



## AT A GLANCE

**COMPANY:** Chalet Nursery

**FOUNDED:** 1917

**HEADQUARTERS:** Wilmette, IL

**YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY:** 36

**SERVICE AREA:** Chicago and surrounding communities

**INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT:** Long-time member of PLCAA and PLANET, PLANET Trailblazer, former president and founder of the Illinois Professional Lawn Care Association, board member of Illinois Turf-grass Foundation, member of Illinois Landscape Contractors Association serving on their Education Committee.

### NUMBER OF CHALET LOCATIONS:

Three — Retail nursery and garden center, Wilmette IL, Landscape Division, North Chicago, IL and Chalet Farm, Salem, WI

**EMPLOYEES:** 275 in season

**SERVICES:** Landscape design/build, monthly maintenance, soil and turf management, arboreal services, retail nursery and garden center, perennial propagation

### PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS/HOBBIES:

Collect music (primarily music from the 60s & 70s), annual pilgrimage to Las Vegas

**FAMILY:** My wife of 28 years passed away in 2005, one son, one grandson (18 months old) and a second grandchild expected in August.

Chalet Nursery, a true Green Industry pioneer, began providing lawn care in 1981, as an adjunct to the company's landscape maintenance services. "We realized that if we were responsible for clients' landscapes, we needed control over the fertilizers and pesticides applied on them," says **William "Bill" Leuenberger**, soil and turf department manager. Leuenberger has more than three and a half decades in the industry, and he's seen lawn care evolve. "Our program has matured into our Soil and Turf Management Department. Our lawn services focus on improving the soil environment, the foundation for healthy, vigorous turf and ornamentals."

**Bill, you spend a lot of your time with various industry associations and serving on a variety of industry committees monitoring and dealing with government and legislative issues. What are you seeing as big issues now?** I thought the biggest battles for the industry would be with pesticides, but it turns out they're mostly about turf fertilizers, phosphorus right now. It's happening even here in Illinois, which also now limits the commercial applications of lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus. Working with the IPLCA (Illinois Professional Lawn Care Association), we were able to get pre-emption, which keeps cities and towns from making their own fertilizer rules. Otherwise, we weren't going to be on board with the bill. I'm worried that nitrogen is next on the list.

**You seem to view issues like this pragmatically rather than confrontationally.** The problem with us taking an extreme position is that it's unsustainable just like the extreme position activists take. While we haven't agreed with many of the positions activists have taken, especially the obviously unsound ones, their squawking has moved the industry toward more environmental practices. Give them credit for that.

**Please describe Chalet's approach to lawn care.** We used to have nine different programs. Now we have just two — organic and synthetic. We're talking about fertilization. Our organic program uses 80% to 90% organic fertilizers. We also use some organic fertilizer in our synthetic program. Our focus is more on training our people rather than applying

products. We realize that every company has to make sales, but we want to feel good about what we're doing and to feel good that we're doing it right

**What changes or new initiatives are you making in Chalet's lawn care programs for 2011?** We're focusing on improving our customer relations. We're already recognized as a leader in client satisfaction, and we want to keep that trust with our customers by constantly evaluating our service commitment and reinventing ourselves. Next, we want to continue improving our nutrient management programs emphasizing to our clients our dedication to appropriate fertilization practices. Finally, we're developing a Chalet accreditation for our employees in regard to all phases of responsible turfgrass care.