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Cover Photo

by Sonny Fulks, Troy, Ohio



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"We are all faced

ties brilliantly

with great opportuni-

described as unsolv-

able problems."-

John W. Gardner

Bob West Fditor

he more things change, the more they stay the same, right?

"There are constant refinements of techniques and equipment. New materials which promise to solve many of the old problems are introduced regularly. Educational programs and professional associations have raised standards and contributed to a widespread "professional" attitude toward this business. And, most importantly, the American homeowner continues to perceive the value of our existence."

Sounds rather appropriate for our industry today, doesn't it? The funny thing is, those words were first printed in May 1980, in the first-ever issue of Lawn & Landscape magazine (known as American Lawn Applicator back in those days).

In his inaugural editorial column, Steve Brown went on to identify many of the challenges confronting the contractor of the early 1980s: governmental regulations; the disappearance of valuable pesticide products; and price-sensitive customers, to name a few.

These factors combined to present difficult decisions to contractors. "Should they expand? Buy new equipment? Diversify? Must economics outweigh agronomics?"

And so was born the publication in your hands (or on your computer monitor - Steve probably didn't anticipate that) today.

Indeed, things change and things remain the same. Steve wrote in the first issue how a seasoned lawn care contractor had lamented to him that the changing industry necessitated contractors having to work harder and smarter to succeed. That is certainly true today. Price-sensitive customers continue to resist justifiable price increases. The question of whether or not to diversify challenges thousands of contractors. And the government refuses to accept reams of scientific proof that contractors protect and beautify the environment and don't threaten it.

I don't think anyone realistically expects business challenges to subside entirely, but the startling similarities in the issues confronting the contractor entering the 1980s and the contractor entering the 21st century highlight a key to any businesses success - devising effective solutions to basic problems.

Problems will always lie between a business and its goal, so avoiding them can't be the answer. Only solving them and thereby bettering your organization can your company grow stronger, more healthy and, ideally, more profitable.

More often than not, the sought-after solutions will only be found through working harder and smarter, and that's where we come in - helping contractors work smarter.

Here's to another great 20 years for us all.

Boh West

Lawn & Landsca

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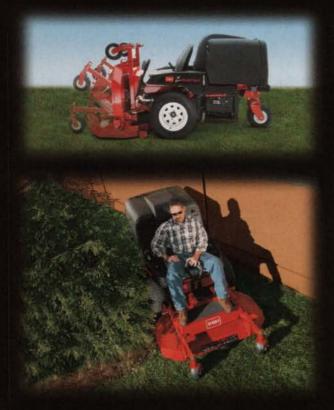
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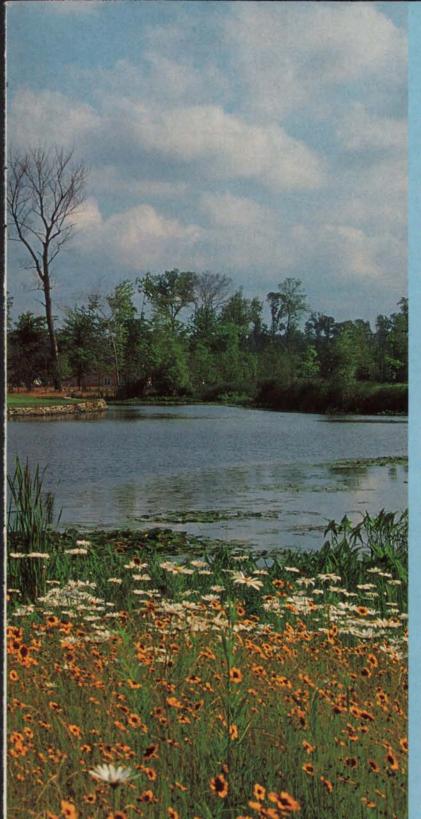
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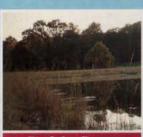
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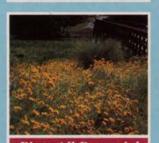
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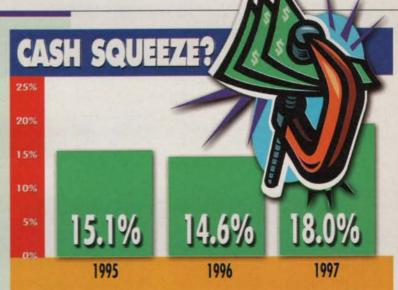
MARKET TRENDS

WHERE DOES THE \$\$\$ GO?

As the labor market remains tight, many lawn care companies are investing more money in improved performance products in an effort to rely less on their personnel.

The newest Operating Efficiency Study published by the Professional Lawn Care Association of America found that the cost of materials used climbed to 18 percent of net sales for the 1997 season, compared to 15.1 percent and 14.6 percent in 1995 and 1996, respectively.

The increased product expenditures didn't necessarily correlate to increased profitability, however, as pre-tax net income slid from 8.2 percent in 1996 to 4.8 percent in 1997.



(Source: PLCAA)

STUDENT CAREER DAYS SOARS

LEXINGTON, KY. – Recognizing that the key to the growth of any landscape contracting company is qualified personnel, more than 80 landscape companies attended the 23rd annual Associated Landscape Contractors of



Students at the Associated Landscape Contractors of America Student Career Days took part in the numerous competitive events as well as the many career opportunities that were available.

America Student Career Days Mar. 18-21 in Lexington, Ky.

Overall, 1,250 attendees took part in the career opportunities and competitive events, while industry repre-

sentatives and students engaged in more than 500 interviews, some of which resulted in internships or immediate hires.

The ALCA Student Career Fair served as a recruiting opportunity as 600 students visited

67 green industry exhibitors' booths and participated in networking opportunities and industry-related discussions.

Competitive events, such as sales presentation, equipment operation, landscape plant installation, interior and exterior design, and irrigation assembly, kept students from approximately 45 universities and colleges busy.

California Polytechnic
State – San Luis Obispo and
Cal Poly Pomona took first
and second place in the team
competition, respectively, followed by Colorado State University in third place. Individual stars included Bryan
Ashby and Nyles Gregory,
both from Cal Poly San Luis

Obispo, and Joanne Stanswell of North Metro Tech.

Next year's ALCA Student Career Days is planned for Mar. 9-12 at Mississippi State University, Starkville, Miss.

(continued on page 10)

L&L MARKS 20 YEARS



CLEVELAND, OHIO — In May of 1980 a 36-page, black-and-white magazine named *American Lawn Applicator* published its first issue. Quite a bit has changed since those days, including the size, color and name of the magazine, but one thing hasn't changed — that magazine's commitment to serving the professional lawn care and landscape industry.

This issue marks the beginning of the 20th year of Lawn & Landscape's commitment to the professional contracting industry.

"The professional lawn care and landscape industry has changed a

(continued on page 16)

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MAY 18 Kentucky Turfgrass Council Sport Field Workshops, Louisville, Ky. Contact: 606/623-6130.

MAY 19 North Carolina Turf & Landscape Research Field Day, Raleigh, N.C. Contact: 910/695-1333.

MAY 21 Desert Horticulture Conference, Tucson, Ariz. Contact: 520/621-1582.

MAY 25 Nevada Landscape Association Trade Show & Conference, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact: 702/673-0404.

JUNE 1-3 Pruning Trees and Ornamentals Workshop, Waltham, Bridgewater and Amherst, Mass. Contact: 413/545-0895.

JUNE 4-6 Plantscape's 8th Annual Christmas Decorating Seminars, Pittsburgh, Pa. Contact: 412/281-6352, JUNE 10 Kentucky Turfgrass Council Sport Field Workshops, Glasgow, Ky. Contact: 606/623-6130.

JUNE 10-12 Annual Native Plants in the Landscape Conference, Millersville, Pa. Contact: 717/872-3030.

JUNE 10-12 SIMA Snow & Ice Symposium, Pittsburgh, Pa. Contact: 814/ 456-9550.

JUNE 10-13 FNGA Annual Convention and Meeting, Naples, Fla. Contact: 800/375-3642.

JUNE 13-15 Turf and Landscape Field Days, Blacksburg, Va. Contact: 540/231-5897.

JUNE 14-15 Integrated Pest Management Conference, San Luis Obispo, Calif. Contact: 805/756-2869.

JUNE 15 Turf Seed's Field Day 17, Rolesville, N.C. Contact: 919/556-0146.

JUNE 15 Kentucky Turfgrass Council Turfgrass Field Day, Lexington, Ky. Contact: 606/623-6130.

JUNE 17-19 Southeast Greenhouse Conference and Trade Show, Greenville, S.C. Contact: 800/375-3642.

JULY 16-17 Florida Certified Landscape Contractor and Technician Exam, St. Petersburg, Fla. Contact: 800/375-3642.

JULY 19-20 PLCAA's Legislative Day on the Hill and Arlington Renewal & Remembrance Project, Washington, D.C. Contact: 800/458-3466.

JULY 23-24 ALCA Masters in Management for the Landscape Industry, Chicago. Contact: 800/395-2522.

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JULY 24-27 American Nursery & Landscape Association Annual Convention, Philadelphia. Contact: 202/ 789-2900.

JULY 27 Midwest Regional Turf Field Day, West Lafayette, Ind. Contact: 765/494-8039.

JULY 30-AUG.1 Southern Nurseryman Association Convention, Atlanta, Ga. Contact: 770/973-9026.

AUG. 6-8 TAN/MISSLARK Conference & Trade Show, Dallas, Texas. Contact: 512/280-5182.

AUG. 10 Nursery Grower's of Lake County Summer Field Day, Madison, Ohio. 440/428-0022. (continued from page 8)

AGRIBIOTECH CONTINUES SLIDE

HENDERSON, NEV. – What began as a plan to consolidate and dominate the turfseed industry has turned into a saga including an ousted founder, a sliding stock price and a slew of class action lawsuits for AgriBioTech.

ABT, which arrived on the scene in early 1995 as it began buying up seed producers, was notified of the first of many class action lawsuits against it in January. The suits, filed one per state on behalf of those states' ABT stockholders, allege fraud, accounting manipulations and imply a re-

statement of financial statements in 1997 and 1998.

The company promptly termed the allegations false and promised to defend itself "vigorously." However, the individual making those promises, Johnny Thomas, ABT chairman, chief executive officer and founder, resigned his positions with ABT as the stock price continued to slide and lawsuits continued to mount.

Thomas was replaced by Richard Budd, formerly CEO of Lofts Seed, which was acquired by ABT in January 1998. Kent Schulze remained in his positions as president and chief operating officer, and a new office of the president was created at ABT that includes four co-presidents:

Randy Ingram, chief financial officer; Thomas Rice, director of research; Kathy Gillespie, responsible for mergers, divestitures and acquisitions; and Drew Kinder.

Thomas attributed the dramatic reorganization to a change in the company's operational needs. "I remain an optimistic and enthusiastic shareholder of the company," he noted.

Budd's initial focus will include the integration of ABT's 33 acquired companies and expanding the company's board of directors, which will include four new members from outside of the company to lead the nine-member board.

"Demand for our products and spring shipments appear

(continued on page 16)

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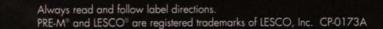
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(continued from page 13)

to be very good," noted Budd. "Although we cannot predict the profitability of the individual remaining two quarters in our fiscal year ending June 30 due to the seasonality of the seed business, management believes at this time that ... we can at least break even on the

pre-tax profit line for the remaining six-month period of our fiscal year 1999."

Meanwhile, ABT's stock continues its slide from its high point of \$29.50 a share in July to below \$5.50 as of presstime.

In addition, the company announced that exploratory efforts to identify a merger candidate or company to acquire ABT have been suspended. The company will remain independent for the time being with the goal of integrating all 33 of its seed companies into one organization operating under one name within the next 14 months.

L&L LANDSCAPE SERVICES ACQUIRED BY TRUGREEN-CHEMIAWN

CAMPBELL, CA. - L&L Landscape Services, co-owned by Steve Glover and Rob Zolezzi, was acquired by TruGreen-ChemLawn, just several weeks after LandCare USA and the maintenance division of TruGreen-ChemLawn finalized their deal to become one company.

The new organization continues to evaluate prospective names.

L&L Landscape Services, which was courted by a variety of national companies over several months before

L&L MARKS 20 YEARS

(continued from page 8)

great deal in the last two decades, so we're excited to still be a valued tool for contractors' businesses," noted Cindy Code, Group Publisher of the Lawn & Landscape Media Group, "Keeping up with

the ever-evolving nature of contractors' businesses has been quite a challenge for us, but one we have enjoyed and look forward to continue meeting."

In conjunction with the magazine's 20th anniversary celebration, each of the next 12 issues will take a look back at articles presented in previous issues. To see what were the hot topics and ideas presented in our inaugural issue, turn to page 119.





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USE READER SERVICE #15





MARKET TRENDS

being acquired by TruGreen-ChemLawn, was number 62 on *Lawn & Landscape* magazine's Top 100 landscape contractor list, reporting \$9.2 million in revenues.

The newly acquired firm will join four others in northern California - Four Seasons Landscape & Maintenance, Golden Bear Arborists, Pacific Environmental and Redwood Landcaping - to form a beach head for future growth in northern California.

Glover, who will remain active in the business said he feels good about the acquisition and his firm's new relationship with TruGreen-ChemLawn. Zolezzi plans to remain active in the landscape business as well. - Cindy Code

ASSOCIATION NEWS

n Operating Cost Study for the landscape industry is available from the American Nursery & Landscape Association. The study evaluates landscape firms' financial performance and provides insight into factors affecting profits, expenditures and budgets. The guide is published jointly by the ANLA and the Associated Landscape Contractors of America. For more information, call: 202/789-2900.

In an effort to increase support of state and international groups, the **Irrigation Association** is planning to partner with organizations representing the irrigation industry. The IA will communicate with affiliated organizations through quarterly conference calls and newsletters. For more information, call: 703/573-3551.

The Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council awarded scholarships to students majoring in the four-year turfgrass management program at Penn State. The seven \$2,000 scholarships were chosen based on high academic achievements in turfgrass management. The recipients include: Brian Bachman, Ryan Davidheiser, John Kaminski, Reid Mitchell, Bradley Park, Heather Shoener and Darryl Sparta.

The Nevada Landscape Association presented its trophy awards to craftsmen who produce outstanding landscapes. The companies honored include: Absolute Landscape Management, Envirotech, and Richmond Breen & Associates. Individuals awarded include: Paul Flint of Lawns, Etc., Deb Schoenberg of Schoenberg Design Associates and Steve Packer of Moana Nursery.



MARKET TRENDS

LESCO ACQUIRES NEW TECHNOLOGY

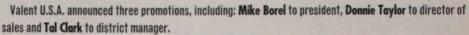
ROCKY RIVER, OHIO – LESCO announced the acquisition of rights to a new technology that will allow it to develop a broad range of unique, controlled-release fertilizers.

The new technology is expected to allow for production of "fertilizers with highly efficient and precise nutrient-release characteristics to meet the complex, exacting agronomic needs of different applications and geographies," according to the company.

LESCO hopes to introduce its first products with the new technology into the golf market later this year.

PEOPLE

Rain Bird Sales hired **Harold McKinney** as the valve product manager for the commercial division.



Weather-matic added regional sales managers John Hort, Neil Teevon and Wes Nieuwbeerto.

Cozette Hadley-Rosburg was promoted to vice president of sales and marketing at Becker-Underwood.

American Cyanamid appointed **Blair Morgan** to turf and ornamental territory representative for Florida, **Roger Bechle** to sales team leader for turf, ornamental and pest control products and **Gary Curl** to business director for turf, ornamental and pest control products group.

Todd Teske was named controller for Briggs & Stratton.

Black Rock Mfg. appointed Bob Vance and Ron Carl as regional sales managers.

Bruce Miehle was promoted to general manager of turf, ornamental and technical products at Dow AgroSciences.

Gardeners' Guild promoted Karen Davis to vice president, chief operating officer, Andrew Guliaeff and Paul Swanson to operations managers, and Mike Davidson to chief financial officer.

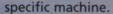


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Harold McKinney Cozette Hadley



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NURSERY MARKET REPORT

PLANT CARE AND SELECTION

IN ALL MY YEARS of green industry experience, the areas needing the most attention in the relationship between landscape installers and their nursery suppliers relates to plant knowledge and care of plants during the installation process.

Kimberly Nurseries has had as much experience in this form of interaction as anyone, from both sides of the issue. This nursery is a 93-year-old firm heavily involved in retail green and hard good sales, wholesale supplies to landscapers and landscape installation. We have seen and experienced many facets of the landscape

installation/supplier relationship.

PLANT IQ. First of all, a good, well-rounded and open-minded knowledge of plants is essential. This plant knowledge is not merely the responsibility of the supplier or nursery; the installer should have a good working knowledge of the plant material most functional for the climate, as well as specific planting site issues and requirements.

There is a much wider plant variety selection to



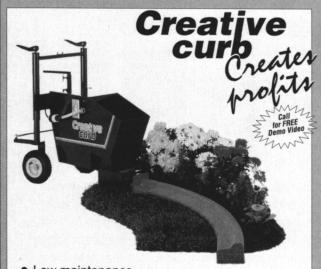
With the wide selection of plant material that is available today, a landscape contractor should have a strong working knowledge of plant material and how different species will function in specific climates.

choose from these days. Even in a more severe climate zone such as ours (zone 4), we offer customers as wide an array of plant material choices as possible.

There are many ways for nursery stock suppliers and

contractors to broaden their plant knowledge basis. Community colleges and universities are offering more and more horticultural-related classes as electives or even for college credits. Many of these

(continued on page 22)



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NURSERY MARKET REPORT

(continued from page 20)

are offered as night classes or can be taken during the off-season. There are plenty of good plant books available, many having quality color pictures as well. Good CD-ROM packages for your computer are available, many as part of an overall landscape design program.

Many areas of the country are now offering certification programs to recognize and promote those individuals and their companies who have achieved such certification status. The overall benefit that knowledge and achievement can have on our industry is profound.

The importance of plant knowledge in the proper placement on the job site cannot be stressed enough. Travelingl around our market and observing landscape projects, the ones that are planned out by knowledgeable people simply stand out from the rest. Not coincidentally, they also seem to be more sustainable and successful years later and are generally better maintained.

IN TRANSIT. The second area of improvement surrounds the care that perishable plant material receives in transit to and on the job site.

Some contractors ignore the proper transportation to get material to the job site safely. Enclosed vans offer protection from windburn and other elements that plants in open trucks are exposed to going

down the road. If such vehicles are not available, perhaps the nursery or supplier can deliver the plant material in one of their enclosed units, or one can be rented. The expenditure can be justified in having healthier plants arrive on the job site, where they are going to need all the extra energy they can muster in order to survive in their new environment.

Plants also must be monitored while at the job site. Plants have been observed sitting out in the hot sun on asphalt parking lots all day or for several days with little or no attention until they are planted. Water, either a lack of, or even too much over time, is the cause of most landscape plant mortality. This must be the case, if proper plant varieties for the area have been selected.

Usually, landscape sites consist of very dry soil, which will actually draw moisture like a wick out of the moist soil with a freshly installed landscape plant. The sooner the entire root zone of that newly planted plant can be saturated, the better the chance at successful establishment.

Many people will only water the newly planted plant again when they see the surface soil dry again. They must consider how much water the soil profile will need in order to get available water completely through the root zone of that new plant. Likewise, after installation, proper water management is essential to ensure





NURSERY MARKET REPORT

that too much water is not causing adverse effects to establishing plants. This is especially the case if an automatic irriga-

Nurseries and contractors can both learn and better understand the supply and demand process by visiting the major sources of supply.

tion system has been installed as part of the project.

Details as to future water management must be addressed prior to the contractor's departure from the completed job site. A responsible landscape firm should leave the owner simple, easy-tofollow care instructions, both

verbally and in writing, as to the care of the different elements of their new landscape. Contractors should also make themselves available for follow up visits at regular intervals until the project owner is comfortable in the

care of their new purchase. This should be the case no matter what the size of the project is.

THE HARD WAY. It bears mentioning that various hard good

items are becoming more and more prevalent in the land-scape. Various water features, statuary, brick pavers and retaining wall products are becoming larger parts of our inventory. A good working knowledge of these products and their availability is also essential.

Contractors need to work with suppliers and nurseries willing to help fill their needs. Suppliers with a good variety of products and knowledge of them are invaluable.

Nurseries and contractors can both learn and better understand the supply/demand process by visiting the major sources of supply. Outside of the busiest spring season, we visit all of our major suppliers, who update us on new products and help us understand their production, inventory and shipping processes. That input is invaluable.

It is important to note that the bottom line of all this is to better serve our customers.

Now, more than ever, potential customers have so many choices as to where and how to spend their money. The more streamlined we can keep this entire process – from grower, to supplier, to installer, to customer – the better overall experience we can provide our clients.

- David Wright

The author is president of Kimberly Nurseries, Twin Falls, Idaho.





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drive wheels to hug the ground. While a foot-operated differential lock kicks in still greater traction. And rest assured, when it comes to cutting performance, you've found mecca. The F735's 20.5-hp diesel engine has plenty of torque to cut through thick and thin. Enough to drive

heavy-duty 48- and 54-inch decks, all the way up to the new (and unique) John Deere 60-inch-high-lift, seven-gauge stamped steel deck. Interested? Visit your local John Deere dealer (call 1-800-537-8233 to find one near you). See why John Deere has been an oasis of good ideas for the past 162 years.



HORTICULTURE FORUM

PRESERVING HISTORIC TREES

IT'S NOT uncommon for the landscape contractor or lawn care operator responsible for the maintenance of many properties to become involved in the upkeep of the lawn, shrubs and ornamentals.

This frequently results in the larger, mature trees being ignored. By doing so, one may also be overlooking an element of the landscape that is very precious to the property owner.

When the declining or sick condition of a large, mature tree is brought up, a landscape contractor may search for a mysterious culprit. He or she might be better off by first thinking back upon how trees grow naturally.

Perhaps, contractors share

in the misconception that mature trees, like trees in the forest 'take care of themselves' and don't need help.

Even in the forest, trees suffer from adverse environmental conditions, yet the truth is that it's 'survival of the fittest.'

Increased
stress on mature
trees comes from
poor and compacted soils,
poor drainage, competition
from grass, restricted growing
areas, road salt, pollution, etc.
Stress reduces plant vigor and
pre-disposes mature trees to in-

The warning signs about this 300-year-old white oak tree's failing health included unusually pale green leaves and an accumulation of deadwood. Photo:
Forest City Tree
Protection

sect and disease problems. By placing emphasis on young trees and ornamentals, land-scape contractors are ignoring the high value that property owners place on their larger, mature trees. Many trees are considered irreplaceable. Frequently, trees hold significant sentimental value, too.

strate the needed expertise to care for these trees. Companies that neglect to address large, mature trees are walking away from potential sales and missing an opportunity to build customer loyalty.

A SPECIFIC CASE. Forest City Tree Protection Co. and

Lanphear Supply, South Euclid, Ohio, recently received an Excellence in Arboriculture Award of Distinction from the National Arborist Association for their efforts to preserve a historic 300-year-old white oak tree on the grounds of St. Gregory the Great Church and School in South Euclid, Ohio.

The white oak was designated a "Moses Cleaveland Tree" by the Early Settlers Association in recognition that

it was standing when Moses Cleaveland first arrived on the shores of the Cuyahoga River in 1796 and founded Cleveland, Ohio. The oak is 65 inches in diameter, approximately 65-feet tall, and has a spread covering almost a quarter acre.

A focal point of the church's landscaping and a landmark in the community, the white oak raises both aesthetic and safety concerns. It grows in the frequently used front lawn area of the church property along a busy thoroughfare. In addition to a couple of gazebos on the lawn beneath the tree, seasonal display signs and manned booths are placed there at various times throughout the year. Sidewalks, which are heavily trafficked by both school children and churchgoers, are also near the oak.

Forest City Tree Protection and Lanphear Supply have been providing care for this tree on an as-needed basis for more than 25 years.

However, despite the annual fertilization, in early 1998 the tree's leaves were unusually pale green. Significant deadwood had also accumulated. There was valid concern that falling deadwood would damage the gazebos and cars



People who place a high value on large, mature trees will invest more in maintaining and preserving them. They will also be more loyal to companies that demon-

HORTICULTURE FORUM

below or, even worse, hurt a pedestrian. In addition, the color of the foliage was an indication that the tree's health was in decline.

A tree's leaves serve as its 'food factory.' They absorb energy from the sun, converting it through the magic of photosynthesis into starches and sugars necessary for growth. Large, dark green leaves indicate adequate chlorophyll and suffi-

cient surface area is present for efficient food production.

Small, pale green leaves make inefficient food factories, causing trees to deplete their stored energy reserves. In an older, mature tree this can signify a serious problem.

In a natural setting, the decay process takes leaves, twigs, branches and tree trunks, breaking them down into elements that will replenish those taken from the soil. This organic matter also helps to maintain an adequate level of moisture and aeration in the soil for healthy root development to occur.

During the 50-plus years the tree has been in the landscape setting, the leaves and twigs have been raked up rather than allowed to decompose and replenish the soil. Even the turf itself actually competes with the tree for water and nutrients. And all of the activities on top of the tree's root zone over the years must have caused considerable compaction.

Although the slow-release fertilizer application compensated for the lack of natural nutrient replenishment, it was important to make more of an effort to restore the root zone to its natural condition. A mycorrhizae inoculation combined with another dose of slow-release fertilizer was then applied, containing humates, a root-zone biostimulant. Mycorrhizae, nature's link between trees and soil, are created when plant roots and certain fungi form a mutually beneficial relationship. Mycorrhizal fungi expand the network of a landscape's root system. To-

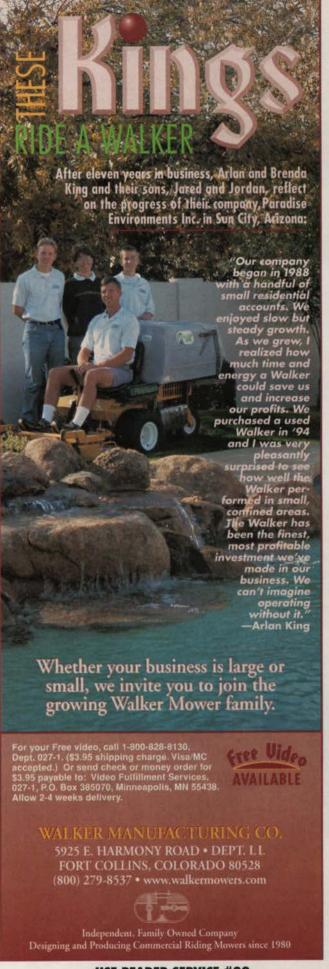
Increased stress on mature trees comes from poor and compacted soils, poor drainage, competition from grass, restricted growing areas, road salt and pollution.

gether with humates, they increase a root system's capacity to absorb water and elements while improving aeration.

Pruning was then done to remove dead and broken branches. Great care had to be taken not to damage the gazebos below.

Four months after treatment, the leaves were a rich, healthy, dark green. Because special attention was paid to one tree and because it's preservation was a success, a client relationship was solidified. The tree should remain a healthy and significant asset to the community for many years to come. – Lauren Lanphear

Lanphear is president and third generation owner of Forest City Tree Protection Co. and Lanphear Supply, South Euclid, Ohio. He can be reached at 1884 S. Green Road, South Euclid, Ohio 44121 or drj3@ix.netcom.com.



DESIGN NOTEBOOK

THE CITY OF TULSA, Okla., commissioned the restoration of the Heatherridge Storm Water Detention Facility after damage to natural wetlands occurred during the construction of a road.

The entire site is comprised of 22 acres, with two ponds surrounded by a suburban neighborhood. The ponds, totaling 7.7 acres in size, are divided by an access road. To maintain an equal water elevation in each pond, the ponds are connected beneath the road by drainage pipes. The project required six weeks to complete.



Turning the 7.7 acres of ponds into an aesthetically pleasing, storm water run-off collection site required extensive algae removal, installation of wetland and aquatic plants and considerable seeding. Photos: Ruppert Landscape DESIGN CHAL-LENGE. The objective of this \$450,000 wetland mitigation project was to transform the existing storm water detention facility into a naturalized environment that would capture

storm water run-off and prevent destructive flooding common in midwestern storm showers. Another goal was to aid in filtering out environmental contaminants, thereby increasing water quality.

DESIGN SOLUTIONS. One of the first steps in creating this wetland environment was to conduct soil tests and to clean and grade all planting areas. Another initial task was to measure the water depths along the ponds' edges since water depth is critical to the survival of aquatic plant life. All algae from the ponds was removed – much of it manually, to minimize chemical applications.



PROJECT: Heartherridge Wetlands

LANDSCAPE CO.: Ruppert Landscape Company

DESIGNER: Keith Franklin of Landplan Consultants

SIZE OF PROPERTY: 22 acres

MAN-HOURS TO

CONSTRUCT: 2,980

PLANTS INSTALLED: More than 127,000 aquatic plants and

about 1,000 seedlings

As part of the reforestation efforts, more than 3.2 acres of land surrounding the ponds were seeded, and about 1,000 whips (larger than seedlingsized trees) were installed. These new trees create a buffer around the pond edges and screen the area from the nearby residential community. Sevenfoot metal T-posts with tree identifications were used to stake upright and mark the reforestation trees.

One of the largest challenges of this project was the vast amount of plant material. More than 127,000 aquatic herbaceous plants were located, purchased from five different states (with similar climate

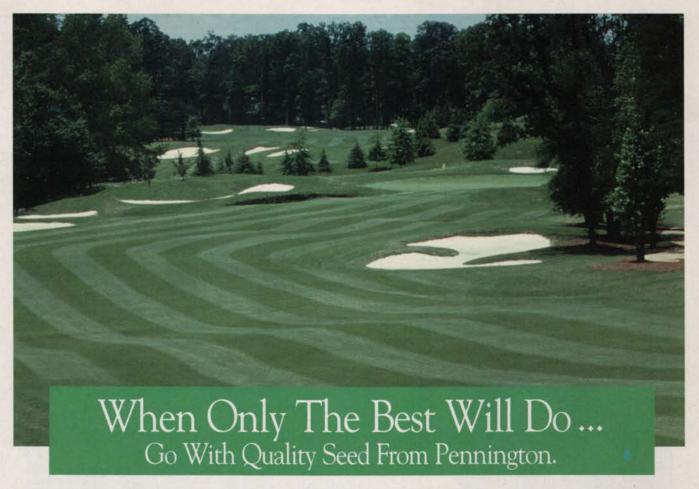
zones) and delivered by refrigerated truck and installed. Placement of these wetland materials varied according to the specific water requirements of each species. By their very nature, these materials are extremely sensitive to drying out, hence crews staggered the delivery of these items in intervals so that plant storage was minimal.

The equipment list for this flood control project was short: a small tractor with a rake attachment: a skid steer with an auger; and a boat. Thus, nearly all of the work was completed by hand, which made for a number of time-consuming tasks. The boat was the only transportation crews had to the two islands, making planning and the sequencing/scheduling of work critical. Once the planting was complete, a 9,500-linear-foot nylon twine fence was installed around the ponds and islands to keep geese out of planted areas, allowing the plants to establish.

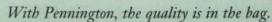
THE RESULTS. Two years later, the dangers of stream erosion and flooding have been greatly reduced by the tremendous storage capacity of the two ponds, which slowly release water back into the local stream. Also, excess storm water run-off, which is temporarily stored there, undergoes a natural cleansing as it comes in contact with the aquatic plants. Additionally, the trees, shrubs, grasses and aquatic materials have formed an inviting habitat for numerous birds, animals and reptiles. - Kathleen Sheetz

The author is a communications specialist at Ruppert Landscape Co., Ashton, Md.





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EXPLORING THE INTERNET

ISTHE

IF YOU'RE NOT on the web, then your business is in trouble.

At least, that's what a lot of folks would have businesspeople believe these days. Internet sites have exploded on the scene with hundreds of new ones being developed on a daily basis. In just a short time, it has become commonplace for televi-

(continued on page 34)

Industry Computer Survey

re you managing a computerized office? Based on a survey of Lawn & Landscape readers, you do have computers in your office and you're using them for a multitude of functions. But that doesn't mean computers have always been embraced within the business.

Fifty-five percent of the respondents to the survey said they have been in business for 16 years or longer, while just 16 percent have been using computers for 16 years or longer. Admittedly, those numbers could be due in part to the lesser prevalence computers held in the workplace nearly two decades ago, but while 20 percent of the respondents noted they have been in business for

10 years or less, 48 percent of respondents have been using computers for 10 years or less, indicating that companies operate for their first few years without computers.

About 40 percent of the respondents use between one and three computers in the office, with an average full-time staff between 15 and 20 people, although 24 percent of respondents have more than 10 computers in their office.

When it comes to computer applications, it was no surprise to see computers handling billing functions for 100 percent of the respondents and accounting fuctions for 96 percent. This was followed in popularity by estimating jobs (60 percent); routing and managing inventory (both at 52 percent); scheduling equipment maintenance (44 percent); and the increasingly popular imaging (24 percent) and computer-aided design (20 percent).

(continued on page 34)

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EXPLORING THE INTERNET

(continued from page 32)

sion commercials and print advertisements to include the advertiser's website address. Consumers have embraced the value of the Internet as a research tool and some people are willing to purchase products electronically today.

What potential does this Internet boom hold for the lawn care and landscape industry, however? Is there a way for contractors to benefit from having a website, or do you have be selling stock with the phrase ".com" in the name to make money off of the Internet? Several contractors have developed websites — more than 600 at last check — and they report real benefits.

(continued on page 36)

Industry Computer Survey

(continued from page 32)

ONLINE LIVES. Another survey, this one conducted via our website, www.lawnandlandscape.com, took a look at how contractors get online and what they do once they're there.

An overwhelming majority of respondents $-92.5\,$ percent — have access to the Internet at work. Most respondents (45 percent) access the Internet via a 28.8 bps modem, although 56k modems and 33.6 bps modems are also popular.

Yet another clear sign of the Internet's growing prevalence in business' lives is the fact that 55 percent of these respondents reported revenues of less than \$100,000 annually for 1998.

The popularity of the Internet with these respondents was obvious, as 61.2 percent said they go online daily, while 26.3 percent are online three times a week or less. Finding a most popular time for some cyber-surfing is a little more difficult, however,

as 33.8 percent said they are online most often between 6 p.m. and 10 p.m., 33 percent said their time to go online varies, and 27.8 percent said they are usually online between 7 a.m. and 11 a.m.

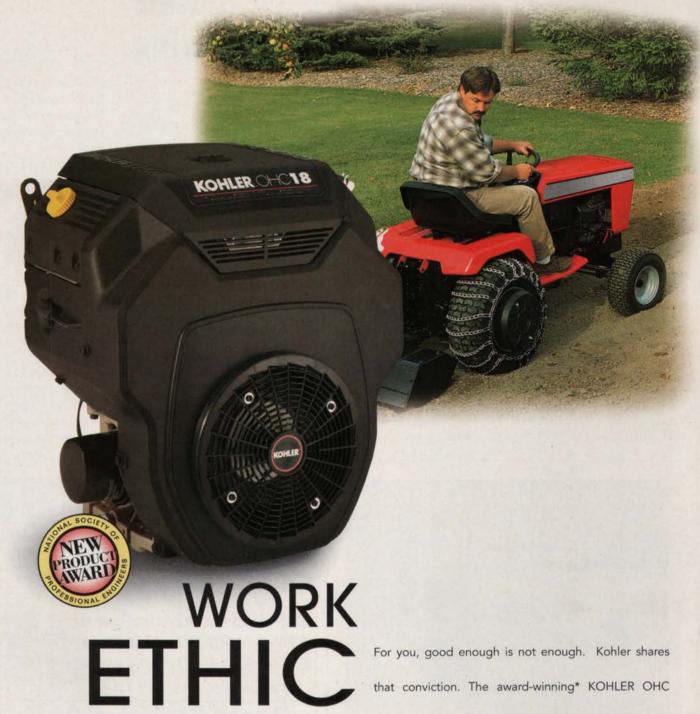
Media sites were voted the most popular by respondents (44.4 percent), although they certainly aren't the only ones being visited. 24.8 percent said they most commonly visit a variety of sites, while 15.8 percent go online to check out equipment manufacturers'/suppliers' sites and 11.3 percent go online looking for news.

While more than half of the respondents reported they go online from home daily -55.6 percent - using the computer at the office is clearly more popular with some as 20.3 percent said they never use the Internet from home.

The future of e-commerce, or the buying and selling of goods over the Internet, certainly appears promising as 78.2 percent of respondents said they would be interested in buying goods over the Internet. — Bob West







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EXPLORING THE INTERNET

(continued from page 34)

TAKING THE PLUNGE. There is no lack of contractors with websites (see sidebar, this page), but that doesn't necessarily mean that any of these sites are actually making money for the companies.

"I see the Internet as the future and I want to invest in it today," noted Mark Sharkey, president, Sharkey & Sharkey Landscape Contractors, Parsippany, N.J. "I think it's important to beat everybody to the punch and be a state-ofthe-art company, just like by investing in new equipment."

While Sharkey is optimistic that having a web presence will boost sales, he's primarily focused on additional benefits of the site for now. "A benefit to having a website is the impression of your company it gives other people," he explained, comparing it to a membership in the Better Business Bureau. "This impresses upon potential customers that we're more than a bunch of people cutting grass, especially commercial customers with websites of their own."

"I was initially looking at our website as a public relations or educational type of service for our current customers," recalled Connie Balint, president, Buckingham Greenery, Buckingham, Va. "But we have a retail flower

Samples to Choose From

simple search for "landscape contractors" via the Yahoo! search engine on the Internet uncovered 600 websites. Here are a few of them:

www.alandscape.com/a1.html

www.rpmarzilli.com

www.mckeowninc.com/commercial.html

www.kayebros.com

www.mtecza.qpg.com

www.yardscaping.com/yardplan.html

www.paraisolandscape.com/index.html

shop as well and we've filled orders all over the country for materials that people have seen pictures of on our site." Clean Cut Lawn
Care, Chapel Hill,
N.C., has picked up
some contracts that
Randy Brown,
owner, traced back to
the company's
website.

"We got three contracts in one month from the website," Brown noted. "We're in an area that is booming with a technologically savvy customer base where everyone has a computer."

David Morello, president, David Morello Garden Enterprises, Houston, Texas, places pictures of jobs

(continued on page 38)





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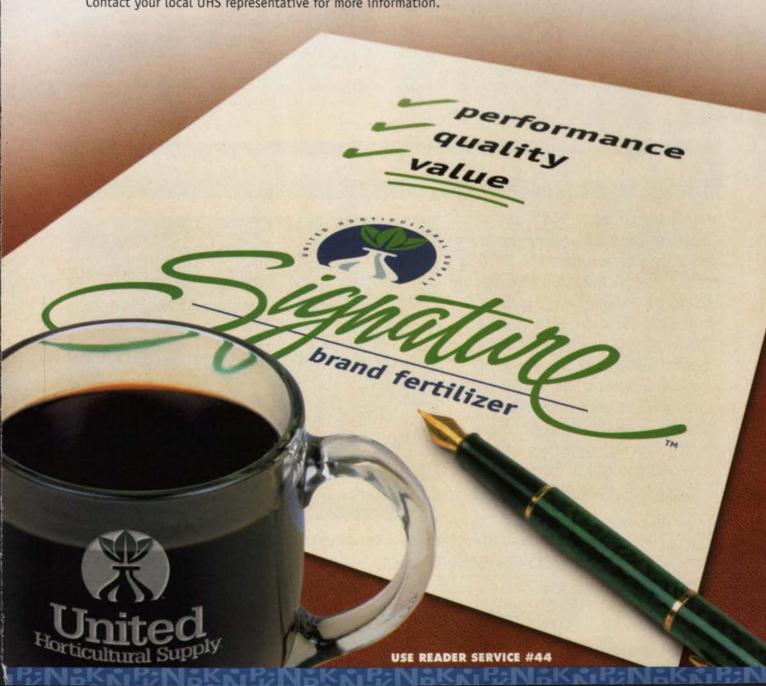
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Contact your local UHS representative for more information.



EXPLORING THE INTERNET

(continued from page 36)

his company has completed on his company's website to give prospective clients design ideas or thoughts on how to manage their landscape before he even meets with them for the first time.

CREATING TRAFFIC JAMS. The undeniable key to building a successful website is creating a critical mass of user traffic.

"We have had our site up for more than two years, so the address is on our stationery, our trucks, our Yellow Pages advertising, our newsletter and a sticker we put on the back of envelopes we mail out," Balint related.

"We created a monthly maintenance calendar that people find to be pretty nice and they come back to the site every month for," Brown noted, adding that his traffic jumped from a couple dozen hits a day to more

than 200 per day after registering the site with search engines. "The calendar tells them exactly what needs to be done on their property for every month of the year, and hopefully they'll hire us to do it for them."



"The real challenge is keeping the site updated and getting people to come back and visit again once they've already seen the site," Balint added. "We highlight different plants and projects each month and have a Plant of the Month that is always changing."

Most contractors's websites also include an area designed to gather information from visitors in order to build up their prospective client database and follow up their website visit by mailing out marketing materials.

Contractors with websites said the cost to initially develop their sites ranged from \$500 to a couple thousand dollars, which is followed by a lesser monthly maintenance fee to update the site and keep it operating.

— Bob West

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USE READER SERVICE #60

Ever-Green Turf & Landscape

HEADQUARTERS: Troy, Ohio

FOUNDED: 1976

PRIMARY SERVICES: Ever-Green derives approximately 40 percent of revenues from its lawn care division, 45 percent from its grounds maintenance division and 15 percent from its sports turf division.

EMPLOYEES: 15 year-round employees; 10 seasonal employees who work about 9 months out of the year

1998 REVENUES: \$1.2 million

1999 PROJECTED REVENUES: \$1.4 million



The Company



MISSION STATEMENT: To establish and apply a "golden rule" attitude between the management team and employees, which they, in turn, convey to the community we serve.

FUTURE CHALLENGES: Not giving in to the external pressures of what our competition is doing but staying with our course of direction.



The Management Team



JOE DUNCAN

President, 25 years experience in the lawn care industry

TED MERCER

Vice president, 21 years experience in the lawn care industry

PATTY GAYLOR

Office manager, 24 years experience in the

I awn care industry



oe Duncan and Ted Mercer can't go anywhere in Troy, Ohio, without being noticed.

Walking into a local restaurant, as president and vice president, respectively, of the 23-year-old, locally owned and operated Ever-Green Turf & Landscape, the pair is readily approached by customers and friends.

"I pride myself on the fact that 75 percent of my customers live within a 10-mile radius of the office and 90 percent live within a 20mile radius of the office," Duncan related.

Focusing strongly on the local service area, encouraging his employees to get involved in the community, giving his employees as much attention as he gives his customers and standing behind his company's mission statement, Duncan has kept Ever-Green growing at a comfortable 5 percent average annual growth rate.

"My goal isn't to expand out of this area or focus on making more of the almighty dollar," Duncan asserted. "I want to give the best service I can within this 10- to 20-mile radius. If I get outside of this area, it's human nature that I'll take better care of the customer living 5 miles away vs. the one living 40 miles away – that's not what I'm about."

Duncan is comfortable with his company's steady growth, and he's proud of what he calls his "prehistoric" ways of managing, such as refusing to use telemarketing to gain customers. Instead, he has perfected the art of expanding his services based on his employees' strengths.

Ever-Green has added commercial grounds maintenance, sports turf maintenance and construction, residential tree and shrub spraying, and landscape installation and design to his once all-residential lawn care company. And this year, as growth approaches the 15 percent mark and the customer cancellation rate hovers below 10 percent, according to Duncan, the quality of service has not been lost.

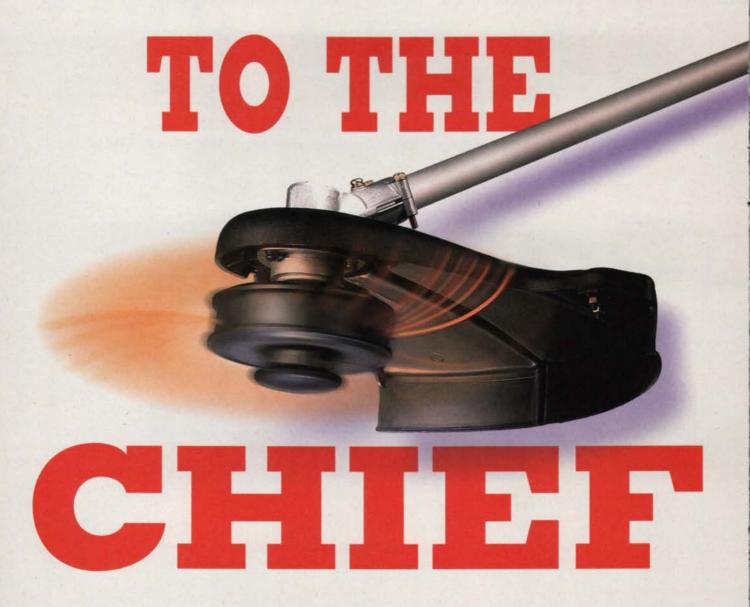
(continued on page 44)

Joe Duncan (left) and Ted Mercer (right) have built an expanding company by taking advantage of being in a small town and offering the services customers want. Photo: Sonny Fulks

Ever-Green Turf & Landscape
has expanded its services and growth
potential by focusing on keeping
its business at a maintainable
operational and local level.

By Nicole Wisniewski

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cover story

(continued from page 41)

PLANTING THE SEED. In 1970, Leisure Lawn made its debut under the ownership of the late Jim Sackett. As a small lawn care business in the same town that industry giant ChemLawn was founded in, Leisure Lawn had an advantage by offering a granular alternative to ChemLawn's liquid lawn care.

Duncan was hired in 1975 as one of the

two lawn care technicians. Almost overnight, he became witness to remarkable

growth, and branches were opened in Cincinnati, Indianapolis and Minneapolis."

At 20 years old, Duncan was offered a job managing the sales at the Cincinnati branch of Leisure Lawn. By 1977, Duncan

'We chose to grow by selling supplemental sales to our current customer base – residential with tree and shrub care; landscape design . . . and commercially with a total maintenance package.' – Mercer

.

was branch manager and by 1983 he was zone manager responsible for the Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, Ind., and Dayton, offices.

After selling the rest of his business to the Baker family, Sackett owned only the Troy office of Leisure Lawn.

In December 1984, Sackett wanted to retire and Duncan jumped at the opportunity to buy the \$400,000 lawn care business. He was able to purchase the company through a 10-year buyout, in which Sackett financed the company 100 percent and agreed with Duncan on a purchase price.

"I set goals for myself," Duncan said. "I didn't finish college, so I knew I had a strike against me. I thought, 'OK, I don't have a formal education, but I did have the opportunity to be with some of the greatest minds in the industry – people like Doug Halterman, senior vice president of Leisure Lawn.' So I told myself that by the time I was 30 I would own my own business, by the time I was 40 I would have the business paid off, and by the time I was 50 I would be retired. The only problem with that last one is that the older I get the more fun I have coming into work everyday."

Mercer and Office Manager Patty Gaylor have similar backgrounds. Gaylor started at Ever-Green in 1976 and has run the office/accounting ever since. Mercer maintained golf courses after high school and was hired as a lawn care technician at Ever-Green in 1979.

OPEN TO EXPANDING. "Never jump into a business just because it's there," Duncan recommended, sharing one of his most important business philosophies.

After purchasing Ever-Green – an allresidential lawn care company – Duncan started to pick up on potential growth areas within his market. Figuring out what additional services would be profitable wasn't tough after accepting the fact that the company couldn't do everything.

"A lot of companies around here offer irrigation work, but we stayed out of it," Mercer noted. "We didn't have the background in it so we subcontract it. We also get another company to trim larger trees."

(continued on page 46)



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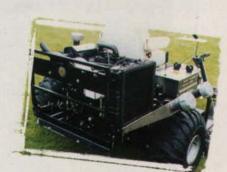
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USE READER SERVICE #84

cover story

(continued from page 44)

One service that contributed to the growth of the company was commercial grounds maintenance. Although Ever-Green only has about 150 commercial grounds maintenance accounts vs. its 2,000 residential lawn care customers, the commercial grounds maintenance business brings in a greater dollar volume.

This expansion into the maintenance of commercial grounds arose out of the company's visibility in a booming commercial area off of Ohio's main north/south highway, Duncan explained.

"The growth in this area just happened over night," Mercer said. "We had one company that wanted us to do maintenance and then another. Then they started asking us to do pruning and lawn care and irrigation. After that, we were practically forced into doing their snow removal."

This contributed to Ever-Green's focused, local growth.

(continued on page 48)

Playing Ball — Profitably

hen city schools and parks began to phase out in-house grounds crews to save on equipment and supply purchases, it didn't take long for a college football referee and an ex-golf course maintenance worker to incorporate sports turf maintenance and construction into their lawn care company. The company already had the right equipment and knew about key sports field issues, noted Ted Mercer, vice president, Ever-Green Turf & Landscape, Troy, Ohio. So all they needed to do was sell.

"The toughest part was selling to the right people: athletic directors and building managers," Mercer recalled. "It took time to build those relationships and explain that we're not taking this work away from them but we're there to help. A good selling point was discussing game and practice field

safety issues. These people saw a need to improve their facilities due to liability concerns."

Another selling challenge was getting schools to understand that a lawn care company can't afford to give this service away just for advertising or recognition.

"At first, that's what we did," Mercer said.
"But we couldn't continue that way and be profitable. Growing out of it wasn't hard, though, because the school was happy with our service."

Once Ever-Green had the first stadium done, it had something to show potential customers.

"We sponsored our own field day and we invited business managers and field directors to Troy Memorial Stadium," Mercer recalled. "We showed them the field, had a slide show explaining the progression of work and served lunch. Once we could show people what we did, it was easier to sell the service."—Nicole Wisniewski

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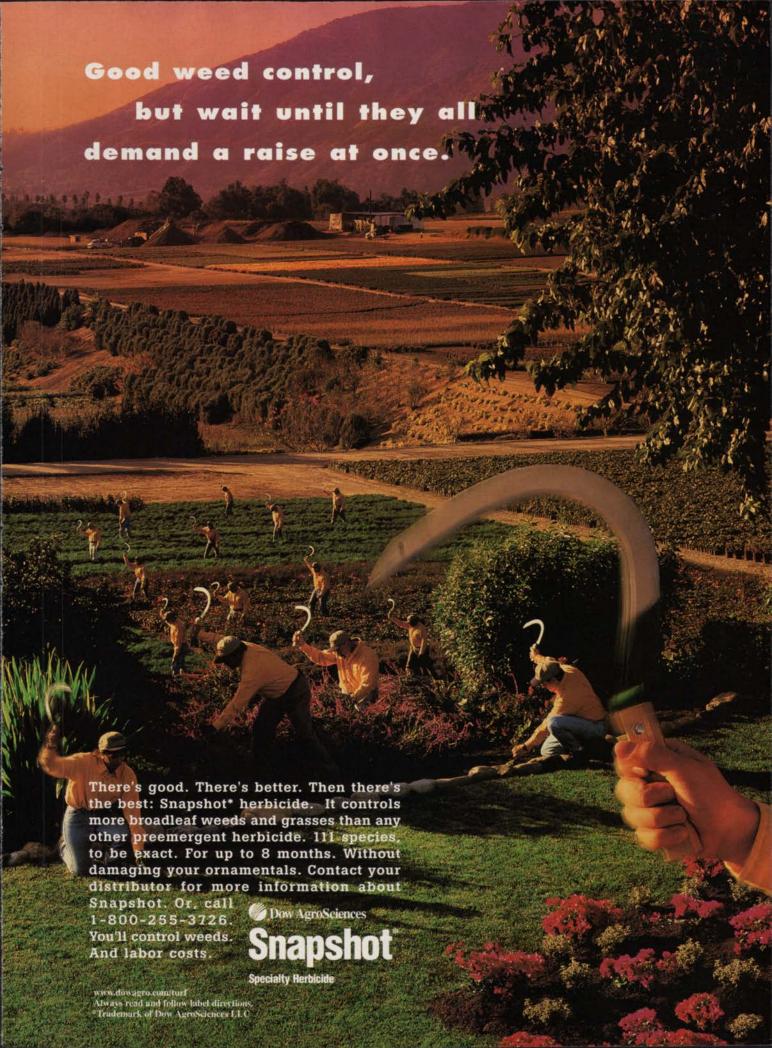
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cover story

(continued from page 46)

"We chose to grow by selling supplemental sales to our current customers – residential with tree and shrub care; landscape design; installation and construction; and commercially with a total maintenance package," Mercer noted.

In 1990, after about five years of experimenting, Ever-Green also ventured into the sports turf business, which became one of the company's key services through Duncan's and Mercer's sports-related turf maintenance backgrounds. Duncan is a college football referee and continually learns about the business by talking with grounds maintenance supervisors and athletic field directors; and Mercer was in golf course maintenance prior to starting his career at the Ever-Green.

"Now, I think sports turf is going to be one of our biggest areas for future growth," Mercer enthused, explaining that the company's first project – Troy Memorial Stadium – helped kick off this part of their business (see "Playing Ball - Profitably" on page 50).

"The school asked us to take care of the field," Duncan explained. "I thought about it and asked myself, 'Do we have the right personnel to handle it?' We had experienced managers. All we needed to do was train our employees in this area."

Ever-Green now has 20 accounts, which amounts to about 50 sports fields.

Because sports turf is a "specialty" service, Duncan said the dollar volume that jobs bring in warrants traveling out of Ever-Green's normal service area for the work.

"Sports turf is not as competitive a business because there aren't 14 companies bidding on the same project," Duncan explained. "We can get a good rate of return. The stadium renovation in Lima is a \$100,000 project."

One way Duncan and Mercer expanded this service while keeping the work within a 30-mile radius of the office was by stressing the importance of keeping practice fields constantly maintained.

"That's where the kids spend most of their time," Mercer noted. "They're on the game field once a week, but they practice everyday, so safety is a big issue on these fields."

"Ever-Green's growth in the next five years will be mostly in the sports turf area," Mercer declared. "And as sports like soccer become more popular in this area, sports turf maintenance will continue on as a necessity."

LOCALLY OWNED & OPERATED. "My greatest compliment to this business is that if I polled of the residents of Troy, Ohio, more than half of them would say that Ted Mercer owns this business and not Joe Duncan," Duncan enthused, crediting Mercer's community involvement as a two-term city councilman for much of the company's success.

"I find it very important to give back to

(continued on page 50)

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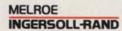


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cover story

(continued from page 48)

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your community," Duncan noted. "I'm very active in this community, and I like for my people to be very active in this community."

This involvement has been a key for Ever-Green because of the company's size, Mercer added.

"In a town of 20,000 people, being visible in the community certainly helps busi-

'I set goals for myself. I told myself that by the time I was 30 I would own my own business, by the time I was 40 I would have the business paid off, and by the time I was 50 I would be retired.' – Duncan

ness," Mercer said. "Because Joe goes to Kiwanis lunches and meetings and because I have contacts from being born and raised with family in this community, call Joe Duncan or myself first and at least give us a shot before contacting anybody else."

A recent challenge because of Ever-Green's community involvement is reaching the new residents of Troy, Ohio, who don't have any local loyalties.

"One of the problems we are finding is that the demographics of this community

> are changing a bit," Duncan noted. "People are moving in, and these aren't 'Miami County' people anymore. It becomes difficult to communicate who we are, especially because we don't do phone solicitation."

To overcome this obstacle, Duncan makes sure his employees do whatever they can

to have as much interaction as possible with their clients.

"We have a policy here where when we do an application we make sure we talk to that customer before we leave the yard," Duncan noted. "If they aren't home, we make sure to leave an invoice and a note reminding them that if they have any questions, comments or problems, they can call us. This ensures that these people will talk about us and that their new neighbors will notice us on their lawns.

"We also send out or hand deliver brochures explaining who we are and listing the services we offer to the neighbors of people who have our service. If we have an opportunity to meet potential customers at their front door and explain our program and who we are then the chances of selling our services to them are greatly enhanced."

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

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USE READER SERVICE #73

Intelligent

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tree or
shrub
installation
can reduce
the
possibility
of future
problems.

By Angela Dyer



t happens all too often. A tree is being removed from a property because it didn't get the correct maintenance. Maybe the tree finally surrendered to a deadly disease. Or, worst of all, perhaps the problems started when the tree was not properly installed in the first place.

The successful installation of trees and shrubs requires knowledge about many factors including site selection, how deep the planting should be and what maintenance should be performed as soon as the woody ornamental is in the ground. If these major points are considered during the installation and contractors know what costly and deadly mistakes to avoid, a tree or shrub installation will run more smoothly and may eliminate the risk of future problems.

SITE STRATEGIES. The first step of any installation is choosing the perfect location for the customer's trees and shrubs. Although there are many factors to consider, the most common considerations mentioned by contractors are drainage and soil conditions.

"Look for areas that are well-drained and have fertile soil," recommended Bruce Phillips, owner of Treemasters, Fulton, Md. "Also, look for areas with the appropriate

amount of sunlight that is needed for the specific plant material."

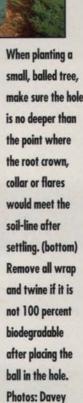
Kevin McSherry, president and owner, From the Ground Up, Decatur, Ill., also suggested paying close attention to the soil type and drainage ability of the location.

"Keep in mind your location to sidewalks, buildings and driveways. This is useful when choosing the plant type," McSherry pointed out. "For example, you don't want to install plants that are too large for the site. Also, be aware of the amount of sun or shade that is in the area where you will plant."

"We look at a site's drainage ability and also the sun and wind in that area," echoed Jeff

(continued on page 56)





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tree & shrub installation

(continued from page 54)

Korhan, president of Treemendous Landscape, Plainfield, Ill. "We use that information to determine our plant choice."

Additional factors to note include paying attention to whether or not the tree will be placed near power lines and knowing how much room it will have to grow, according to Bob Hawkinson, vice president of TLC Total Lawn Care, Jacksonville, Fla.

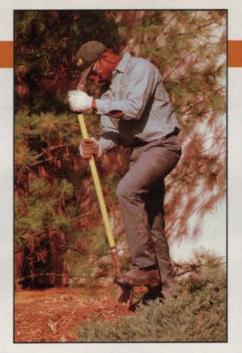
"Also, for shrubs, contractors need to look at the color of building," Hawkinson added. "You don't want to put a white shrub against a white building. In addition, pay attention to the plant's cold hardiness, maintenance needs, possible pest problems and whether or not it's poisonous. You definitely don't want to put a poisonous shrub on a playground."

With all of the requirements that different plant materials have and the many conditions that sites have, Roger Funk, vice president and general manager of Davey Institute, the research and training division of Davey Tree, Kent, Ohio, explained the importance of matching these up to see if the plant and the site is a good fit.

"Try to match the requirements of the tree to the site characteristics," recommended Funk, highlighting a plant's hardiness zones and sun exposure needs, as well as soil conditions and drainage as keys to focus on. "If they don't match, sometimes you can change the site characteristics but

usually the best solution is to change the plant material. The more they differ, the more maintenance dollars you will end up spending."

Careful contractors will still overlook site problems. As Karen Olson-Smith de-



For planting container-grown or balled-and-burlapped trees, prepare a site by digging a wide dish-shaped hole of at least three times the root-ball diameter. Photo: Davey Tree

scribed, the most common mistake she sees is plant material needing full sun that is planted in full shade.

"I've actually had to move plants around to find a better location for them," re-

(continued on page 58)

Prevent and Protect

s more wooded land is developed into commercial and residential sites, the construction process can be deadly to nearby trees, according to the International Society of Arboriculture, Champaign, Ill., however, it is possible to preserve trees on building sites if the right measures are taken.

There are five major ways that trees can be damaged during construction, according to the ISA.

- Physical injury to the trunk and crown Construction equipment can injure the above-ground portion of a tree by breaking branches, tearing the bark and wounding the tree.
- Cutting the roots The digging and trenching necessary to construct a building or to install underground utilities will likely sever a portion of the roots of many trees in the area.
- Soil compaction This happens when pores, the spaces between soil
 particles, are filled with water and air. The heavy equipment used in
 construction compacts the soil, and can dramatically reduce the amount
 of pore space. This not only inhibits root growth and penetration, but
 also decreases oxygen in the soil that is essential to the growth and
 function of the roots.
- · Smothering the roots by adding soil Piling soil over the root system

or increasing the grade will smother the roots. It only takes a few inches of added soil to kill a sensitive, mature tree.

• Exposure to the elements is the fifth form of injury — Trees in a forest situation grow as a community, protecting each other from the elements. Removal of neighboring trees, or opening the shared canopies of trees will expose the remaining trees to sunlight and wind.

Knowing the five major ways that trees can become damaged, it is crucial to know what to do to protect them, according to the ISA.

- Erect barriers The single most important action to take is to set up construction fences around all of the trees that are to remain. The fences should be placed as far out from the trunks of the trees as possible. As a general guideline, allow 1 foot of space from the trunk for each inch of trunk diameter.
- Limit access It at all possible, it is best to allow only one access route on and off the property. Specify storage areas for equipment, soil and construction materials. These areas should be away from protected trees.
- Get it in writing All of the measures intended to protect your trees must be written into the construction specifications.
- Maintain good communication It is important for the both the landscape and construction crews to work together as a team.
- Post-construction tree maintenance Trees will require several years to adjust to the injury and environmental changes that occur during construction. Stressed trees are more prone to health problems such as disease and insect infestations. — Angela Dyer

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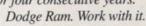
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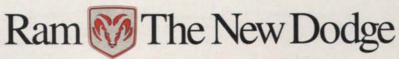
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trees & shrub installation

(continued from page 56)

marked Olson-Smith, marketing and sales director for TechScape, Richardson, Texas.

Phillips also agreed that he sees quite a few plants that are not shade tolerant planted in the shade. "Also, if insects and disease are prevalent in a certain area, you should think ahead to a maintenance program or not install susceptible plants in that area."

Compacted soil is another condition that should not be overlooked, according to McSherry. "Compacted soil can be mostly at a commercial or construction site and even at residential sites that are being relandscaped. There might be areas where heavy traffic was present, either by vehicle or foot, and it is now compacted. This soil may need to have soil amendments added in order to reduce compaction."

THE PLANTING PROCESS. To make tree and shrub plantings successful, it's crucial to know the common mistakes that have al-

(continued on page 60)

ne of the first steps in installing trees and shrubs is making sure the land-

scape is prepared for the planting.

This means that the soil should be in the proper condition. There are a few key points to keep in mind when making these necessary soil preparations.

Soil Preparations

Bruce Phillips, owner of Treemasters, Fulton, Md., explained a step-by-step process to follow before planting begins.

"First, find out what mature trees are in the area," Phillips suggested. "Keep their root systems in mind when digging as not to damage them. Then, take soil tests and check the pH level to tell how much organic material you are going to need to add.

Echoing Phillips on the importance of root systems, David Allen, vice president of Rootwell said, "Determining how well trees and shrubs will grow and the overall health of the plant greatly depends on the condition of the root system. Roots must have an available water source with proper drainage, too much water is as detrimental as not enough."

Phillips also stated that contractors also need to be aware of any fertilizer requirements necessary, recommending slow-release fertilizers because they will not burn the roots.

"If necessary, we will improve the soil by adding an organic material," stated Kevin McSherry, president and owner of From the Ground Up, Decatur, III. "We till it in 8 to 12 inches deep."

Phillips also recommended that soil fracturing might be necessary for heavy clay soils that have been compacted. "Soil fracturing breaks up the compacted soil, which is sometimes necessary before planting."

"Even with heavy soil, if it is removed and replaced, it will remain non-compacted for three to five years," added Roger Funk, vice president and general manager of Davey Institute, the research and training division of Davey Tree, Kent, Ohio. — Angela Dyer



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Surflan				0	•	0		

of control

Medium

Medium—High

High

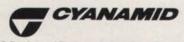
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Level of control



tree & shrub installation

(continued from page 58)

ready been made, in order to avoid them.

Phillips listed several mistakes such as not removing the synthetic twine or burlap from the root ball, which will eventually girdle the root ball and restrict its growth and kill it. It's also just as important to break up the root mass. This could also wrap around the tree and "choke" it.

Placing trees and shrubs too deep in the ground seems to be the most prevalent error contractors see. Hawkinson said that he plants a couple of inches higher than normal because the tree will settle.

"Some people plant them too low and then mulch at the top of the crown, only to find that the tree fails," Hawkinson stated. In order to keep the tree from being damaged from too deep of a planting, there are some guidelines that can be followed, according to McSherry.

"It does depend on the plant size," McSherry explained, "We normally look at a container and triple its size and that will become the size of the hole. For balled-and-burlapped plants, we triple the size of the ball. We use this rule for perennials as well, and triple the size of the quart container."

LAST BUT NOT LEAST. When the installation is nearly complete and the plant has been placed in the ground, a contractor needs to be aware of the next steps necessary to give the tree or shrub a good start.

The first thing to do once the plant material is in the hole is to fill the soil back in around the plant and settle it with water, according to Funk. The next step is pruning and applying mulch to the site.

"Mulch helps in a few ways," Funk commented. "During the establishment of the root system, competition for water from the weeds inhibits the root growth. But, mulch can inhibit these weeds in the first place, if it is used. Mulch also moderates the soil temperature, as well as captures moisture and slows evaporation."

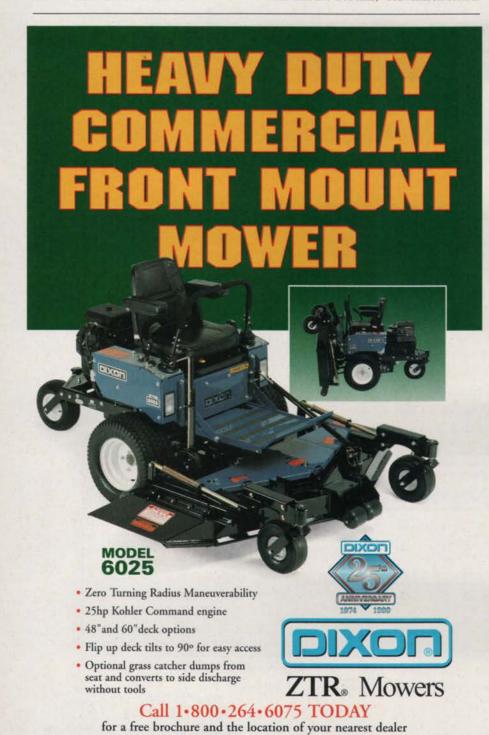
After the planting, McSherry also protects the root system by fertilizing the tree or shrub with a fertilizer having low nitrogen and high potassium and phosphorus.

"These are generally root stimulators," McSherry explained. "We fertilize all of our plant material at the time of planting. Then we leave directions with the homeowners that covers watering and fertilizing instructions. We tell them what the plants need – about 1 inch of water per week. We also tell them to be sure to use a slow trickle of water for about 25 minutes. A fast stream of water could just run off quickly and not absorb."

Aside from these maintenance tips, preventative maintenance is a major factor to remember before the project even begins. It will allow the whole process to run smoothly.

"Even before installation, make sure you have healthy plant material," Olson-Smith said. "Choose plants that have healthy roots and are free from stress and disease."

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine



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USE READER SERVICE #59

As seasonal color
becomes more popular,
contractors need to be
prepared on how to
manage color programs
for clients.

To get the right color at the right time, it's important to determine ahead of time what the plant material is going to look like when it blooms. A key to seasonal color is making sure that there is color on the property all through the year.

By Angela Dyer seasonal color program is much more complex than just planting a few geraniums and marigolds around a property and call-

ing it complete. More and more customers are beginning to ask for a seasonal color program in their landscape design and contractors need to be ready. With its growing popularity, contractors need to know how to manage a color program so that it is effective for the client, as well as the contractor.

In order to install a successful seasonal color landscape, contractors should be aware of its benefits, how to balance color and how and when to perform color change outs. **BLOOMING DEMAND.** According to Greg Fracker, president and owner of Colorscapes by Design, Newark, Ohio, color should be a big consideration in a landscape design. "More and more clients are looking for color whether its perennials, annuals or evergreens," he said.

Bob Rennebohm, owner, Heard Gardens, Johnston, Iowa, explained that the popularity of color is coming from two different forces – the contractor and the client. "We promote seasonal color," he noted. "But, we also see consumers driving the need for color."

With its popularity growing by leaps and bounds, one has to wonder what the benefits are to a color program. "Color catches the eye," Rennebohm mentioned. "People notice it – particularly if it's a pleasing contrast. We sometimes even hear comments from people who

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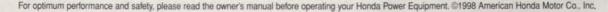
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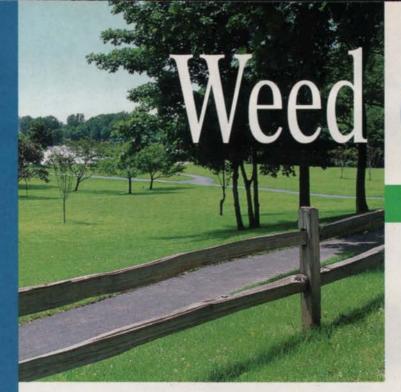
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seasonal color

(continued from page 62)

didn't notice a whole building because there wasn't any color around it."

"The No. 1 benefit is curb appeal," stressed Joe Burns, president of Color Burst, Atlanta, Ga. "The color attracts someone's eye to the landscape."

"People draw conclusions about a property on their approach," remarked Ken Perry, president of Team Innovative Landscape, Silverdale, Wa. "If you paint a pretty picture, color can make people stop and appreciate the landscape."

Perry also noted that another benefit of seasonal color is that you not only take care of color but fragrance as well.

"Color benefits entries, views out of windows, patios and many other areas on a property," commented Paul Shilhan, construction supervisor and landscape architect at Pellettieri Associates, Warner, N.H. "Those eye-catching colors are critical for entries onto properties. Also, color may (continued on page 68)

Seasonal Selling Strategies

onvincing customers that they may want to consider adding seasonal color to their landscapes may seem like a daunting task. However, a handful of contractors explain that the task is not really as hard as it may seem.

"We make the suggestion and show some examples in pictures," stated Bob Rennebohm, owner of Heard Gardens, Johnston, Iowa. "We show them the impact that color can make."

Phil Shilhan, construction supervisor and landscape architect at Pellettieri Associates, Warner, N.H., also mentioned that he doesn't have any problems convincing his customers to purchase seasonal color. "We start slow with just a couple of beds and then maintain those," he explained. "Just be sure not to smother the client with too many maintenance visits."

"Once a customer has received that service, then it becomes an addiction," explained Ken Perry, president of Team Innovative Landscape, Silverdale, Wa. "You can create a dependency. The beauty of color is that you can get someone into it at a reasonable rate to start with and then build a good relationship."

Once a customer is convinced that this service is for them, the next step is the pricing game. Rennebohm explains that he bases it on material and labor costs.

"Square footage is too difficult," Rennebohm explained. "It is different from client to client."

Joe Burns, president of Color Burst, Atlanta, Ga., also bases his price on material and labor. "A lot of contractors have a square foot price," he stated. "We custom price the program by looking at the beds and slopes and then give the price. Every job is priced on its own merits." — Angela Dyer





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seasonal color

(continued from page 66)

encourage people to come closer to garden areas. Just be sure not to add too much color and overwhelm the client."

A PERFECT PLAN. Since Shilhan advised not to smother the customer with color, there are a couple of keys to balance the color on a property.

"You want to pick a range of colors to stay in," Fracker recommended. "Pick a

Red-**Purple**

Blue

Purple

(continued on page 70)

Purple-Blue

The color chart can be a useful tool in analyzing color relationships for contractors planning a seasonal color program. Photo: Color in

Garden Design

Cool Color Combos

andscape contractors can use color to enhance a property. However, it's important to choose colors carefully and use them in ways that work

together as the seasons change, according to Landscape

Gardening: Step-by-Step Visual Guide. The color wheel will help in choosing the color for a landscape design. Hues opposite each other on the wheel match

> nicely, while those closer together clash in appealing contrast. Cool colors, such as green and blue, are more restful and appear to recede from the warmer, livelier colors red, yellow, pink and orange.

One example of using these color combinations in a landscape is to create a background of evergreen shrubs to

emphasize bright red and yellow spring flowers.

Then, in winter, evergreen shrubs will provde a green backdrop for bare branches and snow.

Check the color chart to invent more ways to match and contrast flowers and foliage for seasonal color.

Yellow-Red

Yellow

Green-Yellow

Green

Blue-Green

Red

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USE READER SERVICE #19

seasonal color

(continued from page 68)

hue. For example, if you choose red, you should stay with reds, pinks and lavenders. Then you can also add white to that mix. Just don't plaster the property with color."

When dealing with masses of color, Rennebohm explained that it is crucial to be careful to only use two or three main colors. "Commercial properties need more simple colors, while residential properties can have more color because people are often driving past commercial properties at fast speeds and the eye can't take in much color," Rennebohm observed. "With residential properties, people are often walking by at much slower speeds so more color can be processed."

To get the right colors at the right time, Shilhan first looks at what the plant will do when it blooms.

"We mix annuals and perennials together and we make sure we have color all through the year," Shilhan said. "We focus bright color at the windows and subtle color in other areas around the property. It's important to make the property dynamic so

the areas are always changing."

Similar to Rennebohm's style, Perry creates color spots where he uses strategic colors in large groups, which he classifies as approximately 90 square feet.

"We never mix too many colors together in these areas," Perry stressed. "We use mostly primary colors and not many pastels. On a commercial property, especially, you want to 'wow' the customer and pastels

'You want
new plants
to be up to
size and
showing
good color
when you
are ready to
plant them.'
- Bob
Rennebohm

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don't do this as well as primary colors."

When creating the perfect seasonal color design, another important decision is choosing the specific plant material. Color is obviously the most important ingredient in the design, but sometimes it helps to know the maintenance requirements and life expectancy of the plant material.

"We know that some plants are really short-lived. Some of these plants fill a temporary need better than others," Perry stated, adding that in April he will plant the materials that he knows will be in the ground for approximately four or five months and will last in that setting.

Fracker explained that he tries to install low-maintenance plant material. "We will plant some annuals in the early spring and (continued on page 72)

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USE READER SERVICE #64



seasonal color

(continued from page 70)

then we change out in May or June and again in August."

His plant choice also depends on the conditions at the time of planting. For example, if there is a drought, a contractor should choose a drought-tolerant annual, according to Fracker.

Rennebohm added that he occasionally chooses plant material based on the fact that it could be removed quickly during a change out. He did stress, however, that the most important aspect of choosing the plant material is the seasonal nature of the color.

"As long as you have a client who will accept a change out, color is the most important factor," he added.

PLANTING PARTICULARS. Before the actual planting can begin, the landscape bed and soil condition must be considered.

"This is the most important consideration up front," Rennebohm commented. "The soil needs to be well-tilled and welldrained to make planting and removing plants as easy as possible."

Irrigation was also a big concern of contractors. Echoing Rennebohm, Shilhan said, "Irrigation has to be considered. You can use hoses to irrigate, but make sure the hoses don't get damaged when crews are changing the plants. As far as soil requirements, we look for a nice, loose soil and not heavy clay. It's also a good idea to use a lot of mulch in order to retain moisture."

Perry noted that when he sells a color contract, he amends the soil so it has better draining consistency.

"We use composted saw dust and other top soils that we blend," he said. "This makes it quick to remove and replant material. The consistency of the soil is very important in planting."

Once the soil has been properly amended, how do contractors know when to start the change out? The answer can be as easy as talking to the customer. "Sometimes it's driven by the client's budget," Fracker explained. "The client may also just let me set the schedule. If this happens, the schedule depends on the plants. If they are starting to decline, we will pull them out. However, if there is still good color, we may leave them a bit longer."

Similarly, Burns' change outs are determined based on his recommendations and the customer's budget.

Rennebohm makes the change before the plants lose their color.

"It really depends on the plant and on the weather," he commented. "You want new plants to be up to size and showing good color when you're ready to plant them."

"Most of the time, the change out schedule is figured into the contract," Perry stated.
"The schedule can be created for the customers and their needs."

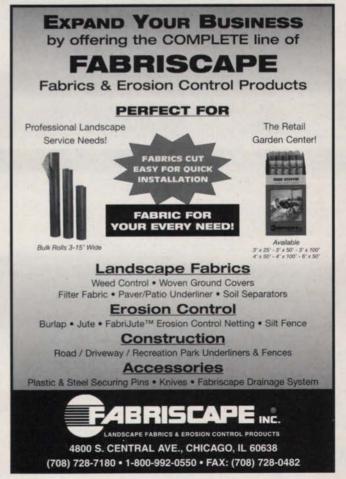
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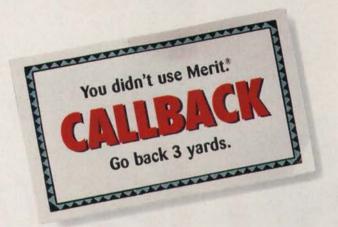
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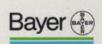


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(Below) The popularity of zero-turn mowers stems from their numerous advantages including speed, maneuverability and increased productivity. Photo: Textron Turf Care

The productivity and maneuverability benefits of zeroturn radius mowers are continuing to capture contractors' attention.

By Angela Dyer

hen driving by a housing development on any summer day, a passerby may notice that crisscross cut of the lawn. It is this mowing technique that makes a summer lawn eye-catching. This look, the result of a zero-turn mower, is only one of the many characteristics that make these mowers unique.

If given the chance, manufacturers and contractors alike will sing the praises of zero-turn mowers. Zero-turn

mowers offer advantages not only in maneuverability, but also in productivity and maintenance needs. Several manufacturers have explained these benefits in further detail.

ers describe are the greater maneuverability and productivity of zero-turn mowers.

"I think the biggest benefit is speed," remarked Jeff Ellis, maintenance manager for McCoy Landscape Services, Marion, Ohio. "This is in terms of turn-around time on jobs and maneuverability."

"The fact that they turn with zero-radius allows them to be more maneuverable," added Tom Benjamin, market manager at Woods Equipment, Rockford, Ill. "This





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zero-turn mowers

(continued from page 76)

on a job in half and, for a contractor, that is money in his pocket," Kadel commented. "Zero-turns can get into spaces that only walk-behind models could previously. The maneuverability is the whole key."

"Zero-turn riders offer a more compact design than non-zero-turn riders. This allows for greater mobility in and out of tight places, but more importantly, it lets the contractor get more equipment on smaller trailers," noted Roy Dust, product specialist for Ferris Industries, Munnsville, N.Y.

For example, he explained that Ferris Industries' zero-turn rider is 6 feet, 9 inches long, while the non-zero-turn rider is 8 feet, 10 inches long.

One might ask, how is all of this added productivity possible? Ruthanne Stucky, director of marketing, The Grasshopper Company, Moundridge, Kan., explained that the independent control over each wheel without the use of a foot-pedal brake assist is part of the zero-turning radius advantage.

"An operator seated between the drive tires at the pivot point of the zero-radius turn has the ergonomic advantage of clearly seeing his immediate terrain, trimming upclose and always passing the mower over

(continued on page 80)

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- Angela Dyer

Ultimate Upkeep

o keep a zero-turn mower running in top condition, proper maintenance is key.

According to Woods Equipment, Rockford, Ill., there are a few regular checks that can keep a mower in good shape.

- Hydrostatic Transmission Service Fluid levels should be checked at least every eight hours of operation. Also, check cooling fins and fan blades for debris. These should be free of foreign material.
- Transmission Filter and Oil Change—
 Every transmission has a filter and it should be changed every 500 to 1,000 hours, depending on use. Under normal mowing conditions, the filter and oil can be changed every 1,000 hours. The two can be changed every 500 hours when using a grass catcher or when operating in temperatures above 100F degrees for any extended period.
- Battery Service First and foremost, be careful to prevent any battery acid from contacting the skin. Clean the battery at least once a season and inspect cables for deterioration and loose connections. Check the battery case for cracks or leaks. Take a hydrometer and recharge the battery if less than a 75 percent change is indicated.

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to end up.

zero-turn mowers

(continued from page 78)

uncut grass in an effortless manner," Stucky said. "This eliminates the wasted time and motion of wide turns, foot pedals and shifting gears. When you eliminate the time and effort associated with jockeying into position on turns and trimming, you end up being more productive."

Due to the the hydraulic systems, there is more flexibility in terms of operation, according to Peter Whurr, vice president of product development, Textron Turf Care and Specialty Products, Racine, Wis.

"In other words, they can drive forward, reverse, turn to the left or right without the user having to select or change gears. This allows for the product to be more productive in maneuvering around confined areas or tree belts and hedge rows," he explained.

These numerous benefits are prevalent in both zero-turn riders and walk-behinds, however the riding models give the operators more opportunity to be more productive during their work day, according to Whurr.



Even though the learning curve is short for zero-turn mowers, some training is typically necessary in order to use the equipment properly and productively. Photo: Grasshopper

"Walk-behind units, unless used with a sulky, tend to be more demanding on the operator and obviously much slower due to walking speeds," he said.

A riding mower can also handle challenging terrain with less wear and tear on the operator, Stucky added.

"A zero-turn rider will save on labor costs because the crew isn't walking," Ellis agreed.

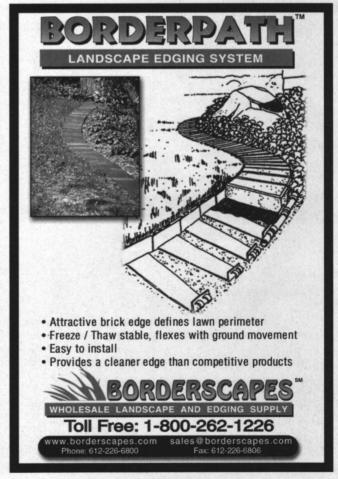
COMPARE AND CONTRAST. Just as zero-turn riders can save on costs over walk-behinds,

gear-drive units can save money as a low cost alternative to riding models. According to Dust, gear-drive models can be used as insurance. They can be purchased as a low-cost back-up for when other mowers are out of service. Or, they could be used as an extra mower when needed.

"Many start-up contractors think they should start with a gear-drive," Dust noted, commenting that a zero-turn walk-behind can cost roughly 30 to 50 percent more than

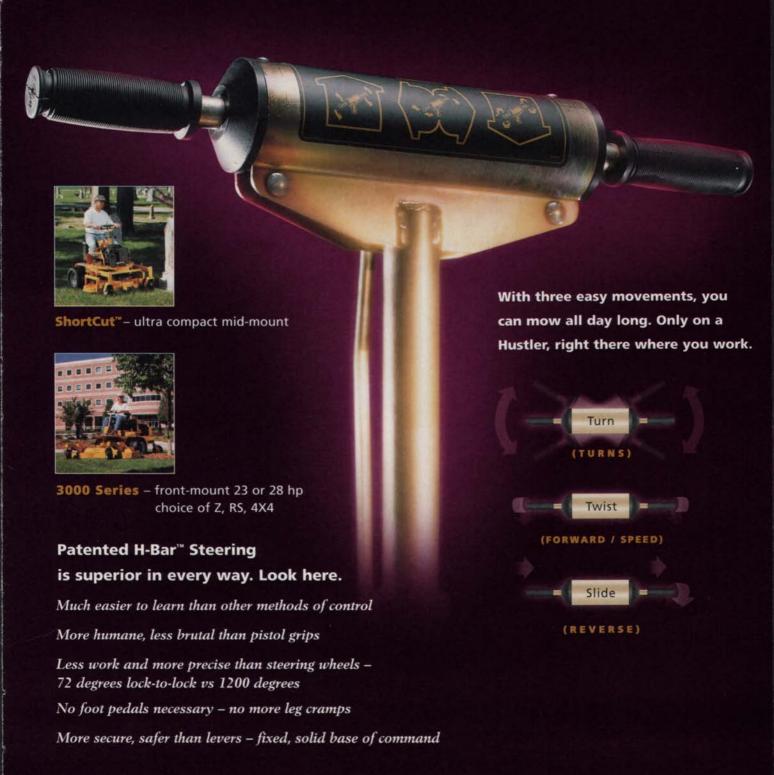
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zero-turn mowers

(continued from page 80)

a gear-drive walk-behind. "But these are the folks who can least afford a less productive machine. Why not mow more in less time and use the money you make to defray the substantial costs of starting a business?"

Whurr agreed zero-turn units are more expensive, but he said that the payback can be considerably more and the return on investment will be quicker with a hydrostatic due to its maneuverability and high performance ability.

"The zero-turn rider will mow more acres per day in equal or less time, thus allowing the contractor to bill more acres per day," Stucky stated. "This increased productivity is significant enough that more business and revenue can be realized while minimizing the relative labor and equipment costs."

"The zero-turns are worth the price, though, for their speed and their labor saving," Ellis noted.

(continued on page 86)

Top Training Tips

s with many necessary products for contractors in the green industry, training is a key factor to the successful operation of a zero-turn mower. According to Peter Whurr, vice president of product development, Textron Turf Care and Specialty Products, Racine Wis., the operator must be fully aware of the unique features of a hydraulically-controlled machine.

"A landscape contractor owes it to himself and his employees to undergo training on any type of mowing equipment," stressed Ruthanne Stucky, director of marketing, The Grasshopper Company, Moundridge, Kan. "Dual-level, zero-turning radius units are no exception, although they are generally easier to operate."

Tom Benjamin, market manager for Woods

Equipment, Rockford, III., explained that typically with commercial products, there is a short learning curve when someone new is using the equipment. "In order to become proficient, the more you use it, the better you will get," he noted.

"For someone with little or no mowing experience, the learning curve for a gear drive vs. a zero-turn walk-behind is basically the same," remarked Roy Dust, product specialist, Ferris Industries, Munnsville, N.Y. "All that is required is an understanding of the different controls."

He added that the greatest challenge is for someone who is used to tractor-type equipment to learn how to use a zero-turn rider. Those operators are used to steering with a wheel and controlling speed and direction with the foot. Plus, they're used to a wider turning radius. The dealer should demonstrate the use of the zero-turn and help promote a necessary comfort level.

"We recommend that our dealers spend 15 to 30 minutes with someone to let them know how to operate the mower," noted Mike Kadel, marketing manager, Dixon Industries, Coffeyville, Kan. "Pay attention to daily maintenance and you should have a long-lasting machine." — Angela Dyer

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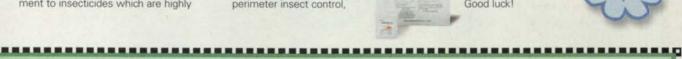
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Deservante and a second

zero-turn mowers

(continued from page 84)

THE QUALITY OF LIFE. Knowing that price differences exist between the two major mower types, a contractor may wonder if he or she will end up spending additional money on maintenance costs during the years that they own the equipment.

"Zero-turn mowers can be less expensive to maintain than gear-drive models," Whurr relayed. "The main reason being that lubrication and the wear and tear of linkages on a gear-drive unit require more servicing than that of the hydrostatic, provided the hydrostatic is kept clean and the oil is changed as per the operator's manual. There is really nothing else to concern the owner than maintaining a regular oil schedule."

He added that other components such as height of cut, caster wheels, belt drives and blade spindles will require the same maintenance program wheth-er it be a gear-drive or zero-turn unit.

Benjamin agreed with Whurr that the major maintenance for zero-turns consists of tasks such as lubricating the spindles and sharpening blades.

"Lifetime maintenance costs on a zeroturn walk-behind will be lower because there

'Zero-turns

can get into

spaces that

behind mod-

The maneu-

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Kadel

els could

won't be a need to replace as many belts, pulleys, band brakes and gear boxes that are on walk-behind mowers," stressed. "Many contractors don't realize that a gear-drive mower is actually a complex more mower than a zeroturn, which requires a greater amount of maintenance."

"In addition to its hydrostatic reliability, a zero-turn mower can have other service advantages such as accessibility of other service points and the heavyduty construction of

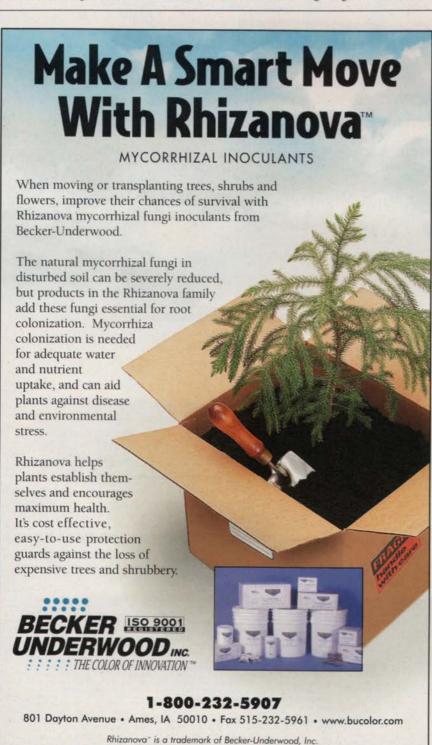
the mower deck," Stucky conveyed.

Provided that regular maintenance is carried out on both zero-turn and geardrive mowers, Whurr stated that he believes the life span of both types of mowers is comparable.

Dust, however, commented that a zeroturn walk-behind offers 20 to 25 percent greater productivity than a gear-drive walkbehind, which would roughly double the life expectancy.

"A meaningful way for contractors to look at this is, 'how much grass will each unit mow over its life span?'" Stucky suggested. "In this regard, zero-turning radius mowers outlast gear-drive models because they will mow more grass."

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine



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BEYOND THE EXPECTED

Getting in the LONG

Effectively designing an irrigation system starts with setting up the zones properly.

By Bob West

"An irrigation system will fail unless suitable zones and pipe routing are designed and installed properly." – Larry Keesen, The Complete Irrigation Workbook

bviously, there are a number of design flaws that can cause an irrigation system to fail – poor installation techniques, using the incorrect equipment, improper scheduling. But improper zoning is right at the top of the list.

Strategically grouping sprinkler heads together allows contractors to take full advantage of the irrigation capabilities of the system and water supply while tailoring the irrigation schedule to meet the varying needs of the different plant material present on the site. Many of the decisions necessary in designing the system will be influenced by the zone setup.

"Thinking about zones starts as early as the contractor's first meeting with the client," affirmed Doug Snyder, manager, The Highbridge Corp., Issaquah, Wash. "That's when you look to select plant material for the job and decide how the site will be graded, both of which have to be decided before you can start to design the system."



FACT FINDING. Contractors readily agreed that a common mistake in zone setup is designing the system before all of the necessary information has been gathered.

"Figuring out what you need to know isn't too difficult for commercial jobs," related Kevin Smith, president, Computerized Design Services, Longwood, Fla. "I take the

(continued on page 92)

Getting a system designed accurately so that different plant materials are irrigated according to their own needs is a key before moving forward with the installation. Photo: Peter Hughes

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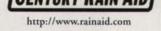
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zonina basics

(continued from page 88)

total gallonage of all of the sprayheads on the system and multiply that number by 12 minutes run time for the sprayheads. Then I do the same thing for the gallonage for all

of the rotors and multiply by 40 minutes run time for the rotors. That gives me a total flow for a day for the entire system."

Smith's next step is to figure out a gallon-per-minute flow rate by dividing the total daily flow by the available watering time for a day, which is usually eight hours.

"For commercial jobs, the flow rate should be at least 25 gpm,

which isn't difficult to get," Smith noted. "The next thing to do is figure out the size of your zones based on the flow rate and then separate the plant material based on irrigation needs.

"Each site should be divided into areas of different watering requirements such as turf, planting beds, ground covers and so on,"

noted Larry Keesen, president, Keesen Water Management, Denver, Colo.

"Zones need to then be scheduled so shrubs are irrigated more deeply and not as

Zoning Tip #1

Proper irrigation design requires that the operating pressure within a zone never vary more than 15 percent.

> often, compared to turf," commented Smith. "And annuals, because of the challenges of getting them established, need their own

> When compared to commercial systems, residential systems present some different challenges to contractors, according to Brian Quill, irrigation and construction manager

at Industrial Landscape, San Jose, Calif.

"The first thing to do is determine the static water pressure, the meter size and the mainline size, and all of that information

> should be available from the site or the water purveyor," recommended Quill. "Normally, the home will have an existing meter and line that goes up to the house and a contractor can tap into that line at the hose bib and use a pressure gauge to find the static water pressure."

> Quill was quick to point out, however, that the working pres-

sure must also be determined because the static pressure is only a reading in a 'no flow' condition.

"Once the water starts flowing, pressure losses occur from the water flowing through the meter, the supply line and the hose bib," Quill explained. He also commented that

(continued on page 94)

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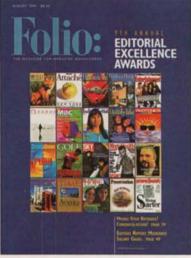
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zoning basics

(continued from page 92)

many manufacturers provide resource manuals with pre-calculated pressure losses based on various system components.

"Another valuable piece of information is the available flow," Quill continued. "That can be determined at the hose bib as well with a 5-gallon bucket and a stopwatch.

"It's a simple test, but it's important because you might have a reading of 80 PSI for the system but only get 5 gpm of actual water flow," he noted. "And the flow on residential systems is usually the primary restriction in-

stead of the pressure because most residences, at least in our part of the country, have a 5/8-inch meter, which is small."

As a result of restricted flow, it's common for residential systems to be zoned with many valves since the low flow rate requires one valve for three or four heads.

Quill cautioned against using maximum

safety capacities taken from pressure loss tables for designing a system because they don't fit realistically into system designs.

"Using the maximum capacities just cre-

Zoning Tip #2

If the elevation difference in a zone is 5 feet, the pressure at the lowest head is 2.17 PSI higher than at the highest head.

ates water hammer by driving flow velocities way up," he noted. "Even if the system works, the homeowner will probably hear pipes banging in the house every time the system is turned on."

Smith also recommended designing a residential system based on 80 percent of the maximum gallonage flowing through the water meter to take into account any water uses that take place inside the house while the system is operating.

"Regardless if it's a residential or com-

mercial system, zones are important so the system doesn't exceed the maximum capability of the water supply," Smith noted. "Exceeding the supply will only result in the system operating at a lower pressure, which creates uneven applications and drives irrigation costs up."

SETUP PRECAUTIONS. Setting up a system according to flow rates and maximum capacities isn't necessarily enough to guarantee success, however.

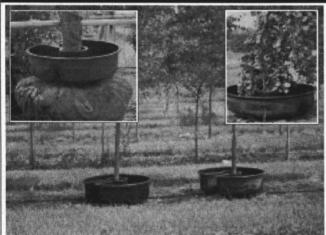
As with the attention required for zoning different plant material, the nature of the property can also demand other design alterations that would influence zones.

(continued on page 96)

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zoning basics

(continued from page 94)

Snyder said the first thing he checks for on a new site is its orientation to the sun since plant material on the south and west sides of a property are likely to get more sun and need more irrigation.

Zoning Tip #3

Parking lot medians and islands, due to the surrounding asphalt and heat, will require more water and a separate zone.

"When berms or mounds are present, the top should be watered with a separate zone, even if it consists of only one head," recommended Keesen. "The peak of the berm will dry out much faster than the slopes, and it will require additional water."

Snyder agreed with Keesen, and added

that a separate zone may need to be included for the middle of the slope, depending on how large the hill is.

"There will probably need to be a zone set up for the bottom of the slope as well,

> especially if it goes up against a paved surface," Snyder added. "Concrete or asphalt will create a heat sink effect that will dry out the nearby turf."

> Snyder also commented that contractors can design the most efficient systems in the world, but if the person who will

manage the system on a daily basis isn't trained to understand irrigation needs and how to properly use the controller, the system will fail.

The author is Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

Zone Valve Location

he most efficient location for the electric control valve is in the middle of the zone, but because of elevation shifts, pressures controls and wire, pipe and trenching costs, this is not always cost effective for the entire irrigation system.

Cost-effective control valve placement allows the valve to be on one side of the zone it serves. If an area is two zones in width, then it would be appropriate to route the main between the two zones. This will save on the cost of pipe and installation, as well as maintain a good balance of pressure throughout the zone.

The same is true at the end of the mainline where it is usually cost effective to stop the

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mainline prior to entering the last zone or two, depending on the distance and elevation change from the control valve and the closest boundary of the zone.

The mainline route, where the area widens and is more than two zones wide on any side, should have the mainline extended toward that area in order to better control the lateral pressure variation and lateral line surge. (Long straight lines have a much greater potential for surge than do shorter ones, and empty lines from low head drainage will increase the surge damage potential.)

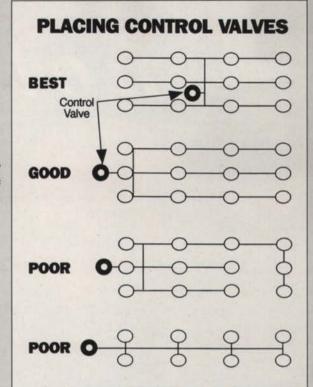
End feeding long, single row zones with 30 to 40 pop-up spray heads can delay by minutes the time it takes for the first and last head on the line to pop up. This affects the water distribution by placing more water closer to the zone. Center feeding the line will reduce surge potential and reduce the time between the first head pop up and the last head pop up.

If there are two or more rows of heads and

little slope, shorten the rows and place several rows on the same zone. (Only if all heads have matched precipitation rates.)
Heads that are grouped together will cool the air more resulting in less evaporation and better compensation for wind direction changes during the watering cycle.

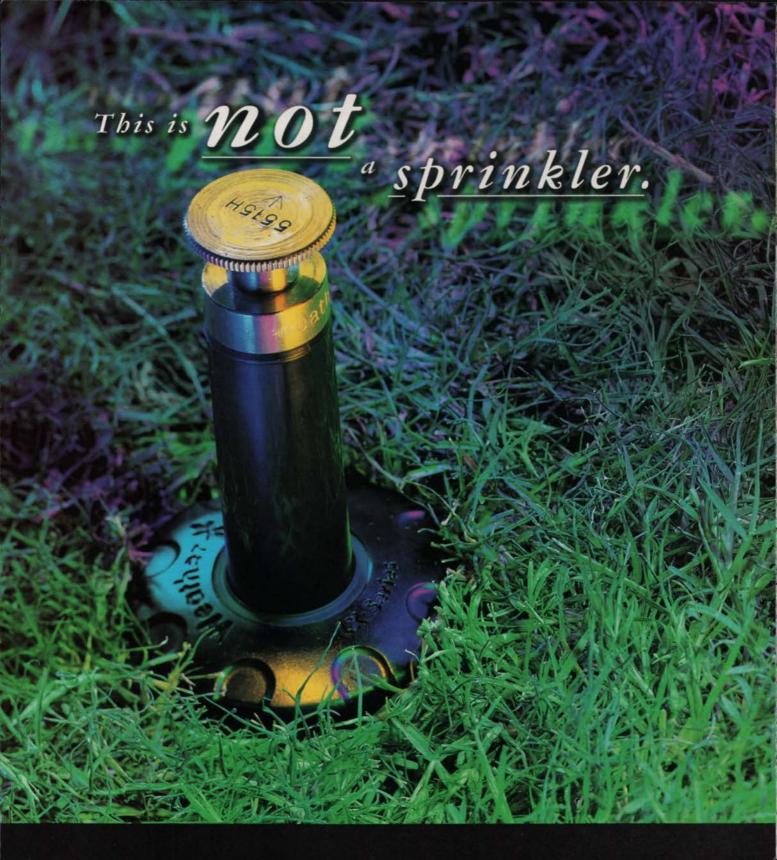
Valves and valve boxes should be kept away from walks, streets and driveways to avoid damage from vehicles and snow plows, lessen pedestrian liability, reduce visibility and prevent vandalism.

This information was excerpted from The Complete Irrigation Workbook, by Larry Keesen. For information on ordering this text, turn to page 115.









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Gathering
the right
information
can keep
lawn care
technicians
from getting
tongue-tied
when
customers ask
questions
about
pesticide use.

By Nicole Wisniewski pesticide is any material used to control a pest, according to Philip Catron, president, Natura-Lawn of America, Frederick, Md.

"If I use soap and water to control a grub problem,

I'm using a form of pesticide," Catron, explained, listing other common household items that are pesticides, yet aren't perceived as such, including bleach and a pet's flea collar.

While defining the term 'pesticide' and surprising the lawn care customer by naming everyday items as potential hazards doesn't offer proof to the safety or lack of risks associated with pesticides, implications can be made for either argument, Catron said.

"There is a big difference between ignorance and a lack of knowledge," Catron stressed. "Perception is what you're dealing with here and that's what needs to be addressed. Consumers are able to comprehend information about pesticide use, but they do need to be properly educated first."

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN. Lawn care and landscape contractors and pesticide manufacturers have a variety of views on how pesticide-related information should be



communicated to lawn care customers.

The amount of information about pesticide use that *should* be relayed to customers varies based on Environmental Protection Agency standards and each state's regulations, according to John Buechner, director of technical services, Lawn Doctor, Marlboro, N.J.

"Certain states, in their pesticide regulations, require disclosure of all of the products that may be used in a lawn or landscape program prior to the first application of the season, common and trade names of the materials, percent of active ingredient as well as the EPA establishment number," Buechner said. "Some states also require a technician to disclose all of the safety precautions the homeowner should take following an application.

"But," Buechner continued, "it is generally a good rule to review safety information with your customers regardless of state law."

When state and EPA regulations are not dictating what should be communicated, landscape technicians and pesticide manufacturers are torn between how much information about safety should actually be conveyed to a customer. Too little isn't good,

Proactively
communicating the
benefits of healthy
turfgrass and the
rigid safety
guidelines required
for pesticides can
help calm customers'
concerns. Photo:
NaturaLawn

Assiness

Veyed to a clustomer. Too little isn't good, (continued on page 102)

Continued on page 102)

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risk communication

(continued from page 100)

especially when it comes to keeping pets and children off of the lawn for 24 hours after a product is applied or until it dries. And too much information may scare customers into canceling their lawn care service.

"You don't want to miscommunicate or downplay the need for pesticides, yet you don't want to cause more discomfort than is necessary in your customers," said Steve Jedrzejek, director of technical services, LESCO, Rocky River, Ohio.

General pesticide and pesticide safety information is hard to relay to customers, especially when their fears are fueled by what they hear in the media, by activist groups or by what they don't know, Jedrzjek added.

From customer to customer, pesticiderelated concerns vary, which is why risk communication has to be dealt with on an



Taking the time to answer
customers' questions about their
lawn and how it is treated helps
them learn to trust you as a
professional and knowledgeable
technician. Photo: Naturalawn

individual basis, according to Tim Maniscalo, government public affairs, Dow AgroSciences, Indianapolis, Ind.

"You have to give customers as much as they want, which is way less than what technicians and the government think they want," Catron explained. "You have to give them information in segments and then build upon their level of interest. Most people only want the basics. Don't give them the whole candy store the first time they come in."

Some contractors don't feel that pesticides are even a concern to their customers.

The Top List

he top three most-commonly asked customer questions about pesticide use and their answers:

Can pesticide applications harm dogs or cats? No, not if label instructions are followed. All pesticides are carefully tested before they can be registered by the EPA and sold. Part of this testing includes determining possible effects on non-target organisms, such as pets. Pesticides that pose an unacceptable risk to non-target organisms cannot be registered. Of course, you should follow the same re-entry procedures for cats and dogs as is recommended for humans. Wait until the treated area dries (in case of liquid application) and, for granular materials, comply with labeled directions for reentering the treated area. If there are any requirements regarding when pets can return to treated areas, these instructions will be on the label. Remember, some pesticides are developed and formulated for use on pets.

2. Do pesticides cause cancer in people exposed to low doses of pesticides over a period of time? Before a pesticide product can be registered and marketed, it must be evaluated as to its potential risks and benefits. Only products determined to have a reasonable certainty of no harm on the environment or human health can be registered by the EPA.

There is no specialty product on the market known to cause cancer in humans. Some pesticides have been shown to cause tumors in laboratory

animals when fed extremely high doses throughout their lifetime. The doses are many times higher than possible levels of human exposure. The American Medical Association's Council on Scientific Affairs states that there is only conjectural evidence, at best, that pesticides may be carcinogenic.

3. What are "idiopathic environmental intolerances," and are they related to pesticide use? There is considerable debate whether this phenomenon is a legitimate illness. Most recently, a committee of the World Health Organization properly identified the phenomenon as idiopathic environmental intolerance (IEI), which generally means it is a phenomenon of unknown cause that seems to have an association with an intolerance for environmental factors.

Clinical ecologists believe that the accumulated body load of multiple exposure to chemicals triggers illness. They contend that illness is caused by a deregulation of the immune system that normally protects individuals from disease. As proposed by the clinical ecologists, deregulation may result in increased sensitivity or allergic reactions to food and other common environmental compounds or lowered resistance to infections or cancers.

There is no theoretical or medical evidence supporting this concept of "environmental illness" or "immune deregulation." Traditional allergists, represented by the American Academy of Allergy and Immunology, have failed to find a link between patient symptoms and sensitivity or allergy to chemicals.

Information from Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment.

"We service 9,000 to 10,000 customers," stated Paul Wagner, president, Masters Green, Sterling Heights, Mich. "In my experience, a customer's No. 1 concern is results – not safety. They want the lawn to look good."

Customers also have a tendency to not want to know pesticide risk information, added Richard Linsday, founding president, Evergreen Lawn & Landscape, Fairfax, Va.

"Most of my customers had lawn care in the past or want it now," Linsday said. "They trust us. They would rather know the when, why and how of applying the material vs. what's in it and what risk can be associated with it."

POLAR OPPOSITES. Ultimately, there's a positive way and a negative way to communicate pesticide ingredient and risk information to customers. Most contractors feel differently about what points they consider positive and what points they consider negative.

As a proof of pesticide safety, many contractors share EPA pesticide testing information with their customers (see "The Proactive Solution" on page 108), said Mark Coffelt, business support manager, AgrEvo, Kansas City, Mo.

Comparing pesticide risk to other everyday risks is another way to ease customer concerns, Coffelt said.

"Sharing information gives customers a level of comfort about what goes into the development of pesticides," Jedrzejek added.

"The public perception of risks in everyday life shows that of 30 common activities, pesticide risk always rates toward the bottom of the list, 28th in this case," pointed out Coffelt, listing smoking, driving a car, swimming, skiing and playing football as a few of the other common activities that pose more of a risk to people than pesticide use does.

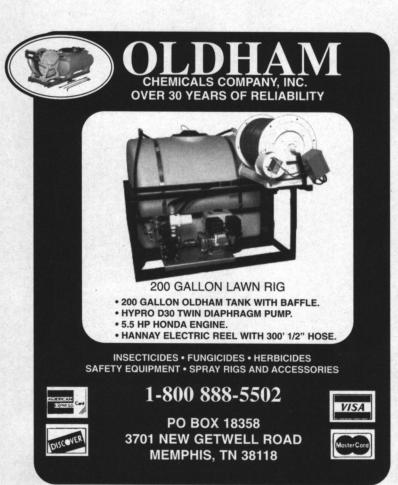
However, some contractors disagree that this information is 'positive' to communicate to their customers.

"Don't get defensive," Catron insisted. "Don't talk about these 30 common activities or the EPA testing information. You have to deal with customer concerns by talking about facts, not by trying to prove or disprove pesticide safety. Trying to prove something is being defensive. Instead, admit that you use pesticides, give customers the definition of a pesticide, explain how you're going to use it and what kind of results it should provide."

After applying the pesticide to a customer's lawn, a technician should tell the customer to stay off of the lawn and to keep children and pets off of the lawn for 24 to 48 hours. The reasoning for this, however, should not be for safety reasons, Catron said.

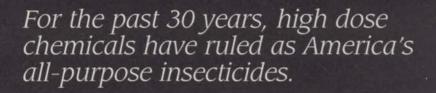
"Posting of the flag used to be enough for safety, but today it doesn't provide the sense of precaution it was designed to," Catron explained. "So, we tell our customers to stay off the lawn for 24 or 48 hours so that the

(continued on page 106)











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READER SERVICE #92

risk communication

(continued from page 103)

weed control product or pesticide can do its job, which is true. Telling the customer to stay off of the lawn for safety reasons only invokes fear."

Instead of focusing on combatting the negative ideas some people associate with pesticides, other contractors focus on emphasizing the positives about pesticide products. One positive way to communicate general pesticide and safety information to customers is by explaining the important of Integrated Pest Management, if that's the way the lawn care technician applies pesticides, Buechner said.

A successful IPM program, according to Catron, includes:

- Prevention, which can be practiced by conserving the natural enemies of turf pests through the selective use of biological and synthetic pesticides and planting improved varieties of turf that have resistance to insect and disease attacks.
 - · Monitoring, which is watching and

recording problem pests throughout the growing year.

• Controlling, which includes the use of biological or chemical treatments only when necessary to prevent major lawn damage and save beneficial insects that help destroy other pests that can damage the lawn.

Another form of positive communication for Linsday comes with the fear his customers have of liquid formulation pesticides.

"My customers fear liquid more than granular because they have seen the technicians out there who've carelessly sprayed liquid pesticides into gardens or on children's toys," Linsday explained. "They associate bad chemical spills with liquid pesticides. Using the granular formulation of pesticides is a big selling tool for us."

Since all formulations of pesticides share the same potential risks, Jedrzejek said whether a technician uses granular or liquid formulation, it's important to convey the ultimate importance of pesticide us supporting materials. Most technicians leave some general pesticide information with their customers in the form of pamphlets, brochures or handwritten notes before applying pesticides to make customers aware of when they will be arriving and what they will be doing after the application is complete. Manufacturers supply pamphlets to contractors when they buy a product from them, but most companies produce in-house brochures with information specific to their company included on them.

"These should be kept very simple and informative," Catron said, encouraging handwritten notes after an application as a more personal way to reach a customer. "Just write a note to explain to your customers what you did and the benefits they should soon see as a result. If the note is handwritten, there's more of a chance they will read it."

When compiling information for the pamphlet, Linsday recommends contrac-



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Natural vs. Organic

hile most pesticides are man-made (synthetic) or derived from items in nature (biological and biorational), others — and many fertilizers or other lawn care products — are termed "natural" and "organic." Customers may ask what these terms mean. There are no universally accepted definitions, but suggested definitions are:

- Natural A product derived from animal/biological, mineral or plant sources, in a form substantially as it occurs in nature. The materials may be altered or manipulated to put them in a physical form that allows them to be efficiently used in the application process by the homeowner or professional applicator.
- Organic Any substance containing the element carbon is, by technical definition, organic.

 Both naturally occurring and man-made products

may be organic. The common misconception that organic and natural have the same meaning may cause the non-technical consumer to believe that a man-made organic material is natural when it is not.

- Natural-based The term "naturalbased" is generally used to describe a mixture of materials that includes some materials that may be properly described as natural. The portion that is natural is frequently undefined. The other portion may be man-made pesticides or fertilizers.
- Organic-based The term "organic-based" is generally used to describe a mixture of materials that includes some organic materials. The portion of the product that is both organic and natural is frequently undefined. The other portion may be man-made pesticides or fertilizers.
- It is important to understand that "natural" or "organic" products are not free from risk. Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment

risk communication

tors remember what their customers are really interested in.

"Most clients are not concerned with active ingredients," he said. "They are more concerned with how much you use, how often and why."

Also available from manufacturers for lawn care technicians to give to their customers are Material Safety Data Sheets, an informational sheet every pesticide product has along with its label, Coffelt pointed out.

"The only problem with customers seeing those is that they explain what the contractor purchases – not what is applied, which can mislead the consumer," Maniscalo noted. "What's actually applied is 99 percent water and 1 percent product. When most pesticides dry they adhere to the turf/soil and exposure is minimal, especially because it is so diluted – some manufacturers offer an MSDS for this 1 percent solution."

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risk communication

other resources and obtain more information on pesticides as well as pesticide use:

- · National Pesticide Telecommunications Network - an information service sponsored by Oregon State University and the EPAgency that can be at 800/858-7378 or at http://ace.orst.edu/info/nptn/.
 - · Customers can be directed to their

local Cooperative Extension Service listed in the blue pages of the local phone book.

· There is generally an 800 number on the product package for direct contact with the manufacturer.

The author is Assistant Editor with Lawn & Landscape magazine.



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USE READER SERVICE #97

The Proactive Solution

ere are a few positive communication points about pesticides that lawn care and landscape contractors can discuss with their customers:

 Environmental Protection Agency regulations and the registration process.

The pesticide industry is one of the most highly regulated in the nation. After thorough review, EPA registers only those uses of pesticide products that pose minimal risks.

- · Pesticide testing. Many people are unaware of the rigorous testing that pesticides must withstand.
- · It takes a pesticide manufacturer seven to 10 years to test and register a product.
- . More than 120 tests are performed, many to evaluate environmental and health impact.
- · Only one pesticide in 20,000 makes it from the lab to the market.
- · A product costs between \$30 million and \$50 million to register.
- · Integrated Pest Management. IPM is a system of controlling pests (weeds, diseases, insects or others) in which pests are identified, action thresholds are considered, all possible control options are evaluated and selected control(s) are implemented. This program stresses the prevention of pest problems and the safe and responsible use of pesticides when necessary.
- · Pesticides enhance the quality of life and the environment. Discuss with your customers what the quality of life would be if there were no pesticides to treat the bothersome pests and weeds that invade homes, lawns and public areas, and can often transmit diseases and allergens. -Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment

When the least state of the leas

Dealing with calls from the media doesn't have to be a hassle, especially for the well-prepared contractors.

By Bob West

t's not often that the phone rings and there's a local newspaper reporter on the other end looking to ask a couple of questions for an article. So when such events do occur, it can be an unsettling experience for some people.

The idea of having your name and something you said printed and distributed to thousands of people can stir some real anxiety. "What if what I say sounds stupid or people disagree with me?" is what some people will wonder. "Why does this newspaper want to talk to me? What did I do?" is a common question for others to ask themselves.

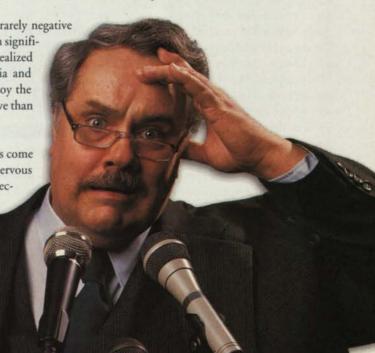
The reality is, however, that calls from local media are rarely negative experiences, unless your company has recently had a problem significant enough to be of public interest. Contractors who have realized the value of opportunities to speak with their local media and develop a relationship with a reporter or two will often enjoy the benefits of free publicity that can be a great deal more effective than any advertising can ever be.

FIRST-TIME FEARS. "Even skilled public speakers don't always come across as they would like to, so it's natural for people to be nervous about talking to the media," remarked Cheryl Steelberg, director of public relations for Environmental Care, Calabasas, Calif.

To help employees deal with the media, some of the industry's larger contractors—ECI, Ruppert Landscape, OneSource (formerly ISS)

Inexperience dealing with questions from reporters and being intimidated by the media can create stressful situations.

Photo: Barney Taxel



public relations

 established formalized public relations departments or positions to serve as primary media contacts.

"By centralizing the calls from the media into our office, it's easier to keep our message consistent and streamlined," Steelberg noted. "Also, I have access to all of the key people in our company as well as the specialists in different areas so I can provide the reporter with the best person to talk to for any article topic."

"I serve as the main contact for a lot of media calls, and then I can facilitate the gathering of information for the reporter and follow up with him or her to make sure they got everything they need," agreed Kate Droege, director of public relations for Ruppert Landscape, a TruGreen-Chem-Lawn company, Ashton, Md.

All of the companies that have a centralized public relations contact still strive to handle media inquiries at the local level, though.

"Our general philosophy is that media inquiries should be handled by the local manager, but that manager should contact the corporate office before giving an interview to the press," related Lynn Gerlack, public relations manager, J.C. Ehrlich Co., Reading, Pa. "The reason for the manager to contact us first is that we may be able to provide him or her with valuable support materials for the interview, such as graphics, photos or specific information."

"If a reporter sees one of our technicians on a property, the reporter should be able to ask that technician a question. After all, that technician is the person with the everyday expertise," added John Carson, division manager for lawn and tree care for J.C. Ehrlich. "We found that we can use the media to help us get our message out. So our goal is to be as helpful as possible."

Most landscape companies aren't large enough to afford the additional costs associated with a dedicated public relations person, but that doesn't mean they can't identify one person within their own organiza-

Good Advice When Talking to Reporters

he first thing you want to do when talking to a reporter is to set the tone. This means you must start off on the right foot immediately and understand that reporters are only human too.

Establish the purpose of the call and probe for details as to what the nature of the call/request is about. You must also clearly establish at the outset what your areas of expertise are — detailing what you are or are not qualified to discuss in the interview. Establish a timeframe for a call back, if necessary, and always return a reporter's call when you say you will.

Other helpful tips:

- Remember that everything you say is printable unless you and the reporter agree to speak "off the record."
- · Be polite and professional.
- · Never lose your temper.
- Don't be sarcastic or use smart-aleck responses and assume that the reporter will know that you are ioking.
- · Try to be helpful.
- · If you don't know the answer, say so, but offer to find it.
- · Stick to the facts; Keep your opinions out of the interview.
- · Don't lie; always tell the truth.
- · If you can't tell the truth, don't be evasive. If you can't give information, say why.
- · Stick to your areas of responsibility and expertise.
- · Answer the reporter's questions, but always return to your message track.
- Repeat messages. Each time you repeat a message, you increase your chances of it emerging in the final story.
- · If you aren't sure of the question, ask the reporter to repeat it.
- Put the story or issue into context i.e., if it's one incident out of 5,000, say so.
- · Don't bring up issues or subjects that you don't want to see in the story.
- · Anticipate reporters' needs whenever possible. Prepare and update fact sheets constantly.
- Avoid using industry jargon.
- · Respect reporters' deadlines.
- · Call back when you promised.
- · Keep track of what was said during the interview.
- · Request copies of the printed piece and watch closely for the story and the results.

Courtesy Ruppert Landscape Company, a TruGreen-ChemLawn company, Memphis, Tenn.

tion to handle those responsibilities.

"People have a right to be cautious in their approach to dealing with the media, especially if they've never been interviewed before," observed Char Crowley, a project manager and public relations contact at The Pattie Group, Novelty, Ohio. "Any time we're approached by the local newspaper, it's generally for a positive story or the reporter needs professional quality photographs to accompany an article, but you still have to be careful."

In particular, Crowley cautioned contractors to watch themselves when dealing with broadcast media.

"In general, television news can tend to be a little more sensational than informative," she noted. "We had one occasion where the information we gave to a television reporter was the complete opposite from what ended up being reported, so we learned our lesson there."

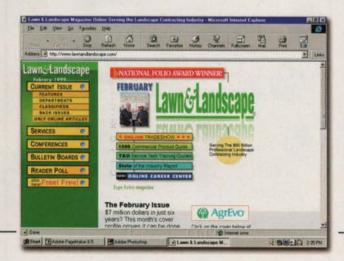
Crowley said a key to getting The Pattie Group some positive coverage in the primary daily newspaper serving the Cleveland market has been its ability to build a working relationship with the reporter commonly

(continued on page 112)

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public relations

(continued from page 110)

handling gardening-related stories.

"We don't generate a whole lot of article ideas for the reporter, but I try to talk to her a couple of times a year when we're working on a community-oriented project that may be of interest to her," Crowley related. "As a result of this relationship, we've been asked to write a couple of articles for the paper, and you just can't buy advertising that works as well as any article that mentions your company name."

J.C. Ehrlich, however, does take a proactive approach in dealing with local media.

"If we get 12 straight days of rain in one of our markets, we may send the local media an information press release explaining what people should keep in mind landscapingwise when the rain stops," Gerlack commented, adding that such releases shouldn't be written to read like an ad for the company. "Plus, there are certain basic topics we address at the same time every year."

Droege also recommended that contrac-

Pictures & A Thousand Words

hen the print media calls looking for an interview or some information for an article, supplying pictures related to the article can also help convey a company positively to the marketplace. Here are some tips on successfully supplying pictures:

- · One good way to maximize a story is to offer a photography to accompany it.
- Try to include your employees in photos to show a problem or solution. Pay attention to the appearance of anyone who is photographed - proper clothes, hair combed, clean shaven, etc.
- · Equipment and safety should be a priority. Trucks should be clean, and all safety precautions should be followed in the photograph.
- · If you have a business card, give one to the photographer. Otherwise, make sure he or she has your name and your company name and they are spelled correctly. - Gourtesy J.C. Ehrlich Co., Reading, Pa.

tors view working with the media as part of their entire community involvement program.

"We are quite aware of the fact that we need to foster healthy relations within our local community," Droege commented. "Whether that means helping out with an article, sponsoring a local high school sporting event or doing some work for a local theater for advertising in their program, that's all a great way to gain public trust, which generates more business."

The author is Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

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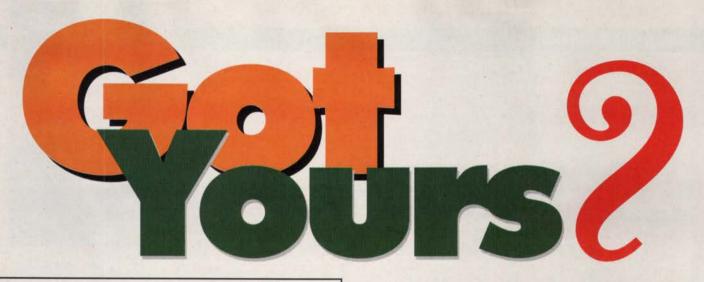
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community program suggests

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T&O Reader Poll

Question:

Do you think green industry techni-cians are fairly paid for their work?

Yes No

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- ☐ In-house

What is your title?_

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Measure Vor Casure

Keeping
track of
every aspect
of a business
is the only
way to
increase
profitability.

By Nicole Wisniewski t's the little things that make a difference in growing a business, according to Jack Mattingly, a green industry consultant, Mattingly Associates Consulting, Woodstock, Ga.

"You're opening yourself up for a big liability if you don't measure every last detail," stressed Mattingly, during the seminar "Structuring Your Business For Success" at the 1999 Lawn & Landscape School of Management. "You have to estimate everything. You have to measure everything. I guarantee right now that if you don't, you're profits are too high or too low."

Knowing all of the details, including the trivialities, such as how long it takes to plant a 3-gallon shrub vs. a 3-inch caliper tree can make a difference. According to Mattingly, increased profitability can only be reached if contractors evaluate and improve upon existing systems and implement other systems that are necessary for tracking labor and production into their businesses.

OPERATIONS SURVEY. The first step to profitable business systems, Mattingly pointed out, is evaluating the current operations to target where they fall short in certain key areas, including:

 Estimating – How often are production rates based on the take-off and/or field measurements for estimating projects as opposed to "eye-balling?"

Field Production – How often are jobs performed with the utmost efficiency?
 Job Cost Feedback – How often do managers/supervisors know man-hours and profits related to the budget of each job via consistent reporting on a weekly/monthly basis?

New Job Start-Up – How often is the field prepared prior to starting the work?

 Budget Hours Feedback – How often do field foremen/ leadmen know the status of each job via consistent weekly reporting of budgeted vs. actual man-hours per project?

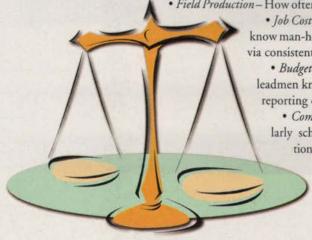
Communications – How often are formal and regularly scheduled planning, coordination, communication meetings held?

 Training – How often are formal and regularly scheduled training programs conducted for employees in all levels of the field? How often are employees trained/developed?

(continued on page 116)



Jack Mattingly'
presentation to
a sold-out
School of
Management
challenged
contractors to
identify and
repair current
operational
flaws. Photo:
Mattingly &
Associates





resource center

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Publications Title		Quantity	Unit Price	Amount	Method of Payment
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Training Vide	os in Englis		The second secon		Charge to my: Visa
Title		Quantity	Unit Price	Amount	Mastercard Discover/Novus
String Trimmers and Blowers Walk-Behind Mowers Riding Mowers	(English) (English) (English)		\$50.00 \$50.00 \$50.00		American Express
Spanish Versions					Name as printed on the card:
String Trimmers and Blowers	(Spanish)		\$60.00		
Walk-Behind Mowers	(Spanish)		\$60.00		Credit Card number:
Riding Mowers	(Spanish)		\$60.00		Expiration date:
Combination Order (English/	Spanish) \$100/set		\$100.00		Expiration date.
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Name			Compa	ny	
Address		Cit			State
ZipPhone			E-	-mail_	

school of management review

(continued from page 114)

How often is progress recognized?

• Evaluations – How often do supervisors schedule formal and regular reviews with all of their employees? How often are employees advised of their weaknesses? How often do supervisors set specific goals for their employees?

- Planning How often are all of the employees involved in the planning of a project that is to be performed or completed for the client?
- Accountability How often does every employee from manager to field understand his or her full responsibility and exactly what he or she is accountable for? How often is the company held accountable?

Mattingly said these questions should all be answered 'always.' Systems that fall in the 'seldom' to 'never' categories are the company's weak points and could be to blame for hurting profitability.

ON THE RIGHT TRACK. While looking at the results of an evaluation like this can be overwhelming, and all of a company's weak

systems can't be turned around overnight, there are certain tracking systems that Mattingly believes should be implemented in all green industry companies as soon as possible.

A landscape company can become more profitable just by taking the time to keep better track of its labor costs, Mattingly said, explaining that the key to doing this is focusing on reducing labor costs by 10 percent.

"If your company has a net profit of \$450,000 and you reduce a 35 percent labor cost to 25 percent, your net profit increases to \$555,000," Mattingly explained.

A few ways to reduce labor costs include simplifying employee time sheets and recording budgeted labor hours while at the same time providing employee incentives to improve work quality.

"Some contractors believe in tracking load time and travel time separately," he explained. "I don't agree. If you track it separately, your employees will get smart and fudge travel hours to meet incentives because they lingered while loading the equipment. If you have equipment loading, travel time

and the job time as one number, your employees won't linger around loading if there's an incentive to

meet for overall time. At the same time, it makes the tracking process simpler because employees aren't tracking every number."

Letting all of the foremen know the number of hours budgeted for a job holds them accountable for getting the 10 percent reduction in labor costs and gives them an incentive, Mattingly related.

"This pushes the accountability from the account manager to the foremen, forcing them to keep their hours in check as well," he said.

Overtime is usually a big problem when it comes to focusing on reducing labor costs. According to Mattingly, 10 percent is an acceptable rate for overtime.

"If overtime is at 19 percent of all of your hours worked, it is too high," he asserted. "If you've had your employees near 20 percent overtime for a long time and then decide to cut down, you should also expect them to be upset, however. It's something that you're going to have to deal with."

Also, Mattingly noted that it's usually cheaper and more beneficial for a company to spend more money training current employees vs. recruiting new employees.

"Recruiting is quick labor, but it's also expensive and can be a gamble," Mattingly said. "Training takes more time, but in the end it's cheaper and helps you to retain your employees."

Tracking quality is a very subjective process, but it can be done, Mattingly assured, recommending a point system of one through 10 for each job based on turf color, overall appearance and other qualities critical to maintenance.

"Then for each employee you can figure out a percentage of the quality of his or her work," Mattingly said. "This gives your workers additional incentives to do their job better and more quickly."

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

Step by Step

he stairway to greater profitability is easy to climb, according to Jack Mattingly, green industry consultant, Mattingly Associates Consulting, Woodstock, Ga. The key is to follow the steps:

Step 1. Identify the weak areas/systems at the company

Step 2. Recognize the working, existing systems at the company and train employees to follow them properly

- · Explain the systems, reports, procedures, etc.
- Explain who does what, how the information is gathered, how it flows and why the information is important so all the employees understand how and why this system works

Step 3. Implement new systems

- · Identify the problem areas
- · Meet and brainstorm possible solutions
- · Encourage new, innovative ideas
- · Outline the expected results
- · Write the proposed policy/procedure
- · Route it to the managers
- · Implement the new system

Lawn&Landscape

Dear Green Industry Professional,

May 1999

Your

Please

respond

today!

Opinion

matters.

It's no secret that our industry is facing a severe labor shortage. In March, representatives from 18 of the nation's most prominent landscape companies came together at Husqvarna Forest & Garden's North American headquarters in Charlotte, N.C., for a two-day industry roundtable focusing on issues surrounding immigrant labor. Discussion at the event touched on a number of topics, with a central theme being the contractors' concerns that current federal legislation doesn't allow for reasonable opportunities to use legal immigrant labor.

Landscape contractors who have attempted to work with legislators to fix this problem, however, say that those individuals responsible for making the laws don't adequately realize the significance of this industry's labor shortage. As a result, Lawn & Landscape magazine is contributing these two pages to initiate the gathering of necessary information from the industry to open legislators' eyes to the severity of this problem.

For this effort to be successful, however, it is imperative that we maximize the number of responses to this survey. Otherwise it is easy for politicians to argue that the labor

shortage must not be too severe of a problem if contractors can't take the time to fill out one short survey. Readers are asked, however, to only submit one completed survey per company so we can compile the most accurate data possible. This survey will also be distributed via national, regional and local green industry associations, and association executives and officers are encouraged to contact us at 800/456-0707 or bwest@gie.net to request copies of the survey.

We have been told time and time again that the green industry is heading toward a real crisis that can threaten businesses' ability to grow and remain healthy. The time to act is now. Please turn to the next page and complete this

survey and fax the page back to us at 216/961-0364.

Best regards,

Cinde, Code
Cindy Code, Group Publisher

Boh West

Bob West, Editor



Lawn&Landscape

Landscape/Lawn Care Industry

- 1. What were your 1998 sales?
- 2. What is the current unemployment level in your local community?
- 3. What different nationalities (i.e., Mexican, Colombian, Polish, etc.) do you currently employ?
- 4. Approximately how many of your employees (as of July 1, 1999) will be Hispanic? (% and number)
 % (actual number)
- July 1, 2002?

 July 1, 2004?
- 6. How many more employees would you hire today if you had an unlimited supply?
- 7. How many more dollars in sales could your business have done in 1998 if you had this unlimited labor supply?
- 8. What state are you located in?
- 9. Are you participating in a recruiting program such as H2B for legal immigrants?

10. Please feel free to share any additional comments _____

Your Opinion matters. Please respond

today!

Please fax back to Bob West

216/961-0364

Lawn & Landscape Our first year of Looks Backs

Our first year of publishing proved the old adage that "the more things change, the more they stay the same."

immy Carter was in the White House. There were hostages in Iran. Ordinary People won the Academy Award for best film. The U.S. hockey team won the gold medal at the Olympics. And Lawn & Landscape magazine was born.

It was May 1980, to be exact, when our first issue was published – you knew us as *American Lawn Applicator* back then. Key article topics in that first issue included computerizing green industry businesses, pesticide exposure issues for applicators and timing fungicide applications for maximum performance.

Not surprisingly, looking back at the article dealing with computers illustrates how far technology has come in the last 20 years as contractors interviewed for the article boasted of recently purchasing a Sperry Univac BC8, a Radio Shack TRS80 and a Burroughs L-6000 computer for between \$4,000 and \$20,000 each.

Another article in that issue could easily have been written for 1999 publication, although researchers in 1980 most likely imagined that an answer to the question of "chemical lawn mowing" would have been uncovered by now.

"Use of dwarf-type turfgrasses will likely not occur in the near future, while chemical growth regulators have been marketed with marginal success," wrote John Kaufmann of Michigan State University in 1980. "In the near future, however, it is certain that chemical lawn mowing will move closer and closer to being a reality."

The Professional Lawn Care Association of

Our Changing Face

company never likes to change its name, but such a move may be necessary as your organization evolves over time.

That has been the case for *Lawn & Landscape* as we have worked to keep pace with the evolving professional lawn care and landscape industry. As a result of changes in the industry and our magazine's focus — from serving just the professional lawn care operator in 1980 to the full-service contractor in 1999 — our name has changed as well.

As the industry grew through the 1980s and maintenance services became more popular, we broadened our focus to include issues related to managing equipment, scheduling crews and offering multiple services. At the same time, we changed the name of the magazine to reflect this changing focus, and *American Lawn Applicator* became *ALA/Lawn & Landscape Maintenance*.

Through the late 1980s, the maintenance portion of the industry continued growing, and maintenance services became firmly entrenched as the service around which much of the industry was built. ALA/Lawn & Landscape Maintenance was shortened to Lawn & Landscape Maintenance.

Following the recession of the early 1990s, the market resumed growing. Clients, began demanding more from their contractors. Providing just lawn maintenance was no longer enough to satisfy these clients, and companies found themselves expanding their service offerings to keep these clients happy. Hardscapes, water features, holiday lighting, and irrigation all became hot services.

Reflecting this change, we targeted the magazine and its editorial focus squarely at the full-service contractor by altering the magazine's name to Lawn & Landscape in 1995. — Bob West





Our logos from our first issue
until now. From top to bottom, they
were introduced in 1980,
1988, 1989 and 1995.

MAINTENANCE

Lawn & Landscape
Lawn & Landscape
Lawn & Landscape
Lawn & Landscape

L&L looks back

America held its first convention and trade show Nov. 12-14, 1980 in Louisville, Ky., and representatives of *ALA* were there.

"PLCAA fills a definite need in the lawn care industry, and if the success of their first convention is any indication of how successful the organization will be, they can't fail," wrote staff members Maureen Mertz and Gaynell Radus, noting the event drew 704 attendees and 70 exhibitors.

Remember When?

his issue marks the beginning of Lawn & Landscape's 20th year of publishing. For those of you true industry veterans who have been at this for 20 years or more, we'd like to invite you to share your thoughts with us on how the industry has changed over the last 20 years. What about the industry is better or worse today than it was in 1980? What will the future hold?

What will the industry look like in 2020 when Lawn & Landscape celebrates its 40th anniversary?

Tambelands and the month of the

Feel free to put your thoughts on these issues down on paper and fax them to Nicole Wisniewski at 216/961-0364 or e-mail her at nwisniewski@qie.net.

THE NAME GAME. Our first issue

featured advertisements from companies that have continued to serve this industry over the years – Finn, LESCO and Rhone-Poulenc – as well as those that have disappeared – Mobile Automation, Flexitube and Solder Absorbing Technology.

At the same time, some of the people the industry has come to rely on for expert

information have been contributing to the magazine for two decades now. Our first year's issues include such names as Barry Troutman and Chuck Darrah from ChemLawn, who are now with Environmental Care and CLC Labs, respectively. And some influential researchers have enjoyed long-lasting homes as Joe Vargas

(Michigan State), Nick Christians (Iowa State) and Pete Dernoeden (University of Maryland) can all be found today at the same schools they wrote their articles from in 1980. – Bob West

The author is Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.



NEW PRODUCTS

Davis Weather Stations

- Wireless Weather Monitor II and Wireless Weather Wizard III are easy to install
- Each station comes preassembled and ready to mount on a roof or mast
- Includes pre-mounted sensors, a radiation shield and a weather-tight shelter
- SensorLink transmitter sends data to the included display module up to 400 feet away

Circle 201 on reader service card

BASF Drive® Herbicide

- Registered with the EPA
- · Contains quinclorac
- May be used on a number of turf species, including creeping bentgrass, Kentucky and annual bluegrass, perennial and annual ryegrass, tall fescue, common and hybrid bermudagrass and zoysia
- Offers a combination of postemergence and residual control in a single postemergence application
- Targets crabgrass, dandelion, speedwell and other broadleaf and grassy weeds
- Controls torpedograss and kikuyagrass
- Works well in overseeding programs
 Circle 202 on reader service

Circle 202 on reader service card

Florastone Collection Payer Molds

- Textured molds produce a concrete stone of 16 inches by 16 inches by 1½ inches
- Enhances garden pathways
- Each mold will produce approximately 75 stones
- Molds are made from industrial strength urethane
- Stone can be made in any color Circle 203 on reader service card



Ruud Lighting Well Lights

- Specification-grade fixture
- · Easy to install
- · Water-tight, corrosion resistant
- Choose from halogen or HID models
- Lights up commercial or residential nightscapes
- Available in 12V Luma Landscape models and in 120V line voltage models
- All luminaires are covered by the DeltaGuard 7-year finish warranty and are UL listed for wet locations
- Accessories, such as glare shields, linear grates, louvers and color filters help to uniquely tailor fixtures to each of the applications

Circle 204 on reader service card

Motorola Radius SP21 Portable Radio

- Two-watt, one-channel radio
- Uses either 25 kHz or the newer 12.5 kHz frequencies
- · Available in VHF or UHF

- Voice Operated Transmission (VOX)
- X-Pand technology
- Private Line capabilities
- Versatile channel spacing
- Weighs 11 ounces
- Measures 4.5 inches by
- 2.5inches by 1.2inchesHas a lightweight and compact design

Circle 205 on reader service card

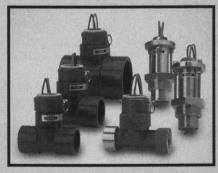
Rain Bird Flow Meter Line

- Offers choice of 11 sensing and transmitting components
- Incorporates flow metering into existing irrigation operations
- Tee-type sensors are available in 1-inch brass and 1½-, 2- and 3-inch plastic models
- Brass insert-type sensors are available for pipe sizes 3-inches and larger
- · Color coded, irrigation-type wire leads and clearly marked flow

direction speed installation

- Combines a paddlewheel impeller with a brass or stainless steel body
- Sensor circuitry
- Can operate at pressures up to 400 psi and temperatures up to 221 degrees Fahrenheit
- Flow meter transmitters are available in signal-alone and display versions
- Can be programmed from a laptop computer or stand-alone models provide an LCD display which shows actual current flow and total flow
- All flow meters have a 3-year warranty

Circle 206 on reader service card



IEW PRODUCTS

Earth & Turf Spray System

- 25-gallon spray system
- Features 12-volt, 7-amp Shurr Flo pump with tractor-



mounted on-off controls

- Stainless steel tips and strainers with 2-pound ball check valves
- · The boom, which has a 90inch spray width, is equipped with unique breakaway

joints that protect it when colliding with obstacles

• Non-corrosive handgun features 12-foot hose

Grde 207 on reader service card

McCulloch's **Backpack Blower**

- · Features a 43cc Mitsubishi industrial engine
- Capable of moving 644 cubic feet of air per minute
- · The throttle and other controls are mounted on a pistol grip handle
- · ProMac anti-vibration system coupled with an aluminum impeller helps to reduce vibrations

Circle 208 on reader service card

PSB Rotary Spreader

- PrizeLAWN BigFOOT HVO features 13-inch pneumatic tires
- · Hinged plate, configured for fertilizer applications, flips out of the way to expose the mass flow port
- · Ergonomic handle reduces operator fatique

Circle 210 on reader service card

Galbreath Hook

- 9,000-pound hook hoist
- New U9 model can be mounted on smaller trucks that do not require a commercial operator's license
- · Designed to accommodate either an 84-inch or 120inch CA chassis
- Requires minimum truck specifications of 6,000pound front axle with power steering and 12,000-pound
- Has 17.5 GPM cycle times
- · Can handle containers from 8- to 12-feet long
- · Allows one truck to perform multiple functions

· Includes single, tandem



and multi-axle configurations with capacities up to 60,000 pounds

· Larger models can handle containers as long as 22 feet Circle 211 on reader service card

Eco Soil Systems Biofungicide

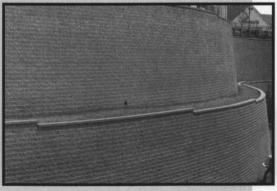
- · EPA-approved microbial Spot-Less (Pseudomonas aureofaciens strain TX-1) biofungicide is available for the treatment of turfgrass disease
- · Approval includes the delivery of Spot-Less using a BioJet system, a bioreactor that automatically ferments and distributes microorganisms through the irrigation system
- · Combats turf disease in golf course applications
- Effective in controlling anthracnose, dollar spot, pythium, leaf spot, bermudagrass, take-all patch, fairy ring, pink patch, gray leaf spot, microdochium patch, summer patch and necrotic ring spot Circle 212 on reader service card

Versa-Lok Retaining

Wall Technical Bulletin

- · Four-page bulletin presents issues for building a tiered retaining wall system
- Offers special considerations for slope stability and foundation evaluation
- · Line drawings and photographs help illustrate points

Circle 209 on reader service card

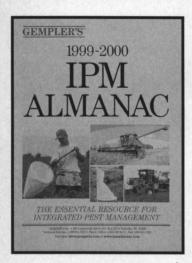


Abbott Fleet Management System

- · AutoMate is an on-board computer system
- · Gives record of date, start time, total mileage, drive time, peak speed and even stop time
- No driver input is needed
- Scheduled maintenance can be tracked and maintained

Grde 213 on reader service card

NEW PRODUCTS



Gempler's IPM Almanac

• Includes tips on starting an effective Integraped Pest

Management program, the tools to use, commodity-specific IPM checklists, an illustrated dictionary, technology terms, a directory listing of more than 3,000 consultants, extension specialists and researchers

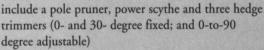
- 250-page comprehensive Integrated Pest Management resource
- Training aid with information on soil testing, weather monitor-

ing, insect trapping and management of weed and wildlife pests

- Include valuable field scouting forms
- Offers easy-to-read chapters
 Circle 214 on reader service card

Stihl Gearbox Attachments

- Five new interchangeable gearboxes are available
- Attachments



- All five attachments are recommended for Stihl units FH 75, FS 85, HT 70, HT 75, HL 75K (fixed), HL75 (30 degrees), HL 75K (0 to 90 degrees) and HL 75 (0 to 90 degrees) only
- Gearboxes offer a complete cutting system

 Circle 215 on reader service card



"...over 250,000 sq.ht.
and \$1300 every day &

I COVE MY JOB

because of this

Ride-on

Sprayer-Spreader!"

Rob McCoy, Lawn Tech Custom Care, Chadds Ford, PA

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EW PRODU

Zeneca Heritage® **Fungicide**

· Provides effective control of some of the most severe fungal diseases including

Rhizoctonnia, anthracnose, downy mildew, Alternaria, Phomopsis, powdery mildew, rusts, as well as other pathogens that cause conifer blights, leaf blights, leaf spots, shoot, stem and

soilborne diseases

· Can be used in both landscape and production ornamental locations, including container, bench, flat, bed or field grown ornamentals in greenhouses, shade-houses, outdoor nurseries, retail nurseries and other landscape areas

· Granted approval for disease control for ornamental plants by the EPA

Circle 217 on reader service card

Bear Cat PTO Powerhouse

- 36 serrated, self-sharpening, reversible heat-treated shredding knives
- · Four tool steel chipping blades
- · Handles limbs up to 5 inches in diameter
- Heavy 7-gauge steel throughout
- · 125-pound dynamically balanced rotor
- · Optional vacuum and blower attachments available

Circle 216 on reader service card



Hoffco L'il Hoe

- Tiller/cultivator uses a 49.2 cc, 2-hp Tecumseh engine
- · Ideal for weeding or cultivating raised beds, boards, landscaped areas or gardens
- · Portable and easy to handle with quick-fold handles
- Weighs less than 25 pounds Circle 218 on reader service card



Gandy core and slice aerators and Gandy single unit and gang rollers are designed to provide turfgrass with that special care. Gandy professional aeration tools feature independent aerator wheels that follow the ground contour. Wheels can be changed from coring spoons to slicing knives to reduce thatch build-up and soil compaction. Models are designed for 3-pt hitch, Cat. I tractors.



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that good old fashioned quality still



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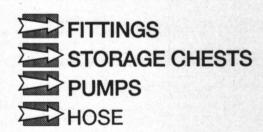


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EACH DAY, as Jim Haley at Terrascape Landscape Management, Phoenix, Ariz., sent out a five-man crew in the morning, he was uncertain whether or not his power equipment would break down.

Haley has been in the landscape maintenance business for 20 years. Satisfying customer expectations and getting the job done right the first time around was a critical concern, as was maintaining profitability. The problem of equipment downtime in the field was significant.

"If a blower broke down,

the job just wouldn't get done and we'd have to return to the job site later to finish," Haley said. "That situation is ancient history now."

Haley purchased a computer software program to organize equipment history and implement a preventive mainte-

nance program for his 35 trucks and approximately 140 pieces of 2-cycle power equipment.

"We've created a structured routine using the MPulse program from SpecTech, Eugene, Ore.," Haley said. "Equipment is always in for service. When a mower is being worked on, the crew takes a backup mower out in the field. Equipment downtime and lost productivity in the field has been practically eliminated.

The most important thing to consider when shopping for a program is ease of use. If people can't figure out how to use the software, they won't use it.

"Before we got MPulse, we handled equipment maintenance off the cuff," Haley continued. "The result was that the equipment life expectancy was cut in half. We were repeatedly blowing engines and clogging carburetors. The use of the computer program to

schedule preventive maintenance has greatly reduced repair costs and has extended the usable life of the equipment."

Many elements go into cre-

ating and implementing a thorough preventive maintenance program. While a computer is not always essential, it makes the organization of information, record keeping

and work order generation easier. If you have a significant amount of equipment, vehicles or facilities to track, using a computer becomes a must.

There are a number of considerations to be aware of when deciding to organize an equipment fleet or mainte-

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nance vehicles. First, there are costs involved in implementing a Computerized Maintenance Management System that go beyond the purchase of a computer and a software program.

Contractors will need to budget for time required to learn to use the new system and to train the people in the company who will be involved with the system. Contractors will also need to allow time in the beginning to enter data. If there is a lot of equipment, it's not necessary to set up everything at once. Plan to enter the most important pieces first and add additional pieces as the need arises.

Another pitfall of newly implemented CMMS systems that most people fail to anticipate is that performing routine maintenance and inspections on equipment that has not had this type of care can lead to higher repair and maintenance costs initially. Once preventive maintenance is being done regularly, however, these costs will drop significantly.

When a company decides it is committed to implementing a CMMS program to track maintenance history and schedule preventative maintenance, management needs to choose a program that lets it track the information that is important to the business and generates the reports it needs to make daily maintenance decisions.

Many CMMS software programs are available with prices ranging from a few hundred

dollars to six figures for complex programs. A company's needs and costs will depend upon the size of its operation and the system it wants.

The most important thing to consider when shopping for a program is ease of use. If the maintenance and administrative people can't figure out how to use the software they won't use it. CMMS requires daily use, generating and closing out work orders. If data isn't regularly entered, the system will fail.

"We don't fully use the MPulse program yet, although we expect to in the future," he shared. "Tracking keys and locks is next on our list of areas to implement."

While it has only been a

number of months that Commercially Yours has had its CMMS program implemented, it has radically changed the way the company deals with maintenance and downtime.

"I can't remember what it was like before we started using the system. It just became the way we do things," Haley said.

Contractors shouldn't underestimate what will be required to get up and running with a CMMS system, but it can result in enhanced profitability and improved ability to deliver customer satisfaction. - Paul Berger

The author is a consultant with SpecTech, Eugene, Ore.

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Builders Plumbing Supply, a leading wholesaler serving Chicago metropolitan area and the surrounding states has an immediate opening for assistant manager at the main office located in Addison, Illinois. This position specifically requires experience in commercial irrigation estimating including a working knowledge of RainBird, Hunter, Irritrol, and Nelson equipment. In addition, the successful candidate will oversee inside sales, counter sales and warehouse operations. Competitive salary and benefits. Please forward resume to: BPS Sprinkler Irrigation, Attn: G. Barthel, 133 S. Rohlwing Road, Addison, IL 60101.

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DIVISION MANAGER

Award winning, full-service landscape management firm is seeking a motivated individual to build its senior management team. Located in the fast-paced San Francisco Bay Area, our growth has created the need for a division manager in maintenance. The top candidate will be a good communicator, organized, customerfocused, and able to understand financial statements. An AA or BA degree is preferred with five years' experience in the commercial landscaping field. We offer generous salaries, profit distribution, company vehicle, health/dental/life insurance, and 401k with company match. For immediate, confidential consideration mail, fax or E-mail resume to Gachina Landscape Management, Inc., 1130 O'Brien Dr., Menlo Park, CA 94025, Fax: 650/853-0430, E-mail: jobs@gachina.com

SEASONAL COLOR MANAGER (FLORICULTURALIST)

Florida Gulf Coast, growth oriented, landscape management company seeks experienced full-time color manager for resort property clientele. Individual must be self-motivated with excellent organization and communication skills. Prefer hands-on experience and knowledge of southern, coastal growing conditions, and chemical certification. Responsibilities include procurement installation, maintenance, and general plant health care for new and mature properties. Please mail or fax your resume to:

Byrne Landscape Management, Inc. P.O. Box 1098 Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459 850/267-1912

Selected candidates will be contacted for further evaluation and possible interview.

SPORTS COMPLEX SUPERINTENDENT

Performs administrative and supervisory work in construction, maintenance and repair of city sport and athletic fields for the Parks Division of the Parks & Open Space Department. Requires: Bachelor's degree in Agronomy, Horticulture, Landscape Architecture, Parks Administration or a directly related field. Selected applicant will be required to submit proof, in the form of official transcripts, of any and all education attained by the applicant that is indicated on the application and/or resume. At least 4 years of progressively responsible experience in parks construction, operations and maintenance plus at least 2 years of supervisory experience. An equivalent combination of education, training and experience may be considered. Licenses or Certificates Required: Colorado Driver's License with a good driving record. Salary Range \$37,820-\$53,438/year. Call Tom Barrett, Manager of Parks for more information. 303/739-7172 or e-mail at tbarrett@ci.aurora.co.us

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HOW WE DO IT...

ROUTE MANAGEMENT: THE BIG PICTURE

FOR THOSE WHO WORK for a landscape maintenance company, route management is the most critical aspect to an individual company's success. Once a set of jobs is sold for a given year, effectively placing these jobs on routes for completion is what determines how successful a company will ultimately be that year.

Mike Rorie, president of Groundmasters, Cincinnati, Ohio, has worked hard to help his company turn routing into a science, as well as a business.

PROPER FOCUS. "Some people in the industry think of land-scape management as a maintenance business when it's really a route business," Rorie explained. "Too many people get caught up in thinking it's something else. But if you look at UPS, or a uniform delivery company, or a company that delivers bottled water, their success and profitability really hinges on the route."

What kind of work was sold, who it was sold to and what the final price was, are answers that need to be established before the first mower hits the site, Rorie noted.

SETTING BENCHMARKS. Another essential element of route management is setting standards by which route performance can be evaluated. Groundmasters developed its standards over the years through good record keeping and trial and error.

"We tell our crews that we don't want more than 15 percent of their 8-hour day to be indirect," explained Chris Hayes, vice president of operations at Groundmasters. "This indirect time is the actual amount of time spent driving to and from jobs."

GETTING INPUT. Planning the routes at the beginning of each season is another important key to success. Groundmasters' account managers and opera-

tions managers tear the routes down each winter and evaluate every aspect of the route. Input is gathered from all employees and used to create the master plan.

New equipment and techniques are also considered. "When new equipment or techniques come to our attention, such as new ways to do bed edging or mulching, we'll take them into consideration," Rorie noted.

ongoing updates. The planning process isn't where changes in the route plan stop. Peak efficiency depends on ongoing monitoring of the crew's efficiency. "If the crew is working faster or slower than our plan estimated, we need to find out why and get it corrected as soon as possible," stressed Rorie.

"We typically try not to change the routes throughout the season," Hayes explained. "We only do this if we lose or add work. We will either add a worker to a crew or add a property to an existing route."

Proper route management considers every aspect of a crew's movement and has a significant impact on how successful a maintenance company is over the course of a season.

"A company should want all of its accounts side by side and the crews making as few moves as possible to do the maximum amount of work," Rorie said.

CREW SIZE IS KING. Landscape maintenance companies should

its crew size for each job. What size crew will do the work most efficiently?

consider

"Commonly, 65 percent of each job consists of mowing time, leaving 35 percent for the horticultural and ornamental side of things. It makes most sense to design a crew so that as the mowing technicians are loading their equipment onto the truck, the horticultural member or members of the crew are finishing up," Rorie explained.

EQUIPMENT IS EQUAL TO MAN-POWER. Rorie said that the basic rule of thumb for equipment choices is: big machines for big yards and small machines for small yards. "Again, custom fit equipment to each level," Rorie restated. "It's like a Rubick's Cube. Whenever you change one side you change everything else."

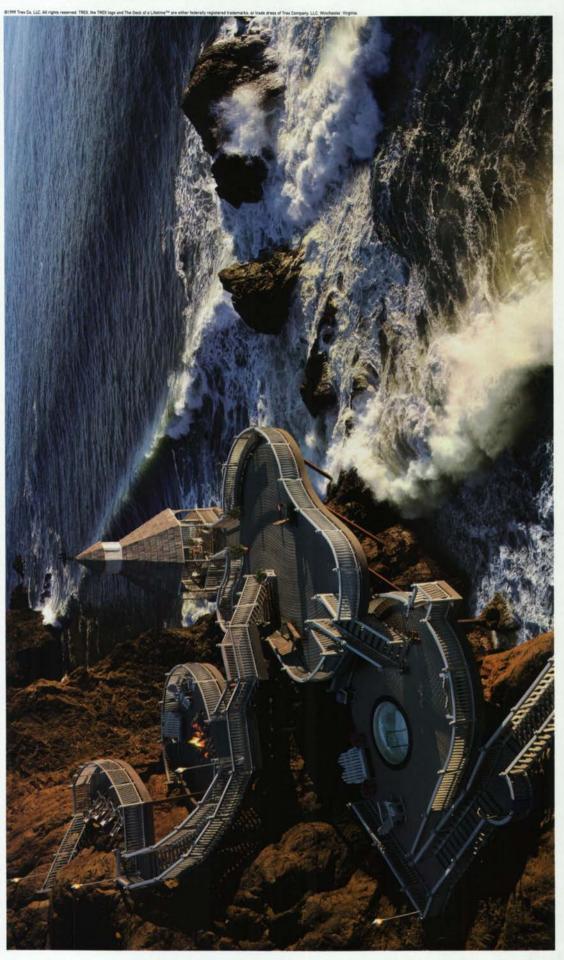
NUMBER CRUNCH. Rorie also explained that some serious number crunching goes into a strong route plan. "Everything is quantified to the hour – time spent on the site and the indirect time of how long it takes to get to the site. Everything is measured to the hour and the minute. An hour of our time is equal to \$40. It's calculator city," Rorie said. III – Will Nepper

5 Keys to Success

Route Management

- · Plan the route at the beginning of the season
- . Know the proximity of the jobs to one another
- · Determine the most effective crew size
- · Choose the proper equipment for each route
- . Know the amount of time spent at a site

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