

## In the Hot Seat

With condominium and apartment starts up, landscape managers strive for communication and education while balancing the need for outside landscape contracting.

As the popularity of apartment, and especially condominium living continues to grow, landscape managers are finding communication and education two of their greatest allies. Communication seems to be the key to working with the sometimes unyielding condominium boards. Education of owners and association members in making them aware the bottom line isn't always in the best interest of maintenance proce-

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These were some of the findings of an informal survey done by WEEDS TREES & TURF among apartment and condominium landscape managers.

One thing is clear, condo and apartment landscape managers are in a hot seat. Not only are condo starts up, but on the average, condo managers are responsible for 126 acres (WT&T survey figure) pointing to the tremendous growth potential of the market. Figures from the Community Associations Institute, a national, non-profit membership education organization for people involved in creating, managing or governing condos or homeowner associa-

tions, show condos increasing as a percentage of total new sales.

James Dowden, executive vice president of CAI, estimates some 65,000 association communities (condos and townhouse communities) in the United States with about 35,000 of those in condominiums alone.

The Avance Mortgage Corporation estimates 20 to 25 percent of all new sales this year will be in condominiums and in some areas such as Florida, California, Chicago, New York, Washington, D.C., Denver, Atlanta, Houston and Dallas, as much as 50 percent.

"Condominiums first started big in Florida and California," said Dowden. "But now, other states are catching up, especially where single family home prices have escalated past the reach of the average buyer."

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The average condominium buyer is a first-time buyer, single or a childless couple (either young or retirement age), paying under \$50,000 for their unit.

Dowden said roughly two-thirds

of all condos have some form of professional management, and roughly 32 percent do it through boards. The majority, he said, contract out for maintenance because the average condominium in the United States is 100 units in size,

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too small to justify its own landscape management staff.

That brought up another concern that surfaced in the WT&T survey. There is increasing competition from landscape maintenance contractors. One respondent said his budgeting process had gotten more involved and complicated each year largely due to the increase in competition.

The highest rated survey categories serviced by outside landscape contractors were turf herbicide application, insecticide application, tree trimming and spraying and flower and ground cover care. Most in-house functions were turf trimming, fertilizer application, turf seeding and turf aerifying.

Tree-spraying was one of the least done in-house functions.

The majority of condo facilities own their own equipment.

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used a year on the golf courses and in flower beds.

The Breakers has its own nursery, but the three-person staff is only half the size Inman would like it to be. Three acres are under shade and five acres are devoted to container stock. The nursery grows most everything (except annuals) that's found on the hotel grounds, including palm trees.

Overseeding is done the first week of December, one green at a time, so as not to disturb play.

Inman works on a budget of over \$500,000. "In one respect I have no budget," he explains, "If I have a legitimate expense, we usually buy it."

Inman started out as a business major at the University of South Carolina, but left after two years to become the golf pro at Camp Lejeune, NC, where he stayed for four years. That was only the start of being a golf pro at such courses as Sea Pines Plantation at Hilton Head, SC; Yeaman's Hall Club, Charleston, SC; and the Surf, Golf and Beach Club at Myrtle Beach, SC. He taught golf at Patrick AFB in Cocoa Beach. In 1976, he enrolled at Lake City Community College in Lake City, FL, and graduated with an Associate's Degree in Golf Course Operations. In 1979, he came to The Breakers working in the nursery and then was promoted to assistant superintendent at Breakers West. In Sept. 1981, he was named superintendent of golf and gardens.

"Ideally, I would like to be in a position where I can be a golf pro and a superintendent," he said. "Some clubs are calling them golf managers."

At age 41, Inman is doing what he likes to do. He's in a satisfying career, golfs about once a month (he's a 3 handicap golfer) and is an amateur photo buff.

"My ego and self-esteem here are very satisfied," he says. **WTT**

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Some respondents, however, pointed to the fact that it was less expensive to contract out certain jobs than to have them done in-house.

"I can see more contracted landscaping and gardening in the

**There is increasing competition from landscape maintenance contractors.**

future because of cost," said one manager.

In the majority of cases, the landscape supervisor specifies the landscape program and the purchase of chemicals. Budget planning is done mainly from September to January.

Survey results show very low participation in landscape associations or organizations by apartment/condo landscape managers.

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