

MAINTENANCE '74: A Matter Of Buying Strategy

Supply shortages, sluggish deliveries, price increases, new safety requirements and EPA and local pesticide bans will translate into buying problems in three vital areas: turfgrass seeds, equipment and fertilizers and pesticides. Superintendents will do well to place their 1974 orders early. Otherwise the shortages and delays may force cutbacks in their maintenance programs.

This article is an attempt to stay abreast of the way the fluctuating economy affects the prices and availability of those products needed by golf course superintendents. This updating of previously published materials, therefore, will allow the superintendent to realistically adjust his buying plans.

Because this article was written before Phase 4 took effect, the reader should keep in mind that the projected price changes are based on information available prior to the complete development and resulting effects of Phase 4. The information was obtained through contacts with major turfgrass, chemical and equipment suppliers. Some companies, which had not yet established their specific 1974 prices, still indicated they anticipated price changes. The price changes for the three groups of materials are a range representative of a cross-section of companies. Even greater price changes might occur for certain items. Superintendents, establishing budgets for 1974, might want to consider this representative as the minimum upward adjustment. In some situations in order to protect against additional, unexpected price rises, an even higher budget request should be made.

TURFGRASS SEEDS

The greatest increase in prices will occur in turfgrass seeds. There definitely will be a world shortage of this commodity in 1974, which is the result of several factors: 1) A severe drought in the Pacific Northwest has created a drastic reduction in seed yields, ranging as low as 25 per cent of the norm

All indicators show higher over-all prices in 1974. This, coupled with possible materials shortages and delivery delays, means superintendents must buy astutely and early

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in some areas. 2) Turfgrass seeds have been priced quite low for some time. A major adjustment has been coming, due to increased costs of production. 3) The demand for turfgrass seed has increased substantially in Europe.

The situation is as follows for specific species:

Bentgrass: A definite shortage will exist with only Seaside seed supplies being comparable to 1973. A two-fold increase in the price of Pennncross could occur, while the price of Seaside may go up by 25 per cent.

Kentucky bluegrass: A seed shortage of many Kentucky bluegrass cultivars is anticipated. The exceptions are certain elite cultivars that were grown on irrigated land. The so called "common types," such as Delta and Newport, may increase in price as much as four-fold over 1973, with supplies limited. The improved (elite) type cultivars, such as Baron, Fylking, Merion, Nugget, Sodco and Sydsport, will be up in price anywhere from 20 to 50 per cent over 1973. Supplies of the improved cultivars will not be as limited as the common types previously mentioned. Here again exceptions exist for certain elite cultivars where the bulk of the production was located on unirrigated sites. The limited supply and increased price for Kentucky bluegrass seed will probably exist for several years.

Ryegrasses: Italian (annual) ryegrass seed is in short supply with a price rise of as much as three-fold anticipated for 1974. Similarly, the "com-

mon type" perennial ryegrasses, such as Linn, may have a three-fold increase in price for 1974 with seed in short supply. The crop yield for improved perennial ryegrasses, such as Manhattan, NK-200 and Pennfine, looks good, because production was located on irrigated land. As a result, only slightly higher prices are anticipated.

Fine leaved fescues: The world demand for chewings and red fescue is increasing rapidly. Fortunately, there was a good crop of red fescue in Canada in 1973. A good supply of seed can be anticipated with a price increase of up to 50 per cent over 1973.

EQUIPMENT

The price rise allowed under Phase 4 guidelines will vary depending on the size of the manufacturer. Recognizing this situation, the following general ranges are anticipated. In comparing prices of comparable 1973 models, a price rise of from 3 to 5 per cent can be anticipated. This represents the basic cost increase to the manufacturer for producing the item.

National legislation also has stipulated the inclusion of a number of safety features on certain types of equipment. These required safety features will contribute substantially to the increased cost of certain 1974 equipment. The safety features include Roll Over Protection Systems for tractors over 30 hp. Recognizing that the price increase for a particular vendor or type of equipment could vary substantially, the over-all indication is that those budgeting for equipment purchases should plan for an increase in the order of 5 to 7 per cent depending on the specific type of safety feature that must be included in 1974.

The availability of equipment for purchase in 1974 also is in a state of flux. It depends on the availability of parts and materials for manufacturing the equipment. Shortages may be especially critical for certain types of engines, ball bearings and specific

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BUYING STRATEGY *continued*

types of steel. Manufacturers are facing anywhere from 26 to 34 weeks delay in the delivery of parts and materials ordered at this time. This means most of the parts and materials for 1974 manufacturing must be ordered well in advance and stockpiled against potential shortages during the critical assembly period. As a general summary of the situation as it appears at this time, there will not be a shortage of equipment, but there may be a delay in delivering certain types of equipment due to a lack of basic materials

and parts.

In the case of irrigation, a price increase of from 4 to 6 per cent across the range of various types of equipment can be anticipated. Supplies appear to be adequate or comparable to 1973 for plastic materials. Parts requiring the use of brass may become short in supply. Deliveries may be slow in some cases.

FERTILIZERS AND PESTICIDES

Considerable variability in price increases and supplies were indicated by the various fertilizer and pesticide

manufacturers. Generally, the price increases will be more modest than for turfgrass seeds and equipment, ranging from 1 to 3 per cent. New items being introduced into the market may have even higher prices than comparable items previously marketed. Basically, this 1 to 3 per cent increase is the result of increased costs of production. Regarding supplies, here again the predicted availability of fertilizers and pesticides for 1974 is variable across companies and among specific items.

Concerning the effect of Federal or state legislation on the availability of certain pesticides, no general statement can be made at this time. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) legislation concerning limiting the use of mercury is still being appealed, but no decision has been made to date. The current situation regarding banning or limiting the use of certain pesticides varies from state to state or province to province. For example, Wisconsin and New York now have prohibited the use of certain pesticides. Thus, it is recommended that each golf course superintendent check his state or provincial regulatory agency regarding the current laws that apply in that area.

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SUMMARY

The key change for 1974 is the limited availability of turfgrass seeds along with a substantial increase in cost. Thus, early purchases and appropriate increases in the budget for this item should be made as soon as possible. Those individuals who delay their seed purchases until the summer just prior to fall plantings may be faced with the unavailability of certain turfgrass cultivars and must make a second, third or fourth choice.

Potential delays in equipment deliveries emphasize the importance of ordering equipment needed for initial spring activities as soon as possible. The cost for specific items will vary considerably depending on the type of unit, particular vendor and amount of safety equipment that must be added. An over-all budget increase of 6 to 7 per cent would be a minimum.

Finally, one should keep in mind that these are just general indications. Even greater increases in cost may be anticipated for certain items. Also, these trends could change considerably depending on the actual situation as it develops under Phase 4. □