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ON THE COVER: SPRING COLOR IS DOMINATED BY THE STATELY TULIP, IN A SPLENDID AFTERNOON DISPLAY, LANCASTER, PA.

PHOTO BY LEFEVER/GRUSHOW FROM GRANT HEILMAN

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If you want to improve the way your company runs its snow removal business, then you should attend The Snow & Ice Management Association’s first Snow & Ice Symposium, May 7-9 at the Airport Marriott Hotel, Pittsburgh, Pa.

SIMA is a year-old organization that has come off the blocks fast, with useful information for serious snow removalists!

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT is the exclusive Green Industry publication helping to sponsor this event. Other sponsors are Western Snowplows, Fisher Snowplows, Shindaiwa, Cryotech Deicing Technology and Burke’s Trading International.

Snow removal is not easy. It takes time to plan your marketing, capitalization and pricing strategies. A May meeting will enable you to take home what you learn and use it to plan well ahead of the first snowfall.

John Allin, president of Allin Companies, Erie, Pa., is a founding member of SIMA, and has a vast background as a landscaper and snow removal expert.

“It is our intent to bring snow plow contractors together for the first time, to give them time to have some intense interaction among their peers,” says Allin.

“I have found that to be the best way to learn. A contractor can sit and listen to me for an hour, but it will be more valuable if he can ask a contractor from three states away how he would handle a specific snow removal situation.”

The lineup for the Symposium brings together experts in weather prediction; finance; equipment and advice from people who are successful at snow removal.

Dale Keep is a Maintenance Methods Specialist for Washington state. He has written many reports and articles on the subject of snow removal, and has trained other public works departments. Keep has been active in evaluating environmental issues associated with deicers. He will share facts about deicing and anti-icing methods.

For the “bottom line,” Frank Ross, one of the Green Industry’s leading business consultants, will speak. Ross knows what companies do to become profitable, and what they must continue to do to make money.

“Companies need to isolate snow activities into a profit center, and understand how much it truly costs them,” says Ross.

Ross told me he will also explain pricing strategies, and ways to present those prices in a way that will be accepted by your customers.

Since what we’re talking about is the weather—and what you can do about it—the Symposium has asked Bryce Anderson, chief meteorologist at DTN, to speak on meteorology.

“I’m going to cover some basic weather fundamentals to help the audience get a handle on the big weather systems that eventually funnel down to the local area,” Anderson told me.

“Then we’ll take a regional look in terms of radar and go over some fundamental factors and features of pressure centers as they move across the country,” says Anderson.

Master of Ceremonies Jim Paluch runs J.P. Horizons, Painesville, Ohio. He specializes in “business coaching.”

Paluch told me he hopes to combine “big picture instruction with ‘right-brain’ creativity,” in a “Roundtable Olympics” format. Having people in a roundtable format, says Paluch, “creates a sense of camaraderie among the group. With that camaraderie, they’re more willing to share information after the session is over.”

Supplier representatives will also be ready to answer questions you have about snow removal equipment.

SIMA members can attend the Symposium for $295. Non-members pay $365. There’s a price break if more than one person attends from your company.

You can join SIMA for as little as $130. To learn more about the Symposium and SIMA, call the Association at 814/456-9550. LM
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Field bindweed puts us in a bind

We have a serious problem with field bindweed growing in and around some plants in our client properties. How can we get rid of it without hurting the ornamental shrubs?

—MICHIGAN

Field bindweed (Convolvulus arvensis) is a perennial weed that belongs to the sweet potato family. It has an underground root that’s not unlike a sweet potato.

There are no selective herbicides to remove this weed. One option is to use non-selective products such as Roundup, Finale or Scythe as post-emergent treatments. These products will harm the desirable plants. Take care not to contact or touch the desirable plants while treating.

Try using a brush or wick for applications. This will be time consuming, but it’s better than repeatedly hand weeding from an established ornamental planting.

Another option is to relandscape heavily infested areas. In this situation, the area to be landscaped can be pre-treated with one of the existing bindweed treatments. Then bring in plant materials free from bindweed. Select plants from nurseries that have good sanitation practices.

Why disinfect tools?

We were in a situation where an elm tree had several branches showing "flagging" symptoms of Dutch elm disease. Our supervisor insisted we disinfect tools while making cuts within the same tree. Why?

—NEW YORK

The main objective of disinfecting pruning tools is to sanitize the tools to prevent or minimize spreading the disease.

While pruning branches of the same tree that show "flagging" symptoms, some judgment is required. Depending on the extent of the flagging and/or browning of foliage in the canopy and the source of infection, disinfecting tools may or may not be helpful.

Generally, the flagging symptoms are the result of fungal infection spread by bark beetle feeding activity. The European bark beetles feed in the smaller branch junctions and spread the fungus. In this situation, it is a good idea to disinfect to prevent further spread. However, if infection occurs through root grafting, disinfecting tools may be of little value. In my opinion, if in doubt, disinfect. It’s a good sanitation practice to help prevent the spread of fungus that causes Dutch elm disease.

Weed resistance in home lawns

We are having a problem managing common broadleaf weeds, such as dandelion or plantain, in some lawns but not others. It's a problem in lawns with a thin grass stand. Are these weeds developing a resistance?

—MICHIGAN

The reason why you may be having weeds in some lawns and not in others may be related to "thin" lawns. Any open areas or a thin stand of turfgrass can allow weeds to germinate and eventually establish. Weed seeds can remain viable in soil for a long period (10 to 20 years). In addition, weed seeds can be carried by wind from nearby untreated areas. Weeds are opportune pests that establish in areas where there is no competition. They compete for the same water, nutrients and space that are necessary for desirable turfgrass. If the turfgrass stand is thin or the turfgrass is not aggressive like Kentucky bluegrass, the area may not fill in very quickly. This is particularly true with bunch-type grass, such as tall fescue or ryegrass.

Your program and the products you use may be effective; however, if the lawn is thin as described above, weeds can germinate from seeds and establish and present a problem from time to time. In this situation, consider over-seeding the thin lawns with aggressive turfgrass and cultivars. Provide good cultural practices for faster filling in competing with weeds.

While managing weeds, it is important to make sure that the target weeds are present and actively growing. Quite often, if the weeds are not actively growing, they will not absorb the product and translocate it to the root system. I am not familiar with any reports suggesting resistance to lawn applied herbicides. With granular products, an application made when leaf surfaces are moist or wet gives better results. LM
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