That's right! All of us have seen it before — that unacceptable area in our fairways or lawn. Just as important, an area where chemicals have been over-applied and a burned condition exists, and that can mean extra work for you. It's difficult to spray accurately and consistently on golf courses because every golf course is made up of countless slopes, contours, and bends. But with Blazon™ Spray Pattern Indicator you can take the guesswork out of spraying, forever. All you do is add Blazon™ right to your spray tank; it's totally compatible with the chemicals you use. It reduces lost time by quickly identifying a clogged nozzle, untreated or overlapped areas. In addition, Blazon™ is temporary and non-staining. Blazon™ Spray Pattern Indicator is the new solution to a never-ending problem. So contact the distributor nearest you for the product that has taken an art and turned it into a science — "The Professional Solution for Professionals"...

Blazon™

SPRAY PATTERN INDICATOR

Milliken Chemical congratulates LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT on its new name.
To the editor:

With due respect to the reports of my contemporaries on the subject of "The Black Death" (August issue), permit me to offer my opinion on the element that seems to be lacking.

Layers occur by intent or by the migration of finer particles. In soil growing media, migration is hindered by the presence of aggregates, produced by the process known as "floculation," enhanced by the presence of aerobic micro-organisms. In their absence, plants growing in a medium of high rates of infiltration, percolation and drainage, it follows that, with reduced water-holding capacity in the medium, irrigation is needed in quantity. The rapid movement of water tends to assist the finer particles to migrate. In a system that embraces flocculation, it appears that the grape-like clusters of fine particles, acting as large particles with ample pore space, may prevent migration to a considerable degree.

To sustain a thriving biological complex, it is necessary to provide the essential nutrients, which, for the most part, are organic in nature. This implies a totally different system of management, one that is in harmony with the age-old processes of nature.

High sand content of soils in putting greens that were "easy to keep" was a feature of field research conducted at Beltsville in the 50s with co-workers Radko and Wilson. Cupcutter cores from greens were collected and analyzed for sand content. Low sand content characterized the greens "hard to keep." The "easy to keep" greens showed many large pore spaces in photographs of thin slices of the profile.

This study, lacking final conclusions, was dropped in 1953. It may have contributed to the notion that, if high sand content in a soil is good, why not use all sand? It must be remembered that this was in an area where topdressings contained organic matter and organic fertilizers were in vogue. The biological nature of soil in the "easy to keep" greens was not determined, but it was thought to be high.

Fred V. Grau
Consulting Agronomist
College Park, Md.

To the editor:

Since 1986, I have been increasingly active on a broad range of environmental issues. My experience thus far indicates that generally speaking, most people who manufacture, distribute, sell and/or apply pesticides are not very interested in alternatives like integrated pest management (IPM).

Officials with the North Carolina Department of Agriculture see no problems at all with the safety of pesticides. If it were not for many concerned individuals, I doubt very seriously that the state would be developing guidelines for monitoring wells for pesticide contamination.

Community feel that many major corporations really don't care about environmental quality, and conversely, organizations like 3PF feel that we environmentalists are a misguided group with sinister motives. Is it any wonder that people on both sides of the fence get frustrated?

I would like to point out that pesticides are not the only reason for problems in the environment. They are, however, part of the problem. We are all responsible for what happens to this planet, individuals as well as industry.

I employ IPM in my business, and have found it to work very well. I use the best cultural practices I am familiar with, and I only use pesticides as a last resort. The only materials I use are insecticidal soap, a sulphur-based fungicide/miticide, dormant oil and strategic use of Roundup. I am doing a lot more hand-weeding, and I intend to use a product called "Sharp-shooter" (Safer Co.) for weed control as soon as it is available in concentrate form.

Robert Mulder
Amsterdam Landscaping
Raleigh, N.C.

To the editor:

I sometimes wonder why the controversy exists concerning "VNS" (Variety Not Stated) seed.

For years, the terms "common" or "commercial" existed and described seed which was being sold as seed of that kind. Any reference to variety was reserved for seed being described with a certain variety name, either of pedigreed and sometimes non-pedigreed status.

More recently, sophisticated and astute seed buyers have come to recognize the merits of seed certification, and the guarantees inherent when specifying "certified seed." It would seem that this is all that is really needed; "common" or "commercial" seed to describe any seed which is not seed of an identifiable variety and one of the pedigreed grades. Pedigree seed merits the variety being part of its name.

"VNS" seems to be some kind of implication that this non-descript seed may possibly possess some varietal traits and characteristics. I do not believe it can be both ways, and disagree with messrs. Oliger and Roberts in attempting to justify anything other than "common" status for "common seed."

Finally, I would point out that it does not really matter whether you are dealing with a "reputable" or "non-reputable" wholesale distributor. If a buyer is not taking advantage of the assurances inherent with pedigreed seed, then caveat emptor—buyer beware.

Martin C. Pick
Otto Pick & Sons Seeds
Ontario, Canada
WELCOME TO THE LANDS OF THE GIANTS.

Jacobsen’s three mowing giants cut your most monstrous schedule down to size.

With massive cutting widths of up to 16’, there’s a Jacobsen giant made to meet any of your high production needs. All three machines have front-mounted mowing units which cut grass before it’s matted down by tractor tires. Giving you a neater, cleaner cut. And exceptional durability helps the Jacobsen giants turn in your lowest per acre cost, year after year after year.

F-10 productivity in a ground-driven reel unit.

Tackle a variety of turf conditions with your choice of reels. Five-blade Blitzers knock down rougher, taller grasses while 6- or 10-blade Fairway reels handle your formal and semi-formal turf areas, beautifully. Streaking and marking are eliminated because the F-10’s reels steer through turns.

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The HF-15 adds hydraulic reel advantages.

The HF-15 gives you all the benefits of an F-10 plus a hydraulic-reel system for a tournament-quality, high-production cut, wet or dry. Add vertical mowing reels and make quick work of your biggest verticutting jobs, too.

The HR-15 rotary giant takes on tougher turf assignments.

Turn tall grass into well-manicured landscapes with three heavy-duty, 72” free-floating rear-discharge rotary decks. Or, choose fine-cut flail decks, with downward discharge and a cut that rivals reels. Perfect for busy parks, schools and other high traffic areas.

No matter what your production mowing needs, Jacobsen has the giant for the job. For a first-hand look, arrange a free demonstration with your Jacobsen distributor. Attractive lease and finance plans available. Or for more information contact: Jacobsen Division of Textron Inc., Racine, WI 53403.

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practical, real life application confirm that pendimethalin is unsurpassed for the number of weeds it controls, the level of control and the duration of control.

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COSTONO has been named associate dean/director of the S.C. Agricultural Experiment Station. Coston replaces Absalom Snell, who retired from the post this year after serving the station for 39 years.

Long-time association executive George Rose retired after more than 50 years in the horticulture industry, including 24 years with All-America

Larry Kuhl George Rose

Rose Selections. He was named executive secretary in the 1960s, a position he held until his retirement.

The Chemical Producers and Distributors Association has a new board of directors: chairman of the board is Richard Mille of Prentiss Drug and Chemical; first vice chairman is Rusty Griffin of Griffin Corp.; second vice chairman is Bobby Pace of Helena Chemicals. Warren E. Stickle, Ph.D., moves from executive director to president. Rick Davis of SureCo will serve as secretary.

Suzanne Klaus of Klaus Greenhouse, Greenwood, Mo., is new president of the National Association of Women in Horticulture. Other officers are Betty Hensinger, Patricia Kish, Kathy Freeland, Linda Barnett, Lisa Macky and Mary Lu Parks.

Ransomes has announced the promotion of Larry Kuhl to vice president of manufacturing. Kuhl is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison who joined Ransomes in 1977 as plant manager.

Timothy Zink has been named vice president of Safer's newly-formed Commercial and Agricultural Division. Zink comes from the Sandoz Crop Protection Division where he was vice president of marketing.

Jerry Kraft has been named vice president of sales for KLM Bio-Systems, a company that produces organic lawn care products. Kraft has been with KLM since 1984; prior to that, he was with O.M. Scott & Sons.

Robert P. McLain is new service coordinator for Tecumseh Products' Engine and Transmission Group Service Division. McLain is a Kent State University graduate with a bachelor's degree in marketing.
The art of application for maximum germination.

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<tr>
<th>SEED TYPE</th>
<th>SEED BRAND</th>
<th>SEED PER 1000 SQ. FT.</th>
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<td>PENNCROSS</td>
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<td>KENTUCKY BLUEGRASS</td>
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<td>SCALDIS HAN</td>
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The Ryan® Mataway® Overseeder is simply better.

- Better results begin with the basics, like seed calibration. An easy-to-read chart on the Mataway Overseeder tells you the exact setting for pounds of seed needed per 1,000 sq. ft. Just look it up, load it up, select setting, and you're ready to go.

Two-inch spacing between rows gives you a dense pattern for one-pass application. Gandy® precision metering and an easily removed disc-type seed delivery system places the seed directly into the slits for uniform seed/soil contact allowing maximum germination.

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Call toll free 1-800-228-4444 for all the details.
THE CUSTOMER AS KING

Today's saturated lawn care market demands that LCOs work harder to keep their customers happy.

by Will Perry, managing editor

Ring.
Ring.
Hello?
Mr. Perry?
Yes.
Good afternoon. This is John Smith from the ABC Lawn Care Company.
How are you?
Fine thanks. Yourself?
I'm also fine thank you. The reason I'm calling is to check and see if you've noticed any improvement in the condition of your lawn. We completed our second application the other day and your grass should have a nice green color, except for the areas of crabgrass along the back fence. That area will be dying off about now.
Well, as a matter of fact, the lawn has looked very nice this year.
Great. I might suggest a light watering in the early evening sometime this week. It's been a while since we've seen some rain.
We'll be back to check on your lawn in a few weeks, but if you have any questions in the meantime, feel free to give us a call. Goodbye.

If you're in the lawn care business and this conversation sounds at all absurd to you, chances are good that you're getting out-hustled for customers in your market area.

Industry analysts agree that the business of lawn care in America has reached a turning point in its history. Gone are the days of the endless customer base that LCOs have enjoyed for the past 20 years. In the 1990s, profitable companies will be those that are able to retain clients through improved communication while selling them additional services.

"The issue now for lawn care companies that are going to be successful is better service," said Rudd McGary,

In the 1990s, the successful lawn care service companies will be those that remember the customer is king.
McGary notes that since the late 1960s, the lawn care industry has followed traditional business cycles of rapid expansion, followed by market saturation, and eventual industry consolidation, which exists currently.

Today, more than twenty years after the industry's inception, there is little variation to be found in the technical offerings of competitors, notes McGary. As a result, companies that make the special effort to attract and retain customers is likely to be more attractive—and profitable.

**Tapping potential revenue**

McGary's estimate of the total revenue available in the lawn care industry in this country is between $1.5 and $2 billion. Since just 1983, chemical lawn care market revenue has grown from $1.05 billion to $1.5 billion, according to industry surveys. Likewise, membership in the industry's professional organization, the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA), has grown from 31 companies in 1979 to more than 1,200 today (which includes the loss of about 30 firms due to consolidation in 1988.) Translated, that means LCOs have reached most of the potential customers available.

To remain profitable, LCOs have recognized the need to hold on to their present customers and sell them additional services, such as mowing and management, tree care and aeration.

Russell Frith, PLCAA president, notes that the "Back to Service" theme of this month's PLCAA convention this month reflects the importance of the issue.

"In the last couple years you can see a real change in the look of the lawn care market. A huge amount of capital has been poured in and the competitive nature of the industry has increased dramatically.

"The thinking used to be that you could always go out and get a new customer if you lost one that wasn't happy. That's no longer always the case," Frith notes.

Frith's company, Lawn Doctor, has grown steadily for several years and ranks among the top revenue-earning lawn care companies in the country with annual sales of more than $31 million. The company has a policy of making sales calls to customers within 48 hours of a visit.

"Each company has to deal with the issue of customer retention in its own way," says Frith. "This is one of our ways."

**Better employee training**

The Davey Tree Expert Company of Kent, Ohio, with annual revenue of more than $5 million, has placed increased emphasis on customer communication in its employee training program.

"We want our people to treat each lawn as if it's the lawn of the president of the company," says Roger Funk, Ph.D., Davey's director of technical and human resources.

"Then we want them to realize that it's not the president of the company that pays their salary. The average customer does."

Davey's "Customer Care" training program is a two-day affair for field employees that was conceived in 1986 and initiated this year. Its focus is to get employees to evaluate their performance through the eyes of the customer.

Davey's field employees are encouraged to attempt to talk directly with customers at the time of service. If no one is home, personalized literature is left at the door, including a stamped survey card. Also, employees are to check the environment for possible areas of complaint.

Funk adds that a toll-free number
for customers is also under consideration.

"As we looked back on 75 years as a company, we found that customer care was indeed the direction we should be headed in," says Funk. The company is currently designing an "Employee Care" program for its management personnel. It will be designed to attract, train and develop the type of caring employees it desires.

"After all," says Funk, "you can't have one without the other."

Mike Turner, operator of Cleveland-based Custom Lawns, uses a quarterly newsletter featuring articles on varied topics such as gardening and mower maintenance in addition to post-application telephone service calls. In addition, since a vast majority of his customers are within 20 to 30 miles of the home office, his employees will stop to evaluate the lawn condition of nearby customers while on the road. They always leave at least a personalized note behind that lets the customer know they were there.

These free visits cost Turner about 10 man-hours a week and have become an effective public relations tool.

"What we're doing now is going out between applications and taking a look around. We're making decisions about the success of the mate-

When Senske Lawn and Tree Care reached a slow growth period three years ago, owner Chris Senske gave it a booster shot by increasing emphasis on communicating with the customer. Today he operates three branches in Washington, enjoys an annual growth rate of 30 percent and revenue of more than $2.5 million.

"We had reached a plateau," notes Senske. "I wasn't happy with how the company was going and felt there was something we needed to do to make a change."

Senske hired a consulting firm to coordinate a two-day training seminar that is taken by all his field service representatives prior to the spring season. "The major thrust of it is to train them to be confident in their abilities to communicate with the customer," says Senske. His employees learn the reasons why people want a lawn care service, what customers want to hear, how to use the proper tone of voice in conversation and how to give a firm handshake, among other things.

"For the new employee, this seminar is awesome," says Senske. "They think, 'Oh my god, this really is a professional organization.' For the returning employee it's a good refresher course that reminds them who pays their salary."

In addition, Senske has 16 employees manning the telephones to drum up new business and contact present customers four to six weeks after their second or third application. "We're calling to see if we can get them to complain before they complain," explains Senske. He says that about 10 percent of his customers have concerns that require attention.

These steps are part of a whole package of things designed to improve the company's image in the eyes of its customers. Senske says, How an employee answers or speaks on the phone, how easy it is for the customer to understand and

Consultant Larry Kokkelenberg says that treating a customer well is the most important element in a service-oriented business.

Ignorance is expensive
In addition to a rising or falling revenue and customer base, there are other factors to consider when evaluating your relationship with your customers. Specifically, it's important to read into those numbers for a more complete picture of where your company may be headed, says industry consultant Larry Kokkelenberg.

Kokkelenberg is president of the Center for Business Development, a consulting firm that has worked with LCOs for more than seven years. He believes that a company's attitude toward its customers is the single most important factor in the success of a service-oriented business.

Kokkelenberg notes that for every customer complaint you receive there are 26 other customers with the same complaint you won't hear from. Sixty-five to 95 percent of those will not do business with you again. Also, the person with a complaint is likely to tell nine or 10 others of their misfortune, while 13 percent of those will tell more than 20 people. However, 95 percent of customer complaints can be rectified if you act quickly and courteously.

A competitive lawncare company today can no longer tolerate an average annual customer turnover rate between 16 and 22 percent, he says.

"There is greater awareness today that it's a lot more expensive to gain new customers than to retain the ones you have," concludes Kokkelenberg.

LM

‘IT WORKS FOR ME’

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Chris Senske
pay their bill, and providing sufficient notification of when you have or will visit a customer's home are all examples of everyday business aspects that can be used to your advantage.

—Will Perry