

How to Get More Nursery, Ornamental Spraying Contracts

THIS "New Frontier of Ornamental Pest Control" does *not* offer a ready-made opportunity for success to all who venture into this field. Only those operators who offer a convenient and economical service to the customer can hope for success in ornamental pest control. Custom sprayers, tree experts, and others also hope to develop this area.

A pest control operator or contract applicator *cannot* wait for emergency calls, but must seek out business opportunities if he expects to develop a program in ornamental pest control. He cannot expect to make a profit unless he has a considerable number of customers with the same problems, so that servicemen can become specialists and know what they are doing.

Perhaps the easiest way for a PCO to make a transition to ornamental pest control work is to provide this type of service for his present customers. For example, if he has a contract for roach control at a variety-store lunch counter, he might offer a monthly inspection and treatment service for the care of the potted-plant counter at this store.

About 40% of the ivy, philodendron, and other potted plants sold in variety stores are infested with two-spotted spider mites, scale insects, whiteflies, mealybugs, or aphids. These pests destroy \$30 to \$100 worth of plants per year per store and greatly reduce sales, because no one wants to buy sickly plants. Monthly inspections of the potted plants by

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servicemen trained to recognize ornamental pests would require about five minutes per visit, plus an additional ten minutes for treatments when required. This service to the store might net an additional \$2 to \$5 per call to the operator.

This type of inspection and service would also benefit many retail florists, supermarkets, and garden centers that handle plant materials but lack the knowledge, skill, and equipment to take care of their own pest control problems. Most florists with small and medium-sized greenhouses would be much better off if they would let a trained expert handle their pest control problems. They suffer 3 to 10% losses from pests each year because they fail to follow good pest control practices. A pest control operator or contract applicator with a knowledge of greenhouse crops could provide a real service to the floral industry. In fact, contracted pest control is already established in the California greenhouse industry.

Seek Florist, Nursery Jobs

I believe the time will come when pest control specialists will handle most of the pest control work for florists, mushroom growers, nurserymen, greenskeepers, fruit growers, and other horticulturists. These industries can no longer afford amateurs because of the value of the crops concerned

and the hazards involved in the use of highly toxic pesticides.

Even the homeowner will have to face the fact that he cannot afford to endanger an investment of several thousand dollars worth of landscaping by allowing a novice to care for it. However, I think that the homeowner will offer a considerable challenge in selling the idea of contracted control. Probably the owners of apartment developments, factories, offices, etc., are more likely to see the advantages of contracted control at the beginning.

The homeowner is more likely to contact the PCO or CA "after the horse is stolen." A bagworm infestation is not usually reported until the shape of the tree is ruined or the tree is on the point of death. The operator must conduct an educational program in connection with the development of an ornamental pest control service.

One way to approach the homeowner is to establish a clinic for house plants. For example, one day a week he could invite the ladies to bring in their "sick" house plants for treatment. On clinic day the operator could pre-mix 5-gallon pails of "dipping solutions" suitable for the control of the pests of house plants. Even though the ladies would pay a minimal charge for this service, and the spraymen could sell them prepackaged dipping solutions for future problems (these dipping solutions might be packaged in a manner similar to flower seeds, with pictures of types of damage and pests), perhaps the greatest benefit would be that clinics of this type would instill a professional status to the PCO-CA work in the eyes of the house plant owners.

However, the operator must know what he is doing before he can expect to be successful. He must know what plant he is dealing with as well as what pest is attacking it. If the serviceman does not recognize the arborvitae on which the pest is feeding, the homeowner is not likely to believe the serviceman when he says that

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Contract care of ornamental plants is finding ready acceptance among homeowners, and contract applicators can find lucrative sales opportunities for this service among present customers, this article advises. Furthermore, once ornamental spraying is a significant part of the CA's activities, it's natural to add contract nursery spraying to the services offered, author Snetsinger says. Many nurserymen, while experts in horticulture, are not prepared to deal with some insect pests, while spraymen are quite accustomed to dealing with such pest organisms.

Nursery, Ornamental Jobs

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bagworms are causing the damage. Any training program for servicemen must teach the ornamentals as well as the pests. Actually, knowing the host is usually the easiest way of knowing the pest. Each ornamental species has a collection of a dozen or so common diseases, insect and mite pests, and other problems. Thus, knowing the host makes simple the task of determining the problem, be it animal pest, disease, mechanical, or physiological.

Spraymen must sell the idea of an inspection-and-treatment service on a contract basis to be able to really make a go of the ornamental pest control business. Operators must also have contracts with a considerable number of ornamental owners with similar problems. Then one can afford experts on ornamental pest control as servicemen, can establish routes for treating particular pests at the correct season, and can make best use of time and equipment.

Railway Weed Control

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analyze all factors in the contract before accepting it. (Maybe the rig can be leased.) This is big business, but it can bring big headaches as well as big profits!

Railroads have been known to engage CAs to apply materials using the railway's own equipment. If such an opportunity presents itself, it's a good way to get experience.

Local yard and siding jobs offer another relatively safe means to edge into the market. Less chemicals, smaller equipment, and fewer men are necessary for these projects; consequently there is less risk (of course, there's also less profit).

Since so much of this large-scale business is let out on bid, it behooves every operator to have bull's-eye accuracy in cost analysis. A very low bid might get the contract, but fail to show any monetary gains.

Astute CAs who want some railroad business must also familiarize themselves with the labyrinthine purchasing procedures the railroads use. America's freight handlers grew into industrial

giants long before "systems analysis" and "efficiency experts" came around, and sometimes the old methods still persist.

In short, there is no doubt that CAs are presently making money spraying weeds along thousands of miles of tracks. Since contractors account for nearly half the total weed and brush control done each year, opportunities for profit and service abound. But as with any industrial enterprise of such magnitude, the business must be approached carefully, after great analysis and preparation.

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