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1981 is the year the caterpillar won and the trees lost. Arborists worked seven-days per week to keep up with the demand for spraying. White Plains, NY, arborist Bob Mullane said this was the worst year he has seen since 1955. Weeds Trees & Turf reviews the spread, the severity, and the business strain of this year’s infestation.  28

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Conflicting signals on pesticide development

A recent increase in the number of pesticide products gaining registration will hopefully continue, but signals from industry and government seem to indicate otherwise.

Mergers may play a role equal to government regulation in the future development of pesticides. Mobil's sale of its agricultural chemical division to Rhone Poulenc was surprising in light of its participation in the Conoco takeover. Du Pont's interest in Conoco is fairly evident since it is highly dependent upon oil resources for its products. The Boots/Fisons merger in the U.S. seems to show togetherness is better in chemical development and marketing.

The result of mergers is obvious; fewer, bigger chemical companies. Does this mean that combining resources will improve research investment and result in more new products? Or will it mean less competition, dropping of minor use products, and higher prices?

Both the cost of registration and liability in case of disposal problems is forcing chemical companies to be more selective in products offered. This extra caution is necessary for chemical companies to protect their market stability in today's merger-mad market.

Integrated pest management is expected to cut agricultural chemical sales in the next decade. Since most landscape products are developed from agricultural products, the prospects are not as rosy even though IPM is not expected to cut landscape chemical use appreciably.

Biological or bacterial production of chemicals is the new wave. No chemical company wants to be left out of that market as it develops due to technological breakthroughs.

Data compensation between chemical companies is still not resolved by the Environmental Protection Agency. Data is still duplicated at high cost to support new registrations when it exists in the files of other companies.

On top of all this, EPA's new administration has reorganized the enforcement division. Companies now have to get new assurance of the rules before proceeding with current and new products.

The small manufacturer must feel lost in all this confusion.

Regardless of the intent of the Reagan administration to provide more encouragement to manufacturers, market conditions are keeping the lid on and finishing the job EPA started in the early 70's. The numbers get bigger and bigger. Small users have a harder time gaining the attention of chemical manufacturers. And the prices keep going up.

You can't blame the chemical companies. They, like you and I, are trying to survive. With so many conflicting signals, they have to be cautious and we have to fight harder for attention. WTT

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Medfly impact small on contractors

The Mediterranean fruit fly infestation has embarrassed state officials, traumatized consumers and imperiled California's lucrative fruit crop. Arborists and landscape contractors, however, have not been greatly affected. Tree people throughout the infected area in central California say that they were besieged by requests for help and information but weren't able to do too much to help.

"We had an awful lot of telephone calls. People wanted advice," says Susan Pitt, office manager of S.P. McClenahan Company in the Portola Valley. "We gave them support and advice. There was no real impact on business, but it caused an awful lot of office work."

Jane Lesh, secretary-treasurer of Lee's Tree Surgeons in Saratoga thinks that the controversy may have "caused people to look at their trees and think about them." Lesh voiced a complaint when she explained that possible business increases from fruit stripping were offset by the "indecisiveness about the whole thing. People would call one day and say 'you have to strip the walnut trees,' and the next day they would be told no."

Gil Mitchell, a partner in Able Tree Surgeons, San Jose, says that in addition to the "vacillation" of officials, demand for stripping was low because "people didn't want to put out the bucks for it. A lot of people thought they could strip the trees themselves or waited for the California Conservation Corps to come by or they just didn't give a damn."

Some didn't think it would be effective.

Even when people were sure they wanted their fruit stripped, tree surgeons weren't always able to be of service. "We just don't have the time to do it," says Susan Pitt. The man hour rate is too expensive to send a tree surgeon to strip trees. We advised clients to get someone local to strip the trees."

Arborists were not asked to spray against the Medfly. The government took care of the aerial and ground spraying and "preferred that people not spray by themselves," according to Pitt. Agricultural Pest Control Operators were asked not to duplicate the job. Mitchell says that there was a negative impact on spray business because people "think that malathion spray is sufficient for all pest troubles. Sprayers lost a lot of business."

Malathion did eliminate many insects and was good for indoor landscapers, according to Alrie Middlebrook of Interior Landscape Design, Inc. in San Jose.

The long range effects of the infestation are mixed. The public is more aware of the importance of tree care. Some people may want to avoid plants, shrubs or trees that attract the Medfly. Fruit trees may not bear as well next year because of the damage caused by improper stripping.

One thing is clear. As Andrea Golden of Interior Landscape Design observed: "it will certainly be a lot of work for people cleaning up the mess."

Floraboard stalled in Congress

Congressional action on the Floraboard plan to establish a research and promotion program that would increase demand for flower and plant products has been delayed. The bill has been introduced in the House of Representatives, but has not yet been introduced in the Senate.

Floraboard is a "producer's program designed to increase demand for floral products similar to the programs for other agricultural commodities such as cotton, wool and milk," according to Barbara Kratchman, publications editor for the Society of American Florists (SAF).

Under the Floraboard system, growers and importers would be assessed a certain rate of sales per year, thus generating a fund of $7.9 million in the program's first year. For the first two years producers and importers would pay at a rate of one half of a percent per year. Each year the rate increase may not exceed one quarter of a percent, with a maximum assessment of one and a half percent of sales. Only firms with more than $100,000 of growth sales would be assessed.

The program will be administered by the Floraboard, a 75 member board consisting of industry representatives nominated by producers' and importers' organizations, and appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture. The board's major objective, Kratchman says, will be to increase demand for flowers and plants and thereby "even out consumer buying patterns. On five major occasions each year (Valentine's Day, Easter, National Secretary's Week, Mother's Day and Christmas) growers sell all they can. They are forced to produce in an inefficient manner."

The full market potential of cut flowers, cut greens and foliage has not been realized.

"The program is producer conceived, created and directed," Kratchman emphasizes. "Because it's a mandatory assessment the government has to have its finger in it, but it is a producer's program. Floraboard will only implement what the producer's okay."

The program must have major industry backing. A referendum will be held and two thirds of all producers have to approve the plan. The program is in its fourth year of partial operation and "it's been a struggle," according to Kratchman.

Continues on page 8
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NLA landscape tour views Cincinnati

More than 200 members of the National Landscape Association toured a cross section of Cincinnati landscapes during the recent America Association of Nurserymen Convention and Trade Show there.

Ken Natorp, president of W.A. Natorp Co., Cincinnati, guided the tour to urban parks, office plazas, suburban apartments complexes, and two residential estates. Much of the construction and design had been performed by Natorp's firm, Thorton Environmental Industries of Maineville, Ohio, and Ammon Nursery, Florence, KN.

Highlights of the tour included Harper's Point, an apartment complex where many water features and plant material provide unusual privacy. Water sound was heard everywhere in the complex due to numerous lakes and waterfalls. One estate contained a three-acre private arboretum with numerous dwarf conifers and an elaborate collection of plant material. The tour also saw baseball star catcher Johnny Bench's home.

The 1982 NLA tour will take place with the AAN Convention in Honolulu, Hawaii, July 17-21. The NLA Board put finishing touches on its management Clinic held each February at the Gault House in Louisville, KY.

Deadline for ALCA award is November 15

Entries for the 12th Annual ALCA Environmental Improvement Awards are sought by the association. Awards in seven categories will be awarded: commercial landscape contracting, residential landscape contracting, interior landscape installation, interior landscape maintenance, exterior landscape maintenance, land reclamation/revegetation, and design/build landscaping.

A panel of judges will evaluate each entry on its own merits, without comparison to other entries. There is no limit to the number of awards the judges can make in any one category and no limit to the size of the project.

Project entries will be accepted until November 15, 1981 at a cost of $85 per entry ($70 for members). Awards will be presented at the Annual Meeting in January.

Information and entry forms are available from Associated Landscape Contractors of America, 1750 Old Meadow Rd., McLean, VA 22102. Awards chairman is Ann Lambeth.

ALCA prepares for Palm Springs show

Exhibit space for the annual ALCA Trade Exhibit is going faster than usual for the 1982 meeting in Palm Springs, CA. Indoor and outdoor displays make the show attractive to more than 1,000 landscape contractors each year. The date for the show is January 24-27, 1982.

First interior landscape exam nears

The National Council for Interior Horticultural Certification plans to give its first exam during the Interior Plantscape Association Show, October 28-30, at the Radisson Hotel, St. Paul, MN.

NCIHC is an independent self-sustaining council formed to recognize qualified interior landscape contractors and their job worthiness. Requirements for taking the exam include five years experience in the field, four years experience and an associate's degree in horticulture, or three years experience and a bachelor's degree. Each applicant must submit photographs and documentation of four jobs completed and belong to either IPA or the Interior Landscape Division of ALCA. The applicants must pledge adherence to a code of ethics.

The exam will also be given at the ALCA Show in Palm Springs, CA, in January 1982. ALCA has endorsed NCIHC and its certification program.

For information contact the National Council for Interior Horticultural Certification, PO Box 17148, Washington, D.C. 20041.
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