Information on the green industry

Problem: I am in the process of opening a lawn and landscape management company. I plan to offer irrigation installation and repair and herbicide and fertilizer applications, but am a novice in that part of the field. Do you know where I can find any literature on these subjects or any courses I could take at home?  
(Florida)

Solution: Regarding the pertinent literature and/or courses in your field, contact the University of Florida in Gainesville or other universities in your area. Your local county cooperative extension service can give you a listing of local schools that offer courses in agricultural sciences. You may be interested in a four-year degree or a two-year associates degree in turfgrass and ornamental management areas.

Once you obtain enough background and confidence, the technical part of your business will be easier. These schools should provide you with the basic knowledge of programs related to your interest.

Developing a service on a program basis will require some scientific background and technical expertise. Therefore, if you are unable to obtain it through schooling, consider the following alternatives:

1) Work for another company as an intern or employee.
2) Hire a technical expert (advisor) knowledgable about program development.
3) Hire a private technical consultant/contractor.

In addition to the technical aspect of the programs, you also need expertise in equipment, business management, and so on. Contact the appropriate experts to help you in this regard.

You also need to become familiar with federal and state laws pertaining to your interests. A pesticide applicator/operator license may be required in order to purchase and apply pesticides. This information may be obtained through your local Department of Agriculture and/or EPA office.

Attend seminars and/or conferences related to your interest in services. Also, become a member of local, state or national organizations such as Professional Lawn Care Association of America or International Society of Arboriculture. Subscribe to trade magazines, such as Landscape Management, Arbor Age, and/or Tree Care Industry and cooperative extension publications and/or newsletters.

(ED. NOTE: See Page 1 for a list of some of the best trade organizations in the green industry. Additionally, the PLCAA has a home study course in turf management it conducts in cooperation with the University of Georgia. To find out more about this course, call the PLCAA at (404) 977-5222.)

Will horticultural oil harm flowers?

Problem: Will horticultural oil harm annuals or perennials growing beneath trees? Normally, we would have used oil before these annual flowering plants are planted. We are thinking of using oil at other times during the growing season when flower-