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by
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Sue Gibson
Editor



Imagine if your business never changed. Imagine competitors that become completely predictable, customers that renew year after year, employees who never leave and weather that's always perfect. Maybe in that world, mower blades never go dull and business owners never get wrinkles.

In the real world, however, things constantly change. In fact, that's one of the things I like best about business. Employees, customers, competitors and Mother Nature make every year different from the last. This makes business even more of a challenge because we should realize that what works well one year may be a flop the next. Change challenges us and keeps us on our toes.

I think we all want to be able to forecast coming changes, to budget with certainty, to know that things will be all right, all year long. Anticipating change and being flexible is our way of trying to stay in control of events. And events are constantly changing. As we enter the new year 1997, we'll have big changes in our industry with the TruGreen-ChemLawn/Barefoot Grass merger, the Environmental Protection Agency's pressures to prove the risks and benefits of pesticides and this year's usual weather surprises.

Probably the best way to profit from change is having a clear plan of business and staying flexible at the same time. I hear too often about lawn or landscape contractors who seem to be in business just to make a wage, not to build a business. Step one is making a plan based on your customers' needs. Step two is making it realistic.

It doesn't have to be complicated. And although a yearly business plan will not stop change from happening, it can help guide your business through the many changes, twists and reversals that are inevitable. Even the largest companies revise their business plans on a regular basis. They have to because their markets, customers, competition and employees change.

Several articles in this month's issue explore planning for 1997, whether it be through a preemergent herbicide strategy, developing a clear marketing plan, setting a profitable pricing structure or searching for the best mowers or sprinkler heads for your business.

Our cover story, "Aiming High," (page 32) explains how ISS Landscape Services Inc. in Tampa, Fla., anticipates change by having clear goals for its future business in lucrative specialty landscape services, amusement parks and golf courses. The plan gives company employees a focus on what needs to be done to achieve an efficient and profitable year.

Now that I think of it, those seem like pretty good goals for any company this year. A good business plan for 1997 will enable you to be a smart manager, react quickly to market changes and give your employees strong leadership. That alone will make this year something special. — Sue Gibson

Lawn & Landscape

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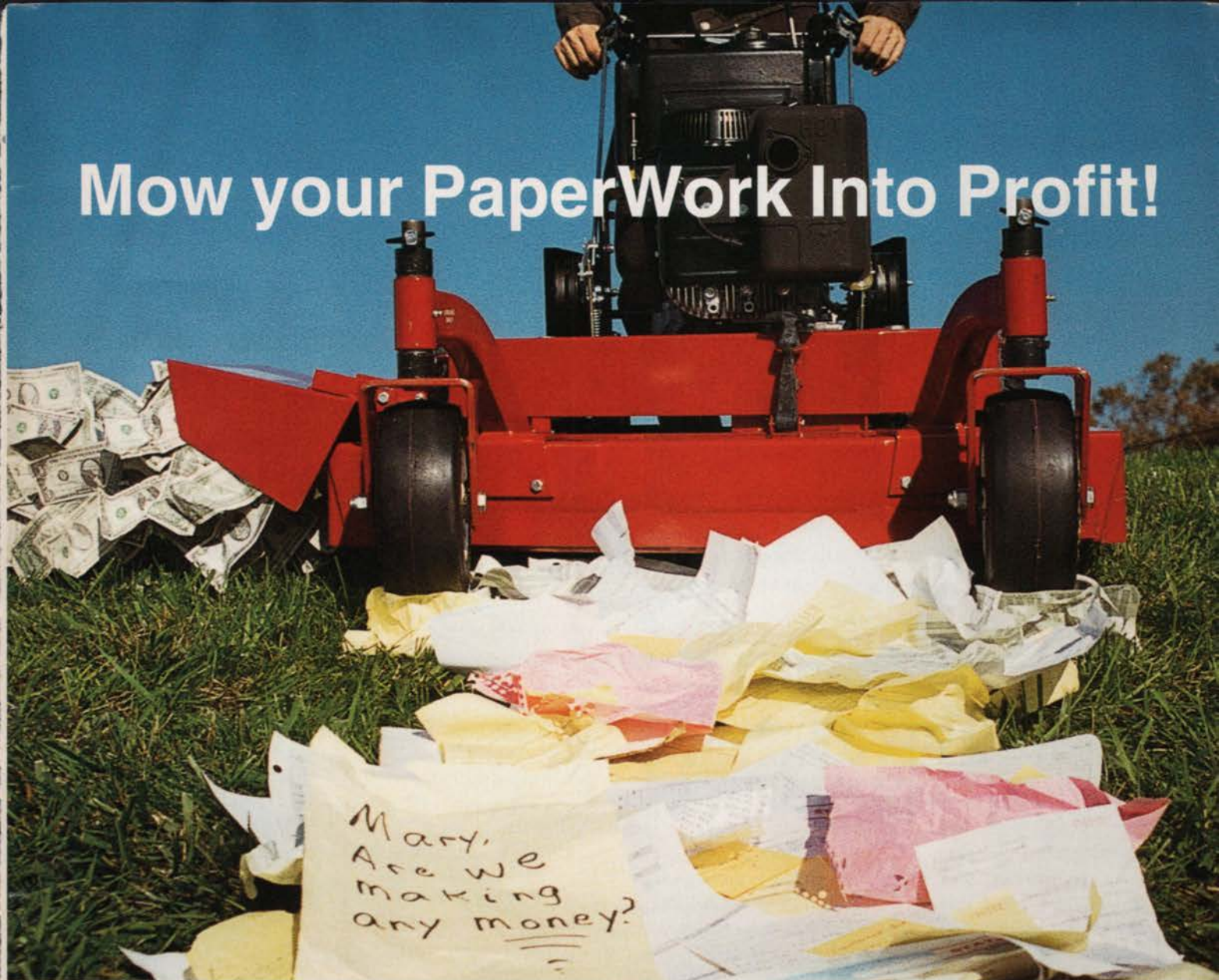
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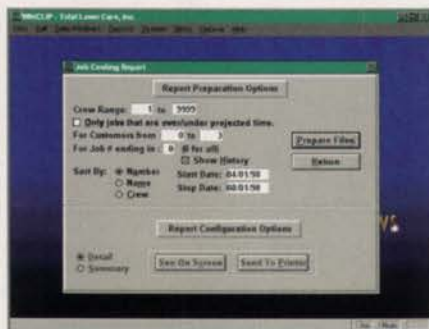
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MARKET TRENDS

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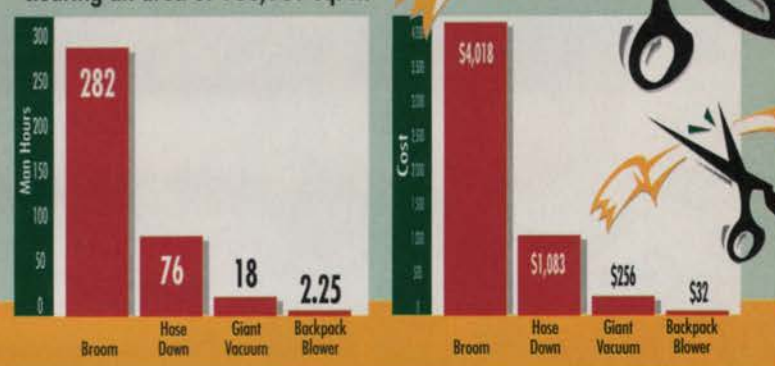
Gasoline-powered blowers continue to face potential restrictions from near-sighted groups focusing exclusively on the noise produced by these valuable tools.

One municipal study illustrates the value of blowers by measuring their productivity against vacuums, hoses and brooms. The study showed that an area of 168,989 square feet can be cleared in two hours and 15 minutes with a backpack blower, but takes 18 hours of work with a vacuum, three days with a hose and almost 12 days with a broom.

Critics also ignore the fact that backpack blowers triumph in affordability with a labor cost of \$32.06 for clearing that area, compared to \$256.50 for the vacuum, \$1,083 for the hose and \$4,018.50 for doing the job with a broom.

CUTTING AWAY LABOR COSTS

This chart illustrates labor and cost savings with a backpack blower for clearing an area of 168,989 sq. ft.



Source: Echo Inc.

SERVICEMASTER CONTINUES GROWTH — BUYS BAREFOOT

IN A MOVE that surprised the entire lawn care industry, ServiceMaster L.P., Downers Grove, Ill., announced plans to purchase Barefoot Inc., Worthington, Ohio, for \$230 million. The purchase, by the company that owns TruGreen-ChemLawn, will form the lawn care industry's largest company, with more

than 3 million customers.

According to ServiceMaster, the transaction will be carried out with a tender offer to Barefoot stockholders of \$16 per share. The deal is subject to registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission, antitrust approval and completion of final due diligence by ServiceMaster.

Patrick Norton, CEO of Barefoot Inc., expected the deal to move smoothly, noting, "I would anticipate closing in about three months." He said the move by

excited about combining the nation's two largest lawn care companies with the objectives of creating expanding market opportunity, economies of scale and productivity improvements," said Carlos Cantu, CEO of ServiceMaster.

Norton added, "Barefoot is joining with the nation's largest lawn care company and one of the leading service companies in the country. ServiceMaster has a reputation for outstanding customer service, with an emphasis on training and developing people."

Barefoot reported annualized revenues in excess of \$125 million

from 53 company owned branches and 50 franchises. TruGreen-ChemLawn reported customer level revenues of more than \$630 million from 2.5 million customers serviced by 200

(continued on page 8)

ServiceMaster will be the largest lawn care company in the U.S. with more than 3 million customers and more than \$755 million in revenues.

ServiceMaster is consistent with the company's strategy for growth through acquisitions and called this deal the "biggest consolidation" so far.

Executives of both firms noted advantages for the combined company. "We are



Barefoot Grass CEO Patrick Norton (left) noted that with the sale of the company to ServiceMaster, Barefoot will now benefit from the emphasis given to service and training at TruGreen-ChemLawn. Credit: Photographic Design Group

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MEANS BUSINESS

MARKET TRENDS

(continued from page 6)

service centers throughout the U. S. Servicemaster's Consumer Services operating segment owns TruGreen-ChemLawn, as well as Terminix, ServiceMaster Residential and Commercial

Services, Merry Maids, American Home Shield, Amerispec and Furniture Medic.

INDUSTRY REACTION. It's a fair guess that almost all industry insiders were taken by surprise with the news of the deal. Some contractors contacted by *Lawn & Landscape* declined to comment on the situation, saying they were unsure how the consolidation would affect the marketplace. Others expressed optimism because the consolidation will eliminate some competition in their markets.

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Terry Kurth, president of the Professional Lawn Care Association of America and owner of four Barefoot Grass franchises in Wisconsin, stated, "It's an interesting deal. There are going to have to be some options from my standpoint as a franchisee — I don't see them (ServiceMaster) buying many franchises. I told my people I see things going on the status quo here, other than a potential name change down the road."

Bruce Moore, president of Eastern Land Management Inc., Shelton, Conn., saw

some positive points to the move: "I think it's good for us for a couple of reasons. First, there is going to be a 20 percent to 25 percent attrition from any merger, so that will put more customers out there for us to go after. Second, this means there's one less company operating in the area, so there is one less competitive telephone call and one less piece of mail my customers get."

Lou Wierichs Jr., president of Pro-X Systems, Appleton, Wis., and former president of PLCAA, sees positives and negatives to the move. He said it would be "too bad if the industry lost an outstanding competitor like Barefoot

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LAWN & LANDSCAPE magazine delivers superior, total coverage of the continually evolving professional lawn and landscape contractor market, from in-depth business trends and technical research reports to market analysis and new product introductions. For 18 years, L&L has provided industry presidents, business owners and top-level managers the most up-to-date information needed to effectively run their businesses.

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MARKET TRENDS

(continued from page 8)

Grass," but finds that competing with large companies as a locally based firm is not very difficult. He emphasizes the local connection in his business and noted that each time a national company consolidates, it gives the local companies an upper hand.

This trend often encourages customers to seek out local firms, noted John Carson, division manager of J.C. Ehrlich Co., Reading, Pa. That tendency represents opportunity for locally based lawn care companies, he said.

Wierichs also noted that whenever larger companies combine, those in the middle (local branches or franchises) often elect to go out on their own, which creates a glut of new startup lawn care companies. That, he noted, could create

more price pressures in an industry already dealing with price pressures, at least for a short time.

Daryle Johnson, president of All American Turf Beauty Inc., Van Meter, Iowa, said he didn't think it was good for the industry to have just one huge firm and several smaller firms, rather than two or three large, national companies.

Steve Hyland, president of Hyland Brothers Lawn Care, Fort Collins, Colo., predicted the deal would not be good for building customer loyalty.

"I feel for the customers because they're being bounced around. The customers are getting rocked back and forth, and if I was a customer, I might just leave the industry."

Although definite figures for the

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EVENT CALENDAR

To ensure that your meeting date is published, send an announcement at least 10 to 12 weeks in advance to *Lawn & Landscape*, 4012 Bridge Ave., Cleveland, OH 44113.

JAN. 19 New York State Arborists Association certification exam, Suffern, N.Y. Contact: 716/671-5433.

JAN. 19-21 Empire State Tree Conference, Suffern, N.Y. Contact: 518/783-1322.

JAN. 20-22 Central Environmental Nursery Trade Show, Columbus, Ohio. Contact: 800/825-5062.

JAN. 20-22 Virginia Turf & Landscape Conference, Richmond. Contact: 540/942-8873.

JAN. 20-23 Michigan Turfgrass Conference, Lansing. Contact: 517/321-1660.

JAN. 20-24 Professional Horticulture Conference of Virginia, Virginia Beach. Contact: 804/523-4734.

JAN. 20-24 North Carolina Turfgrass Short Course,

Raleigh. Contact: 910/695-1333.

JAN. 21-23 Midwest Turf Expo, Indianapolis. Contact: 317/494-8039.

JAN. 21-23 Mid-America Green Industry Convention, Kansas City, Mo. Contact: 816/561-5323.

JAN. 22 South Carolina Landscape & Turfgrass Conference, Columbia. Contact: 706/542-2494.

JAN. 24-25 ALCA Masters in Management, Atlanta. Contact: 800/395-2522.

JAN. 24-25 Commercial Lawn Care Equipment Exhibition & Trade Show, Jacksonville, Fla. Contact: 904/778-9632.

JAN. 27-29 Iowa Turfgrass Conference, Des Moines. Contact: 515/232-8222.

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ASSOCIATION NEWS

The Professional Lawn Care Association of America appointed new directors to the board of its Education & Research Foundation. Cindy Code, group publisher of *Lawn & Landscape* magazine, David Shetlar of The Ohio State University and Norman Goldenberg of TruGreen-ChemLawn joined the board.

PLCAA also introduced Terry Kurth, Lawn Care of Wisconsin, as its 1997 president at the Green Industry Expo. Joining him on the executive committee are: Larry Messina, president-elect; Bob Ottley, vice president; and Gerald Grossi, secretary-treasurer. For more information, contact PLCAA at 800/458-3466.

The Associated Landscape Contractors of America announced its scheduled slate for the 1997 Executive Forum, Feb. 16-19 in Acapulco, Mexico. The Forum's theme will be "The Leadership Journey," and the keynote speaker will be Watts Wacker, a renowned speaker on the subject of future consumer agendas. Other speakers include Ralph Strayer, chief executive officer of Johnsonville Foods, and Will Philips, a partner at Faust Management.

ALCA also announced the following Masters in Management for the Landscape Industry seminars: Jan. 24-25 in Atlanta; Feb., 21-22 in San Francisco; and Aug. 8-9 in Chicago. For more information, contact ALCA at 703/620-6363.

Newly-elected board members for the California Landscape Contractors Association include Dave Penry, president and Charles Nunley, president-elect.

The Southern Nurserymen's Association elected its new board of directors for 1996-97. John Watkins, Watkins Nurseries, is president. He is joined on the board by James Zangger, Greenleaf Nursery, vice president/chapter 1, William Reese, Greenbriar Nurseries, director/

chapter 3, Walter Imahara, Imahara's Landscape, director/chapter 4; and Wilfred Robbins, Robbins Nursery, director/chapter 2.

The Professional Grounds Management Society recognized the lifetime dedication to the green industry by Jeffrey Bourne by bestowing upon him its highest honor — the Gold Medal. This is the 14th award made by the association since 1926. Bourne is director of recreation and parks for Howard County, Md.

PGMS' new officers include: Steve Wharton, president; Tom Riccardi, first vice president; Randall Willis, second vice president; and Jeffrey Bourne, treasurer. For more information, contact PGMS at 410/584-9754.

Donald Leslie was installed as the 1996-97 president of the American Society of Landscape Architects at the ASLA Annual Meeting in October. Leslie is an associate dean at Penn State University. New ASLA vice presidents are: Thomas Dunbar, president-elect; Kathleen Fox, vice president of finance; Patrick Moore, vice president for professional products and services; and Virginia Russell, vice president for membership.

Jim McCann, president and CEO of 1-800-FLOWERS, headlines the American Association of Nurserymen's 1997 Management Clinic. The event, held Jan. 30-Feb. 2 in Louisville, Ky., is designed to help attendees be more profitable with discussions on critical areas such as marketing, financial management and personnel. For more information, call the AAN at 202/789-2900.

The Florida Turfgrass Association elected Roy Bates president for 1996-97. He is a 15-year veteran of the FTGA and is superintendent at the Imperial Golf Club, Naples, Fla.

The FTGA also introduced its site on the world wide web. The site includes green industry information and resources, environmental reports and much more. The address is <http://ems.ifas.uf.edu/ftga/>.

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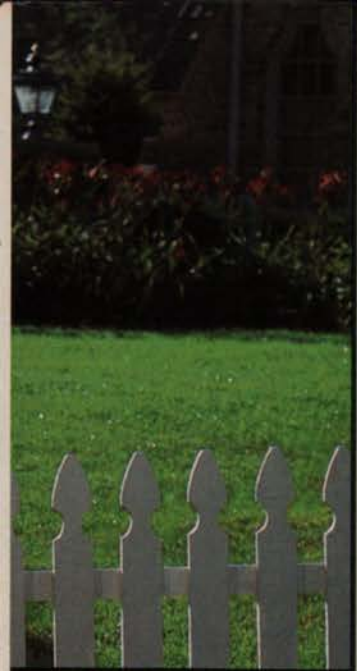
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USE READER SERVICE #12

MARKET TRENDS

(continued from page 10)

company's combined market share are not available, most insiders agree that the clout will be considerable in many market areas. Economies of scale and productivity for the combined company should enable the firm to offer services at ever more profitable levels.

"I don't know what the captured market is, but what we have to remember is that we still have 70 percent to 80 percent of lawn applications done by the homeowners," Kurth noted. Others agreed, noting that the potential market for professional lawn care services across the U.S. continues to be large.

(continued on page 18)

TRANSITION

A series of personnel moves at Homelite included the appointments of **Jimmy Farmer**, brand manager, professional products and **Matt Ragland** brand manager, consumer products. **Jeff Pinnow** was also promoted to director, sales forecasting.

Sandoz Agro announced a series of sales and marketing promotions. **Gene Hintze** was named eastern district turf and ornamental sales team manager. **Leo Schoenhofen's** territory expanded to include the mid-south and southwest turf and ornamental group.

United Horticultural Supply promoted **Russ Mitchell** to manage the UHS Great Lakes Division.

Kevin Gordon is the new product manager for irrigation valves and controllers at Hunter Industries. He will oversee development of products for both residential and commercial markets.

Jack Heinemann was promoted to business manager for the International Operations Division of Briggs & Stratton.

Geri Cashion joined FMC as a technical representative for the southeastern region.

The Engine Division of Kawasaki named **John Messing** sales manager for industrial engines, **Karen Freeman**, sales manager for turf engines, and **Steve Iveson**, sales representative for distributor and deal accounts.



Jimmy Farmer



Kevin Gordon

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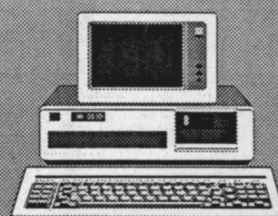
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Aquascape's American Tour

Workshops explaining how to Construct, Estimate & Sell water features

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Monday, January 6 - Cleveland, OH | Friday, January 24 - Denver, CO | Thursday, February 20 - Philadelphia, PA |
| Tuesday, January 7 - Atlanta, GA | Monday, January 27 - Charlotte, NC | Friday, February 21 - Newark, NJ |
| Wednesday, January 8 - Miami, FL | Tuesday, January 28 - Raleigh, NC | Monday, February 24 - Boston, MA |
| Thursday, January 9 - Orlando, FL | Wednesday, January 29 - Richmond, VA | Tuesday, February 25 - Providence, RI |
| Friday, January 10 - Tampa Bay, FL | Friday, January 31 - Washington DC | Wednesday, February 26 - Hartford, CT |
| Monday, January 13 - Memphis, TN | Tuesday, February 4 - Seattle, WA | Thursday, February 27 - Bridgeport, CT |
| Tuesday, January 14 - Kenner, LA | Wednesday, February 5 - Portland, OR | Friday, February 28 - Rochester, NY |
| Wednesday, January 15 - Houston, TX | Thursday, February 6 - Phoenix, AZ | Monday, March 3 - Indianapolis, IN |
| Thursday, January 16 - Austin, TX | Tuesday, February 11 - Kansas City, MO | Tuesday, March 4 - Detroit, MI |
| Friday, January 17 - Dallas, TX | Wednesday, February 12 - St. Louis, MO | Wednesday, March 5 - Milwaukee, WI |
| Monday, January 20 - Los Angeles, CA | Thursday, February 13 - Cincinnati, OH | Thursday, March 6 - Minneapolis, MN |
| Tuesday, January 21 - Sacramento, CA | Friday, February 14 - Columbus, OH | Friday, March 7 - Las Vegas, NE |
| Wednesday, January 22 - San Francisco, CA | Monday, February 17 - Nashville, TN | Wednesday, March 12 - Arlington Hts, IL |
| Thursday, January 23 - San Diego, CA | Tuesday, February 18 - Pittsburgh, PA | Friday, March 14 - St. Charles, IL |
| | Wednesday, February 19 - Baltimore, MD | |

- | | |
|---|---|
| ❖ Formulate your construction and material expenses to know job related costs before you give a bid. | ❖ Create a construction system that guides your crews step-by-step from excavation to flowing water job after job. |
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MARKET TRENDS

(continued from page 16)

▼ AUTODESK ACQUIRES SOFTDESK

The consolidation trend in the software industry continued in December when Autodesk purchased Softdesk in a \$72 million deal. Softdesk will operate as the AEC Market Group of Autodesk.

Softdesk developed Autodesk software for 10 years.

▼ IA SHOW SETS ATTENDANCE MARK

The 1996 Irrigation Association Expo in November drew

a record 5,500 attendees to San Antonio. Louis Toth of Aqua-Lawn Inc., accepted the IA presidency for 1997.

"The place to start preparing for the future is the IA," said Toth.

Next year's IA Show is Nov. 2-4 in Nashville, Tenn.

▼ IN BUSINESS...

The Federal Trade Commission approved the merger of Ciba and Sandoz into a new firm, Novartis...Toro and Maruyama Mfg. announced Maruyama will build commercial hand-held power equipment to be sold under the Toro ProLine name. 

PLCAA TO ENHANCE ARLINGTON CEMETERY

Volunteers representing the Professional Lawn Care Association of America plan to participate in a large-scale landscape enhancement project for Arlington National Cemetery. The project, entitled "Renewal and Remembrance," will be held Feb. 2 in conjunction with PLCAA's 8th Day on the Hill program in Washington, D.C.

The group will apply lime on at least 200 acres of highly visible turfgrass around the Lee Mansion, the Kennedy Memorial and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. An estimated 55 people are expected in the first-time event.

Phil Fogarty, president of Crowley's Inc., Cleveland, Ohio, and coordinator of the project, urged members to participate through actual work or contributions. "Hopefully, this is something we can do every year. It's a good opportunity for the industry to give something back to the country and get good publicity at the same time."

A similar project by the arborist industry was covered by the national media. For more information on PLCAA's Arlington project, contact PLCAA at 800/458-3466.

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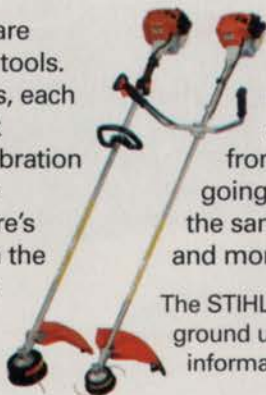
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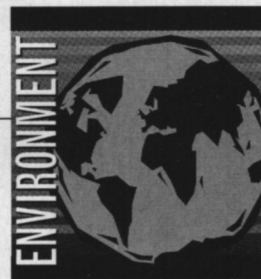
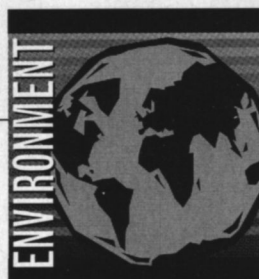
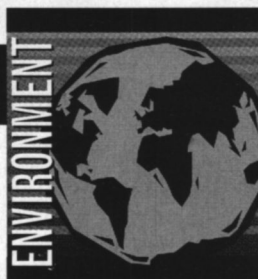
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FORUM

UNFAIR-VIEW. The battle over state preemption vs. local control continues in Ohio Courts. The Cleveland suburb of Fairview Park, despite being defeated twice in local appeals courts, has asked the state supreme court to rule whether the city may set its own pesticide notification laws.

Jim Betts of the Ohio Pesticide Applicators for Responsible Regulation said that the supreme court should

decide this month whether or not to take up the issue. In the event the court does hear the case and the city wins, the industry will put its full resources toward convincing Ohio lawmakers to produce a tougher, clearer preemption law, Betts asserted.

SPEAKING OF BENEFITS. The Ambassador Speakers Program is a joint effort of three industry associations to motivate and prepare industry representatives to educate the public about our industry's environ-

mental benefits. Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment, the Professional Lawn Care Association of America and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America enlisted 16 speakers for professional training to give presentations to civic, community and school groups.

The program is modeled after the American Crop Protection Association's program. Pilot presentations are scheduled for Ohio, Michigan and Pennsylvania groups.

THE PROS CHOICE.

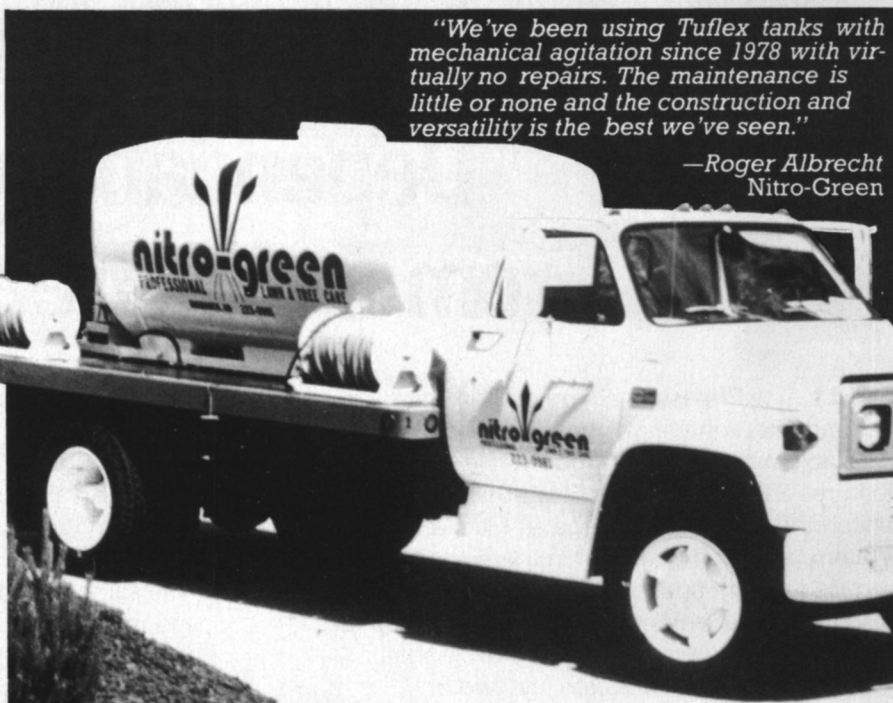
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—Roger Albrecht
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USE READER SERVICE #23

PESTICIDE VIEWPOINT. Environmental issues are not the only issues covered at the Professional Lawn Care Association of America's Legislative Day on the Hill next month, but invited speaker Robert F. Kennedy Jr. should provide some topics for lively environmental discussion.

As an attorney representing the Natural Resource Defense Fund, Kennedy has led the charge in pushing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to adopt stringent stormwater programs and tough regulations regarding the water quality of the Hudson Bay. Attendees of the Day on the Hill will be able to ask the highly visible Kennedy about his position on lawn care as an industry.

For more information on the Day on the Hill on Feb. 3, call PLCAA at 800/458-3466.

NOW HEAR THIS. Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment reported that the Environmental Protection Agency is considering the idea of talking pesticide labels. The EPA believes end users familiar with products tend not to read labels and are more likely to misapply or misuse products. RISE asserts that pesticide users do use the present labeling and a new requirement is unnecessary.


Even if only required at the consumer level, the estimated cost of \$2 per container to add the labeling would certainly be passed on to users at all levels. RISE is working with the EPA

to further research the issue of effective labeling.

WELL SAID. At the Green Industry Expo Cincinnati in November, PLCAA held a seminar titled, "The Other Side of the Pesticide Story," a session that allowed the Sierra Club's northeast Ohio chapter president Laurel Hopwood to present her views in opposition to pesticide use to an audience of green industry professionals. Next to her was Lauren Lanphear, president of Forest City Tree Protection, South Euclid, Ohio, who presented the industry side of the story.

Lanphear followed Hopwood's speech with an outstanding presentation, using emotional images

environmentalists employ to reinforce their points. He described his experiences in horticulture as a child, working in the family apple orchard and caring for trees. He also talked about pesticides as "plant medicines," putting a positive spin on the maligned tools of the landscape trade.

Lanphear had two other messages for the group. First, he stressed that because the media and public outrage is weighted against lawn and landscape contractors, the industry's viewpoint is actually the "other side of the pesticide story." He also encouraged the contractors to "stand up and speak up" when customers, legislators or the media portray the industry as irresponsible or negligent. — Paul Schrimpf 

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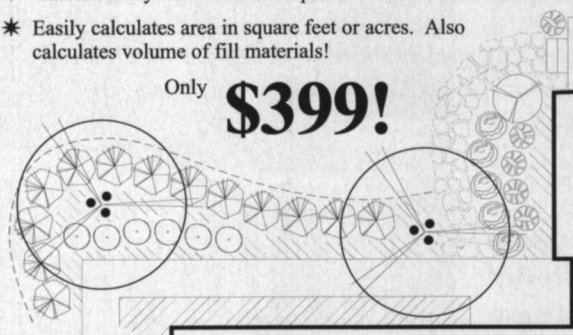
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USE READER SERVICE #26

DESIGN NOTEBOOK

SITUATED IN an affluent golf course community overlooking the clubhouse, an elegant Southern-style landscape was created for this Mid-western residence. The architectural style of this home was different than the surrounding homes, and even though its style didn't conflict with the neighborhood, a more unique and befitting landscape needed to be developed.

The project received a merit award in a residential design/build category from the Associated Landscape Contractors of America.

DESIGN CHALLENGE: The home-owner had high expectations for the project and was willing to commit the necessary resources to the project to achieve the desired result. His own idea of how the finished project would look was much more artistic than most jobs and was certainly a standard installation. The numerous elements contained in the design necessitated the presence of 12 contractors on the job site and ensuring that each one had the same vision for

the finished project was a constant test for the crew.

DESIGN SOLUTION: Many components were used to achieve the desired classic, casual elegance. Stone walls were built in excavated areas in the front to accent and exaggerate the slightly sloping yard. Above these walls, a lush garden was planted including star magnolias, oak-leaf hydrangea, a mosaic of hosta varieties, holly and fothergilla.

Eight Kwanzan cherry trees were planted across the entire front for continuity and added color. Two Sweetbay magnolias served as "entrance sentinels" on either side of the brick driveway which centrally bisected the property. To bring the architecture into the landscape, accent fences that repeated the railing details of the front porch were installed as a border to the parking area to create an auto-court effect. Annual flowers planted along the borders created an explosion of continuous color.

A feature of the north side of the property are an existing

DESIGN NOTES

PROJECT:

LANDSCAPE COMPANY:

DESIGNER:

SIZE OF PROPERTY:

MAN-HOURS TO INSTALL:

PLANTS INSTALLED:

The Kenney Residence

The Pagura Company, Dublin, Ohio

Greg Pyles

Approximately 320 feet by 190 feet

Gardens occupy 15,500 square feet

more than 4,100

40 ornamental trees, 192 shrubs,

450 perennials and grasses, more

than 200 flats of annuals

grove of mature pines that had been limbed-up to approximately 20 feet. Thirty pink and white dogwoods were planted as an understory to these evergreens. A stone path meanders through this garden, and the entire area was mulched with imported pine straw. Low and high voltage lighting was installed to create a soft and elegant nighttime effect.

A pool was designed with two waterfall. One spills into the pool at the north end while the other spills out of the pool along the eastern edge. Both the pool and the deck area were raised 5 feet above grade with a stone wall to create the illusion that the pool spills into a nearby pond at the edge of the property. This waterfall can

also be seen from the clubhouse and is similar in character to other water features along the golf course.

The surface of the pool deck is made up of Kansas limestone laid in a random pattern of squares and rectangles and is surrounded by wrought iron and custom wood fencing. The iron fence was used in areas where it was important not to obstruct the view beyond the property while the wood fencing serves as the gateways into the area while screening the view of the neighboring homes. A pergola was placed at the southern end of the pool to serve as a focal point and also to lend a vertical transition between a grouping of existing tall pines and the flat pool surface.

Finally, the entire area was surrounded with gardens containing stone paths, Stella D'Oro daylily, astilbes, spirea, groundcovers and old-fashioned favorites of holly-hock, rose of sharon and lilac requested by the homeowner. The entire setting is serene and tranquil and takes full advantage of the views of the pond and golf course beyond.—Greg Pyles

The author is the residential designer with The Pagura Company, Dublin, Ohio.

Repeating the railing details of the front porch created an auto court area that connected the landscape to the house.



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NO NEED FOR SPEED. Not surprisingly, the manufacturers were unanimous in their emphasis on a mower's

productivity. "This is the most important issue for anybody buying any equipment," noted Brian Masterson, marketing manager for the landscape contractor group of The Toro Co., Bloomington, Minn.

But the manufacturers were quick to warn that contractors often let misconceptions lead them astray in finding a mower that will be productive for their particular business. "Ground speed and deck width aren't necessarily true indicators of productivity," warned Bob Walker,



Contractors rely on their mowers to continue operating, but they don't always ask the right maintenance questions of their dealers. Credit: Walker Mfg.

president of Walker Manufacturing, Fort Collins, Colo. "Contractors need to look at how a mower works in open areas, tight areas, trimming and any other conditions on the properties they'll be mowing."

Dick Tegtmeier, president, Encore Mfg., Beatrice, Neb., noted that some mowers sac-

rifice safety in a failed attempt to be more productive. "It can be mathematically proven that at certain speeds you're over-running the blade," he said. "ANSI standards put the tip speed limit at 19,000 feet per minute. Manufacturers with mowers going 12 or 13 miles per hour are kidding them-

(continued on page 26)

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Jeff Bainbridge, Creative Landscape, Dover, DE

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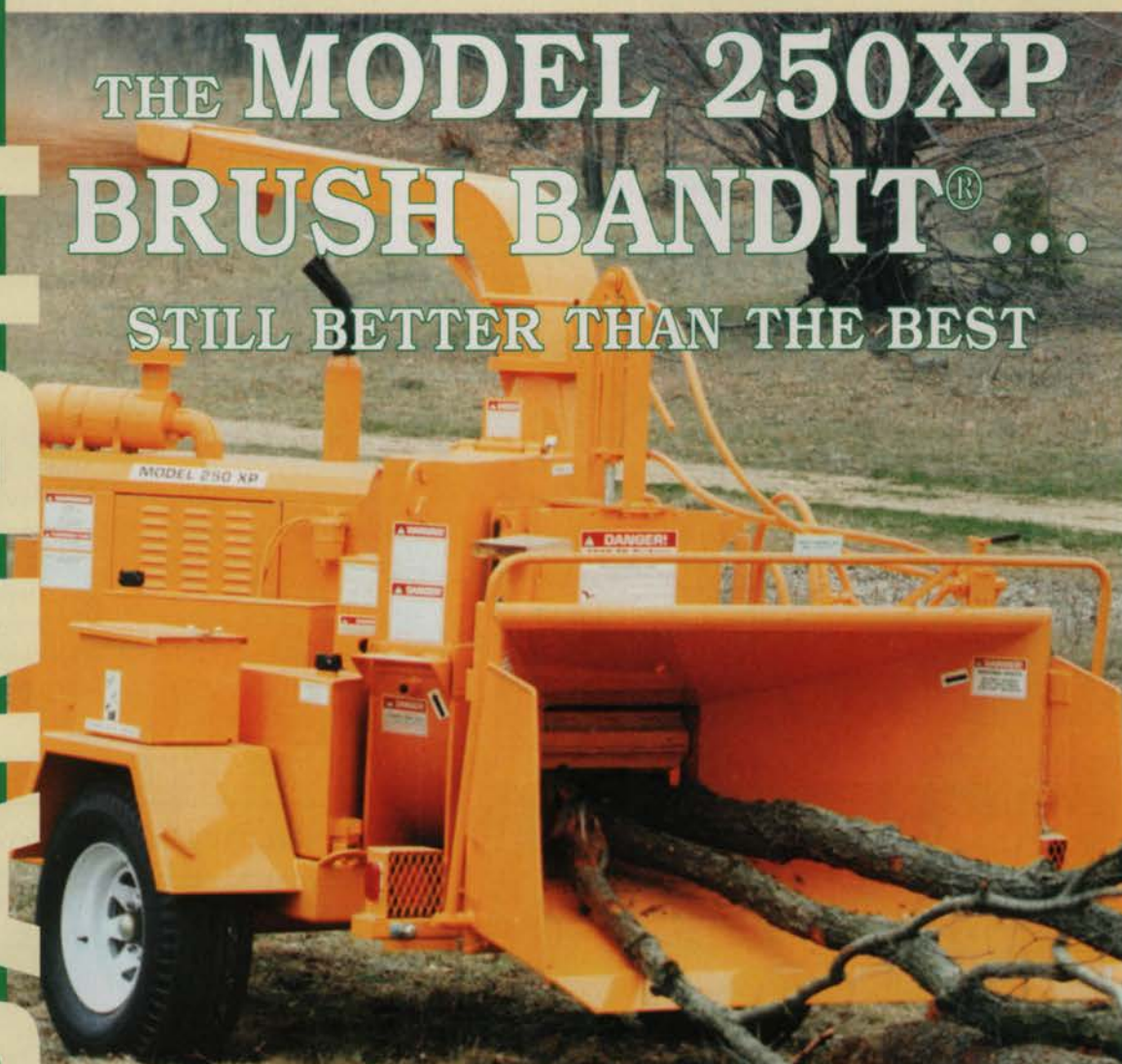
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USE READER SERVICE #31



EQUIPMENT FOCUS

(continued from page 24)

selves if they say they meet ANSI."

Contractors should also be aware that productivity and horsepower aren't necessarily synonymous. "A lot of contractors buy more engine power than they need," mentioned John Smith, president, Exmark Mfg., Beatrice, Neb. "It can often be difficult to

tell how much power is needed, so buyers should look for a dealer who will let them test out a mower on one of their properties."

AS THE MOWER TURNS. Zero-turn radius mowers have become an industry buzzword, but manufacturers say many contractors still don't understand the concept and

how to tell if a mower is a true zero-turn unit. "There's a common misconception that zero-turn units are extremely costly with high failure rates and repair costs, but that's just not true," emphasized John Chiera, a regional manager for Ransomes, Lincoln, Neb. "The hydraulic components actually service easily with a lower failure rate than gear-driven units."

Walker pointed out that true zero-turn mowers have to have two transmissions — one for each turning wheel. "If the unit just has a single transmission then it tries to offer zero-turn performance with individual brakes on the wheels," he explained. "Dual hydrostatic drives offer an entirely different level of

service by turning the mower within the length of its body without applying the brakes."

Be ready to pay a premium price for this extra feature, however. Smith said contractors can expect to pay an additional \$1,000 to \$1,200 for a true zero-turn unit, but it may be worth the cost. "It's the most productive unit on the market and a relatively cheap investment for what contractors will get back in productivity," he reasoned.

ALL HANDS ON DECK. While most manufacturers offer comparable deck constructions, there are still key features they recommend contractors look for when shopping. "There are two

(continued on page 30)



Manufacturers note that mowing speed is too often mistakenly viewed as the sole measure of a mower's productivity. Credit: Scag



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EQUIPMENT FOCUS

(continued from page 26)

types of welds being used on decks now," according to Tegtmeier. "Stitch welds are welds in various points along a seam. Continuous welds go along the entire seam of the deck and shield. I'm still of the old-fashioned belief that the long welds are stronger resisting the flexing and abuse of the metal."

Tegtmeier added that most manufacturers use 12-gauge steel for deck construction and 7-gauge steel for the skirts.

Masterson said Toro takes a different approach with its decks altogether, forming them from one-piece stamped steel. "Our decks aren't the same gauge as our competition, but we design them to

minimize the mower's weight and maximize the airflow and clipping movement under the deck," he said.

ADAPTABLE PIECES

& PARTS. As with any piece of equipment, serviceability must be maximized. "Whoever services the mowers should be involved in the buying decision," asserted Walker. "Have the salesperson show you how to change a belt, drain the oil, check the air filter and so on. They should walk you through the

maintenance procedures of the mower, all the way up to replacing the engine."

Zero-turn radius mowers have become an industry buzzword, but manufacturers say many contractors still don't understand the concept and how to tell if a mower is a true zero-turn unit.

Chiera also emphasized serviceability. "A lot of spindle assemblies fail

prematurely. Ask the dealer if a mower's housing is aluminum or cast iron. What type of bearings are used? Are they easily serviced? These are important, and fair, questions for a contractor to ask."

SUSPENSION. "A 'floating deck' is a term that's often misunderstood," stated Walker. "Contractors should search for a mower with some floating action more than what is offered by just by tractor suspension or tires. The deck needs to float up and down, as well as side to side to ensure a quality, even cut, regardless of the changes in the turf surface."

— Bob West

LL

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HEADQUARTERS (landscape): Tampa, Fla.

BRANCHES: Seven branches in five states.

ESTABLISHED: 1976

PRIMARY SERVICES: Full service landscape design, construction and maintenance for commercial facilities, office complexes, golf courses, theme parks and resorts.

1995 SALES: \$26 million

1996 PROJECTED SALES: \$28 million

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: Approximately 850

OWNERSHIP: Division of the Denmark-based ISS International Service System Inc. A/S. Its North American headquarters is in Atlanta.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY: To provide a full range of professional services in the landscape and turf industries. Our personnel, equipment and management systems ensure the finest care for resorts, theme parks, golf courses, sports fields, industrial projects and large scale commercial business centers.

FUTURE CHALLENGES: To grow through new business creation and strategic acquisitions beginning in 1997 to achieve a projected revenue of \$75 million by year end 2000, focusing on both quality and customer retention.

THE MANAGERS

RON SCHMOYER: Age 45, president. Owned a maintenance company in Allentown, Pa., until his company was acquired by ISS in 1988. Was appointed president of ISS Landscape Management Services in 1995.

DALE ELKINS: Age 37, division vice president. Started with ISS as project manager at Busch Gardens Tampa. Named division vice president of non-golf operations in Florida in 1995.

PAUL HICKMAN: Age 46, vice president, golf division. Spent 22 years at Grenelefe Resort.



Aiming F

ISS Landscape Management Services is focused on growing its branch offices and its resort, theme park and golf course niches across the country.

By Paul Schrimpf

R

on Schmoyer sees enormous potential for ISS Landscape Management Services through the rest of this decade. Two years after taking the reins at this Tampa, Fla., based landscape maintenance firm, Schmoyer said that 1997 will be the beginning of new growth in its client base and range of services.

A division of ISS International Service System Inc. A/S, a multinational facility services company based in Denmark with its North American headquarters in Atlanta, ISS Landscape Management Services has set its sights on a variety of large-scale commercial markets. ISS is already a fixture in some of Florida's most visible theme parks and resorts, and it has carved out niches in golf course maintenance and special maintenance challenges such as the Orlando International Airport.

However, the potential client list is enormous. With seven branches in five states, ISS is poised to expand wherever opportunity may occur, whether within the radius of an existing branch or out into new territory. And, its ambitions are not limited to the United States.

"Not all landscape companies are interested in becoming national or world companies," explained Schmoyer. "Some are satisfied with being a good landscape contractor in one particular town or city. The goal at ISS is to service customers in the United States and in other parts of the world."

Schmoyer hopes ISS will ride the wave of outsourcing that is sweeping the country, from the government sector to the golf course market. And with a proven niche in direct report site work such as resorts, ISS has a goal of nearly tripling its revenues to \$75 million by the end of the year 2000.

In 1996, revenues were expected to come in at about \$28 million, and 1997 projections have been set at \$33 million. The service breakdown is 40 percent resort and theme park maintenance, 35 percent commercial and industrial maintenance and 25 percent golf course maintenance.

ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDED. Schmoyer is driven by the freedom to experiment with new ideas, make mistakes and learn valuable lessons.

A graduate of the turfgrass management program at Penn State University, Schmoyer worked in grounds maintenance and eventually owned his own firm in Allentown, Pa., until ISS acquired the company in 1988. He stayed on as a consultant and eventually became branch manager, then division vice president of ISS' southeast Atlantic region in 1991.

When Schmoyer was asked to take the helm as president of ISS in February 1995, the company had been bogged down by slow growth. There was a feeling within the management ranks that the company needed new direction, and communication across the division was weak.

"Some of our key management personnel were looking for other opportunities," noted Dale Elkins, the division's vice president responsible for all operations in Florida. "It was presented to us by our corporate offices that it was the appropriate time to bring someone new into the leadership role."



(Left) Ron Schmoyer, left, and Dale Elkins have big plans for expansion of ISS Landscape Management Services into both new and established markets, with a focus on direct report site landscape management. Credit: Christopher Casler, Orlando, Fla.

High

Upon being offered the position, Schmoyer contacted a human resource specialist to plan the announcement of changes within the company.

"I told him that we were going to go through a major strategy change within the company, and I needed to communicate it to everyone in the company," he explained. "So together we created a presentation — basically, we told the group that we were going to make a lot of changes, but the changes would be positive. Fortunately, it turned out to be very successful."

"It could have been a very demoralizing situation," added Elkins. "The (outgoing) president was no longer there and it was the perfect opportunity for unrest to occur. Fortunately, Ron was able to address the situation immediately and stop the rumors and uneasiness among the troops. It turned out to be a perfect situation to get things under control — the key people knew ex-

actly what was going on that day, and Ron set the goals for what we wanted to accomplish over the next five and 10 years."

The presentation, given at the company's annual meeting, marked the beginning of significant change at ISS. More open communication, business growth, restructuring of responsibilities and greater empowerment of the branches were a few of the key points Schmoyer stressed.

FAST FORWARD. In his short tenure as president, Schmoyer has prepared the company to enter a major growth mode with a truly entrepreneurial attitude.

And as free as Schmoyer is to run the division his way, the corporation provides him with tremendous resources for financing, training, human resources and administrative support.

One of the fundamental changes at ISS was giving the branch managers more con-

trol of meeting customer and employee needs. One important element of this change was the addition of a business development manager to each branch.

"The previous philosophy was that the branch manager was responsible for everything, including selling, and it just wasn't working as well as intended," Schmoyer explained. "One of the big results we've had in the short period of time we have had business development managers is that the retention of our customers has gone up dramatically. And I believe it's because the branch manager is focusing on the customers, the employees and the business."

Within branches and at the sites, it is the project manager that is the critical link between the customer and ISS. Elkins noted that in most cases, the project manager is a certified horticulturist who works with one or two assistant project managers and di-

(continued on page 36)

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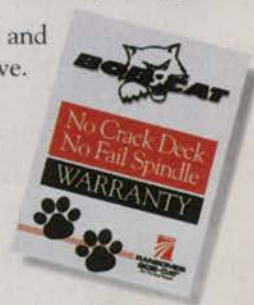


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(continued from page 34)

rects a staff of technical people specializing in irrigation, pest management and other specialty fields, plus foremen and laborers. From six to as many as 70 people are assigned to a specific site.

The project manager is, in most cases, able to handle contractual issues and clarifications, hire new employees, provide proposals for extra work situations and deal with people and site-related problems.

Schmoyer and Elkins track the status of ISS branch offices using detailed profit and loss statements that they review each week. "We're rarely surprised about financial situations within the company," noted Elkins.

Elkins also meets informally with branch managers each week, and formal meetings are held each quarter when P & L statements are reviewed more thoroughly. "We try to recognize adverse trends as well as opportunities to solve potential problems," he said. Despite the temptation with so much information to micromanage, Elkins said he focuses primarily on key accounts for face-to-face visits and meetings with employees.

PEOPLE FOCUS. Both Schmoyer and Elkins have learned all too well that people are what drive a company's success. The two-year



Schmoyer and Elkins maintain an open door policy that invites workers to present their problems directly to upper management.

grow at a steady pace.

"The number one consideration," he continued, "is to make sure there is a future here for our employees. We need to provide them with new opportunities and provide customers with quality service. Over time, our competition is going to increase and we have to make sure we have a company that offers something the employees really want."

To increase the flow of communication with all employees, Schmoyer and Elkins said they made it clear that any employee can call them at any time with a company issue.

"We have the open door policy," stressed Elkins, "where any employee that is not satisfied by the primary chain of command to get his or her problem solved can come to Ron or me. It's important that employees know they can come to us to get their problems solved."

ISS also provides an extensive in-house training program for each level of manager and worker. Each branch has its own training coordinator, Elkins explained, who is responsible for bringing in vendors to train employees on products and processes and to coordinate courses in safety, first aid, CPR and defensive driving. In addition, each employee learns about

ISS operations, including maintaining a professional image.

Finally, each employee is entitled to money for continuing education that can be used for recertification, community college or vocational/technical courses.

THE FUTURE. Schmoyer and Elkins are banking future growth on the company's ability

to handle the large, complex landscape maintenance sites and projects. One of the primary reasons for this strategy is that so few companies are equipped to provide the service ISS can deliver. Another reason is the company's near perfect retention rate for direct report on-site contracts, including theme parks, resorts, industrial and commercial clients and golf course maintenance.

"We're proud of our retention rate with our major accounts," said Elkins. "Busch Gardens (Tampa) was our first contract and it has lent credibility to our marketing efforts in every industry segment. When you can show people what you can do, it makes a big difference." Schmoyer pointed out that there are theme parks within a 150 mile radius of each of the existing branches that ISS plans to pursue.

Other potential large scale clients that Schmoyer feels are promising future prospects include universities and zoological parks.

On a different note, Schmoyer said he has been meeting with a consultant to develop a program that will help get ISS into the government market. He did not elaborate, but said if things pan out as expected that "the entire country will be our potential market."

FIRST RESORT. One of the important niche markets for ISS has been resort and theme park maintenance, and Elkins has become a seasoned veteran at pleasing these highly sensitive clients. He discussed these special challenges in a recent interview:

Q. What are the client expectations like in resort and theme park maintenance?

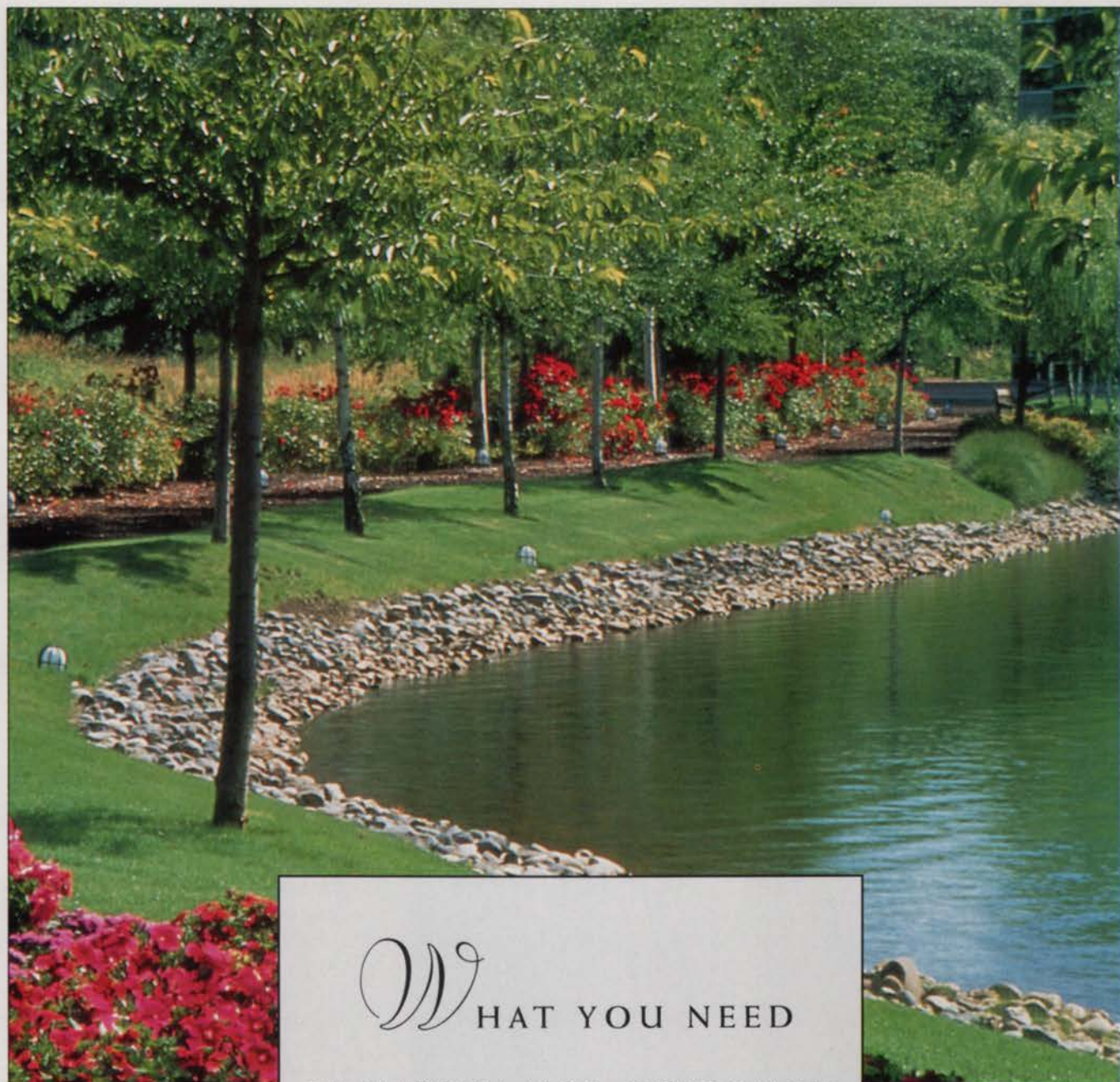
A. There's a constant demand for flawless grounds. Our clients' customers are new to the site on a daily basis. Their expectations

(continued on page 38)

"The previous philosophy was that the branch manager was responsible for everything, including selling, and it just wasn't working as well as intended."

reorganization has really focused on programs and strategies that will keep the best people working for ISS and the best clients under contract.

"What we're really doing is getting the right people into the right positions and then growing at a comfortable pace," said Schmoyer. "We want to keep the strong manager retention rate we have now and



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USE READER SERVICE #40

(continued from page 36)

and perceived value should never be compromised — in other words, a continuous “wow” needs to be achieved. This creates some immense challenges with scheduling, educating and monitoring of the grounds to ensure consistent quality.

Q. What are the scheduling challenges?

A. With theme parks, all mechanical work needs to be performed before the park opens, which is usually around 9 a.m. Projects that require more than the three hours of daylight most mornings provide require that work be performed overnight — and we end up

doing plenty of all-night projects. It’s almost understood that when there’s renovations to be done, or when color improvements are being made at the park, it has got to be instant — no down time.

At resorts, though, mechanical work cannot be done before guests wake up. You still have to avoid close customer contact when using mechanical equipment at resorts — the philosophies are the same, but they require different operational strategies.

In no way can the guest be disturbed — any bad experience by a guest at a theme park or resort could result in them not returning. The clients have to get the repeat business — it’s a major part of their success.

Q. How is training and monitoring a staff at a resort or theme park a challenge?

A. Because laborers represent both ISS and the client to customers, each worker is trained by both ISS and the resort or theme park management.

The grooming and appearance of the employees — the professional image they present on the site — has to be impeccable at all times. For example, there’s no facial hair allowed on the men, except for an occasional moustache.

Full uniforms are also critical for technicians — no worker is allowed on the property without the accepted uniform. It’s a challenge to keep the work force looking good and staying motivated because there is a lot of turnover. We have to be sure the workers can perform all the work required, but when they punch in we also have to be aware of their appearance and attitude. Are they motivated? Are they going to give bad experiences to the guests?

You have to ensure this doesn’t happen — employees go through the resort training process because the questions they are asked most often at the park are about the park itself. That’s a significant difference between a typical landscape maintenance operation and ISS. **LL**

ISS Landscape Management Services is located at 5028 Tampa West Blvd., Tampa, FL, 33634. Phone number is 813/886-0001.

The author is Managing Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

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Last spring, lawn care professionals experienced the tenacity of weeds, especially crabgrass. Plan your control strategies now to win the war this year.

by Jeffrey F. Derr

Looking Ahead By Looking Back



Now is a good time to develop a weed management plan for the upcoming season. Although it may be quite cold outside and, depending upon where you live snow may be on the ground, now is the time to consider your options for control of summer weeds.

First, look over your results from this past season. Many lawn care professionals blamed their preemergence herbicide for failing to control crabgrass in 1996. In reality, there are many reasons why control was not achieved, including weather, weed germination period, weed species present, length of residual control and application timing. Understanding these causes will assist in developing plans for 1997.

EXCESSIVE RAINS. Rainfall patterns have a major impact on preemergence herbicide performance and last year was no exception. In general, the more that falls after application, the shorter a preemergence herbicide will last. Excessive rain leaches herbicides, diluting the concentration in the upper inch of soil where most weed seeds germinate. Herbicides differ in their potential for leaching based on their water solubility and their ability to bind to soil particles.

If excess rainfall occurs shortly after application and causes runoff of soil particles, herbicides that are bound to those particles will be moved from the site of action. Heavy rains soon after application can move herbicide granules, especially on areas with a slope. Also, higher soil moisture levels favor the growth of microorganisms that play an important role in the breakdown of herbicides.

The ideal situation for weed control with a preemergence herbicide is a light rain after application to incorporate the herbicide into the soil, followed by no rain thereafter. Excess rainfall may decrease herbicide levels in the soil to the extent that either a second application of a preemergence herbicide or application of a postemergence herbicide is required.

So the poorer results seen in 1996 may have been due to the rainfall patterns and not due to failure of the preemergence herbicide. Keep in mind, however, that there are differences among the crabgrass preventives in how long they last in the soil.

TEMPERATURE EFFECTS. Temperature also affects residual weed control with a preemergence herbicide. The higher the temperature, the faster the breakdown of preemergence herbicide. This is

(continued on page 41)



Many factors can influence the proliferation of crabgrass. For example, if you experienced a lot of rain in your area, then your crabgrass woes may have been weather related and not product related.

Credit: J. Derr

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(continued from page 40)

related to greater microbial activity under higher soil temperatures. Also, volatile herbicides will leave the soil surface faster under warmer conditions.

My graduate student, Rakesh Chandran, and I have been looking at the soil residual of the preemergence broad leaf herbicide Gallery™ in turf situations. One of the reasons for this project was the reports out of New York by Dr. Joseph Neal and Dr. Andrew Senesac that Gallery provided more than 12 months of control for certain weed species.

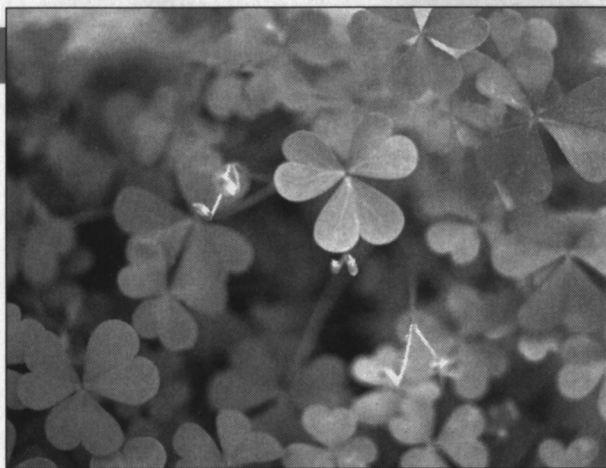
We wanted to see if the same length of control would occur in Virginia. Not surprisingly, our results suggest that the soil residual of Gallery in Virginia falls between that for New York and that observed in states much farther south, such as Florida.

Temperature also affects the germination period for a summer annual weed. The faster it warms up in the spring, the sooner weeds will germinate, while a cold spring delays germination. The farther south the location, the longer the crabgrass season lasts. Therefore, herbicide length of control will be different in a northern state vs. a southern state due to germination differences.

You can take advantage of the cold soil temperatures in winter and early spring in a preemergence program. A preemergence herbicide can be applied much earlier than the onset of crabgrass germination and still provide control of summer annual weeds well into the growing season. Herbicides do not break down as quickly under cold conditions, resulting in longer soil residual compared to summer applications.

Starting earlier in the year makes it easier to treat many properties before the onset of crabgrass germination by spreading out the workload. Remember, however, that the earlier the preemergence herbicide was applied, the greater the chance of late season crabgrass germination. If a crabgrass preventive was

Distinguishing weeds, such as sorrel, as summer annuals or perennials is critical for knowing what types of products to use and when they should be applied.



applied in fall or early winter, it probably will not provide full-season crabgrass control. Also, if a preemergence crabgrass herbicide was applied in late fall or winter, one could not reseed in the spring.

IDENTIFICATION STEPS. An important skill to learn in turf weed control is the ability to distinguish annual weeds from perennial weeds. Summer annual weeds, like crabgrass, germinate from seed each year and generally are killed with the first hard frost, while perennial weeds live for many years.

Why is it important to tell the difference? In general, we use preemergence herbicides to control annual weeds, and must resort to postemergence herbicides to control perennial weeds. A preemergence herbicide applied for crabgrass control will not control perennial grasses like quackgrass.

Another important point in lawn weed control is telling the difference between crabgrass and goosegrass. Sometimes called hard crab or silver crab, goosegrass germinates later in the season than crabgrass and is tolerant of some of the herbicides used for preemergence crabgrass control. Goosegrass has a whitish base and

flattened stems which come from a central crown area of the plant. Crabgrass will not root at the nodes, allowing it to spread laterally across bare soil. The wiry stems of crabgrass are noticeable late in the year.

Since goosegrass germinates later than crabgrass, an early season application of crabgrass preventive may have broken down to low levels by the time goosegrass germinates.

COMPARING TYPES. Preemergence and postemergence herbicides have inherent properties that affect an overall control strategy.

There are advantages and disadvantages to each group of products. Specific herbicides used in each of the systems will vary across different turf species. Check the herbicide label for specific use directions.

As a group, the preemergence crabgrass herbicides pose less risk of turf injury than postemergence herbicides. I am speaking here of foliar damage—yellowing or browning of turf blades. Potential for root injury is a separate issue.

Certain preemergence herbicides, such as the dinitroanilines (Barricade™, Pendulum™, Surflan™, Team™, etc.) may suppress new root development in sensitive species, but whether or not this is an important effect is an active area of research. Other herbicides, such as Ronstar™, do not appear to affect root development in turfgrass. The postemergence herbicides Acclaim™ and MSMA may cause temporary foliar injury in certain species.

Preemergence crabgrass herbicides control annual grasses for two to five months, depending upon the specific product used and the weather. Some postemergence herbicides will not provide significant soil residual so crabgrass germinating after application is not likely to be controlled. In these cases, a timely application of a postemergence herbicide after the peak of crabgrass germination can provide acceptable control without a preemergence herbicide.

Preemergence herbicides control crabgrass as it germinates, leaving no dead patches in turf. Application of a postemergence herbicide may result in dead weed patches in a lawn, which may be disturbing to a customer if there's a significant weed problem.

(continued on page 44)

It's a good idea to rotate herbicides every few years using products from various herbicide families.



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(continued from page 41)

If the postemergence herbicide was applied to weeds in flower, viable seed may still be produced, leading to increased infestation the following year. Preemergence herbicides control weeds before they can flower.

In terms of integrated pest management, postemergence herbicides fit the traditional IPM mold better than preemergence herbicides because postemergence products allow for spot treatments as needed. However, a single, well-timed preemergence application may deliver results that make using postemergence products unnecessary.

CRABGRASS STRATEGIES. There are four crabgrass control options: a single preemergence application, a split preemergence herbicide application, a preemergence followed by a postemergence application or a preemergence-postemergence tank mix application. Below are descriptions of each strategy:

Single preemergence and split preemergence herbicide application.

Application timing is important for preemergence herbicides since most preemergence products will not control weeds after they emerge. An advantage of a single preemergence application is that only one

visit to the site is required. If the site is not a highly maintained area, some late-season crabgrass may be acceptable.

A split preemergence application generally results in longer residual control. A general concept is that a certain threshold concentration of the herbicide in the soil is required for crabgrass control. As the herbicide breaks down in the soil the concentra-

Herbicides will differ in their potential for leaching based upon their water solubility and ability to bind to soil particles.

tion drops below the threshold, resulting in crabgrass germination.

By reapplying the same preemergence herbicide two months after the initial application, the threshold concentration will be maintained for a longer period of time. Since the soil concentration after a single preemergence application is prob-

ably much higher than the threshold concentration, a lower application rate can be used for each split application than that used for the single application program.

Use of a preemergence followed by a postemergence application. Use of a preemergence herbicide in early spring followed by a postemergence application later in the year

(continued on page 46)

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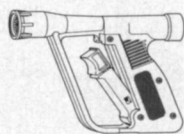
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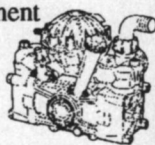


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(continued from page 44)

has certain advantages. In certain years, acceptable control may have been obtained with the preemergence herbicide, so no postemergence treatment would be required. However, greater monitoring is needed for the split preemergence/postemergence treatment to determine when a postemergence application is needed.

Tank-mixing preemergence and postemergence herbicides. Combining a preemergence with a postemergence herbicide allows you to treat later in the year than with a strictly preemergence program. With proper timing, control of existing crabgrass plants, as well as those that emerge later in the growing season, is possible.

RESIST RESISTANCE. The choice of product is an important decision that a lawn care manager must make. Besides comparing cost and length of control, another point that should

be considered is the potential for the development of resistance. If the same herbicide is used year after year for a number of years, a resistant form of the weed may develop.

It is probably a good idea to rotate crabgrass herbicides every few years using products from different herbicide families.

SPRING BROADLEAF CONTROL. Although we apply them primarily for annual grass control, the crabgrass preventives will control certain broadleaves from seed, such as prostrate spurge, carpetweed and yellow woodsorrel.

The crabgrass preventives will differ in their effectiveness on broad leaf weeds from seed so check extension bulletins or other sources of information for specific control ratings. The crabgrass preventives will not control existing broad leaves, nor will they control perennial broad leaves. The control of annual weeds like spurge will probably

not last throughout the summer months.

Take advantage of some free time now to plan your spring weed control program to avoid scrambling to catch up in the spring. Determine which strategy best fits the weed problems that exist at each site. **LL**

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The author is an associate professor of weed science at Virginia Tech, and is currently a visiting scientist at Rutgers University.

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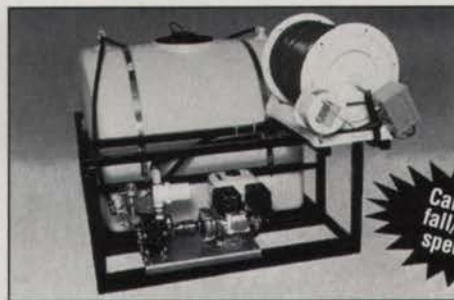
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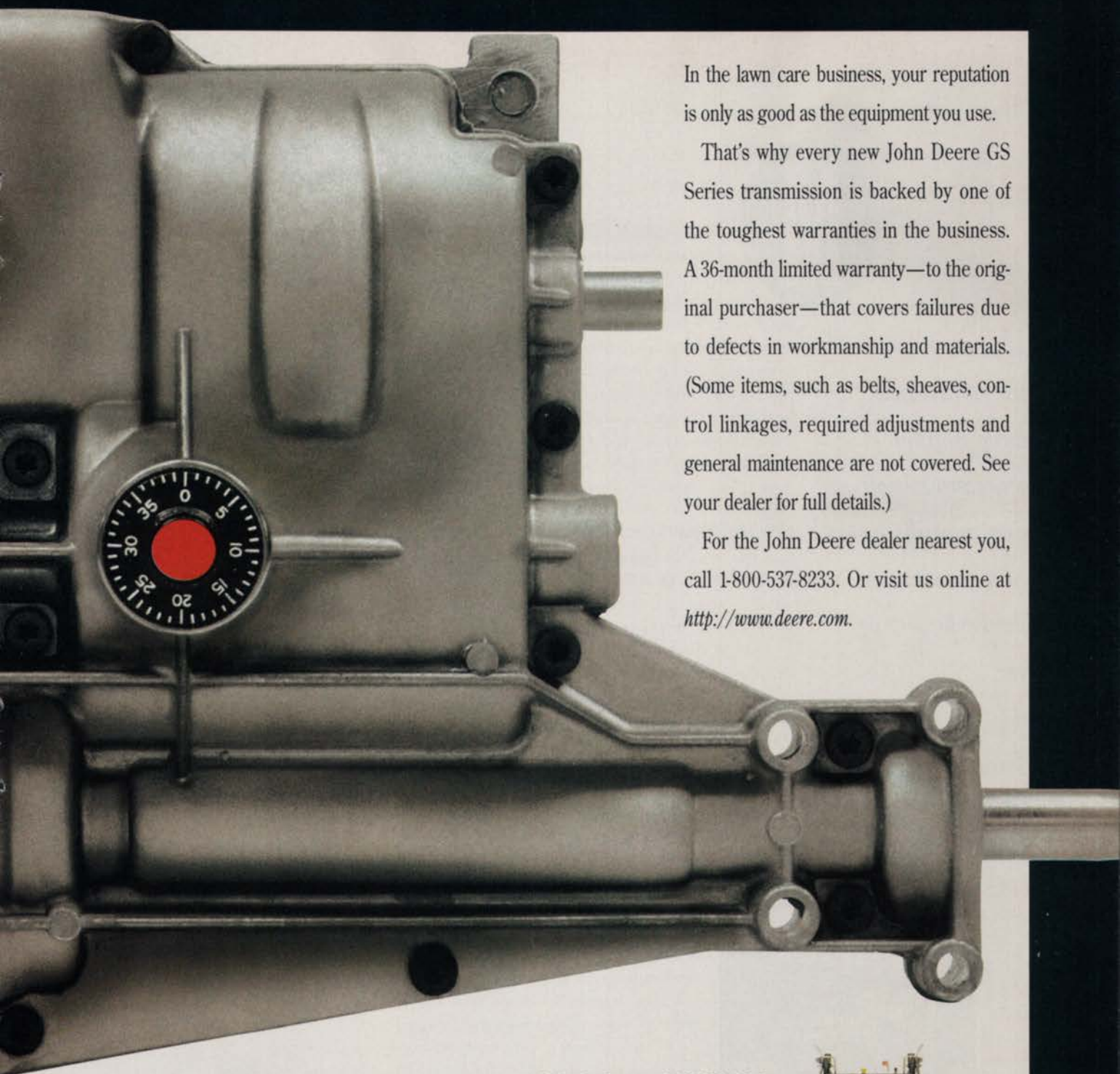
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Manufacturers of mowing equipment rarely agree on everything, but there is some consensus on one point — the commercial riding and walk-behind mower market holds tremendous growth potential for sales and service.

Manufacturers are responding to this demand by snapping up every available commercial niche market, looking for contractor loyalty and a piece of the market pie for themselves. The result has been more product lines, faster updates to existing products and even some totally new manufacturers coming on line with product introductions.

It is also creating some changes in the manufacturing ranks. Consolidations have already occurred, and more are rumored to be in the works.

As the commercial mowing market grows, competition among manufacturers for your equipment dollar keeps getting hotter.

By Paul Schrimpf

GROWING COMMERCIAL NUMBERS. The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, based in Old Town Alexandria, Va., predicts the number of units in the marketplace by polling member companies each quarter about the numbers of units they ship. A formula is then employed to estimate shipments for the entire model year.

In 1996, the pulse of the commercial market registered much stronger than its counterparts in the consumer area, according to the shipment estimates. OPEI predicted that 1996 shipments of commercial, intermediate-sized walk-behind rotary mowers will show an increase of 6 percent for the 1996 model year. The organization expects the good news to continue in model year 1997, anticipating an additional 4.5 percent increase in unit shipments.

The news on riding rotary mowers is even better. Shipments of all types of commercial riding rotary turf mowers were projected to increase 7.5 percent in 1996, and are on pace to grow an additional 8.1 percent in the 1997 model year.

Conversely, the consumer market, stuck in a holding pattern due to inclement spring weather last year, faltered against 1995 numbers. Front engine lawn tractor shipments were expected to drop 7.3 percent in the 1996 model year, while riding garden tractors should show a drop of 12.9 percent. Finally, the rear engine riding mower forecast predicts a 13.9 percent drop.

Of course, there is some crossover to consider. Dick Tegtmeier, president of Encore Mfg., Beatrice, Neb., has found a growing



Mowers

On the Move



The commercial mower market is expanding, but growth is strongest in zero-turn riding units. Credit: (left) Walker Mfg., (above) Grasshopper

demand for borderline consumer/commercial riding equipment, and one zero-turn unit in particular, to attract consumer customers. "In the last nine months, we saw brisk sales in the small rider area, from 42 to 48 inches," explained Tegtmeier. "It's a niche that we are going after as a company."

Even with greater consumer interest in some lines of commercial equipment, however, the numbers show that the consumer market is a bit more vulnerable to weather and economic factors while the professional market provides consistent equipment sales opportunities for manufacturers.

RIDE 'EM COWBOY. While walk-behind mowers are still enjoying much success with the

professional mowing maintenance contractor, the riders are getting a lot of the attention these days. Rick Curlett, director of marketing with Exmark, Beatrice, Neb., said the key words for contractors are productivity and performance.

"As the top-notch companies grow, getting and keeping good people becomes a big challenge," said Curlett. "One of the ways contractors can overcome this is through equipment. With a riding unit, one person can do what two or three can do with walk-behind units." The combination of more productivity and fewer people allow contractors to take on more jobs, as well as more complex jobs, he added.

Productivity benefits of riders include

more consistent speed of work and consistent quality of cut, and increased maneuverability that leaves little trim work. Operator comfort is also a critical issue with riders, and operators will work longer and faster on units that are comfortable to operate.

Curlett sees a real maturation of the contractor market and a desire among established contractors to make the smartest possible equipment purchases. "There's no question, as they evolve as companies, they are getting more sophisticated about time and productivity," he said. "I see these contractors going out and doing motion/time analyses on their workers, trying to determine how long it takes to get mowers off trailers, perform the work and load up again. They talk more about amortization instead of saying, 'Well, I can get five or six years out of this thing.'"

I'M WALKIN'. As a step-up product from the high-end residential equipment many new mowing contractors start out with, the walk-behind mower is growing to meet the quality, comfort, versatility and price demands of both young and established companies.

Most contractors are still starting out with a gear-drive type, but quickly evolve into hydrostatic transmission units, noted Curlett. "Most growing companies start out with a gear drive walk-behind because of the price," he explained, "but as their business grows and evolves they begin to see the value of the productivity advantages that hydros can provide."

Because brand loyalty is so pervasive in the contractor industry, many manufacturers are trying to provide a complete line of units that the evolving contractor can work through as their business grows and changes. American Honda Power Equipment, Duluth, Ga., which has hydro walk-behind machines on the market, has introduced a gear-drive unit to try to pick up the price-conscious, less established contractor, according to Ned Swanson, assistant sales manager.

"Hydros are more efficient, but there's still a large market out there for the gear-drive machine," he said. "A lot of newcomers to the business see the \$2,000 to \$2,500 price tag and will buy the gear drive — it's more of a price thing with them."

Dixon Industries, Coffeyville, Kan., tested the commercial waters in 1987 with their zero-turn riders and recently introduced a walk-behind unit to pick up more of the contractor market. "We're pleased to be selling to the market on a larger scale," said marketing manager Steve Dixon. He added that the commercial market continues to grow as a proportion of the company's total business.

GROUND ZERO. After 25 years of carving out market share piece by piece, the era of the zero-turn radius mower as the riding unit of choice for lawn maintenance professionals has apparently arrived. Bob Walker, owner of Walker Mfg., Ft. Collins, Colo., producer of commercial riding, out-front, zero-turn mowers for the last 16 years, pointed to OPEI statistics showing these units being shipped in greater numbers than traditional steering type units in 1996, by a ratio of 56.5 percent to 43.5 percent.

"Before 1996, the ratio was closer to 60 percent steering wheel to 40 percent zero turn," said Walker. "Finally, the zero-turn mower is becoming the industry standard."

Walker also observed that this switch in design preference has come even though some larger manufacturers have yet to come on line, or just recently added zero-turn products. What has happened is that many small and medium size manufacturers have added zero-turn units to

their lines or entered the market with a zero-turn product. A decade ago, about six zero-turn units were on the market — today, there are options available from 30 manufacturers, according to Walker.

Commercial demand is resulting in more product lines, faster updates to existing equipment and products from new manufacturers. Credit: Scag

"It's really been 15 years of evolution for our units," said Mark Meagher, advertising manager with Dixie Chopper, Coatsville, Ind., manufacturer of belly-mount zero-turn units. "And the zero-turn aspect has always been part of the sales pitch." With so many companies offering the units now, he explained, "Customers are finally realizing there may be something to this zero-turn technology."

Walker suspects that the increasing market share zero-turn models are commanding will pull other manufacturers into the market and make some waves. "All these manufacturers can't really survive," Walker predicted. "It will be very difficult for the

market to sustain itself with this many manufacturers. I suspect the big companies will get into the zero-turn market, and market forces will either push companies out or push them to be more competitive."

The waves of change are evident already in the market. One of the most recent examples was the acquisition of Bunton Co., Louisville, Ky., by Jacobsen division of Textron, Racine, Wis. An established player in the large commercial turf equipment market, Jacobsen was interested

in reaching more of the commercial maintenance market purchasing mid-size machines, according to Paul Golevicz, production manager at Jacobsen.

"It completes the line of rotary mowers



under the Jacobsen Textron umbrella," noted Golevicz. "And the new Twister zero-turn product helps us increase our market reach."

On the other side, Bunton will be able to use Jacobsen's research and marketing

expertise and resources to get products off the drawing board and out to users to demo, according to Bunton's sales and marketing manager Joe Santangelo.

NEW DESIGN FEATURES. Ken Raney, advertising manager at Excel, Hesston, Kan., said the biggest challenge has been to convert Excel's success in the large commercial mowing equipment area to success in smaller equipment. "We've been working to make a zero-turn unit that's smaller in size and at a price the customer is looking for," said Raney. He added that Excel is testing prototypes now for the release of a new riding mower late this spring.

At the Green Industry Expo in Cincinnati, The Toro Co., Bloomington, Minn., rolled out its entry into the zero-turn rider market, an effort the company has been planning since the development of its landscape contractor group 18 months ago. According to commercial product sales manager Brian Masterson, Toro's research led them to favor the out-front design.

"Users told us they wanted an out-front deck because they are easier for getting under trees and bushes and provide better visibility for cutting." The units also have larger tires and a wide wheel base for stability and a low center of gravity, he added.

The market will be able to gauge the impact of the Toro zero-turn mowers on commercial users this spring when the units become available. A 60-inch side discharge and, in late summer, a 40-inch recycler will be the available decks.

Another sign of the zero-turn movement is the addition of new lines to the market from established or new manufacturers. Shivvers Mfg, Corydon, Iowa, maker of zero-

(continued on page 54)

Walker suspects that the increasing market share zero-turn models are commanding will pull other manufacturers into the market and make some waves.



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(continued from page 52)

turn mowers for a number of manufacturers, began producing its own Country Clipper line in January 1995.

"The zero-turn market is exploding," said John Willard, outdoor power equipment division sales manager with Country Clipper. "They simply cut faster with no trimming and less fatigue."

"There is a movement away from walk behinds," he continued, "because you have to be able to find people to operate them safely and efficiently. You pay a bit more for the rider on the initial cost and in maintenance, but you get more — the zero-turn unit is the fastest way."

Snapper Power Equipment, McDonough, Ga., recently introduced its new entry into the mid-size zero-turn market, with an emphasis on ease of operation and mechanical simplicity, according to John Chick, commercial product sales manager. The design

includes a joystick drive system that makes it "easier to train operators to use the unit," noted Chick.

American Honda also expects to get its zero-turn rider off the drawing board, through production and out to users by the time EXPO '97 in Louisville starts in late July. Swanson said he hopes to have the units to dealers in the fall.


Another new out-front, zero-turn entry will come from Bush Hog, division of Allied Products, Selma, Ala. Product manager Jimmy Anderson explained that the softening agricultural market has nudged them into commercial mowing equipment to pick up some of the slack.

Bush Hog will use its extensive system of agricultural product dealers initially to distribute the machines, according to Anderson, but will eventually be moving sales into metropolitan area dealers in the near future. Other new product introductions, including

walk-behind units, are also in the offing.

Something completely new will be the Surfer from manufacturer Great Dane Power Equipment, Elm Grove, Wis. The new design features a hinged, stand-on platform with padded support so the operator can stand and drive the machine.

Its smaller footprint, between 53 and 57 inches long depending on the unit, will allow more machines to be brought to site than is typical with riding mowers, said Rick Cuddihe, vice president of sales.

Cuddihe said that simplicity of maintenance and durability were primary considerations in the design, which includes a larger gas tank, 7-gauge steel throughout and Marbain steel blades that allow contractors to cut twice as long before the blades need sharpening. 

The author is Managing Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

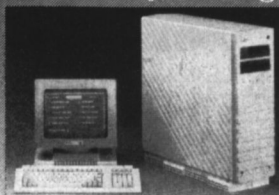


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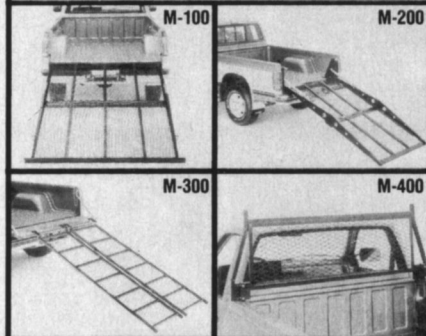
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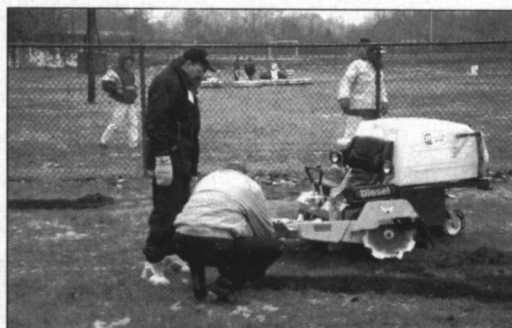
USE READER SERVICE #55

Green Industry Expo Review:

High Hopes for '97

Optimism ran high as contractors from large and small companies gathered in Cincinnati to network and become better business people.

Lawn & Landscape Staff Report



A zoo tour, a casino night and a popcorn carnival — sounds more like a party than a business conference, doesn't it? Participants at the Green Industry Expo, held in November in Cincinnati, Ohio, had the opportunity to celebrate a successful year in the green industry and prepare for another.

The Expo broke records, topping its 1994 highs with 60,900 square feet sold and 283 exhibiting companies. Show management estimated a 29 percent increase in attendance, with a total of 4,500 attendees and exhibitors participating.

The sponsoring associations had good conferences, as well. The Professional Lawn Care Association of America reported 542 participants, the Professional Grounds Management Society welcomed 240 attendees and the Associated Landscape Contractors of America hosted a record 953 people. The optimistic

mood carried over into attendance at seminars and special events.

CHALLENGING IDEAS. The three sponsoring organizations provided a full slate of programs covering everything from pesticide risk/benefit tests to ergonomic designs to handling personal stress. A debate on the use of pesticides drew interested attendees as speakers represented the envi-



The Green Industry Expo held last November in Cincinnati, Ohio, attracted more than 4,500 attendees and exhibitors representing all facets of the lawn and landscape contracting industry. Popular events at this year's meeting included ALCA's Casino Night, PLCAA's Popcorn Carnival and PGMS' tour of two historic, local landmarks: Spring Grove Cemetery and the Cincinnati Zoo.

ronmentalist and industry sides of the issue.

Two Washington, D.C., insiders offered their predictions on 1997 national legislative agendas. Ben Bolusky, director of government affairs, American Association of Nurserymen and David Crowe, on-going legislative representative for Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment, forecast a year of bipartisan action on environmental legislation, additional attention to risk factors and continuing pressure to regulate aspects of the workplace. Bolusky noted that approximately 275 pieces of legislation dealing with the workplace were monitored in 1996.

CROWD PLEASERS. ALCA's landscape facility tour took on new dimensions this year as more than 600 people journeyed to two Cincinnati-area companies. PGMS tour participants enjoyed a fascinating tour of Spring Grove Cemetery and Arboretum, plus the innovative Cincinnati Zoo.




Networking breakfasts held by the sponsoring associations attracted many contractors interested in improving their businesses. The Outdoor Equipment Demo gave visitors a chance to test new models.

PLCAA's Popcorn Carnival featured several speakers discussing industry in the 21st century, in a circus-like atmosphere that encouraged audience participation. The Live Auction raised more than \$25,000 to support public awareness programs.

PLCAA, RISE and the Golf Course Superintendents' Association of America put their joint Ambassador Speaker program into action at the GIE show. The program will develop a speakers bureau from the

green industry to spread a positive message to the public. For more information about participating in this program, contact PLCAA at 800/458-3466.

In addition to booths demonstrating actual equipment, several hardy souls braved the chilly weather to test equipment under real-life circumstances at the Outdoor Equipment Demo on Thursday. It was a great day to check out traction, as the ground was wet and slippery with mud and snow. 



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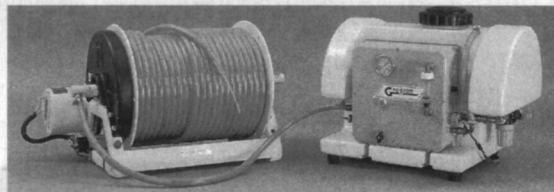
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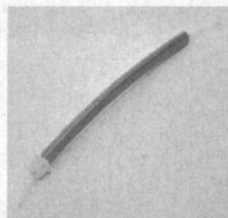


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USE READER SERVICE #58

Targeting Profitable Prices



Labor is such a key factor in a job's cost that contractors have to have an accurate working knowledge of the productivity levels of their crews or they run the risk of losing money with inaccurate job costing.

There may be other methods that work, but most contractors agree that a successful pricing structure starts with understanding your costs.

By Bob West

W

hether your company does \$50,000 in business a year or \$50 million a year, the most important ingredient to your success may be the efficiency of your company's pricing structure. Companies interviewed for this story emphasized the need for a clearly defined and well conceived pricing structure for any company to maximize its profits and grow more profitable.

And companies of all sizes agree that an effective pricing structure can only be built upon a foundation of understanding a company's costs.

COST CONTROL. "The most important part of a pricing structure is knowing your costs," asserted Bruce Moore, president of Eastern Land Management Inc., Shelton, Conn. "Too many contractors think their costs are just what they're paying for labor."

Understanding costs means breaking them down task by task. "We went to a computerized job costing system so we know what each part of a job costs us. We share this information with our operations managers so

they see where the costs are going," he explained. "This is important because they are the people responsible for pricing jobs."

Knowing all of the costs associated with a particular job means understanding that job. "Contractors have to thoroughly read all of the specifications in a bid job," noted Dave Hanson, vice president of Environmental Care Inc., San Jose, Calif. "Too often details of a job are left out of the bid price, or competitive pressures force contractors to run too close to the edge. This can mean a significant loss if the client holds you close to the specifications."

OVERHEAD OVERSIGHTS. When a contractor's pricing structure is flawed, it's often because he or she isn't recovering overhead costs properly, according to Charles Vander Kooi, president, Vander Kooi & Associates, Littleton, Colo. "Overhead isn't something specific to charge for on a job like a tree. So many contractors don't realize that the jobs present opportunities to recover some of it," he commented.

(continued on page 60)

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Big talk? Yes, it is, but this Grunder wiseacre has been showing off—and blowing sceptics away—his entire life. As a freckle-faced, red headed Dennis-the-Menace type kid, he started his business with nothing more than a "push" lawn mower and chutzpah. That little business went to 75 regular customers almost overnight. As a full-time student at the University of Dayton, while his buddies drove to school in old "beater" cars and flipped burgers for pocket money, Marty arrived in his Grunder Landscaping Company truck and, at age 21, did over \$300,000.00 in business. Last year he was named Young Entrepreneur of the Year by the Small Business Administration's Midwest Region, in the 1 to 25 employees category. Currently, Marty oversees a staff of 30, 18 trucks, a backhoe, an assortment of other equipment, and a diversified business doing everything from basic residential lawn maintenance to complicated commercial landscaping projects—and, this year, breaking \$1.5 million in annual sales. He's also investing in land, lecturing from time to time, and working with other landscapers as their "marketing coach."

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USE READER SERVICE #59

pricing for profit

(continued from page 58)

Vander Kooi recommends a multiple recovery system. "Overhead should be charged on each part of a job that requires overhead costs," he said. "Many contractors try to get it all back on labor, but equipment and materials have overhead costs also."

John Joestgen, vice president of installation sales for D.R. Church Landscape Co., Lombard, Ill., warned contractors about the difference between fixed and variable overhead costs. "Some overhead costs will change based on the volume of work being done. You may need to add a receptionist if your volume doubles," he explained. "That's a variable cost. The cost of the building isn't likely to change along with the volume, so it's a fixed cost."

When fixed overhead costs do change, though, they do so dramatically. "Fixed costs will plateau for awhile as revenues increase," Joestgen said. "But when it's necessary to add another office or five more trucks to the fleet, it jumps considerably."

Moore explained the importance of understanding these overhead costs. "This is the biggest cost area you have control over," he stated. "If your pricing seems high, you need to look at cutting overhead."

PEOPLE & PARTS. "Labor costs have to be dealt with in production hours, not just dollars and cents," according to Vander Kooi. "This provides the contractor control and the chance to see how well jobs are being estimated. Plus, when you tell a foreman to get a job done in 80 hours of labor vs. telling him to keep it at \$800 he knows what has to be done and can measure it."

"We do a lot of measuring and field testing so we can assign the

Lessons Learned

Learning from experience can be a valuable, yet sometimes painful, process.

Bruce Moore, president of Eastern Land Management Inc., Shelton, Conn., warned contractors to be careful pricing snow removal jobs. "Clients can unintentionally set some traps with snow," he said. "You have no control over the weather, so you're sticking your neck out by giving a client one price for snow removal for an entire season. It can work to your benefit if you get less snow than normal, but we learned the hard way to price on a per-inch basis."

Tim Thoelecke, president of Garden Concepts, Glenview, Ill., said to be aware of each city's policies for handling leaf removal if you provide that service. "It can get expensive for the contractor if you have to haul leaves away because you never know how many leaves will be on the property at any certain time," he noted.

Find Your Own Way

Contractors interviewed for the story noted various less conventional forms of price structures that have proved successful, and unsuccessful, for some companies.

Tim Thoelecke, president of Garden Concepts, Glenview, Ill., explained how a company he subcontracts work to operates. "The contractor doesn't concern himself with the nickels and dimes of each bag of fertilizer because experience has taught him to judge what the complete cost of a job will be without adding up the specific numbers," he said. "Then he goes back through the records and checks his numbers with true cost accounting and makes any necessary adjustments for next year."

He added that the contractor divides the price for a job into equal payments over the course of the season and saves additional time. "Now he's got stable cash flow."

But other contractors may be underpricing jobs because they use a system of multipliers. John Joestgen, vice president of installation sales for D.R. Church Landscape Co., Lombard, Ill., explained: "This is when a contractor figures out the cost for a job and multiplies that cost by two or two and a half to cover overhead, equipment and other costs."

Obviously, this is not an exact method. "A big problem is that with this method you would charge the same amount for a \$100 1½-inch caliper Ginkgo tree and a \$100 4-inch caliper silver maple even though the silver maple requires much more labor to install," Joestgen added. "Plus, using multipliers doesn't allow you to spread out overhead, labor or travel costs over larger jobs."

appropriate labor hours depending on the type of people working on each job," Moore added.

The same attention has to be paid to expenses for materials. "Contractors need to consider 'materials take-off' for their pricing," added Vander Kooi. "The amount of materials you charge the client should be the amount you buy, not what you install. If a job requires 1,113 feet of pipe, charge the client for the 1,160 feet of pipe you buy to cover the cost of extra pipe that is cut off and thrown away."

ADD IN PROFIT. Combining an awareness of the company's costs and an understanding of its goals should help simplify the decision of how much profit to add to a job's cost.

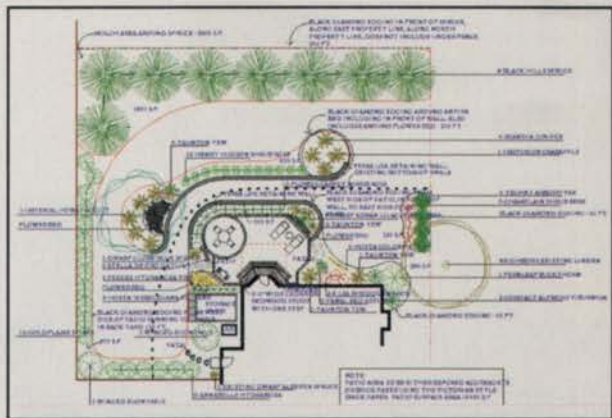
"When it comes to applying profit, a company has to have a defined business model with a clearly stated goal," recommended Hanson, who warned against reducing margins to earn more jobs. "Companies looking at 5 percent or 6 percent or less as profit on some jobs are not helping themselves, and they're certainly not helping the market. They only help create a downward spiral of prices."

Hanson noted it is often the most successful and rapidly growing companies that charge the highest profit margins. "Companies with

(continued on page 94)

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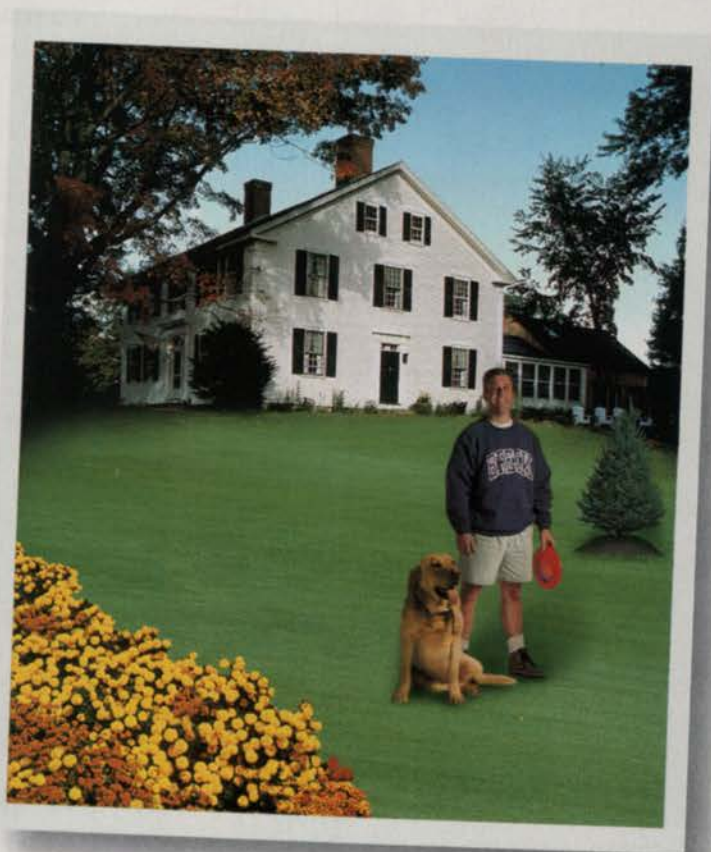
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"Sprinkler head selection and proper placement is the single most important aspect of an efficient water conserving irrigation system. Those who design and/or install an irrigation system can be held liable if the system is not designed, installed and maintained (if appropriate) properly."

— Larry Keesen,
The Complete Irrigation Workbook

Spray patterns, flow rates and flexibility are the focus as manufacturers of irrigation equipment strive to give contractors greater control over irrigation systems.

By Bob West

What's New in

Sprinklers?

As Keesen indicated, there are two key ingredients to installing an effective irrigation system. Manufacturers of irrigation components realize, however, that the selection process of sprinklers is actually an afterthought for many contractors.

The manufacturers of rotors, spray heads and nozzles emphasize that installing the wrong irrigation devices, or installing the correct devices improperly, can create the same problems that the system is supposed to eliminate — dead turf.

NOZZLE NEWS. Manufacturers are constantly working to simplify their products and make them more user-friendly. This focus will hopefully encourage contractors to pay more attention to the parts of the system which are often above the ground and that make system maintenance less laborious.

The development of adjustable nozzles for spray heads is one part of this focus. Many of the manufacturers already have adjustable nozzles available, and those that don't are very close to bringing them to market. The nozzles provide contractors more control over the width of the spray arc.

Jeff Carowitz, marketing manager for Hunter Industries, San Marcos, Calif., explained one benefit of adjustable nozzles. "Traditional nozzles have pre-set spray patterns, so a 90-degree nozzle can only spray a 90-degree arc. To change the spray pattern a contractor would have to change the nozzle," he said. "Contractors can use adjustable nozzles to tailor the spray to the landscape."

Hunter's nozzle can be set to spray anywhere between 1 degree and 360 degrees. This flexibility lets contractors reduce wasted water. It also reduces the number of different nozzles a contractor has to

(continued on page 66)

Walker Keeps Maine Contractor in the Mowing Business

GET THE COMPETITIVE EDGE

Steve Bennett, Scarborough, Maine, has been in the landscape contracting business since 1971. He nearly quit the business in the early 90s when he became increasingly frustrated by losing jobs to competition, lowering prices, and marginal profit levels. He needed a competitive edge. Then, in the spring of 1994, he purchased a Walker Mower and wrote to tell us what happened:

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(continued from page 64)

keep in inventory or on the truck.

Not everyone is sold on the benefits of adjustable nozzles, though. "Contractors are seeing this nozzle as a panacea to spray arc problems, but it's not the most efficient way to handle irrigation," countered Robert Nitko,

product manager for the landscape and turf division of L.R. Nelson, Peoria, Ill. "You can't match the precipitation rates over different arc sizes in a site, only over different spray radiuses."

Nitko explained that the flow rate for adjustable nozzles is usually two or three

times greater than for fixed nozzles. "If a system runs until the right amount of water has been put down by the spray heads, the areas around the fixed heads won't get enough water. But if the system runs until the right amount of water has been put down by the fixed heads, the areas around the spray heads will get too much water."

The adjustable nozzles have become so popular, however, that L.R. Nelson will have its own model on the market this spring.

Bear Irrigation, Temecula, Calif., developed a new nonadjustable nozzle as part of an alliance with Buckner Turf Irrigation, Fresno, Calif., to conquer the problem of uneven spray patterns. Bear eliminated the adjustment screw found in all other nozzles so that the water can be brought up directly through the middle of Buckner's BasicNozzles. Conventional nozzles with the adjustment screw bring the water up in four separate streams outside of the center of the nozzles.

"Removing the adjustment screw gave us more room to work with to create a deflector and manipulate the spray pattern," noted Thomas DeWitt, president and chief executive officer of Buckner.

DeWitt admitted removing the screw eliminates the contractors' ability to adjust the spray radius, but he doesn't think contractors will mind. "Focus group studies indicate that 90 percent of the contractors installing irrigation systems install nozzles and don't adjust them. So if the nozzles are being installed fully open anyway, then it shouldn't be a problem not having the adjustment screw. Plus, removing the screw allows us to produce a less expensive nozzle."

DeWitt also claimed that contractors will be able to match the precipitation rate of nozzles spraying different sized arcs in one system with these nozzles. "The flow for a 90-degree spray is exactly equal to half of the flow for a 180-degree spray."

Another common problem can be irrigating the area immediately surrounding the sprinkler. Rain Bird Sales' new U-series of nozzles includes a second orifice designed to provide water in close to the sprinkler.

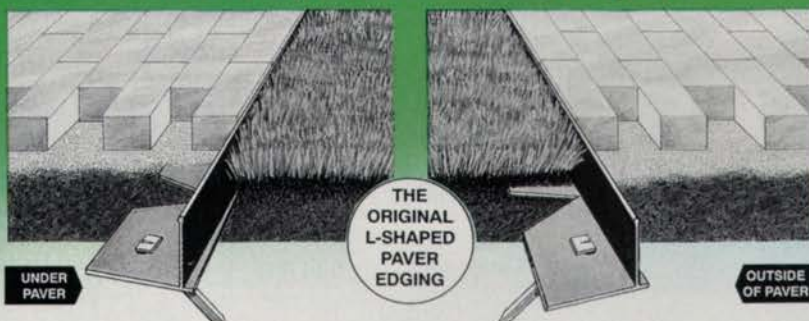
USER-FRIENDLY ROTORS. Manufacturers are also focused on making sprinklers easier to

(continued on page 68)

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USE READER SERVICE #62

(continued from page 66)

use. The K2+ is a gear-driven sprinkler offered by K-Rain Mfg., Riviera Beach, Fla., that is designed for easy adjusting.

The available spray arcs are clearly noted on top of the cover, along with an arrow that points along the right edge of the spray. The arc width is set with a standard key turning method. "It allows the contractor to see exactly where the spray will go without having to activate the system," according to Barbara Paez, vice president of K-Rain.

Gene Johnson, manager of marketing communications, Weather-matic, Dallas, Texas, said the company's new CT70 closed-case rotor heads are designed for large turf areas with a spray radius of 49 feet to 74 feet and a 1-inch inlet.

"The arc ring is located on the side of the unit and the contractor can slide it into place without using any tools," Johnson explained,

(continued on page 72)

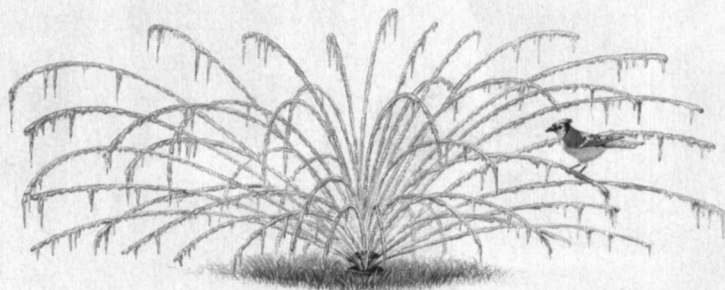
Selling High Quality Parts

The price conscious nature of irrigation contractors is not lost on manufacturers searching for the next innovation. "Since the need for quality and performance are given, most contractors cite cost as the biggest issue to them for buying supplies," noted Thomas DeWitt, president and chief executive officer for Buckner Turf Irrigation, Fresno, Calif. "However, the quality still has to be there to minimize call backs."

"Contractors should look for products which can save them labor time," according to Gene Johnson, manager of marketing communications, Weather-matic, Dallas, Texas. "The biggest part of a job's cost is in the labor. The cost of the sprinkler heads doesn't make up much of the cost."

Barbara Paez, vice president of K-Rain Manufacturing, Riviera Beach, Fla., encouraged contractors to look at the big picture and what top quality products can mean to the efficiency of a system over time. "Some nozzles may cost 50 cents more than other nozzles, but contractors have to convey to the customer what the extra features and value are, especially in regards to water conservation," she said.

Contractors should also educate their customers about the benefits of increased control over the water distribution. "Overspraying onto pavement can cause damage or make for slippery surfaces. Many of the new products are designed to eliminate some of these problems," commented Don Clark, marketing manager, Rain Bird Sales Inc., Azusa, Calif.



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(continued from page 68)

"and this can be done regardless of whether or not the system is operating."

Convertible ready-check valves are standard on CT70 rotors. These valves, located below the sprinkler assembly, counter problems of too much or too little water in the lines. "They keep the line full without having any puddle out around the heads, and they help avoid dry line shock," Johnson noted.

Before performing system maintenance, Johnson warned contractors to note the position of the valves. "There can be problems if you leave them in the check position and try to blow out the system," he said.

Getting enough water into the area immediately around the large gear-driven heads can be as much of a problem as with the spray heads. But Nitko said that L.R. Nelson has a redesigned gear-driven unit that he expects to be available soon that handles this problem. "We've altered the flow path through the head



so the flow has been streamlined for the primary nozzle and altered for the secondary and tertiary nozzles," Nitko explained.

SPRAYS ARE OK. While manufacturers continue to fine tune pop-up spray heads, few dramatic changes are taking place. One reason for this lack of new development is the high quality pop-up spray heads most manufacturers now offer.

"The manufacturers have pretty much perfected pop-up sprays," noted Grant Williams, a distributor with Irrigation Supply of

Maintenance tasks such as changing nozzles and setting spray patterns are being simplified to save irrigation contractors time and money. Credit: Shawnmark Industries

Columbus, Amlin, Ohio. "A few companies had problems with their wiper seals, but that's been fixed."

Williams explained that mold grew on the seals of some pop-up sprays and stopped the heads from retracting when the system shut off. Manufacturers since learned that injecting a fungicide into the rubber will kill any mold before it can grow enough to cause these problems. **LL**

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

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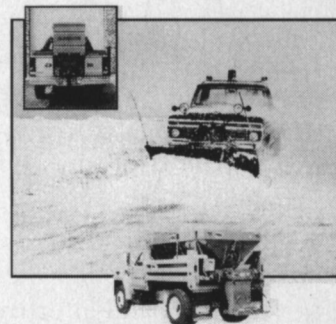
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Smart contractors realize that markets change and so should their marketing strategies. Whether it's a simple or comprehensive plan, each strategy should be based on customer needs.

By Susan Gibson

Adapting to Changing Markets

Some lawn and landscape contractors look at marketing as an afterthought. They think of marketing as advertising or flyers that are secondary to the real business of providing services. But a clear marketing strategy can guide a business into highly profitable niches, expand its range of services or geographical areas and even make the difference between profitability and failure. A good marketing strategy enables a company to target the best-paying customers, establish long-term relationships and generate new sources of income down the road.

Even the most successful contractors, however, quickly point out that developing a marketing strategy is never a one-time thing. People change, markets change and strategies should change accordingly.

"Things are constantly changing and what was proactive in 1995 is not considered to be proactive today," said Judith Guido, director of marketing and business development, Laflamme Services Inc., Bridgeport, Conn. "What was cost effective in 1995 may not be today. What was new then is old now."

"Our marketing strategy evolves and continues to evolve because markets are variable," explained Tom Hofer, president of Spring-Green Corp., Plainfield, Ill.

Because customers and markets constantly change, contractors should realize that marketing strategies are never stagnant. Contrast current programs with those of 20 or 25 years ago, when many lawn and landscape services were in their infancy.

Hofer described the changes: "We used to think that everyone with a house and a lawn was a potential customer. Through a painful process, we learned that wasn't the

Marketing Strategies that Work

case." Now, he noted, sophisticated methods of telemarketing and direct mail allow contractors to identify the better prospects and target them successfully.

WHO IS YOUR CUSTOMER? The first step in developing a clear strategy, according to successful marketers, is understanding the potential customer. "Who are your potential buyers? Why would they buy your product?" asked McRae Anderson, president of McCaren Designs Inc., St. Paul, Minn. He used McCaren's Christmas decorating business as an example. "We try to determine if they lack the time, talent or confidence that would make them likely customers for professional services."

Then, he targets customers in the market — corporations with repeatable business. "We have limited time available at Christmas, so we want to do projects with a large dollar volume at one site. This lets us maximize the work we can do within that time frame."

Joe Skelton, president of Lifescapes, Atlanta, Ga., agreed that knowing the customer is necessary. "Our business is diverse in our services and our marketing approaches. The type of marketing that generates interest in design/build services is going to be different from that which generates interest in commercial maintenance."

For new or smaller companies, focusing on current customers may be the best strategy, said Jeff Carowitz, marketing manager, Hunter Industries, San Marcos, Calif. "Contractors should focus on a particular segment of the market that makes sense for their business structure and assess their strengths in relation to their customer base. Build the business around these customers and referrals."

He advised contractors to "cultivate that group. They will be your most profitable and better paying customers." If growing companies use a shotgun approach of costly widespread advertising to large groups, they may find the wrong kind of customer,

Carowitz warned. "That will only attract price shoppers."

THE ONE AND ONLY. While there will always be customers who only want low prices, many more want quality, good service and a feeling of spending their money on something worthwhile. Marketing allows a company to define a niche for itself in the marketplace as a company that is special.

Without a clear marketing strategy, the only strategy is price cutting. Many contractors complain that their customers perceive services merely as commodities differentiated by price.

Having a clear marketing strategy allows a company to position itself outside of the commodity perception, said Anderson. "We try to provide a different look and different product for our customers. We want to position ourselves so we're not bidding for the work, but negotiating." He added that a clear strategy allows the company to "jump out of the commodity area and create a new market without those pricing pressures."

One example he gave was the creation of

• *While there will always be*
• *customers who only want*
• *low prices, many more*
• *want quality, good service*
• *and a feeling of spending*
• *their money on something*
• *worthwhile.*

different brochures targeted to different customer groups. The brochures, which market McCaren Design's interiorscape services to landscape architects or property managers, provide useful information and answer many questions typical of those groups.

This kind of program shows that the

company understands the potential clients and their needs, Anderson explained. On a smaller scale, a custom proposal for a particular problem shows the customer a targeted solution.

Another example of developing a special niche is McCaren Design's work with "diversity decorating" for the winter holidays. Anderson explained that the program evolved out of one customer's need to represent various religious holidays that occur throughout the winter. When he searched for appropriate display materials, he found there were few available. The result is a niche where McCaren Designs provides custom displays to a growing number of corporate clients interested in expanding their winter displays.

Guido noted that in-depth research can be an invaluable tool in cultivating a unique image with property managers. "We ask them about their goals and tell them, 'We're here to make your job easier.' We'll do research on the company to find out if it's downsizing or if the stock price is low."

Information like that may change the approach Laflamme takes with a client, she noted. The company may suggest a toned down, "sensible" looking landscape if a client is currently in a down cycle. "We want to find out about the company's objective and the property manager's objective."

Large companies must tailor different strategies to meet many objectives. "We have about 140 people with us and about 30 or 40 of them represent our company as some form of sales or customer service person," commented Skelton. "We're not expert marketers, but we do a lot of things for marketing. If we listed them all as an aggregate, there may be 50 or 60 different things we're doing — from speeches to garden shows to seminars to entertaining CEOs."

Lifescapes divides its marketing efforts into three areas: design/build, grounds management and administrative or corporate marketing. Although it's large enough to do nearly \$10 million in business, it still concentrates on developing a marketing niche for all three segments.



Customized yard signs, neighborhood door hangers, personalized brochures purchased from manufacturers and clean, painted trucks are inexpensive ways to project a professional image. Credit: Hunter Industries

"We're not looking for bid work. We're looking for a relationship where the customer feels good about working with us," Skelton explained. "We're targeted toward negotiating." This strategy works well with the design/build end, but is more of a challenge with bid-minded property managers. "There, the relationship is also important, but they are required to take bids. Many property managers think all grounds management companies are the same. We have to convince them we're special."

GUTS VS. SCIENCE. While many marketing successes are attributed to "gut instinct," a plan is a more methodical approach. "When you do a marketing campaign for the first time, it's really gut instinct," Skelton explained. "Then, once it's done, analyze it and measure the return."

"Gut instinct works when the market is good, but when it changes there can be problems," Hofer explained. "Some people are just flying by the seat of their pants and when things go wrong, they don't really understand what they're doing wrong."

"The danger for contractors in a growth phase is taking on new work that is outside their normal business load," said Carowitz. "For instance, they may be used to doing

\$3,000 residential irrigation installation jobs and then take on a \$30,000 commercial job." He noted that the new work will require additional equipment, labor, financing and operating expertise — something that start-up firms may not be able to handle.

"A business plan helps start-up contractors understand where they're going, what types of work they do best, what size projects they handle, who their customers are and the operations necessary to support the work," Carowitz added.

He suggested contractors focus on target customers, then structure the operations to support the work. "If they're planning to grow, they should understand what it will take to get started before they get into new work."

Hunter's marketing support program provides custom yard signs, door hangers and brochures that enable growing irrigation contractors to cultivate referral business.

Much of the program teaches contractors to look at their services from the customer's point of view. "Many contractors don't understand the selling process," Carowitz noted. "We offer seasonal postcards they can mail to customers in northern climates. The cards remind customers that they should winterize their irrigation systems in the fall, have them turned on in the spring and have them

checked during the summer."

While it may be hard to target exact marketing costs, Carowitz suggested that contractors devote much time and effort to the area. "I would tell contractors if they're not spending 5 percent to 10 percent of their sales on promoting the business, they're not maximizing what they can get. I'm not talking about advertising necessarily, but about all activities that help build the business."

Contractors have an opportunity to sell value and position themselves as a professional company with a marketing plan, he noted. Two-tiered product structures enable contractors to appeal to different buyers, he added. Standard and high quality product lines can help build sales for both price conscious and quality conscious buyers.

IS IT RIGHT? "You can't take marketing for granted or it will jump up and bite you," warned Hofer. Spring-Green's service and market mix require adjustments to the basic marketing strategies. "Marketing has been a major focus for us."

Hofer regularly checks the effectiveness of the company's plans. "I check to see if it makes sales and if it makes cost effective sales," he explained. "With new technology and direct mail techniques getting better, we're always testing effectiveness."

"The most important element is nonstop research," maintained Guido. "Internally, we ask what works with customers and what doesn't. Externally, we hold focus groups and meetings with current, past and potential customers. Plus, we study general business trends by reading, watching the business channel and checking on the Internet." ■

The author is Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

IN YOUR TURF

WILL CORN GLUTEN MEAL MAKE THE COMMERCIAL LEAP?

AS A NATURALLY derived product, corn gluten meal appeared to be a promising alternative herbicide to other established products. Research at Iowa State University indicated that the corn milling by-product had the ability to inhibit root formation in germinating grasses, acting as a preemergence turf herbicide.

However, the practical application of the product in the professional lawn care arena is uncertain. True believers in the product have created a niche for corn gluten meal's use, but much of the research conducted outside of Iowa State has provided a mixed bag of results.

IN THE MARKET. Corn gluten meal has been available largely to consumers through Gardens Alive! for a few years, but some commercial lawn care operators and golf course superintendents gained access to the product and have been trying it out. Warren Jensen, president of Safe Earth Lawn and Garden Care, West Des Moines, Iowa, is a satisfied user of the product for his consumer customer base.

Safe Earth, which only uses organic-based products, serves customers that Jensen said have a total commitment to pesticide-free lawn care. They range from highly anti-pesticide individuals to those who claim to be chemically sensitive. His

The jury is still out on the use of corn gluten meal against grassy weeds.

customers also tend to have a higher tolerance of lower weed control thresholds, which balances out corn gluten meal's shortcomings in terms of efficacy.

"It makes sense to me to do what we're doing. There are people that measure lawns by a different scale. As people learn they can live with something less than perfect and see lawn beauty from a different angle, this program will continue to grow," Jensen noted.

Another happy corn gluten meal user is Skip Wade, superintendent at the Cherry Valley Golf Club on Long Island, N.Y. He said he's been pleased with the level of crabgrass control he gets on his fairways and greens, and the turf color quality has been excellent.

THE RESEARCH. Corn gluten meal has gotten a variety of reviews at land grant universities, from viable to a complete



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bust. At Cornell University's Long Island Horticulture Research Lab in Riverhead, N.Y., weed science specialist Andy Senesac observed test plots for two years and found a negative effect related to corn gluten meal.

The herbicide activity is caused by a protein that breaks down rapidly, especially in wet conditions. The protein breaks down into nitrogen, and Senesac believes that this actually caused the herbicide to fertilize the target weeds rather than control them.

Senesac also theorized that success with corn gluten meal in established lawns against weeds may be a factor of the nitrogen improving turf quality and density, which is a major cultural factor in weed

reduction. "You're actually applying 6 pounds of N per 1,000 square feet all at once, which is really too much N and not enough weed control."

At the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, weed specialist Prasanta Bhowmik studied corn gluten meal over a three-year period and found that while the highest rates applied as a preemergent provided pretty good control, the efficacy disappeared by July.

Bhowmik noted that the plots used were highly infested, so his data do not reflect control on more established, less weedy turf. "I have mixed feelings about the product," he said. "There may be some room for a product like this for customers on a case by case basis, but you can clearly see

the difference between corn gluten and other weed control products in July and August."


MORE AVAILABILITY. Until now, corn gluten meal was available almost exclusively as a consumer use product. This will soon change, at least east of the Mississippi River.

Fertnell Co., a 50-year old distributor located in Bainbridge, Pa., will begin marketing the product for commercial use, placing it in garden centers and supply houses across the eastern U.S.

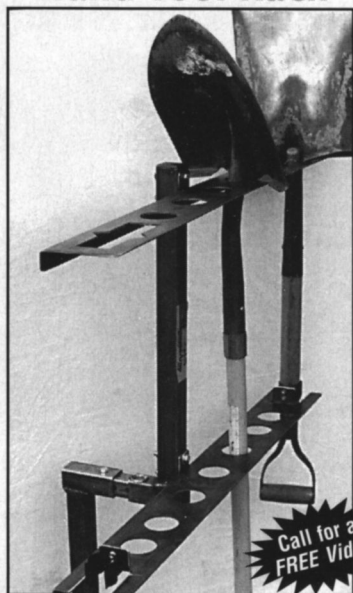
"We've been in the distribution of natural products for the past 25 years, and this is the first major breakthrough with any validity to it," said President Dave Mattocks. He claims to have tested it on his

own and believes in the product's preemergence capabilities.

FUTURE PROSPECTS. David Gardner, a graduate student conducting research on corn gluten meal at Iowa State with weed specialist Nick Christians, recently conducted a two-year study using combined rates of pendimethalin from $\frac{1}{6}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ of the recommended label rate with various application rates of corn gluten meal. The numbers showed that higher rates of corn gluten meal could enhance the performance of lower rates of pendimethalin.

Gardner said that he will be looking at corn gluten meal in combination with other herbicides on the market in the future. — Paul Schrimpf 

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NEW PRODUCTS

Dairon S.A.'s Rotadairon® line of soil cultivation, leveling and clearing systems, overseeders and combi-seeders is now available in the U.S. The PTO-driven machines use re-



verse rotation technology to cultivate the soil, bury stones, turn under grass and create a suitable surface for seed germination.

Circle 204 on reader service card

Include Asset Estimator estimating software from **Include**

(continued on page 80)

LITERATURE

A new six-page informational brochure from **RohMid LLC** is designed to educate readers about Mach 2™ Turf Insecticide, a new product awaiting EPA registration before it can be sold. Mach 2 uses halofenozide as its active ingredient to accelerate the molting process and stop the feeding of targeted pests such as grubs, cutworms and sod webworms.

Circle 200 on reader service card

A 12-page color brochure from **John Deere** includes full specifications and descriptions of each of Deere's six skid steer loaders along with information on the Deere diesel engines powering the units. Action photographs depict

the various applications and attachments for the machines as well as important features.

Circle 201 on reader service card

California Landscape Lighting updated its landscape lighting fixture charts and is now offering them free of charge. The four charts make specification comparisons on various manufacturers' fixtures in areas such as unit size, construction material, finishes, mount type and more.

Circle 202 on reader service card

Century Rain Aid's 1996-97 catalog highlights 16 landscape irrigation and lighting products. The 80-page catalog presents nearly all of the products Century Rain Aid distributes from Rain Bird, Hunter and Hardie, as well as lighting companies.

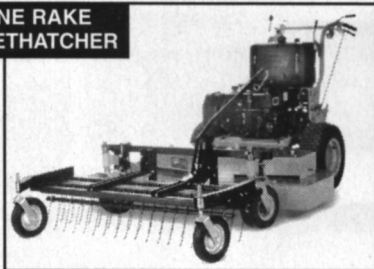
Circle 203 on reader service card

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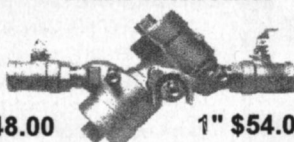


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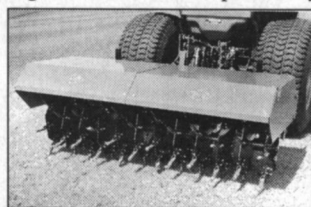
NEW PRODUCTS

(continued from page 78)

Software has features for proposal automating, bid and item cloning, assemblies, line item and job level markups and quick summaries on screen of gross profit and margins. This Windows-based software has an unlimited database featuring multiple description fields along with user defined categories and note fields.

Circle 205 on reader service card

Gandy Model 4972 and 4996 aerators have dual-wheel aerating heads which independently



follow the ground contour. The model 4972 covers a 6-foot width while the 4996 covers 8-foot swaths. Both models

mount on a tractor category one three-point hitch. Versatile operations are offered with interchangeable coring spoons and slicing knives.

Circle 207 on reader service card

Skid-steer blades from **Kasco** are available with manual or hydraulic angling 54-, 60- or 72-inch widths. The blades feature replaceable cutting edges, adjustable skid shoes and a spring-controlled break-over for snow that also locks rigid for pushing dirt or stone. Kasco blades fit most compact



tractors up to 50 hp and feature loader-mounted blades so the bucket can be removed and replaced with a blade.

Circle 208 on reader service card

Shaver Mfg.'s

model 101 post-hole digger is a PTO-driven unit for tractors with category zero and one three-point hitches. The model

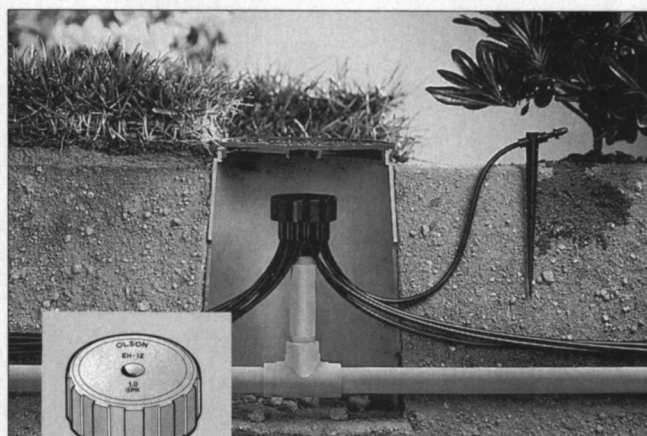
101 comes with semi-double flight augers of 4-, 6- and 9-inch diameters with 9- and 14-inch bolt-on extensions available. A totally enclosed gearbox and a shield protecting the PTO assembly from



(continued on page 82)

Spraying Systems' TeeJet 440 series DirectoValve® manifold system has up to five ball valves in a single assembly for easy installation of electric boom control valves. The unit includes built-in mounting brackets and a range of inlet and outlet connections with a maximum pressure rating of 300 psi.

Circle 206 on reader service card



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1995 TOCA

- 1st - Magazine/Cover Design
- 1st - Newsletter less than four-color
- 1st - Magazine/Overall Design
- 1st - Magazine Single Page Design

1996 TOCA

- 1st - Magazine/Cover Design
- 1st - Magazine/Overall Design
- 1st - Writing/Ornamental Feature article

1996 ASBPE

- 2nd - Publication Redesign (Central Chapter)
- 3rd - Publication Redesign (National)
- 2nd - New Publication Design (T&O; Central Chapter)
- 3rd - Front Cover of Tabloid Magazine (T&O; Central Chapter)

1994 TOCA

- 1st - Magazine/Cover Design
- 1st - Magazine/Overall Design

1994 Press Club of Cleveland

- 1st - Best Cover

1992 TOCA

- 1st - Writing/Commercial Publication

1992 Press Club of Cleveland

- 2nd - General Magazine Excellence

1989 ASBPE

- 2nd - Graphics Excellence/Contents Page
- 2nd - Graphics Excellence/Publication Redesign

1991 ASBPE

- 2nd - Graphics Excellence/Opening Page/Spread Feature

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Lawn & Landscape

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NEW PRODUCTS

(continued from page 80)

stray materials keep the unit functioning.
Circle 209 on reader service card

The Treegator® Jr. from **Spectrum Products** is a low-profile, portable drip irrigation system for low-branched trees and shrubs. The unit is made of PVC for strong seams and a puncture-resistant surface and

delivers 20 gallons of water in a four- to six-hour period to avoid runoff or evaporation during irrigation.

Circle 210 on reader service card

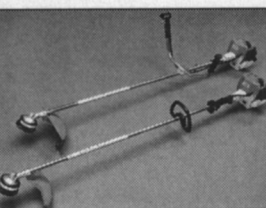
Wireless remote control technology is available for the SC 1102 and SC 502 gearbox-driven stump cutters from **Vermeer Mfg.** This radio remote control sys-

tem has an operating range of 100 feet and allows users to position the machines in tight areas and still control the stump cutter's tongue, run the up/down wheel positioning mode and the swing of the cutter wheel. The joystick controls can be hand-held or worn with a neck strap and are powered by a 9-volt battery.

Circle 211 on reader service card

The FS 80 and FS 85 Professional Series™ Grass Trimmers from **Stihl** are powered by a new 25.4-cc engine with a swirl combustion chamber. Stihl's ElastoStart™

shock absorbing handle and electronic ignition make for easier starts. Other features in-



clude dual stage air filters, anti-vibration systems and an ergonomic handle integrating the on and off throttle switches in one location.

Circle 212 on reader service card

Aquatrols Aqueduct™ and AquaGro® 2000 soil surfactants are designed to improve water penetration of soils, reduce runoff and create uniform water movement through the soil. Aqueduct's chemistry is specifically tailored to mineral-based soils such as loam, clay and silt where turf is generally planted, while AquaGro 2000 works best in ornamental-friendly organic soils such as peat and bark.

Circle 213 on reader service card

Thomas Equip-ment's T-243HD

"S" series skid steer loader has a 4-cylinder, turbo-charged 83-hp Deutz diesel engine producing 25 percent more horsepower and 37 percent more torque



(continued on page 84)

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P O W E R B R O O M B Y

shindaiwa

NEW PRODUCTS

(continued from page 82)

than the T-233HD for larger jobs. The loader has a lift capacity of 2,400 pounds and 5,200 pounds of breakout force. A steel mainframe handles work stresses while hydraulic oil reservoirs mean long service life.

Circle 214 on reader service card

Grazer's new single-stage snow thrower is fully floating with a 3-inch below grade operations and features a fully



swinging discharge chute. A fully-enclosed cab fits most Grazer models for

improved operator comfort.

Circle 215 on reader service card

The Self-Change 100/103 from **Wikco Industries** is a manual

tire changer designed to change tires on wheels with rim diameters between 4 inches and 16½ inches. The machine includes mount/demount bars and a bead breaker. Options include a tire spreader and nylon-protected bars for custom wheels.

Circle 216 on reader service card

The Bear Cat Vac-N-Chip Pro from **Crary** is 29 inches wide and has 27 mounted beater blades for picking up

The **Toro** DL2000 subsurface irrigation system uses RootGuard® technology to eliminate maintenance problems caused by root growth into the system or immediately around the emitters. DTech™ self-cleaning emitters prevent troublesome clogging which reduces the uniformity of the applications. The system can be installed at grade or buried between 4 and 8 inches below the surface with 12- or 18-inch emitter spacing available.

Circle 217 on reader service card



allow users to tailor the agitator bar's performance along with the vacuum opening for each job. A single front wheel provides maneuverability through five forward speeds and one reverse speed.

Circle 218 on reader service card

leaves and small branches. The chipper handles branches up to 3 inches in diameter. Unlimited height adjustments

Lesco's 21-inch self-propelled mower is designed for professional users with a 5-hp Kawasaki engine, an alumi-

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☐ Lawn Maintenance Contractor
☐ Ornamental Shrub & Tree Service
☐ Irrigation Contractor
☐ Landscape Architect
☐ Other Contract Services (please describe): _____

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☐ School, College, University
☐ Trade Association, Library
☐ Others (please describe): _____

3. What were your approximate 1995 revenues?

- ☐ 0 - \$50,000
☐ \$50,001 - \$100,000
☐ \$100,001 - \$250,000
☐ \$250,001 - \$500,000
☐ \$500,001 - \$1 million
☐ + \$1 million

4. How many of your employees are:

- _____ Full time _____ Applicators
_____ Seasonal _____ Maintenance

5. What percentage of your business is:

- _____ % Commercial/Industrial
_____ % Residential
_____ % Gov't/Municipal
_____ % Golf

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| 2 | 22 | 42 | 62 | 82 | 102 | 122 | 142 | 162 | 182 | 202 | 222 | 242 |
| 3 | 23 | 43 | 63 | 83 | 103 | 123 | 143 | 163 | 183 | 203 | 223 | 243 |
| 4 | 24 | 44 | 64 | 84 | 104 | 124 | 144 | 164 | 184 | 204 | 224 | 244 |
| 5 | 25 | 45 | 65 | 85 | 105 | 125 | 145 | 165 | 185 | 205 | 225 | 245 |
| 6 | 26 | 46 | 66 | 86 | 106 | 126 | 146 | 166 | 186 | 206 | 226 | 246 |
| 7 | 27 | 47 | 67 | 87 | 107 | 127 | 147 | 167 | 187 | 207 | 227 | 247 |
| 8 | 28 | 48 | 68 | 88 | 108 | 128 | 148 | 168 | 188 | 208 | 228 | 248 |
| 9 | 29 | 49 | 69 | 89 | 109 | 129 | 149 | 169 | 189 | 209 | 229 | 249 |
| 10 | 30 | 50 | 70 | 90 | 110 | 130 | 150 | 170 | 190 | 210 | 230 | 250 |
| 11 | 31 | 51 | 71 | 91 | 111 | 131 | 151 | 171 | 191 | 211 | 231 | 251 |
| 12 | 32 | 52 | 72 | 92 | 112 | 132 | 152 | 172 | 192 | 212 | 232 | 252 |
| 13 | 33 | 53 | 73 | 93 | 113 | 133 | 153 | 173 | 193 | 213 | 233 | 253 |
| 14 | 34 | 54 | 74 | 94 | 114 | 134 | 154 | 174 | 194 | 214 | 234 | 254 |
| 15 | 35 | 55 | 75 | 95 | 115 | 135 | 155 | 175 | 195 | 215 | 235 | 255 |
| 16 | 36 | 56 | 76 | 96 | 116 | 136 | 156 | 176 | 196 | 216 | 236 | 256 |
| 17 | 37 | 57 | 77 | 97 | 117 | 137 | 157 | 177 | 197 | 217 | 237 | 257 |
| 18 | 38 | 58 | 78 | 98 | 118 | 138 | 158 | 178 | 198 | 218 | 238 | 258 |
| 19 | 39 | 59 | 79 | 99 | 119 | 139 | 159 | 179 | 199 | 219 | 239 | 259 |
| 20 | 40 | 60 | 80 | 100 | 120 | 140 | 160 | 180 | 200 | 220 | 240 | 260 |

6. Circle what percent of your business is:

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| Lawn Care | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |
| Maint. Serv. | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |
| Irrigation Serv. | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |
| Pest Control | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |
| Installation | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |
| Trees & Ornmtls. | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |

7. How much did your company spend in 1995 on?

Turf Chemicals \$ _____
Ornamental Chemicals \$ _____
Equipment \$ _____

8. How many does your business operate?

- _____ Walk Behind Mowers
_____ Riding Mowers
_____ Trimmers
_____ Chain Saws
_____ Blowers

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(Please check only one.)

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- ☐ 1. Landscape Contractor (maintenance & installation)
☐ 2. Chemical Lawn Care Company (excluding mowing maintenance service)
☐ 3. Lawn Maintenance Contractor
☐ 4. Ornamental Shrub & Tree Service
☐ 5. Irrigation Contractor
☐ 6. Landscape Architect
☐ 7. Other Contract Services (please describe) _____

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- ☐ 1. In-House Maintenance including: Educational Facilities, Health Care Facilities, Government Grounds, Parks & Military Installations, Condominium Complexes, Housing Developments, Private Estates, Commercial & Industrial Parks.

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IV. OTHERS ALLIED TO THE FIELD:

- ☐ 1. Extension Agent (Federal, State, County, City, Regulatory Agency)
☐ 2. School, College, University
☐ 3. Trade Association, Library
☐ 4. Others (please describe) _____

2. What best describes your title?

- ☐ Owner, Pres., Vice Pres., Corp. Officer
☐ Manager, Director, Supt., Foreman
☐ Agronomist, Horticulturist
☐ Entomologist, Plant Pathologist
☐ Serviceman, Technician, Crew member
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1/97

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NEW PRODUCTS

num cast deck and variable speed transmission. The mower has eight cutting heights ranging from $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch to $3\frac{5}{8}$ inches and users have the option of discharging, collecting or mulching clippings.

Circle 219 on reader service card

The zero-turn Surfer from **Great Dane Power Equipment** features a compact design with a maximum length of 57



inches to provide better mobility than any zero-turn walk-behind mower. A stand-on platform puts operators nearly in the center of the turning point for excellent visibility. The entire deck is constructed of 7-gauge steel. Available deck sizes include 36, 48, 52 and 61 inches with Kawasaki, Briggs & Stratton and Kohler engines.

Circle 220 on reader service card

Peco's Pro 12 is a 12-cubic-foot fully mounted lawn vacuum fitting Exmark, Woods and Byers riding mowers. The vacuum has a 4-hp engine for powerful collection of clippings and a tapered aluminum box on a steel frame that doesn't block operator visibility. The unit is



lightweight so it won't affect the mower's performance, and all vacuum controls are lo-

cated within easy reach of the operator's seat.

Circle 222 on reader service card

Glenncorp's GCI-500 trencher operates on a three-point hitch with either a hydrostatic drive or live PTO. Standard equipment includes a 3-foot deep, 4-inch wide digging chain with hard surface cup teeth, a 23-gpm pump, depth

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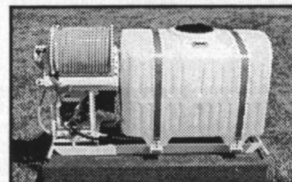
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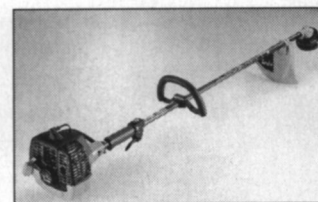
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cylinder and a high-torque, low-speed hydraulic motor.

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The ProForce TBC-2510 professional trimmer from Tanaka has an anti-vibration cushion grip handle and a fully automatic feed cutting head. The head senses when more cutting line is needed to keep the engine speed at peak cutting performance. A metal blade can be attached easily for tougher cutting

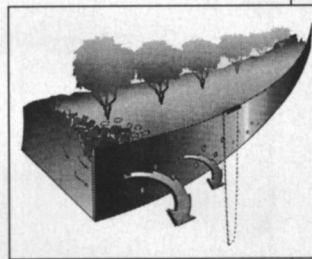


jobs. The unit weighs less than 12 pounds with a

bearing-supported, solid steel shaft for smooth power transfer from the 24-cc, 1.3-hp engine.

Circle 224 on reader service card

Drain-Edge™ from Oly-Ola Sales is a black, vinyl landscape edging with a double row of 1/4-inch holes in it to allow excess water to pass through. It is designed to border bed areas which accumulate water from excessive irrigation, rainfall or run-off. The edging is 4 1/2 inches high and 3/16 inches thick and is available in 10-foot long pieces or 100-foot long rolls. Ten-inch black



steel stakes anchor the edging in place around the beds.

Circle 225 on reader service card

Lofts Seed's new Kentucky bluegrass, Eagleton, shows strong resistance to the bluegrass billbug. Eagleton features a medium dark green color to blend easily with other varieties and forms a dense, fine-leaved turf.

Circle 226 on reader service card



GRINDERS HANDLE HURRICANE FRAN'S AFTERMATH

WHEN Hurricane Fran ravaged North Carolina and surrounding states last fall, the entire country heard a name they'll likely never forget.

It began Sept. 5 when Fran's outer bands of rain and hurricane-force winds began pounding the coastal regions. Winds up to 115 mph extended 145 miles from Fran's center with "tropical-storm-force" winds stretching 290 miles out. It all headed straight for Raleigh-Durham.

Four days later damage in Raleigh alone was estimated at

\$930 million, and officials blamed the storm for 17 deaths in the state.

CLEAN-UP NEEDED. Calls flooded businesses carrying industrial equipment suited for the clearing and disposal of such devastation. Rick Avate, Raleigh manager for Vermeer Sales and Service, said as soon as there was power at his dealership the phone rang fast and furious, not really subsiding until the end of October. In all, the dealership sold and delivered more than 100 brush chippers.

Avate said Fran's fury was more dramatic than that of other hurricanes because it blew over trees rather than snapping them. "I went through Hurricane Hugo

Damage in Raleigh alone was estimated at \$930 million, and rescue officials were blaming Fran for 17 deaths in the state. Credit: Vermeer

(1989), but this time, because the ground was so saturated with rain, the wind had an entirely different effect."

One of Vermeer's Brawny TG-400L tub grinders immediately headed for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Kirk Pelland, university forester, estimated that 50,000 cubic yards of trees on the 900-acre campus had been uprooted or felled. That



amounts to about 10,000 tons of debris, ranging from small trees and limbs to large oaks.

"We have a small tub grinder we use for leaves, and we were very happy with that,"

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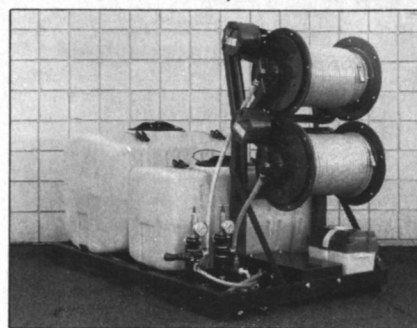
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PRODUCT PROFILE

Pender said. "But this was completely different. We needed a much larger unit."

He added that the TG-400L processed just under 3,000 tons the first month, on its way to finishing off what it could of all 10,000 tons of debris. Partially to credit for the efficient pace is the unique gear-boom design, which allows the loader arm to lift 3,000 pounds at full reach. Another advantage is its high degree of mobility. After moving it to the site, crews can assemble or disassemble the machine in about 20 minutes.

While it stayed in one place for most of the effort, Pender and his team assisted the townspeople of Chapel Hill with the clean-up, as debris was brought by the truckload

to the area for processing. But Pender said it was unlikely they would ever get all the wooded areas cleared.

400 TREES DOWN. During that same delivery, one of Avate's salespeople discovered a brush chipper was needed at Duke University in Durham. Assistant Golf Course Superintendent Jim Reeves decided that one was vital to dispose of the 400 trees knocked down during the storm.

He bought Vermeer's 1230 Turbo model with the patented Auto-Feed system. It cuts materials up to 12 inches in diameter and automatically monitors and controls feed-roller speed by sensing engine load, reducing stress and jams. Reeves also liked safety aspects,



such as the longer feed tables, putting more than 6 feet between the operator and the feed rollers.

"We wanted something easy to use," Reeves said. "The speed at which we could work allowed us to reopen the course just a couple of days after we began clearing the fairways."

Even after that moral victory, Reeves echoed Pender, saying he is not sure whether

The TG-400L tub grinder's unique gear-boom design allows the loader arm to lift 3,000 pounds at full reach. Credit: Vermeer

they'll ever get all of the debris cleaned up in the wooded areas surrounding the course. But he's convinced there wasn't much more they could have done to ready themselves and the landscape for the storm.

"We brought everything in off the course and prepared the best we could," he said. "I lived in Florida for a number of years and have been through several hurricanes. You just never know how hard it's going to hit until it's here." **LL**

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Environmental Care Inc. the largest landscape maintenance company in the United States has positions available in Phoenix, Arizona. We are seeking career minded, experienced individuals to be Account Managers. Qualified individuals will be team oriented with excellent customer service skills. Benefits include medical, dental, life insurance and 401k. Send resume to 2902 E. Illini, Phoenix, Arizona 85040 or FAX 602/243-2847, Attn: Bill Rademacher. EOE. Pre-employment drug/alcohol screen required.

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Scian's Landscaping Inc., one of Southern New Jersey's largest and fastest growing landscape contractors, is currently seeking take charge, self-motivated landscape professionals to join our management team. These positions require a minimum of 1 to 3 years supervisory experience in either grounds maintenance, landscape construction, tree removal or irrigation systems. Horticultural degree is a plus. We offer an excellent compensation program and employee benefits package commensurate with experience. For immediate, confidential consideration, please send or fax resume to Scian's Landscaping Inc., 444 Commerce Lane, West Berlin, NJ 08091, Attention: Jo Anne Crouch. FAX 609/768-5236. PHONE 609/768-5915. EOE/MF

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Expanding multi-branched Cleveland, Ohio, firm seeks design, sales, supervisory and human resource applicants. Fax responses to 216/357-1624, Attn: Rod.

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Seeking a detail-oriented person with excellent communication and leadership skills to service high-end residential clients. Duties to include fine pruning, annual and perennial care, total turf, tree and shrub care. Ornamental and turf operators license required. Ability to identify and treat turf and plant problems a necessity. Must be experienced with all types of landscape equipment. Snowplow experience a plus. Call or fax resume to Architerria, Attn: Tracey Lester, 847/949-6576 Fax 847/949-6579.

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Maintenance Engineers, established in 1962, has government grounds maintenance contracts throughout the United States. We are seeking a qualified top level manager with experience in large scale contracts. Duties include management of contracts, interfacing with customers, assisting with bidding and preparation of proposals, and procurement of equipment and supplies. Applicant must have a minimum of 5 years experience and be willing to relocate to Jackson Hole. Benefits provided, compensation commensurate with experience. Please send resume to P.O. Box 30452, Jackson, WY 83001.

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clearly defined service missions that include quality work, service and professionalism are looking for higher margins by providing better service."

Vander Kooi reminded contractors to price for profit according to the needs of their own business, not what their competitors do. "If you need to charge \$30 on a job, charge \$30," he said. "Instead of cutting your margin out, make that \$30 work for you."

Ideally, profit margins should be fairly consistent throughout the year and finish close to the company's year-end profit. "I see a lot of contractors put a high margin on a job because they know they haven't covered their costs," Vander Kooi explained. "If profit margins are 20 percent on jobs during the year but the company only makes a 5 percent profit for the year, there needs to be better awareness of the job costs."

DIVIDE IT UP. One situation when margins have to change is when a company has different divisions.

"There's a real danger in looking across various market segments with respect to applying your pricing structure," agreed Hanson. "A homeowners' association isn't going to pay what you can get with work that is design/build, so margins and costs have to be controlled accordingly."

Vander Kooi divided the possible services a contractor could offer into four areas: construction; maintenance; garden centers; and nurseries. "Contractors have to budget and price each of these profit centers differently," he said. "Maintenance is a repetitive service where the costs are almost entirely in labor, while nurseries don't have as much overhead until the point of harvest."

Of course, the recommended teacher for learning pricing lessons is experience. "Experience is the best teacher," remarked Hanson. "But if you learn a lot of bad habits, you'll just perpetuate them over time."

Moore recommended contractors working to control their costs contact any associations they belong to or the national associations for cost accounting information. "There are a lot of estimating and job costing packages available with labor times and rates built in," he said. "It doesn't mean you can do jobs for those numbers—that's where experience comes in—but it can be helpful." **U**

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

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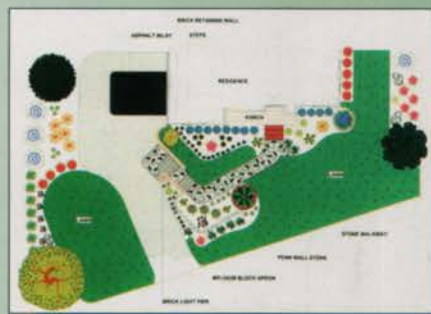
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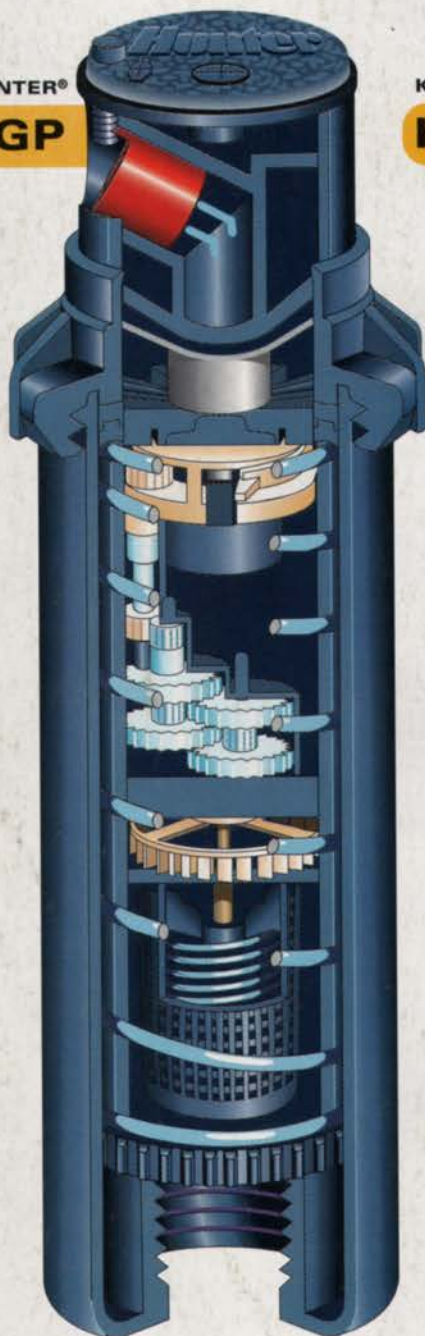
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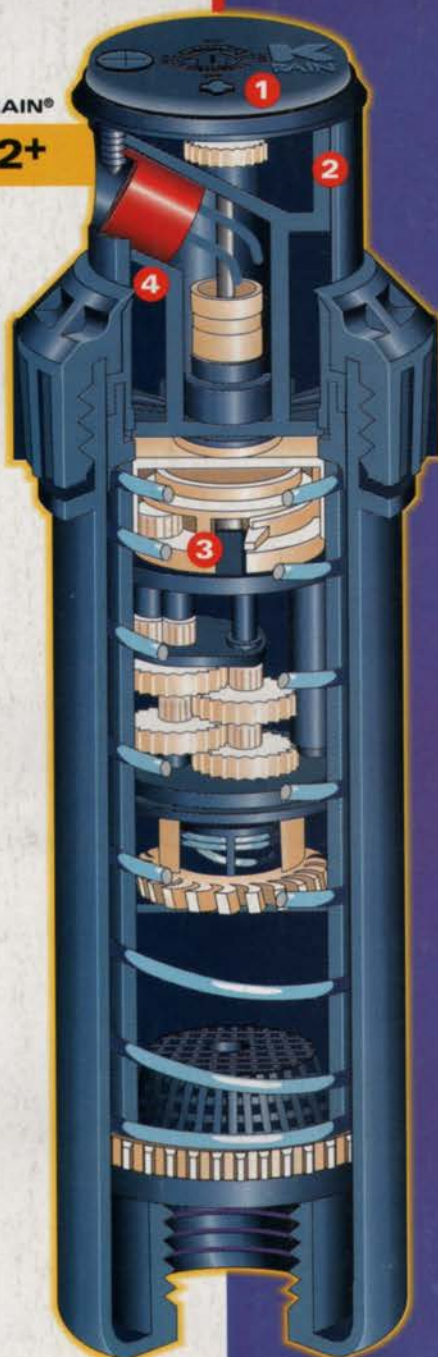
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