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We Wonder At The Wisdom

The other day we came across a suggestion that nurserymen and sod growers might find an answer to complaints about rising prices and taxes on land next to cities by taking advantage of those skyrocketing land values and consider their property as an investment that can be sold at a profit.

Since nursery operators grow their crops in moveable containers, and sod growers strip their land, the counselors say these growers don't have to tie up large amounts of money in permanent improvements on their growing grounds. For that reason, the advice is, these growers might well buy land as it starts to increase in value because of city expansion, and plan to sell it a few years later at a handsome profit.

Higher taxes, which go along with rising land values, should not be a serious problem because nurserymen don't need the tremendous acreage and per-acre income is high compared to surrounding farm land, according to R. Bruce Ricks.

Many a nurseryman now feels he must sell when property taxes begin to rise and move to an inexpensive site, the University of California Graduate School of Business staffer commented recently at an industry meeting. Instead, he recommended, nurserymen should buy close-in land which will be converted to urban use more quickly, land which is entering the "predeveloped" stage of rapidly rising values. At first blush this does indeed look like an easy way to make a relatively fast buck. But we wonder.

In the first place, most nurserymen, and sod growers, have a sizeable investment in the cultivation and development of their land. Not all nursery stock is grown in pots, particularly trees and many ornamentals. And sod growers don't yet raise turf on flats. The land on which these growers nurture their crops requires constant, tender care through fertilization, maintenance of the right balance of chemical elements, and irrigation. They do indeed have a considerable investment in their soil. It isn't always easy to find suitable land on the nearby fringes of promising metropolitan areas, nor to change addresses.

The idea of such land speculation is an intriguing one, but we wonder at the relative costs involved in such maneuvering over the finally-to-be-realized profit a grower would get. And, there is always the risk that property values may drop or that projected population movements may not materialize.

WEEDS TREES AND TURF is the national monthly magazine of urban/industrial vegetation maintenance, including turf management, weed and brush control, and tree care. Readers include "contract applicators," arborists, nurserymen, sod growers, and supervisory personnel with highway departments, railways, utilities, golf courses, and similar areas where vegetation must be enhanced or controlled. While the editors welcome contributions by qualified freelance writers, unsolicited manuscripts, unaccompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes, cannot be returned.