A major roadblock to serving the athletic field market has been that there is no such thing as a typical athletic field manager.

It's the least understood area of turf management," one grounds manager told WEEDS TREES & TURF, "with the least amount of information available."

An informal survey of college and university athletic field managers in September now provides some consistencies in the way athletic fields are managed.

The individual in charge of athletic fields is also responsible for the entire campus in more than half the cases. He reports to the Physical Plant Director but must consult regularly with athletic directors and coaches. He puts together his own budget and field maintenance standards.

His biggest concerns are overuse of the fields, control of them, time available, and water (irrigation and drainage.)

For the most part, he operates without any particular set of recognized field maintenance standards, putting together his own based upon his experience and requests from the athletic department.

The average budget for chemicals and equipment for fields was $16,000, while the track surface and pits are worth $117,400. The fencing around fields is worth $52,000, the equipment used worth $163,000 and the stadium building and stands are valued at $1.57 million.

With sizeable investment for just the athletic portion of their responsibility, colleges need more than a "maintenance man."

"Colleges don't want people in charge who go out and just work with their back all day," a chief groundskeeper at a college in the Southeast says. "They want people with some leadership, and people who can put together a budget, train other people, and supervise effectively."

College administrators can't expect a person who has little education and is unwilling to accept responsibility to manage buildings and landscapes worth millions of dollars. There is more than money at stake. The atmosphere of the campus to students and alumni and the safety of athletes are also at risk.

Management decisions for these can't be made by someone working out of a closet with a washtub in it or a cramped corner of the equipment room in the gym.

The athletic field manager of today has to work out complicated schedules, substantiate budget requests, deal with unions, and still know grass. He has to overcome bad weather, satisfy alumni, and even invent equipment and methods to get his job done.

Salary range
Salaries (and respondents were surprisingly frank) ranged from $12,000 to $40,000 annually, with 14 percent of those polled earning in the $12,000-$19,000 range, 48 percent in the $20,000-$25,000 category, and approximately 26 percent $25,000-$30,000.

Those indicating the highest salaries usually hold titles such as grounds and services manager, physical plant director, or director of facilities and grounds.

"I think you'll find the salaries to be about the same as what park directors make," one superintendent notes. "In the North they're probably a little higher than in the South."

Experience is a big word in the college groundskeeping fraternity with 11 years on the job being an average of all those responding, the low respondent having one year experience, the veteran 36 years.

These averages may not give the complete picture since some of those relatively new in their positions also indicate previous experience in grounds departments or related businesses.

Slightly more than half hold undergraduate degrees with hor-
ticulture, just edging agronomy, the most prevalent educational background. Nine percent hold associate degrees, 15 percent graduate degrees. While many of the college grounds superintendents who responded to our survey earned their positions by coming up through the ranks, they like their more formally educated counterparts, are eager to broaden their understanding by attending conferences and seminars. Winter short courses in turf management by some of their more formally educated counterparts, are eager to broaden their understanding by attending conferences and seminars. Winter short courses in turf management provided an excellent opportunity to learn, several note.

The feeling among grounds superintendents is that the profession will require more specialized training in the future.

Specialized training
The feeling among grounds superintendents is that the profession will require more specialized training in the future.

Differences caused by the size of colleges and universities and geographic location sometimes make direct comparisons tricky. If the grounds superintendent isn't worrying about pushing the snow off a parking lot in the North, he's fretting about the seed he put down on the bermudagrass in the South, hoping for just a bit more green before the alumn-