wet spring and open winter. But this year, "I would expect that we're not going to have as much rain, which means less red thread," he said. "But be prepared for it if we get a cool, damp spring. The best way to get rid of it is to grow it out with good cultural practices, particularly a second fertilizer application."

THE TORRID TRANSITIONAL ZONE.

Though temperatures warm up when driving South, the increase of fire ants in transitional zone areas like North Carolina are heating LCOs' tempers to a feverish level.

In 2002, fire ants made a big jump north and west in a lot of transitional zone areas due to the mild winters in 2001 and 2002, said Rick Brandenburg, entomologist, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, N.C. "This insect is surprising us with its ability to move so far north - they are moving much further into cooler temperatures than they ever have before," he said, adding that a Georgia study revealed that there was recent hybridization of typical Southern fire ants with more cold tolerant fire ants from the northern Georgia mountains.

Unfortunately, there's no magic spell or silver bullet to banish this pest. "The key for fire ants is learning as much as you can about their biology and management," Brandenburg advised. "They are different than white grubs and armyworms because



they live in colonies of a half-million ants and to control them you have to lull the colony into thinking nothing's wrong or they will move fast to avoid destruction. They are smart insects - you have to develop long-term strategies."

Another 2002 showstopper in the transitional zone was the fall armyworm, Brandenburg said, adding that the mild winter caused these insects to move northward. "The contractors who took a real beating were those who laid new sod or established new lawns because fall armyworms prefer new seedlings and sprigs," he said. "These insects have a knack for finding the lushest, nicest, most tender growth to feed on."

This year, the same problems will persist if mild winters continue, and tall fescue lawns will be more susceptible to these insects because "green turf makes a better meal," Brandenburg said.

On the disease front, large patch and spring dead spot hosted the main event in 2002, according to Lane Tredway, plant pathologist, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, N.C. And the cold, wet fall might make diseases even more severe this year, particularly on bermudagrass and zoysiagrass lawns.

LCOs can best manage large patch - light brown, sunken turf areas - in April and May, preventively, Tredway suggested. "A single fungicide application in the fall before the grass goes dormant is most effective," he said, adding that large patch worsens when turf is wet for long periods of time. "If you

don't do that, the disease can be controlled or suppressed in the spring, but applications are far less effective, and they need to be made before symptoms occur."

Spring dead spot, which dots bermudagrass with circular dead specks in the spring, is similar to large patch in terms of control strategies, but Tredway said even fall applications are more sporadic than fully effective. "Your best bet is to wait and see how bad it gets and try to encourage grass to recover in the spring and summer through good cultural practices, including aeration, thatch control and avoiding excessive nitrogen in late summer," he suggested.

WEEDY SOUTHEAST SIGHTS. Warm weather, clear skies, sandy beaches - the Southeast constantly boasts all three, along with consistent insect and weed populations among its attributes.

"Weeds live all year round here - we have winter and summer annual weeds," stated Jeff Michel matter-of-factly, but two particular weeds posing major Southeast problems this year are crabgrass and alexandergrass in St. Augustine lawns.

Excess water through irrigation or heavy rainfall promotes these weeds, said Michel, training and technical director, GreenUp Division, Massey Services, Maitland, Fla. In 2002, this meant heavy afternoon rains three to four times a week in June, July, August and September.

WEEDY Southeast Sights

"If the Midwest faces a wet spring and dry summer - as it did the last two years - LCOs can expect significant billbug damage in June and July." - David Shetlar

ber. "And there isn't a good postemergent control product that takes care of them so, usually, we have to go in after the damage is done with a nonselective herbicide that kills the lawn and the weeds, then resod," he lamented. "It's a very expensive venture."

In an attempt to plan ahead and prevent these weeds in the spring, Michel is investi-

gating adding a second, more expensive preemergent application in February and March. He applies the first application in fall to control winter weeds.

"It's also important in spring that we clean up last year's weed problems and get fertilizer applications property timed so the

lawns are healthy and growing before summer and don't have weakened root systems susceptible to weed infestation," added Barry Troutman, technical services director, ValleyCrest Cos., Calabasas, Calif.

Michel said 2002 was also a bad disease year, root rot being the main menace in the

Southeast due to the massive amounts of rainfall the region received. "This even helped increase the weed population because the severity of the disease has an effect on how much bare area there is for crabgrass to get into home lawns," he said.

Overall, the intense rainfall followed by drought-weakened root systems makes plants much more susceptible to a host of horrors – particularly diseases, Troutman said. "This year, it will be more important than ever to manage irrigation on properties to ensure too much water doesn't collect and cause disease," he said.

In terms of pests, Michel expects the same predators – fire ants, which Troutman called "insured revenue forever in Florida because they've always been and always will be a problem," chinch bugs, sod webworms and mole crickets. "Florida is a breeding ground for new things and a challenging location to do lawn care – yet exciting as well," he said.



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NORTHWEST CRANE FLY ISLAND.

Few states receive as much rainfall or cloud cover as Oregon and Washington, but that doesn't keep visitors, particularly the European crane fly, from exploring the Northwest's lush green grasses.

Crane fly damage shows up as brown or dead turf patches in March and April when the spring

Northwest Crane Fly Island

growth spurt begins. "At this stage, insects are in the larvae form and stay underground during the day feeding on turf roots and crowns, but come to the surface on damp, warm nights to feed on aboveground plant parts," explained Arthur Antonelli, extension entomologist, Washington State University, Puyallup, Wash. "Feeding stops in mid-May, and larvae go into a non-feeding stage just below the soil surface during July and August. From late August through September, pupae wriggle to the surface and the adult crane flies emerge."

However, crane fly larvae undergo a weak hibernation when unseasonably warm winter temperatures wake them up. "These

(continued on page 74)

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Regional Lawn Care

(continued from page 72)

warm periods result in early feeding and lead to more serious lawn damage in early spring," Antonelli pointed out, adding that if warm winters occur, LCOs should watch the lawn carefully for damage development, particularly if the area has a history of crane fly problems.

Based on Oregon State University Meteorologist George Taylor's predictions, the western part of the state will experience a wetter, cooler winter and spring so crane fly infestations will probably be about the same as they were in 2002, commented Dwight Wolfe, owner, Albany Weed Man, Albany, Ore.

The standard crane fly control recommendation is to assess population numbers in mid- to late March and treat if needed. According to Antonelli, preventive fall applications during October also have been successful. "This is the time when most of the eggs have hatched and the larvae are small and vulnerable," he said. "If a fall applica-

tion is made, another application should not be needed the following spring."

A few years ago, a second turf damaging crane fly – called the common crane fly – made its appearance in the Northwest, bearing a resemblance to the European crane fly. "This complicates current management recommendations because there are two generations per year with this new crane fly where the European crane fly has only one," Antonelli said, explaining that common crane fly has an early adult emergence in April and May as well as a second emergence in August and September. "We are currently assessing timing recommendations to deal with both species. But with the introduction of this new crane fly, fall applications may become more common, since such applications will surely eliminate both species."

In addition to crane fly troubles, Wolfe said he expects to see more diseases, particularly red thread, leaf spot and fusarium,

prevail in the Northwest as a result of wetter, cooler winter and spring temperatures.

Most homeowners complain about red thread, a fungal disease that shows up on lawns as 2- to 24-inch diameter circular pinkish-red patches, described Tom Cook, turfgrass specialist, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Ore. A close examination reveals red webs resembling antlers that bind the grass blades together. Eventually, these patches will turn bleached-out white.

Red thread thrives in poorly fertilized, cool temperature environments and typically worsens on perennial ryegrass, red fescue, chewings fescue and old bentgrass lawns, Cook said. "[Red thread] also shows up at times in summer on lawns that are under mild drought stress or low nitrogen fertility," he pointed out.

Treatment includes a fungicide application and then turf reinvigoration to prevent future problems. Maintenance steps include

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Pricing Irrigation

by Ali Anderson, Lauren Spiers &
Nicole Wisniewski

Trickle DOWN ECONOMICS

Well-priced irrigation maintenance can bring a shower of profits.

Irrigation systems are in constant movement throughout hot, summer months, particularly in drier climates.

As a result, systems require maintenance at some point to ensure that all the regularly moving parts are still in tip-top shape, offering adequate coverage to intended areas.

This service in itself is no easy task – requiring consistent parts stocking based on expectations as well as organized scheduling. Additionally, contractors have to work the numbers and properly price this service before the profits can come pouring down.

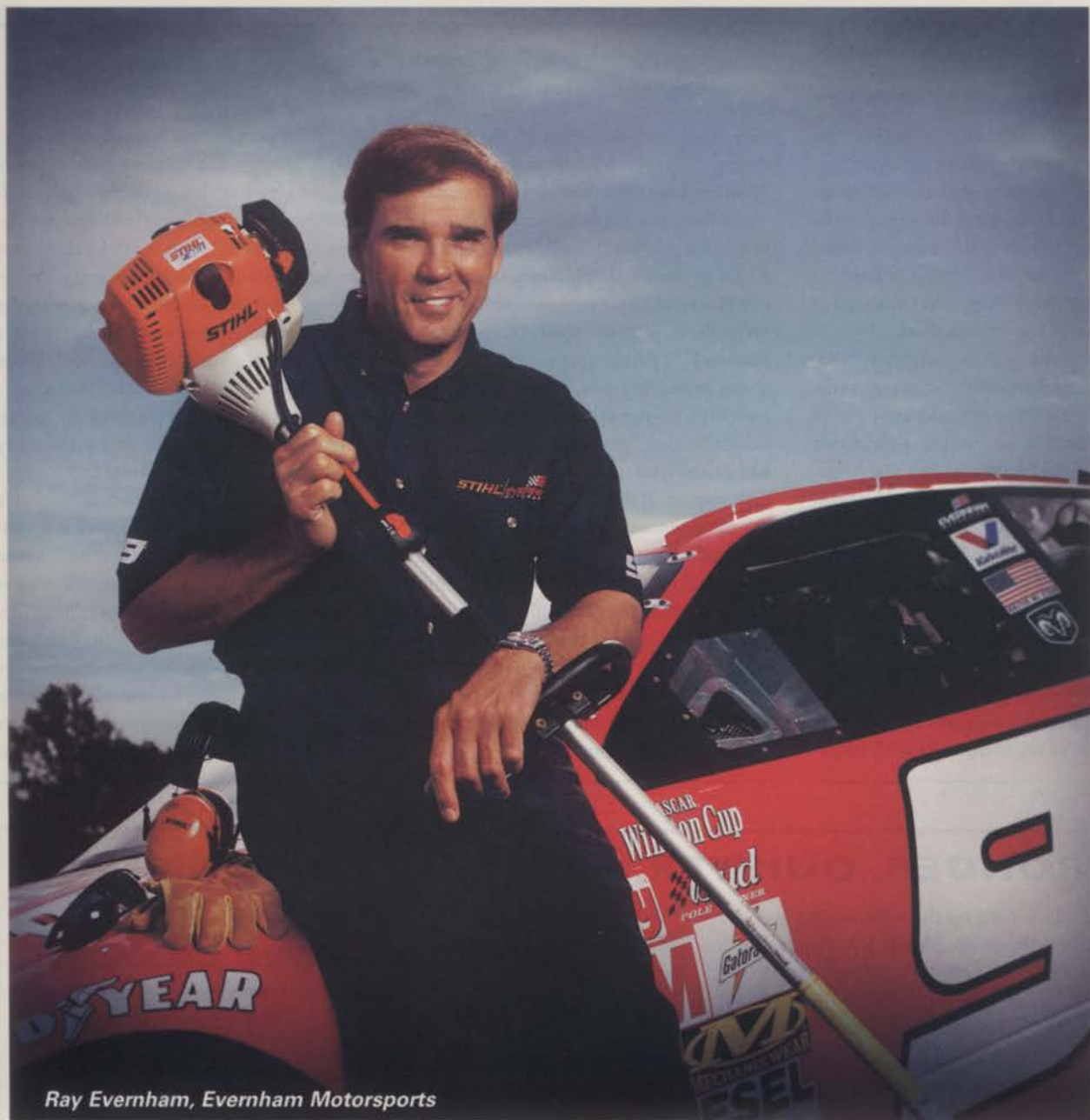
PRICING POINTERS. A typical irrigation maintenance pricing structure goes something like this, according to Bert Wood, regional manager, Omni Landscape Group, Atlanta, Ga.: First, contractors determine an average hourly payroll rate. Then they determine the price they pay for materials and the indirect costs per man-hour. Finally, they add these three factors

together and apply the desired markup. “Without trying to make it sound too basic, that is the bare bones of determining a profitable pricing structure,” he said.

Dwight Elliott, president, Elliott Irrigation Co., Birmingham, Ala., agreed, suggesting that contractors “first sit down and figure out what it costs for your service truck to pull up to a particular job,” he said. “You have the truck itself, its insurance, upkeep and gas. You have your inventory on the truck along with your investment in electronic equipment. You have your service technician’s salary, bonus and commission, health insurance and training. Basically, you will have about 30 percent of your company overhead for the service end.”

Most irrigation contractors charge a standard hourly labor rate plus material costs for maintenance services. For instance, Rain Link’s hourly labor rate is \$60 per hour, which is an average rate, according to Shonda Chapa, co-owner, Rain Link, Wichita, Kan.

(continued on page 78)



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USE READER SERVICE #64

Pricing Irrigation

(continued from page 76)

But most contractors agree that the final price will fluctuate based on job difficulty. For instance, if certain aspects, such as access to the problem, make the repair more labor intensive, the rate will increase, Wood said, or if new, less experienced technicians are doing the work, they don't warrant as high of a rate, Chapa pointed out.

Other contractors prefer set pricing. For instance, Elliott charges \$85 to drive up to the property, then adds specific charges for each type of repair. "Let's say we locate and repair a bad valve," said Elliott, adding that irrigation service consists of 32 percent of his business, but he'd like to increase that to 50 percent. "We charge \$85 plus \$145 for replacing the valve, and the \$85 includes a system check."

Omni Landscape Group has two ways of pricing irrigation repairs, according to Wood. The first way is the company's "Planned Service Program," which is a preventive maintenance program that accounts for one-third of the company's total irriga-

tion revenue. "We arrive at the price to perform this service by calculating all of our known system components, namely clocks/controllers, main points-of-connection and zone valves," Wood said. "For example, a 12-zone system typically will have one clock, one main and 12 zones, equaling 14 components. We multiply the total number of components by a per-component price to arrive at our evaluation cost. This is a fixed cost each time we perform the service. In addition to the evaluation cost, we request a pre-authorized limit for repairs to go along with each visit. So, at the completion of each visit, the customer will be invoiced the evaluation cost plus a time-and-materials charge for repairs below our pre-authorized limit. The last visit of the year will be the winterization of the system, which is priced based only on the number of main points-of-connection. The price is higher if the system requires the use of compressed air to perform the winterization."

Wood prices other repairs on a per-occurrence basis. Examples of these types of repairs, which are priced on time-and-materials, include main or lateral line breaks, weeping or stuck open control valves, controller repairs or replacements and wiring or solenoid troubleshooting. "When we price these types of repairs, we typically request a 'not-to-exceed' price from clients," Wood said. "Our pricing is usually based on a worst-case scenario, so we generally ask for a fair not-to-exceed price and make every attempt to come in well under that."

Job materials also can affect pricing. "We request different not-to-exceed amounts based on the size of the mainline," Wood explained. "A 1-inch mainline will require less time to access, repair and backfill than a 6-inch mainline. Materials also are taken into consideration. Using the same example, we can use a PVC fitting for a 1-inch line repair while we use a mechanical joint fitting for

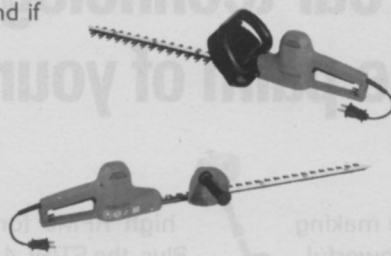
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USE READER SERVICE #67

Pricing Irrigation

(continued from page 78)

anything larger than 3 inches. The price difference between a 1-inch PVC fitting vs. a 6-inch mechanical fitting is significant."

Regardless, a contractor's pricing structure, they cannot leave out key factors when determining fees. When pricing irrigation maintenance, contractors should consider system size, mainline size, system history or age, wear-and-tear vs. construction damage and repair access. These aspects can affect overall costs, Wood advised. "Construction damage typically is a lot more detrimental to the system than meets the eye," he said.

Another pricing mistake is underestimating the time needed to perform repairs, Wood said, advising contractors to know the job and do the adequate research on the specific system before estimating it.

Contractors should also remember that proper pricing doesn't always guarantee profits. "Anyone managing an irrigation service team must drive revenue in order to make a profit," Wood said. "We achieve this

Quick TIP

Wichita, Kan.-based Rain Link offers a materials discount for customers who prepay for their annual service. "If clients prepay for their fall shutdowns and spring startups, we offer a discount on materials if they cut their line, for instance," said Shonda Chapa, co-owner, adding that the discount is usually 10 percent off of the list prices of materials. "It benefits us for them to sign up and pay for the maintenance program ahead of time to help with our scheduling and cash flow, but it's also a benefit for them because they receive a discount."

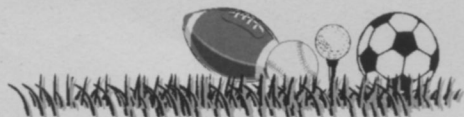
through thorough tracking of our irrigation teams. Our goal is to capture at least 90 percent of our labor and materials, which means capturing the amount we *should* be charging for labor and materials, not simply covering our labor and material costs."

Wood explained that his goal is to bill 85 to 90 percent of each crew's hours and minimize the cost of unused but purchased materials bought in bulk. "You should try to bill in excess of 85 to 90 percent of your labor costs and 90 to 95 percent of your

material costs," he advised. "If each employee works 10 hours a day, at least 8.5 to 9 hours of that day should be billed at the hourly rate you would charge to the customer. Provided you have determined the correct labor and material charge and you have steady flow of service work coming in, you will make a profit every time."

CLIENT CONCERNS. Selling flexibility, convenience and aesthetics is easy when chat-
(continued on page 82)

Michael Fiore



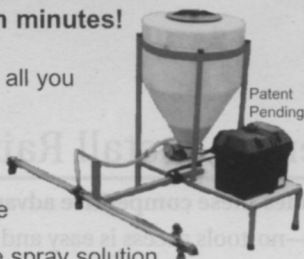
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USE READER SERVICE #70

Pricing Irrigation

(continued from page 80)

ting with clients about irrigation systems, but talking price can be awkward. Using familiar comparisons helps.

"When trying to sell these services, we use a lot of real world examples that the customer can relate to," Wood pointed out. "Our favorite is the example of servicing a car. Everyone knows the importance of

changing the oil in their cars, rotating the tires, checking fluids, etc. We do these things because cars are significant investments and they get us to where we want to go. The same thing applies to irrigation systems. Irrigation systems have moving parts, they are a significant investment and they get our landscapes where they need to go."

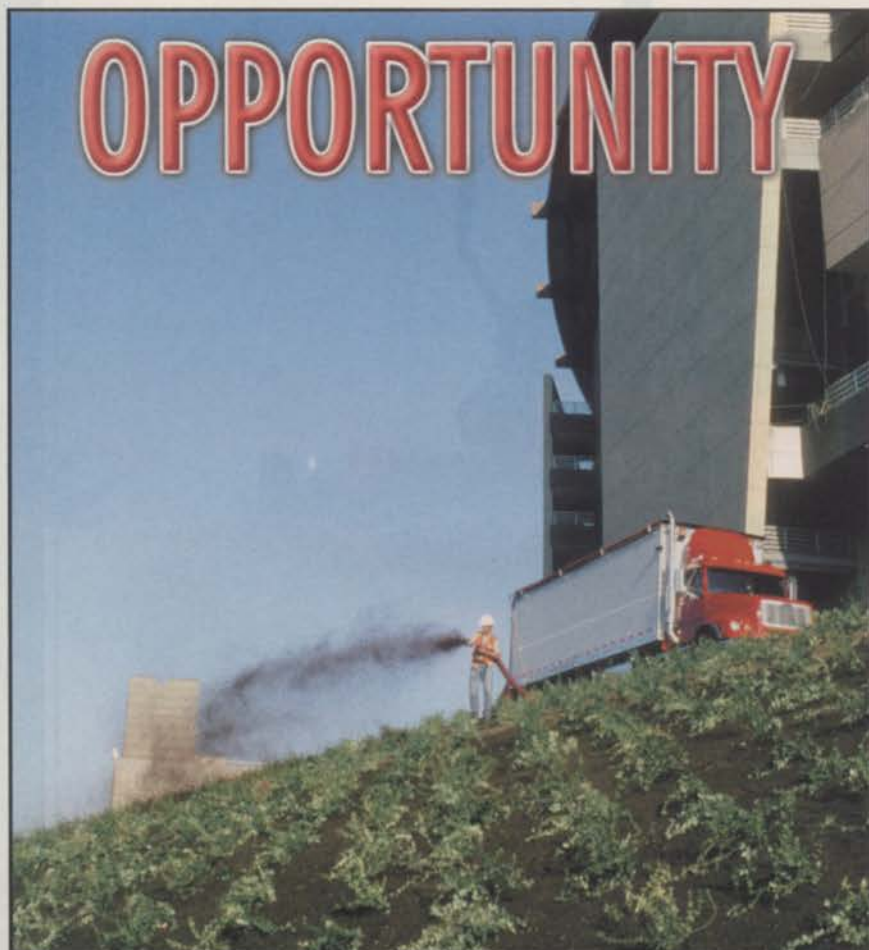
Elliott also uses examples to explain irrigation pricing to clients. "One client was giving me a hard time about the lack of materials I used on his repair and so I told him the story of my daughter, Beth," he said. "She went to the dentist and had four wisdom teeth removed. We had to drive her there - the dentist didn't bring his office to our house. Then, he took 45 minutes for the procedure and charged me \$1,145. He didn't even use any parts. I appreciate the dentist's good work and didn't have the nerve to ask him to list out the cost of the gauze he used. The customer understood this example."

Also, when dealing with customers, one of the biggest mistakes contractors can make is not communicating results or progress. "Always get the customer's approval before proceeding with a repair and do not nickel-and-dime a customer to death over small items," Wood suggested. "If you do find you have underestimated a repair, let the customer know as soon as possible, preferably before the repair is completed, especially if it is a lot more involved than you originally thought. The customer will be willing to work with you the majority of the time. If a customer calls up and says 'nothing works' or 'I have got a leak every 30 feet,' ask a few questions before quoting them a price or better yet, offer to come to their property free of charge to get a better assessment on the situation. Follow up with the customer, let them know what you discovered."

Also, contractors shouldn't be afraid to "toot their own horns" with clients, Wood said. "Talk about your response time, repair quality, cleanup quality," he commented. "This helps build trust and loyalty with the customer - in other words, repeat business."

Ultimately, discussing company merits, as well as excelling at offering this specialized service helps contractors get over pricing humps and achieve profitability. Woods advised, "When explaining the pricing structure of your services, focus on the value of the services you are providing, be professional, sell the job, do the job right the first time, be an effective manager and the wins, i.e. profits, will all fall into place." **LL**

The authors are Assistant Editor - Internet, Assistant Editor & Managing Editor of Lawn & Landscape, respectively, and can be reached through nwainiewski@lawnandlandscape.com.



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USE READER SERVICE #72



Understanding Roots

by Anna Martin

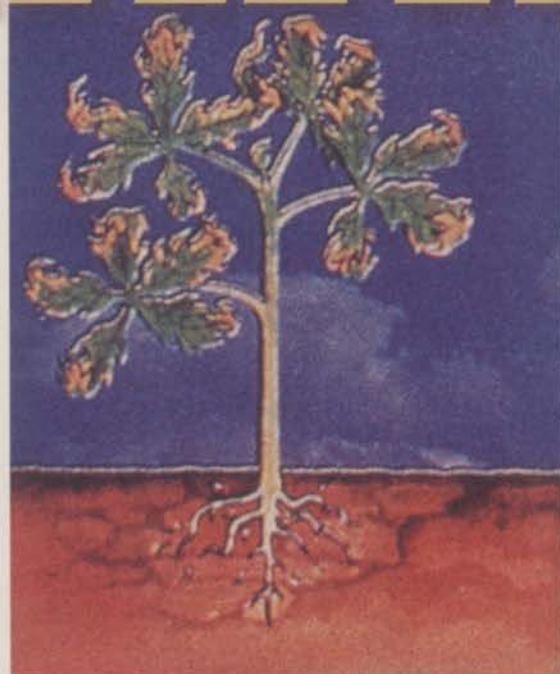
Though leaves steal the show, plant roots actually play a more significant supporting role in growth.

What Lies BENEATH

As a component of a universal three-part plant system, including roots, stems and leaves, roots often take the behind-the-scenes supportive roles essential to total production, but far from the limelight of recognition and celebrity. Leaves – the photosynthesizing plant organs – are typically the show stars, receiving not only all of the hype and acclaim for their performance, but also the “oohs” and “aahs” over their aesthetic appearance. Therefore, the root system of a vascular plant may be one of the most oversimplified and underappreciated organs in living history.

ROOT DOWN. A root system’s primary functions are anchorage and the absorption of water and minerals. The secondary functions include storing water and minerals and producing shoot growth hormones. A plant is comprised of an above ground shoot system, which includes the stem or trunk and leaves, and a below ground root system. The stem or trunk supports the photosynthesizing plant organs – the leaves. These organs function with the help of a highly developed vascular system, which consists of two conductive tissues – xylem and phloem that exist together and circulate through the entire plant. Xylem transports water up from the roots to the leaves and phloem distributes food throughout the plant.

(continued on page 86)



Roots and soil work together. Plant roots grow in the spaces between soil particles. A balance of air pockets and soil particles produces a healthy root system, which in turn produces a healthy plant. Without a healthy root system, plants will not thrive. Photo: Dow AgroSciences

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Understanding Roots

(continued from page 84)

Growth within the root system is two-part. Primary growth originates from the apical meristem – an area of perpetually embryonic cell tissue. Apical meristems are located at the tips of roots and shoots and manufacture the plant's extension growth. Secondary growth, which thickens the roots, originates from the vascular cambium and the cork cambium, two lateral meristems.

Roots, which form at the base of the root collar, typically are made up of primary roots from which secondary roots – commonly known as “feeder roots” – arise. Primary roots are woody and perennial and are responsible for the anchorage and storage functions. The secondary roots are comparatively short lived and usually function for approximately two years before dying or becoming part of the primary root system. These secondary roots are responsible for the absorption of water and minerals.

A plant's root system can span four to seven times the diameter of its drip line. The majority of the root mass is found in the top meter of the soil – generally in the top 12 inches – where water and minerals are most plentiful. Roots tend to grow continually toward sources of water and minerals, choosing the path of least resistance. Both primary and secondary roots together have more than 100 times more surface area than the above ground shoot system.

Soil structure plays an important role in how well roots grow, and likewise, roots play an important role in soil ecology. Plant roots do not actually grow in soil; they grow in spaces between soil particles. A balance of air pockets and soil particles is essential in producing a healthy root system, which in turn produces a healthy and vigorous plant. Air pockets allow for good movement through the soil and facilitate the removal of

expired carbon dioxide from the soil. Water movement through these pockets is also essential to optimal root growth. The release of carbon dioxide along with hydrogen can create a lightly acidic environment, which actually helps make micronutrients available to the plants. Roots also have the ability to produce chemicals called exudates that can inhibit competition from other plants.

Generally, there are two types of root

Mycorrhizae grow on and around a plant's root system, surrounding and often penetrating the cortical cells of the plant root.

The mutually beneficial relationship between plant root systems and mycorrhizae is such that many plants suffer in their absence. Mycorrhizae fungi play a major role in the plant's ability to uptake phosphorous and other essential minerals from the soil, increasing the root system's uptake ability

The **primary functions** of a plant's **root system** are **anchorage** and the **absorption** of water and minerals.

The **secondary functions** include storage of **water and minerals** and the **production** of **shoot growth hormones**.

systems, taproot systems and fibrous root systems. In tap root systems, one or several dominant roots grow directly down and give rise to several secondary branches. Some trees with a taproot system include: *Quercus alba*, *Juglans cinerea*, *Carya* and *Carpinus*. Conversely, fibrous root systems do not have any roots more prominent than the next. Some trees with fibrous root systems include: *Acer rubrum*, *Acer saccharum*, *Betula*, *Populus deltoides* and *Abies*. To manage landscapes effectively, contractors must know the growth characteristics of the trees and shrubs that they work with. For example, fibrous root systems are particularly well suited for soil conservation, as they tend to cling persistently to soil particles.

A FUNGUS AMONG US. Discussing root systems would be impossible without giving recognition to mycorrhizae fungi.

by nearly 500 percent. In exchange for this service, the plant supplies the mycorrhizae with life-sustaining nutrients. The presence of mycorrhizae in the soil surrounding plants also helps guard against disease and drought, and most certainly helps a plant recover and thrive when a contractor transplants it.

When trees must be dug and transplanted at inopportune times – such as mid-summer – adding an anti-transpirant substance containing mycorrhizae and several valuable nutrients to the root balls helps plants thrive in their new environments.

PROPER PLANTING. Practically everything associated with healthy plant growth begins with proper planting practices.

Planting depth is particularly important. Make sure the root crown is well above the original soil level (4 to 8 inches above, depending on the size of the plant). Don't forget, the tree will settle. Positioning the root crown too high is better than risking smothering the plant by positioning the root crown below the soil line.

Contractors should know the specific characteristics of the root systems of the plant material with which they frequently work. There are thousands of existing varieties, and catering to plants' individual needs from the start will pay off in the long run. Always make sure the soil is suitable and amend it if necessary. Common materials

(continued on page 93)

Come installation time, contractors should take note of their plant materials' root masses to ensure that roots are not showing girdling tendencies.

To do this, contractors should simply look for roots that may be circling back toward the plant stem or trunk when they remove a tree or shrub from its container or burlap. If these roots look like they may pose a threat, simply use a sharp knife to cut through the circling roots. If the entire root mass appears problematic, make four vertical cuts through the root mass, one on each side, and then spread the root mass out when planting. This will encourage normal growth. – *Anna Martin*

Simple Slices

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(continued from page 86)

used for amending soil include: compost, bonemeal, manure and peat moss.

Additionally, check the drainage capabilities of both the rootball (or container) and the planting soil. Be sure to provide a proper draining environment for new plants.

Moreover, know what plants are compatible and which pose the greatest competition for resources. For example, use drought-resistant varieties together to aid in proper watering.

Lastly, don't forget that many plants will compete aggressively for space with hardscapes as well. Contractors should determine which landscape element is more important to clients.

Of course, we should mention that starting with healthy, robust nursery stock is the key first step in proper tree care. Contractors should buy only from reputable nurseries and green goods suppliers who offer trees and shrubs that have been properly prepared for transplant. These plants have been pruned not only for appearance but for root/shoot balance as well. Most balled-and-burlapped trees lose more than 75 percent of their root mass when dug. Professional growers have pruned the root systems of their trees and shrubs and used drip irrigation to ensure that the best possible concentration of roots is contained in the root ball at the time of harvesting.

Contractors disturb the root systems of container-grown plants (below) less during transplanting than bare root plants. Contractors must keep bare root material (right) moist and install it soon after removing it from the soil.

Photos: Moon Nurseries



And make sure the nursery stock you buy has been fertilized properly and given proper care for pest and disease prevention.

ROOT RIOTS. Common culprits of root problems include: conflict with hardscapes, limited soil volume, insects, disease and de-

cay, animals, competition from other plants, soil compaction, girdling and mechanical damage. Some universally visible symptoms of root trouble include: fungal growth, discolored leaves, epicormic shoots (shoot growth originating from the bark), insect activity, changes in the bark and heavier than normal fruit and nut crops. Unfortunately, once the signs of damage and disease become visible, it is usually too late. Being familiar with the problems trees and shrubs may encounter and what causes them is the best solution. Here are three major root problems, their symptoms and solutions.

Root Disease and Decay. Injury to a plant's stem or root can leave it susceptible to bacterial and fungal infection. This often leads to debilitating disease and decay.

Decay is the process by which microorganisms destroy and consume the walls of healthy cells. Older trees are less able to defend against the progression of decay-causing bacteria and fungi and contractors should monitor them closely.

Root decay or "root rot," can go virtually unnoticed for years. Typically, infection strikes either the feeder roots – impeding the plant's ability to uptake water and nutrients – or the woody perennial roots, affecting the plant's ability to properly store supplies. Additionally, decay-weakened woody roots, as the tree's source of support, are apt to fail and topple the tree. Common signs that there may be root decay include: mushrooms or fungi growth on and around the root crown; the presence of sawdust from termites, carpenter ants or other boring insects; changes in bark texture; asymmetrical root collar; lack of root flare; smaller than normal leaves; discolored leaves; epicormic shoots or a leaning trunk or stem. If these symp-

Contractors have three options when purchasing nursery stock: balled and burlapped (B&B), container or bare root.

B&B stock is field grown, dug and wrapped in burlap. By doing this, a tree retains an optimal root mass and soil volume for short-term sustenance before it is transplanted. When planting, contractors need only remove the burlap from around the stem or trunk, as burlap is biodegradable.

Container-grown plant material, if grown in a proper sized container, is most likely to survive transplants, as the root system is fairly undisturbed in the process. However, a container plant may take longer to become established, as the roots may resist venturing out of their original fertile soil mass.

Bare root stock, as indicated by its name, is moved and transplanted without the benefit of accompanying soil. Bare root stock must be kept moist and planted as soon as possible. This type of stock is most commonly used for reforestation and revegetation projects. – Anna Martin

The Tree Trio

Understanding Roots

toms arise, try to inspect the root system. If the inside of the root is brown or grey, the tissue is probably dead. Healthy roots are normally pink or tan in color. Contractors can use an increment borer to take a look at inner tissues of a tree at the root collar.

Girdling Roots. A typical root grows away from the center point of a tree's root collar,

constantly in search of new water and mineral sources. A girdling root is one that abnormally turns back towards this center point, crossing back over itself or its surrounding roots. As the root continues to grow longer and wider, it has the potential to strangle any other roots that it encircles. Not only does this damage the plant by

restricting the flow of water and nutrients to the plant, but it can render the plant structurally unstable as well. In trees that are buried too deeply in the soil, a girdling root can actually encircle the trunk at or above the root collar.

The classic cause of root girdling is obstruction, such as hardscapes, areas of highly compacted soil or the container housing the plant. Indications of girdling roots include branch dieback, smaller than normal leaves, misshapen root collars and lack of root flare.


The best way to treat a plant with girdling roots is to cut them away.

Soil Compaction. One of the most widespread deterrents of healthy plant growth is soil compaction. Air pockets in the soil are necessary for both root movement and respiration. In other words, soil compaction suffocates the plant. The availability of oxygen to a plant's root system is vital to the plant's overall health and life function.

Common indicators of roots affected by soil compaction include branch dieback, smaller than normal and/or discolored leaves and poor flower or fruit production. One way to avoid soil compaction problems is to select plant varieties that are more adept to thriving in compact soils. A few examples of such trees include *Acer campestre*, *Ginkgo biloba*, *Gleditsia* and *Tilia Cordata*.

To aid the recovery of plants suffering from soil compaction, remove the top few inches of soil without damaging surface roots.

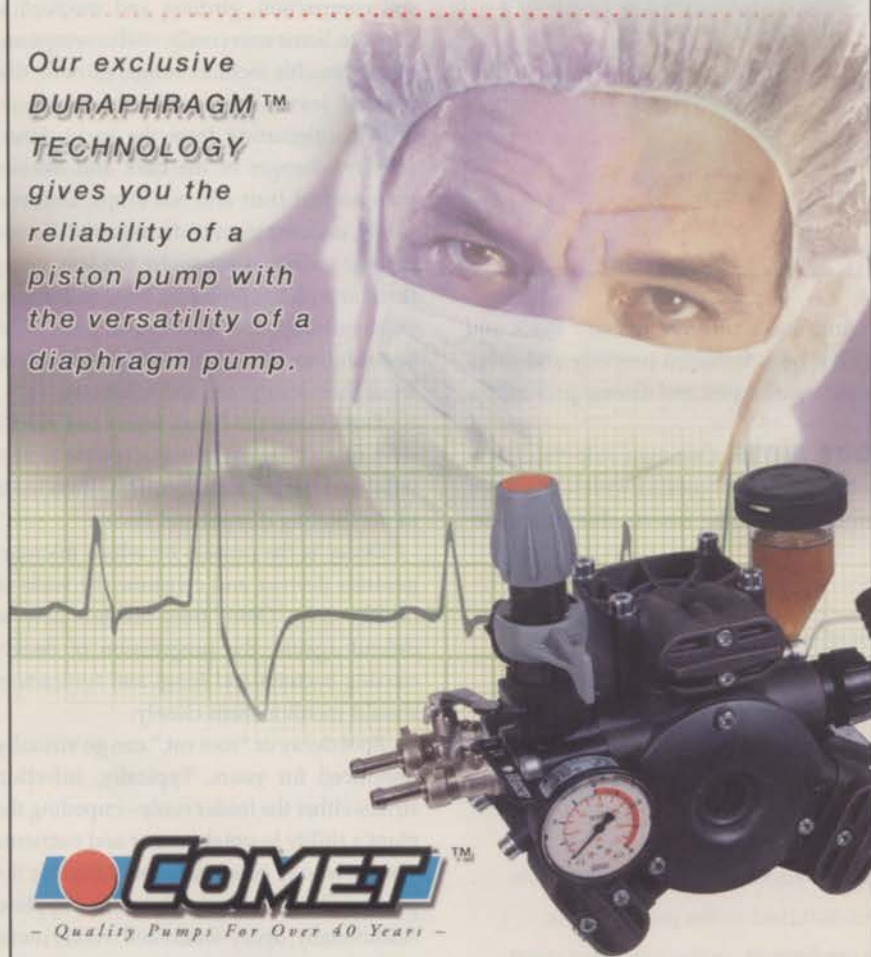
ROOT TLC. The ability to conceptualize the growth characteristics of root systems is a challenging aspect of providing tree and shrub care. Just like the inner workings of the plant, monitoring growth and examining the physical appearance of the root system is difficult to do without the possibility of damaging the plant.

However, root systems play a vital role in the health of plants. Proper care of plant root systems involves building knowledge of the basics and using common sense. Though preventive root care may seem costly and time consuming, the extra effort will pay off in a healthy and robust plant—from the roots up. 

The author is marketing director, Moon Nurseries, Chesapeake City, Md., and can be reached at amartin@moonnurseries.com or 800/803-TREE.

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USE READER SERVICE #77

Design Tips

by Ali Anderson

Creating stunning landscape designs is no simple feat. The process requires a close look at the basic elements of color, texture, scale, balance, rhythm and focus.

Picture this: a striking landscape design – garnished with vibrant flower blossoms planted methodically, assorted trees placed with precision, a custom-made rock wall adorned with a stunning waterfall and an inviting cobblestone pathway illuminated by evening spotlights.

Now picture this: piles of sketches, hours of client-designer meetings, long lists of plant possibilities and frequent trips to a handful of nurseries.

Yes, some serious planning – not just planting – goes into creating a picturesque landscape portrait. But what makes a good landscape design? And how can contractors add more pretty pictures to their landscape portfolios?

After all, landscaping allows for an endless array of possibilities – with so many plants in countless variations of size, color, texture and form. Add stone and water features, and the possibilities multiply exponentially.

While exciting, all these options can make landscape design a bit overwhelming. But industry veterans and landscape designers insist there are some design fundamentals that can help contractors find and create just the right look.



Picture Perfect PLANNING



Dazzling flower blossoms, earthy cobblestones and contrasting shades of greenery can add a colorful flair to any landscape design. Add the elements of texture, scale, balance, rhythm and focus, and a picture-perfect property comes into focus. Photo: Riepenhoff Landscape

BACK TO BASICS. Some professionals, like John DeBell, president, Clippers, Chantilly, Va., like to approach design projects in terms of the basics – at least to begin with.

“Form and function are the basics of good design,” explained DeBell, whose company offers design, installation and lawn maintenance services.

Form, as DeBell defined, is the structural shape of the overall landscape – whether curvilinear, rectilinear, asymmetrical or otherwise. Function refers to the actual purpose for the site. DeBell noted that, at times, form takes too much precedence over function. Bad news, considering function means usability for clients. Every customer wants a scenic – and useful – final product. That functionality can mean planning for walkways in high-traffic areas and allowing easy access to parking.

“A good designer determines the client’s needs for the space,” asserted Beth Doyle, landscape designer, Chip-N-Dales Custom Landscaping, Las Vegas, Nev.

When trying to define the function of a particular space, Doyle recommended designers ask find-out questions: Is the customer likely to entertain guests in the outdoor space? If so, will that be during the day or the evening? Will the customer entertain large groups or host smaller family gatherings? Does the customer have children, pets or special needs to consider?

Asking these and other questions, contractors can gain a clearer picture of exactly what function their design forms ought to take.

“In commercial projects, function also represents the future maintenance issues after the design is installed, photographed and admired,” DeBell expounded.

Indeed, upkeep issues can interfere with functionality. Specifically, turf maintenance problems may originate from placing grass strips between curbs and sidewalks adjacent to parking areas.

Another issue to consider in terms of function is pedestrian traffic, which always takes the shortest route through landscapes – regardless of how attractive the installation may be.

Poorly designed walking patterns that try to force pedestrians into longer, more inconvenient paths ruin many landscapes.

By considering these and other possible functionality problems, contractors can create more user-friendly landscapes and increase customer satisfaction as well.

ELEMENTARY BEAUTY. Once contractors address the basics of form and function, they’re ready to add the finer details of composition. But where to start?

Piles of industry-related books and how-to guides outline effective design elements. Whittle those down to a manageable few, and here’s what’s left: color, texture, scale, balance, rhythm and focus. These specific elements – though somewhat elementary – are some of the details that can add a cohesive flair to any contractor’s designs.

Color. When making color selections, contractors must factor in the color of flowers, leaves, soil, branches and bark – and how they fit with color schemes already living on the site.

“Color has to be used in a way that complements the design and doesn’t hinder what’s trying to be expressed,” said Matt Schultz, designer, Riepenhoff Landscape, Hilliard, Ohio, noting the importance of using colors that don’t “clash” with already-existing architecture and plant life.

Although most plants are green, contractors can choose from scads of shades to add variety and depth to their designs. Thus, an assortment of greens can bring life to a somewhat dull green spot. And in terms of flower hues, the colorful options are seemingly endless.

Remember, bright colors draw attention and dark colors create depth, Doyle advised.

“With such an assorted palette of colors available in nursery products, color choices can be manipulated to elicit certain feelings,” she stated. “Arrangements of blues and purples in the perennials or variations of cool greens can create a cooled-off feeling in an otherwise heated desert southwest landscape. Carpets of colorful ground cover can simulate a flowing stream. Gold and yellow are often used to bring attention to a shady spot.”

Texture. Texture refers to the visual smoothness or coarseness of a feature. And, according to Doyle, it is a commonly overlooked element.

“Imagine that the densely wooded forest you visited as a child only contained one type of tree,” Doyle mused. “No variety in texture of bark, leaves or branches. Picture the unexciting visual that would be.”

Similarly, the allure of a yard is largely tied to its textures. Just picture the lack of animation associated with a texture-free landscape design. Not a pretty picture.

“Textures evoke a desire for people to touch,” Doyle added. “They may graze their fingertips along the edge of a blooming lily or stroke the plume of fountain grass or rest their hands on a textured wall or boulder.”

Design Tips

Textures please the eye as well. Thus, when designing, contractors should attempt to mimic nature by grouping plants and placing opposing textures nearby.

Otherwise, if contractors clump too many fine-textured plants or other elements, the landscape lacks variety, depth and interest, Schultz shared. "We try to combine textures

not only for appeal, but we can also use texture to create distance."

Specifically, remember that soft elements usually seem farther away than those with coarse texture. Keeping texture in check is essential when seeking depth in a design.

Scale. This element refers to sizes – and the relationships created by variable sizes.

"When paying attention to scale, you're trying to be sure you don't put something large in an area that is too small," Schultz mentioned. "You don't want elements to be overlooked – but you want them to be noticed. Finding that comfortable medium, in terms of scale, is essential to a good design."

Balance. Balance is the overall equilibrium of a landscape design. Achieving balance doesn't require precisely mirrored plantings and hardscape features on each side of the picture. However, it does require a sense of equality throughout the design.

"Lots of times the architecture of a house may be asymmetrical, but it can still have balance," Schultz noted. "If you have too much of one thing on a house or in a design, it's going to feel heavy on that side. You want to create a sense of symmetry – not just in plant types or shapes, but in amounts and quantities."

Shultz insisted such balancing techniques are based on mathematics – of a sort.

"You want to do designs not always in equal distribution," he continued. "One side may have five plants of one size, while the other has one plant whose size equals the combined sizes of the smaller plants."

Simple addition, really.

Rhythm. This means repetition of elements – not just putting 20 different plant types on a site, but actually using some repetition in plant types for a reason. That reason is this: repetition in landscaping creates patterns. These patterns are comfortable and familiar to those using the property. Contractors can use patterns of repetition in plant shapes, flower colors, hardscapes and textures. These repetitive themes tie an entire landscape together.

"Rhythm helps create a feeling of coherence," Schultz emphasized. "When used correctly, rhythm makes the end result look like an entire, well-designed project – not just a series of smaller projects added together."

Focus. Does the design revolve around a certain element – an artistic entry, a large fountain or prominent statue? If not, the designer had better change plans because having a focus – or a point of concentration – is key to creating a scenic design.

"You have to create a focus – or a series of focuses – so people will know where to look," Schultz stressed. "You don't want them to

(continued on page 100)

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Design Tips

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feel overwhelmed by the many things going on in the landscape."

Referring to a Japanese method of landscaping, Schultz recommended using groupings of threes to create focus. Three focal points within a rectilinear courtyard – perhaps a tree, a group of boulders and a statue – can draw the desired attention.

Contractors who consider all of the outlined design elements can create portfolio-worthy pictures out of properties. Although some sites may call for more of one element, all are necessary for an eye-catching design.

GETTING STARTED. Next comes the actual design phase – the process of taking a

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Visit the March 2003 issue online for a checklist of site-survey questions and creative design tips.

shapeless site and transforming it into a perfect picture. The design process begins.

But how?

While each company is likely to take a uniquely tailored approach to the process, there may be some overlap in what goes on with landscape designs. Each contractor has to come up with a system to best serve clients.

First, a good design generally begins with an understanding of the site. Thus, one of the initial steps is to assess the designated property to increase awareness of the area's potential and possible functions.

"Although every site is unique, a basic site analysis is key to arriving at a workable, appealing design," Doyle affirmed. "The analysis also gives you momentum to begin making plans."

Schultz likes to spend a few hours familiarizing himself with a new design site, making preliminary sketches and taking measurements. He records down-to-the-inch dimensions for existing buildings, plants, property borders and elevation changes. He includes anything that could possibly impact his design plans in the on-site evaluation.

Regardless of what measuring or drawing has been done by previous designers, Schultz recommended contractors start from scratch. Do it all again if necessary, just for the sake of accuracy.

"I learned in the past never to trust anyone else's drawings or designs," Schultz recalled. "Often the old drawings I'm given are outdated because of changes in building construction or alterations in the property. It's best to start fresh."

After sufficient time on the site, Schultz heads back to the office for work on a base sheet, some brainstorming and a crack at initial design concepts. "While the property is still fresh in my head, I like to come up with concepts," he shared. "I start to draw, and sometimes I find one concept fits perfectly. Other times I'll come up with many ideas."

This concept stage is packed with all sorts of plans – for grading, irrigation, demolition, lighting, etc. Sometimes during this process,

(continued on page 102)

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LANDSCAPES

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Design Tips

(continued from page 100)

looking through books on garden style and historic landscape or thumbing through previous drawings – just for some added inspiration – may be helpful.

"However, I want to create something unique for each client. I don't want to give them a cookie-cutter design that is identical to the one I did last week," Schultz admitted.

Then comes the test: taking plans to clients for approval.

"It is pretty normal to have to make a few attempts," Schultz said, recalling a few clients who made substantial changes to his initial designs. "It's kind of like stabbing in the dark. But the more experience you get with a variety of clients, the better you get at it."

Taking the time to understand what clients want is a must and can aid this process, said Milton Ninde, landscape designer, Clippers, Chantilly, Va.

"Listening to what the client is trying to achieve is paramount," Ninde noted. "Sometimes it is hard for clients to explain what they



Designing around a striking feature, such as a neatly sculpted tree, creates a focus for viewers.

Photo: Riepenhoff Landscape

want. They have an idea or mental picture but don't know how to convey that perception."

Asking questions is one of the designer's primary responsibilities, including: Can I execute and maintain the integrity of the design? Is the design satisfying the needs of my client? Can I accomplish the intended design within the designated budget?

Similarly, Doyle advocates customer-designer interactions. The first stage of her design process involves meeting with clients to discuss needs and establish a budget.

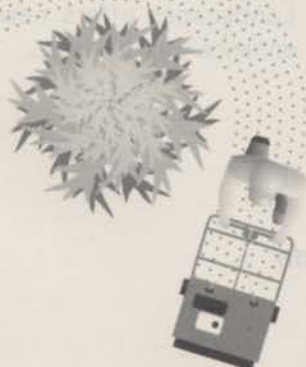
She provides photographs to give customers a visual of her work and help them pinpoint their own preferences.

But the communication doesn't stop there. Keeping the lines open throughout all stages of the design process – even down to the installation phase – is necessary for happy customers and usable designs. **LL**

The author is Assistant Editor – Internet for Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at aanderson@lawnandlandscape.com.

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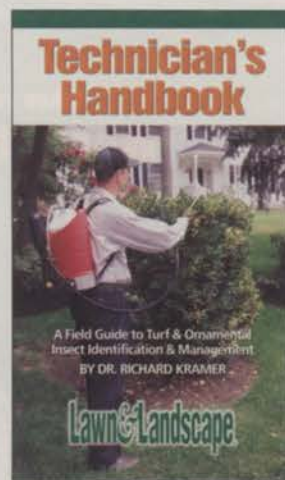
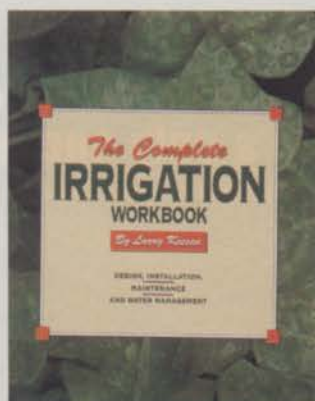
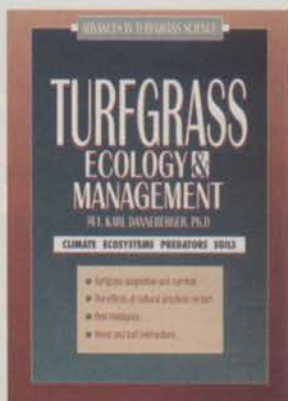


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Landscape Edgers

by Enloe Wilson & Nicole Wisniewski

Landscape edgers give lawns crisp borders for clients who want added definition.

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Everything looks great, but what's up with the scruffy perimeters?

Poor edging is the landscape equivalent to coloring outside the lines. But unlike a 4-year-old artist, nothing is cute about a yard roughly serviced – especially to the paying client.

Luckily, today's landscape contractors don't have to rely on string trimmers or the manual edgers of yesteryear to manicure lawn borders. But newer edging equipment does come with its own set of considerations.

CHOICES GALORE. With power landscape edgers having gained popularity only in the last 15 or so years, contractors don't have to think too far back to remember the days before them. Since those days, the edger has evolved in two basic forms – stick and walk-behind. Both offer crisp edging along pavings and curbs, but each comes with its own pros and cons.

First came walk-behinds.

"The walk-behinds came out in the mid-1980s," said Jay Larson, product marketing and communication manager, Shindaiwa, Tualatin, Ore. They remained the status quo until the early 1990s, when stick, or shaft, edgers surfaced to become the widely favored mode of edging, he said. Nowadays, walk-behind edgers are more generally given to initial bed- and edge-defining applications than routine maintenance.

"Walk-behinds have traditionally offered more power and are probably still better for cutting the first edges of the season," Larson commented.

But with the evolution of the stick edger, most manufacturers agree that this design offers users greater flexibility.

Contractor preference dictates the reason there is an abundance of stick edgers on the market, Larson said. "We considered producing walk-behinds, but focus groups preferred stick edgers," he shared, mentioning that while stick edgers may lag behind in

(continued on page 108)

An edge makes the difference on an otherwise messy lawn border. Photo: Stihl



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Landscape Edgers

(continued from page 106)

power, crews favor their lightweight portability, relative speed and maneuverability and uniform cutting ability.

"Many contractors go with sticks as opposed to walk-behinds because of portability and weight," Larson remarked.

While stick vs. walk-behind has long been the primary choice among contractors, technology stands as the dominant variable to decide on today. As with other hand-held power equipment, chief among the technological debate is 2-cycle vs. 4-cycle.

While many manufacturers have cashed in on the move to 4-cycle technology, David Vick, general manager – sales and marketing, Redmax, Norcross, Ga., said some manufacturers are focusing on ways to improve 2-cycle operations and meet California Air Resources Board Tier II and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency emission standards without switching to 4-cycle engineering and without using catalytic converters.

"The 4-stroke machine was designed to be the emission efficient solution, but no one stopped to take the time to develop and optimize the 2-stroke," explained Paul Golevicz, marketing services manager, Echo, Lake Zurich, Ill. "The 2-stroke is more powerful than 4-cycle because it has only three moving parts – piston, crankshaft and connecting rod."

Manufacturers' ultimate goal with equipment is maximizing efficiency and power, all while maintaining a lightweight machine. "On a standard 2-cycle, 30 percent of the fuel escapes as gas," Vick said. "With new technology – a two-barrel carburetor instead of one – as gases escape, pure air is injected instead of raw gas and fuel to diminish the output of a fuel/gas mix."

In Vick's opinion, 2-cycle edgers are also quieter and have fewer moving parts, meaning less maintenance.

But 4-cycle machines also have their place in the market. Manufacturers continue focusing efforts on 4-cycle technology because they feel eventually all machines will need catalytic converters or be equipped with 4-cycle engines due to EPA demands for increased noise reduction and decreased emissions. "A 2-cycle fires on every stroke of the piston, while 4-cycle machines fire on every other stroke meaning a cleaner, quieter, more fuel-efficient machine," Larson said.

The other basic decision contractors need to make when purchasing an edger is choosing between a straight or curved shaft.

Some manufacturers claim that vital, careful cuts should be made with a straight shaft for precision, while others explain how the curved shaft is more ergonomically sound and increases user flexibility and visibility. On average, straight shafted machines are slightly more expensive than curved-shafted edgers, Vick said, giving an example between two where the curved machine costs \$319 and the



According to manufacturers, stick edgers offer contractors greater flexibility than walk-behind edgers. Photo: Stihl

(continued on page 146)

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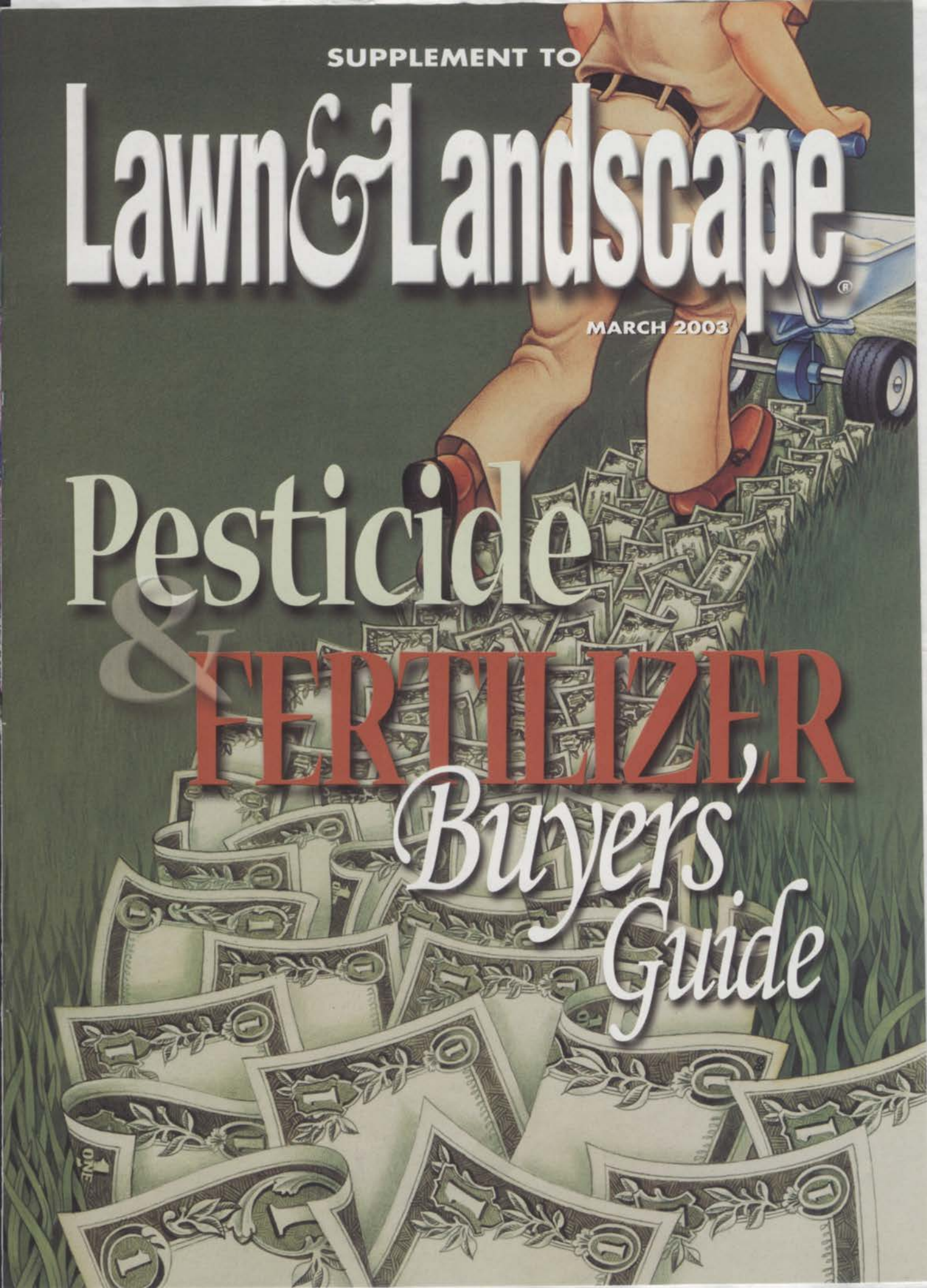
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by Lauren Spiers

As weeds start to grow up, lawn care operators consider their options for knocking them back down.

Emerging TRENDS

Many homeowners take pride in mowing their own lawns and keeping them tempting for barefoot toes. But when the inevitable, unsightly weeds like dandelions and crabgrass stain their closely-tended lawns, it's time for the professionals to take care of business with strong herbicide applications.

To bring damaged lawns back to their green glory, the question for lawn care operators (LCOs) becomes, what combination of preemergence and postemergence herbicides provides the best course of action?

RESEARCH & REVISE. Determining the advantages and disadvantages of different herbicides takes a good deal of time and research. "I've got a pretty set program now that I've been using for about four years," remarked Doug Harris, owner/operator, Harris Lawn Care, Mitchellville, Iowa. "But, things change and different products come and go. You've got to keep up with them."

Harris conducted a lot of research before nailing down his weed control plan. He now uses frequent postemergence applications due to excessive broadleaf weeds in his area. By talking to other LCOs and conducting his own product trials, Harris developed a program that worked best for his Midwest clients.

Craig Martin, manager/supervisor, Greener Lawn Care, Cumberland, Md., takes a different approach to herbicide use. "We use the preemergents as our mainstay and postemergents as kind of a quick fix," Martin noted. Since the preemergence products he applies control weeds well, this maintains customer satisfaction. Additionally, less frequent and more targeted postemergence applications keep material costs down.

Martin did research similar to Craig's when choosing his herbicides and both men know that LCOs have many factors to consider in the decision.

"There are a lot of factors that are driving what LCOs choose to use," acknowledged Quenton Jackson, regional marketing manager, Monsanto, St. Louis, Mo. "Primary among them are price, convenience and safety, but decisions are also driven by things that are outside the chemistry." Jackson mentioned that legislative issues and environmental concerns must also be taken into account when the topic is herbicides.

Researchers are knowledgeable contacts for LCOs, and results of trials performed by universities are available on many university Web sites. For LCOs performing their own tests, Brian Unruh, extension turfgrass specialist, University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla., had



Healthy lawns depend on several factors – proper mowing, regular watering and an appropriate combination of preemergence and postemergence herbicides.

some suggestions. "Don't just try one product in one location and base your results off that," he urged. "Choose three or four landscapes or lawns and see how that product works." The amount of coverage and duration of treatment a product provide compared with its cost, are also important considerations for LCOs.

A HEALTHY COMBINATION. Remembering that preemergence and postemergence herbicides are two different animals is important when LCOs are choosing products. Though they both result in weed elimination, "comparing postemergents to preemergents is like comparing apples and oranges," Harris

Green Monsters

Green, strong and menacing. Remind you of something? Yes, we're talking about the Incredible Hulk – and turfgrass weeds. Choosing the right herbicide for offending weeds is like a great anger management session for the Hulk, leaving a calm Bruce Banner relaxing on a lush lawn. But, like the Hulk, weeds are aggressive and definitely unwanted, and without the proper control they'll tear through everything in their path. Remembering that postemergence herbicides are chiefly used to control broadleaf weeds and preemergence products work best on grassy weeds is vital to taming the beast. Here's a quick list to refresh your memory:

GRASSY WEEDS	BROADLEAF WEEDS
Annual Bluegrass	Bittercress
Barnyardgrass	Black medic
Broomsedge	Buttercup
Crabgrass	Chicory
Crowfootgrass	Catsear
Dallisgrass	Common chickweed
Fall panicum	Curly dock
Goosegrass	Dandelion
Green Foxtail	Ground ivy
Nimblewill	Henbit
Orchardgrass	Knotweed
Quackgrass	Lawn burweed
Timothy	Mouseear chickweed
Sandbur	Purslane
Yellow Foxtail	Speedwell
Wild barley	Spurge
Windmillgrass	White clover
Witchgrass	Yellow woodsorrel

– Lauren Spiers

stressed, explaining their difference. "The idea behind a preemergent is that it puts a barrier down so that as the weeds begin to grow, they come up through the barrier and it kills them. For a postemergent, the weeds have to be up and actually growing for [the treatment] to work." Understanding this difference, most LCOs use both preemergence and postemergence herbicides in their lawn care routines.

"I've got two categories of customers: Some that just want me to come around and kill their dandelions [and] other customers that want full service," Harris said. With a range of customer expectations, he reasoned that having both types of herbicides available is the best solution.

Likewise, Scott Eicher, senior product



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manager, Dow AgroSciences, Indianapolis, Ind., expects preemergents and postemergents to be used in combination for quite a while. "In some cases, split [or] multiple treatments with a preemergence product may give a business the type of control and a cost they believe is a good investment," he noted. "Others may choose to manage their business with a combination of pre- and postemergent control. The key is delivering a service to their customer that meets or exceeds their expectation levels."

Moreover, products in each category are designed to deal with either grassy or broadleaf weeds, but rarely both. Generally, postemergence herbicides control broadleaf weeds and preemergence products control grassy weeds and crabgrass.

Knowing all this, the next consideration is whether to use a liquid or granular form of material.

"Ours is strictly a liquid program," Martin offered. "In our area, the biggest benefit is ease of application. We've got rather rough terrain and some of our lawns are steep, so pushing a spreader isn't feasible. A hose drag is better." Along with other LCOs, Martin stressed that broadleaf weed control with a liquid postemergent is superior to results gained with a granular material.

Harris explained that granular products require moisture to stick to the turfgrass plant. However, trying to schedule applications for first thing in the morning or after it rains is impractical and often impossible. He also noted that liquid postemergents work better than granulars because as weeds pull in nutrients when they go dormant in the fall, they also pull in pesticides put down during mid- to late-season applications.

At YardApes, New Milford, Conn., President Shayne Newman also prefers liquid products. "We tank-mix a liquid postemergent broadleaf weed control and a crabgrass preemergent," he described. Tank-mixing allows him cut down on labor by letting him make only one blanket application instead of two.

As a caveat to this practice, Unruh reminded LCOs that lawns can be overloaded if too many chemicals are applied. "A lot of times we think that when we spray herbicides on the turf and it doesn't

kill it, that it doesn't hurt it," he said. "That's not always the case. It can slow the turf down metabolically, for instance."

GREENS FEES. Homeowners and property managers want to know up front what weed control will cost. Determining the appropriate amount to charge is often

tricky, though most LCOs base their prices on square footage.

"Charges vary per application," commented Mike Leahy, president, Blades of Green, Churchton, Md., whose properties range from townhomes to 12-acre lots. "Most people base it on square footage, but I'll even base it on things like what the



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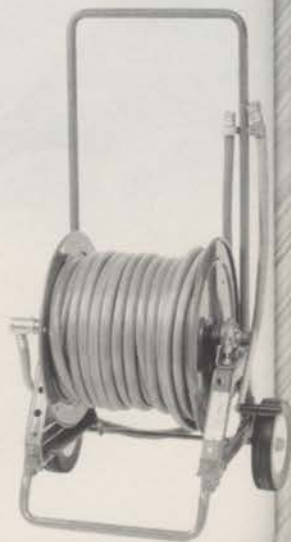
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USE READER SERVICE #403

Pre & Post Pros & Cons

[client] expects of me," he continued. "If they want me to bend over backwards, they might pay 20 percent more than other people, but they get what they pay for."

Newman's pricing plan, based on a materials cost of about \$2 per 1,000 square feet of preemergent and postemergent mixed together, is a simple \$5 per 1,000 square feet. Oftentimes he doesn't additionally charge for things like spot spraying callbacks because his clients are already investing their money in mowing services, pruning, etc.

Even in situations where costs for spot treatments are absorbed into other prices, when customers don't have to pay "extra" for certain applications, this often translates into more renewed business. "A callback in the lawn care industry is one of the most expensive portions of running the business," Eicher remarked. "If you can reduce callback complaints, customer retention will be higher."

Because no herbicide is a cure-all, lawn care operators usually use a combination of preemergents and postemergents to deal with the host of weeds that can infiltrate otherwise healthy lawns. Of course, each category has its own pros and cons, so Scott Eicher, senior product manager, Dow AgroSciences, Indianapolis, Ind., and Jennifer Ralston, industrial turf and ornamentals product manager, Monsanto, St. Louis, Mo., offered some information for herbicide shoppers to remember. — *Lauren Spiers*

Preemergents

PROS

- Annual weed problems are reduced or eliminated before customers even see them.
- Can control weeds in turf settings as opposed to just along sidewalks or plant beds.

CONS

- With blanket applications, herbicides may be applied in areas they are not needed.
- Generally more expensive than post-emergents.

Postemergents

PROS

- Highly effective broadleaf weed control.
- Broad-spectrum products can kill the vast majority of weeds once they have emerged.

CONS

- Products containing 2,4-D can be volatile and spray drift can injure nearby plants.

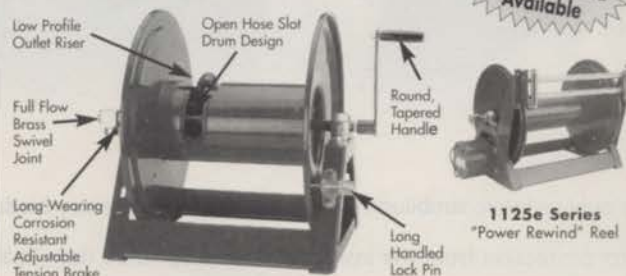
Of course, working out the pricing details in the first place, and pricing services to compete can offset costs when callbacks are necessary. Harris' approach

to pricing is involved, but effective. "First, I figure out what my overhead is and what the cost of materials are, and then I compute it down to what my cost is

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on someone's yard," Harris outlined. "You need to know what your cost is for labor, equipment and material, and then figure out what your profit is," he continued, adding that while finding out what competitors are charging is sometimes difficult, knowing the fair market rate in a given area is also important when pricing applications.

Martin's strategy is similarly detailed. "Our [overall] pricing gets cheaper per thousand square feet, the more square feet you have," he explained. "I put together our pricing structure [by determining] overhead and the time it takes to get to the property. The pricing per 1,000 square feet stays the same, but it's the number of square feet on the lawn that gives you the variable," he said.

For example, Martin's average lawn is 10,000 square feet, for which he charges about \$50. A lawn half that size though, costs slightly more than \$35. For those two lawns, the price of labor and materials per 1,000 square feet is the same, but the acreage changes. For a smaller lawn, the overall price per 1,000 square feet goes up.

Nailing down an effective herbicide program is no easy task. With the number of products, combinations and techniques to consider in addition to pricing services, there are a multitude of questions to answer, but several places to find those answers as well.

"Most states generate a pest control guide for turfgrass managers," Unruh offered and also suggested using the Internet as a source of information on products. "I really think you should be your own researcher," he advised. "Get these products and stack them up next to each other."

But, don't forget the most important rule: always read the label.

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at lspiers@lawnandlandscape.com.

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by Lauren Spiers

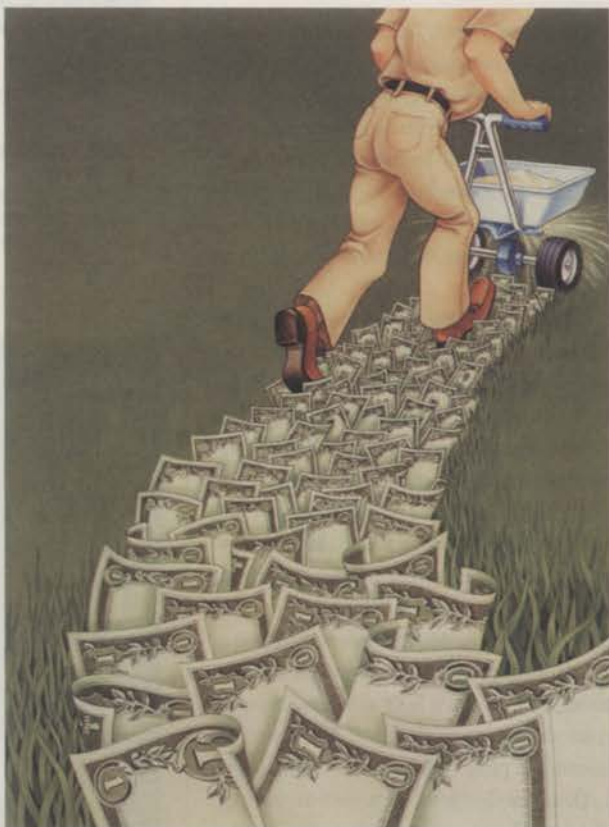
Lawn care operators shouldn't panic as natural gas prices rise and urea follows suit, but they should prepare to raise their fees.

When it comes to fertilizer, "urea is the component that does most of the growing," explained Bob Andrews, president, The Greenskeeper, Carmel, Ind. "It makes your grass grow up - or down; it gives it color. It's an important part of the mix." But just as the grass can grow up or down, the price of urea can fluctuate, leaving lawn care operators (LCOs) with questions and concerns in currently tense economic conditions.

Urea production depends on natural gas, and economic struggles worldwide and impending war in the Middle East are causing urea prices to rise. "With recent events a lot of people are concerned as to what the fuel oil supply is going to be," Andrews commented. Though there was not a great deal of instability with gas prices toward the end of 2002, some contractors are sure that prices will rise.

"I think you can expect prices to go up straight across the board," asserted Michael Hornung, president, Valley Green, St. Cloud, Minn, who predicted a price increase of \$40 to \$60 per ton. "Because it's a petroleum-based product, what suppliers seem to be doing now is hedging their bets," he observed, reasoning that as gas prices rise, producers will raise their prices sooner rather than later to make sure they meet their margins.

BUY, BUY, BUY. Natural gas and urea prices are already on the rise, with a 20-percent increase in some places and at least another 10-percent jump forecasted for the spring. Additionally, suppliers predicted spot shortages of urea throughout 2003.



"There are possible spot shortages coming up this spring because inventories are lower," said Randy Vogel, president, Spring Valley, Jackson, Ill. Vogel explained that the Mississippi River has a hand in the situation, but determining the locations of potential shortages is difficult. "Most of the material is shipped up the Mississippi River to various ports. How fast it warms up this spring and how long it takes for ice to [melt] could certainly affect where shortages occur. If the barges can't move, they can't get the product out."

Moreover, Tim Ankrum, special products manager, United Suppliers, Eldora, Iowa, noted, "historically, the bottom of the Mississippi gets fed [with shipments] first, and as they run out, the top end markets usually get hit the worst." Even so, LCOs shouldn't panic. "We've gone through this many times before," Ankrum continued. "It's part of the daily business that you position yourself to make sure the end user customers are going to get their

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product." He insisted that because the urea market is so large, suppliers might be able to alleviate spot shortages in one area by pulling on resources from another part of the country.

Knowing this, the better-safe-than-sorry mindset dominates among contractors, most of whom purchased at least their first round of 2003 fertilizer in 2002.

Andrews bought his first round of fertilizer in advance and was happy to note

that the company paid less this year than it did for its first round in 2002. At the same time, Andrews cautioned against buying too much fertilizer too far in advance. "Round one [fertilizer] contains preemergent crabgrass control," he noted, "so if we don't use that product in round one, we don't use it for the rest of the year." He added that getting rid of excess product may be wasteful, but because fertilizer doesn't have a very long shelf life, storing unused

portions rarely makes sense. That's why contractors need to compare usage from the previous year with projected square footage for the coming year, and try to only purchase what they'll need.

"We pre-bought ours [in December 2002] as well," said Hornung. "Usually I'll buy enough inventory to carry me through round one or round two, because demand should ease by that point," he noted. Also, making a purchase in late fall lets LCOs get price breaks from suppliers eager to decrease their stockpiles.

Some contractors take advantage of being able to lock in fertilizer prices with their suppliers. "In December we start contacting our suppliers for the following season, so we know what it's going to cost us," explained Kevin Johnson, president, All-American Turf Beauty, Van Meter, Iowa. "So far, prices have only gone up about 2 or 3 percent."

Dennis Salwei, sales representative, United Horticultural Supply, Minneapolis, Minn., mentioned that some LCOs called in for quotes as early as November 2002. "They want to know what's going on so they can adjust their pricing," he commented, adding that price fluctuations on materials like urea can intensify competition that already exists in the lawn care industry.

"Most people don't have the space to store [fertilizer] for the winter," Salwei said. "Some can pay for it in advance and we won't deliver it until the spring." For the most part, only bigger companies are able to use this strategy, but Salwei and Ankrum agree that if contractors have the space and the resources, purchasing fertilizer supplies in advance is a good idea.

Having a basic knowledge of why prices are so precarious is important for LCOs both so they can compare inventory and prices accordingly and so they can brief customers when their bills are slightly higher. First, ammonia production occurs during a chemical reaction involving natural gas, a catalyst and air. Manufacturers then use ammonia to create urea, which is a main component of fertilizer. Therefore, when gas prices rise, so do fertilizer costs.

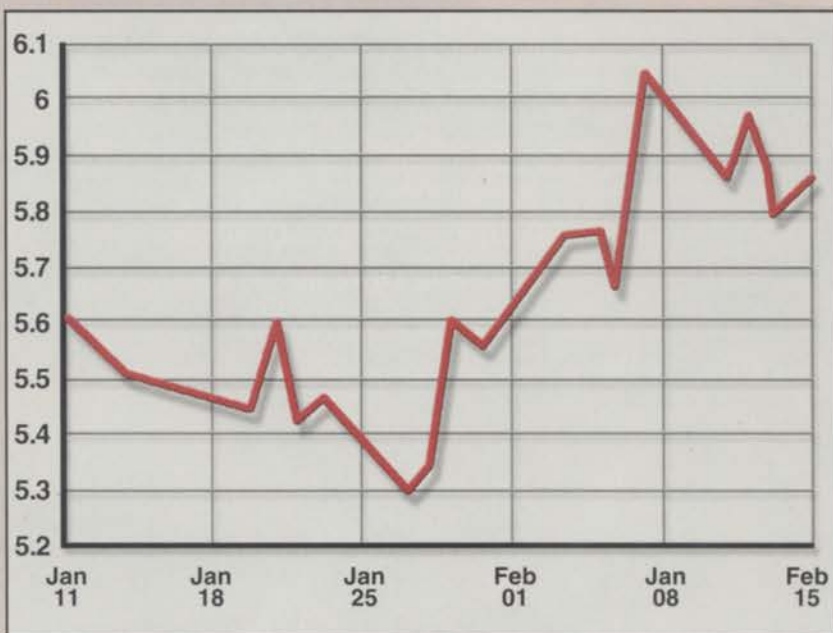
Additionally, Kirk Guillebeau, a financial analyst for the oil and gas exploration and production company Boroero En-

Who's Henry Hub?

Actually, Henry Hub is a what – not a who – but it may still have more power in the lawn care industry than the head honchos at most well-known companies. Located in Erath, La., the Henry Hub is owned by the Sabine Pipe Line, which transports natural gas between Port Arthur, Texas, and Vermillion Parish, La. Nine interstate and four intrastate pipelines interconnect at this hub, and according to the company's Web site, because of its significant interconnect ability, in 1989 the Henry Hub was chosen as "the official delivery mechanism for the New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX) natural gas futures contract."

Sound confusing? It is. Simply, this honor means that because of its high volume and centralized location, natural gas prices determined as the product reaches the Henry Hub are used as the price points for trading natural gas on the NYMEX. Just like on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, expert commodities traders, analysts, manufacturers and suppliers of natural gas, closely follow these prices, which determine how much the commodity will cost the end user. The Henry Hub "spot prices," which pertain to next-day natural gas transactions, are reported in dollars per million British thermal units (MMBtu).

"What we do as a producer is watch the natural gas market," said Tim Ankrum, special products manager, United Suppliers, Eldora, Iowa. "As long as it's trading high, [fertilizer] costs will be up." Ankrum noted that suppliers are most comfortable when natural gas prices are between \$2 and \$3 per MMBtu, but that current prices are hovering around the \$5 mark and may stay that way for a while. Go to http://quotes.ino.com/exchanges/?r=NYMEX_NG to see what the Henry Hub is at right now.



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Gas Guzzlers

terprises, Tyler, Texas, explained that crude oil prices initially affect natural gas prices. "When crude oil prices get too high, some people switch to natural gas for their energy needs," he said. "For example, many homes in the Northeast and Midwest will switch from heating oil – a crude oil product – to natural gas, which increases the demand and inflates the price." Worldwide economic issues are currently affecting crude oil prices, beginning a chain of price increases.

"Prices will average well above \$3 per MMBtu (million British thermal units) for the next several years," Guillebeau observed, and said that, "extremely hot or cold weather will cause price spikes to the \$6 to \$7 per MMBtu range," and may even be as high as \$10 per MMBtu. These increases will certainly affect urea prices, but price increases per ton and per bag of fertilizer will not be that great. For instance, if some projected increases are correct, regional fertilizer prices

When natural gas prices rise, fertilizer prices follow and lawn care operators wonder about this connection. Simply, the primary fertilizer ingredient, urea, is created during an ammonia reaction; ammonia is the product of a chemical reaction involving natural gas.

Kirk Guillebeau, a financial analyst for the oil and gas exploration and production company Borero Enterprises, Tyler, Texas, emphasized that just as the price of fertilizer is influenced by natural gas prices, natural gas prices are influenced by the price of crude oil.

Currently, several factors – both domestic and international – are causing fluctuations in the supply and demand of crude oil and consequently causing an increase in the price of natural gas.

- Possible war in the Middle East has natural gas prices up because a large portion of U.S. oil is imported from this area. With such tension, oil exports to the United States are down and barges transporting the product are heading home less than completely full.
- Venezuela exports oil, urea and sulfur to the United States, but oil production at refineries is down significantly due to a labor strike. Venezuela must correct its own economic downturn, so production cannot remain low for too long, but returning to the country's average output of 3 million barrels of oil per day may take time.
- In Argentina, economic conditions forced a devaluation of the peso, resulting in an inability of the country to produce material for export. The U.S. imports a fair amount of urea from Argentina and low production there results in less material here.
- At home in the United States, domestic producers like Mississippi Chemical, Donaldson, La., are taking a hit from the price increases. The company announced that its nitrogen complex will shut down for the first quarter of the 2003 calendar year, affecting the amount of urea available for buyers. – *Lauren Spiers*

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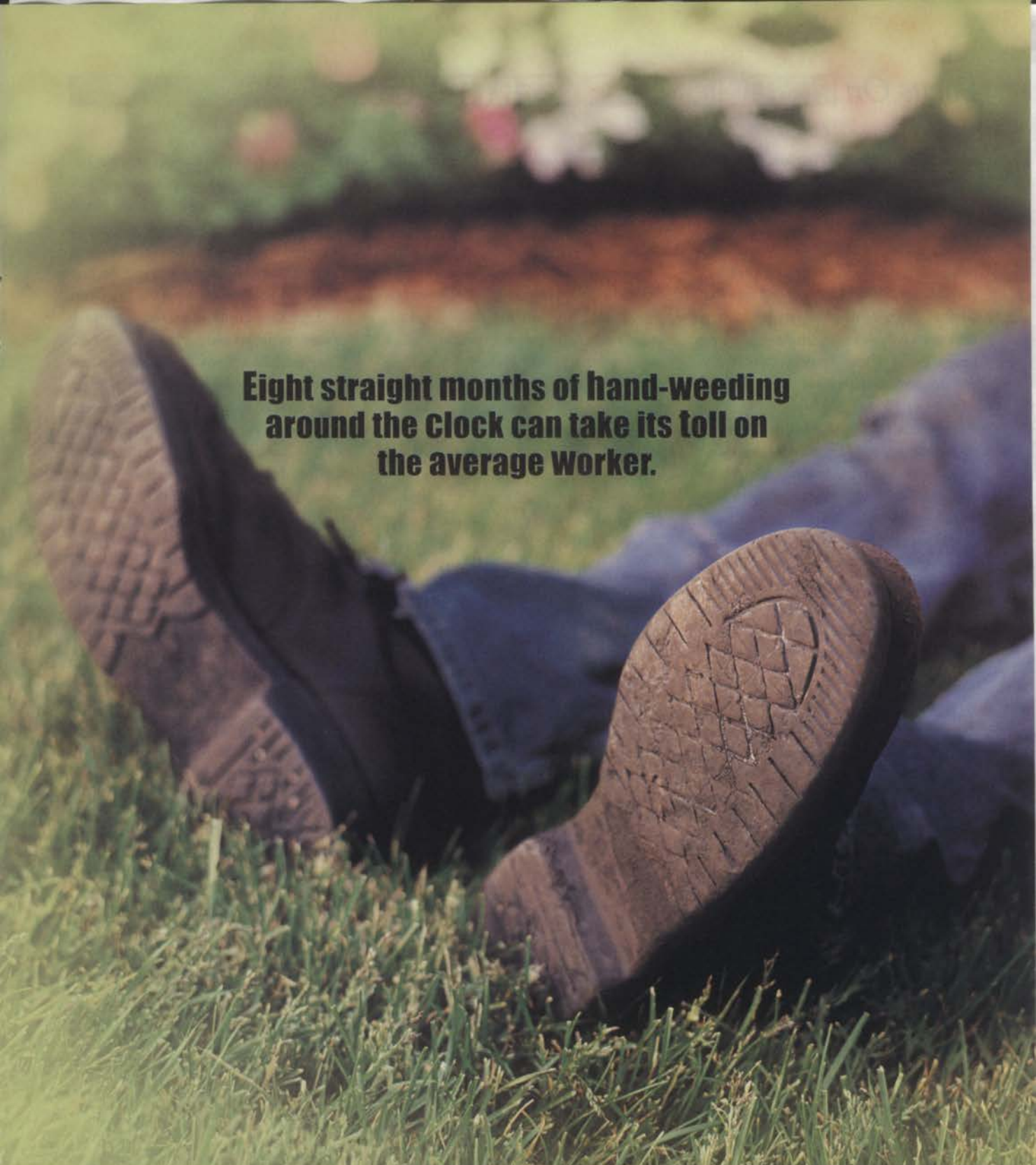
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could rise to about \$300 per ton. With 1 ton yielding 40 50-pound bags, the cost per bag would increase to only \$7.50 per bag.

SELL, SELL, SELL. As with any business, the priority is to make a profit by providing quality products and services. In that case, as natural gas prices rise and urea follows suit, business owners must raise their fees accordingly. Andrews routinely raises prices for lawn services. "Most [contractors] have settled into the idea that we have to raise our prices annually. If we don't then we're forced into a big jump later on, and that's when you get into customer resistance."

Hornung agreed. "This year we're going to raise prices - not a lot, but a 2- or 3-percent price increase is going to absorb a lot of what we'll need," he noted. Hornung went on to say that customers don't usually balk at the smaller percentage increases, but

complaining begins when fees rise 5 to 10 percent at once.

"The bottom line is that if your cost of providing the service goes up significantly, you have to raise your prices," Johnson stressed. "If you keep your prices the same and provide the same service, you're not going to make money." However, because Johnson's company is already at the higher end of the pricing scale, he has opted to keep prices where they are this year. This decision is safe because previous annual increases built up a cushion of profit that will offset any extra costs. Also, Johnson's competitors have kept prices flat for several years, so raising his fees could cause too great a disparity and hurt his business.

Still, routinely raising fees is recommended by most veteran contractors, and can be especially necessary when product prices rise. "Really look at your true cost of operation for 2003," Hornung urged,

"because we'd hate to see anyone become a statistic." In order to appease any customers who may be caught off guard by a price increase, Hornung suggested that switching clients from a five- to a four-application program might be one solution. "That way you get the price you need for that application and they save money on the whole package," he noted. "I'm certainly not one to cut corners and lighten up the product we're putting down or put on less, so this is a better solution."

Andrews agreed that applying thinner applications is not a good idea and can hurt the lawn and a company's reputation. "I try to emphasize to [customers] that to maintain the quality of service and the quality of product," he remarked, "we have to increase our prices." **LL**

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine, and she can be reached at lsapiers@lawnandlandscape.com.

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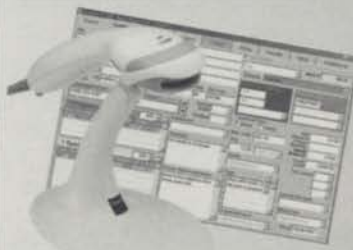
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Professional Products

by Lauren Spiers

Questions and concerns arise as pesticide molecules lose patent protection but gain more market presence.

Up for GRABBS

TAKE A minute to reminisce about the year 1986. Ronald Reagan was president and the Dow Jones Industrial Average had yet to reach 2000 points. *The Cosby Show* was America's favorite program and *Top Gun* grossed nearly \$177 million. Americans gasped at both Halley's comet and the Challenger explosion. The New York Giants won Super Bowl XXI, Tiger Woods was only 11 years old, and many landscape contractors reading this magazine had yet to graduate high school.

But by 1986, basic manufacturers of pesticides had been in business for decades and patented product after product in the lawn care market. This year – 17 years later – patents expire on products uncovered in 1986, giving formulators the chance to use previously-patented active ingredients in their own products. Though this is far from a new phenomenon, the growing number of generic products – sometimes called “off-patent” or “post-patent” – means changes for everyone.

TO SERVE AND PROTECT. Without the grueling but vital patent process, the development of generic products would probably not be so significant. After all, the expiration of the original patent is what opens the door for generics in the first place.

In short, basic manufacturers spend several years and millions of dollars initially testing possible molecules for use in herbicides, insecticides and fungicides. Once researchers identify a viable active ingredient (called “discovery”), the manufacturer applies to patent the molecule as quickly as possible.

“The reason anybody patents anything is so they have the ability to capture some of the investment they’re making in a product,” emphasized Chuck Buffington, lawn and ornamental market manager, Syngenta Professional Products, Greensboro, N.C. The 17-year patent protection begins immediately after the patent is granted and prohibits outside companies from using the basic manufacturer’s research or molecule in their own trials. “Nobody can afford to spend \$120 million to develop a product and have somebody else *not* spend \$120 million to develop the same product and compete in the marketplace,” Buffington continued.

While the patent’s clock is ticking, manufacturers continue their research, often taking as long as 10 years to complete the next phase of development – registration. According to Croplife America’s booklet “From Lab to Label: The Research, Testing and Registration of

Agricultural Chemicals,” there are 142 tests pesticides must pass in order to receive product label registration from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Dave Ross, turf and ornamental technical manager, Syngenta Professional Products, noted that the number of studies can exceed 200 to register a new active ingredient. When the EPA reviews the test results and approves the product, it awards a patent that permits one manufacturer alone to distribute and sell the pesticide for the remainder of the patent life.

Formulators however, eagerly await patent expiration, fully aware that the opportunity to re-formulate name-brand products and sell them as generics can widen their presence in the market and increase their sales.

“[If] you have a compound that controls everything but one disease, and there’s [a product] recently off-patent and you’d like to fill that hole in your portfolio, you could go fairly easily and get that molecule,” suggested Stephen Briggs, director, specialty products department, BASF, Raleigh, N.C. Briggs acknowledged though that formulators cannot start re-tooling post-patent products as soon as they get their hands on them. “You have to go through a process to register your





Years of research that costs millions of dollars still must be completed after a pesticide supplier is awarded a patent but before the product can be sold, making development decisions critical for basic suppliers. Photo: Dow AgroSciences

products of optimum performance and quality is part of the company's mission statement. Other formulators expressed equal commitment to their products.

Though formulators seem to have the better end of the generic products issue, they experience some down sides.

"One of the disadvantages of getting into that marketplace is that generally these products have very low margins," Briggs reasoned. "Especially if you get two or three generics of the same molecule, it tends to drive the value out of the molecule."

In terms of losing market share though, manufacturers aren't entirely worried. "After people use the post-patent products, a lot of times they come back to the branded product either because of handling or performance issues," Buffington explained. "Even though they have the same active ingredient, it's not the same product they've come to count on."

With all of this debate, there is a misleading perception that manufacturers and formulators produce branded products and generics respectively, but not both. "Over the last 15 years, those things have merged and blurred because [almost] everyone sells products that are on patent as well as products that are off-patent," explained Owen Towne, business director, specialty products, Griffin LLC, Valdosta, Ga. "It's hard to say there are generics and non-generics."

DECISIONS, DECISIONS. Basic manufacturers and formulators struggle with the generic products issue, but ultimately, the fate of products from both categories lies in lawn care operators' hands.

"The advent of generics is going to be a big deal, particularly in the areas of fungicides and insecticides," remarked Bob Andrews, president, The Greenskeeper, Carmel, Ind. Andrews reasoned that the availability of generics could easily increase usage of certain products. He explained that in terms of materials, when a regular lawn care application costs \$50, but a proper fungicide application costs upwards of \$150, convincing a client to buy in to the higher-priced treatments can be difficult.

"If we buy [a product], we have to mark it up and sell it, then we have to add

own off-patent product [with the EPA]," he explained. "That takes government approval, and they may ask you to redo a couple of studies or ask for your own studies."

Just as Buffington noted that patents guard manufacturers' investments, the EPA protects end-users by requiring further approval and registration of post-patent products. This ensures that the active ingredient in the generic formulation mirrors that in the original brand name product. Formulators however, have the advantage of spending far less time and money on the registration process than basic manufacturers do.

Curtis Clark, business development and marketing manager, Riverdale Chemical Co., Burr Ridge, Ill., explained that by paying substantial "data compensation" fees to the basic manufacturer, formulators can purchase the original research on the active ingredient.

ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM. Basic manufacturers spend tens of millions of dollars and years of research to develop the safest, most effective pesticides they can, while formulators also spend millions on data compensation fees, but are spared the decades of research when pro-

ducing a generic product. The subject is prominent but delicate, and members of both groups admit there is a certain level of tension in the air when branded products lose their patents.

"There is [tension] because everybody wants to protect the base molecule because they spent all the money getting it there in the first place," Clark explained. "Generics have anywhere from 10 to 15 percent lower price points than the branded products, and they take some level of market share away from the brands."

On the manufacturer's side, Ross offered, "the big concern is that the [post-patent product] manufacturers won't have the commitment to the active ingredient in order to steward the product effectively in the marketplace." He and Buffington affirmed that, by the time a patent expires, basic manufacturers have a significant commitment to the active ingredient and understand the chemistry better than a generic formulator does. The worry then becomes that generic manufacturers will not be able to offer the same level of service and support on the part of the active ingredient.

Formulators disagree and stress that they stand behind their post-patent products. Jim Taliak, category director, LESCO, Strongsville, Ohio, noted that providing

Look for this article online to find more information about off-patent products.

the labor factor to it, then we have to collect the money," he explained. "When we look at a product that's so far out of our price range that it doesn't make sense to buy it and sell it, we're not buying it at all." To this end, lower-priced generic products give lawn care operators the ability to market applications they and their clients couldn't afford in the past.

Still, some brand-loyal contractors question the efficacy of generic products compared to their brand-name counterparts. Basic manufacturers find this is a valid concern. "[post-patent product manufacturers] are usually absent from the stewardship of products in the industry as far as supporting the actual end-use customers in the field with either problems or industry issues," Buffington noted, cautioning contractors to remember that the generic version of a product may include the same active ingredient, but in a different formulation than the original.

Taliak admitted that formulations [of post-patent products] can certainly differ, but outlined, "we perform inside test-

ing and university testing on our private label products. We have a responsibility to continually test our products and make sure we bring them to the market when it's appropriate for the end user."

Towne agreed that testing post-patent products alongside the originals is a priority. "No one's going to switch to a poor-quality product," he added. "The second entrant has to have a material that's at least as good as the original registrant's."

Some contractors see little difference between the results they gain from brand-name and those from reformulated products. "I've gone in and out of using [brand-names] as opposed to [generics] just based on what I can get in terms of a promotion or a buy," remarked Phil Fogarty, vice president of growing opportunities, Weed Man Franchising, Euclid, Ohio. "I've used both of them, they both work under the circumstances I've put them under, and I usually end up buying one or the other based on price."

It's true that competition in the marketplace results in price cutting on nearly

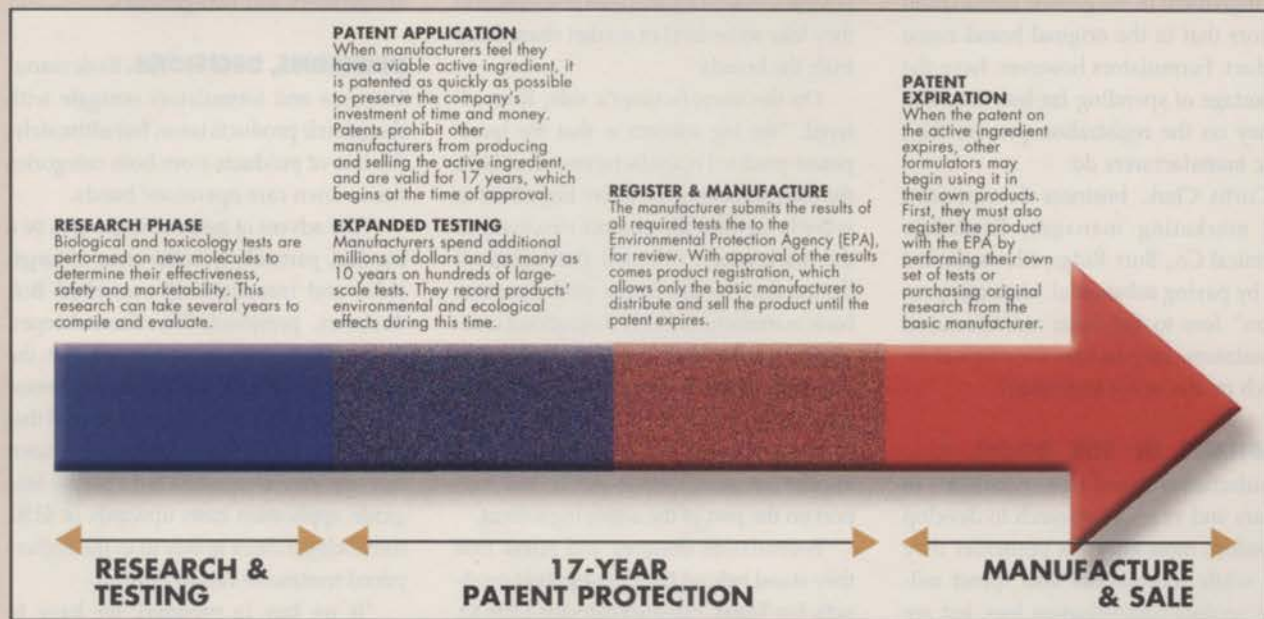
all products involved, but the benefits don't end there. Towne affirmed that choice is always good and suggested that contractors can use competition between products to their advantage by ensuring that their clients receive the best values and the best quality possible.

"I don't think I've ever felt like I wished there weren't this many products available," Fogarty laughed. "We have a broad-spectrum mentality where we expect one product to do a lot of things and we want one application to have a lot of different values for us. But I think having a lot of products lends itself to being more targeted and gives us more choices on how to run our businesses." **II**

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Synthesis Schedule

Though the timing can vary from product to product, manufacturers of basic ingredients have to follow specific steps when developing and registering new active ingredients for herbicides, insecticides and fungicides. In their booklet "From Lab to Label: The Research, Testing and Registration of Agricultural Chemicals," the Croplife America organization provides information regarding this timeline. The booklet states, "On average, only one in 20,000 chemicals makes it from the chemist's laboratory to the farmer's," and the main steps of the grueling registration process are outlined here. — *Lauren Spiers*



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by Lauren Spiers

From start to finish, sprayer manufacturers give the dos, don'ts and how-tos of proper sprayer use.

Keeping sprayers properly calibrated and nozzles clean helps ensure smooth, even applications every time.



A quality sprayer is one of the most important machines in a lawn care operator's (LCOs) fleet, so proper use and care to ensure consistently even chemical applications is vital. To cover the basics, sprayer manufacturers offered a few steps to sprayer use and upkeep.

1. *Pump it Up.* According to Skip Strong, general manager, Sprayer Parts Depot, Miami, Fla., "a lawn care operator needs to have a pump that is at least three times the gallons per minute (gpm) that [they] want the output to be." For example, if an operator intends to apply material at 3 gpm, a pump with a capability of 9 gpm should be the minimum requirement. Strong explained that the higher pump capacity allows for some loss of pressure through the spray hose and some volume put toward hydraulic-jet agitation, with enough pressure left to achieve the necessary 3 gpm.

2. *Calibration Nation.* Tom Rich, president, Rich Mfg., Lebanon, Ind., acknowledged that improper calibration causes many LCOs to have problems getting lawns evenly green and pest-free.

Manufacturers agree that sprayer calibration is easy. "To check calibration on any given spray tip nozzle, you want to set the machine to spray into a bucket and measure the amount

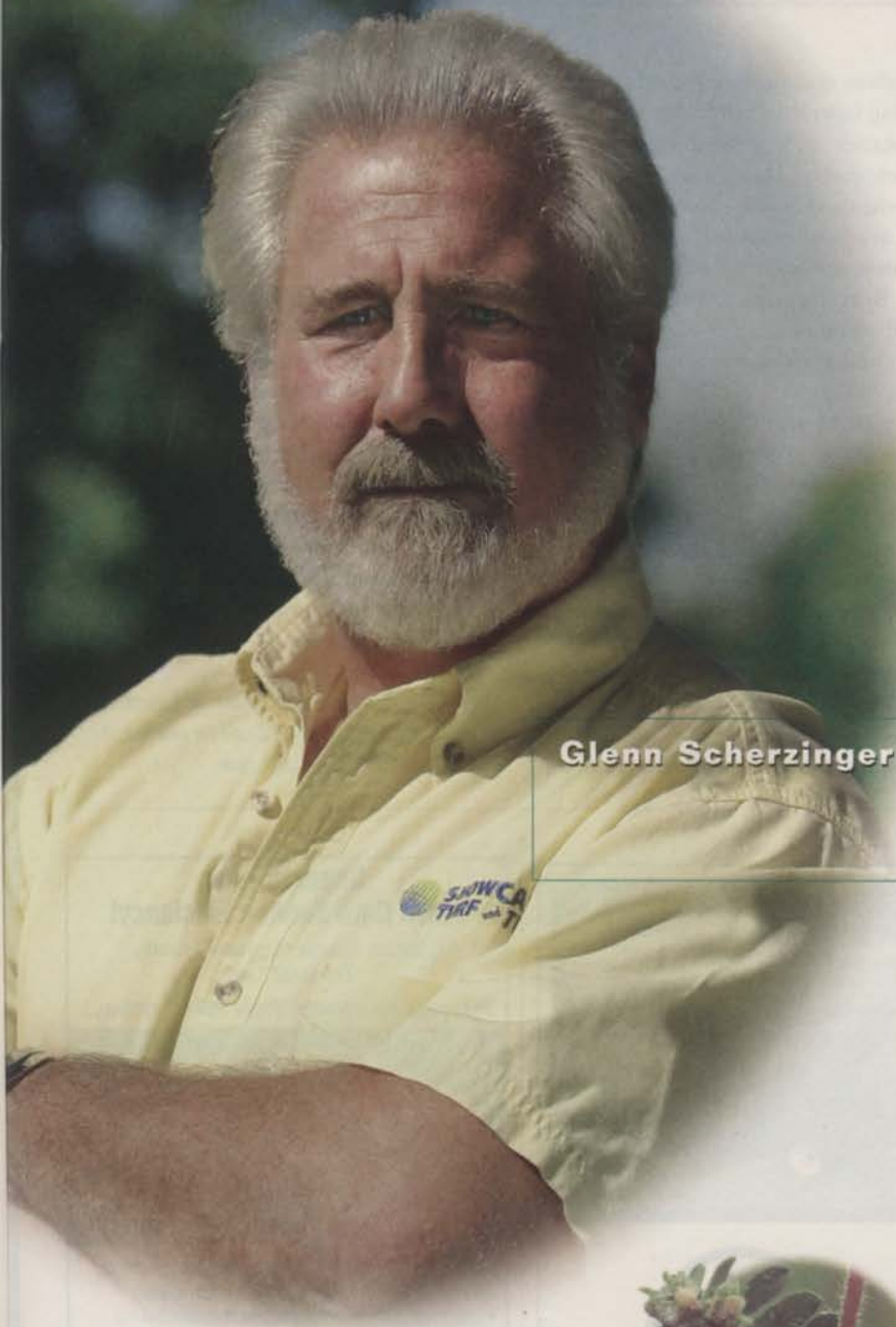
of liquid you have over a certain time," Rich explained. The resulting measurement is stated in gallons per minute and every nozzle tip is rated for a certain level. For instance, a 1 gpm nozzle should yield 1 gallon of water over 1 minute. If the resulting amount of water is more or less than 1 gallon, adjust the sprayer pressure accordingly. Strong recommended using a 5-gallon bucket calibrated in ½-gallon increments for the job, and Bori reminded LCOs to multiply the gpm for sprayers with multiple nozzles. A machine with six nozzles, all rated for 1 gpm should put material down at a total of 6 gpm. Check calibration on a weekly basis to ensure consistent application rates.

3. *Mix and Mesh.* "One of the most common mistakes I see is not having the correct suction filter screen mesh on the sprayer when diaphragm pumps are used," commented Strong. When using a diaphragm pump, Strong recommended using coarser screens of 16 or 20 mesh. "Anything finer than a 20-mesh screen clogs faster and causes the diaphragms to be sucked in and cut by the pump valves prematurely," he said. "Diaphragm pumps are made to pump coarse granular materials, so a fine filter screen of more than 20 mesh is not necessary." To determine the type of mesh to use, imply draw a 1-inch line down the screen and count the number of holes in that length; 20 holes equals 20 mesh.

4. *Know the Terrain.* Riding sprayers are becoming increasingly popular, but some



SPRAY Away

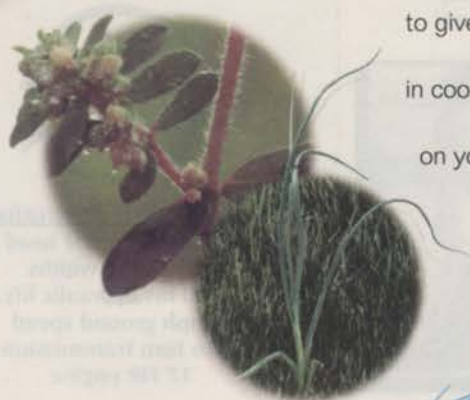


Glenn Scherzinger

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work better on certain terrain than others. "Most spray machines don't do well on steep slopes," explained Albert Bori, president, BrandTek, Winter Garden, Fla. He added that when choosing a machine, contractors need to consider if they're going to be frequently working on inclines, and purchase a sprayer for such situations. "There are machines that are designed for slopes," he said, "and it usually means a lower profile, a stand-up model rather than a riding model and a wider wheelbase."

5. *Slow & Steady.* Maintaining a steady, appropriate ground speed is essential in sprayer applications. Tad Grubbs, national sales director, C & S Turf Equipment, North Canton, Ohio, offered that the average LCO works at about 1,000 square feet per minute and hand-held sprayers must be calibrated with a walking speed of about 3 mph in mind. Grubbs also noted that the optimal speed for a riding

machine is about 4 mph, explaining that going faster than that makes anticipating obstacles more difficult and can affect lawn quality. He mentioned that some mechanized machines on the market are set at a fixed ground speed, making calibration and operation somewhat easier.

By keeping up a proper ground speed and calibrating sprayers accordingly, LCOs can avoid the risks of uneven growth and color.

6. *Maintenance Magic.* "Sprayers get bad reputations really easily and it's all because of maintenance issues," Bori identified. His routine includes putting the sprayers "to bed with a blanket" by spending at least 15 to 20 minutes going over maintenance tips. Among his maintenance pointers are washing sprayers daily and cleaning with rust-retardant or rust-prohibiting chemicals, lubricating all the moving parts, greasing all fittings and cleaning debris from the engine compart-

lawncare.com

Check out the March 2003 issue online for additional tips on proper sprayer use, care and calibration.

ment. "Any time you have a machine that works in such adverse chemical environments, you need to perform more than the normal amount of maintenance you would perform on a lawn mower," Bori insisted, adding that LCOs shouldn't leave chemicals in sprayers for long.

Following these proper usage and preventive maintenance tips can keep repair or replacement costs to a minimum and help ensure that sprayers will do their job well for several years. **LL**

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at lspiers@lawncare.com



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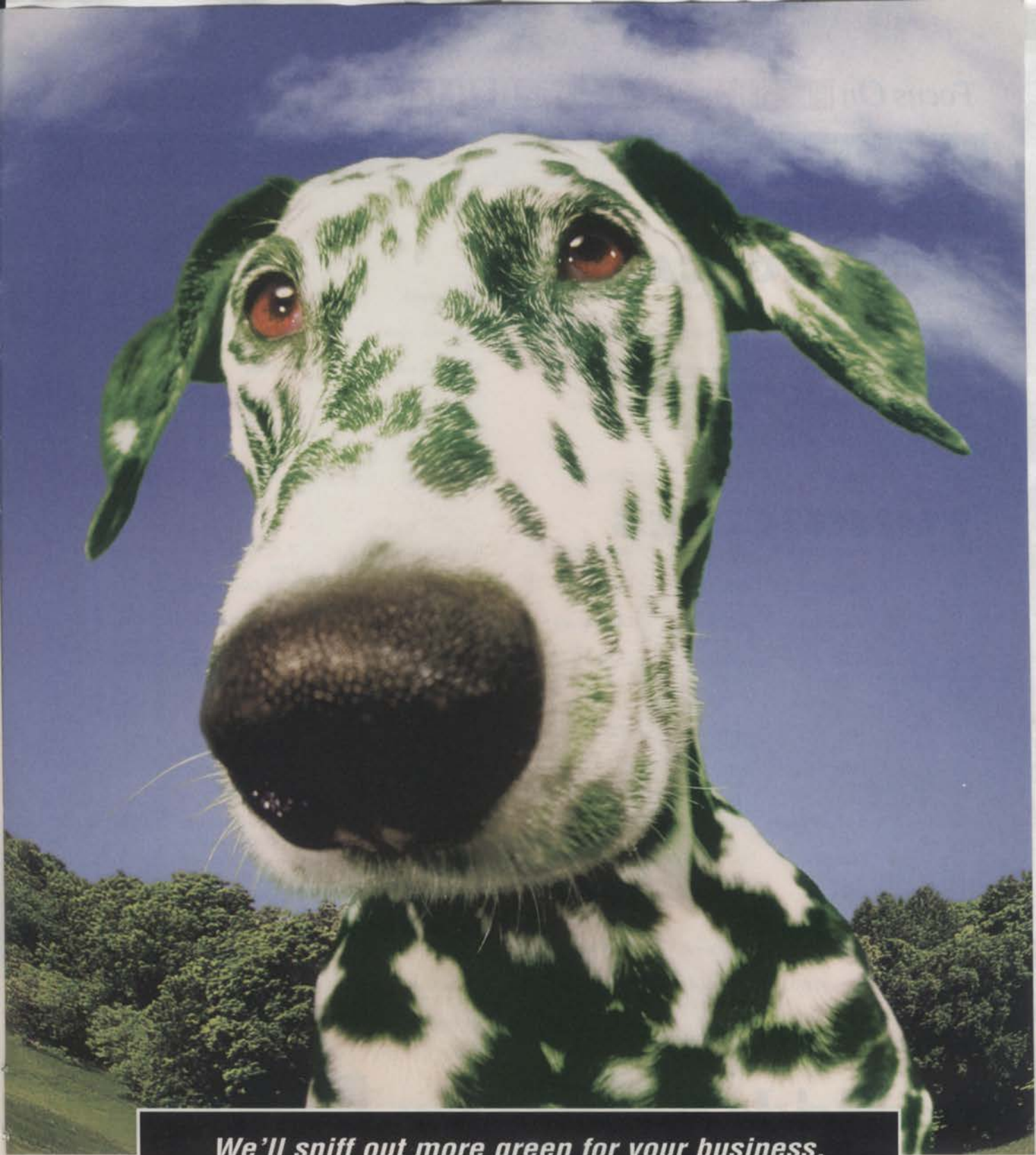
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PESTICIDES						
BIOLOGICALS						
BASF	Amdro® Pro	Hydramethylnon	Granular	Turf, ornamentals	Fire ants, other ants	www.turfacts.com
Plant Health Care	Teknar Bti	Bacillus thuringiensis	Granular, WSP	Ornamentals, ponds	Mosquito, black fly larvae	800/421-9051
	Bioinsecticide	var. israelensis (Bti)	Water-soluble dunk	Ponds, lakes, reservoirs	Mosquitoes	
	PHC Mosquito Dunks	Bacillus thuringiensis				
	Bti Bioinsecticide	var. israelensis (Bti)	12% granule	Landscapes, flower beds, soil/potting mixtures	Pythium, rhizoctonia, fusarium and sclerotinia	
	SoilGuard 12G	Beneficial fungus				
	Biofungicide					
Valent	DiPel Pro DF	B.t.k.	Dry flowable	Turf, ornamentals	Worms	800/89-VALENT
FUNGICIDES						
BASF	Propiconazole PRO	Propiconazole	Liquid (microemulsion)	Turf, ornamentals	DS, RT, PM, pink patch, blights	www.turfacts.com
	Iprodione PRO 2SE	Iprodione	Suspo emulsion	Turf, ornamentals	BP, DS, GSM, PSM, large patch	
	Curalan® EG	Vinclozolin	Extruded granule	Non-residential turf	DS, LS, BP, RT, PSM	
Bayer Environmental Science	26GT®	Iprodione	23.3% - 2 pounds per gallon	Industrial turf	BP, DS, GSM, LS, large patch, fusarium blight, necrotic ring spot, fusarium patch	800/843-1702
	Aliette	Aluminum tris	WDG	Ornamentals	Pythium, phytophthora, downy mildew, fire blight	
	ProStar	Flutolanil	WP	Turf, ornamentals	BP, fairy ring, other common turf diseases	
BioWorks	Root Shield Granules	Trichoderma harzianum	Strain T22	Turf, ornamentals, herbs, vegetables,	Pythium, rhizoctonia, fusarium, sclerotinia, thielaviopsis	315/781-1703 x304
	PlantShield HC	Trichoderma harzianum	Strain T22	Turf, ornamentals, herbs, vegetables,	Pythium, rhizoctonia, fusarium, sclerotinia, botrytis	
	MilStop Foliar	Bicarbonate chemistry	Foliar spray	Turf, ornamentals, herbs, vegetables	PM, botrytis, downy mildew, anthracnose, black spot	
Cleary Chemical	3336	Thiophanate-methyl	F, WP/Water-soluble bag, G	Turf, ornamentals	LS, SM, anthracnose, turf patches, brown rot	800/524-1662
	Spectro 90 WDG	Chlorothalonil, Thiophanate-methyl	Water-dispersable granule	Turf, ornamentals	LS, SM, anthracnose, turf patches, brown rot	
	Spotrete	Thiram	F, water-dispersable granule	Turf, ornamentals, animal repellent	DS, BP, LS, RU, RT	

Pesticide & Fertilizer BUYERS' GUIDE

lawnandlandscape.com 

See the Buyers' Guide online for a complete listing of pesticide manufacturers' products and a complete Fertilizer Buyers' Guide

Putting together an effective lawn care program means selecting the right products, so *Lawn & Landscape* presents its Pesticide & Fertilizer Buyers' Guide, a comprehensive listing of key pesticide and fertilizer suppliers and the herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, biologicals and fertilizers they produce.

For a complete listing of abbreviations used in this buyers' guide, see the guide on page 34.

Focus On PESTICIDES & FERTILIZERS

MANUFACTURER	PRODUCT NAME	ACTIVE INGREDIENTS	AVAILABLE FORMULATIONS	FOR USE IN/ON:	KEY PESTS CONTROLLED	CONTACT INFO.
Crompton/Uniroyal Chemical	Terraclor	PCNB	75% wettable powder	Turf, ornamental soil	BP, DS, GSM, LS, PSM, melting out	203/573-2000
	Terrazole	Etridiazole	35% wettable powder	Turf, ornamentals	Pythium spp., Phytophthora spp., pythium blight, cottony blight, grease spot, spot blight, root rot, crown rot, damping off	203/573-2000
	Terraguard	Triflumizole	50W	Ornamental	LS, PM, RU, aerial blight, botrytis blight, Petiole rot, mildew, scab, black root rot, rylincladadium, root rot, wilt and crown canker, fusarium wilt, root rot	
Dow AgroSciences	Eagle WSP	Myclobutanil	WP in water-soluble packets	Landscape, lawn care, golf, backyard fruit trees	BP, DS, RT, summer patch, spring dead spot	800/255-3726
	Fore Rainshield	Mancozeb	WP in water-soluble packets	Lawn care, golf	BP, GLS, RU, SM, pythium blight	
Griffin	Junction	Copper hydroxide and mancozeb	Dry flowable	Greenhouse, nursery and turf	A, BP, DS, LS, anthracnose foliar diseases	800/737-3995
	Concorde SST	Chlorothalonil	Liquid	Turf, nursery and ornamentals	A, BP, DS, LS, RT, RU, melting out	
	Pentathlon DF	Mancozeb	Dry flowable	Turf, landscape	LS, RU, botrytis, anthracnose, cercospora	
J.J. Mauget	Fungisol	Debcarb	Liquid	Ornamentals	Dutch elm, verticillium wilt, anthracnose, fusarium wilts, cytospora canker	800/873-3779
	Tesubject	Tebuconazole	Liquid	Ornamentals	Oak wilt, Dutch elm, crab-apple scab, Hawthorne leaf spot	
Knox	Shaw's Bayleton 100 Granules	Bayleton	1% Granular	Turf	BP, DS, RT, RU, fusarium blight	219/772-6275
Lebanon	ProScope 8 - 4 - 24 Eagle SGN 145	Eagle (myclobutanil)	Fertilizer combination and straight G	Turf	DS, LS, RT, anthracnose, fusarium patch	
LESCO	LESCO MANhandle	Mancozeb, myclobutanil	WP	Turf, ornamentals	BP, DS, RT, anthracnose, pythium	800/321-5325
	LESCO Bayleton LESCO PCNB	Triadimefon PCNB	Granular, WDG Granular, Liquid	Turf, ornamentals Turf	BP, DS BP, GSM, PSM	
PBI Gordon	Bordeaux Mixture	Copper	Soluble powder	Flower beds, ornamentals	Fungal/bacterial diseases	800/821-7925
Plant Health Care	Trilogy Neem	Neem oil (oil biopesticide)	Sprayable horticultural oil	Landscape plants and shrubs	RU, WF, PM, black spot, aphid, scale, mite	800/421-9051
Rainbow Tree	Alamo Arbotect	Propinconitol Thiabendazole	Liquid Liquid	Trees Trees	Oak wilt Dutch elm, Sycamore anthracnose	877/272-6747
Riverdale	Magellan	Mono- and dibasic sodium, potassium, ammonium phosphates	Liquid	Turf, ornamentals	Pythium, yellow tuft	800/345-3330
Sipcam Agro USA	Echo Mefenoxam 2	Chlorothalonil Mefenoxam	90DF, 6 lb. F 2 lb. EC	Turf, ornamentals Turf, ornamentals	BP, DS, GLS, LS, SM Pythium, phytophthora, yellow tuft	678/296-2054
Syngenta	Alamo	Propiconazole	Liquid	Turf, ornamentals	Sycamore anthracnose, Dutch elm, crabapple scab, oak wilt	800/395-8873

MANUFACTURER	PRODUCT NAME	ACTIVE INGREDIENTS	AVAILABLE FORMULATIONS	FOR USE IN/ON:	KEY PESTS CONTROLLED	CONTACT INFO.
Syngenta	Banner MAXX	Propiconazole	LinkPak/MAXX, 2x1 gal./MAXX	Turf, ornamentals	DS, BP, GLS, SM, LS, RU, RT, PM, anthracnose, summer patch, take-all patch, scab	800/395-8873
	Heritage	Azoxystrobin	Liquid	Turf, ornamentals	BP, GLS, SM, RT, RU, PM, summer patch, take-all patch, anthracnose, pythium, Rhizoctonia, southern blight, fairy ring, downey mildew, alternaria, myrothesium	
Tree Tech	Alamo	Propiconazole	Liquid injection	Trees	Dutch elm, oak wilt, cedar apple rust, applescab, anthracnose	354/520-5335
	Systrex/Nutrient	Triademifon	Liquid injection	Ornamental trees	RU, PM, LS, leaf blight, tip blight	

HERBICIDES

Agrisel USA	Clear Out 41 Puls	Glyphosate	4 lb.	Turf, ornamentals, specialty	All actively growing green plants	877/480-0880
BASF	Drive® 75DF	Quinclorac	Dry flowable	Turf	CR, CL, DN, torpedograss, kikuyugrass	www.turfacts.com
	Pendulum®	Pendimethalin	AquaCap capsule suspension, 2G, 3.3EC, water-dispersible granule	Turf, ornamentals	CR, OX, SP, PA, foxtail	
	Vantage®	Sethoxydim	Emulsifiable concentrate	Turf, ornamental, non-food, non-crop	CR, foxtails, bermudagrass	
Bayer Environmental Science	Acclaim®	Fenoxaprop-ethyl	Liquid	Sod farms, turf, ornamentals	CR, GG, annual and perennial grasses	800/843-1702
	Ronstar® G	Oxadiazinon	2%	Turf, ornamentals	Annual grasses, broadleaf weeds	
	Finale®	Glufosinate ammonium	Liquid	Emerged weeds in non-crop areas	DN, dollarweed, white clover, thistle, annual and perennial grasses	
Chemnova	Glyfos® PRO	Glyphosate	Soluble container	Turf, ornamentals, industrial sites	Annual weeds, perennial weeds, unwanted vegetation	800/548-6113
Cleary Chemical	Methar 30	DSMA	Solution	Turf	CR, dallisgrass	800/524-1662
Crompton/Uniroyal Chemical	Casoron	Dichlobenil	4G, Granular	Turf, nurseries, under asphalt, under vinyl pool liners	Annual and perennial grassy and broadleaf weeds	203/573-2000
Dow AgroSciences	Confront	Triclopyr and clopyralid	Liquid, on fertilizer	Golf	DN, CL, broadleaf weeds	800/255-3726
	Dimension	Dithiopyr	Liquid, water-soluble packets, on fertilizer	Lawn care, golf	CR, grassy weeds, broadleaf weeds	
	Snapshot 2.5 TG	Trifluralin, isoxaben	Granular	Landscape	CW, SP, OX, grassy weeds, broadleaf weeds, groundsel	
FMC	QuickSilver™	Carfentrazone-ethyl	Flowable liquid	Turf, ornamentals	CL, SP, DN, thistle, penny-cress, etc.	800/321-1FMC
Griffin	TranXit GTA	Rimsulfuron	Dry flowable	Turf	PA, trivialis, perennial ryegrass	800/737-3995
Howard Johnson's	Weed Control	Millennium	0.87%	Ornamentals, turf	CL, GI, OX, henbit, thistle	800/298-4656
	Crabgrass Control	Barricade	.20%, .29%, .37%, .58%	Turf, landscape ornamentals	CR, SP, foxtails, henbit pigweed	
	Crabgrass Control	Dimension	.086%, .107%, .13%, .172%	Lawns, ornamental turf	CR, CW, henbit, pineapple weed	
Knox	Shaw's Turf Food Barricade®	Barricade	.20%, .28%, .38%, .50%	Turf	BYG, CR, PA, selected annual weeds	219/772-6275

Focus On PESTICIDES & FERTILIZERS

MANUFACTURER	PRODUCT NAME	ACTIVE INGREDIENTS	AVAILABLE FORMULATIONS	FOR USE IN/ON:	KEY PESTS CONTROLLED	CONTACT INFO.
Knox	Shaw's Turf Food Dimension®	Dimension	.08%, .10%, .13%, .17%, .25%	Turf	BYG, CR, PA, foxtail, selected annual weeds	219/772-6275
	Shaw's Turf Food Ronstar®	Ronstar	1%, 1.5%	Turf	GG, CG, PA, other annual weeds	
Lebanon	ProScope 19 - 2 - 9 Confront	Confront	Fertilizer combination and straight G	Established turf	CL, GI, DN, violets, plantain	800/233-0628
	ProScope 20 - 4 - 10 Dimension 0.19%	Dimension	Fertilizer combination and straight G	Established turf	CR, CW, GG, foxtail black medic	
	Woodace 13 - 18 - 18 Ronstar ExPo 1.73% Ronstar	Ronstar	Fertilizer combination	Turf, ornamental beds	GG, PA, OX, stinging nettle, carpetgrass	
IESCO	IESCO Pre-M	Pendimethalin	DG, WP, EC, Granular	Turf, ornamentals	CR, CW, GG, PA, SP, knotweed	800/321-5325
	IESCO Dimension	Dithiopyr	WSP, EC, Granular	Turf, ornamentals	CR, CW, GG, PA, SW, knotweed	
	IESCO Prosecutor	Glyphosate	Liquid	Turf, ornamentals	Herbaceous weeds	
Monsanto	Roundup Pro	Glyphosate	Liquid	Turf, ornamentals	Non-selective herbicide	800/332-3111
	Manage	Halosulfuron	Dry	Turf	Non-selective herbicide	
	AquaMaster	Glyphosate	Liquid	Aquatic weed control	Non-selective herbicide	
PBI Gordon	Trimec® Classic	2,4-D, MCPP, dicamba	Liquid and dry	Turf	Postemergence broadleaf weeds	800/821-7925
	Trimec® Turf Ester	2,4-D, 2,4-DP, dicamba	Liquid-emulsifiable concentrate	Cool-season turf	Postemergence broadleaf weeds	
	Super Trimec®	2,4-D, 2,4-DP, dicamba	Liquid-emulsifiable concentrate	Cool-season turf	Postemergence broadleaf weeds	
ProSource One	Strike 3 Ultra	2,4-D clopyralid, dichlorprop-r	Various	Turf, sod farms	CL, DN, OX, SP, plantains	901/758-1341
Riverdale Chemical	Manor	Metsulfuron methyl	WDG	Turf	Bahiagrass, grassy and broadleaf weeds	800/345-3330
	Razor Horsepower	Glyphosate MCPA, triclopyr, dicamba, 2,4-D free amine	41% WSL	Turf	Grassy, broadleaf weeds CL, CW, DN, GI, OX, daisy, black medic, buckhorn, goose foot, henbit, knotweed, plantain, poison ivy, purslane, red sorrel, thistle, wild violet	
Simplat	BEST with Dimension	Dithiopyr	Various	Turf, ornamentals	CR, GG, OX, PA, SP	800/227-9633
	BEST with Barricade	Proflam	Various	Turf	CR, CW, GG, PA, woodsorrel	
	BEST with Team Pro	Benfen, triflaurin	Various	Turf	CR, GG, OX, PA	
Sipcam Agro USA	Atrazine Turf & Conifer	Atrazine	4 lb. L	Warm-season turf	Winter annual weeds	678/296-9054
	Sim-Trol	Simazine	4 lb. L; 90DF	Warm-season turf, nurseries	Winter annual weeds	
Spring Valley	20 - 4 - 4 + Team Pro	Team Pro	Granular	Turf, athletic fields	CR, OX, SP, GG	800/635-2123
	19 - 0 - 6 + Dimension	Dimension	Granular	Turf, athletic fields	CR, GG, CW, OX, SP	
	18 - 2 - 12 + Gallery	Gallery	Granular	Turf, athletic fields	CW, SP, DN, CL, knotweed	
Syngenta	Barricade®	Proflam	4FL, 65WG	Turf, ornamentals	CR, CW, SP, OX, GG	800/395-8873
	Fusilade® II	Fluazifop-P-butyl		Landscape, ornamental	Grassy weeds	
	REWARD®	Diquat dibromide	GIT	Turf, ornamentals, vegetation management	Egeria densa, Eurasia watermilfoil, Salvinia molesta, water hyacinth, hydrilla, water lettuce, sumpweed, floating and marginal weeds	
UPM Corp.	Vine-X	Triclopyr	Liquid	Landscapes	Invasive vines and brush	www.vine-x.com

MANUFACTURER	PRODUCT NAME	ACTIVE INGREDIENTS	AVAILABLE FORMULATIONS	FOR USE IN/ON:	KEY PESTS CONTROLLED	CONTACT INFO.
Valent	Envoy	clethodim	Liquid	Ornamentals	Grassy weeds	800/89-VALENT
INSECTICIDES						
Arbor Systems	Pointer	Imidacloprid	5%	Ornamentals	Aaphids, borers, adelgids, Japanese beetles, Lerp Psyllids	800/698-4641
	Greyhound	Abamectin	1.9%	Ornamentals	Elm leaf beetle, lace bugs	
	Shepherd	Propaconazole	14%	Ornamentals	Dutch elm, oak wilt, apple scab, Sycamore anthracnose	
Bayer Environmental Science	Chipco® TopChoice	Fipronil	0.01%	Turf, landscape beds	WF, fire ants, mole crickets, aphids, scale, lacebugs	
	Sevin®	Carbaryl	80 WSP, SL	Turf, ornamentals	AW, SW, cutworms, chinch bugs, other turf pests	
	Merit®	Imidacloprid	75 WSP, 75 WP, .5G, 2F, 2.5G	Turf, ornamentals	WF, lacebugs, white grubs, mole crickets, aphids, scale	
Crompton/Uniroyal Chemical	Adept	Diflubenzuron	Water-soluble bags	Greenhouses	AW, LM, WF, fungus gnats, shoreflies	203/573-2000
	Dimilin	Diflubenzuron	4L, 25W, soluble concentrate	Trees, shrubs, landscapes, rights-of-way	AW, LM, GM, Lepidoptera, diptera, bagworms, budworms, tent caterpillars, tussock moths, webworms, weevils, etc.	
	Floramite	Bifenazate	Soluble concentrate	Ornamental	CL, two spotted spider mite, Pacific mite, strawberry mite, European red mite, citrus red mite, Southern red, spruce spider, bamboo spider mite	
Dow AgroSciences	Conserve SC	Spinosad	Liquid	Golf, lawn care, nursery, arborist, greenhouse	AW, LM, SW, TH, leps, cutworms, spider mites	800/255-3726
	Dursban Pro	Chlorpyrifos	Liquid, granular, on fertilizer	Golf, road medians, industrial plant sites, rights-of-way	Lepidoptera, chinch bugs, fire ants, aphids, etc.	
	MACH II	Halofenozide	Granular, liquid	Lawn care, golf	White grubs, lepidopteran larvae	
FMC	Talstar® F	Bifenthrin	Blowable liquid	Ornamentals, lawns	Fire ants, ants, chinch bugs, spider mites, silverfish	800/321-1FMC
	Talstar® EX	Bifenthrin	Granular	Turf, landscape	AW, fire ants, ants, chinch bugs, ticks	
	Astro®	Permethrin	Flowable liquid	Turf, ornamentals	Bark beetle, aphid, leaf hopper, pine saw fly, wasp	
Gowan	Mesuro Pro	Methiocarb	Extruded granules	Ornamentals	Slugs, snails, sowbugs, millipedes	800/737-3995
	Rubigan AS	Fenarinol	Aquous solution	Ornamentals	PM, RU, scab	
	Hexygon DF	Hexythiazox	Dry flowable	Ornamentals	Two-spotted spider mite, European red mite, honey locust spider mite, Pacific spider mite, Southern red mite, spruce spider mite, strawberry spider mite, Willamette mite	
Griffin	Vendex	Fenbutatin-oxide	Wettable powder	Ornamental plants	European red mite, Pacific spider mite, Southern red mite, spruce spider mite, strawberry spider mite, two-spotted spider mite and Willamette mite	800/737-3995

Focus On PESTICIDES & FERTILIZERS

MANUFACTURER	PRODUCT NAME	ACTIVE INGREDIENTS	AVAILABLE FORMULATIONS	FOR USE IN/ON:	KEY PESTS CONTROLLED	CONTACT INFO.
Hot Pepper Wax	Hot Pepper Wax - Insect	Capsaicin	RTU, concentrate	Vegetables, flowers, ornamentals, fruit	AW, WF, aphids, spider mites, lace bugs	888/667-3785
J.J. Mauget	Imicide	Imidacloprid	Liquid	Ornamentals	TH, Long-haired borers, flat-headed borers, psyllids, adelgids	800/873-3779
	Abocide	Abamectin	Liquid	Ornamentals	LM, mites, Elmleaf beetle, fall webworms, Sycamore lacebug	
	Inject-A-Cide B	Dicrotophos	Liquid	Ornamentals	GM, scales, borers, leaf hoppers, bronze birch borer	
Howard Johnson's	Insect Control	Mach II	0.86%	Turf	AW, cutworms, webworms, beetles, chafer,	800/298-4656
	Insect Control	Merit	0.20%	Turf, ornamentals	Grubs, chafers, billbugs, weevils, crickets	
	Insect Granular	Permethrin	0.25%	Grass, spot treatment	Grubs, fire ants, ticks, mites, fleas	
Knox	Show's Turf Food DeltaGard®	DeltaGard	.10%	Turf	SW, AW, chinch bugs, mole crickets, ticks	219/772-6275
	Show's Turf Food Diazinon 333	Diazinon	3.33%	Turf	SW, AW, chinch bugs, white grubs, ticks	
	Show's Turf Food Merit	Merit	.15%, .20, .25%	Turf	Japaneze beetles, Northern & Southern masked chafer, billbug, May-June grubs	
Lebanon	ProScope 16 - 4 - 8 43%, MESA MACH II 1.33%, 2%	Barricade	Fertilizer combination	Established turf	BYG, CR, GG, OX, foxtail	800/233-0628
	ProScope 20 - 2 - 6 Talstar 0.069%	Talstar	Combination fertilizer and straight G	Turf	AW, SW, chinch bugs, ants, ticks	
LESCO	LESCO Talstar	Bifenthrin	Liquid, granular	Turf, ornamentals	GM, SW, chinch bug, mole cricket, annual bluegrass weevil	800/321-5325
	LESCO Merit	Imidacloprid	Granular, WP	Turf, ornamentals	Grubs, piercing and sucking insects	
	LESCO Mach 2	Halofenozide	Granular, liquid	Turf	AW, SW, grubs, cutworms	
Poulinger USA	Dragonfire	Organic	Powder	Turf, ornamentals, gardens	Nematodes	866/709-8102
Spring Valley	22 - 3 - 5 + MACH II	MACH II	Granular	Turf, athletic fields	Japanese beetle larvae, Northern & Southern masked chafers, Lepidopteran larvae	800/635-2123
Stoller Chemicals of Florida	Carrier	93% Soybean Oil with Surfactants	Liquid	Ornamentals, foliage plants	WF, scale insects, aphids	352/357-3173
Syngenta	Avid®	Abamectin	Liquid	Landscape, ornamentals	LM, TH, WF, mites, aphids	
	Citation®	Cyromazine	Liquid	Turf, ornamentals	LM, shore flies, fungus gnats	
	Varsity®	Abamectin	Granular	Turf	Fire ants	
Tree Tech	Vivid II	Abamectin	Liquid injection	Ornamental trees	Adelgids, elm leaf beetle, scale, mites, oakworm,	354/528-5335
	Dendrex	Acephate	Liquid injection	Ornamental trees, shrubs	TH, caterpillars, aphids, bronze birch borer, leaf rollers	
	Harpoon	Metasystox R	Liquid injection	Trees	Bark beetles, borers, mites aphids, adelids	
Valent	Distance Insect Growth Regulator	pyriproxyfen	Liquid	Ornamentals	WF, scale, aphids, fungus gnats, mealybugs	800/89-VALENT
	Distance Fire Ant Bait	pyriproxyfen	Granular bait	Turf, ornamentals	Red imported fire ant	

MANUFACTURER	PRODUCT NAME	ACTIVE INGREDIENTS	AVAILABLE FORMULATIONS	FOR USE IN/ON:	KEY PESTS CONTROLLED	CONTACT INFO.
Valent	Orthene Turf, Tree & Ornamental 97	Acephate	Pellet	Commercial turf, ornamentals	Broad-spectrum insecticide	800/89-VALENT
Wellmark International	Extinguish Enstar II Altosid	Methoprene S-Kinoprene Methoprene	Granular Liquid Liquid, granular	Turf Turf, ornamentals Landscapes	Fire ants WF, TH, aphids, mites Mosquitoes	800/248-7763
ANTIBIOTICS						
J.J. Mauget	Microject	Oxytetracycline	Liquid	Ornamentals	Ash yellows, bacterial leaf scorch, palm lethal yellows, fire blight, leaf scald	800/973-3779
Tree Tech	OTC	Oxytetracycline	Liquid injection	Ornamentals, fruit trees	Fire blight, lethal yellows, wetwood, bacterial leaf scorch	354/528-5335
REPELLANTS						
Arkion Life Science	Flight Control	AQ	Spray applied	Turf	Goose repellent	800/468-6324
Hot Pepper Wax	Hot Pepper Wax - Animal	Capsaicin	RTU, concentrate	Vegetables, flowers, ornamentals, fruits	Rabbits, squirrels, small animals	888/667-3785

Ad Index

COMPANY NAME	WEB ADDRESS	PG#	RS#
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Cox Reels		P8	420
Dow AgroSciences	www.dowagro.com/turf	P15	
FMC Corp.	www.fmc-apgspec.com	P36	419
Hannay Reels	www.hannay.com	P5	402
J.J. Mauget	www.mauget.com	P35	418
Lawn Power & Equipment	www.brandtekus.com	P14	410
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PRO-Equipment	www.proequipment.com	P34	404
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EDITOR'S NOTE: This information is provided for general awareness purposes only. A supplier's inclusion or exclusion from this listing should not be perceived as an endorsement or criticism of its products. This information should not be considered a substitute for the information on a product's label, and all pesticide applicators are encouraged to read the label before using any product. Product listing submissions were edited due to the influx of information.

Abbreviation Guide

A -	Algae
AW -	Armyworms
BG -	Bluegrass
BP -	Brown patch
BYG -	Barnyardgrass
CL -	Clover
CR -	Crabgrass
CW -	Chickweed
DN -	Dandelion
DS -	Dollar spot
GG -	Goosegrass
GLS -	Gray leaf spot
GM -	Gypsy moths
GSM -	Gray snow mold
LM -	Leafminers
LS -	Leaf spot
OX -	Oxalis
PA -	Poa annua
PM -	Powdery mildew
PSM -	Pink snow mold
RT -	Red thread
RU -	Rust
SM -	Snow mold
SP -	Spurge
SW -	Sod webworms
TH -	Thrips
WF -	Whiteflies

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MARCH.03

Landscape Edgers

(continued from page 108)

straight machine costs \$419 – the big difference being the gear box configuration.

Ultimately, a contractor's decision will be based on preference.

FUTURE THOUGHTS. Manufacturers are always thinking ahead when it comes to new machine designs and features.

Currently, some manufacturers are exploring edgers that can accommodate various blade sizes, Vick pointed out. Additionally, product designers are looking into incorporating adjustment wheels so contractors can vary their depth of cut on jobs, Larson added.

Manufacturers also are investigating new shield and gear cases, Golevicz said.

Furthermore, old reciprocating edgers, which are equipped with three oscillating blades, may come back on the landscape scene within the year, Vick said. "Manufacturers did away with this type of edger because it was more expensive – close to

Many contractors wonder, "Can I sharpen my edger blades like I do my mower blades?"

The answer, according to Echo, is, "No."

To maximize edger efficiency and cut on the job, contractors should replace edger blades when they are worn to approximately 6 inches in length.

Other common questions that contractors typically ask include:

Q: How long will a unit run on one tank of fuel?

A: On average, a unit will run between 30 and 45 minutes on one tank of fuel.

Q: Are there any special break-in procedures for new engines?

A: A new engine will be broken in after approximately three to five tanks of fuel have been run through the unit. During the break-in period, the engine performance will increase and exhaust emissions will stabilize.

Q: What is the expected engine life rating?

A: If contractors perform proper preventive maintenance and use proper lubrication, typical edger engines are designed to last 1,200 to 1,500 hours or more. – Echo

Quick Tips

\$700," he said. "But recreations of this model are coming back by demand and will be more affordable – about \$600."

In terms of engines, they will either remain the same size in the future or decrease in size because, as Larson explained, "If the engine gets any bigger, the ma-

chine is going to get heavier and too cumbersome for the operator." **L**

The authors are Associate Editor and Managing Editor of *Lawn & Landscape*, respectively, and can be reached at ewilson@lawnandlandscape.com or nwisniewski@lawnandlandscape.com.

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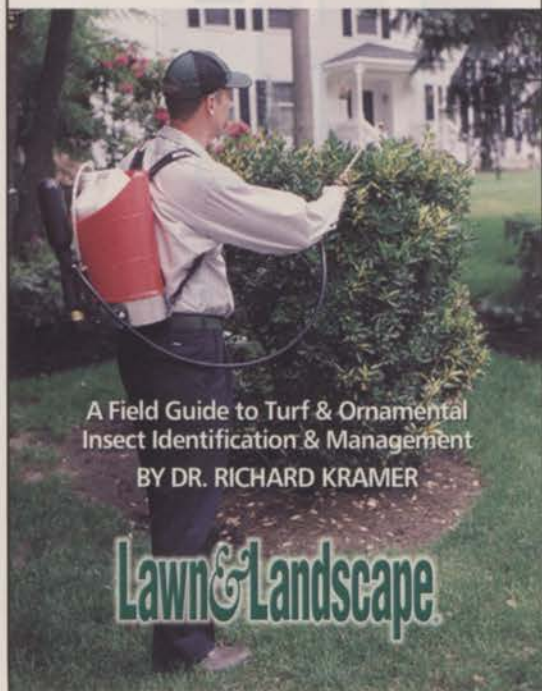
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Marketing Strategies

(continued from page 148)

ings to develop an "aggregate wealth rating," which weights numerous variables, including income and home value, and assigns each customer to a certain percentage group numbered zero through 19. Individuals who fall in group 19 – the highest 5 percent – are the most likely to buy landscaping and lawn care services, while those at the other end of the spectrum are least likely to do so. "This [knowledge] helps ensure that every marketing piece reaches the ideal prospects," Nichols affirmed.

Creating a clientele overview can be time consuming, but by profiling their best customers a company can identify its "A" clients and develop marketing strategies to swell this customer segment. At Wallace Landscape Associates, Kennett Square, Pa., President and CEO Terry Wallace makes this research a priority. "We take our "A" clients and look at their age, house value and whether they have children or not," she explained. "We just look at their whole lifestyle and try to figure out how we can reach out to more of the same type of client."

"If you know who your customers are – especially your best customers – and you know what their similarities are, you can identify who your best prospects are going to be." – Don Nichols

For Wallace, that type of client turned out to be in the high-end residential market, which is typical for the landscape industry. She determined that the best way to find similar clients in her area was to advertise regionally in magazines such as *Architectural Digest* and model print ads after those for luxury brands like Mercedes.

Jeff Lefton, marketing director, Mainscape, Indianapolis, Ind., also gleans creative ideas from magazines. "I tear pages out of good magazines like *Time* and *Forbes* and keep them all in a file folder," Lefton explained. "When I get ready to do something, I pull the folder, spread out the pages, and let it happen. You can get a lot of great ideas from people paying a lot of money to do this."

Of course, even more important than what contractors know about their preferred clients is what clients know about contrac-



tors. The vast majority of Wallace's clients come from referrals. "We keep the same clients year after year, and we find that we're working for their friends who are also the kinds of people we want to work for," she said. Nichols' survey found that clients choosing a lawn care company looked at characteristics such as consistency in staff, quality of work, professional appearance, responsiveness and personal contact. Keeping up with these necessities can maintain customers' high opinions of the company they choose, and increase word-of-mouth marketing.

To this end, Jack Robertson, president,

Jack Robertson Lawn Care, Springfield, Ill., emphasized the need to keep in touch with current clients. "It's the four c's: constant contact creates customers," he recited. "We want to be in contact with our customers as much as possible." After more than 25 years in business, Robertson takes advantage of several marketing techniques that ensure his current clients are satisfied and retention rates stay high.

For instance, Robertson does something special annually for a group of his most faithful clients, like send them certificates for a free pie at the local pie shop. When these clients pick up their desserts, he invites these clients to stop into the office, which happens to be around the corner. "My opinion is that if you can get a customer to come into the office and visit with them there, they're a lot less likely to go anywhere else," he explained. "Another reason for [giving

them pies] is that now our company is going to be mentioned at the kitchen table and that puts us in a positive light."

Customer retention is also where Linda Donovan, vice president, Earthworks Landscaping Co., directs her marketing efforts. "Once you take care of the people who already trust you, not only are you increasing your services for them, but their neighbors also

are saying, "They've had the same landscaper for 15 years. We go through them like water, let's give them a shot," she emphasized.

In addition to staying in contact with current customers, both Donovan and Robertson acknowledge the importance of rewarding longtime clients. While putting together percent-off or first-time-free offers can entice potential clients and bring in more money right off the bat, thanking loyal customers keeps revenue coming in year after year. Robertson insisted that having offers for first-timers may even offend longtime clients. "I'm very fortunate to have customers who have been with us for 27 years," he explained. "I'm so concerned about doing anything negative to my customer base that I don't give offers." Instead, he relies on staying in contact with customers and ensures that his company maintains a professional appearance, such as clean trucks and uniforms and well-groomed technicians – tips that any company can implement easily.

Maintaining customer awareness also is highly important and Lefton encourages contractors to be visible in the community. He explained that contractors who focus on property management for instance, should join organizations like the Building Owners and Managers Association. "Typically, they have lists [of contact numbers] and sometimes they even have their own magazines or newspapers to advertise in," he explained. "They have opportunities like golf outings in the summer and a company can be a hole sponsor. Rather than spreading all your dollars out, target where you would like to work."

Similarly, with homeowners' associations, Lefton and a sales representative from the management firm hold periodical cook-outs on Saturday afternoons for residents to

attend, eat lunch and ask questions about their landscapes. This helps keep the clients happy and the landscaping company well-remembered.

DID YOU SEE THAT? Once a company determines that its niche clients are upper-middle-class families with three soccer-playing kids or retired couples who enjoy walking around their neighborhood, for example, the next step is to get the company name in front of those people. After all, clients have to see logos and hear slogans in order to learn about a company in the first place.

As expected, opinions on the best way to do this differ widely, and not every type of marketing works for every company. For instance, more stringent laws might make telemarketing much more difficult in one state than in another. Likewise, extremely high-end clients may be more accessible through direct mail than through television

advertising. Furthermore, the cost of entry and return on that investment can easily determine whether or not a certain form of marketing is appropriate or worthwhile.

Landscape and lawn care professionals insist that the little things really help get a marketing message across. "All of the marketing I do has to meet at least two of the following three criteria: it must be fun, it must be cheap or it must be different," explained Marty Grunder, president, Grunder Landscaping, Miamisburg, Ohio.

Grunder stressed that paying for advertising isn't always necessary if it's done the right way. "We spend about 1.6 percent of our gross sales on marketing, but there's a tremendous amount of advertising that we do that doesn't cost very much," he said. Through press releases to newspapers and television and radio stations, Grunder has received publicity for little – if any – cost. For example, he was able to gain airtime on the local news by

alerting viewers to a possible mail scam. Similarly, when Grunder Landscaping gave away an excess of Christmas trees one holiday, the company's name was spread throughout the area without mentioning a word about landscaping services.

At Avalawn Landscaping, Cincinnati, Ohio, president Erich Heinrich, whose client niche consists of largely commercial properties, delivers poinsettias to his customers during the holiday season to thank them for their business. The potted flowers range from \$2.50 to \$5 each and take only one or two days to deliver. "On the card, we just write, 'This is a gift from Avalawn,' and leave instructions on how to care for the poinsettia," Heinrich noted. "We do get phone calls off of it, but gifts should not be given as advertising."

Certainly, traditional techniques like using a telemarketing approach can be profitable if done properly, and direct mail campaigns offer some of the highest returns and

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closed sales for the investment. Still, postage and subcontractor costs, as well as long contact lists, can elevate expenses associated with this marketing effort.

Advertising in the *Yellow Pages* is another common marketing choice, but Nichols advised that because such ads are often ineffective and expensive (\$600–\$1,000 for a ¼-page ad, depending on the region), they should be used simply as easy access to a company's address and phone number. Robertson agreed, naming the *Yellow Pages* approach a "necessary evil" that offers the contractor little control over the placement and function of the ad itself. This being the case, non-traditional methods of advertising are gaining popularity and generally cost little more than time and creativity.

Donovan stopped advertising six years ago and now uses non-traditional techniques in her marketing efforts, which are targeted at existing customers and involve mainly

household items. "I looked around my house and thought of all the different things in the kitchen alone that promote somebody else's business and said, 'How can I get my name on that sponge?'" Donovan explained. The result of her efforts has "Earthworks Landscaping Co." written on jar openers, baby bibs, toddler t-shirts, calendars and for her best customers, fleece blankets. These items are inexpensive, ranging from 60 cents each for jar openers to just \$1 per calendar and a mere \$7 plus embroidery for blankets. They all find their ways into clients' homes where guests will see the logo. "Now my name is being spoken by someone who didn't say it yesterday," Donovan enthused.

In a similar effort to put a new spin on a more traditional method of advertising, Robertson works closely with his sign printing company to develop a bus bench campaign that runs five months of the year. "When the bench is put up by the sign

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Find more marketing tips from this article in the Online Extras section of our Web site.

company, we have them put about half of them upside down," he explained. The trick prompts passersby to call the office and initiates a relationship. "If people ask why we did it, we say, 'Well, you noticed it,'" he said. "What is advertising all about? Being seen and reacting to it."

PUT IT IN WRITING. In addition to giving gifts and keeping customers actively interested, many contractors find that putting their offers and appreciation on paper is one of the most effective ways to market their services.

Heinrich successfully used fliers to increase residential and commercial sales. "I

(continued on page 154)

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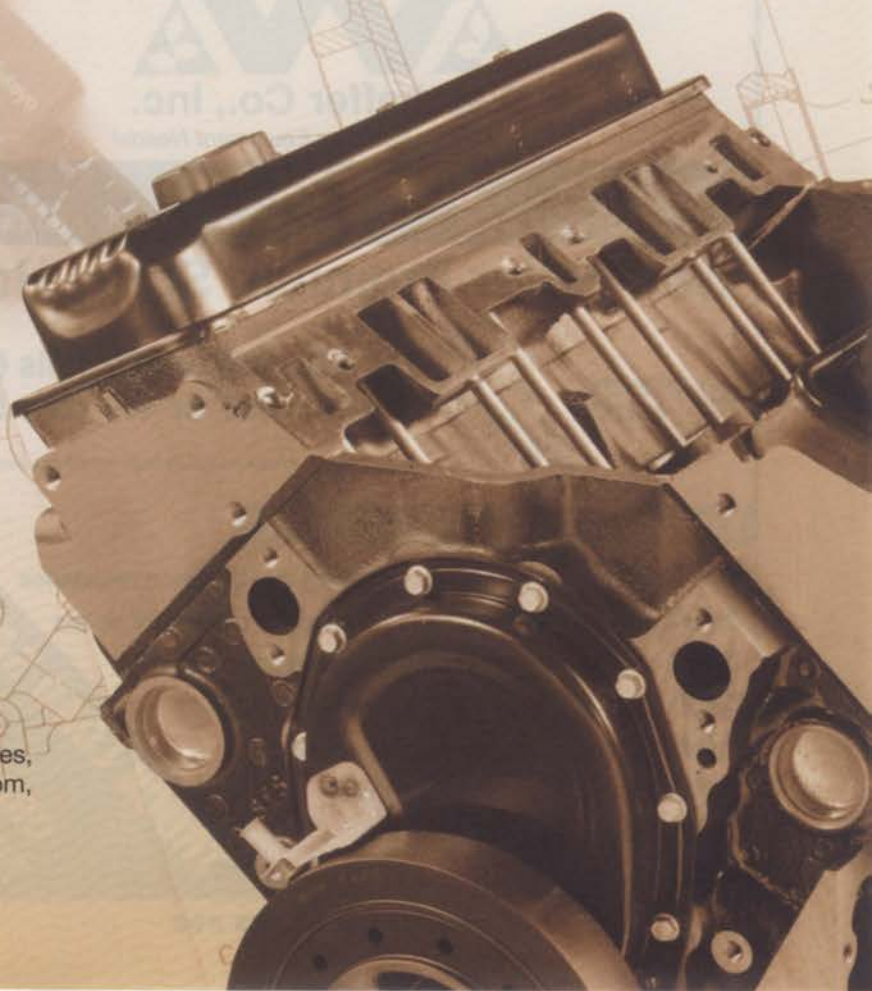
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USE READER SERVICE #93

Marketing Strategies

(continued from page 152)

made up three different colored fliers," he described, "and at the bottom of the blue one I put 'lawn price \$25-30.'" The other fliers included progressively higher price ranges and as Heinrich and his crewmembers scouted neighborhoods and sized up lawns, they left the appropriate flier at the client's door. "You're only putting the fliers at the houses you want to service," Heinrich commented, comparing this to direct mail. "If you put a flier somewhere and the person calls, you know they already know the price, and you know you want to do the property because you put the flier there."

Heinrich and Donovan both use professional printing companies for their marketing materials, and Lefton agrees that this is the best option. He visits his commercial printer with his own photographs in hand and concepts for pieces in mind. "In my case, I pay \$50 per hour for [the] work," he enthused, "and in three or four hours you can generate a great creative piece." Lefton explained that commercial printers are well-versed in desktop publishing programs and should know where to find free artwork on the Web, which makes production easy and affordable.

On the other hand, advertising agencies also can work their magic on print ad concepts for magazines. Anna Cooke, co-creative director for Creative Resource Group, Clearwater, Fla., puts together evocative print ads for Phillips Environmental Group, Clearwater, Fla. "We wanted to develop a lifestyle campaign vs. just selling the landscape," Cooke explained.

Chris Phillips, president, Phillips Environmental, agreed saying, "Our concept has always been about the highest quality landscape design/build one could find, and our advertising had to reflect that." By working with an agency, Phillips had a wealth of creative people at his disposal and the resulting ad campaign targets clients through lifestyle magazines, direct mail, the Internet and solid public relations.

Phillips added that the agency he works with develops new ideas and concepts all year long, and appeal to clients' emotional interests. "The brand is the relationship your customer has with your product. Landscaping is an emotional buy and our advertising is directed to that emotion," he suggested.

Another way many companies communicate their messages to clients is via peri-

Marketing Strategies

Site signs connect a company's name with its work.

Photo: Wallace Landscape Associates

"I try to write things I think people are going to want to know about. I use a lot of visuals and I try to get to the point quickly." For the most part, Grunder Landscaping's newsletters aren't based around hard selling, but they are designed to keep clients interested and answer their questions.

Other popular and simple marketing techniques include putting job site signs at each project in-progress, and simply sending traditional, handwritten thank you notes to customers on a regular basis. When targeting a specific client niche, that kind of personal touch at holidays, company anniversaries or periodically throughout the year, reinforces the positive contact clients appreciate from their lawn care or landscape companies and keeps you on their mind. ■

The author is a Assistant Editor to Lawn & Landscape magazine and she can be reached at lspiers@lawnandlandscape.com.

odic newsletters. Be they monthly or seasonal, newsletters are an excellent way to remind customers when the next round of treatments will begin, explain the intricacies of proper mowing and watering techniques, or keep readers abreast of local and environmental news related to landscaping and maintenance. "[A newsletter] is a fantastic way of consistently communicating your message in a classy, unobtrusive way," remarked Grunder, who publishes a quarterly newsletter for his clients.

Robertson's newsletter goes out "like clockwork" once every month, Lefton said,

Many landscape contractors use their own skills or those of their employees to market their company and its services. But Chris Phillips, president, Phillips Environmental Services, Clearwater, Fla., put his company's marketing efforts in the hands of professionals. "We decided [to use an agency] right from the start," Phillips remarked, adding that choosing the right advertising agency results from a detailed search rather than hiring the first company in the phone book. Here are a few of Phillips' agency insights:

- **Review your prospects.** In the same way clients look over landscaping bids for just the right company, a review process is necessary when choosing an advertising agency. "We were looking for top-notch creative talent, people with a sense of what we wanted to accomplish and good chemistry," Phillips outlined, and enthused that in addition to those properties, the firm he selected also offered a great public relations department.

- **Take your time.** "The review process can be quite time consuming - several months - because it's an important commitment for both parties," Phillips observed. "All agencies differ in their creative abilities, so you must be prepared to judge which more effectively matches your expectations creatively and financially."

- **Know your budget.** After choosing an agency, meeting to discuss the advertising campaign and marketing budget is the next step. "You need to know exactly what you want to spend over the next 12 months and share that with the agency up front," Phillips advised. As with other marketing efforts, the cost of marketing through an agency ranges from 2 to 5 percent of gross sales, or more for a larger company. Phillips mentioned that cost should not be a contractor's determining factor when considering an agency since the alternative - hiring in-house marketing employees - increases overhead and capital costs.

- **Mark your calendar.** "You never want a potential client to forget about you, so some sustained marketing is necessary," Phillips said. The firm he uses works all year to develop new ideas for feature stories and advertising campaigns. - Lauren Spiers

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USE READER SERVICE #96

by Matt Shooner

After setting up systems to build client relationships, contractors have to create employee buy-in.

Even though measuring the quality of relationships may seem like a subjective goal, there are specific and measurable areas in any contractor's business that can and do affect, if not determine, the quality of those relationships. So, by measuring these specifics over time, and working to improve the results, contractors will begin to reap the benefits of improved relationships. The stronger the relationships, the better the bottom line.

To review the key points covered in the first part of this series (see "Get Personal," February 2003, *Lawn & Landscape*), 11 areas that strongly affect client relationships are:

- Average time to deliver estimates
- Sales closing percentage
- Size of average sale
- Average annual revenue per client
- Average referrals per client
- Number of personal contacts per client
- Total number of contacts per client
- Average time to respond to service calls
- Customer turnover/loss
- Average service calls per job or application
- Average days to collect payments

Because you can objectively measure these items, you should accept them as the benchmarks of client care and measure them to establish current baselines in each area. Contractors who adopt this model create a list of specific areas to measure, know where the company is now, and establish processes and goals for what the company will accomplish in each area.

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Client Relationships

(continued from page 156)

Every company should be armed with a future vision. To convince employees that their goals are good for them as well as the company, contractors must use clear and ongoing training and consistent measurement and reporting.

duction and sales managers, office and finance managers, customer service managers and anyone else who has responsibility for a portion of the business. These conversations should take place one-on-one or in small, intimate groups where everyone feels

so approach them thoughtfully. This may be a three- to six-month process, giving the staff sufficient time to discuss the issues. Also, keep the environment comfortable by scheduling meetings as off-site breakfasts or staff retreats.

How do **contractors convince their employees** that their **goals are good for them** as well as **the company?**

Through **clear** and **ongoing training.**

Swaying employees toward a new vision and way of thinking takes showmanship and enthusiasm. The process is called "buy-in." When employees truly buy-in to ideas, they perform out of desire and get pleasure from their accomplishments, creating an effective extension of an owner's vision and yielding exciting and measurable results.

DOING "TALK-ABOUTS." The process should start with key staff. Speak with pro-

free to give their opinions. Lay out visions and objectives and listen carefully to responses. Some of the best methods for implementing change and achieving total staff buy-in will come from these people, and they will appreciate seeing their ideas and suggestions become part of the final statement of goals and methods.

You do not want to rush this process. The decisions being made are critical and will significantly affect the company's operation,

Other approaches to use to get employees to buy-in to improving client relationships include:

- Create the "big picture." Explain what the company will look like after accomplishing goals and the opportunities success will bring employees.

For instance, when describing a goal to increase referrals, say something like, "Referrals are the least expensive and usually the most profitable of the sales we make. Referrals show us that our customers are happy with the work we are doing, and the new sales we receive from them are more profitable to the company. This means we can grow faster and promote more people. Increasing referrals significantly will affect

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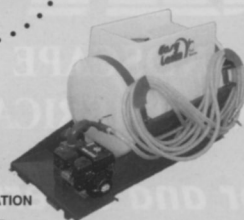
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Client Relationships

(continued from page 158)

the company and all of our futures in a positive way."

- Finalize specific short- and long-term improvement goals for all of the benchmarks.

For example, explain to employees how the company currently receives an average of one referral for every 15 clients. Then, they can emphasize that their short-term goal is to increase that to three referrals per every 15 clients in the next six months, and their long-term goal is to increase that to no less than five referrals per every 15 jobs in the next year. This would mean that at least one-third of the company's client base is providing possible leads.

- Detail the procedures to help employees achieve each of these goals.

For instance, to increase referrals:

- 1) First, set up a referral program. Give a \$25 credit to any customer who refers a friend or neighbor who signs up for a full lawn or tree care program or give a \$100 credit to any client who sends a referral who buys more than \$1,000 worth of services.

- 2) Run a referral coupon in every issue of the company newsletter.

- 3) Insert a referral coupon with every billing statement.

- 4) Clover-leaf every current job with an invitation to receive a quote.

- 5) Call each completed job for quality control and ask for referrals in the process.

- 6) Ask for and record lead sources.

- Lay out a training and supervision system for teaching and reinforcing procedures. For instance:

- 1) Give everyone taking leads a checklist that includes asking for sources.

- 2) Record the lead (and the source) in the computer database.

- 3) Note referring people on proposals.

- 4) Have every salesperson reference the job done for the referring customer.

- 5) Prepare a "closing checklist" for salespeople on which one of the items is asking for a referral. Tally the checklists.

- 6) Create scripts for each type of employee to use as they ask for referrals.

- 7) "Overhear" and oversee that the process is actually working.

- Design results-driven individual and group compensation and recognition plans to reward those who advance the company's goals. For example:

- 1) Pay \$20 to each employee who generates a referral who becomes a client.

- 2) Award the top referral-generator each quarter with a check for \$100 and a weekend getaway worth \$300.

- 3) Present these awards at a monthly or quarterly performance awards meeting.

- Define the mechanics of actually measuring results. Some steps include:

- 1) Enter all leads into a computer database.

- 2) Make "Source" a field that must be filled in on the computer.

- 3) Create a report listing the source and employee for all leads.

- 4) Automatically credit the referring client's account when entering a sale.

- Assign responsibility for tracking re-

(continued on page 162)

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Client Relationships

(continued from page 160)

sults. For instance, make the lead and order entry person accountable for this task.

- Create methods for reporting weekly or monthly results to the company, comparing the number received to the same period last year and providing budget, actual, month-to-date and year-to-date figures.

- Brainstorm ways to capitalize on these company changes in marketing and sales efforts. For example, after one year, publicize the percentage of business that comes in through satisfied clients. This builds credibility and should increase leads and sales.

Meet with the key staff group as often as necessary to lay out the most efficient, effective and fairest ways to handle each of the above areas for each benchmark. Incorporate as many of their ideas as possible and explain the reasoning if something they suggest must be left out.

SELLING THE SIZZLE. Once you complete this process for each benchmark, you are ready to "take it to the troops." The next

step is a matter of crafting all that's been decided into a comprehensive and compelling sales pitch – not a memo or a manual.

Arrange a kickoff meeting with the entire staff. This should be paid time and should be fun. Consider having a catered lunch or dinner, but let everyone know that this is an important meeting – not just a party.

At the meeting, paint the big picture. Stress the value of each client and describe the over-reaching goals – to dramatically improve what customers think of the company and to reward and recognize employees who help make that happen.

Next, each department head should lay out the specifics of the changes for those areas under their supervision. The more detailed the descriptions of the processes and procedures, and the clearer the explanation of the measurement and reward systems, the more likely the staff will buy-in.

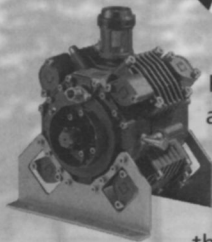
- Use large charts for tracking benchmark goals. Post charts in a place where all staff can see company and individual progress.

After kicking off the program, keep it alive. Announce major accomplishments and minor triumphs. Schedule a monthly or quarterly performance awards meeting and give due recognition even for the smallest improvements. Reinforce the goals constantly, and reward staff members individually when they take the steps needed to help move the company forward.

Remember, this is all about "getting personal" and improving client relationships. The results will follow the action, and the profits and growth will follow the results of a well-planned and executed program. **□**

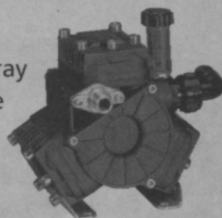
The author is president, Focal Point Communications, Cincinnati, Ohio, and can be reached at 800/525-6999 or mshooner@growpro.com.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second of a two-part series on improving client relationships. In part one, which ran in February, the author highlighted how contractors can set benchmarks to improve client relationships.



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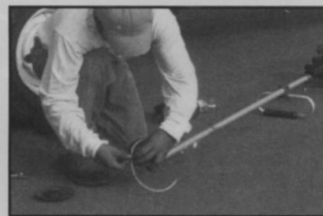


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COST CONTROL

7 Ways to Reduce Rental Costs

In today's economy, contractors and business managers rent more equipment to help manage cash flow and increased workloads. However, before visiting the rental store with their lists of equipment needs, contractors should take time to ensure they have the right tools and machines for the job – and the jobsite.

These seven tips can help contractors collect the right tools and reduce rental costs.

1. *Examine the jobsite.* Take a look at travel distances, steepness of grades and underfoot conditions. Know the height and reach requirements for the aerial equipment that you may need. Specifying the right machine can help prevent work delays. If you walk into a rental yard and you're not sure of what you need, ask the people working there to visit your jobsite and advise you on the best equipment for the job.

2. *Select the right machine.* In general, select the smallest machine that will get the job done. But contractors shouldn't cut short on size and power. If the machine isn't large enough or is underpowered for job requirements, completing a task may take longer.

3. *Consider work conditions.* Know whether rental equipment will work inside, outside or both. Measure the size of building entries. If emissions are a concern, contractors may need electric-powered equipment. Also consider needed lighting, such as portable light towers.

4. *Know the terrain.* A piece of machinery operating on 4 inches of loose gravel may have different requirements than one working on smooth concrete. Flotation tires may be necessary in some situations, while others require tracks. Contractors may even need solid tires if underfoot conditions are especially abusive.

5. *Calculate rental duration.* Carefully figure how long completing the work will take. However, be careful not to underestimate the length of rental. If a contractor needs a piece of equipment for three weeks, renting it for the entire month may be more cost effective. As a result, be sure to ask about costs.

6. *Determine equipment delivery.* Many contractors require that the rental store deliver equipment to the

jobsite. If a contractor's particular rental store does not do this, he or she should be sure to calculate whether the company's truck and trailer can haul the equipment. Contractors who have trucks capable of towing equipment but no trailers should ask whether rental stores will rent them trailers.

7. *Rely on the experts.* Working with professional and well-trained rental store staff can save time and money – and help increase your productivity.

"The customer wants to work with a salesperson who understands his business and his needs," Beeler said. "A landscape contractor, for example, appreciates it when we recommend he rent a skid-steer loader with work tool attachments. This helps him complete multiple tasks with one machine, eliminating the need to rent one or dedicated-task rental machines. The bottom line is we save him time and money." – Rod Beeler

The author is manager, Rental and Used Equipment Services, Caterpillar, Peoria, Ill.

Contractors should rent the right machines for the right tasks. For instance, at this new home, a wheel loader carries heavy loads of landscaping stones, while a mini hydraulic excavator digs holes for new shrubs with an auger tool attachment. Photo: Caterpillar



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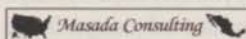
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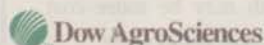
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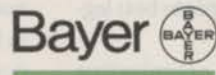
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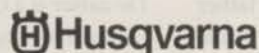
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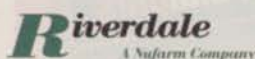
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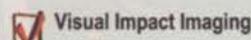
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Cover Story

(continued from page 46)

need to be good stewards as a company and an industry."

Customers must understand the importance of this resource, too. "You have to take a proactive approach," added Heaviland, who, consequently, had a water board meeting planned later that day. "I would rather be a leader and know what is happening and how it will affect us so we can prepare."

"We are looking at trying to better define our irrigation team in how we can service our clients in providing water audits and upgrading to systems that are more water efficient," he continued.

In this case, Heaviland hopes to beat legislation to the punch.

He wants to build an organization founded on sound moral principles, designed to outlast economic stress, labor shortages and industry qualms.

Heaviland examines his own role and fleshes out where he fits into the picture — where will he be stationed as the A, B and C

branches progress and as employees gain more responsibility?

"My role, as the president, is to develop leaders within this organization," Heaviland defined. "I look at my role as developing the corporate culture from the top down, and developing key relationships with potential clients that can benefit our sales."

In the meantime, Heaviland continues to stay two steps ahead, always anticipating, planning and refocusing when necessary.

He remembers when this flexibility to change was first important — when his role shifted from co-owner in charge of operations to sole president after his father's death in December 1997. "That was a real turning point in our company," he said, hesitating at the notion, which after five years still seems a shock. "I will still start to pick up the phone and call him."

The 13-year partnership shared by father and son still serves as a compass while Heaviland determines the company's course.

As Heaviland charts "what's next," he reflects on the business foundation he and his father cultivated during their joint ownership — the Torch Award the company earned in 2002 from the San Diego Better Business Bureau acknowledges the company's sound principles. "It's nice to be recognized for being a company with high ethical standards, and we are very proud of that," he said. "It is the kind of legacy that Dad left. He was a man of high integrity and character and his imprint still exists."

Perhaps this is why Wilhite calls Heaviland "one of the special ones."

"I couldn't think of a better thing to be honored for — business integrity," he continued, pausing for the right words. "Tom is very deserving of that. In our industry and in our area, he is one of those good guys." ■

The author is a Contributing Editor to *Lawn & Landscape* magazine and can be reached at khamphshire@lawnandlandscape.com.

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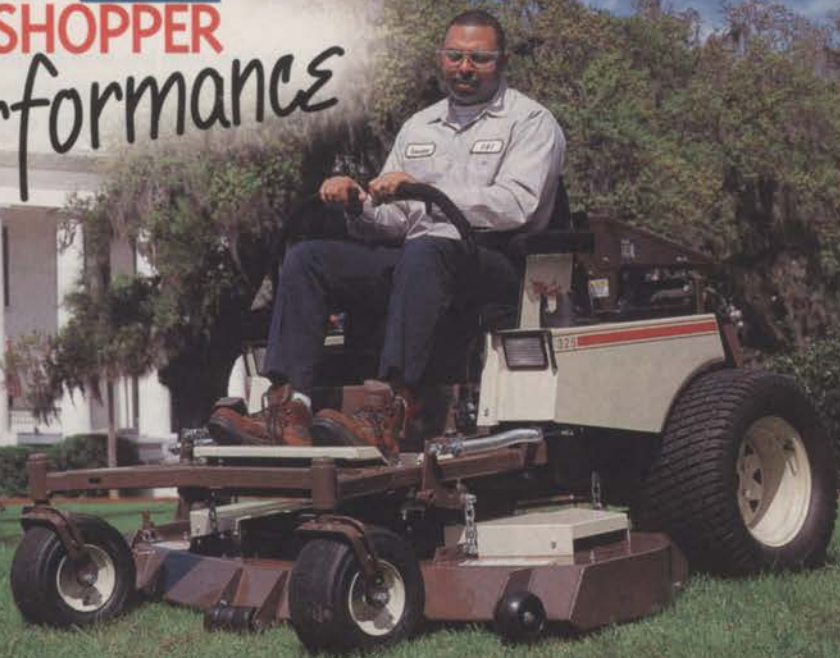
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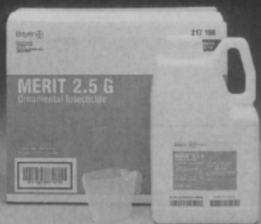
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Circle 213 on reader service form

Woods M2760

- M-series model designed to handle the toughest mowing jobs
- 27-hp Kohler engine provides maximum power and offers easy, dependable start and quiet operation
- Best-in-class adjustable-suspension seat cushioned for comfort
- Two-year warranty
- Hydraulic deck height adjustment
- Sleek hood design protects muffler and keeps excess debris away from operator



Circle 214 on reader service form

Shindaiwa M2500 Multi-Purpose Tool

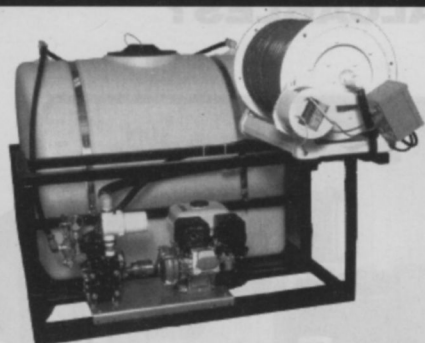
- Unique cross between 2- and 4-cycle engines, multi-purpose tool combines best of both worlds
- Low noise, improved fuel economy and dramatically reduced exhaust gas emissions of the 4-cycle engine
- Powerful 24.5cc, 1.1-hp engine, improved fuel economy, and reduced exhaust gas emissions
- Split boom and positive coupler design of the M2500 allows for quick and easy changing of six different attachments
- Attachments include: trimmer, pole pruner, articulated hedge trimmer, PowerBroom, lawn edger and cultivator

Circle 215 on reader service form



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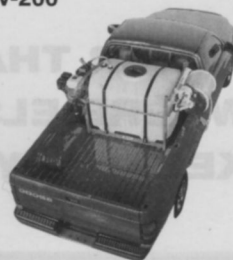
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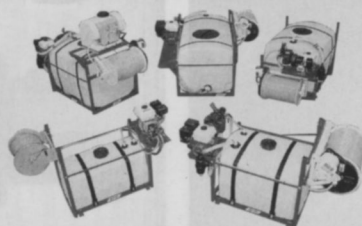
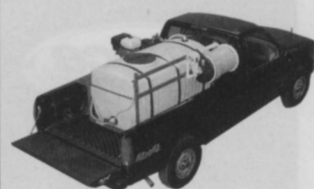
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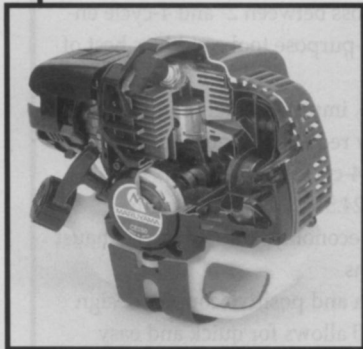
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Products

Maruyama CE Engine

- Low-emission 30.2 engine
- No catalyst



- Does not need extra weight
- Does not need added heat
- Engine allows

unburned fuel to escape for superior fuel efficiency and extraordinary machine power and strength

Circle 216 on reader service form

Earth & Turf MultiSpread 200

- Spreads topdressing, chips, salt, sand and other materials
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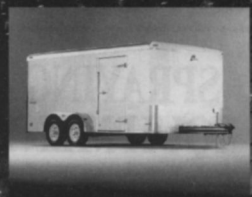
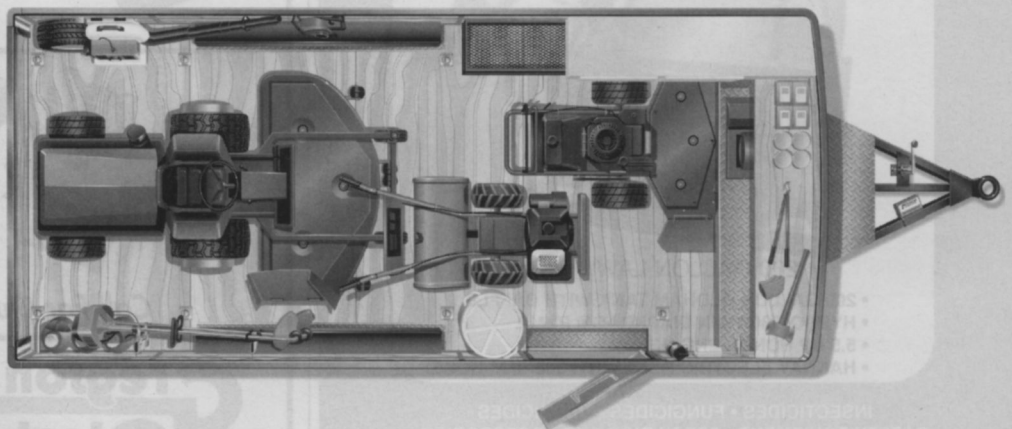
silt, leaves, snails, shellfish and other dirt to micron size

- Single units, with 2- to 16-inch flanges, handle flow to 4,800 gallons per minute
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Products

Landscape Tiles

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- Reveals recycled "components" from automobiles and other post consumer waste
- Suitable for retaining walls, terracing, planters and edging



- Finished sides are component free
- Brown color closely resembles weathered wood

Circle 219 on reader service form

Turfco TurnAer 26 Diff-drive aerator

- Diff-drive with dual braking action enables operator to aerate entire lawn without stopping
- Fingertip brake control allows aeration around trees and other objects
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Circle 220 on reader service form

John Deere 797 Max-Fram Z-Trak Mower

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Price with blower and truck \$62,500
Price for blower unit only \$42,500

2001 Finn 916 (16-yard unit) bark blower, approximately 457 hours on the bark blower unit, Finn serial number SSA-299. Unit is mounted on a 1994 Ford CF8000 cab over chassis with 187,461 miles. 21,000 rear and 12,000 front, Cummins 8.6L 210-hp, 5-speed transmission, driver's side fuel tank, 295-75R 22.5 tires.

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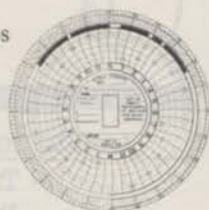
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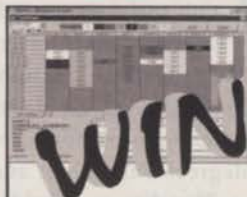
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Regional Lawn Care

(continued from page 74)

fertilizing regularly with a nitrogen-based fertilizer in spring and fall when red thread is most active and dethatching lawns in spring, Cook advised.

THE WILD, WILD SOUTHWEST. Many travelers identify Texas as the spot where the West begins – drawing on its laid-back, pokey, country nature.

Unfortunately, there's nothing sluggish about the Southwest's three main pests: chinch bugs, brown patch and dollar weed, which were the same culprits that attacked lawns last year, pointed out Greg Wilson, president and chief executive officer, AmeriLawns, Houston, Texas.

Although the southern chinch bug is a serious St. Augustinegrass pest, it occasionally may feed on zoysiagrass, centipedegrass, bahiagrass and bermudagrass. Expanding, irregular dead turf patches surrounded by yellow, dying grass halos often provide the first clues to the presence of chinch bugs, according to the Texas A&M University Extension. These islands of dying turf tend to increase in size and merge as insect numbers

grow. Damage develops rapidly, especially in sunny locations during hot, dry months.

Chinch bug damage is typically confused with certain lawn diseases, mainly the other Southwest pest – brown patch. Brown patch symptoms usually occur in a circular or semi-circular pattern, as opposed to the irregular-shaped areas of dead and dying grass that result from chinch bug feeding. Detection of significant numbers of the insects themselves is the best proof that chinch bugs are causing the damage.

Brown patch, appearing in circles of light brown, thinned turf, can be active in fall, winter and spring, but is primarily a problem in the fall, pointed out James McAfee, extension turfgrass specialist, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas. The disease attacks turf leaf blades and appears when nighttime temperatures drop below 70 degrees Fahrenheit and rainfall increases. The disease subsides when air temperatures rise above 90 degrees Fahrenheit.

"Water only as needed and early in the day to remove dew and allow the grass to dry quickly," McAfee suggested. "Avoid over fertilization in spring and fall. And improve the turfgrass root system with good drain-

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**The WILD, WILD
Southwest**

age and aeration to reduce damage caused by brown patch. Fungicides are most effective when used on a preventive basis."

To be proactive, Wilson advises his clients of potential turf villains via e-mail, fax, newsletters, bill inserts and mailers. "We give them practical, precautionary steps to help avoid potential infestations and outbreaks in their lawns," he said. "Since we find many homeowners who opt for regularly scheduled lawn care services tend to 'set and forget' about their lawns, we try to actively encourage our clients to pay attention to what is happening in their lawns as well as the surrounding lawns in their neighborhoods."

Though most LCOs only have one area of the country to focus on, traveling the United States and paying attention to other regions' turf troubles can inspire them to keep their planning minds active. Additionally, Wilson said, "Study. Study your client, the turfgrasses you deal with, the insects, fungi and weeds you fight, the pesticides you use to combat them and the general soil and climate conditions in your area, and encourage your employees to do likewise." **ll**

The author is Managing Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine, and she can be reached at nwisniewski@lawnandlandscape.com.

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- *Extended quarterly seminars.* These two-hour workshops satisfy about eight educational hours per year. The five members of our educational committee, representing various company departments, identify challenges facing The Pattie Group and plan seminars to address them. Pattie Group staff or outside instructors lead the sessions, which range from leadership skills to project management. Fees for an outside professional are usually \$300 to \$400 – a minimal dollar amount per person when training 30 to 50 people.

- *Outside study.* This option is more personal, focusing on an individual's unique career/academic pursuits. Employees work with their supervisors to identify areas of interest and form strategies to address them. Supervisors help employees select area schools and other institutions where they may attend classes.

We award full educational credit hours for green industry-related studies and half credit for non-industry topics. We budget \$250 to \$3,000 yearly for each employee, based on tenure and position to be used toward education and offer three paid days off from work annually to attend outside educational programs.

The yearly training budget, including speakers, workbooks, materials, travel and/or overnight stays to outside programs, etc., has averaged about \$55,000 for 50-plus employees.


Historically, employees have advanced their careers by growing horizontally across job duties and not vertically within their chosen competencies. For example, technicians typically become foremen and later pursue operations management positions.

Unfortunately, this sort of path often takes individuals away from areas where they have natural abilities.

We countered this trend by initiating an apprenticeship program to encourage employees to grow within their personal skill set. Technicians starting at entry-level positions can advance their careers through nine technician levels, ultimately becoming master technicians.

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Already, we have seen positive results, with a 10- to 15-percent higher employee retention than comparable companies. We also feel the output and work quality of our employees has improved under this system. – *Steve Pattie* 

The author is chief executive officer, The Pattie Group, Novelty, Ohio, and can be reached at 440/338-1288.

5 KEYS TO *Employee Training*

1. Set a continuing education hour requirement for each employee.
2. Support educational pursuits both within and beyond the green industry.
3. Establish an apprenticeship program to encourage employee growth within a skill set or career path.
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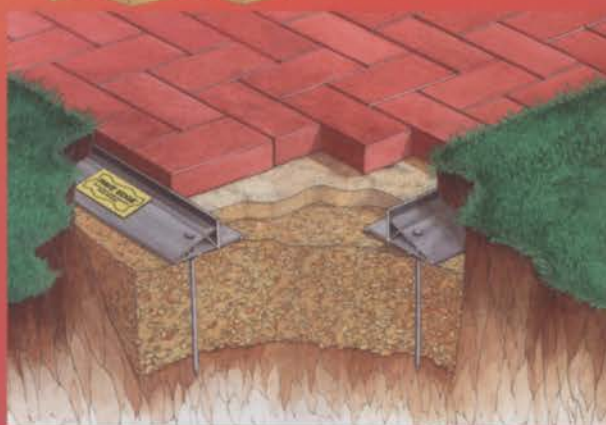
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