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Craig Bakstad, East Dundee, Ill.

Cover Story Learning All the Time

Tovar's Landscape Contractors enjoys learning from industry experts to improve its operations.

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Riding Right Along

Thanks to recent developments in design technology and added productivity benefits, riding mowers continue to 66 enjoy gains in popularity...

The Artist's Landscape

Contractors agree that choosing whether a landscape needs the vibrancy of annuals or the texture of perennials is an art form ...

Shade Issues & **Opportunities**

There are a number of options available to maximize the quality of landscapes 90 in shaded areas.

Insect Control Strategies

An effective insect control program can be achieved through a number of options.

An Endless Supply

The avenues of purchasing irrigation products are changing, along with the criteria for selecting a good distributor.

Room for Improvement

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The Design Center as a Marketing Tool

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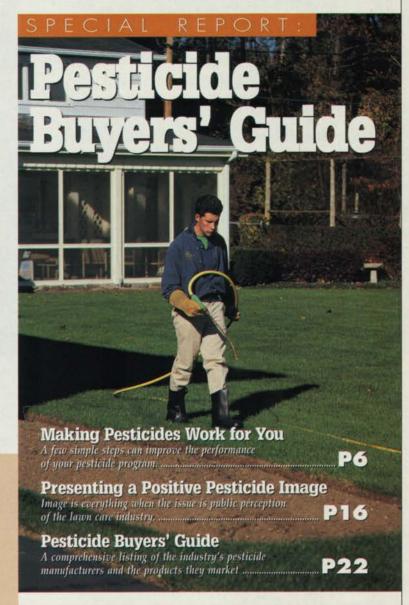
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Reintroducing the lawn

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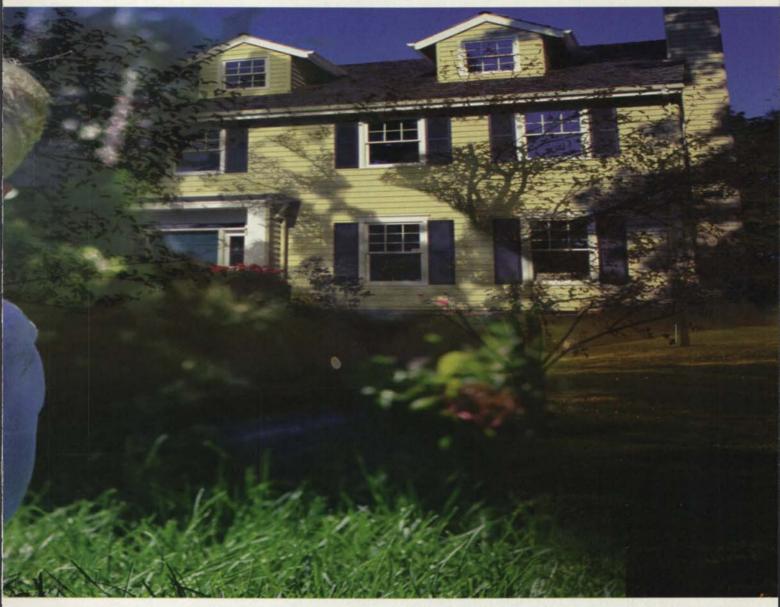
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Apart from the crabgrass at the bottom left, the poison ivy top right, the fire ants dead center and the mole crickets you can't even see yet. These days it's not enough to produce

herbicides and insecticides that merely work. As your customers are made increasingly aware of the processes involved in keeping their lawns and landscapes free from weeds and insect pests, they're asking questions. At Aventis, we provide the answers they want to hear with a full line of products that do their job.

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Editor's Focus

Don't Leave Without A Map

"We can only thrive when we have a goal."

- Margaret Kuhn

A couple of years ago, wide-scale acquisitions of landscape companies by TruGreen-ChemLawn and what was then known as LandCare USA spurred considerable concern that small and mid-size businesses would no longer be able to compete and grow in this industry.

Obviously, that has not proven to be the case by any stretch of the imagination. The industry has continued to grow during the last two years and all indications for the future are positive. At the same time, while the pace of consolidation has slowed, there is little reason to believe that we've seen the last of the mergers and acquisitions within this industry.

Instead, the many potential buyers and sellers I spoke with at the Lawn Care & Landscape Industry Merger and Acquisition Forum in San Francisco were confident that consolidation will continue in this industry, and there are even reasons to believe more companies - residential maintenance and irrigation contractors, for starters - will receive increased attention from potential buyers.

The big question that independent contractors have to ask themselves is what this means for them.

What has become obvious as this process has continued is that whether owners decide to sell their businesses or not, each owner has to have a plan for the future of his or her company.

A number of contractors have used the past two years to educate themselves about how a business is valued and sold. A key lesson that many contractors have hopefully learned is that businesses aren't sold overnight and businesses don't necessarily have to be sold right now.

> Yes, there is a chance that the window of opportunity for selling a business and receiving maximum dollars will close as time passes. But there is an even better chance that deciding you want to sell your business and, more importantly, when you want to sell your business will keep that window open for you.

So, if nothing else, sit down and think about what you want where do you want your business to be five years from now? How are you going to get there?

No one gets in a car and just starts driving without a planned destination. The smart drivers take a map or directions with them. Shouldn't you do the same for your business?

Boh Wit

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BREAKING NEWS

Lawn & Landscape To Launch Interior Business Magazine

CLEVELAND, OHIO - The Lawn & Landscape Media Group announced plans to introduce *Interior Business*, a new publication that will target the growing interior landscape market.

The inaugural issue of Interior Business will appear in May with subsequent issues to follow in July,

September and November. Current plans call for a bimonthly publication frequency throughout 2001.

"The debut of Interior Business magazine is the result of our identifying a growing need for quality business management information for this segment of the market, as well as numerous requests from current readers and suppliers," said Cindy Code, group publisher of the Lawn & Landscape Media Group. "Interior Business will address the business management concerns of the professional interior landscape contractor as well as the growing number of exterior contractors that we see entering the interior market."

The publication received a statement of support from the Associated Landscape Contractors of America at ALCA's Interior Landscape Conference.

Contractors can sign up for a subscripton to *Interior Business* at www.interiorbusinessonline.com. CLEVELAND, OHIO - A

January survey of Lawn &

Landscape readers asked
them to rank the eight
challenges facing their
businesses from one to eight
with one being the most
challenging and eight the
least challenging.

Not surprisingly, the lack of qualified

Lack of labor 2.70

Competition 3.68

Unlicensed contractors/low bidders 3.69

Lack of capital 4.05

Government regulations/environmental issues 4.95

The economy/local market 5.24

Weather 5.99

Other 6.59

Source: Lawn & Landscape Reader Survey

sional contractors as a growing nuisance.

labor remains
the greatest challenge. Along with increased competition,

contractors also regularly pointed to the proliferation of unprofes-

INDUSTRY NEWS

LESCO Creates New Business Segments

ROCKY RIVER, OHIO – Despite their customers widespread growth, some lawn and landscape suppliers have been challenged to increase profits in the last few years. Various distributors in the industry continue to sell or consolidate (see *Breaking News*, page 32), and now LESCO announced it is realigning its business into three separate divisions: lawn care, golf and product supply.

"To take advantage of the size and scope that LESCO has attained in the past decade, we have decided to organize our business into a structure that focuses our organization even more closely on our customers and markets," said William Foley, chairman, president and chief executive officer. "Focusing separate management teams on each of our business units will assist LESCO in achieving its long-term growth and profit objectives, while increasing accountability for the performance of our business and improving our overall response time to customers."

The lawn care division will serve lawn care operators, turf maintenance companies and in-house maintenance crews. The golf division will serve LESCO's golf course and international markets. And the product supply division will oversee purchasing, manufacturing and distribution activities.

(continued on page 26)



LESCO is run by president and chief executive officer Bill Foley Photo:

Roger Mastroiani

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SURVEY SAYS...

Are Smaller Firms Growing Too Fast?

LAGUNA NIGUEL, CALIF. – While the good times roll for most of the landscape industry, business influences are carrying different impacts on companies of varying sizes.

Kevin Kehoe, a green industry consultant with Kehoe & Co., Laguna Niguel, Calif., said a survey his group conducted found that while landscape companies are growing, companies doing less than \$750,000 in sales annually aren't growing as often or as much as their larger counterparts.

"We believe that three things are happening," Kehoe noted. "Pricing is relatively less of an issue, so mid- and large-sized companies are getting more of the good work.

"Second, the smaller firms are maxed out," he continued. "They have grown so quickly that they traded profits for sales and are cutting back on taking any more new business.

"Finally, good people are gravitating to the large companies who are willing to invest more

Calendar of Events

MAR. 14-15 Beyond the Basics of Landscape Construction, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J. Contact: 732/932-9271.

MAR. 15 New York State Turf & Landscape Association Landscape Contracting Seminar, "Irrigation Basics," North White Plains, N.Y. Contact: 914/636-2875.

MAR. 16 Ohio Landscapers Association Meeting and Educational Seminar, Westlake, Ohio. Contact: 800/335-6521.

MAR. 16 Massachusetts Pesticide Exam, Springfield, Mass. Contact: 617/626-1786

MAR. 21 Perennial Plant Conference, Storrs, Conn. Contact: 860/486-2930.

MAR. 22 Certified Landscape Technician Training, Fletcher, N.C. Contact: 828/697-4891.

MAR. 23 Nevada Landscape Association Trade Show & Conference, Reno and Las Vegas, Nev. Contact: 775/673-0404.

MAR. 25 New York State Turf & Landscape Association Landscape Contracting Seminar, "Hands-on Training," Katonah, N.Y. Contact: 914/636-2875.

MAR. 28 Conference on Urban Pest Management, Riverside, Calif. Contact: 909/787-3718.

MAR. 30 Certified Landscape Technician Training, Raleigh, N.C. Contact: 919/515-1197.

APR. 5 New York State Turfgrass Association Adirondack Regional Conference, Lake Placid, N.Y. Contact: 800/873-8873.

APR. 7, 18 & 26 Massachusetts Pesticide Exam, Waltham, Mass. Contact: 617/626-1786.

APR. 8-9 Certified Landscape Technician Exam, Woodland Hills, Calif. Contact: 800/448-2522.

APR. 9-11 EETC Fourth Annual Meeting, Cleveland, Ohio. Contact: 336/375-7500.

APR. 13 Massachusetts Certified Arborist Exam, Waltham, Mass. Contact: 508/653-3320.



APR. 25 Roadside and Right-of-Way Vegetation Management, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J. Contact: 732/932-9271.

MAY 11 & 19 Massachusetts Pesticide Exam, Waltham, Mass. Contact: 617/626-1786.

MAY 26 Massachusetts Pesticide Exam, Cape Cod, Mass. Contact: 617/626-1786.

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

JUNE 2 & 16 Massachusetts Pesticide Exam, Waltham, Mass. Contact: 617/626-1786.

JUNE 6 Pruning Trees and Ornamentals, Waltham, Mass. Contact: 413/545-0895.

JUNE 8 Scouting for Pests and Problems of Woody Ornamentals in the Landscape, Bridgewater, Mass. Contact: 413/545-0895.

JUNE 9 Massachusetts Pesticide Exam, Springfield, Mass. Contact: 617/626-1786.

JUNE 13 Pruning Trees and Ornamentals, Amherst, Mass. Contact: 413/545-0895.

JUNE 14 Scouting for Pests and Problems of Woody Ornamentals in the Landscape, Pittsfield, Mass. Contact; 413/545-0895.

JUNE 21 UMASS Turf Research Field Day, S. Deerfield, Mass. Contact: 413/545-3066.

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in people in terms of pay, benefits, career guidance, bonuses and training," he concluded.

This final claim was supported by the fact that 68 percent of his respondents offer performance bonuses to employees, and this practice is noticeably more common in larger companies.

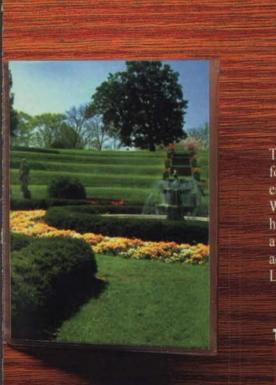
OBITUARY

Industry Pioneer Stevens Passes On

BALTIMORE, MD. – Frank Stevens, a pioneer and visionary in the professional lawn and tree industries in Maryland, passed away Feb. 2. He was 78.

Stevens started in the industry in 1967 with Cornell Chemical Co., now known as York Distributors, selling pest control products. From there, he joined Scientific Plant Service. In the early 1970s, he started Operators Heat's lawn care division, known as Maryland's Lawnkeeper. In January 1978, he founded Pro-Lawn-Plus, where he remained president until his retirement in 1991.

(continued on page 21)



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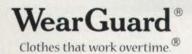
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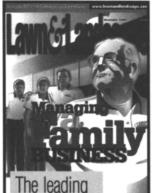
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- □ 6. Landscape Architect
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- □ 7. Other Contract Services (please describe)

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(continued from page 17)

Stevens was active in developing several industry associations, including the Maryland Turfgrass Council, the Maryland Arborists Association, the Maryland Association for the Responsible Regulation of Pesticides and the Professional Lawn Care Association of America.

BLOWER UPDATE:

Sounding Off

DALLAS, TEXAS—The Portable Power Equipment Manufacturers Association's (PPEMA) board of directors unanimously endorsed a resolution requesting all leaf blower manufacturers label blowers with sound levels as measured by the ANSI B 175.2 standard.

"PPEMA and its members support sound level labeling for blowers," remarked Fred Whyte, PPEMA chairman and president of Stihl, Virginia Beach, Va. "Sound level labels provide important information to potential purchasers and aid municipalities in the enforcement of local sound ordinances."

People

Environmental Industries announced the following: Richard

Sperber was promoted to chief operating officer and is still president of Valley Crest and Environmental Golf; Greg Pieschala was hired as executive vice president; David Mutter was hired as vice president, sales and marketing; Greg Motschenbacher was hired as vice president, director of project management for Valley Crest, Ken Hutcheson was promoted to vice president of U.S. Lawns and Neville Laatsch was promoted to vice president and branch manager of Valley Crest's water features and theming division.

FX Luminaire added **John Binkele** to its staff as vice president of business development.

The Drip Store hired **Peter Luchsinger** as vice president, operations and promoted **Amber Dodman** to office manager.

Roeland Kapsenberg was appointed to chief executive officer and president of Barenbrug North America and **Ron Dodds** was names territory manager at Barenbrug Northeast.

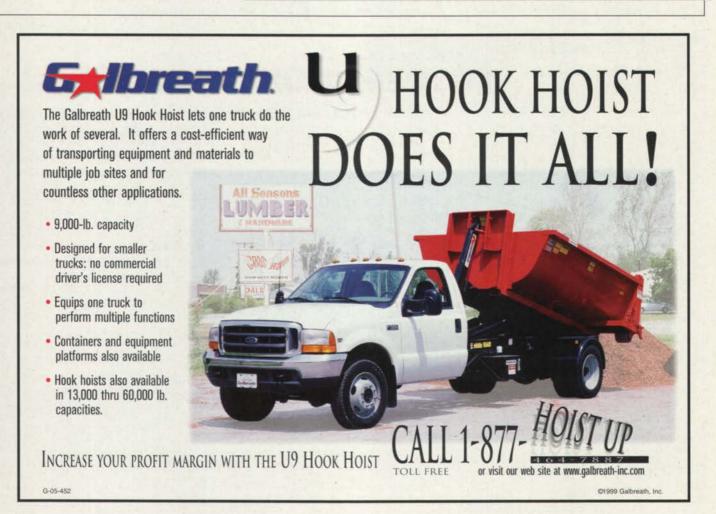
Den Garner was named executive director of the Evergreen Foundation.

David Ross was promoted to the position of national accounts manager at Zeneca Professional Products.





Binkele(Top), Ross (Bottom)



The PPEMA Blower Labeling Program is available to all manufacturers of gasolineand electric-powered leaf blowers. The program stemmed from PPEMA's recognition of concerns that have been expressed about leaf blower sound levels and the importance of providing prospective buyers accurate information about sound levels that may affect purchasing decisions.

PPEMA members also encouraged nonmember companies to make a similar commitment to sound level labeling for leaf blowers.

"As manufacturers, we are committed to reducing blower sound levels, encouraging proper blower operation and facilitating blower labeling efforts," Whyte encouraged.

INDUSTRY RECOGNITION:

Aquascape Designs named an *Inc.* 500 Company

BATAVIA, ILL. – Aquascape Designs, a supplier of educational information and supplier

On the 1 = 3

Garden Gate Landscaping - www.gardengate.net

Mink's Nursery - Landscaping and Lawn Service - www.minksnursery.com

Professional Lawn Care Association of America - www.plcaa.org

National Association of Home Builders - www.nahb.com

Foster Manufacturing Corp. - www.fostermfg.net

American Nursery & Landscape Association - www.anla.org

Sterling Trucks - www.sterlingtrucks.com

To announce a new Web site, e-mail nwisniewski@lawnandlandscape.com.

plies for water feature installations and maintenance, was named one of the 500 fastestgrowing, privately held companies in the country by *Inc.* magazine.

The company has grown by 1,831 percent in the last five years – good for 116th place on the list – doing a significant portion of its business with professional landscape contractors.

Aquascape Designs is headed by Greg

Wittstock, who started the business while he was in college.

"This award is an exciting acknowledgement and one that recognizes a lot of blood, sweat and tears shed by our employees," noted Wittstock, company founder and president. "Our mission is to change people's perception that having water features installed on their properties requires a lot of work."

(continued on page 24)

Let's to the editor

To the Editor:

In Dave Clancy's "Getting Started on Tree and Shrub Care" (October 1999), the point of increased profits for companies is understated, and the suggested methods of achieving those profits are oversimplified.

A customer's decision to have a lawn treated is a business decision equating to low pricing. Because competition in the lawn care service industry is enormous, pricing is suppressed.

Tree treatments, on the other hand, are emotional decisions. The profits realized are significant. Treating a tree for a species-typical problem usually takes less time than treating the lawn around the tree. The applied pesticide usually costs less than the pesticide used to treat the lawn.

No lawn service company will ever realize the potential profits in arborial care with mind sets of "capital investments and inhouse training." The fait accompli is the cost of diagnosis (training, knowledge and personal time) vs. the potential of turning that diagnosis into a sale. If there is no sale,

there is no funding for diagnosis.

Lawn care professionals are trained to treat symptoms of the problem – the derivation of which goes unchecked. That's not OK with trees, which, genetically, may take years to respond to diagnostic treatments.

The proverbial trick is to realize a profit from the diagnostic process. The treatment, if any, will provide its own profit windfall. Some companies are doing this – but these companies are tree services with certified professional operators (CPO), not spray companies with arborists.

The solution is for the lawn company to team with a consulting arborist. This will form a synergism for both parties. There is no additional overhead for either, each will profit, and so will the trees.

Joe Samnik,
Consulting Arborist and CPO

To the Editor:

We are very flattered with the contents of your December issue. You've done a skillful job at chronicling the inner workings of our company. I think this will be a valuable resource for those in the process of building their own landscape businesses. It is also a very fitting tribute to George and the excellent organization he has built over the years.

Bart Parker,
Director of Sales and Marketing
The Morrell Group, Atlanta

To the Editor:

I just received my first issue of Lawn & Landscape. Great magazine. Also, I went to your Web site, and it is the best I've found. My only regret is that I didn't know about it two years ago.

Neil Fievet Nitro-Green, Hayden, Ala.

To the Editor:

We wanted to thank you for the story in your January issue. We appreciate your time and effort to help connect Future Farmers of America and the green industry.

Jan Ferris, Regional Director National FFA Foundation

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USE READER SERVICE #92

In Business...

crete & Pottery.

Skinner Nurseries will expand its distribution network to serve the Orlando and Savannah/Hilton Head markets... Orbit Irrigation Products was awarded the 1999 Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year award in its region for manufacturing... Calloway's Nuersery merged with Cornelius Nurseries...Gardners' Guild was selected a 1999 Waste Board WRAP winner for reducing waste... Pennington Seed unveiled a new packaging and production warehouse... Gehl Co. expanded its Madison, S.D., skid loader facility ... Florists' Mutual Insurance introduced employment practices liability Insurance to protect employers from wrongful termination or sexual harassment allegations... Barenbrug USA purchased Lloyd Seekamp Seed of Gilcrest, Colo.... Boz-zuto Landscaping won 13 awards at the 1999 Prince George's County Beautification Awards ceremony... Pavestone Co. acquired White's Con-

Association

The **Professional Grounds Management Society** announced its officers for 2000: Kevin O'Donnell, president; George Van Haasteren, first vice president; Matt Vehr, second vice president; Joseph Murphy, treasurer and Randall Willis, past president.

Richard Hurley received the 1999 **New Jersey Turfgrass Association** Hall of Fame Award. The award is presented annually and recognizes a continuing lifetime commitment of dedication, service and achievements contributing to the advancement of New Jersey's turfgrass industry.

The **Associated Landscape Contractors of America** presented its Annual Exterior Environmental Improvement Judges' Award of 1999 to Hendrikus Schraven Landscape Construction & Design of Issaquah, Wash., for the Nelson residence, a residential design/build project near Seattle, Wash. This award is presented to one outstanding project from the annual ALCA Exterior Environmental Improvement Awards program that merits special recognition and honor. The project involved a new construction site on a dramatic shoreline with a steep 130-foot slope prone to severe erosion and landslides.

The **Evergreen Foundation** contributed \$15,000 to North Carolina State University's libraries to help complete work on the Greenways Archive – a depository of information about the history and development of greenways. Greenways are green spaces that connect parks and trails and provide wildlife habitat, as well as walking and biking trails.

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LESCO Creates New Business Segments (continued from page 14)

According to Breck Denny, LESCO chief financial officer, the divisions were developed to better focus the company's marketing efforts.

"Before the realignment, the company didn't have divisions. It had a production orientation with a sales effort in golf, a sales effort in lawn and an operations group. Now we have more distinct areas of responsibility, so they'll be measured as divisions in terms of responsibility. Hopefully we'll be more responsive as a marketing group now," he explained.

Dana Wilson will head the lawn care division as president. Wilson previously served as Northeast regional manager, director of service centers and vice president of service centers and lawn care.

Alex Antonio was named president of the golf division. Antonio was previously CEO of Howard Johnson's Enterprises, a privately

LESCO°

owned producer of fertilizers and related products based in Milwaukee, Wisc.

Charles McGonigle will serve as president of the product supply division. McGonigle was vice president of operations for LESCO.

LESCO, which is a powerful force in green industry distribution with sales of more than \$460 million through its 234 service centers and 71 stores-on-wheels, also announced the company has formed a new management committee comprised of Foley; the divisional presidents; vice president, chief financial officer; vice president, chief

information officer; vice president, human resources; vice president, general counsel; and corporate secretary. The committee will focus on driving the company's strategic objectives through the new business units, as well as seeking new opportunities to

speed the company's growth.

LESCO also announced record earnings of \$11.6 million for its 1999 fiscal year. "We believe our unique business model has begun to demonstrate its underlying profitability potential," noted Foley.

LESCO's stock was trading at nearly \$17 a share at press time, down from a 52-week high of \$19.50 a share in early July 1999.

About 84 percent of the company's revenues came from the sale of fertilizers, turf seed and pesticide products, with the remaining 16 percent from equipment sales.

– Scott Hunsberger





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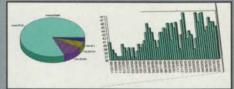


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"CLIP tracks everything. It keeps us on schedule, shows the profitability of every job we do, reminds us of important dates, reveals the effectiveness of our advertising, applies service charges to clients' bills, and lets us know exactly where our company stands on a monthly basis," says Bob.

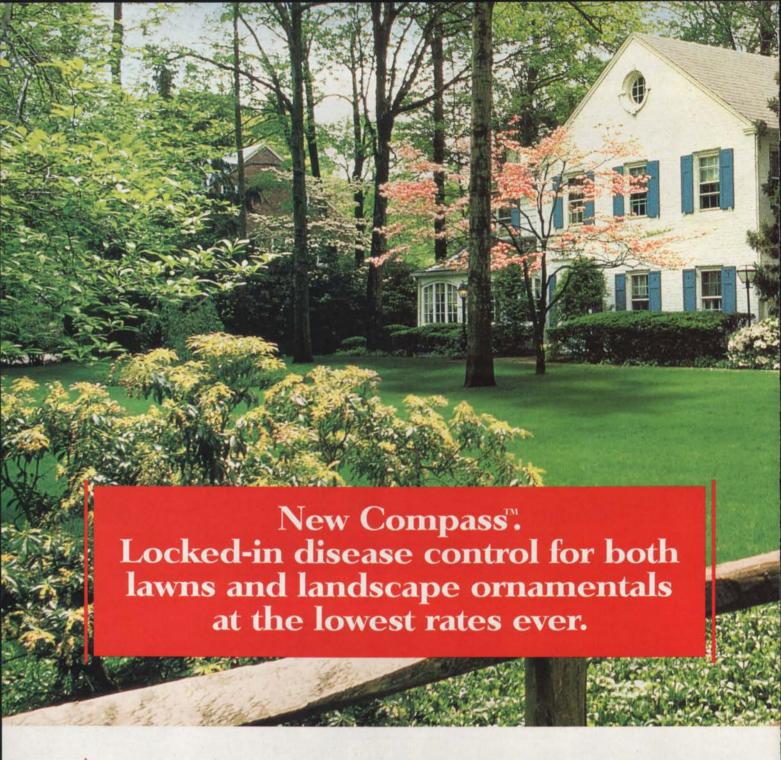
Bruce Stone, partner and co-owner, says, "It's not just that *CLIP* is a great program. *CLIP*'s support services, most notably their annual *CLIP* Conference, have been invaluable to our business. The people at *CLIP* stand behind their product 100%. *CLIP* has taken such a burden off us. It's enabled us to get away from doing paperwork so we work *on* our business instead of *in* it.

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Breaking News

Environmental Industries, Others Announce Acquisitions

CALABASAS, CALIF.—Environmental Industries Chief Executive Officer Burt Sperber has steadfastly maintained that his organization would make acquisitions when such deals made strategic sense.

EII's strategy must include strengthening its position along the East Coast as the company announced four acquisitions, highlighted by the purchase of STM Landscape Services in Oakton, Va.

"We have been looking at companies for acquisition, but we had not found anything that excited us like STM did," noted Burt Sperber in an exclusive interview with Lawn & Landscape.

"This is a family business just like ours, and its revenue is all from mainte.

revenue is all from maintenance work."

This entry into the Washington, D.C., market continues EII's move up the Atlantic

Coast – a move that began with EII's acquisition of Oyler Brothers in Florida nearly 10 years ago. EII also has operations in Atlanta, Ga., and Charlotte, N.C.

STM generated approximately \$12 million in revenue last year, and the company will operate as STM Landscape Services, an Environmental Care Co.

EII also confirmed it had completed acquisitions of smaller companies, one in Orlando and two in the Charlotte, N.C., market, although additional details on these acquisitions were not available.

In other acquisition news:

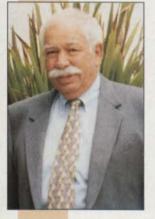
 RBI and West Coast Bridge, two West Coast landscape companies merged to form American Civil Constructors, a company established to consolidate specialty contractors into a platform for a build-up strategy in the landscape and heavy construction markets. RBI, with offices in Denver, Colo., Salt Lake City, Utah, Dallas, Texas, and San Francisco, Calif., has more than 700 employees and \$69 million in revenue.

American Civil Constructors will pursue contractors with public works experience that are located west of the Mississippi River.

 Sanitors, a janitorial and landscape company located in San Antonio, Texas, acquired Russ Fragala Landscape Corp, Coram, N.Y.

This is Sanitors' first acquisition outside of Texas. Al Honigblum, president of Ground Control, the landscape division of Sanitors, said Fragala will remain on to oversee operations and assist in acquisitions.

Sanitors, which entered the landscape industry with the 1998 acquisition of Ground Control, San



Burt Sperber
explained that
the acquisition
of STM will help
Environmental
Industries better
serve the
mid-Atlantic
regions of the
United States.
Photo: EII

MERGERS

United Green Mark, Shemin Join

NOVATO, CALIF. – United Green Mark (UGM), one of the largest irrigation distributors serving the Western United States, has teamed up with Shemin Nurseries, one of the largest nursery material distributors in the Eastern United States.

The deal was driven by the retirement of UGM co-founder Ric Green as well as a continued evolution of suppliers into more full-service organizations.

"Both UGM and Shemin are tightly focused on serving the professional end of the green industry and do not pursue retail sales," noted a release announcing the deal. "Both companies have been working on expanding their product mix and services offered, believing that the industry is best served by a one-stop philosophy that maximizes its customers' purchasing and operational efficiency."

Mark Agnew will remain chief executive officer of UGM, which has 34 locations in four states and annual sales of \$150 million. Shemin Nurseries and its 20 locations are led by Bob Shemin. Both UGM and Shemin Nurseries are now part of a new holding company, Shemin Holdings, and the organizations will operate with their current management teams in place.

While immediate expansion plans aren't known for the new organization, the company's release did explain that in today's era of consolidation, "this union will provide the necessary resources for both Shemin Nurseries and UGM to become the 'acquirer of choice.'" – Bob West

Breaking News

Antonio, has offices in 16 states and closed 1999 with a little more than \$100 million in revenue - \$30 million of which came from landscape services.

"We are looking to expand through acquisition," Honigblum said. "We are looking for companies that are willing to grow at a minimum of 10 percent on an annual basis and expand through consolidation."

So far, Sanitors, which has a corporate goal of \$250 to \$300 million in annual revenue, has acquired five companies and, according to Honigblum, seven additional acquisitions are in the pipeline.

• TruGreen LandCare acquired Scapes, a \$6 million commercial landscape maintenance and residential and commercial design/build company with locations in Atlanta and Ashburn, Va.

Terms of the sale included all commercial landscape management operations, residential and commercial design-build operations, all trucks and equipment and the transfer of 100 employees - approximately 50 at each location. - L&L Staff

ACQUISITIONS:

Andersons Buys Scotts' Pro Turf

COLUMBUS, Ohio - Consolidation within the professional turf industry picked up steam when The Scotts Co. agreed to sell its U.S. professional turf business to The Andersons, Maumee, Ohio, and its Canadian professional turf business to Nu-Gro. The deal is expected to close by May 31.

The Andersons will acquire the U.S. rights to the Pro-Turf®, Contec™, AccuPro™ and other professional turf brands and their associated distribution network, product inventories, customer lists and all trademarks, patents and copyrights associated with the professional turf market. Nu-Gro acquires rights to the same assets for the Canadian market. The Scotts® brand name, however, is not part of this transaction.

The transaction does not include any of Scotts' consumer, grass seed, lawn care services or horticultural businesses.

According to Scott Todd, senior vice president of Scotts Professional Business Group, the professional turf industry in North America has become saturated. He predicted a snowball effect to follow the sale announcement. "This is the catalyst to a much-needed consolidation in this industry," he said, pointing out the negative effects of an increased number of suppliers. - Scott Hunsberger



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ON THE NET

Industry Debates Internet Sales

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN. - Turfco Mfg., a supplier of commercial aerators, edgers, sod cutters and over seeders, has begun selling its products direct to contractors via the Internet, no longer using dealers to take product to market.

In doing so, Turfco has become one of the first lawn and landscape industry suppliers to pursue e-commerce aggressively and examine the potential for a sales approach radically different from the traditional dealer network.

This winter, John Deere & Co., Moline, Ill., also announced its vision of the future, which includes considerable emphasis on Internet-based direct sales to contractors. Obviously, direct selling from manufacturers to contractors would have tremendous impacts on the dealer portion of the industry, and Mark Rostvold, senior vice president of Deere's worldwide commercial & consumer equipment division, said dealers have to understand the big picture.

"We readily admit that we don't have all of the answers,

but we do know that the basic business model is going through a substantial transformation," remarked Rostvold. "And, to survive, we must change our thinking and approach business differently in order to align our actions with the world as it is - not as we'd like it to be.

"We want dealers to fully understand that their roles

will change," continued Rostvold. "And the change isn't being driven by manufacturers, but by technology and the marketplace."

While Deere elected not work for this year.

Meanwhile, Turfco is taking orders and shipping product via the Internet. Promotional literature distributed by Turfco boasts "parts direct and quick. Overnight

parts will become the norm. Loss of income and downtime are a thing of the past."

Contractors can now purchase Turfo products via the company's Web site (www.turfco.com), its toll-free 800 number and its fax number. Contractors can access online equipment manuals to identify the specific parts they need, and they will be able to charge purchases to a credit card or directly to an account with the company.

"The equipment prices are considerably less than what they used to be," according to a press release from the company.

This all begs the question of just how feasible selling via the Internet is for the landscape indus-

John Bender, national sales manager, Prime Line, Litchfield, Ill., said his manufacturing operation has explored the possibility of selling direct via the Internet, (continued on page 34)

WILL THIS HAPPEN?

to discuss a timeline for beginning to offer products direct to contractors, industry speculation is that such an initiative couldn't begin until the year 2001 because the manufacturer has likely already secured product orders from its dealer net-

"The first

companies

to pioneer

e-commerce

will gain a

competitive

edge that will

determine their

success or

failure in the

next 10 years

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Brophy

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Turfco (continued from page 32)

but, ultimately the decision was made to continue to maintain a traditional distribution system.

"We believe our wholesale distributors can go on selling into the commercial market better than we can because the distributor is better positioned to react to a regional marketplace," Bender explained. "We've observed some of our competitors selling directly to contractors, but I'm not sure that's the best way for us to go about our business. They may have had some success selling direct, but they've probably also increased their costs of doing business."

Andy Somich is a territory sales manager for Modern Power Equipment, Wickliffe, Ohio, and he said he thinks distributors like his are relatively safe from too much Internet competition. "Service and parts are keys to commercial customers," noted Somich. "Contractors have to get help right away once the season starts and get loaner machines."

Somich also said contractors may limit their options for getting equipment serviced by buying directly from a manufacturer's Web site.

"I can't see contractors buying machines off the Internet and then going to a dealer to get the machine serviced," he related. "Dealers don't make money on warranty work, but they do warranty work for their customers to take care of them. Dealers may not service equipment bought over the Internet."

George Kinkead, Turfco's president, is confident, however, in the future of online sales and e-commerce.

"Our direct program was developed after very deliberate and careful market analysis, and I think this is a pretty logical step," explained Kinkead, who declined to share whether or not he thinks the company can grow sales in the year 2000. "The fast pace of product development and improvements means making new products available to end users rapidly is imperative.

"Our problem isn't with two-step distribution, but that model just doesn't work for us. The mainline dealers focus most of their efforts on their primary product lines, so short line and specialty products tend to get lost in the shuffle," Kinkead continued. "The pull side – customer demand – has continued to develop very nicely for us. The push side – dealer and distributor effort – was becoming a limiting factor. Today's successful landscape contractor has become more and more sophisticated. But let's face facts – if a dealer has a chance to sell a \$6,000 mower or a \$1,000 edger, he will spend most of his time learning the features and advantages of the mower."

Somich acknowledged that big-ticket machines like mowers generally get more attention from dealers than lesser-priced equipment. But he defended dealers, pointing out that purchasing machines that are in less demand and tying up valuable cash in inventory isn't a viable option for a lot of dealers.

Kinkead recognized that many dealers do support such short line products, but they still don't spend enough time learning about the machines to support contractors' need for information about setting up these products for maximum productivity or what extra parts to inventory.





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"The dealer has a lot of that educational information for big-ticket items like mowers, but a dealer's people just don't have the time to learn in-depth about more specialized equipment," he noted.

As a result, an information chain develops from contractors to dealers to the manufacturer and then back to the contractor to get questions answered, which makes communication challenging and time consuming.

Some manufacturers and dealers have privately expressed concern about is that while selling direct to contractors over the Internet does eliminate a dealer and/or distributor's markup from the retail price, suppliers' prices are also then accessible to anyone with a computer and a modem. As a result, some suppliers are concerned that selling direct will force manufacturers to lower their prices and create even more price competition – a fear that Kinkead said is a benefit to contractors.

"Now our prices are published and fixed," he observed. "As more manufacturers start selling direct there will be more pressure on the different groups involved in the traditional distribution process to be bringing real value to the process. Otherwise they are only serving to drive prices higher and they are probably hampering the process."

One significant challenge Turfco will face, and one reason more manufacturers haven't pursued the idea of selling direct to contractors more aggressively, is the contractors' need for service support. As a result, Turfco has added a limited two-year warranty to its products and will be accessible via the phone for assistance in cases where equipment is shipped directly to a contractor and some assembly is required. In addition, Turfco continues to sign up servicing dealers.

"When the contractor handles the final assembly, he is going to know more about the machine, such as where the adjustments and settings are," explained Bill Lazar, quality and service manager at Turfco.

While Turfco recognizes that contractors may have to assume more responsibility in some areas, the company believes there are substantial benefits to be achieved in others that justify this shift.

"With the many mergers that have been occurring in the industry, especially among equipment manufacturers, the distribution system has undergone some major upheavals," pointed out Bob Brophy, lawn care products sales manager at Turfco. "We have had Turfco dealers who suddenly disappeared because they were bought out or lost their major lines due to a merger of manufacturers. We often ended up serving the customer directly because we had to."

Brophy said other dealers and distributors have made changes in their business approaches that have affected contractors.

"Many distributors and dealers are reevaluating their own business methods and strategic plans," he explained. "More and more, they tend to focus on their primary lines and high-profit equipment. This is smart management for them, but making this shift has made getting the necessary information to the end users more difficult for specialty suppliers, such as Turfco."

Deere has also observed many of these



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changes taking place, while simultaneously watching the realm of e-commerce explode in so many other industries. The combination of these developments will result in a significant reduction in the number of dealers serving the industry, according to Rostvold. In addition, he predicted the nature of dealers' sales will change dramatically in that time.

"There will be half as many dealers and the proportion of their revenue will shift from mostly whole goods sales to mostly parts sales and service work," Rostvold explained, adding that to make this shift dealers will likely have to service more manufacturers' equipment. "One thing we're asking our dealers to do is provide universal service. That means they'll fix any brand of equipment. We want the John Deere dealerships to be the first choice for servicing all makes of equipment."

Somich agreed with Rostvold's estimate that 70 to 80 percent of dealers' current revenues come from the sale of equipment with the rest of the dollars derived through providing service and selling parts, but he said

there is another factor significantly impacting dealers' businesses.

"Dealers can't find good mechanics," he explained. "So the mechanics they do have are getting older and aren't as familiar with the new technologies, new designs and new products coming on to the market.

"Dealers are starting to find ways to get more profit from service and parts as their margins on the sale of equipment go down, but they can't find enough mechanics to do as much of this more profitable work as they can do," Somich continued.

Rostvold said the unbelievable rate at which e-commerce is growing – experts report that Internet sales currently total about \$300 billion and are doubling every nine months – means manufacturers have to start moving in this direction now.

"The first companies to pioneer e-commerce will gain a competitive edge that will determine their success or failure in the next 10 years and beyond," he asserted. "If you resist the changes taking place, you run the risk of being swept away." **IRRIGATION ALSO.** The irrigation industry is also examining similar Internet marketing opportunities, although the distributors are the companies considering direct sales in this industry.

Bob Marsan, president, Marsan Turf & Irrigation, San Dimas, Calif., said that even though his company is selling online, he doesn't think the Internet can ever fully replace the distributor. "The technical training and dialogue that happens between a distributor's personnel and the contractors is lost online," he noted.

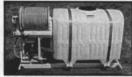
Bob Hobar, marketing manager, Irrigation Supply, Warrensville Heights, Ohio, said the company is selling commodity-type products online but that distributors have to be sensitive to the fact that they commonly have limited territories they can sell to, which mitigates the benefit of selling to contractors nationwide via the Internet.

"But I think the game is changing and eventually distributors will be able to sell products wherever they want," he noted. – Bob West



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short work of work. (Package includes 460 Loader, 613 Rotary Cutter.)

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<u>Design Notebook</u>

PROJECT: The Cole Residence LANDSCAPE CONTRACTOR: McHale & McHale Landscape Design, Upper Marlboro, Md.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Stephen McHale SIZE OF PROPERTY: Approximately 200-feet by 100-feet

MAN-HOURS: Approximately 1,600

PLANTS INSTALLED: Three 30-foot Heritage river birch; perennials varied from Sedum 'Brilliance,' Pennisetum 'Hameln,' Liriope 'Big Blue' and Coreopsis 'Zagreb' in the sunny areas to lily of the valley, blue and red lobelia, Astilbe 'Gloria,' hosta, epimedium and plumbago in the shaded areas; mazus, ajuga and Iris 'Caesar's Brother' were used around the waterfall and 'Otto Luvken' cherry laurel, Oakleaf hydrangea, itea and rhododendron were used as background shrubs.

Having previously worked with McHale & McHale Landscape Design, the Coles called as soon as they settled into their new home in Bethesda, Md. There were many challenges ahead since the back of their property included a "tree save" area, which was not to be disturbed, limiting the amount of space that could be developed in a design.

DESIGN CHALLENGES. Our objectives were to create an outdoor living space that could accommodate 40 to 50 people and at the same time provide a comfortable space for small family gatherings.

The greatest challenge was to ensure proper drainage through the backyard. Since the builder was unable to create positive drainage away from the house, grading was a top priority. Other challenges were creating a natural garden that included a patio for entertainment, a sunbathing area and a focal point for the garden.

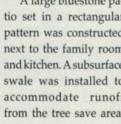
DESIGN SOLUTIONS. As the design process evolved, the idea of a waterfall and a pond naturally the garden. The two landscape elements were posi-

> A large bluestone patio set in a rectangular pattern was constructed next to the family room and kitchen. A subsurface swale was installed to accommodate runoff from the tree save area.

fit into the sloping backyard and became the life of tioned so they could be viewed from the family room

and the kitchen.







Riverjack gravel was used to cover the subsurface swale and create a dry riverbed. The swale was also bridged with a 2-foot by 5-foot piece of quarried stone that connected the kitchen patio to a broken Pennsylvania flagstone patio to be used for sunbathing and overflow entertainment.

To create the sunbathing patio, a 3-inch high, serpentine-shaped stone retaining wall had to be constructed. The sunbathing patio also acted as the coping for the pond, which was approximately 8 feet by 15 feet. The waterfall pump was hidden behind a dense grouping of rhododendron.

The planting design provided for the succession of color throughout the year.

The dominant plants of the garden were three 30foot Heritage river birch - one next to the pond, one in the plant bed above the wall and one next to the Riverjack swale. The birches provide character throughout the year and bring the woods closer to the house. Mass plantings of liriope were used instead of turf in the open spaces next to the house.

To extend the hours of enjoyment in the garden, a subtle, yet dramatic, lighting design was implemented, highlighting the birch trees with uplights and filtering light from the existing large trees onto the patio areas to create a subtle moonlight effect. Mini-spotlights and an underwater light also illuminated the pond and waterfall.

It was a pleasure working with the Coles. They contributed ideas to the design and allowed us the freedom to be creative without strict budget restraints. - Stephen McHale

The author is vice president at McHale & McHale Landscape Design, Upper Marlboro, Md.

constructed a large bluestone patio set in a rectangular pattern in the Coles' backyard next to their family room and kitchen (bottom). Photos: McHale &

McHale Landscape

Design

A sunbathing patio

was created with

quarried stone and

a 3-inch high

retaining wall

McHale also

(top). McHale &

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Nursery Market Report

SEASONAL OUTLOOK

Sizing Up Spring Supply

In the busy spring season, many nursery growers dream of transforming their operations into giant plant factories capable of manufacturing product at breakneck speed. In reality, they cannot always supply enough product to meet demand from landscape contractors and to compensate for a national shortage of ornamental trees and shrubs.

"Unlike manufacturing, we can't just crank up production to produce more plants," said Keith Manbeck, nursery manager for Manbeck Nurseries in New Knoxville, Ohio. "Producing the plant material is a long process, and believe me, if I could, I would snap my fingers and double my inventory at the present."

With trendy new material featured in magazines, supply depletes fast, added Calvin Bordine, perennial manager for Bordine's Nursery in Clarkston, Mich. "You may fall out of the material very quick, and you can't make any more," Bordine explained.

Typically, growers feel the production crunch every spring, but this year the situation is worse thanks to widespread drought, which stunted the growth of some ornamentals.

"Weather is always a factor, but the impact is localized," said Jeff McIvor, Oregon Association of

Nurserymen's director of marketing and communication. "The biggest factor is that the economy is strong. The market has been this way for several years. Plus, people tend to want bigger trees and shrubs – 'ready-made landscaping,' which has made supplies tight."

HERE TODAY, GONE TOMORROW. Contractors may encounter shortages of low-maintenance product, including day lilies and hosta, and new or unusual specialty items because demand for them



Five Tips for Suppliers

- **1.** Know that predicting market demand is not an exact science. Growers begin planning their spring seasons anywhere from one to three years before harvest. This year, expect large and small evergreens to be plentiful, while shade trees and ornamentals could be in short supply.
- **2.** Order trendy specialty items and rare varieties far in advance because demand is high.
- Place orders early to ensure an adequate supply of the desired crops for landscaping.
- **4.** Maintain constant communication with suppliers to avoid problems or misunderstandings and to build strong relationships.
- **5.** Tour suppliers' nurseries after peak season to get a sense of their planning, production, shipping and inventory processes.

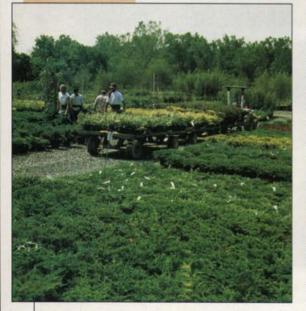
is rapidly rising, growers report.

In particular, there is increased demand for more cutting-edge types of hosta, explained Mary Beth Vanous, business manager for hosta specialist Q&Z Nursery in Rochelle, Ill. "Those who come to us are willing to go out of their way for the material," she said. Because the nursery maintains a constant inventory of nearly 150 varieties all year, Vanous said she doesn't expect to encounter any shortages.

Some growers are still recovering from last year's drought, which meant fewer trees to sell. For the next several years, Manbeck forecasted, shade trees and ornamentals will be in short supply, but large and small evergreens will be plentiful.

Known for its rhododendron, Teufel Nursery in Portland, Ore., is bracing itself "to supply more than ever," said Rick Christensen, landscape division manager. Like (continued on page 48)

Because of severe
drought and increased
demand, nursery
suppliers are
struggling to maintain
an adequate supply
of ornamental trees
and shrubs for
landscape contractors.



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USE READER SERVICE #131

Nursery Market Report

(continued from page 46)

Vanous, he is confident that the operation is ready for the spring rush. "We can almost always substitute a different type of rhododendron if we ever run out of the particular one a customer wants," Christensen said.

RISKY BUSINESS. Spring plant availability is often based on the decisions of individual growers, which are made several years before harvest. In some cases, growers and landscape contractors face some of the same challenges with weather and labor.

Inclement spring weather, for example, may keep contractors from working outside, Bordine said. "In late spring," he explained, "if they're behind on jobs, we're dealing with the same beast."

The limited labor pool, Bordine added, also contributes to the spring crunch. Relying on people to show up can be risky, so his operation has turned more to mechanization to increase productivity.

McIvor agreed that the tight labor market worsens growers' supply problems, but the

industry is focused on finding a solution with legislation that would ensure a sufficient, legal work force during peak times.

Besides weather and labor, growers face risks predicting market demand far in advance of any given spring season. Generally, planning begins one to three years before harvest. Still, "planning for a given season is an ongoing process that evolves throughout the year," said Joe Boarini, owner of Grande Greenhouse in Indianapolis, Ind. "Many of our decisions for next season are made during the busiest times of the current season."

GET TO KNOW SUPPLIERS. According to some suppliers, there is a need to educate contractors about the difficulties of production. Many encourage contractors to tour nurseries and inspect inventory at other operations. "You can see if you've experienced a regional shortage," Bordine said, "or if you had a problem with a particular grower."

Many growers advise contractors to order far in advance, especially if they want new or rare plants. Some producers are already booking orders for spring of 2001. "There is no such thing as an order placed too early," Boarini said, "but there is definitely such a thing as an order placed too late."

One of the biggest challenges facing growers, Manbeck added, is that contractors don't always comprehend that producing crops takes time. While a perennial can take six to nine months to produce, a spirea is about a 15-month product from cutting to sale, he explained. "On the other side of the coin is caliper plant material," Manbeck said. "If you start at propagation, making a 2-inch plant can take six to eight years. I'm not sure that contractors appreciate this. Considering the price of plant material in the last five years and also that a liner from the West Coast costs \$7 to \$12, figuring out why large plants are in short supply isn't hard."

Learning about the complex supply/demand process, some growers stress, is essential to contractors forming successful partnerships with their suppliers. "Communication is key to any strong relationship," Boarini said. – Ali Cybulski

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Notification Nuisance

In New York state, the green industry could soon be the latest target of an increasingly active anti-pesticide lobby. A "universal notification of abutters" bill is currently working its way through the New York state Senate that would require anyone applying pesticides to notify those bordering the property within 48-hours prior to application.

If passed, the "Neighbor Notification" bill, which has already been approved in the state assembly, will have a dramatic impact on the applicator community, adding a substantial administrative and financial burden, said Fred Langley, who follows state issues for Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE), Washington, D.C.

This bill would place an unfair burden on applicators, agreed Don Burton, president of the New York State Lawn Care Association. "Can you imagine the complexity of trying to get addresses, especially in densely populated neighborhoods with multiple-occupant dwelling units? That's the whole neighborhood," he said.

The proposed notification system would likely create a false sense of emergency, Langley pointed out. "If people are getting a barrage of notifications, they will think that something is wrong," he said.

The bill could have an especially detrimental effect on the tree service industry, according to Burton. With components such as unrealistic spraying limitations, "the legislation is so onerous that it precludes the possibility of arborists even being able to comply," he said. "Should the law go through, compliance will just be too expensive."

RISE is currently raising awareness and understanding about the bill's implications, Langley said. State industry associations are also lobbying Gov. George Pataki's office, circulating petitions and contacting state representatives to convey their concern about the bill. "If there's any hope of modification, it's a long shot, but the hope is there," Burton said.

A BETTER WAY. Instead of getting everyone involved, especially those who could care less if someone is treating neighboring lawns or trees, applicator allies and others are proposing a statewide registry as part of the bill. Homeowners who want to know about pesticide applications in their neighborhoods would be on a list and then notified accordingly.

For applicators, this database would substantially reduce the administrative burden a notification bill would impose. There are already 11 states with registries and they work well, according to Langley. "These registries have also shown that very few people are willing to sign up for these," said Langley. "Essentially, most people don't care."

IN RELATED NEWS... This year, pesticide use in and around schools will be a hot topic in communities across the country. A recent U.S. General Accounting Office report on pesticide usage in schools has given national exposure to the often emotionally charged child protection issue. In this election year, public interest research groups also are focused on the issue. "Who wants to be against protecting the children?" Langley asked wryly. "This is a vehicle for them to pass legislation that phases out pesticide use or severely limits use of pesticides both indoors and outdoors."

Related legislation has been introduced in a number of states. In Massachusetts, there are several bills pending in the legislature as well as a ballot measure filed by a public research interest group that would dictate to schools exactly how, if at all, they can control pests. "They are tying the hands of pest control professionals," Langley said. The bill also would limit the pest control materials schools can use and fine them upwards of \$5,000 for failing to comply.

In terms of science, this bill creates a "lock in time," failing to accommodate new technologies or methods of delivery, and completely ignores the issue of resistance management, according to Langley. "The legislation is pretty short sighted," he said.

RISE is currently working with a coalition of organizations in Massachusetts to see if the bill can be amended to show more consideration and evenhandedness toward the complex issue of pest control. "Our concern is that the measure has the potential to put children and staff at risk because is it limiting," Langley said. - Cynthia Greenleaf

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<u>In Minor's League</u>

We are looking at ways of making our employees more efficient. Can you provide some insight on this subject?

First, let me congratulate you for focusing on the most important aspect in expense control of a landscape management or landscape construction operation. While employees are our biggest assets, personnel costs are the most significant expense items on our financial statements. Ensuring that your people are more efficient than your competitors' employees means the difference between acceptable and less-than-acceptable profitability—even more importantly—in the pricing structure of your services.

With that in mind, here are some simple concepts that are critical to getting the most out of your employees. These concepts, quite frankly, are not rocket science, but you would be amazed how many landscape companies do not adhere to these philosophies.

- 1. Establish goals for all your employees. At the very least, the goal for your key field people should be meeting their budgeted hours. This information should be communicated every day before any service crew of any type leaves your facility. Staff members need to understand your expectations if you want them to meet those expectations. This is why establishing goals is the critical first step.
- 2. Monitor those goals. Each day when the crews come back in, you or your managers must determine how they performed in comparison with the established goals. This monitoring process needs to be done as soon as the crew comes in or the next morning, at the very latest, to reinforce the importance of these achievements.
- 3. Give feedback on the goals. Without feedback, establishing or monitoring goals is immaterial. You can give feedback in a number of ways. The most obvious way is communicating your feelings about the employee's performance. Simply said, praise or reprimand based on the performance.

Obviously, when I talk about reprimanding, don't take that too literally. Feedback can be either positive or negative. How you give that feedback is important. Praise should be done both privately and publicly. Criticism should never be given in a public environment.

Another way to give feedback is by charting your crews' progress daily using scoreboards in your warehouse with everyone's name listed on the board alongside their budgeted hours. Each day, post their actual hours. The benefits of this approach will be realized in a number of areas, the most important being the power of peer pressure.

Seeing this evolve over time in my years in business, I was amazed at the peer pressure that emerged as crew members compared performances. This type of pressure is not necessarily bad if you and your managers focus on the right areas. For example, by increasing efficiency, you can charge your customers less and conceivably pay your employees more. The feedback aspect of these strategies cannot be overstated.

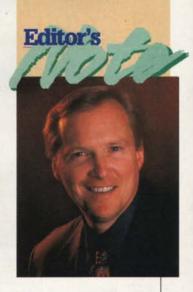
4. Establish rewards for achieving goals. There are very few individuals who will work extremely hard simply because goals are put in front of them. But there are many people who will work very hard if there is a reward for achieving their goals.

For field people, the reward must be immediate. By immediate, I mean no later than one month after achieving the goals. Monitoring and feedback must be ongoing. The payout for goal achievement must be made as soon as possible. With mid-level and senior managers, you can establish a similar reward system used with less regularity, perhaps annually, based on a profit-sharing plan or the like.

Trying to increase your efficiency is certainly an admirable goal. Efficiency must be examined every year, if not every month. Painting a picture of the expectations you have for your employees is imperative — but that is not enough. Monitoring the goals, giving feedback on the goals and rewarding for goal achievement will ultimately lead to increased efficiencies.

One of the most popular speakers at the 2000 Lawn & Landscape School of Management was David Minor, founder and former president of Minor's Land scape Services, a \$12-million company in Fort Worth, Texas, that Minor sold to TruGreen-ChemLawn in 1998. In this monthly column. Minor shares his thoughts and suggestions for managing a lawn and landscape business with readers.

In addition to serving the industry as a consultant and speaker, Minor is professor and director of The Entrepreneurship Center at The M.J. Neeley School of Business at Texas Christian University. Readers with questions they would like to ask Minor can e-mail them to bwest@lawnandlandscape.com or fax them to Lawn & Landscape at 216/961-0364.



8

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CONTRACTORS

HEADQUARTERS: Elgin, III.

FOUNDED: 1990

BUSINESS SERVICES: About 74 percent of revenue comes from commercial accounts, 25 percent from government/municipal accounts and 1 percent from residential. Approximately 50 percent of the company's revenue comes from snow plowing with 40 percent from maintenance services, 8 percent from landscape enhancement work and 2 percent from lawn care.

1999 REVENUE: \$2.8 million PROJECTED 2000 REVENUE: \$3.4

EMPLOYEES: 18 year-round, 12

seasonal

THE COMPANY

MISSION STATEMENT: To provide the best value in commercial landscape and snow and ice management using the best-trained professional people, state-of-the-art equipment, methods and management. We guarantee complete customer satisfaction and great opportunity for learning and growth for our team.

FUTURE CHALLENGES: Improving our growth management, hiring the right people, continuing to provide quality training programs and better managing the early spring part of the season.

THE OWNERS

Jeff Tovar, president

BACKGROUND: Owns 73 percent of the company he founded in 1990 after mowing lawns part-time to pay for his college education.

Steve Bednarz, vice president of sales and marketing

BACKGROUND: Owns 27 percent of the company he joined in 1992 to head the company's sales and market-

ing operations.







Tovar's Landscape Contractors enjoys learning from industry experts to improve its operations.

Jeff Tovar learned a valuable lesson early in his business's history – he doesn't know everything about managing his business, so using the talents and experiences of industry veterans lets him operate with the benefit of their knowledge.

Tovar learned this lesson in his second year of business when organized labor tried to unionize his employees.

"We didn't know anything about dealing with unions, so we asked our attorney what to do and he recommended we not do

anything," recalled Tovar, president, Tovar's Landscape Contractors (TLC) and Tovar's Snow Plowing, Elgin, Ill. "All of a sudden, we had a union vote taking place in our offices, and we had to work to defeat it.

"That experience taught us the value of having great advisors," Tovar continued. "So we went out and hired one of the best attorneys and accountants in the city to

handle that work for us, and we started looking for people who could help us in other areas of our business."

Since those early days, TLC has enjoyed significant growth, and Tovar is quick to point to the advice various advisors and landscape contractors gave him as keys for this growth. At the same time, he knows that he and the rest of the company have more lessons to learn if they are to keep growing the company.

(continued on page 58)

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USE READER SERVICE #22

Cover Story

(continued from page 55)

MOVING ON UP. Tovar founded TLC in 1990 after realizing that he could have a future with the lawn service he had started to help pay for his college education. Aside from the aforementioned face-off with organized labor, the early years were generally good at TLC.

"We grew quickly like a lot of companies do," Tovar noted. "We were doubling in sales almost every year for the first four or five years, and then we had to level off because our profitability had gone down as the sales had gone up."

After five years in business, the company

was doing about \$1.2 million in annual revenue, and Tovar started developing relationships with key industry advisors.

"We had reached a point where I had to take a step back and not worry about being the best mower of lawns or the best edger of grass and instead be the best leader I could be," Tovar recalled. "We spent the next two years focused on working with different advisors and learning how to be leaders, and then we started going after controlled growth – about 20 to 30 percent annually."

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Now that TLC is back in

its growth mode,

Tovar looks for 20 to 30

percent growth

annually, a number

that he said will allow

the company to double

in size every four

years or so.

Tovar listed 14 different contractors or industry consultants he has met with and learned from, and 16 different landscape companies he has visited.

"We learned that we don't have to know everything by ourselves," added Steve Bednarz, vice president of sales. "We've received some good information from people who have 'been there, done that' already. Why should we start from ground zero and figure everything out ourselves when we don't have to?"

Bednarz said he has improved TLC's sales and marketing efforts by contacting the primary marketing personnel at different leading landscape companies and asking them how they handle different issues.

"I may not necessarily be able to use the same practices or the same materials they use because our budgets don't include as much money as theirs do, but I can figure out why a company uses a certain concept and then I

(continued on page 60)



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Cover Story

(continued from page 58)

can apply that concept to our business," Bednarz related.

This focus on learning doesn't come without a considerable time and financial commitment, and Tovar said the company budgets to spend 2 percent of its annual revenues on training and education every year. "We spent \$60,000 on improving ourselves through training and education last year, and a lot of people think that costs a lot of money, but I tell them that money pays off," Tovar related. "This is a commitment we've made as a company."

In addition to working with industry con-

sultants, TLC's training dollars bring a paramedic to the office every year to train all of the company's employees in CPR and first aid. The money also pays for safety videos, prizes for a safety contest and mandatory English classes during the winter.

"And we've put together the TLC 'Formula for Success,' which is a procedures manual that spells out how we do everything in the company from mowing a lawn to selling a contract to entering data administratively," Tovar explained. "This manual provides us with a blueprint for training the employees every year and standardizing the training from year to year."

In addition, Tovar credits the company's ability to focus on a particular customer niche as a key to TLC's growth.

"We started out serving small, one-quarter acre residential properties, and then we slowly graduated into upper-end residential jobs," he recalled. "Our next step was going after some government and municipal bid work, but we really wanted to focus on commercial properties.

"The key to the transition into the commercial market was actually the 1- to 3-acre, high-end residential jobs because these clients were also business owners," Tovar continued, adding that this process took the company about six years to complete. "Doing a great job on their properties got them to ask us to maintain their offices, as well. Then we were able to develop some commercial references, and potential commercial customers didn't view us as just a residential company any more."

TLC has focused on growing the commercial side of its business during the last four years, and while government/municipal accounts still represent about 25 percent of total corporate revenues, TLC's Year 2000 Vision Statement calls for reducing this amount to less than 20 percent of total revenue by growing the commercial business.

"We're pretty good at managing bid work, but you always have the concern with those jobs that you can lose them for \$100," Tovar noted. "And because of the history of government corruption in the Chicago area, this market is strictly low bid so elected officials don't have to worry about any appearances of impropriety if a contract doesn't go to the lowest bid."

(continued on page 62)



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Cover Story

(continued from page 60)

WINTER WONDERLAND. The winter season presents significant challenges for many contractors, but TLC embraces snowfall with its considerable snow removal service, which is technically a separate business, Tovar's Snow Plowing.

"Initially, we operated as two companies because doing so afforded us better insurance rates," Tovar said. "The landscape company subcontracts people and equipment to the snow company."

Nearly 60 percent of the total organization's 1999 revenue came from snow plowing operations. Chicago's heavy 1999 snowfalls exceeded Tovar's budgets and expectations, but he remains cautious when budgeting for future snowfall revenue.

"We budget for 25 inches of snow to fall each winter," he related, adding that Chicago has received at least that much snow each year during the last 25 years.

One method TLC employs to guard against being hurt too much by a light snow

10 two-man maintenance crews

1 one-man lawn care crew

1 two-man enhancement crew

18 riding mowers

10 walk-behind mowers

20 string trimmers

20 blowers

5 edgers

8 pruners

4 chain saws

2 brush cutters

8 hedge trimmers

13 maintenance vehicles

2 spray vehicles



year is using two types of annual snow contracts—one contract charges customers based on the amount of snow that falls; the other charges customers a flat winter rate regardless of the amount of snowfall. Clients paying via this second contract pay in five equal installments over the course of the winter so the company can be assured of at least some cash flow regardless of the weather.

"If we have a particularly heavy snow year, clients paying the guaranteed rate end up getting a good deal, and we end up getting a good deal if we have a light snow year, but that all tends to even out over the course of a few years," Tovar said.

In addition, the company may purchase a holiday decorating franchise to help maintain cash flow through November, December and January.

"We keep all of our foremen on board throughout the winter, and our goal for next year is to keep all of our laborers working throughout the winter, as well," Tovar noted.



Help Keep Central Park Beautiful!

After 2 years & a \$4.6 million renovation, the North Meadow of Central park is about to be re-opened. The Central Park Conservancy, a prestigious not-for-profit organization, is seeking several horticultural professionals to maintain this area of the park, which will include 12 ball fields and 5 soccer fields. Candidates for all positions must have a valid driver's license, the ability to operate power equipment and perform manual labor outdoors. The Conservancy is an equal opportunity employer that offers competitive salaries and a generous benefits package.

SECTION SUPERVISOR: Will lead a 7-person crew in the horticultural and operational maintenance of this area. 3-5 years of related park or horticultural supervisory experience; sound organizational skills and a NYS pesticide license are required. CODE: NMSS

CREW FORMAN: The successful candidate will be the lead member of the team, assisting the Section Supervisor. Must have related field experience including turf maintenance & a NYS pesticide license. CODE: NMCF

ZONE GARDENERS: For this position, you will perform all horticultural and operational duties in this area. Horticultural experience or education is required. CODE: NMZG

We are also seeking a SECTION SUPERVISOR for the Woodlands area. In addition to a wide variety of horticultural and operational activities, responsibilities include attending Woodland Advisory meetings. At least 2 years of experience in park management, horticulture or a related field including supervisory responsibility are required, as is a NYS pesticide license. CODE: WSS

If any of these positions seem to match your talents and have captured your interest, please forward your resume to us, indicating the position code to: HR Dept., Central Park Conservancy, 14 E. 60th St., NYC 10022 or e-mail to: hrdept@centralparknyc.org. FAX: (212) 310-6633. EOE

Central Park Conservancy "This is a good time for training and equipment work to get done. Plus, we want to get better at managing the spring rush when the weather breaks, and we think we can do this by having all of the employees already working for us and ready to go as soon as we can get to work.

"In the last few years, we were probably working some of our people too hard during those crazy weeks early in the spring, and this year we want to make sure our production people don't work more than 50 hours a week and our managers don't work more than five days a week, even if that means they work some pretty long days," Tovar explained. "People need to get their rest, otherwise they're susceptible to accidents and injuries."

GROWING AGAIN. Now Tovar looks for 20 to 30 percent growth annually, a number he said will allow the company to double in size every four years or so.

"We have to grow the company if we are going to offer our people opportunities in the future," he said. "For example, we have talented operations managers. If we can't

grow and offer them opportunities to advance to positions like a branch manager then they may go to other companies looking for those opportunities."

Despite the fact that the company has identified its target market and is comfortable with its service offerings, Tovar knows the learning process is far from over for him and his management team.

"I'm confident that we'll continue to grow because even if the economy slows down people will still require landscape maintenance and snow plowing services," he commented. "But I know that as we grow different issues will chal-

lenge us, and that's where our advisors are going to be crucial to our success.

"Idon't know everything about growing a business from \$3 million to \$6 million, so I need to identify some people who do know what challenges we're going to run into so we can anticipate them and be ready to deal with them as they arise."

The author is Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.







63

MILLIONS IN RESEAR AND STILL OUR BEST I

This machine didn't start as a blueprint or in a focus group. It began as a dream: To craft a zero-turning-radius mower with the finest mower deck ever. Enormous challenges stood in the way. Four million pounds of pressure and thick seven-gauge (.177 inch) steel were needed to stamp a mower with the required depth and strength. The front baffle had to both eliminate dead space and brush grass into a vertical position — a paradox. And the machine itself had to set new standards in maneuverability and reliability. Yet the F680 with its 7-Iron™ deck met every goal. Proof engineering plus imagination can accomplish anything. To see for yourself, stop by any John Deere dealer (call 1-800-537-8233 for one near you).

Offset to the side and front-mounted for trimming, 7-Iron decks float over uneven ground, while maximum blade overlap (40 mm) assures a pristine cut during turns. Deck flips 90 degrees, proving no angle has been overlooked. Shaft-driven mower blades, unparalleled 5.75-inch depth, full-length front baffle, and wide-discharge chute, create a F680s come only in extra vacuum, airflow and cutting strength. They have the force even the thickest, wettest industry's only stamped grass can't withstand. steel seven-gauge deck, .75-inch bump protection, recessed spindle housings, automotive-quality paint,

and heavy-duty frames.



CH AND DEVELOPMENT DEAS START AS DREAMS.



USE READER SERVICE #135

Riding Mowers

by Bob West

Thanks to recent

developments in design

technology and added

productivity benefits, riding

mowers continue to enjoy

strong gains in popularity.

At its heart, the professional landscape industry has always been about cutting grass. Research conducted for Lawn & Landscape magazine found that lawn maintenance represents the largest sales volume of business for more than half of the magazine's readers. The industry is filled with countless stories of contractors who started out as teenagers with a borrowed lawn mower from their parents or a grandparent and started mowing the neighbors' lawns in order to pay for a new bike, a first car or even school.

Lawn mowing will probably always remain at the heart of this industry, especially if the manufacturers of commercial mowing equipment have anything to say about the matter. And, fortunately for those contractors who have grown their businesses past the point of borrowing equipment from family or friends, manufacturers have made significant strides in the design and manufacturing of riding mowers, which has led to considerable growth in this product category over the last few years.

In fact, nearly 30 percent of Lawn & Landscape readers report they bought at least one riding mower last year. And since the average reader spentalmost \$13,500 on riding mowers, he or she clearly bought more than just one unit.

Today, there are very few maintenance contractors without at least one riding mower in their fleet, and the new product designs and developments of the last few years have likely ensured that there will be more riding mowers bought in the future.

(continued on page 68)

Photo: Textron Turfcare and Specialy Products

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Riding Mowers

(continued from page 66)

A LOT OF ZEROES ADD UP. Figuring out what is behind the increasing popularity of riding mowers isn't difficult - zero-turn radius capabilities.

Since the introduction of hydrostatic drive transmission technology to the industry nearly a decade ago, nearly every manufacturer of commercial mowing equipment has incorporated zero-turn capabilities into their machines and more contractors have put these machines on their trailers.

"A few years ago; we weren't even using too many of the 48-inch or 60-inch riding machines, but we've really started buying more riding mowers of late just like everyone else is," related Tim Lynott, commercial

Manufacturers have

made significant strides

in the design and

manufacturing of

riding mowers, which

has led to considerable

growth in this product

category over the

last few years.

maintenance division manager, Chapel Valley, Woodbine, Md. "We still need to have walk-behind mowers in our fleet to handle the hills around here and some of the tight turf areas like parking lot islands, but the riding machines are much more productive."

"We really look for the zero-turn capabilities in a mower and the ability to deliver that clean cut that people want," explained Dave Ramsze, regional vice president, The Groundskeeper, Tucson, Ariz. "These machines are more productive than gear-drive units, and I think the riding mowers in general are more comfortable for people to operate eight or 10 hours a day."

Danny Wright, president, Wright Lawn Service, Houston, Texas, noted that his company is looking to use more riding mowers, and he said he'll only buy the hydrostatic machines.

Riding Mowers



In addition to the maneuverability benefits of some riding mowers, contractors have shown an appreciation for visibility mid-mount mowers afford the operator for trimming purposes or mowing along edges. Photo: Walker Mfg.

"The hydrostatic mowers have you going in another direction as soon as you move the handles," he observed.

Wright noted, however, that some properties are still best served with a couple of walk-behind mowers.

"The riding mowers are generally too large to use on the residential properties, and a lot of our residential customers don't like to have us riding a mower all over their grass," Wright noted. "And the walk-behind mowers probably give us a better quality of cut, which is particularly important on the resi-

dential properties.

"So our riding mowers tend to be used more on the larger commercial properties where they're most productive and the customer isn't going to inspecting the quality of cut as closely," he added.

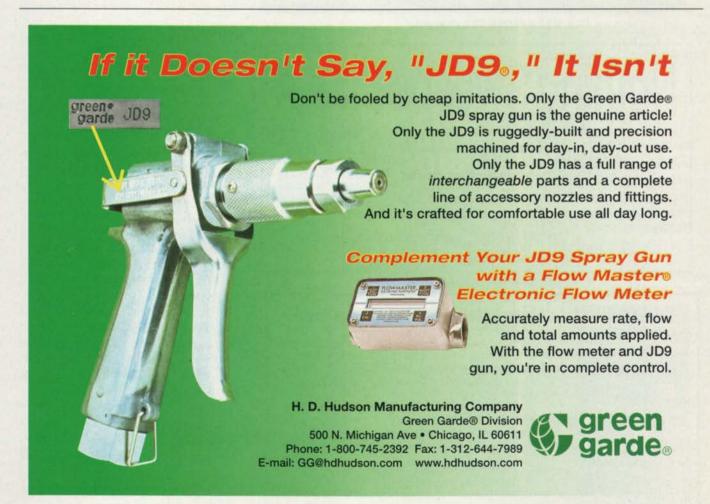
Zero-turn capabilities aren't without their own potential downsides, however.

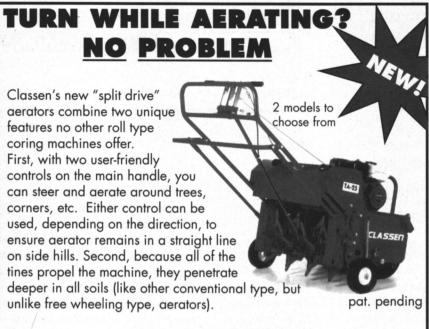
"One problem we have is getting the technicians who use the zero-turn mowers to make their turns at a reasonable speed," related Wright. "The mowers turn so quickly that the operators are having fun and they

don't realize that they might be tearing up the turf making these turns."

As a result of the popularity in zero-turn radius mowers, the phrases 'gear drive' and 'hydro' have become commonplace among commercial mower manufacturers and their customers during the last few years. The primary difference between the two transmission styles is that hydrostatic drives offer mower operators more instantaneous control of the mower's drive wheels than gear-drive transmissions do.

In addition, whereas a gear-drive mower's drive wheels operate in unison, a hydrostatic-drive mower's drive wheels operate independent of each other. This enables mower operators to make true zero-degree radius turns by having one tire move in





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Length:13 min.

Riding Mowers

reverse while the other tire moves forward.

"The other advantage of the hydrostaticdrive mowers that we like is that the operator doesn't have to constantly adjust the belts like with some belt-drive mowers," noted Lynott, adding that he involves the company's mechanics in any mower demonstration tests he conducts to get their input on maintenance needs of different machines.

Ramsze echoed Lynott's emphasis on equipment maintenance saying the cost number he's concerned about when he buys a new mower is that mower's life-time cost. "I want to know how much a mower is going to cost us over the course of its life with all of the maintenance costs that are required," he explained. "A mower's durability is one of its most important features."

ALL HANDS ON DECK. For the last two years or so, one key focus with riding mowers has become the placement of the cutting deck on the machine. As contractors responded favorably to the first couple of models with mid-mount decks – with the deck located beneath the operator's feet – other manufacturers raced to bring their own midmount unit to the market. Now, nearly all of the leading manufacturers have a product in this category.

Wright is a fan of mid-mount decks and said mower operators probably enjoy better visibility of the area around the cutting deck with this arrangement, but that's not why he buys mid-mount machines.

"The mid-mount models let me put more equipment on the trailer every day," he related. "I want to put as much equipment on the trailer as possible each day in case something breaks down so I don't have to go all the way back to the shop or to a dealer for a replacement part in the middle of the day."

Ramsze, however, remains a proponent of mowers with the decks in front of the operator for two reasons. "We like to have the flexibility to change the mower decks sometimes based on the size of the property we'll be taking care of that day," he explained. "And sometimes we'll use an attachment on a riding mower to do some aerating or something besides mowing, and I think that frontmount mowers handle that better."

The author is Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

It's All About Up Time

pring is quickly approaching, and you need to get your equipment ready for spring cutting.

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The author is customer service manager, The Toro Co., Bloomington, Minn.

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he lawn maintenance industry has a low cost of entry and offers the prospect of immediate customers.

"Five years ago, I was maintaining small residential yards for \$50," recalled John Gabrielson, owner, John's Custom Care, Keller, Texas. "Because starting a lawn maintenance business today is so easy, I lost some of my residential jobs to new companies who were charging \$30."

The ease with which companies can enter the industry and the fact that lawn maintenance equipment is an expensive asset puts a real importance on protecting this equipment to minimize loss.

"We have a mechanic at our company who handles the equipment and makes sure it's loaded properly in the morning and secured indoors in the evening," noted Sam Burke, president, Landscape One, Hebron, Ky. "We take these precautions because we don't want to risk burglary or damage."

Due to a rise in mower theft recently, Ken Raney, advertising manager, Excel Industries, Hesston, Kan., said more contractors have been taking measures to secure their equipment at night and during the day in between jobs.

"Theft continues to be a real problem, especially when it comes to a high-dollar item in a metropolitan area," related Chuck Lebkuecher, senior property claims representative, Florist's Mutual Insurance, Edwardsville, Ill. "A particular favorite for thieves is a high-dollar unit like a backhoe or tractor that is left overnight at a job. Thieves drive in with their own trailer, load up the unit and away they go. And one contractor in Florida has had equipment stolen from trucks in the front yard while workers were in the back yard."

"A lot of the contractors in Texas are buying cheaper equipment so if and when it gets stolen, they suffer less of a loss," Gabrielson related. "Some of the equipment theft going on is due to the neighborhood contractors operate in, but even in a good neighborhood contractors need to be aware of theft at all times.

"The bigger a company gets, the harder protecting the equipment becomes," Gabrielson continued. "Because we've remained a relatively small company, my brother and I tend to take better care of our equipment. Sure, locking equipment up to work in a residential client's backyard and unlocking it again to use it can be time consuming, but stealing a piece of equipment takes only minutes. And yard equipment is attractive to thieves because they can make a lot of money reselling or using it."

More contractors are buying enclosed trailers as an easy way to protect their equipment from theft, Raney said.

"A lot of contractors who have smaller com-

panies or are just starting out don't have a place to unload or store their equipment because they work out of their home or apartment," Gabrielson said. "An enclosed trailer can keep equipment locked up."

"In Florida, thieves are incredibly brazen and will strike in broad daylight with the crews nearby," Lebkuecher added. "Leaving equipment at a job site overnight is like ringing the dinner bell for thieves, especially if they know the location and know the equipment will be there for several nights - this gives them a chance to organize the how and when of stealing it."

Enclosed trailers can protect equipment not only from theft but also from the negative effects of the weather, added Bill Shea, vice president of sales and new product development at Ferris Industries, Munnsville, N.Y.

"Tving equipment down on a trailer can prevent it from getting wrecked or damaged during transport from one job to another," said Shea, citing other ways a trailer protects equipment. "When shopping for equipment, contractors should also make sure machinery is powder coat painted for durability so it can better withstand the sun and snow."

Burke doesn't take any chances when it comes to securing his equipment from weather damage. He keeps his machinery inside or securely covered every night.

"Mowers aren't like cars where the engine is nice and secure under a hood," Burke explained. "Daily dew, rain and fog can negatively affect a mower and how much more maintenance will be needed to keep it in daily running condition."

- Nicole Wisniewski





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Perennials & Annuals

by Nicole Wisniewski

Contractors agree that choosing whether a landscape needs the vibrancy of annuals over the texture of perennials, or vice versa, is an art form.



If a client wants strong, high-impact color, annuals should be installed in the landscape, but if more texture is preferred, perennials should be used. Most contractors mix annuals and perennials to provide the best of both worlds. Photo: Lied's Landscape Design & Development

Color, texture and light. These three words, although synonymous with the painted picture, are a necessity in landscape design.

"I create a work of art when I design a landscape," related Louis Kobus, agronomist, Village Turf, Mt. Vernon, Va. "But instead of using brushes and paints, I use a variety of plant material."

Planting the right perennials and annuals for the

right amount of impact on a job can be just as challenging as mixing colors together on a pallet to create the perfect skin color. Although color, texture and light offer a wealth of opportunities for creativity, they aren't the only factors contractors must consider when incorporating perennials and annuals into the landscape picture. Knowing the differences in bloom time, growth conditions and cost, and taking advantage of this knowledge when using perennials, annuals or a combination of both can turn a crayon drawing of flowers into Monet's garden.

THE BASICS. Perennials and annuals each have their own advantages and disadvantages, according to contractors.

"Perennials offer color that returns every year and add texture to the landscape," offered Bruce Allentuck, president, Allentuck Landscaping, Gaithersburg, Md. "The biggest disadvantage of perennials is that they have a fairly limited bloom time. Annuals, on the other hand, bloom all season long, presenting bursts of color."

Perennials have an average two- to three-week bloom time, said Greg Fracker, president, Colorscapes by Design, Newark, Ohio, so for season-long color, a contrac-

> tor may need to install seven to eight different types of perennials, which can hike up the cost.

> While using perennials, a client may spend more initially, Fracker explained, but over time perennials are actually less expensive. "A flat of annuals costs \$11 to \$15 compared to two 1-gallon perennials for \$16 in the Ohio market area," Fracker shared, "But while annuals are cheaper, they need to be planted over again every year."

> According to Scott Gardner, nursery manager, Barnes Nursery, Huron, Ohio, perennials can be bought for \$2.99 per quart size and two to three gallons of perennials are available for \$10 to \$25.

> > (continued on page 79)



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Perennials & Annuals

(continued from page 74)

"When a new variety of perennial comes out on the market, it can cost as much as \$5 to \$7," Gardner said. "Once the newness of the variety wears off – in about two to four years – the price comes down."

"We tend to use perennials and annuals together in the landscape to get the best of both worlds," Allentuck added. "This does take a serious commitment from the client, though, because re-designing particular areas of a landscape or, in some cases, entire landscapes altogether is often in order. Not every client is willing to make that kind of investment in time and money."

Fracker said he installs more annuals in his commercial clients' properties because

Favorites

lthough the following two short lists are only a peak into the variety of perennials and annuals available to landscape contractors, these are some reliable plants that can be used in different colors or for texture, as long as the chosen plant is suited for a contractor's specific use and location.

ANNUALS: Ageratum, Alyssum, Aster, Begonia, Brachyscome, Celosia, Centaurea, Coleus, Crossandra, Dianthus, Dusty Miller, Gazaina, Geranium, Gomphrena, Gypsophila, Helichrysm, Impatiens, Lobelia, Marigolds, Pansy, Petunia, Phlox, Portulaca, Primula, Rudbeckia, Salvia, Snapdragon, Verbena, Viola and Zinnia.

PERENNIALS: Achillea (Yarrow), Arabis (Rock Cress), Armeria (Sea Thrift), Ascl-

(Rock Cress), Armeria (Sea Thrift), Asclepias (Butterfly Milkweed), Astilbe, Bergenia, Echinacea (Coneflower), Euphorbia, Gaillardia, Geranium, Heuchera (Coral Bells), Hollyhock, Hosta, Hypericum (St. John's Wort), Iberis (Candytuft), Kniphotia (Red Hot Poker), Lavandula (Lavender), Liatris (Gay-feather), Lobelia, Lupinus (Lupine), Monarda (Bee Balm), Papaver (Poppy), Potentilla, Rudbeckia, Salvia, Sedum, Shasta Daisy, Stachys (Lamb's Ear), Veronica and Viola.

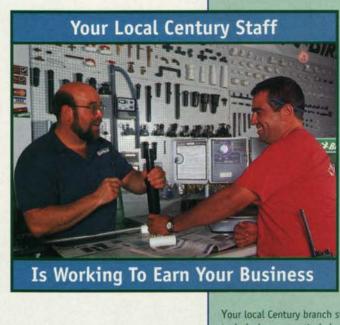
- Paul Hubbs

The author is president, Grower Systems, Lancaster, Pa.

residential clients tend to favor perennials for their lower long-term cost. "Most commercial corporations have money to spend on annuals and want the instant color they bring," Fracker pointed out.

"Perennials should be used when the client wants color and texture and is willing to spend a little more money up front instead of having the on-going expense of having to replace the annuals every season," Allentuck said. "Also, clients who want a somewhat contemporary look may want to use large sweeps of perennials for a variety of textures, whereas annuals should be used when strong color is required."

(continued on page 82)



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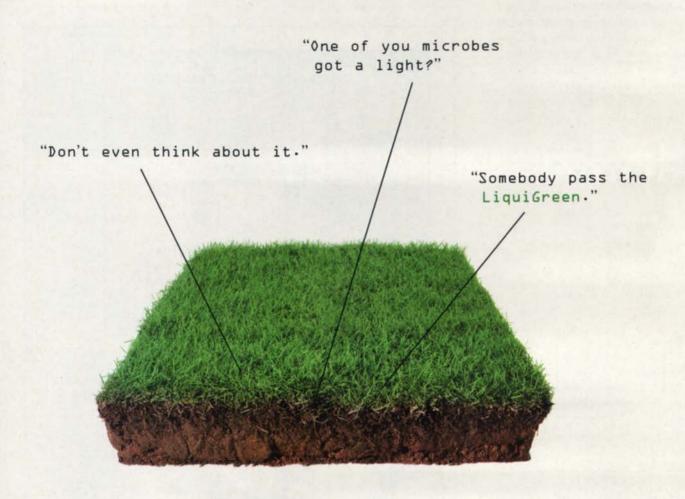
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Perennials & Annuals

(continued from page 79)

Charlie Bowers, co-owner and chief executive officer of Garden Gate Landscaping, Silver Spring, Md., said variegated perennial foliage can also add spots of light to shade gardens.

"We use perennials to cover larger areas in broad sweeps to achieve light and texture, making a specific statement at some point during the season," he said. "In the Mid-Atlantic region, we plant annuals in early May and they last until mid-October. Since we are strictly residential, our annual plantings are specifically used to bring season-long color to small spaces in the garden and in containers, both in the frontyard and patio garden areas. Container plantings have become a renewed form of garden art and have increased in popularity."

Paul Hubbs, president, Grower Systems, Lancaster, Pa., agreed that container plantings, usually done with annuals, have become more of a trend: "Hanging baskets (continued on page 84) hen constant color is in demand, annuals and perennials may not always suit a client's purposes. Sometimes color changeouts are in order to provide non-stop color.

The key to color changeouts with Greg Fracker's commercial customers is making sure he constantly monitors these properties and recognizes color needs before property owners do. Fracker, president, Colorscapes by Design, Newark, Ohio, charges about \$30 per hour for a color changeout service – a cost that is separate from the flat rate installation fee.

Color changeouts, according to Paul Hubbs, president, Grower Systems, Landcaster, Pa., are done primarily with annuals and are for clients who want dramatic visual impact.

"Most annuals will fade out by September," Hubbs explained. "Contractors can take those faded plants out and put mums in that will last through the frost.

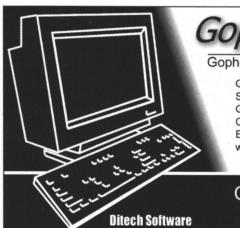
This procedure is more costly, but it enhances the corporate image of commercial clients, who will have budgets for this service because the visual impact enhances their names and reputations."

Garden Gate Landscaping, Silver Spring, Md., is a 100-percent residential company, and Charlie Bowers, co-owner and chief executive officer, said only 50 percent of his clients are interested in paying for the fall changeout, yet they are more interested than ever in seasonal color.

The color program at Garden Gate is done on a time-and-materials basis and is an extra for people who like to have flexibility and want to change their landscape theme and color annually. Customers who don't need that flexibility can be quoted a price.

"We price everything on a fixed margin by estimating the hours, materials and plants and then by applying our expected final margin," Bowers said. "The price will vary with bed preparation needs, location of the bed on site or travel time." – Nicole Wisniewski

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Perennials & Annuals

(continued from page 82)

and patio containers can add visual impact here and there, where the growing conditions are favorable for the plant."

GROWING UP RIGHT. Perennials adapt better to a variety of growing conditions, Hubbs explained, while annuals thrive in direct sunlight.

"Perennials offer more diversity as to what you can do with them as far as environmental factors are concerned," Hubbs explained. "Perennials don't need as much sunlight. In the meantime, annuals feed off the sunlight and put all their energy into prod

light and put all their energy into producing seeds and blooms, expending themselves."



According to contractors, the popularity of a variety of perennial or annual is driven by the plant's availability.

Unlike perennials, annuals require a little more maintenance, Gardner said. "If annuals are planted too early in the spring and are hit by a frost, they die," Gardner said. "Contractors need to be patient and wait until the danger of frost has passed to plant annuals."

Certain varieties of annuals also need constant watering, fertilizing and pinching, Allentuck pointed out.

"Because certain varieties of annuals, like geraniums, need a lot of deadheading, we have to be flexible in what we plant, especially on commercial accounts because the property manager is less likely to take care of this maintenance," Gardner said. "Annuals that re-bloom without much maintenance are begonias and impatiens.

"Once perennials are planted, they repeat bloom every year," Gardner continued. "Some perennials need to be dug up and replanted, but in our growing area, 75 percent of the perennials planted will bloom again the following year."

Barnes said that certain perennial varieties, such as the commonly mis-planted hosta, thrive only in shady areas that offer filtered sunlight.

Some perennials also tend to naturalize and enjoy out-of-control growth while others may not look their best all season long.

To prevent a perennial takeover, some plants require division. Some versions need to be separated as frequently as every other year, suggested Ann Hancock, horticulturist/curator, DeLapa Perennial Garden at the Michigan State University Horticultural Demonstration Gardens, East Lansing, Mich.

While constant maintenance is required for certain perennials and annuals, and others need just a little tender loving care, people still tend to expect instant fullness after an installation, Gardner remarked.

"People look at gardens that have been in place for 20 years and want that look," Gardner said. "If annuals and perennials are (continued on page 86)



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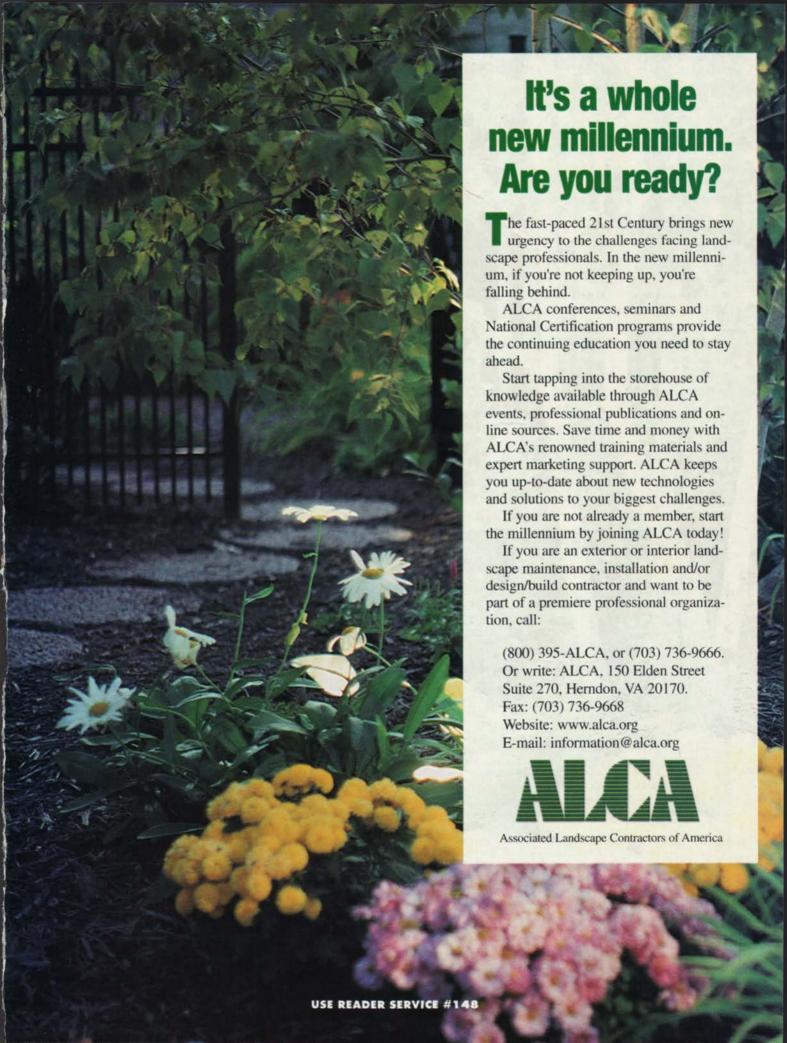
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Perennials & Annuals

(continued from page 84)

planted too close together, however, they don't have adequate spacing to grow. People can't achieve a 'flower show' look unless plants are constantly and carefully maintained and divided. A full garden is not instant and can be a maintenance nightmare."

LOOKING FOR VARIETY. According to Bowers, unique perennials and annuals are in short supply (see "Nursery Market Report" on page 47).

"Growers continue to grow the same old plants," Bowers said. "They are not adventurous or inventive. Growers have the philosophy of 'If we grow it, they will come.' So what's popular is driven by what's available."

"The average residential customer wants the landscape to look good and, honestly, could care less what we use," Bowers said. "We send customers that are picky about variety and/or color to a garden center to buy their own plants and then we'll install them when we come to their property for a regular visit. There isn't enough money in residential accounts to search all over for specific plants, especially plants with perfect color. Color is too subjective."

Some of the most popular annuals and perennials Hancock deals with have color that can compliment any other plant partner.

"One of the most popular annuals we deal with now is Purple Fountain Grass," Hancock said. "It can be forced early so that the consumer is able to enjoy a lush plant in full bloom. The plant has deep burgundy foliage and graceful, pendulous flowers. Thus far, we have not had any problems with deer eating it, nor does it seem to be susceptible to any insect or disease problems.

"As for perennials," Hancock continued, "in full sun, Russian sage is popular because its color and texture make it a good companion to other plants. Additionally, it is not attractive to deer or susceptible to insects or disease. One other popular perennial is the purple coneflower. People love it because it is very hardy, and attracts butterflies. This perennial is, however, attractive to rabbits, and sometimes gets a powdery mildew in the late summer."

Bowers said there is a list of bulletproof perennials that perform well in Maryland.

"Some of the old standbys include Blackeyed Susan, hosta and coneflowers – all perennials," Gardner offered. "The Perennial Plant Association named Scabiosa Butterfly Blue the 2000 perennial of the year. Also popular this year are herbs, such as rosemary with its purple blooms and lavender, which provides a great look and scent, but is a plant that doesn't like wet feet."

Variegated Jacob's Ladder also looks like a good perennial to try, Allentuck said, and he always relies on coreopsis, Russian sage and Golden Rod. The annuals Allentuck prefers are petunias, salvias and begonias.

The author is Associate Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.



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by John Fech

OPPORTUNITIES OPPORTUNITIES

There are a number of options available to maximize the quality of landscapes in shaded areas.

In the lawn care and grounds maintenance industries, most properties are blessed with some shady areas. There are few sites that have no shade, perhaps with the exception of new construction. Yet, even these sites have shade, as the buildings, homes, awnings and covered walkways cast shadows. Inevitably, lawn care operators and landscape maintenance contractors must deal with shade as a given in the landscape.

Shade affects turf and ornamentals. The effects of shade are complex, with a lot of interrelationships between turf, ornamentals and non-plant materials in the landscape. Shade affects the function of the site. Heavy levels of shade prohibit the growing of turf, which limits traffic in an area. No other plant is as traffic tolerant as turf.

If you're dealing with a shady area and you decide to replace turf with groundcover, expect a change in function, as well. And clients used to walking or

letting children play in the shady area may also need to change their expectations for that area as well.

SHADY ISSUES. Each type of shade will impact the landscape differently. These are the different types:

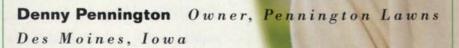
 Light shade – mostly open conditions with eight to 10 hours of full sun. Light shade is likely to occur in landscapes containing only small trees.

(continued on page 92)

People love the idea of green turf, but shady areas like this yield weak turf. Photo: John Fech



"For years, we had the same problem every spring—how to effectively control weeds while it was still cool outside. We usually had to reapply products to get the desired control. That is until we discovered Cool Power*. Cool Power eliminates the weeds the first time around—saving us time and money."



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So whether it's wild violets or dandelions.



weeds can't hide from Cool Power.



Shaded Areas

(continued from page 90)

- Dappled shade light to moderate shade produced by a pergola; a small-leaved shade tree such as a honeylocust; or an open canopy tree, like an Amur Corktree or a Kentucky coffeetree.
- Half shade morning sun/afternoon shade – four to five hours of each. Some plants will grow well placed in morning sun, but not so well in afternoon sun, like Barrenwort or Bishop's Weed.
- Mostly shady six to eight hours of dappled or full shade.
- Full shade no significant periods of sunlight during the day.

With problematic shade, let a site inventory/analysis help classify the landscape. This task is best performed on-site by gathering information, taking notes and gaining a "sense of place" in the landscape space.

Inventory is first. Determine the level of shade and identify the area's problem spots and assets. Using a light meter can help determine the intensity of sunlight in the area. You can purchase or borrow one from a lighting contractor or use the light meter in a camera.

Next, use a piece of tracing paper and lay it over a base map of the area. Base maps are

easily obtained from commercial clients, but they can be a bit more difficult to obtain for residential properties. This exercise allows accurate note taking and documentation of potential concerns or opportunities for features. You may want to photograph the area for future reference and comparison. If you implement a change that turns out well, you may want to use the "before" and "after" photos to sell a job to another customer.

Analysis comes later, with an evaluation of each specific condition's importance. The soils, neighboring views and existing buildings may be only slight concerns, but the level of shade and prevailing winds may be major contentions.

After you have identified the level of shade, write "heavy shade" or "light shade" in appropriate portions of the landscape renovation plan. If you are using a light meter, write the number of footcandles of light in the circle with the description. This will be a valuable reference when you are considering changes to the area.

RIGHT PLANT, RIGHT PLACE. This catch phrase of recent years is appropriate when considering shaded landscapes. Placing well-adapted plants into shady spaces is critical to the landscape's success.

Determine the specific needs of each plant in the space and match it to a suitable location. For example, a landscape on the north side of a house with an oak tree located 25 feet from the foundation and several grey dogwoods or redbuds growing in the understory will have four to six previously identified types of shade. Certainly, heavy shade will be present under the oak, while dappled or half-shaded conditions may exist on the edge of the dripline, depending on the exact location of the understory trees. As you introduce other plants into the landscape, keep the different levels of shade in mind.

Poorly sited plants will struggle. Placed in more shade than originally intended, plants may develop leggy, stretched out stems. This tissue is generally floppy and abnormal in appearance. Moss, mildew and slugs are more likely. The long-term, end results are dead plants and unhappy clients.

competition. Turf and ornamentals fail in landscapes because of excessive shade (continued on page 94)

Games

ealing with shade in the landscape often means using the right plants for the situation. Some good choices are:

COOL-SEASON	SHADE
TURF SPECIES	TOLERANO
Fine fescue	Excellent
Tall fescue	Good to
	Excellent
Kentucky bluegrass	Poor/Fair
Supina bluegrass	Excellent
Rough bluegrass	Good

WARM-SEASON	SHADE
TURF SPECIES	TOLERANCE
Bahiagrass	Good
Centipedegrass	Fair to Good
St. Augustinegrass	Excellent
Bermudagrass	Poor
Buffalograss	Fair

Fair

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Carpet Bugleweed, English Ivy, Dwarf Mahonia, European Wild Ginger, Pachysandra, Bishop's Weed, Periwinkle, Wintercreeper, Hall's Japanese Honeysuckle, ferns, Lily of the Valley, Barrenwort lamium, Sweet Woodruff



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ADAPTED UNDERSTORY TREES

Pagoda, Dogwood, Hophornbeam, Redbud, Serviceberry, White Fringetree, Wayfaring Tree (viburnum).

- John Fech



Kevin Johnson General Manager, All American Turf Des Moines, Iowa

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problem weeds in the summer.



Shady Areas

(continued from page 92)

and plant competition. Both factors impact the survival of plants growing underneath the canopy. Recent research studies show that between 85 and 90 percent of a tree's roots are in the upper 18 inches of the soil surface, which is the exact location of a new ornamental's roots that are trying to establish themselves, as well as the entire root systems of most turfgrasses.

In addition to normal competition from trees and large shrubs, walnut trees produce anti-competitive compounds in their roots, which actually act as a herbicide toward many plants that try to grow nearby, or in the same location. Be aware of this when you choose plants for a shady landscape.

OPPORTUNITIES. The landscape manager or lawn care operator needs to look at a problematic shade area as a potential sales opportunity. A little positive mental attitude will go a long way in turning a problem into income for your business. Here are four basic redesigns for shady landscapes:

1. Replace existing ornamentals with shade-

The effects of shade are

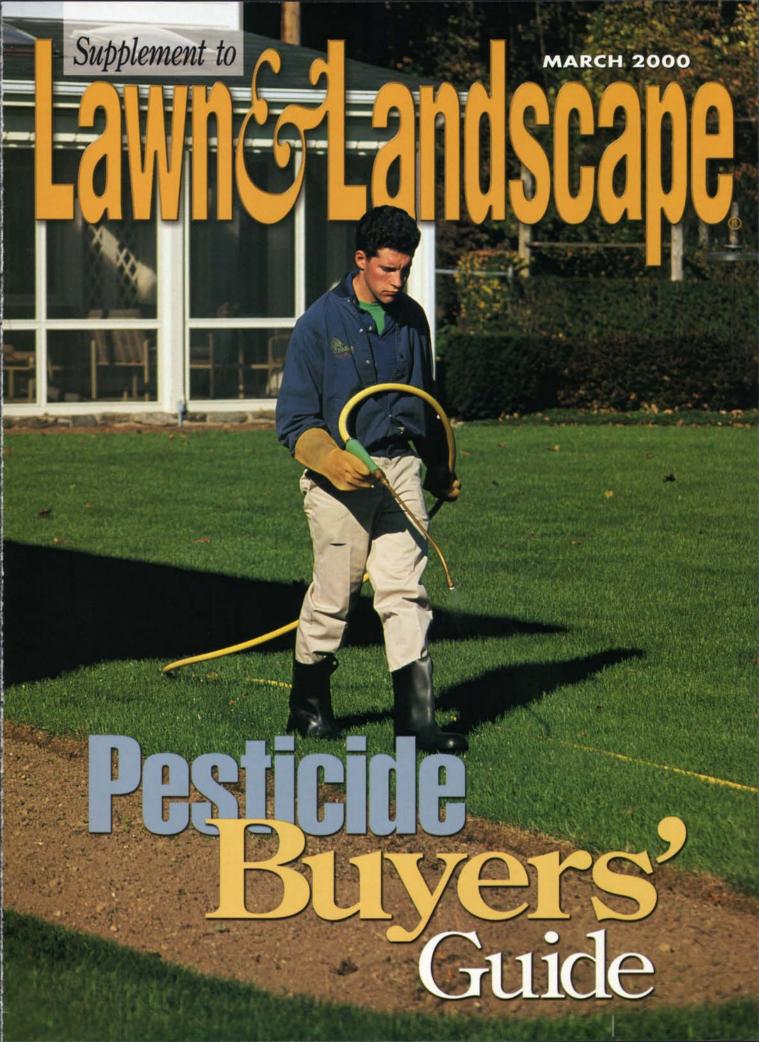
complex, with a lot of
interrelationships between

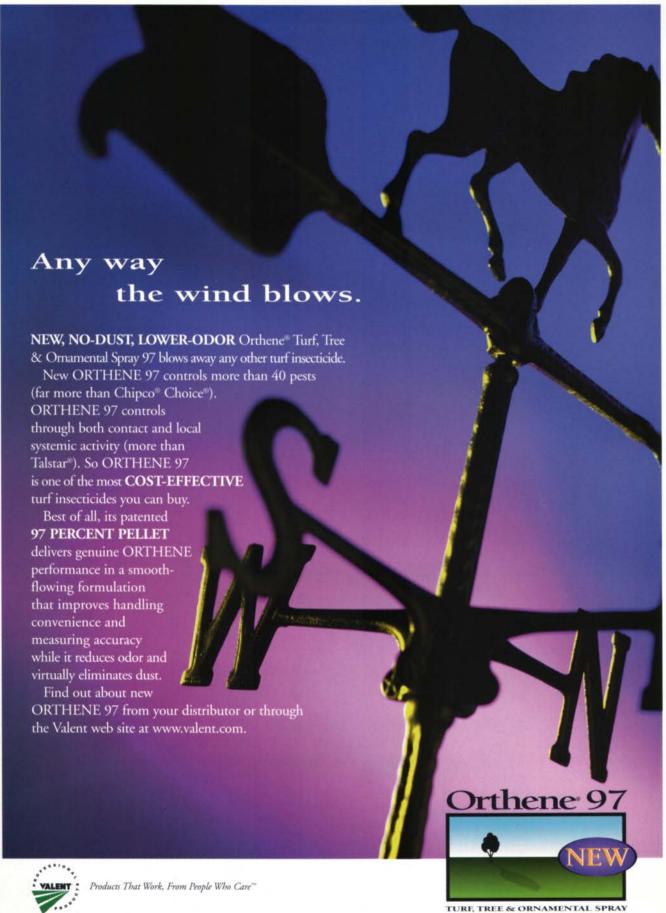
turf, ornamentals
and nonplant materials
in the landscape.

adapted ornamentals. Existing plants are likely to be growing, although not that well. Lilacs and chrysanthemums will grow in the shade, but they won't flower. Likewise, burning bush will produce green foliage that doesn't turn bright red, as it would in full sun. Look to match the hours of available sunlight in an area with plant needs.

- Replace existing turf with shade-adapted turf. Existing turfgrasses are also likely to be struggling in low light. In general, turfgrass isn't a viable plant choice in areas that receive less than three or four hours of sun each day. Consider replacing Bermudagrass or Kentucky bluegrass with a fine fescue, tall fescue or supina bluegrass.
- 3. Replace existing turf with shade-adapted ornamentals. Forget about turf if the area receives less than three to four hours of sun daily. Spray the existing struggling turf with a nonselective herbicide, wait a week or so, and then plant adapted perennials and groundcovers.
- 4. Turn an existing failed mixed landscape into one with no, or few, plants, by installing hardscape elements. In heavy shade, consider using mostly mulch and stones as groundcover and an alternative to turf. A series of paving stones, flagstones or cobblestones running through the landscape facilitates traffic flow and creates a sense of motion, (continued on page 124)







CONFENTS

MAKING PESTICIDES WORK FOR YOU

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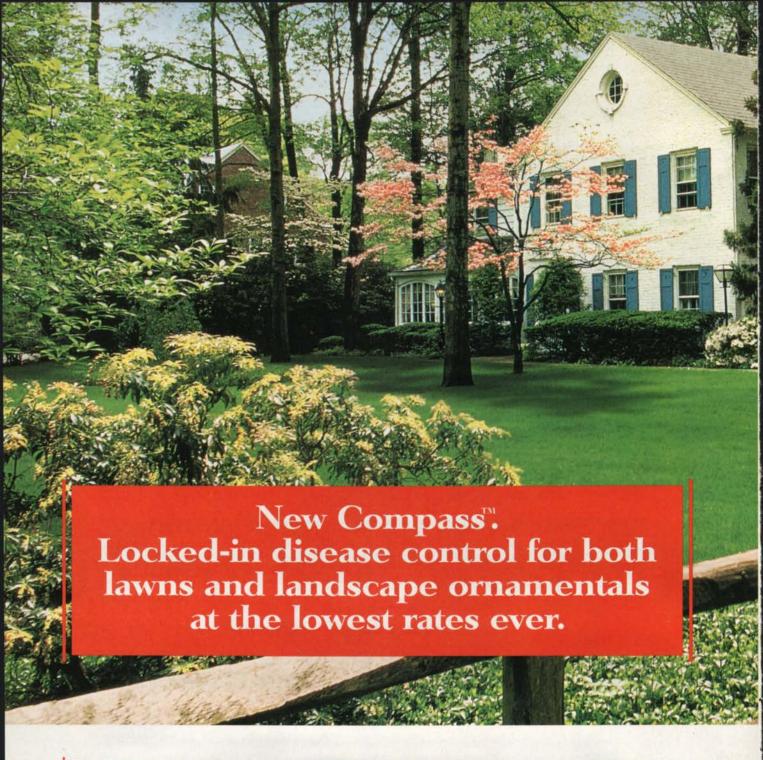
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Making PESTICIDES A few simple steps Making PESTICIDES Work for You

A few simple steps can improve the performance of your pesticide program.

By Rick Brandenburg



Many of us in landscape maintenance find ourselves relying on pesticides to help maintain a site's appearance. Generally, using pesticides is a cost-effective way to deliver what our clients desire. Pesticides save significantly on labor costs and can often correct problems very quickly. But we also know that pesticides can be costly, do not

always perform well and may be harmful if they aren't used correctly.

Taking the time to learn the rules of pesticide application has many benefits. When you fully understand how to best use pesticides, then you benefit economically and get good control the first time at the lowest possible rate. This saves you the time required for re-treatment, money and helps address health or environmental concerns by minimizing the amount used.

These rules apply to ornamentals and turfgrass in warm or cool climates, and this philosophy transcends plants, pests and geographic regions.

1. Learn to identify pests and diagnose diseases. This may sound far too basic, but I've been amazed throughout the years by the number of times people have either misdiagnosed problems or simply didn't diagnose them at all. It goes without saying that most insecticides won't manage disease problems and vice versa. The most common problem with misdiagnosis comes from looking only at symptoms the pest causes. Yellowing turfgrass could mean water stress, fertility problems, diseases, insects or nematodes. Finding the actual pest problem can ensure proper diagnosis.

2. Make sure you have a basic understanding of pest biology. This is very important because many pests have periods in their development when they are most susceptible to pesticides. By targeting the pesticide application to the time when the pest is most susceptible, you can increase the likelihood of outstanding control. For example, target first instar white grubs in turfgrass. These are most susceptible to insecticides when the product is applied in mid to late summer while the grubs are still very small.

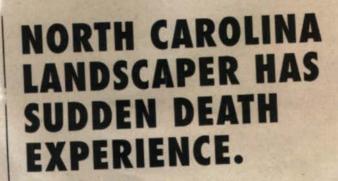
Understanding the product you are going to use is also important. For example, products like halofenozide and imidacloprid work even better when they are applied at egg laying or egg hatch.

 Select the proper products for maximum effectiveness. Make sure the product you purchase is labeled and recommended

Generally, using pesticides is a cost-effective way to deliver what clients desire — a healthy, attractive landscape.

While pesticides save significantly on labor costs and can often correct problems quickly, if used improperly, they may harm human health or the environment. Photo: L&L Staff





"I started to feel cold. I knew there was no time" says Kay.



For Kay Gambill, time was running out. The temperature was dropping, the weeds were growing, and she and her team had a 2 acre ornamental landscape to clear and re-build in Fayetteville, NC. "Cardinal Landscape works right through the winter" she explained "and that's when most systemic weedkillers quit. But not Finale® Herbicide. Where it'll take Roundup® a month or more, Finale does the job in a few days, even when the thermometer's below 40°. For weeds, it's a sudden death experience, winter as well as summer. Kinda gives you the shivers, doesn't it?"

Pest control everyone can feel good about.



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for the pests you want to control. Don't simply go to your storage and take what is in inventory simply because it is convenient. If it isn't one of the better products for that pest, then you most likely will not have saved any time or money. Read and follow the label carefully. Doing so is not only the law, but the label also has information about product use that will help increase your success.

Pesticides should be selected for their efficacy against the pest you wish to control and with a number of other considerations in mind. Is there water nearby? If so, then factors such as water solubility and fish toxicity are important to consider.

Pesticide selection should be on a site-bysite basis. What kind of equipment do you have to apply products? Can you do a better job with liquid or granular formulations? Are there re-entry restrictions? Does the product require immediate irrigation?

4. Be sure your application equipment is properly calibrated and use the proper rate. Poor application is one of the most common causes of pesticide failure in the landscape. Nozzles and pumps wear, equipment gets knocked around and settings change. An occasional check of calibration and output is a real money saver.

Environmental factors can make pest control more difficult. With soil insects, such as white grubs or mole crickets, many factors are working against good control. The very fact that these pests are in the soil gives them a big advantage. They are more difficult to detect and often aren't found until they've done considerable damage. By the

time they are discovered, they are also quite large and harder to control.

The soil itself acts as a buffer and helps

protect these insects. Some insecticides may be trapped on the grass itself, while many products are bound in the thatch and other organic matter. This prevents the insecticides from ever getting to the target site — the grubs and mole crickets themselves. Slow or no movement of insecticides deep into the soil is a major limiting factor in trying to control these insects.

How do these products work at all? Control is generally obtained by the small amount that makes it a little deeper in the soil and by the movement of the insects near the soil surface. This is a double-edged sword. It demonstrates that in turfgrass and most landscape settings, pesticide use may not be a threat

to ground water. At the same time, these characteristics make it difficult to move pesticides to the root zone where the insects reside.

Linked with controlling soil insect pests is the availability and use of irrigation. Irrigation is important for several reasons. One is product safety. Some products must be watered in immediately after application to reduce surface residues and potential human and animal exposures.

5. Irrigate to move pesticides into the thatch and soil to minimize ultraviolet degradation and improve control and residual

activity. Some products require moisture for activation. Granular formulations have a granule with a pesticide attached, and water washes the product off the granule and to the site of action — soil.

Irrigation following an insecticide application for soil insect control is important. Irrigation or rainfall is often necessary before a pesticide will begin to work. Generally, thorough irrigation is beneficial following insecticide application when you are trying to control soil insects, such as white grubs or mole crickets. Studies on insecticide movement in soil haven't always shown increased movement with increased irrigation, but a 1/4- to 2inch application of water helps initiate the control process.

When soils are dry, many insects move deeper to stay in a zone with adequate moisture. The deeper they are in the soil, the more difficult they are to control. When insects reside deep in the soil, the likelihood they will contact the insecticide is limited. In addition, when soil conditions are dry and hot, there is a much greater likelihood that a portion of the pesticide will be bound quite tightly to the dry thatch and organic matter. Under these conditions, some loss of insecticides will occur through evaporation. The bottom line is that hot and dry conditions usually reduce insecticide effectiveness.

Irrigation cools the soil surface, moistens the thatch, and most importantly, helps move the soil insects closer to the soil surface. Many turfgrass managers have adopted the practice of both pre-treatment and post-treatment irrigation when attempting to control soil insects. This lessens the amount of pesti-

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many reasons
to fine tune
your pesticide
program for
maximum
control at the
lowest use
rates and
application
frequency.



Pesticide selection should be made on a site-by-site basis in order to best control the pests on the property. For example, pesticides for surface-feeding insects were not entirely effective against these soil-feeding pests. Photo: Brandenburg

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cide bound to the thatch, reduces evaporation of some insecticides and encourages the insects to reside closer to the soil surface. In effect, pre-treatment irrigation in conjunction with post-treatment watering helps guarantee results. Pre-treatment irrigation does not replace post-treatment watering, it merely acts as an enhancement.

There are times when irrigation following insecticide application is not desirable. Consider the fact that many insects, such as armyworms and cutworms, feed on the turfgrass above the soil surface. To control these pests, it is important to place the insecticide at the appropriate site.

As a general rule for foliage-feeding pests, do not irrigate following insecticide application. This keeps the product on the foliage of the turfgrass, where the insects will readily come in contact. Exceptions to this approach would be if the label requires irrigation following application, or if the product had systemic activity and needed

watering to be taken up through the plant roots.

Another factor in caterpillar control is the application's timing. Smaller worms are easier to control, like grubs and mole crickets, but the time of day is also critical to success. Cutworms and many other caterpillars feed at night when they are small, and once they are larger they feed all the time. A general rule for caterpillar control is to treat late in the day. This makes certain that the caterpillars receive a fresh dose of the insecticide when they begin to feed at night. Since caterpillars feed on the aboveground portion of the turfgrass, you can imagine that if the turfgrass is mowed, or top
performance
from any
pesticide,
identifying the
pest problem is
paramount.
Like in any
battle, knowing
your enemy is
critical.

and in particular, if the clippings are removed within a day or two of treatment, control will be diminished.

For top performance from any pesticide, identifying the pest problem is paramount. But at the same time, more than just identifying the pest is necessary to obtain maximum control. Understanding the biology of your pests will get you a long ways toward outstanding performance out of whatever products or approaches you use for pest control. This is true for the use of synthetic pesticides, biorational approaches, or organic pest control. Like in any battle, knowing your enemy is critical to success.

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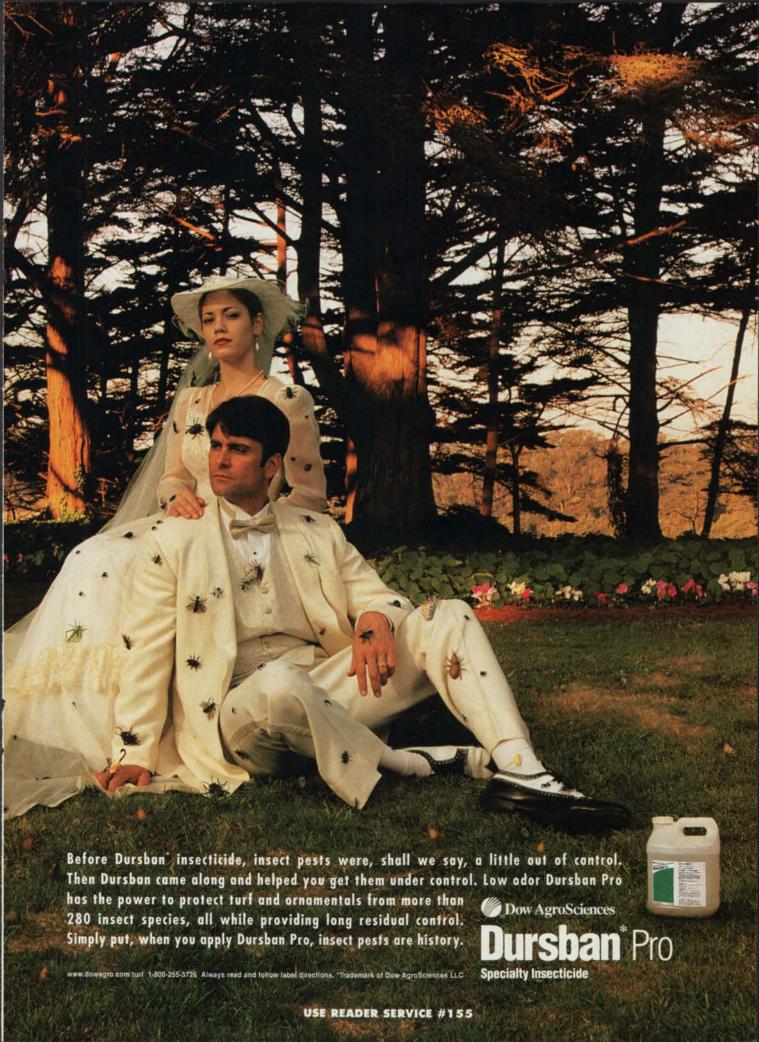
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business, I've seen numerous situations that can cause pesticide failures. I've observed that pesticides rarely fail. Pesticides are gen-

erally quite reliable, but under environmental extremes, may actually fail. A working knowledge of what situations produce less-than-desirable results can serve you well.

One of the most common explanations for failures is that the insects have become resistant to the insecticides. Fortunately, resistance to insecticides in the landscape is a fairly rare event. It has been a problem in the Southeast for people trying to control southern chinch bugs. Multiple generations of this pest and numerous applications of insecticides to control it are a recipe for resistance.

On occasion, spray tank water that measures a pH value above 7 can cause a more rapid breakdown of the pesticide. This is re-

ferred to as alkaline hydrolysis. It is a phenomenon that occurs quite frequently, particularly in geographic regions where ground water is very alkaline, or where people use municipal water for spray tanks and that water has been rendered more alkaline in processing. This problem can be checked with a \$30 pH meter and corrected with a minimal investment in acidifiers or buffers.

Another form of pesticide breakdown is by microbes in the soil. Microbial degradation is a process by which pesticides are broken down by microorganisms in the soil. This eliminates the pesticides and metabolites after they have completed their task of controlling the pests. In rare instances where the same pesticide is used again and again in the same location, the microbes build to a high level. Often, the result is a rapid breakdown of the pesticide before it gets a chance to perform effectively.

Rotating products through the years is often recommended to reduce the likelihood of resistance. Oftanol (isofenphos) was one of the first products documented to suffer from microbial degradation when it was used year after year for grub control.

Certainly, pesticides are valuable tools. Use them wisely and understand what makes them work best. If you do this, you will be rewarded with outstanding performance. The end result will be that your job is easier and the results of your labor are enhanced.

The author is a turfgrass entomologist at North Carolina State University, Raleigh, N.C.

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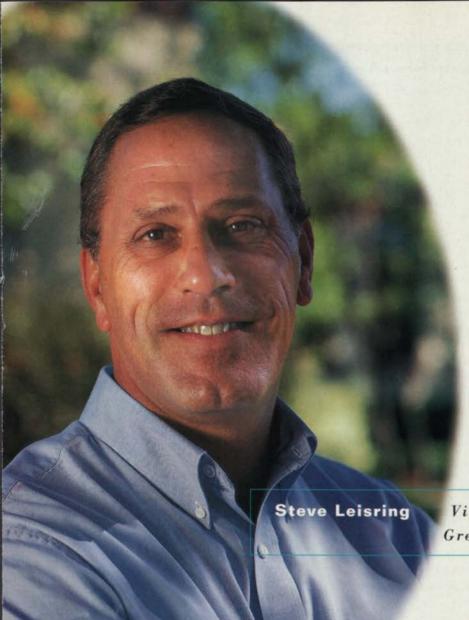
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The lawn & landscape industry needs to help cast pesticides in a better light.

By Rick Brandenburg Pesticide use in our homes, businesses and environment is often a very controversial, emotional issue. We've seen heated debates on television, read accounts of protests in magazines and newspapers and perhaps even taken part in serious discussions or confrontations ourselves. Few of us agree with the negative attack pesticides have received in recent years, but at the same time we care about the environment and do not wish to use harmful products.

For a while it seemed negative news about pesticides was showing up in the media on a daily basis. That appears to have subsided to some degree since the big Alar scare about a decade ago. However, concern has been renewed with the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA) and the debates about how to implement this sweeping legislation and the impact it will have on landscape maintenance and other industries. As implementation moves forward, it remains a heated topic of discussion, especially since we realize some pesticide registrations for landscaping uses may be lost.

ON THE DEFENSE. Through the years, the landscape management industry has found it necessary to defend pesticide use around homes and businesses. We've had to justify pesticide use to state and federal regulatory agencies, environmental groups, the public in general



Lawn and landscape contractors can help improve pesticides' often negative image by keeping their customers educated and informed.

and even our own customers.

For many years, landscape managers often took several different approaches to defuse the pesticide issue. One was to simply dismiss those who opposed pesticide use as "loons" or "environmental freaks" who needed to get a life. The reality is that many of the people concerned about pesticide use are not loons or freaks, but rather well-educated, intelligent people who for some reason have concerns about pesticides and the associated health and environmental risks. To simply dismiss them is inappropriate and incorrect.

More people than ever have concerns about pesticide use because fewer people than ever are involved in production agriculture. Decades ago, when a high percentage of the population was involved in agriculture, people were familiar with the tools of the trade, such as pesticides. Today, pesticide use is a foreign concept because less than 2 percent of the U.S. population lives and works

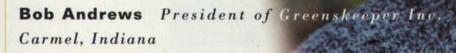
Presenting were familiar with the tools of the trade, such as pesticides. Today, pesticide use is a foreign concept because less than 2 percent of the U.S. population lives and works Presenting Presenting Present of the U.S. population lives and works Pesticide Image

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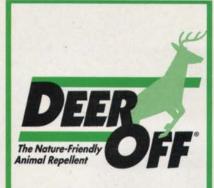
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FOCUS: PESTICIDES

on farms. People simply aren't familiar with pesticides and why they are used.

By dismissing the loons and the freaks, we also acted as though these individuals didn't have any solid ground to stand on. In fact, we know of instances, called attention to by the media, and other sources, where pesticides have caused both environmental and health problems. These instances have been primarily the result of pesticide misuse,

and they have added to pesticides' negative image.

PUTTING IT IN PER-SPECTIVE. In the past when responding to pesticide criticism, many of us have simply countered attacks by citing life's other, seemingly bigger risks. We felt that by overwhelming the concerned party with the other, larger threats to our respective lives, such as automobile accidents or heart disease, we would render any risk from pesticides negligible or trivial. Unfortunately, risk communication experts tell us this ap-

proach simply doesn't. You can't eliminate one fear by presenting a bigger one. In other words, the risk of getting cancer from pesticide exposure isn't eliminated in a person's mind as soon as they are told that artificial sweeteners or smoking cigarettes may be bigger risks. It simply gives them more problems to worry about.

While people may be convinced that the risk of dying from an automobile accident is hundreds of times greater than dying from pesticide exposure, people view driving an car as an essential part of life. But to many, pesticide use is unnecessary and that argument doesn't carry much weight for some.

So, how do we present a positive image of the landscape industry and the manner in which it uses pesticides? The best way to promote our businesses and pest management strategies is not by being critical of the opposition, but by operating in a professional manner and openly discussing these issues with confidence.

TIMES HAVE CHANGED. Public concern about pesticide use has encouraged the de-

velopment of new, lower toxicity products as well as new biological and organic pest controls. Without demand for new pest management approaches there would have been little funding available for research and limited incentive for companies to pursue the development of new technologies. This progress toward lower toxicity products, lower use rates and organic programs has been a positive development.

There is simply no comparison between the pesticides of today and the pesticides of 20 years ago. Today, the mammalian toxicities and use rates are much lower. Pesticides are also less persistent in the environment and more toxin-specific to insects, to name a few improvements. We have made a dramatic shift from the types of products we used to spray, which is good news for everyone.

The days of dieldrin and chlordane are long gone. We have more rigid testing than ever and new pesticides must undergo rigorous tests and

screening. Companies registering new chemicals have their work cut out for them since it is becoming increasingly difficult and expensive to do so. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is giving special consideration to reduced-risk products, since the concern over environmental and human health risks has encouraged some new and established companies to focus on alternative technologies and biorational controls for pest management in the landscape. While these have been positive developments, they have been challenging to all of us at times.

A good analogy to the current pest management situation is the U.S. automobile industry in the 1960s and 1970s. When pressure from foreign automakers intensified, it resulted in both short- and long-term changes with far-reaching implications.

Despite the challenges the U.S. auto industry faced during those years, the end result has been more cost-efficient, higher quality cars that are competitive in a global marketplace. Similarly, the challenges in the pest management industry have produced positive changes in our technologies. We can

he public's concern over pesticide use has helped encourage the development of new, lower toxicity products.

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expect these trends to continue.

In addition, technology in the area of pest control for turf and ornamentals has increased dramatically. We once used products at rates in the range of 10 pounds or more of active ingredient per acre. Today, we have products that are less toxic to humans and animals and are used at rates of 0.1 pound of active ingredient per acre or lower. That is a 100-fold decrease in the amount of active ingredient applied. This is amazing, particularly in light of the fact that these products are also less toxic to people and pets on a pound-for-pound comparison.

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A good example of pesticide progress is with products for soil insects, like white grubs and mole crickets, which have been among the most difficult to control and often require the highest pesticide rates. Some of the newest products use effective rates of just 0.0125 pounds of active ingredient per acre. Other products, such as halofenozide and imidacloprid have lower toxicities than many of the past products used for white grub control and lower use rates, as well. But, they also require more accuracy in timing for optimal control. These products are most effective when directed toward the first instar grub and less effective as remedial products to control the larger third instar grubs. These products are lower toxicity to humans, generally offer lower use rates than many older chemistries, and are unique classes or modes of action. Plan to see more of this in the future as the EPA approves new, lower toxicity chemistries.

FQPA'S IMPACT. With legislation, there are major developments the public needs to understand. FQPA is making sweeping changes in pesticide regulation. Rather than considering individual pesticides and uses, this law is looking at aggregate uses for all products with similar modes of action. While EPA is trying to base decisions on sound science, in some cases good data is lacking. This law has already had an impact on several products used in the turf and ornamentals area as companies have determined the registration of certain products will no longer be practical.

The most important component of this law is the aggregate analysis of pesticide exposure. In other words, all organophosphates, such as chlorpyrifos, are evaluated based on the exposure one might receive from these products for cockroach control in the home, termite control around the home, insect control in the lawn, other turf area exposures (athletic fields, etc.) and all agriculture uses of the product. This is much more strict than previous laws, which looked at individual products and specific uses. This law is moving forward and rather than fear it, we should use it to our advantage. We must be vocal and let EPA know when the registrations of valuable products are threatened. We are now working under the most comprehensive, scientifically based regula-

tions ever. That should make the public feel good about what pesticides we are using let's inform them.

BETTER ALTERNATIVES. Are pesticides necessary to maintain quality landscapes? In many cases the answer is "yes." In some situations, pesticides may not be necessary if cultural and alternative control practices can be diligently employed.

Pest control without pesticides is practical in many situations, but usually requires other inputs, such as labor, to compensate for the synthetic products. However, many landscapes can be managed without pesticides and this is, in part, due to recent research that has helped us understand the ecology of many pests and their natural enemies. In addition, we have seen a recent influx of biological, natural and organic control products. While the efficacy of some of these products has not been thoroughly validated, many products are gradually finding a place in the landscape industry with companies developing programs using these low environmental impact products.

We have also seen an increase in products that are "natural" in their composition. Some new products, such as Conserve SC from DowAgrosciences, Indianapolis, Ind., are based on a natural organism found in the soil. This same material can be produced synthetically and gives us a biorational type of product effective against various caterpillars and other pests. Companies are still working on biological materials like entomogenous nematodes that attack insects, biological controls of diseases and nematodes, fungal pathogens such as Beauveria bassiana that attack insect pests and a whole array of other products. Many of these are showing great potential and some are already in use. Natural, biological, organic or biorational products (or whatever you wish to call them) offer great potential for the

We now understand our pests a lot better and have a excellent means to monitor, detect, and forecast them. This allows us to use cultural and management practices that help reduce the likelihood of pest outbreaks. It also allows us to use pesticides more effectively, which in turn, allows us to use them a minimum number of times at the lowest rates. This saves time and money and helps minimize unnecessary pesticide use, which is a positive move.

We have a positive story to tell about progress made in pest management. We are operating with the latest technology that has been the result of years of research and are using lower rates of less toxic materials. We are also operating under the strictest pesticide laws ever. This is all quite a positive image for pesticide use. Let's tell everyone about it.

The author is a turfgrass entomologist at North Carolina State University, Raleigh, N.C.

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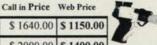
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MANU- FACTURER	PRODUCT NAME	ACTIVE INGREDIENT	AVAILABLE FORMULATIONS	FOR USE IN/ON:
HEDRI	CIDES			
Dow AgroSciences	Confront	triclopyr, clopyralid		turfgrass/black medic, white clover, common chickweed, henbit, chickweed, broadleaf plantain, common dandelion, common
	Gallery	isoxaben	dry flowable	ragweed, shepherd's purse, wild violet turfgrass and ornamentals/common chick weed, white clover, henbit, wild mustard, common purslane, common ragweed,
	Snapshot	trifluralin,	granule	spotted spurge, dandelion, dwarf mallow, broadleaf plantain, buckhorn plantain, red sorrell, yellow woodsorrel ornamentals and ground covers/annual
	Silapsilor	isoxaben	granole	bluegrass, common chickweed, white clover, crabgrass, yellow foxtail, henbit, common purslane, common ragweed, annual sowthistle, purslane speedwell, dandelion, giant foxtail, broadleaf plantain, annual
	Surflan	oryzalin	aqueous suspension	ryegrass, red sorrell warm-season turf, tall fescue and ornamen tals/annual bluegrass, large crabgrass, smooth crabgrass, giant foxtail, goosegrass, Johnsongrass, common chickweed, common groundsel, henbit, spring pigweed, yellow
	Team	benefin, toluidine	granule	woodsorrel turfgrass/bahiagrass, bermudagrass, perennial bluegrass, centipedegrass, fescue, perennial ryegrass, St. Augustinegrass,
	Turflon	triclopyr	ester	zoysiagrass turfgrass/annual and perennial broadleaf weeds such as bull thistle, clover, dandelion, goldenrod, ground ivy, oxalis, plantain, ragweed, wild violet
Monsanto	Roundup Pro	glyphosphate	WSL (4 lb. Al/gal.)	preplant to turf and ornamentals/broad- spectrum, nonselective grasses and broad leaf weeds
	Roundup Dry	glyphosphate	WSG (72 percent AI)	preplant to turf and ornamentals/broad- spectrum, nonselective grasses and broad leaf weeds
	Manage	helosulfurox	WDG (75 percent AI)	turfgrass and landscaped areas/yellow nutsedge, purple nutsedge
Novartis	Barricade	prodiamine	65WG	established turf grasses (excluding golf course putting greens), lawns and sod nurseries and landscape ornamentals including established perennials and wild flower plantings
Riverdale	Horsepower Millennium	MCPA, triclopyr dicamba	2,4-D free amine	turfgrass/black medic, buckhorn, chickweed, clover, daisy, dandelion, goldenrod, goose foot, ground ivy, henbit, knotweed, oxalis, plantain, poison ivy, purslane, red sorrel, red clover, speedwell, thistle, wild violet turfgrass/blessed thistle, buckhorn, common
5.1	Ultra	dicamba		groundsel, dandelion, goldenrod, henbit, honey- suckle, horsetail, oxalis, plantain, red sorrel, white clover, wild garlic, woodsorrell, yarrow

MANU- FACTURER	PRODUCT NAME	ACTIVE INGREDIENT	AVAILABLE FORMULATIONS	FOR USE IN/ON:
UHS	PrePair	OCH PROPERTY AND ADDRESS OF THE PARTY OF THE	Separate Control of Co	West And processing Control of the C
UNS	rrerair	naprogramide/ oxydiazon	6 percent granule	ornamental crops/broadleaf grassy weeds
		VA JUIGEON		
Zeneca	Reward			turf, ornamentals, aquatic areas/broadleaf
				and grassy weeds
INICEA				
INSEC	FICIDE	5		
Bayer	Merit	imidacloprid	WP, WSP, G	30 types of insects in turf and ornamentals,
				including white grub species, aphids, scale insects, lacebugs, leaf hopper and royal
				palm bug
	Tempo	gyflurthrin,	SC, WP	nearly 40 turf and ornamental pests,
		betacyfluthrin		including aphids
Dow	Dursban	chlorpyrifos	emulsifiable concentrate,	all turfgrasses and most ornamentals/ants,
AgroSciences			WSP	armyworms, fire ants, aphids, cut worms,
				bluegrass billbugs, mole crickets, chinch
	Conserve SC	spinosad	suspension concentrate	bugs, grubs, sod webworms turfgrass and ornamentals/Lepidopterous
	Conscire	opinosaa	sospension concernate	insects, including sod webworms and small
				armyworms as well as fall webworms,
				armyworms and bagworms
Gowan	Hexygon	hexythiazox	emulsifiable concentrate	ornamental plants, non-bearing trees, mature
	70			ornamental plantings/european red mite,
				pacific spider mite, southern red mite, spruce
				spider mite, strawberry spider mite, two- spotted spider mite, willamette mite
				sponed spider time, vindinene time
J.J. Mauget	Imicide	imidacloprid	10 percent	ornamental trees/boxers — wing and
BERLEY CO.	Abacide	abamectin	1 percent	sucking insects ornamental trees/mites — caterpillars, scale
	Inject-Axide B	bldrin	80 percent	ornamental trees/chewing and sucking
A STATE OF THE STATE OF			THE REPORT OF	insects
Novartis	Avid	abamectin	.15EC	ornamental plants/leaf miners and spider
Novariis	Avid	abameciin	.13EC	mites
DE STATE OF THE ST	Award	fenoxycarb		turf, ornamentals, sod farms and nurseries/
				fire ants and big-head ants
PBI Gordon	Acme	copper		evergreens, shurbs, shade trees, fruit trees/
	Bordeaux	COPPO		anthracnose, leaf spot, elm leaf curl, needle
から 一日 こうしゃ				cast, sphaeropsis blight, nectria canker, gray
CONTRACTOR OF THE PARTY OF THE	Trimec Classic	2 4-D and		mold turfgrass/broadleaf weed control such as
	Timice Classic	dicamba		black medic, broadleaf plantain, buckhorn
The way of				plantain, clover, dandelion, ground ivy,
				henbit, lambsquarters, oxalis, plantain, purslane, red sorrel, spurge, thistle
	Trimec Turf	2,4-D and	ester	turfgrass/black medic, chickweed, clover,
	Ester	dicamba		dandelion, ground ivy, henbit, mallow,
	Ornamaa	fluorifae Dhut I		mustard, nettle, oxalis, plantains, purslane
DEVICE PLANT	Ornamec	fluazifop-P-butyl		ornamentals and nurseries/annual and perennial grass weeds such as
E BETTE				barnyardgrass, crabgrass, giant foxtail,
PROPERTY OF				green and yellow foxtail, goosegrass,
A STREET		THE PARTY OF THE P	The second of the	johnsongrass, bermudagrass, quackgrass

MANU- FACTURER	PRODUCT NAME	ACTIVE INGREDIENT	AVAILABLE FORMULATIONS	FOR USE IN/ON:
PBI Gordon	Barrier	dichlobenil		ornamentals/annual and perennial grasses such as annual bluegrass, bluegrass, bull thistle, chickweed, crabgrass, dandelion, evening primrose, foxtail, groundsel, knot weed, plantain, purslane, yellow woodsorrel
UHS	Dursban 2CG Fire Ant Bait w/ Conserve	chlorpyrifos	2 percent coated granule granule bait	turf and ornamentals/mole cricket, european crane fly, deer tick fire ants
Valent USA	Orthene 97	acephate	pellet	turf, trees, shrubs, nursery stock/mole crickets, fall army worm, cut worms, ants
	Pinpoint 15G	Acephate	granule	turf, container-grown nursery stock/mole
	Tame 2.4EC	fenpropathrin	liquid spray	crickets, fire ants, aphids, mealy bugs shrubs, plants, trees/mites, aphids, whitefly, leafminer, scale
Zeneca	Scimitar	lambda- cyhalothrin	CS and WP	turf and ornamental/armyworms, webworms, beetles, weevils, mole crickets, leaf hoppers and mosquitoes
FUNG Bayer	Bayleton	triadimefon	WSP	controls turf and ornamental diseases, including dollar spot, gray leaf spot, brown patch, fusarium blight and summer patch
Dow AgroSciences	Rubigan	fenarimol	aqueous suspension	turfgrass and ornamentals/dollar spot, copper spot, rhizoctonia blight, necrotic ring spot, summer patch, fusarium blight, take-all patch, pink snow mold
Griffin L.L.C.	Junction	copper	dry flowable	greenhouse/nursery & turf — algae, brown
	Pentathalon	mancozeb	hydroxide liquid and dry flowable	patch, dollar spot, blights, leaf spot, anthracnose turf & landscape — botrytis, anthracnose, rust, leaf spot
J.J. Mauget	fungisol Tebuject	deltagard	2 percent 4 percent	ornamental trees/31 pathogenic diseases ornamental trees/red oak wilt, leaf spot and apple scab
	Imisol	imidacloprid, deltagard	2 percent	ornamental trees/insects and diseases
	Abasol	abamectin, deltagard	2 percent	ornamental treees/insects and diseases
Novartis	Compass	trifloxystrobin	50WG	turfgrass including golf courses, institutional, commercial and residential lawns, sod farms, sports fields, parks, municipal grounds and cemeteries; and ornamentals grown in interiorscapes, field nursery plantings, forest nurseries, residential and commercial landscapes, greenhouses, lath and shadecontainers and other enclosed structures
	Alamo Subdue MAXX	propiconazole mefanoxam	systemic injection WSB, liquid	trees/Dutch elm disease, oak wilt, scab conifers, nonbearing citrus, nonbearing deciduous fruits and nuts, ornamentals and turf/phythium and phytophtora

LAWN & LANDSCAPE

MANU- FACTURER	PRODUCT	ACTIVE	AVAILABLE	FOR USE
Novartis	NAME	INGREDIENT	FORMULATIONS	IN/ON:
Novartis	Bannner MAXX	propiconazole	water-based microemulsion	turfgrass/dollar spot, brown patch, anthracnose, red thread, pink patch, rust, powdery mildew, stripe smut, summer patch, necrotic ring spot, spring dead spot, take-all patch, leaf spot, gray leaf spot, oink snowmold, fusarium patch, gray snowmold, yellow patch, zoysia patch
PBI Gordon	Teremec	chloroneb		snow mold, brown patch, pythium blight and southern blight
	Formec 80	mancozeb		turfgrass and ornamentals/rust, fusarium blight, powdery mildew, red thread, dollar spot, brown patch, pythium blight, snow mold, anthracnose, alternaria leaf spot, petal blight,
Riverdale	Patchwork	fenarimol	granule	turfgrass/necrotic ring spot, summer patch, fusarium blight, take-all patch, spring dead spot
UHS	Engage 4F	PCNB	4 pound flowable	turf and ornamental/turf diseases
Zeneca	Daconil	chlorothalonil	WDG and flowable	golf courses, sod farms and ornamentals/ broad-spectrum contact control of major turf diseases
	Heritage	azoxystrobin		brown patch, Pythium, take-all patch, summer patch, anthracnose, gray leaf spot, snow mold
BIOLO	GICAL	S		
Plant Health Care	Crymax Bioinsecticide	Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurstaki	Water dispersable granule	for use on virtually all horticultural plants to control a broad spectrum of Lepidopteran (worm) pests, such as diamondback moth, gypsy moth, and tent caterpillars with low risk to workers, beneficial insects or the environment.
	Lepinox bt Bioinsecticide	Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurstaki	Water dispersable granule	the only biological control material regis- tered for control of fall armyworm on turf. controls a broad spectrum of additional Lepidopteran (worm) pests, such as sod webworms, bagworms, loopers and horn worms with low risk to workers, beneficial insects or the environment
	AQ10 Biofungicide	Ampelomyces quisqualis	Unique	used as a preventative control measure before powdery mildew outbreaks occur on virtually any horticultural plant

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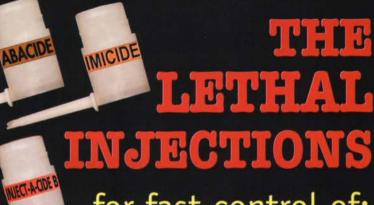


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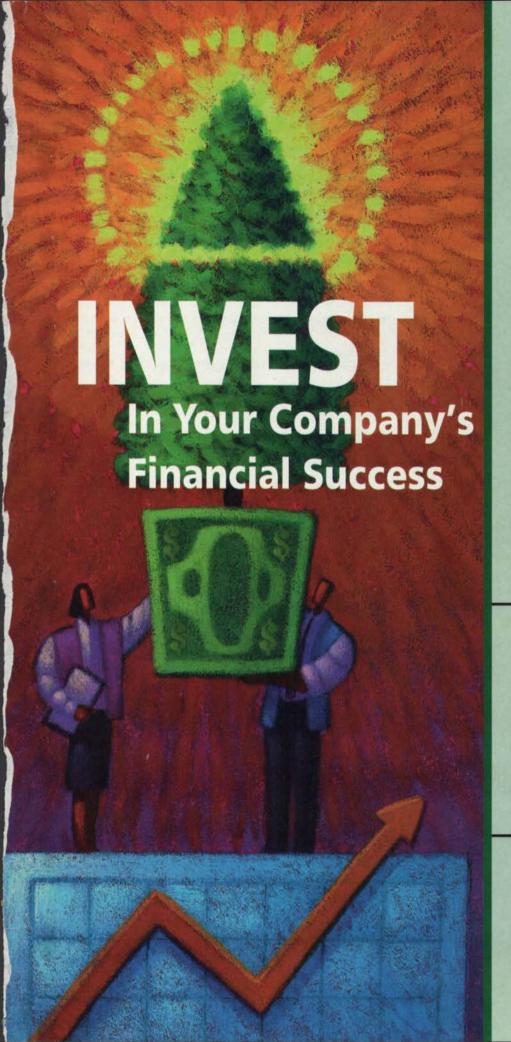
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Shady Areas

(continued from page 94)

which can be very appealing.

Another opportunity to serve the client is through tree pruning. Whether you subcontract this work out to a colleague or provide this yourself, certified arborists can improve the potential for better plant growth with judicious pruning. The key is to open the canopy and allow more light to penetrate through the tree. In general, light pruning is the rule. Never remove more than 10 to 20 percent of the leaf surface within a given year.

Pruning is most successful when it is done to enhance the growth of existing, shadeadapted plants. Attempts at pruning to allow plants that require more light to thrive generally fail because the tree canopy grows back in a few years, and the new plants starve for sunlight. Tree pruning is more effective when only one tree is present in the landscape, rather than several existing specimens.

Once the canopy has been opened up, then shade-adapted turfgrasses can be introduced into the landscape. Select a seed mix-



An eye toward the surrounding shade conditions encouraged one contractor to install planter boxes of shade-tolerant plants instead of turf in this area. Photo: John Fech

ture that combines several shade-tolerant cultivars of each species. In a shady environment, the best results are achieved with this approach. St. Augustinegrass and bahiagrass may function well in warm-season regions, while cool-season turfgrasses can be used in northern areas.

In moist shade, select a mix that is 20 percent rough bluegrass; 10 percent supina bluegrass; 40 percent fine fescue; 10 percent perennial ryegrass; and 20 percent shadeadapted Kentucky bluegrass cultivars. Cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass that perform well in shady conditions include America, Chateau, Explorer, Glade, Nuglade,

Princeton 105 and SR 2000.

On dry shade sites, a mixture of 50 percent fine fescue, 40 percent shade-adapted Kentucky bluegrass cultivars and 10 percent perennial ryegrass should be sown. Supina and rough bluegrass should not be used because these species perform well only in a moist environment.

MAINTAINING SHADED TURFS. Plant growth regulators (PGRs) can significantly improve the quality of turf growing in the shade. They work by slowing vertical leaf elongation, which channels more food into the stolons, crown and roots of the plant, (continued on page 126)

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13

Shady Areas

(continued from page 124)

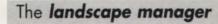
and leaves more food available for root growth. When plants treated with PGRs are compared to untreated plants, the treated plants are thicker and denser, with more roots. Untreated plants tend to be thinner, paler and scant in comparison.

Use product mixtures of slow-release ni-

trogen fertilizer and PGRs to encourage root growth and to strengthen crowns.

Apply 1 to 2 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year in shaded areas. Slowergrowing plants are unable to use high levels of nitrogen for desirable results. Shaded turfgrasses that receive heavy fertilization will become weakened. Apply fertilizer at the same times of the year as sunny areas, just apply less.

Another maintenance practice to pay attention to in shaded areas is mowing. If possible, mow the shaded turf areas a at a higher height than the sunny turf ones. Shaded plants need all the leaf surface area they can get for photosynthesis and to send carbohydrates and sugars to the roots and crowns. This is especially important for grass plants in the shade



or lawn care operator

needs to look at a prob-

lematic shade area as a

potential sales opportunity.

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because they have fewer leaves than ones in the sun.

Also, try to instruct your clients to limit traffic in shaded areas. Because turf in these areas is not growing vigorously, it struggles to tolerate traffic. Installing pavers or stepping stones is helpful in shaded turf areas, just as it is in shaded mixed landscapes.

Irrigate turf in the shade a bit less than the sunny areas of the landscape. Set the irrigation controller timers for the "shady" zones to run for approximately 80 percent of the time, as the sunny zones do. The shady areas dry out slower and are more likely to retain moisture because there is less evapotranspiration. If shady turfs are irrigated the same amount of time as sunny areas, more water than necessary is applied, increasing the potential for root rot, compacted soils, moss and mildew.

Maintaining a healthy landscape in shade is a complex endeavor. Using some of the strategies I've suggested may increase your success.

The author is an extension educator at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Neb.

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Insect Control

By Bob West

An effective insect control program features a number of

options.

Ask any veteran lawn care professional about the keys to a successful lawn care program, and you'll usually hear about the importance of sufficient irrigation and fertilization in order to develop healthy turfgrass. These lawn care professionals will probably also chuckle a

bit as they tell you this because they know how rarely homeowners deliver appropriate irrigation and fertilizer to their lawns.

Instead, homeowners often take a very reactive approach to lawn care – when the grass starts to turn brown, then they do something. But, by this time, the problem has generally already established itself as a verifiable lawn pest. And that often means insects.

While there are a number of turf insects that can wreak havoc with turf, grubs are generally the most widely talked about because of the extent of the damage they can cause and their presence in so much of the country. But a successful insecticide program includes control strategies for any insects that may arise on a property.

THE IPM QUESTION. Pest control programs – regardless of the pest – have become commonly viewed in the light of the term integrated pest management (IPM) in recent years. Although definitions for IPM vary based on who you talk to, the general concept is that problematic weed, insect or disease areas in the landscape are treated only once the cause of the problem has been identified. The idea is that such (continued on page 130)



Combination products
that let lawn care
operators apply an
insecticide with a
fertilizer can have
dramatic productivity
results. Photos: L&L Staff



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Insect Control

(continued from page 128)

a strategy will shift lawn care operators away from making blanket applications of pesticides to an entire property when the product doesn't need to be applied to the entire area.

Many lawn care professionals and researchers are beginning to question the validity of applying the IPM concept to insect control, however, because insects can inflict a tremendous amount of damage to a landscape in short order. That damage is generally enough to at least cost a lawn care operator dollars in terms of a guarantee or a callback, and there is certainly potential for losing the customer entirely. "We try to treat a large percentage of our lawns with a preventive application of an insecticide," related Jack Robertson, president, Robertson Lawn Care, Springfield, Ill. "I've always felt that even though these preventive applications aren't true IPM, doing this is important from a customer satisfaction standpoint because if a customer has an insect problem that could be the last straw and cost you that customer."

While there are a number

of turf insects that can

wreak havoc with turf,

grubs are generally the

most widely talked about

because of the extent of

the damage they can

cause and their presence

in so much of the country.

As a result, lawn care operators like Robertson are prescribing preventive treatments for pest problems representing the most potential damage.

"Now that the preventive applications can be made on the fertilizer we can kill two birds with one stone," observed Robertson.

The Lawn Co., South Dennis, Mass., is hoping to enjoy the best of both worlds this year by outfitting its lawn care technicians' vehicles with additional spray tanks.

"We'll apply preventives for insects such as grubs to as much as 70 percent of our customers' properties," noted Don McMahon, agronomist, The Lawn Co. "But we're testing a four-tank system this year in order to practice a little more IPM."

McMahon said he would like to see the preventive grub control products offer better control of surface-feeding insects as well, so this year The Lawn Co. will eliminate the application of the preventive surface-feeding insect control product for some of the company's customers. The technicians re-

(continued on page 132)



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USE READER SERVICE #141

Insect Control

(continued from page 130)

CHICAGO – Asian long-horned beetles have heavily infested the Chicago area, and officials are trying to prevent the tree-munching pest's spread to surrounding areas. The fight against the beetle has prompted field tests this spring in Chicago of the systemic pesticide imidacloprid, according to Win McLane, a U.S. Department of Agriculture official.

Imidacloprid is to be tried on 240 non-infested trees in a suburb of Chicago that represents one of the most infested areas in the city and is under USDA quarantine restricting movement of wood and related agricultural products from the area. In fact, the USDA expanded the Asian long-horned beetle quarantine to include more parts of Chicago and two more nearby areas after inspections revealed that the beetle had infested trees outside of the previously regulated areas.

In each area of 60 uninfected trees, the insecticide will be injected into the soil around 15 trees and injected into the

trunks of 15 others. The remaining 30 trees will be controls to compare their experience to that of the treated trees.

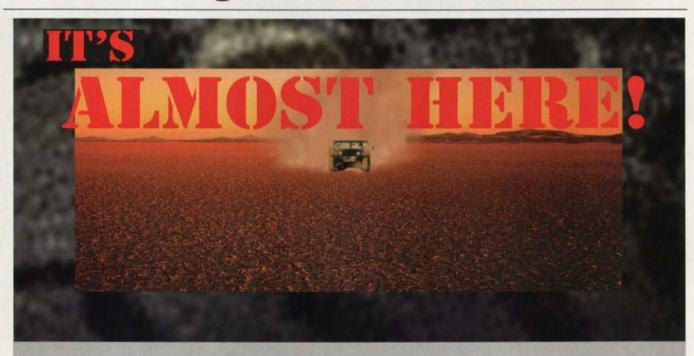
Federal tree and insect experts were to meet with city and state 'beetle battlers' in February to figure out where, when and exactly how they will run the tests.

Officials hope imidacloprid might be able to protect trees that haven't been attacked yet by the beetle, which arrived here and in New York in fresh-cut wood packing material from China. Similar tests are being planned for New York City and Long Island, the only other U.S. areas known to be infested.

Since July 1998, Chicago has lost 1,190 trees to the beetle, which does its damage when in larval form by chewing tunnels through the heartwood. Tests of various systemic insecticides in China the last two summers by U.S. and Chinese scientists found that when injected into the soil or tree trunk, imidacloprid "appeared to be the most effective against not only adult beetles, but against the young larvae," McLane said.

- Courtesy of Chicago Sun Times

Asian Long-horned Beetles



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Rosie and her husband, Pete, spent a lot of time designing the body of their "Perfect" landscape truck. "We didn't have to modify the truck at all," says Pete. "It's a standard 109" Isuzu NPR EFI, 13,250 GVW. The body has an II-ft. by 7-ft. bed with dual hydraulic dump lift, removable sides, built-in ramp and multiple tool boxes. It easily carries 6,000 lbs. of anything, from plants to rocks to dist, up the steepest hills. Rosie and I find that this custom body on the Isuzu truck is a perfect combination."

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Insect Control

(continued from page 132)

sponsible for these customers will use the new vehicles that are outfitted to let the technicians make applications of control products if and only if they should see a problem with these insects on a property.

"We used to do two annual applications for surface-feeding pests, and we've cut that back to one," observed McMahon. "This year we're going to try not to make any applications for these pests other than curative applications, and we'll see what happens.

"Customers who don't get the preventive grub control don't have a blanket insecticide application, so we'll have to treat them preventively for the surface-feeding pests, but we'll still have some technicians operating at a higher level of IPM," added McMahon.

BIOLOGY 101. Putting together an effective insect control program obviously requires examining a number of options regarding the products that are used. Part of this examination includes biological or biopesticide products for more and more contractors due to increasing environmental pressure and government regulations.

"By definition, a biological insecticide contains some form of a living organism," explained Albrecht Koppenhofer, specialist in turfgrass entomology, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J. "There is a developing market here for the more natural products," affirmed McMahon in describing the Cape Cod area. "This year we're going to be testing neem oil and even some garlic-based products for surface insect control.

"I won't use any of these natural products until we've tested them and we're confident in the results we'll get, but more customers are asking for these products," he continued. "I think if you're using biological products you need to communicate that more treatments may be necessary than with traditional insecticides, but, in the long run, you'll probably end up with a better program IPM-wise because these accounts will

force you into more spot treatments."

One real challenge that exists for many contractors is educating themselves and their technicians on the capabilities and uses of these biological products in comparison to the conventional pesticide products.

"Using biological products requires a shift in the mindset to some degree on the part of the pesticide user," acknowledged Dr. Michael Brownbridge, an entomologist with the University of Vermont Entomology Research Lab, Burlington, Vt. "The biological product has to be chosen specifically based on the target pest, and then that product has to be applied in such a way to make sure it reaches the pest."

While these practices are also required for traditional pesticides, Brownbridge said biological products oftentimes have much more targeted ranges of control and specification application requirements.

"For example, nematodes can't be ap-(continued on page 136)



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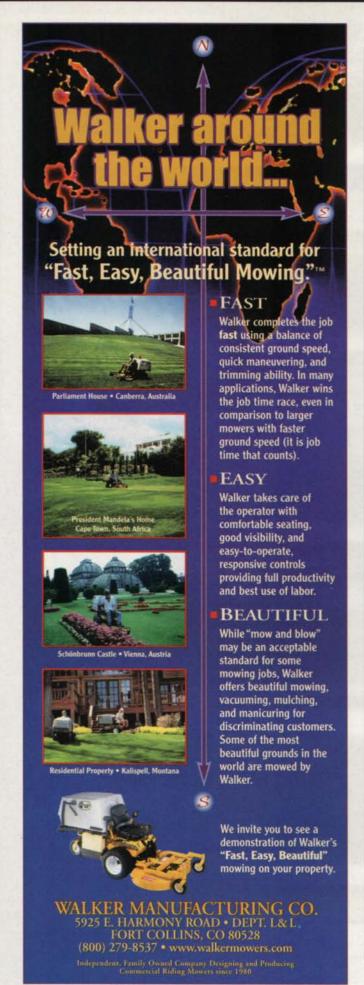
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Insect Control

(continued from page 134)

plied with high-pressure sprayers because the pressure will destroy the nematodes," he noted. "And various fungi work better when applied with high-volume sprays vs. electrostatic sprays."

Because of the fact that biopesticides generally contain living organisms that provide the activity, Brownbridge also explained that there are different handling requirements for these products.

"Biological products have to be kept in appropriate storage conditions, which means keeping them cool and out of the sunlight," he noted. "Since these products contain living organisms, there are certain conditions under which they'll thrive and there are conditions under which they'll die. If the organisms die, the effectiveness of the product will be significantly compromised.

And while Brownbridge lauded the environmental and applicator safety benefits of biological products, he recognized the fact that their performance generally falls short of the standards lawn care operators have come to expect from traditional pesticides.

"Biological products do not deliver the instant knockdown of the pests that people have grown accustomed to," he related, adding that many lawn care operators and consumers fail to give these products a fair opportunity to succeed. "Biological pesticides deliver a gradual reduction in pest population, but the constraints of business and customer demands lead too many users of biological products to immediately blame the product when they have a control problem when the real problem may have been in the application or due to the fact that chemical residual in the soil killed the living organisms in the biological product.

"Users of conventional pesticides are much more forgiving of problems with those products than they are with biological products," Brownbridge concluded.

TALK IS CHEAP - AND IMPORTANT. Robertson also places a great deal of emphasis on the importance of communicating with customers for a successful lawn care program.

"The communication has to be there, especially when you get into August and September and the lawns start showing signs of heat-stress," he explained, adding that customers have to understand that no lawn care product is 100 percent effective. "When lawns get like that a lot of homeowners are going to have trouble identifying the cause of the problem, so they tend to blame insects regardless of whether or not there are any insects there to blame.

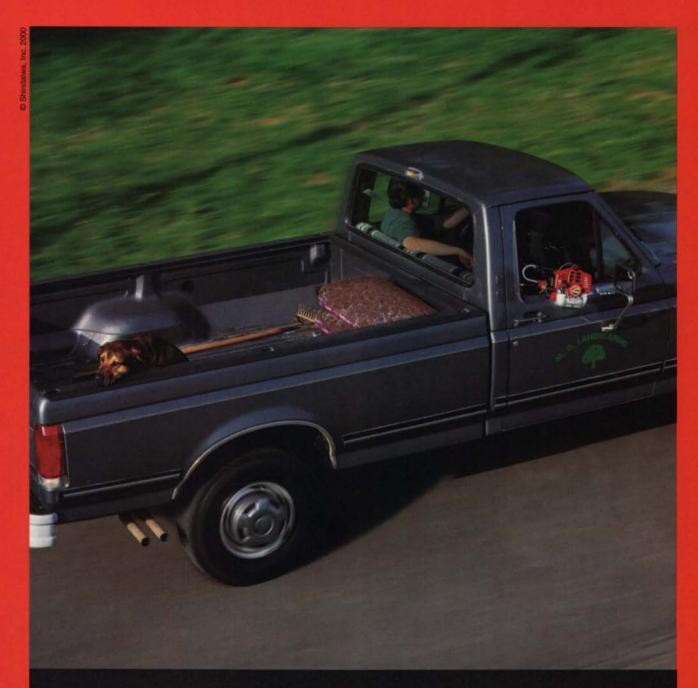
"Then the customer ends up wondering if whoever took care of their lawn knew what they were doing," Robertston continued.

To help facilitate these communications, Robertson said his technicians leave informative materials behind at every property they treat. "

"And we don't offer any money-back guarantees, but we'll keep coming back to the property and re-treating until the customer is satisfied that the problem has been taken care of," Robertson noted. "But the most important part of this customer service is reacting within 24 hours to the customer complaints, getting the product down on the lawn and getting the customer to water it in.

"You just need to make sure the customer sees some reaction so they know you're responding to their concerns," he added.

The author is Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.



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by Nicole Wisniewski

The avenues of purchasing irrigation products are changing, along with the criteria for selecting a good distributor.

When Todd Johnson first started installing irrigation systems 20 years ago, he called a number of suppliers in Ham Lake, Minn., looking for a place to purchase the irrigation products he would need for his business.

"I spoke with various suppliers and some of them didn't give me the information I needed, while others insisted I attend design school first

before buying irrigation products so I would know how to install irrigation systems properly," explained Johnson, owner, D & T Landscape and Irrigation.

Johnson was most impressed with the latter of the two suppliers. "This supplier had its act together," Johnson said. "The education its employees offered me was invaluable."

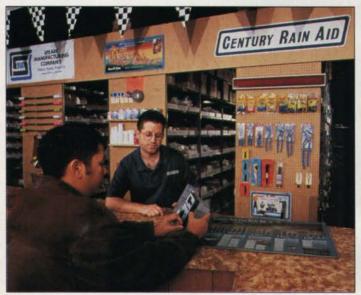
Purchasing irrigation products is not just about buying and selling. Contractors want to rely on their suppliers for education, product knowledge and technical and business training, along with adequate and available supply and consistent and accurate ordering, billing and shipping procedures.

ONE TRUE THING. Generally, Russell Smith, president, Qualitiscape Services, Fort Worth, Texas, purchases his irrigation products from

one major supplier he relies upon for product availability.

"We buy most of our products from one distributor," Smith said.

"Each year we negotiate with prospective suppliers of wholesale goods to ensure we're getting the best available price. We utilize a secondary source who has outlets near our trade area to increase efficiencies for our (continued on page 140)



In a recent irrigation survey, contractors rated product availability and ample product stock as the most valuable benefits distributors offer. Photo: Century Rain Aid



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(continued from page 138)

technicians in the field. By buying in sufficient quantity, we can get the best prices for these supplies."

While price is always important to contractors because they have to remain competitive when charging their customers, the numbers written on the price tags aren't high on contractors' priority lists when shopping for products.

In a survey conducted by Ewing Irrigation, Phoenix, Ariz., customers measured product availability and ample product stock as the No. 1 benefit their distributors can offer them, pointed out Cliff Woodberry, vice president, administration. A technically knowledgeable staff was No. 2 on the list, followed by service accuracy, billing accuracy and, friendly and helpful service. Price didn't appear on the list until No. 6, according to Woodberry.

"We look for distributors who are sensitive and in tune with the state of the industry," related Smith. "We look at the service

nother distributor service emerging in the year 2000 is 24-hour ordering via the Internet.

Ewing Irrigation started selling irrigation products over the Internet two years ago, and last year its online component was updated with an inventory and sales system. Through this system, customers can place product orders 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"Our customers like Internet ordering because of the control they have using it," said Cliff Woodberry, vice president, administration, Ewing Irrigation, Phoenix, Ariz. "What they order online is what they get. There is never a mix up because someone taking the order got it wrong. Ordering online also gives customers the opportunity to buy products at their most convenient time, whether

Purchasing Products

that time is during lunch or at 3 a.m."

While Woodberry said not all customers will embrace this method of ordering products in the next five years, they will eventually have to rely on it in the future.

Bob Hobar, marketing manager, Irrigation Supply. Warrensville Heights. Ohio, said he feels the same way. Irrigation Supply started a web site four years ago. At first, drawing traffic to the site was difficult. Manufacturers weren't linking to Hobar's site because some said they felt that providing him additional exposure wasn't fair to the distributors who weren't online, and some threatened to refuse selling him products if he sold them online. Today, the situation is becoming easier as the Internet becomes more popular.

"Now we run monthly specials online to keep people returning to our web site." Hobar explained. "The Internet is certainly creating a buying fad in the industry. In the future, purchasing products online will hopefully be considered more of a reality than a fad. As long as we keep the site interesting and provide incentive, customers will continue to buy products from us online." - Nicole Wisniewski





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level the distributors are able to provide and whether or not they are willing and able to refer potential customers our way."

Like Smith, Johnson also purchases products from just one distributor whom he relies on for product availability and service. "I believe in building a working relationship with my distributor," Johnson remarked. "I buy my products directly from my distributor and my distributor takes care of me by offering me customer leads."

Despite the fact that many contractors still rely on building supplier relationships and buying directly from that one supplier, distributors said the trend is changing among their customers.

"A contractor typically buys from at least two or three suppliers, depending on how dense the contractor's area is," said Bob Marsan, president, Marsan Turf & Irrigation, San Dimas, Calif. "Some people do buy everything from one place, but, usually, contractors will have a couple of main distributors and then a few back up distributors.

"Sometimes this decision is just based on geographic factors," Marsan continued. "If contractors are traveling 30 minutes to their job sites, they may have two or three normal distributorship locations near their main offices and then a fourth or fifth supplier located near distant jobs in case products are needed more immediately for these jobs."

Selecting the right supplier – no matter how many of them contractors buy from – is different for the professional irrigation contractor and the start-up irrigation contractor, said Bob Hobar, marketing manager, Irrigation Supply, Warrensville Heights, Ohio.

"For contractors who are looking at bids put out by architects and specifiers, there is usually a list of preferred products the architect suggests the contractor use," Hobar explained. "For the small business owner who is installing systems on small residential properties, the criteria for selecting the right product is different.

"Maybe the supplier or product is familiar to the contractor," Hobar continued. "Maybe the contractor's father bought products from a certain supplier for years. Maybe the location is convenient for the contractor. In the past, contractors bought from one distributor and only one. Now with the avenues for finding product information online and through other avenues, more people are coming in and doing more comparison shopping. Customers are looking to get the most out of their investment of dollars and time."

MONEY TRAIN. Most suppliers provide their customers with training and education provided by their staff members or manufacturers they work with.

Hobar will sit start-up irrigation contractors down with his staff for two to three hours for a beginning tutorial, handing out some free pamphlets and information to get them started. These sessions are usually con-



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ducted during the off-season in Ohio - December through March.

"We sell a multitude of products, so we first try to give a generic overview of the industry so contractors can have the ability to choose what they want to purchase," Hobar said. "We want them to buy from us, but we want them to be educated first. In addition to training, we make sure our staff can help them along during the purchasing process."

In addition to product and irrigation installation and troubleshooting training, suppliers also offer business training, teaching contractors how to market themselves and develop quotes and bids. "We put together a number of business development seminars,"

Woodberry said. "We're not only concerned with contractors knowing the technical end of things, but we like to provide them with information that can help them grow their landscape businesses."

This training, Woodberry explained, is free for customers. Ewing Irrigation will attach a price tag to certain seminars as a way to draw more attendance, but in addition to training, contractors usually walk out of a paid session with an incentive product. "If we charge admission, we try to give contractors more in return," Woodberry said. "For example, if we charge \$40 for a seminar, contractors will probably walk out of there with education and a \$65 controller."

Some distributors also offer contractors design services. The contractor pays



provide their customers

with training and

educational

opportunities

taught by their staff or

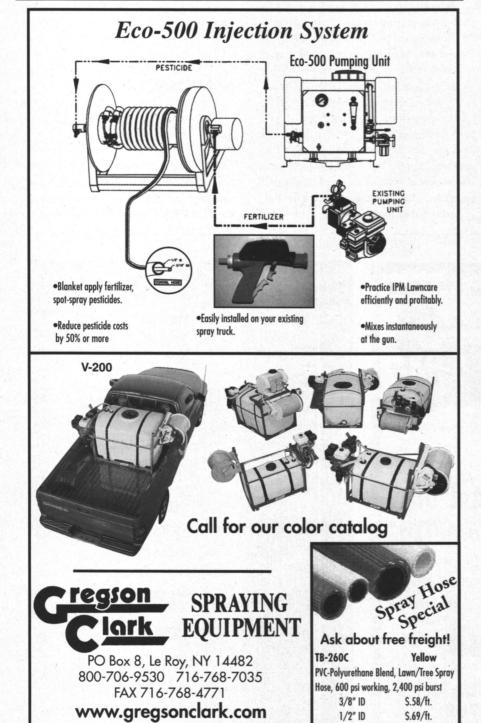
the manufacturers

they work with.

the supplier for the design and buys the equipment from them for the installation, Hobar explained. Then a discount is applied to the equipment purchased, so the design ends up being considerably discounted or free. This service is especially important to contractors who are not fulltime irrigation contractors but who install irrigation systems as a division of a landscape company.

Most training and educational services suppliers offer contractors are available to any type of contractor and are readily used. Still, some contractors suggest suppliers need to advance their training seminars to meet more contractor needs.

"We take advantage of educational pro-



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grams offered by our distributors," Smith said. "Generally, we are satisfied with them, but we would like to see our distributors take training a step further and create trade schools for irrigation technicians and installers."

LEADING YOU ON. Another popular service suppliers offer contractors is help generating customer leads.

Johnson takes advantage of a subscription-based program his supplier offers where he receives a list of all of the new homes being built in the area over a certain price range that may require an irrigation system. He also has the opportunity to access a construction bulletin listing all of the commercial construction projects in the area, and he can go through this bulletin and pick out all of the projects that include an irrigation system.

Hobar also has a board hanging in his office that contractors are welcome to put their business cards on. Homeowners come into his store looking for contractors who can install irrigation systems into their yards. The service is a win-win situation for the distributor and the contractor.

"If we give contractors a lead that pans out, they will usually reward us by giving us their business," Hobar said.

Other distributors, who know their name and reputation are on the line when they forward contractor names to homeowners, are very cautious about who they recommend for irrigation services.

"I only give leads to my best customers," Marsan said. "If a homeowner calls me and tells me the lead I gave them never panned out, I won't recommend that contractor for a job again. I give leads to the contractors who I know will make me look good, too."

Irrigation Supply also provides contractors with the opportunity to market their services by volunteering to staff the contractors' booth at local trade shows. Hobar said this lets contractors interact directly with the potential customers, and all his staff gives up is time spent at the trade show booth.

Another possibility for contractors to generate leads through their irrigation product supplier is getting involved with Yellow Page advertisements the manufacturer places nationwide.

"Manufacturers take out ads in Yellow Pages across the United States," Hobar explained. "We are listed regionally under those ads. And contractors can be listed under the distributor names, as well, for a 60 to 80 percent discount. Contractors get a reduced rate because of the national ad campaign the manufacturer is involved

with. This gives the contractor exposure under a well-recognized brand of irrigation product. We usually supply manufacturers with a list of contractors who may be interested in a service like this."

The author is Associate Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.



USE READER SERVICE #66

Power Blowers

by Cynthia Greenleaf

Improvement

Some see it as an indispensable landscaping tool, while others attack it as an evil intrusion into a peaceful suburban existence. But no matter how it's viewed, one fact is consistent: the power blower and its surrounding controversy is putting plenty of pressure on the equipment industry to meet both regulations and consumer expectations. The law of evolution applies here – adapt or else. Matt Wilson, technical service manager, Maruyama U.S., based in Redmond, Wash., summarized the situation succinctly: "You've got to do something or give up on the market."

rhe debate update. The power blower issue is as contentious as ever, despite what some had hoped. "Two or three years ago, no one was paying attention to this," said Robin Pendergrast, vice president of the International Marketing Exchange, McHenry, Ill., and a leading advo-

cate for the power blower industry. "Contractors and manufacturers thought it would blow over."

Ouite the opposite. One of the most recent bans

Quite the opposite. One of the most recent bans (continued on page 146) Facing pressure
from increasing
regulations
and a
mounting
opposition,
equipment
manufacturers
are taking
steps to make a
better power
blower and
encourage
proper use.

In response to increasing pressure to reduce operating noise, equipment manufacturers are lowering the decibel levels of their power blowers. Photo: Maruyama

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Power Blowers

(continued from page 144)

was just passed in Palo Alto, Calif., where all gas-powered blowers in residential areas have been outlawed, effective July 2001. Under the ban, which Pendergrast said he considers an especially devastating blow for blowers, only electric blowers are permitted during restricted hours. "This ordinance is not going to be overruled," he said, noting that the city has been contemplating a ban for the past decade and did not outlaw blowers impulsively. "And if a ban can happen in Palo Alto, it can happen anywhere."

Randy Haslim, vice president – technical for Tanaka, Kent, Wa., agreed. "The 'no blow' movement is going to continue to grow – there is no doubt," he said. This fact has become increasingly clear to manufacturers, who are scrambling to make their power blowers more earth- and, especially, earfriendly while trying to maintain commercial and cost effectiveness.

(continued on page 148)

Il too often, blowers have been cast as noisy villains in neighborhoods across the country. One way to improve this often unfair image is by encouraging proper, courteous use. Nine tips to remember:

- **1.** Don't run your blower at full throttle. Blowers should be run at the lowest possible throttle speed that gets the job done.
- **2.** Don't use your blowers early in the morning or late at night. As a general rule, operate your blower in residential areas only at reasonable hours of the day.
- **3.** Don't blow debris onto adjacent properties, streets, vehicles, people or pets. Clean up promptly and properly.
- 4. Keep blowers at least 10 feet from doors or windows.
- **5.** Only operate one blower at a time on small residential sites. Even two quiet blowers operating simultaneously will generate excessively high noise levels.
- **6.** Use a rake or broom to loosen heavier debris. Do not use blowers to move large debris piles from one spot to another.
- 7. Use the full nozzle extension so the air stream can work close to the ground.
- **8.** Check the muffler, air intakes and air filters often to make sure they are working properly.
- **9.** Slightly dampen surfaces or use a mister attachment if conditions are very dry and dustv.

Mind Your Manners

Information courtesy of the Portable Power Equipment Manufacturers Association

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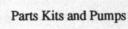


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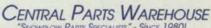
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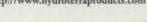
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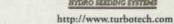


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Power Blowers

(continued from page 146)

BUILDING A BETTER BLOWER. Reconfiguring blowers to meet both regulatory, consumer and commercial contractor demands is a challenging task. One of the primary concerns is maintaining a powerful air force, which is inherently noisy, while reducing the decibel level at the same time. "How do you generate enough cubic feet

per minute and miles per hour to do the work that's required at a quieter level?' This is the big question," said Kim Liechty, Husqvarna Forest and Garden's director of engineering.

This question can sometimes be an issue of compromise, pointed out Marty Koval, director of U.S. sales for Shindaiwa, Tualatin,

Ore. "There are always tradeoffs," he said. For Shindaiwa, reducing noise while striving to maintain performance and reliability at the same time has always been a primary concern, he said.

While Husqvarna, based in Charlotte, N.C., currently has a line of blowers meeting or exceeding Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and California Air Resources Board (CARB) standards, they're always looking to improve. The company has backpack and hand-held blowers in development that will have a dBA rating "significantly below 65," Liechty said.

Another obstacle for manufacturers is user education. In the past, Husqvarna has offered quieter products in its line, but it fell victim to a common misconception, Liechty said. "The user equated sound with power and they just didn't sell well."

Maruyama realized that noise was becoming a serious concern in residential areas about half a decade ago, which was a huge incentive to go back to the drawing board, Wilson said. Like many manufacturers, he added, Maruyama started focusing on how it could reduce noise.

In addition to its landmark 62 dBA packback blower, which has been especially well-received in California, Wilson said, Maruyama will have a CARB Tier II-compliant backpack blower on the market by late fall. The unit is still in the prototype stage with the company aiming to bring the sound level below 60 decibels, Wilson said.

In addition, Tanaka plans to introduce a low noise, commercial backpack blower this spring. "We're targeting 62 dBA," said Haslim, who admitted the company's blower technology was a little antiquated and ready to be revamped.

RedMax, Atlanta, Ga., also has a quieter blower in development. While its current blowers run at 75 or 65 dBA, the company will be introducing a new line of gas-powered products in the next few years, equipped with a lower rpm to bring the decibel level down, said Don Kyle, RedMax's vice president of marketing.

Regarding the issue of power blower performance, the equipment industry as a whole will readily admit that there is still plenty of room for improvement in the machines. "We recognize that blowers need to be

(continued on page 150)



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Power Blowers

(continued from page 148)

cleaner and quieter, and we're working on some solutions," commented Karen Hutchinson, director of operations, Portable Power Equipment Manufacturers Association (PPEMA), Bethesda, Md. "Obviously, the industry wants to be as responsive to these issues as possible. Now, it's just a question of the technology catching up with the demand."

CHANGING THE APPROACH. Without question, proper blower usage goes hand-in-hand with improved blowers. Without responsible operation, an improved blower



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Alternative on the Horizon

y eliminating emissions and reducing operating noise to an unprecedented 56 dBA. Echo's innovative new alternative energy blower is positioning itself as the power blower of the future. In development for the past two years, Echo, based in Lake Zurich, Ill., came up with this electric blower in response to and in anticipation of a need to provide a quieter product with zero emissions, according to Larry Will, Echo's vice president of engineering. Specifically, the company wanted to target individuals affected by the increasing number of power blower bans throughout the United States. "We were looking into the future," Will said. "Our feeling was that if we could develop a product that performs adequately and was attractive financially, we may have a product for those people."

Echo approached the development of this blower with two objectives in mind. The first was a desire to get an even distribution of battery power for a sustained amount of time. "We initially looked at using a lead acid battery, but found that the performance deteriorated as soon as it was drawing power," Will said. Echo then tried a nickel metal hydride battery, which performed better and got consistent voltage. "With the nickel metal hydride battery, the electric blower can run 40 minutes on a charge, compared to one with a lead acid battery that deteriorates after about nine or 10 minutes." he observed.

For the sake of safety and energy conservation, Echo also wanted to control the battery's output, so it equipped the battery with a computer that allows the user to adjust both voltage and rpm.

While the blower's innovation is impressive, the price tag isn't, and Echo

Power Blowers



Equipped with a nickel metal hydride battery, Echo's new alternative energy power blower provides consistent power for about 40 minutes. Photo: Echo

will be the first to admit this. Preliminarily priced at approximately \$2,300, this cost includes three batteries at \$700 each one to use while the other two are recharging. "From an initial cost standpoint, this is not attractive to the professional user," Will admitted. "But if a person wants to use this blower all day. he's going to need a minimum of three batteries."

Will also noted that this new blower is not a replacement for the more demanding clean-ups. "It would be adequate for blowing grass and leaves but not for major parking lots," he said.

With the second generation prototype currently undergoing testing. Echo is still fine-tuning the blower and hopes to have it on the market in five to 10 years, Will predicted. In the meantime, the company is waiting to see if there's enough of a market demand to justify further investment. "I don't know if there will be enough business out there to warrant spending another \$2 million to put this into production," Will admitted. "It's kind of a Catch-22. You have to sell a lot of product to get the price down."

- Cynthia Greenleaf

is fairly useless. Blower manufacturers and industry associations are addressing this issue by educating landscape contractors (See "Mind Your Manners" on page 146).

The fact is that many landscape contractors simply don't operate power blowers in a courteous manner, blasting them at full throttle for hours on end and running them at all hours of the day. The solution, however, is simple. "Common sense will solve the problem all the way around," Kyle said.

PPEMA hopes an instructional video will help the situation. In partnership with the (continued on page 187)



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By Michael Alanson

The A landscape design/build firm creates its own marketing vehicle. A landscape design/build firm creates its own marketing vehicle. A landscape design/build firm creates its own marketing vehicle. A landscape design/build firm creates its own marketing vehicle. A landscape design/build firm creates its own marketing vehicle.

In the real estate game, location is the key to success. Firmly believing that philosophy, Jacobsen Landscape Design and Construction, Wyckoff, N.J., has combined location, attention to detail and a commitment to the community in a successful marketing program centered around its 1-year-old Design Center.

In an affluent area of northern New Jersey, one of the challenges for any landscape company is to stand out from the well-financed national service firms and low-overhead local competitors. Founder and owner Glenn Jacobsen realized that a 20-year reputation, a consistent and well-trained staff and an aggressive sales effort could only take his company so far. And so he created the Jacobsen Landscape Design Center.

"We are always faced with the challenge of differentiating ourselves from our competition and being

> able to spread our design philosophy," Jacobsen said. "One way we found works is to offer a high-profile example of the work we do. The results have been outstanding."

> Since its opening last spring, the Design Center has become a magnet for local and regional clients looking for a little hands-on experience before settling on a landscape design project. The site – located on a corner lot on a busy local road and consisting of a two-story, 3,200-square-foot building surrounded by a garden-like setting



Jacobsen Landscape's investment in its new
Design Center was based on location, quality,
community and visualization of goals.
Photo: Jacobsen Landscape Design & Construction

Design Centers

complete with a pergola, multiple hardscapes and babbling brook – also sends a quality message to passersby.

"We wanted the Design Center not only as a place for clients to see and experience the potential of a landscape project, but for those just passing by to get the feeling of what Jacobsen Landscape is all about,"

Jacobsen pointed out. The existing Design Center is an outgrowth of a smaller version built two miles up the road in Wyckoff in 1993. At that time, Jacobsen was looking for a place to showcase specific examples of his company's work. Having seen an immediate rise in sales that first year, finding the right location before an even more ambitious center took the original center's place was only a matter of time. Now, extensive paver walkways meander through garden settings complemented by landscape architecture, custom-designed water features and specimen plant materials that combine to create

an ideal outdoor showroom.

Jacobsen's landscape niche in northwest Bergen County has always been in high-end residential design/build projects supplemented by residential and commercial maintenance. With its roots firmly established in the local communities, Jacobsen Landscape's significant investment in the Design Center was based on several well-defined goals:

- Location. The new center had to send a
 highly visible yet subtle message to passersby on a main thoroughfare between two
 of the most affluent towns in the area.
- Quality. The center had to attract highend, demanding customers who would respond to the facility's professionalism.
- Community. The center would serve as a meeting place for local civic organizations to hold functions, spreading the Jacobsen Landscape name beyond its immediate customer base.
- Visualization. The center would be a place where customers could select the materials and designs for their properties.

The building also houses the company's administrative offices and design staff, mak-

ing it an ideal location for client meetings. With Jacobsen Landscape's shop facility right around the corner, housing all landscape equipment, nursery stock and landscape materials, the highly visible new building has drastically increased the company's market exposure.

Since its opening last spring,

the Design Center

has become a magnet

for local and regional clients

who are looking for a little

hands-on experience before

settling on a landscape design project.

Like the much-smaller initial Design Center, results measured in the first year of the current center's operation have been immediate and remarkable. "Thirty-nine percent of our sales leads from February through November last year came from people who said they saw or visited the Design Center," Jacobsen said.

This exceeds the numbers resulting from other lead generators, such as previous customers (19 percent of leads), Yellow Pages ads (19 percent) and referrals (15 percent).

"You can't argue with those numbers," Jacobsen pointed out, adding that the company was running 21 percent ahead of the previous year's sales and 3 percent ahead of its sales goal as its fiscal year closed.

The marketing challenge ahead is to maintain these numbers. Jacobsen said he saw similar initial results with the original Design Center, but those numbers admittedly lessened over time as the novelty and newness of the site waned.

"We learned that we have to make the effort to continually draw people to the center," he said. "Since we are not a retail establishment we have to give clients a reason to



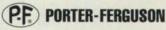
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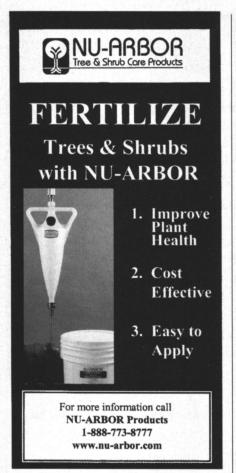
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Design Centers

stop by. We are determined not to just become part of the area's local scenery."

With that goal in mind, there has been a significant marketing effort for the new Design Center, even during its first year, when traffic comes easily. One strategy has been to promote community goodwill, and already in its short existence the center has hosted local garden club meetings, the Midland Park Chamber of Commerce holiday party and a fall festival to benefit a local children's charity (see sidebar on this page). Last fall, one of the company's staff members, Jody Shilan, taught a series of adult school courses in outdoor enhancements at the Jacobsen Landscape Design Center.

Jacobsen admitted there is a significant investment in maintaining such a high-profile marketing program, well beyond the initial investment in time, energy and, of course, money. The site is treated almost as a regular customer, with a dedicated weekly maintenance schedule for Jacobsen Landscape crews to keep up and improve the property. There is also an on-site manager responsible for upkeep, including special projects like an impressive holiday lights display that lit up a previously unimproved corner of town.

"We like to think of ourselves as good neighbors who happen to run a landscape design business," Jacobsen said. "And since we are a landscape design company, we have the ability – and the obligation – to present an attractive look to our community. We are able to do that everyday through the Design Center, and our customers have responded."

The author is editor of Jacor Publications, Midland Park, N.J.

Clowns, Llamas & Landscape Marketing

ct. 16, 1999 was one of those beautiful early autumn days in northern New Jersey, and at the Jacobsen Landscape Design and Construction Design Center, that Saturday morning also brought the mewing of a llama and the popping of popcorn during the inaugural Jacobsen Landscape Fall Festival.

Designed as a high-profile way to attract people to the new Design Center, the combination of aggressive advance marketing, beautiful weather, a petting zoo and a MoonWalk situated on the corner of the property attracted more than 500 people throughout the day.

Organized in conjunction with The Depot, a non-profit women's exchange and gift shop in town, the event raised money for the Family Counseling Service in neighboring Ridgewood, N.J., in addition to boosting Jacobsen Landscape's profile.

Unanticipated benefits of the event were the team building and camaraderie that developed among the Jacobsen Landscape staff, which was responsible for all the event planning and implementation. Staff members actually volunteered their time and effort to make the day a success.

"The investment in the event was substantial, but being able to offer such a fun day to our community was immeasurable," owner Glenn Jacobsen said. "We were able to donate a sizeable check to charity and we can directly track new business to leads we received during the event." – *Michael Alanson*

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Performance Standards

By Ralph Nicolsi

budgets, but all customers have similar goals. They want their properties to look good, and they want services at a reasonable price. Very few of them, however, share a common understanding of precisely what is included in grounds care and landscape services. Does spring clean-up work include bed definition, cultivation, new mulch and pre-emergence herbicide application, or does in only involve leaf and debris clean-up? Does mowing include sidewalk edging on a monthly schedule or after every mowing visit? Are lawn fertilizations three, four,

> These questions can go on endlessly, and unless there are established guidelines spelling out the details of your services in a grounds care program, you will never know what customers expect because they won't know what to expect either.

> five or six applications? Do flower installations involve soil prep, deadheading and watering or

> How many times have potential clients dismissed your company's landscape maintenance bids as "entirely too high," when other clients have readily accepted your pricing on comparable projects? And how many times have you had customers besiege your office with calls complaining about your performance on their properties while other customers remain completely satisfied with the

same services you're providing for them?

All customers have unique personalities and

Establishing formal performance specifications can be a benefit for both selling and training purposes.

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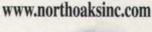
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Performance Standards

specifications are simple statements of what will be done, when it will be done and how often it will be done. They provide a level playing field on which "apples to apples" bid comparisons can be submitted and assessed. They also help to increase consistency in job performance and they align results and cost expectations of contractor and customer.

While nearly all property and facility managers have detailed specifications for every major maintenance line item, from asphalt to carpet to roofing, few, if any, have their own company-wide landscape or

All customers have

unique personalities

and **budgets**. But,

customers all have

similar goals. They

want their properties to

look good, and they

want services at a

reasonable price.

grounds maintenance guidelines and specifications. Similarly, homeowners don't prepare bid packages for prospective grounds care contractors.

Contractors need to provide detailed and articulate specifications for each and every service that you offered. Specifications are the blueprint for your business operations. From these specifications by which your company operates, you can develop a brief description of services that will enable you to better communicate with your customers.

Well-written, internally developed standards should be the foundation on which your company's training, operations and sales efforts rely. These standards provide points of reference for teaching new hires the elements of your business and how you want your business to operate. They also serve as benchmarks against which you can

Basic Qualitie Performar

Il performance specifications should share the following basic qualities.

- · Clarity. Specifications should be straightforward, clear and easy to understand. They should be written using simple words and sentences that accurately describe the services offered. Minimize technical terms and phrases wherever possible. While isopropylamine salt of glyphosate may get the job done, "herbicide" makes more sense to the reader. On the other hand, don't shy away from using professional terminology where its use is warranted. Anti-desiccant will be sprayed on all shrubs before transplanting to minimize water loss. After all, in addition to selling your customers, your goal is to educate them.
- Performance specifications must be thorough and complete. All aspects of the services you provide should be addressed to some extent. For example, let customers know that lawns will be cut at a specific height and spell out the proposed schedule and duration of the mowing agreement. Include in the description edging and trimming specifications and note that you blow clippings

judge and compare the quality and completeness of your employees' work. After all, how can you be critical of the work your field personnel are doing if you don't tell them exactly what you expect them to do?

In addition, performance specifications can help refine your cost estimating by estab-

Performance Standards

nce Standards

from sidewalks and parking lots if, in fact, these are part of your services. State clearly the number of times you will perform all of the individual services. For example, all planting beds will be mechanically weeded every week for a total of 26 times throughout the growing season.

- · Accuracy. Information contained in the specifications should be technically accurate and reflect sound horticultural and agronomic practices of the region in which your company operates. Keep specifications current as you develop new practices or implement new equipment and products. If your sod specifications still call for a routine application of agricultural limestone at 50 pounds per 1,000 square feet or if your pruning specifications still include topping, then a review of your programs is long overdue.
- · Flexibility. Service descriptions should never convey an "all or nothing" proposition. They should be developed and written to accommodate your customers' various needs. You can't be so flexible as to compromise your reputation, your professional standards or disrupt your daily business, but you can offer varying levels of services. That isn't to say that you mow half of the lawn: of course, there are services you can never alter or modify.
- · Specifications should be professional in appearance and content. Although they don't have to be designed by a graphic artist and printed on parchment paper, they should be professional and well organized. A simple word processing program will enable you to tailor an inexpensively produced and attractively formatted document that can be printed on your company stationery as part of your sales and presentation package. - Ralph Nicolosi

lishing definitive parameters for the many variables involved in the bidding process.

Sharing with your customers an abbreviated version of your performance specifications that describe your services will speak volumes about your company. They support the fact that as a professional in the field, you are trained, experienced and knowledgeable in what is largely an unregulated industry. These specifications commu-



USE READER SERVICE #77



Performance Standards

nicate that you have put forth thought and effort in your business and that you clearly understand the services you offer. Furthermore, spelling out exact plans and sharing this with customers demonstrates a willingness to subject your work to their scrutiny.

Finally, telling a customer what is included in your services often helps justify

Well-written

internally developed

standards should be

the foundation on

which your company's

training, operations,

and sales efforts rely.

your pricing by assigning value to these services. And explaining what is included in your services presents the opportunity to negotiate the extent and types of services if what you originally proposed is more than what the customer wanted.

Performance specifications must, of course, reflect varying climates and regional cultural practices throughout the country. In Texas, Bermudagrass is cut 43 times during a season at a 1-inch height, and in Michigan, Kentucky bluegrass is cut 26 times at a 3-inch height. Control measures for white grubs in Indiana will differ from control measures for mole crickets in Florida, Likewise, the timing and application rates for pre-emergence weed control in Ohio will vary from the timing and rates in the transition zones.

Performance specifications in and of themselves won't double your business overnight or entirely eliminate customer complaints. The operative word is, and always will be, "performance." Once you've said

what you are going to do, you need to follow through and do those things on time, efficiently and well.

Using performance specifications, however, will enable you to communicate with your customers more efficiently. And by doing so, you are more likely to minimize misunderstandings and misinterpretations about bids or job performance. Furthermore, these standards will enable you to educate your customers why certain practices or services are necessary to properly install and maintain their landscapes. Educated clients are valuable assets.

Adopting performance specifications, scopes of work, grounds management guidelines or landscape standards, by whatever name, will reflect favorably not only your company's reputation, but on the reputation of the landscape industry as a whole.

The author is with Commercial Landscape Management and Consulting, Columbus, Ohio.

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Marketing Methods

by Clint Pollard

A few minutes spent planning can help make a basic ad stand out from the rest.



PLAN

For more than 100 years, the Yellow Pages have been helping people do business. They are an essential part of today's business environment. When you factor in the high cost of advertising in mediums like newspapers, television and outdoor billboards, the Yellow

Pages can be a reliable, effective and affordable advertising method.

Currently, 53.1 million potential buyers consult the "Landscape Contractor" heading in the Yellow Pages each year, making it the 59th most-referenced heading out of 4,200. "Lawn Maintenance" is 77th, with 39.3 million references.

What does this mean to the landscape industry? This means the Yellow Pages remain one of the most powerful mediums available to help contractors reach potential customers. Small and large landscaping companies have proven they can gain new business by advertising in the Yellow Pages.

Still, in many ways, these thick phone books are misunderstood. Simply put, many business owners advertise in the Yellow Pages because they think they have to. Often, they see these ads as just another expense—like taking inventory or stocking shelves. What many advertisers don't realize is that Yellow Pages advertising is more than a cost—it's an investment. With more than 17 billion references made to the Yellow Pages annually—90 percent of which result in a purchase—Yellow Pages advertising remains one of the most effective growth

Marketing Methods

engines available to business owners.

Let's take four of the most prevalent myths and break them down:

Myth No. 1: "Yellow Pages advertising really only works for big, national companies. I own a small business. I can't compete with large, national companies advertising in the same markets."

Fact: Sixty-one percent of consumers looking for a landscape contractor in the Yellow Pages are looking for a local business. Highlighting your "local advantage"

-your years in the community and accessibility - is crucial.

Myth No. 2: "People already know who they want to call before they reference the Yellow Pages. They're just using the Yellow Pages to find the phone number."

Fact: While people might know what they want to buy, they don't often know where to find it or which business to buy it from. The information contained in your ad – the unique services and products you offer, your hours of operation, your location and other features that set you apart from the competition – can make the difference in a customer's decision. Studies show that seven out of 10 people are in a "decision mode" when they reference the Yellow Pages and that 70 percent of consumers use the Yellow Pages to get new ideas for what they need.

Myth No. 3: "People only use the Yellow Pages for price-comparison shopping."

Fact: Only 13 percent of consumers look in the Yellow Pages for price listings. Forty-six percent look for store hours and 33 percent want to know what products and services your business offers. In other words, while price is ob-

viously important, it is not the only

element to include in your Yellow Pages ad and not the only information your potential customers want. Research data proves customers looking for a landscape contractor want convenience, reliability, reputation and special services. While your competitors might offer lower rates, you can win business by incorporating this kind of information – along with prices – into your ad.

Myth No. 4: "With so many ads already under my heading, mine will just get lost in the shuffle."

Fact: People use the Yellow Pages as a "search engine" to shop around. Research shows they don't simply turn to the first, most colorful and eye-catching ad they see. In fact, 62 percent of consumers look at more than one ad when they reference the Yellow Pages. On average, customers will look at 5.3 ads before deciding who to call. And how do they make that decision? According to research, 79 percent of consumers want more information from Yellow Pages ads.



Marketing Methods

Yellow Pages ads reach a broad range of undecided customers who can be swayed by what they see in the ad. Developing an ad that provides consumers with the information they're looking for will keep your business from getting lost among your various competitors' ads.

This can be done in a number of ways. Here are some ideas:

- Put ideas in your ads: There's more to an ad than just phone numbers and addresses. Give potential customers ideas. For instance, suggest how often and what time of year homeowners should aerate their lawns.
- · Advertise under multiple headings: Research shows that consumers that use the Yellow Pages often reference more than one heading. In fact, 21 percent of consumers

reference at least two headings before finding what they want. Advertising your business in more than one place increases the chance that someone will see your ad and contact your business. For example, if you specialize in floral landscaping, advertise under the "Florists" as well as the "Landscape Contractors" heading. Also, if you provide services relating to lawn care, advertise under "Lawn Maintenance."

• Include information your customers are looking for: Naturally, your business' phone number and address are crucial information to include in your ad. But consumers are looking for such information as office hours, detailed information about products and services, directions and maps, prices, years in business, payment options and

unique offerings and specials. Provide details about anything that sets your business apart from the rest. For example, if you offer special rates during a certain time of year or if you offer new homeowners a discounted price, list the different rates in your ad.

- · Offer tips and advice: Include advice or tips in your ads, such as listing the best flowers to plant in a shady area of your yard.
- · Highlight unique services and products: Design your ad so it features and calls attention to the unique services and products your business provides. For instance, if you specialize in xeriscaping, detail the specific services you offer and their benefits.

The author is executive vice president - marketing for the Yellow Pages Publishers Association.

Posted on the Bulletin Board

Lawn and landscape professionals have traditionally found that the best ideas come from each other. The Bulletin Boards at Lawn & Landscape Online (www.lawnandlandscape.com) are a free opportunity for contractors to share questions and answers on key business issues. Following is one such conversation relating to advertising:

SNAGGER: What is average percentage of what you gross a year that you should spend on advertising. For example, if a business grosses about \$100,000 a year, how much should it spend on advertising? I heard you should spend 2-4 percent of your gross sales on advertising. Is this accurate?

THEPOGO: I guess it depends on how you are advertising. I have never advertised in the phone book, but I have spent about \$1,000 on flyers to pass out. I am curious how the phone book ad works out for a mowing company

LLGUY: Has anyone had much success telemarketing for new customers?

SOUTHSIDE: I found advertising in the newspaper a waste of time as it only just

pays for itself. Yellow Pages is the only way to go. I use a display ad, and, while it is pricey, we would have gone broke years ago without it. Our ad cost \$2,000

EARTHWORKS: Get in the Yellow Pages. I spend as much there as I can afford. Of course, word of mouth is the best advertising, but you don't want potential customers looking at someone else's better-looking ad when they are looking for your name. I have always gone with the notion that any advertising is money well spent as long as it works. Start asking new customers how they found you. What they tell you may surprise you. I try to never cut corners on any jobs and it usually pays off with referrals. I have advertised in service directory in newspaper with some success. I noticed that jobs that came from newspaper ad were generally smaller than those from Yellow Pages

SNAGGER: I am really interested to know what the average amount of money a business should spend in relation to what it grosses in advertising? Is it normal for a business to spend 4 percent of its gross in advertising, or is that too much/too little?

ANDREW: I don't know the average percentage a business spends on advertis-

ing. All I know is that a decent sized, color ad will pay for itself on the first sale. I wouldn't be without a Yellow Page ad.

NILSSONASSOCIATES: Think "outside the box" as to ad percentages because there really is no set standard. Ask what you're trying to accomplish and how much more sales you want to generate. Eighty percent of new business will probably come from referrals, but early start ups should focus on lead generation to build a base and get referrals.

KYLE35: What I have learned about marketing is that you should look at return on investment. For example, if you spend \$100 on an ad and from that ad you pick up a new client that spends that much. Then everything else that comes after that first job is pure profit. So don't just look at the percentages - track the results. And always remember that if you do good work you will get referrals.

BUNNYHARTMAN: I am a small operator. All of my 110 customers came from referrals. I ALWAYS ask where they got my name, and I always send the referring customer a check for \$5 with a note 'Thanks for the referral.'

Implementing systems

to accurately control

Photo: The Toro Co.

labor and equipment costs

is one recommended strategy

for delivering accurate bids.

By Jim Huston

Have you ever met a potential client, walked the property and submitted an estimate that you knew was actually going to result in a non-profitable job? Probably not. But the odds are pretty good that you have submitted estimates that you thought were going to result in a profitable job and ended up costing you money instead.

In fact, most landscape companies have had their share of bad jobs throughout the years, and these jobs are generally the result of honest mistakes. As long as the company takes the time afterward to identify the mistakes that were made and ensure they aren't repeated, the problem is generally solved.

The real problems occur when contractors don't realize they are making bidding mistakes. All these companies know is that each year ends with less money in the bank than expected. These companies are heading down the road to ruin.

Businesses usually become dysfunctional for one of two reasons:

- 1. There is a serious (perhaps even fatal) flaw in the estimating system regarding:
- · General and Administrative (G&A) overhead recovery
 - · Estimating and tracking equipment use
 - · Estimating and handling field labor
 - Personal pride interferes with implementing sound business principles and practices daily.

SEVEN SCENARIOS. The following seven scenarios illustrate the most common mistakes contractors make. I have labeled them as follows:

- · "Iron Man" Mike
 - · The Sugar Daddy High
 - · Too Much Caffeine (or Testosterone)
 - The Vampire Syndrome (continued on page 164)

A landscape
job can be a
disaster
waiting to
happen if the
price is
estimated

incorrectly.

Bidding Bidding

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FIVE-MINUTE BRIEFINGS TURN INTO HOURS OF SAFETY

Taking time out of the work day to talk may be perceived as being unproductive, but taking just five minutes to review basic procedures can help create a safer, more efficient workplace. Managers can hold brief, informal meetings right at the tailgate of work vehicles before sending workers out on the job. ALCA's Toolbox Talks, located in the Weekly Features section, provides managers with topics for these meetings. Focusing on driver safety, topics for March include backing techniques and defensive driving.

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to support proper growth? Find soil temperatures for several locations across the U.S. in TechNotes from Novartis Turf & Ornamental Products, a Weekly Feature on our site. Locate the Weekly Features section near the bottom of our home page and click on the listing for TechNotes to find this valuable data to help with your seasonal planning.

The online LawnStore inventory is growing faster than a well-fertilized lawn. The product selection has expanded and increased since the store's grand opening in January. This growth has been fertilized by the addition of several publications, new software programs and new store categories. Visit https://www.lawnandlandscape.com/lawnstore.asp to find a vast inventory of industry products to help you run your business. Remember: The LawnStore is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year (actually 366 days this year)!

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Please visit http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/signup.asp to be added to our growing subscriber list.



(continued from page 162)

- Ego-mania
- Looking for "Foxes" in All of the Wrong Places...
- In God We Trust (All Others Use Purchase Orders)
- 1. "Iron Man" Mike (Mike is not his real name). There was a construction company that intended to employ enough field labor for approximately 50,000 field-labor hours for the year. Total equipment costs were estimated at about \$450,000 for the year. Indirect G&A overhead was estimated at another \$300,000.

For bidding purposes, direct costs (material, labor, labor burden and subcontractors) were included in the bid at cost. Equipment costs were combined with G&A overhead and added to the bid at \$15 per estimated field-labor hour (\$450,000 equipment costs plus \$300,000 G&A overhead, both divided by the 50,000 projected field-labor hours).

There was one fatal flaw in the process -

equipment costs were not bid based on what would be needed for the job. All equipment costs were averaged and bid at the same rate for all jobs regardless of how much equipment was required for each particular job. Jobs requiring nothing more than pickup trucks and wheelbarrows were billed the same (\$15 per hour) as projects needing skidsteers, trenchers and backhoes.

Too many contractors estimate jobs this way. The consequences are subtle and eventually can be disastrous. Labor-intensive jobs requiring only pickup trucks and wheelbarrows are estimated far too high with inflated equipment costs. Subsequently, you do not get these jobs in a competitive market because your price is too high.

Equipment-intensive jobs charge too little for equipment costs. Because the bids are underpriced, you get these jobs. And you keep getting them. The result is that you are using all of your equipment but you are charging your customers for only a fraction of its actual cost.

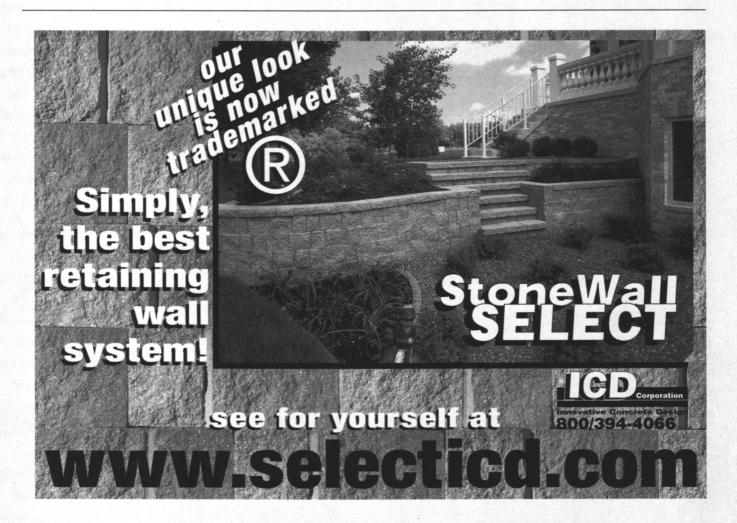
Two things need to happen in order to correct this scenario:

• Equipment bid into every job should be bid the same as you would bid labor. Equipment should be included in bids only as the job requires it.

Actual use, in hours, should be multiplied by a predetermined cost per hour.

- Equipment usage must be monitored through job costing on a job-by-job basis.
 This will ensure that equipment costs bid into specific jobs are compared to actual equipment costs.
- 2. The Sugar Daddy High. A commercial landscape and irrigation contractor and a large homebuilder developed a close relationship. The homebuilder provided the landscape and irrigation contractor with more than \$1 million of work annually.

This contractor was the envy of other



contractors in his market. The pricing of the work was reasonable. The builder paid the contractor within 10 days of being invoiced. Yet, the contractor managed to go broke. Why? For a couple of reasons:

· There were no internal controls.

Jobs were bid accurately and competitively, but they were not job costed. Effective planning and quality control wasn't used in the field. Crews were not directed properly and the client's problems were not addressed quickly and effectively. As a result, jobs dragged on as crews did not develop a sense of urgency to complete them.

The company kept digging itself into a larger hole as it scrambled to "rob Peter" bill new work - to "pay Paul" - pay off bills for jobs completed six to 12 months ago.

· The landscape and irrigation firm became a captive subcontractor.

The consequences were inevitable. Eventually, the contractor relinquished control of his company to the builder.

The builder began dictating schedules and precluded the landscaper from working for other clients. The home builder began to ask the contractor to do a few free "favors" (i.e. landscape his home, his secretary's home, etc.). The homebuilder also did not expect to be charged for legitimate extras.

When the economy in that area went into recession and the home builder had no work to give to the landscaper, the landscaper, who had not pursued other work, had no other clients to turn to. His cash flow stopped but past-due payables and payroll taxes did not. Because of his entrenched bad habits, he was unable to turn his business around.

My point is this: Do not get intoxicated on a "sugar daddy high." The question is not whether or not you will lose your sugar daddy but when.

3. Too Much Caffeine (or Testosterone). A few years ago, a hard-charging contractor in the Southwest was feeling pretty good about having a year that saw \$1.5 million in gross sales with a net profit of better than 10 percent. He decided to "put the pedal to the metal," so to speak, and grow even more.

He decided he needed a full-time estimator, so he hired one with very little experience. During the next 12 months, sales increased to \$2.5 million. Unfortunately, his bottom line went from a 10 percent net profit to a 10 percent loss even with the increased sales.

What went wrong?

- · Bids were not reviewed. The new, unproven estimator was allowed to bid work without the owner or someone else reviewing his work. This cost the company about \$150,000.
- · Field communication and audit trails were not in place. People in the field made decisions and changed the product without proper approval or documentation from in-



spectors or the owner. One retaining wall had to be replaced at a cost of more than \$50,000.

• Proven systems and office staff were not in place before growth occurred. This company could just about handle the pace of \$1.5 million in gross annual sales. There were problems (the flow of paperwork became congested, job costing was late or not done at all, change orders were not adequately documented, etc.), but these problems were not insurmountable.

Unfortunately, the owner did not try to resolve these problems in his systems before he decided to increase sales. Management was soon overwhelmed, and the company never recovered.

Simply put, the owner did not manage either himself or his company. He thought he could run his company on adrenaline, of which he had plenty.

The moral of the story is: "You take care of the systems and the systems will take care

of you." If you don't, they won't.

4. The Vampire Syndrome. It would be so easy if all you had to do was to put systems and procedures in place and then watch business take off. There is, however, one added ingredient: people.

Some people, if given the chance, could destroy a McDonald's. They would change the menu, eliminate the hamburgers or fire the help. They would find or invent some way to make the operation fail. Show them a hundred times how to do something right and they would change it and do it wrong. They have to do it their way.

Vampires are like that. They love to live in the dark. If you show them the light of day, they immediately run back into the dark and back to their habitual coffins. A coffin is simply a rut with ends installed.

I'm convinced that some contractors are so ego-driven that they deceive themselves. They live in a "coffin" of sorts. The very thought of implementing sound procedures and systems makes them run for cover. No amount of coaching can draw them out of their cavernous lifestyles, and, unlike bats, they cannot see in the dark.

5. *Ego-mania.* A rather large landscape contractor self-destructed. At its height, this firm employed upwards of 500 people. In a well-publicized merger, the company almost doubled in size overnight. This company showed up in markets everywhere.

In their own eyes, top management could do no wrong. Marketing, advertising and obtaining market share became paramount. Size went to their heads. They began to believe all the hype about them. Three years later, the company disintegrated. Why?

Image and marketing became the company's focal point. But the systems necessary to direct and control the company daily were not in place, nor were they developed. Estimating was not well developed. Job costing reports for specific jobs and crucial financial reports were never available.

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- As compared to the auger, which leaves the walls of the hole flat, the spade scores the hole so that the tree enjoys maximum root growth.

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Some employees went for almost a year without knowing for whom they worked or to whom they should report.

In essence, top management did not understand that tried-and-proven systems, combined with bureaucrats and a bureaucracy forced to focus on supporting field operations, is the heart of any good landscape operation.

Forget image and marketing that image if you do not have good systems. Without the proper systems, you will only dig a deeper hole in which to bury yourself.

6. Looking for "Foxes" in all the Wrong Places. A \$4 million landscape construction and services company spent almost four years trying to get an accounting and job-costing system into place. The company went through a couple of software programs and as many controllers and bookkeepers.

It just could not get the system together. The delay cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, most noticeably in the field. The estimator could produce good bids, so that was not the problem. Unfortunately, the field was incapable of bringing in a job on budget or on schedule.

Everyone knew there was a problem, but no one would listen to or implement solutions. Everyone avoided the real problem. Activity, not results, became the focus.

Field production turned into a "Three Stooges" scene because there was not a well-thought out game plan. Operations never improved because there was no job costing to identify specific problems. Labor-hour budgets were not clearly spelled out to field personnel, nor was there any timely, accurate feedback to management or field crews—no scoreboard.

Because of all the confusion and lack of controls, the field superintendent took advantage of the situation, putting fictitious people on the field payroll to the tune of about \$50,000.

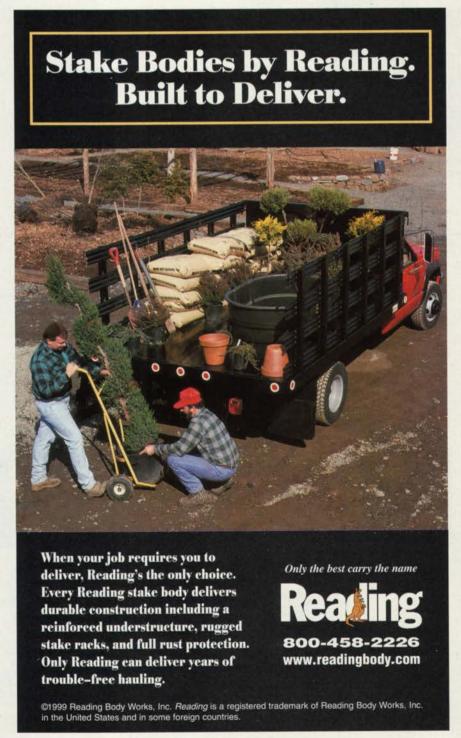
7. In God We Trust (All Others Use Purchase Orders). A landscape contractor was grossing approximately \$500,000 to 600,000 a year in the residential and commercial installation market.

Purchase orders – the paper trail identifying who was ordering what for which particular job – were not used. Nor was a system for job costing in place to compare bid-toactual material costs. Invoices from suppliers were paid without documentation. Blind faith replaced the control that a system of purchase orders would have provided.

Of course, abuse was almost inevitable. Employees ran materials for side jobs through the company and embezzled approximately \$40,000. Had purchase orders been used properly, this problem would have been pre-

vented. The temptation was just too much for employees.

The author is president of Smith Huston, Englewood, Colo., which specializes in consulting to the green industry. He can be contacted at 800/451-5588, shi@smith-huston.com or http://www.smith-huston.com.



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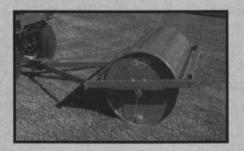


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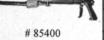




85200 MAG-I List \$ 99.95 Web \$ 75.00



Mighty MAG-I Tree Gun List \$ 150.00 Web \$125.00



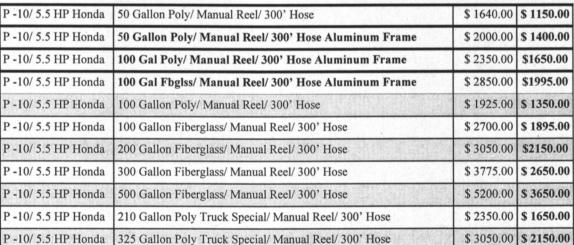
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- Broad-spectrum herbicides Razor and AquaNeat can be used in turf, landscape and golf course management
- · Active ingredient in both is glyphosate
- · Razor created for use in terrestrial applications; Aquaneat de-

signed for aquatic applications

- Both control a variety of herbaceous weeds in dry or wet environments
- Designed for sprayable applications
- · Absorbed through weed leaves
- · Weed control above and below ground

Circle 213 on reader service card







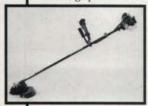
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Mfg. in Dalton, OH

John Deere Brush Cutter, Line Trimmer

- · Powered by two-cycle, M-Series engines designed to run cooler, quieter and with less vibration
- 30.4-oz. fuel capacity
- · Both pieces of equipment weigh 15 pounds and feature harnesses
- · Shock-absorbing grips
- · XT170B brush cutter has bicycle-type handlebars
- · XT170 trimmer has an all-position handle, throttle, grip and wide trigger control



· Safety guard with deflector flap protects operators from flying debris

Circle 215 on reader service card

Tanaka Hand-held Blower

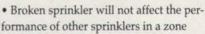
- THB-2510 can be converted into a vacuum with an optional kit
- · Kit is ideal for yard debris pick-up and includes intake tubes, rear handle and debris bag
- Features 24-cc, 1.3-hp engine
- · Air velocity of 134 mph and air volume of 304 CFM
- · Weighs 7.9 pounds and has a noise level of 69 dbA

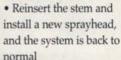
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Whetstone Group 'Slam Shut' Flow **Control Valve**

- · Combination ball valve and retaining stem are installed inside sprinkler riser
- · When a sprinkler head or riser is broken, Slam Shut valve closes instantly
- · A tiny stream of water shoots upwards

to mark the location of a broken head





· Slam Shut works on all

types of sprinklers, bubblers and risers

· Eliminates water waste, flooding and erosion

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- Bottom inlet screen protects the nozzle from clogging

Internal assembly can be removed from the top for servicing or replacement

- Five standard and two low-angle interchangeable, colorcoded nozzles
- Available with a builtin check valve, which holds back



up to 10 feet of elevation change

• Adjustable radius from 22 to 45 feet at an operating pressure range from 25 to 60 psi

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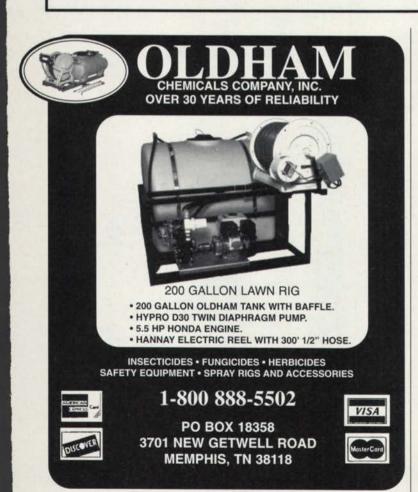
Little Wonder Hedge Trimmers

 Double-edge, gasoline-powered trimmers in 16-, 24- and 30-inch blade lengths

- · High-carbon, hand-finished steel blades
- Blades glide back and forth for vibrationfree trimming
- · Cuts through growth up to one inch thick
- 21.2-cc engine
- Shock mounts for handles and clear front guard for a better view of the cutting blades

Circle 218 on reader service card







Classen TA-25 Split-Drive Aerator



• Two controls on the main handle steer and aerate around corners and trees

• Tines propel the machine for deeper

penetration in soils

- 4-hp engine, removable weight bar, front poly drum and protective chain guard
- Fits through a 36-inch gate

Circle 220 on reader service card

Irritrol 2700 Series Anti-siphon Valves

- New generation of the 700 series
- Come in ³/₄ and one-inch models
- Manual and electric models in three-fourths and one-inch sizes
- Flow range of 5 to 25 GPM
- Flow control for adjustment and manual shut-off
- Built-in atmospheric vacuum breaker rids of back siphonage
- Available with captured-screw or threaded-bonnet cap

Circle 221 on reader service card

Pennington Mohawk Turf

- Bermudagrass variety tolerates cold temperatures
- Available as a single variety or component of the Bermuda Triangle turfgrass blend
- Dark green color

Circle 222 on reader service card

Echo PB-260L Backpack Blower

- Features Echo's low-noise technology in a lightweight design
- Generates a maximum air speed of 155 mph and average air volume of 375 CFM
- · 25.4-cc dual-ring piston engine
- Adjustable, left hip mounted throttle assembly with cruise control

Circle 223 on reader service card

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- · Ideal for watering small grass areas, ground cover or shrubs
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- · Granular biostimulant for root growth
- 25-pound bag
- Incorporates 12 species of Endo and Ecto Mycorrhiza, beneficial fungi
- Helps plants recover from the stresses of transplanting, poor soil and bad weather

Circle 225 on reader service card

Bobcat Landplane Attachment

- 78-inch-wide landscape leveling tool for skid-steer loaders
- Hydraulically activated scarifying with five-inch teeth
- Multi-task screened bottom that acts as a soil loader, sorter and pulverizer

Circle 226 on reader service card

NDS RF Series Root Barrier Fabric

- Promotes healthier root growth by allowing ground water, air and nutrients to flow through the fabric
- SpinOut root regulator coats fabric and suspends lateral root growth while promoting secondary deep

growth while promoting secondary deep root growth

- Root barrier fabric promotes healthier root growth while encouraging secondary deep root growth
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- Allows conversion between bagging and mulching
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- Attachments include 46-inch two-stage snow thrower; 54-inch dozer blade; 47-inch rotary broom and debris blower
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Circle 228 on reader service card

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- 27-hp diesel engine powers the B2710HSD
- Hydrostatic transmission with three-speed engine capable of traveling up to 11.9 mph
- · Four-wheel drive
- · Wet disc brakes
- Standard auxiliary hydraulic block positioned for connecting a front loader Circle 229 on reader service card

Hustler Hydro Walk-Behinds

- Available with deck sizes of 37-, 48- or 54-inches with Kawaski air-cooled engines in 15 and 17 hp
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- 45-hp engine

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Circle 232 on reader service card

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Qualified applicants must have proven leadership abilities, strong customer relations and interpersonal skills. We offer excellent salary, bonus, and benefits packages, including 401k and company paid medical coverage. For career opportunity and confidential consideration, send or fax resume, including geographic preferences and willingness to relocate to: DeAngelo Brothers, Inc., Attention: Paul D. DeAngelo, 100 North Conahan Drive, Hazleton, PA 18201. Phone: 800/360-9333, Fax: 570/459-5500. EOE/AAP, M-F.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Western States Reclamation, Inc. is a sixteen year old landscape, revegetation, and erosion control company in Broomfield, Colorado who is recognized for our excellent work. We seek to fill the following po-

- Project Manager Revegetation/Landscape
- Estimators Senior and Entry Level
- Irrigation Superintendent
- Landscape Superintendent
- Reclamation Superintendent/Foreman

If you are qualified, you will receive above average wages, excellent medical benefits, 401k/profit sharing, company vehicle (Superintendents and Project Managers), relocation allowance, incentive program and working in a great team environment. All positions are full time year round. Check our website at www.WSreclamation.com Send resume to WSRI, 11730 Wadsworth Blvd., Broomfield, CO 80020, fax 303/465-2478.

HELP WANTED - LANDSCAPE

A well established, full-service landscape contractor in Vail, Colorado is seeking qualified Irrigation Technicians, Licensed Chemical Applicator, and foreman for maintenance and construction positions in the spring of 2000. A minimum of two years experience and/or college degree in related fields. Wages commensurate to experience. Room for advancement. Benefits include 4-10 hour schedule, health, dental, 401k, profit sharing, etc. Bilingual a huge plus. Please mail or fax resume to: Johnie's Garden, Inc., P.O. Box 5115, Vail, CO 81658-5115, fax 970/827-5696, phone 970/827-9200.

Call Lori today to advertise! 800/456-0707

IRRIGATION BRANCH MANAGER/ SERVICE TECHNICIANS

Oasis Irrigation Systems, Inc., a well established full service irrigation company in Atlanta, GA and Charlotte, NC seeks energetic, highly motivated, and wellorganized people to join our team in the following positions:

Atlanta

- Service Technicians
- Commercial Foremen
- · Residential Foremen

Charlotte

- Branch Manager
- Residential Salesperson
- Service Manager

If you are qualified you will receive above average wages, excellent medical benefits, relocation allowance, incentive program and working in a great team environment. All positions are full-time and year round. Mail, fax or e-mail resume to:

4958 Winters Chapel Road Atlanta, GA 30360 Fax 770/913-0180 E-mail: 4958Oasis.aol

VEGETATION CONTROL CHEMICAL SALES REPRESENTATIVE

Come join one of the largest Vegetation Management companies in the United States

DeAngelo Brothers, Inc. has immediate openings for Chemical Sales Representatives throughout the United States.

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Please forward resume for confidential consideration, and include salary history and geographic preference in cover letter. Send or fax resumes to:

DEANGELO BROS., INC.

Attn: Charles Sizer 100 N. Conahan Dr. Hazleton, PA 18201 Fax: 570/459-5500 EOE/AAP/M-F

GREAT CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Large Charlotte, N.C. landscape company is seeking highly qualified, self-motivated professionals. Positions include:

- Lawn Maintenance Foremen
- Commercial Landscape Production Manager Send Resume to The Metrolina Landscape Co., P.O. Box 669003, Charlotte, NC 28266 or call 704/392-9501. Fax: 704/394-1405.

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TREE AND SHRUB CARE

Spray Technician/Plant Health Care Monitor. Plant ID and knowledge of insect pests and diseases desirable. Will consider trainee. Work involves insect and disease control on ornamental plants in southeastern PA. This can be a career position or can lead to other positions within the company. Top pay and benefits. Keystone Tree Experts, 215/348-4444 or email to employment@keystonetree.com

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

The Green Plan, Inc., a fifteen year old full service landscape, tree care and irrigation company located at the base of the Colorado Rocky Mountains is continuing to grow and expand operations.

Current Positions Available:

- Chemical Division Manager
- Licensed Tree and Lawn Spray Technicians
- Irrigation Service Technicians
- Landscape Maintenance Foreman
- Landscape Installation Foreman
- Tree Climbers and Bucket Operators

Positions include excellent compensation, year around employment, 401k and full benefits. Immediate openings available with a quality ALCA Member firm. Please forward resume to the fax number or address below.

THE GREEN PLAN, INC.

P.O. Box 17338 Boulder, Colorado 80308 303/938-8230 Phone 303/938-8137 Fax tgp@eazy.net

SALES - TERRITORY MANAGER

Outdoor Power Equipment Distributor seeking highly motivated territory rep for Indiana market. Guaranteed base, commission, 401K, health and dental benefits. Fax resumes to: 800/732-5447.

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POSITIONS AVAILABLE

24-year-old established garden center and landscape nursery on 18 acres experiencing significant growth has positions available in the following areas:

- DIRECTOR OF RETAIL OPERATIONS Senior retail management experience required – Creative vision with an eye to the 21st Century, strong training, supervisory and communication skills needed – help us to expand our product categories, private labeling, E-commerce and more
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- RETAIL SALES Sell all phases of the nursery operation plus all types of garden products and gifts
- TREE AND SHRUB SALES Sell in the nursery retail operation – horticulture experience is necessary
- LANDSCAPE SALES Experienced individual with excellent sales background in the landscape field, good tree and shrub knowledge required, strong ethics
- PRODUCTION PROJECT MANAGERS manage upscale landscape jobs from inception to completion, client customer service skills, ability to read plans, manage crews and possess equipment knowledge
- IRRIGATION MANAGER(S) for installations, repairs and service. Experience in all aspects of irrigation; customer service skills required. Yearround employment

We are looking for talented individuals excited by and dedicated to horticulture with a focus on doing the right thing for the customer and who seek opportunity with a dynamic, rapidly expanding company. We are interested in professionals who are highly motivated and consider themselves self-starters. Excellent benefit package and competitive salaries. Fax resume to Marders 516/537-7023 or e-mail to humanresources@marders.com Bridgehampton, NY. Eastern End of Long Island. Visit our website at www.marders.com GET EXCITED ABOUT GOING TO WORK!

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A DIVISION OF OMNI FACILITY RESOURCES, INC., THE FASTEST GROWING SERVICE COMPANY IN THE INDUSTRY; has career opportunities available for strong management and sales candidates to join our full service landscape team. Offices located throughout the East Coast and the Midwest. SALARY COMMENSURATE WITH EXPERIENCE, PLUS A FULL CORPORATE BENEFITS PACKAGE. CALL 800/462-0343 OR FAX RESUME TO 610/630-1288.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Well-established, full-service design/build firm in Northeast New Jersey has these positions available immediately:

- Irrigation Department Supervisor
- · Irrigation Foreperson
- Landscape Construction Foreperson
- Lawn Maintenance & Turf/Tree Care
 Supervisor

Send resume to Personnel Dept., Jacobsen Landscape Design and Construction, 413 Godwin Avenue, Midland Park, NJ 07432. Call 201/891-1199. Fax 201/ 444-4334.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Nationally ranked 11th full service landscape, irrigation, maintenance, tree care, construction & pool construction company in South & Central New Jersey is seeking career minded, skilled & highly motivated professionals to join its award win-



ning team. Lipinski's goal is to maintain the leadership position in landscape for commercial & residential customers and to redefine the architectural approach in the horticultural industry as a leading technological edge • Landscape Designers • Architects • Salespersons • Landscape Construction Supervisors & Forepersons • Irrigation Service Technicians • Landscape Maintenance Supervisors & Forepersons • Lawn & Pesticide Applicators • Experienced Tree Climbers

Fax or e-mail resume to Katy Kelly – Human Resource Manager LIPINSKI LANDSCAPE IRRIGATION, INC. PO Box 605, Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054

Fax: 856-234-0206

E-mail: katy@lipinskiland.com

EXCITING CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

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Work can be boring – not here – we want professionals who want to use total talents and ideas. If you can communicate, listen, are innovative and compassionate, we are looking for you.

If you want to be part of the management team in a medium sized company that is going and growing and have talent and experience we are looking for the following:

- Construction Supervisors
- Landscape Architects
- Maintenance Managers
- Maintenance Supervisors
- Production Assistants Sales Managers

We have competitive salaries and benefits with a variety of incentives.

Please send your resume and history to: P.O. Box 7166 Libertyville, IL 60048

I.P.M. SPECIALISTS

I.P.M. SPECIALISTS NEEDED for growing full service tree company located in Fairfield County, Connecticut. We are looking for qualified, motivated specialists for year round employment with a starting yearly compensation of \$35,000, depending on experience and qualifications. Will need to have CT supervisory license, Horticulture/Arboriculture degree, or minimum of 2 years experience. Benefits include paid holidays, vacation, medical and dental insurance, 401k plan, mileage reimbursement. Send resume to Bruce S. Pauley Tree Care, Inc., P.O. Box 878, New Canaan, CT 06840 or call 203/966-0869 to schedule interview.

BRANCH MANAGERS/ DESIGNERS/SALES REPS

Come join our sensational Design-Build and Maintenance team. Opportunity awaits talented Branch Managers, Designers and Sales Representatives for our Cleveland and Detroit operations. Great salaries, generous benefits and promises kept. Fax your resume to HR Director 440/357-1624 or call 440/357-8400 ext. 144.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNTIES-CENTRAL NY

IDEAL LANDSCAPES INC., rapidly growing company based in Syracuse, has the following positions available:

- Irrigation Technicians
- Landscape Installation Foreman including brickwork
- Pesticide Applicator
- Landscape and Lawn Maintenance

Send resume with salary requirements and references to P.O. Box 96, Manlius, NY 13104 or fax 315/463-5252. Inquiries kept confidential.

SUPERVISOR POSITION AVAILABLE

Statile & Todd Inc., a Landscape Design and Build firm located in Springfield, NJ is looking for an exceptional individual to supervise the Irrigation and Lighting division.

Qualifications:

- · A minimum of five years experience.
- · Valid New Jersey drivers license.
- · Strong communications skills.
- Knowledge of irrigation systems, designs, controllers, and parts.
- Knowledge of lighting systems, designs, controllers, and parts.

Statile & Todd offers a competitive base salary, paid vacations/holidays, health insurance and a 401(k) package. This is an excellent career opportunity for the right individual.

Fax cover letter and resume to 973/379-5453.

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High-end residential Design/Build firm serving the McLean/Great Falls area since 1978 has immediate opening for experienced Landscape Designer. Applicant should possess strong design skills, creativity, and presentation skills. We offer a \$50K-\$55K benefit package, company paid health insurance, 401K, and excellent working environment. For immediate and confidential consideration please call 703/641-4790, (fax) 703/641-4792, or send resume to Wheat's Landscape Design Centre, P.O. Box 6152, McLean, VA 22106. Visit our web page at www.wheats.com

SUPERVISOR

Fox Tree and Landscape Nursery, located on the beautiful Texas Gulf Coast, is currently seeking an experienced Tree Service and Landscape Maintenance Supervisor and an experienced Nursery Manager. Contact Dan at 361/992-6928, or send or fax resume to: 5949 La Costa, Corpus Christi, TX 78414. Fax: 361/991-7841.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

About our company ...

Mulhall's a leading provider of landscaping goods and services in the Omaha area, has been in the business for over 45 years. We have a staff of 12 landscape designers handling both commercial and residential designs. Our landscape division is supported by a 250-acre nursery in which we grow specimen trees, container trees, container shrubs, and perennials. Our installers and designers work out of a two-year-old facility designed specifically for the efficient staging of landscape projects. We also operate Omaha's largest and most complete garden center.

About the position ...

Omaha's economy has prospered in recent years and as such, larger estates are being built as well as existing homes being rehabbed. We want to add to our design team a person experienced with upper-end projects. The addition of the landscape architect will assist us in consistently turning out top quality designs, through the sharing of knowledge with our design team and through leading the design effort on selected larger projects. Salary in the range of \$60,000 with a competitive benefits package. Send confidential resume and salary requirements to:

MULHALL'S

3615 N. 120th Street Omaha, NE 68164 Attn: Sean Mulhall EOE

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Are you ready for a change? Come join our team in the beautiful southwest. We are searching for top quality people in the following positions:

- Project Manager
- Landscape Designer
- Crew Leaders

Qualified candidates will possess experience in their respective position as well as excellent communication skills, self-motivation and strong desire to succeed. Excellent benefits, profit sharing and relocation allowance. Please mail or fax resume to: Heads Up Landscape Contractors, Inc., 7525 Second Street NW, Albuquerque, NM 87107. 505/898-2105 (Fax)

OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

JOIN THE INDUSTRY LEADER!



We're McGinnis Farms, Inc., a leader in the wholesale distribution of nursery, irrigation, and landscape supplies with current locations throughout the Southeast and South Central U.S. Be a part of our growth as we plan to expand with operations in the West, Southwest, Midwest and Northeast. We are currently seeking industry professionals who want to be part of the excitement of setting new standards of quality and service to the landscape and irrigation professional.

We have opportunities available for:

- Market Managers
- Branch Managers
- Nursery Managers
- Irrigation Managers
- Landscape Supplies Managers
- Account Development / Outside Sales

Ideal candidates are innovators with strong experience in the landscape / irrigation industry, including experience in sales, procurement, and inventory management.

Our comprehensive compensation package includes competitive pay, incentives and excellent benefits including medical, dental, vision, disability, life, and 401k.

Forward resume with salary requirements to:

Human Resources
McGinnis Farms, Inc.
5610 McGinnis Ferry Road
Alpharetta, GA 30005
Fax: (770) 740-8541
Email: resume@mcginnisfarms.com.

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Power Blowers

(continued from page 151)

Bay Area Gardeners Association and the California Landscape Contractors Association, PPEMA's video, slated for release this spring, will address all aspects of proper blower operation—from routine maintenance and safety procedures to proper protective gear and usage etiquette. The video also will include a test so contractors can make sure their employees are getting the message.

Raising conscientiousness takes time, but the industry is gradually getting there. "A lot of contractors have become painfully aware of the noise they create and have taken steps to curb that," said Haslim.

As determined by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standard, the only national standard for measuring power sound, PPEMA also has been working on improving the variables in decibel ratings as well as revising test procedures for greater consistency. As part of that goal, PPEMA is encouraging manufacturer participation in its voluntary labeling program, launched in 1997 that indicates a blower's decibel level directly on the piece of equipment. "We feel that this is something that the industry should be doing," Hutchinson said. These straightforward labeling standards could help cities regulate more intelligently and contractors serve their residential customers more courteously, Hutchinson said. The standards are:

- Category 1 65 dBA or less
- Category 2–greater than 65 dBA or less than or equal to 70 dBA
 - Category 3 greater than 70 dBA

Labeling blowers could put the blower manufacturing industry in a better light. "In the past, we've been seen as a 'Big Bad Wolf,' but this will show that we're trying to do our part," said Nick Jiannas, Stihl's product manager for power tools, Virginia Beach, Va.

For the power blower industry, Hutchinson admitted that the noise issue has taken a backseat to complying with more pressing exhaust emission regulations, namely the EPA Phase II/CARB Tier II requirements.

"Clearly, everyone recognizes that noise is important," she says. "But when you have only so many engineers working on the issue, there are only so many things you can do at once – but we're working on it."

The author is Associate Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

How We Do It

Teaching English as a Second Language

The trend toward a diversified workforce shows no signs of slowing. That means proportionately fewer workers in the green industry speak English. So we at The Care of Trees offer our employees training in English as a Second Language (ESL).

Safety was the No. 1 reason we began our ESL classes. We invest a lot time and effort into safety training for our crews, but if they can't understand the information, the training is pointless.

Relying heavily on input from our bilingual Latino staff, we learned that the most effective ESL program uses instructors who speak only English in classes that are held at workplace locations. Our Hispanic employees also helped pick their ESL provider.

Instructors first familiarized themselves with industry terminology so they could immediately begin safety-oriented classes. From there, they began roleplaying with the employees, creating situations for them to practice client interactions to build their confidence. Many employees knew more English than we thought, but they needed to be more comfortable taking risks and making mistakes.

We pay participants for half the time they spend in

class. Also, if an employee has a perfect attendance record, he or she receives a paid day off.

While there are obvious steps our managers can take to support employees in our ESL program, motivating them to sign up for it can be a bit more challenging. It can be difficult to convince some non-English speakers that learn-

ing the language can benefit them. The greatest motivator is when they see their peers gain new skills and confidence through the program. In our safety meetings, which are taught primarily in English, employees



- Provide the training at your company facilities and at times that are most convenient for your employees, such as right before or after work.
- 2. Offer the training on a shared-time basis.
- 3. Obtain the cooperation of managers to ensure operations don't impede the program.
- 4. Involve employees who have taught themselves English in shaping the ESL program.
- 5. Mark milestones along the way. Look for every opportunity to celebrate your employees' achievements to show you support their efforts.

studying ESL answer questions right away, when before they couldn't. This inspires their peers to consider the program. Because safety is a top priority at our company, we translate into Spanish during meetings, and we provide critical print materials in both English and Spanish.

Our ESL program involves training for our Englishspeaking managers, as well. They participate in workshops on communication strategies, one of which is learning to work with employees with some English-speaking skills. Managers also learn that cultural differences can color their perceptions of employee behaviors.

In the Hispanic culture, a person's identity is very much tied to his or her group. The goal is to avoid standing out from peers. But in American culture, individualism is not only acceptable, but sought after. This difference can cause misunderstandings when managers seek to include Hispanic employees in management decisions. While managers see this as reaching out to employees, Hispanic workers can become uncomfortable at being asked to stand out from their peers.

Similarly, in Latino cultures, even constructive criticism is an affront when delivered in front of others. If an employee is not doing a task correctly, the manager can be far more successful talking with the employee individually. The way the message is delivered is equally important. Telling the employee that a task was done incorrectly, rather than the employee did a task incorrectly, will yield more successful results.

Your clients will also notice the ESL difference. Instead of avoiding contact with clients, your employees will have the confidence and skills to communicate with them. – Scott Jamieson

The author is president of The Care of Trees, which has offices in Chicago, Washington, D.C., and New York.

MARCH 2000



For Tough Turf Tasks.



For more than 30 years, Kubota has been building diesel powered equipment to handle tough turf and landscaping projects.

Kubota M-Series utility tractors, from 47-90 net engine HP, offer a user friendly design and an ergonomically engineered operator platform for comfort and ease of operation. These tractors are powered by quiet Kubota E-TVCS diesel engines. Cab models provide a zone of operator comfort and

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The compact sized B21/L35 TLB's are designed to work in tight places and are easy to transport from one job site to the next with a ³/₄ ton pick-up and trailer. Versatility is provided with Kubota's quick-attach backhoe, Category I, 3-point hitch and rear PTO.

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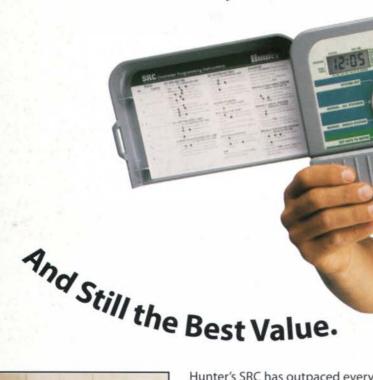


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