

Be Prepared . . .

(from page 6)

the understanding of what possible adverse effects exist.

The anti-DDT people are outrageously off base on this matter of priority. On the basis of questionable adverse effects upon wildlife, they cry for an outright ban at the expense of the very real possibility that one result will be to condemn perhaps thousands of human beings to death.

Because such a warped sense of judgment can develop regarding chemicals, it is imperative whenever a problem does arise to see that it's reported in proper perspective.

Repeating: The cry is for a ban on DDT, although there is not one shred of evidence that any human being has died from the effects of it.

Yet there is another "DDT"—Drunk Driver Traffic—that has been statistically tagged with being directly responsible for killing between 15,000 and 20,000 people in the U.S. every year.

So who's excited? So who has a bill before Congress to ban either alcohol or the automobile?

A chemical public relations program is essential to your business. It must be in depth and overwhelmingly convincing.

It must be capable of overcoming that oft illogical aspect of human nature—emotion—that in the case of DDT has said:

A dead bird in hand is stronger proof than 200 healthy birds flitting in the bush.



Dennis E. Showalter's pen rests on the headquarters site for the park domain that he supervises. Most — but not all of it — is indicated by the shaded patches on the city map of Topeka, Kan. The system includes 59 parks, an 18-hole golf course and 15 lighted ball diamonds.

Dennis Showalter, Topeka Superintendent:

Stretch Resources To Place the Park Where the People Are

By GRIER LOWRY
Independence, Mo.



A massive tornado that swept through the heart of the city in 1966 and an accelerated spread of Dutch Elm Disease have demanded the maximum capability of the city's three aerial bucket units. Cleo Campos is working from the bucket of Reach-All unit manufactured at Duluth, Minn.

TAKING a good basic program and continuously upgrading it usually is a pretty sound success formula for any undertaking. It's the strategy for developing the turf, weed and tree program for the park department in Topeka, Kan.

The park system in this city of 130,000 encompasses 59 parks, an 18-hole golf course, 15 lighted ball diamonds, five swimming pools, three recreation centers, and nine shelterhouses.

It adds up to 1,450 acres to keep looking nice for Dennis E. Showalter, superintendent of parks.

Topeka residents take more than the normal pride and interest in their system. Usage is uniformly high, from the new downtown park near the Capitol and a senior citizen's home to any one of the suburban playground-recreation centers. The task, therefore, for Showalter, who holds a degree in ornamental horticulture from Kansas State University and has had varied experience in several nurseries, is all the

more challenging, demanding and rewarding.

Weeds and turf are thought of together, for Showalter believes the most effective way of controlling weeds is through good turf.

However, in early spring, the park crew of 31 employees does unleash a weed-control program, spraying with the lowest volatile 2-4-D ester on dandelions and other broadleaf weeds.

The low volatile is employed to reduce damage to trees and growth on private property adjoining parks.

Re-Seeds With K-31

When Showalter came to Topeka in 1961, he noticed that K-31 fescue used in re-seeding park areas was developing beautifully. He decided the technique warranted continuance and upgrading.

Poor turf areas are plowed up in late July and August and re-seeded. Weeds not controlled through re-seeding are sprayed in fall and spring. Re-seeding on poorest turf

is conducted on about 200 acres each year.

"It is our experience that if we can get the seed into the ground by Aug. 15 and up past Labor Day, we never have a failure due to hot weather," said Showalter.

"If we have a hot, dry fall and try and get the seed into the ground after Sept. 10, our chances of failure increase. I know most bulletins state that planting this early isn't advisable, but it works for us."

The method includes plowing up the ground with a disk plow if the land is rocky or is full of tree roots, or with a moldboard used on good, open land. The ground is plowed to a depth of about eight inches. A "Rotovator" is employed in the second step to "mix everything together."

A smoothing harrow prepares the ground for actual seeding, accomplished with a "Viking" seeder. About 200 pounds of K-31 fescue per acre is sown. Fertilizing is delayed until a good stand is established, which usually arrives by October.

As a seed, K-31 has numerous cardinal virtues, says Showalter. He points out that the area is in the so-called "Crabgrass Belt," sandwiched between the cool and warm weather grasses. K-31, he says, has proved to be a tough, relatively drought-resistant, easy-to-establish grass, one that withstands the heavy traffic it receives on the ball diamonds. His single qualification: As long as a thick stand is established.

"It is interesting how K-31 changes by the second year of growth," Showalter notes. "The first year it is usually fine-bladed. But the second year, it often starts to get a little coarse."

"I think you'll find more and more institutions, including schools, and more homeowners, turning to K-31."

"It responds well to fertilization, yet it gets along well without it. One drawback is that the grass during May grows rapidly as it shoots up its seed head. This means a lot of mowing, at least once weekly. So May is the month when things get pretty frantic around the city park department."

Re-seeding is done by a crew of three or four men, all classified as equipment operators and all with grass-seeding experience. Driving a straight line with the tractor, with no doubling-back, skips or gaps, is regarded as part of the good re-seeding technique.

An entire park is seldom re-seeded, chiefly because the park people don't want to deprive youngsters of



Leonard Cutting has variety in his work — some 400 varieties of trees and shrubs in the city's arboretum. The home, part of the six-acre park and two-acre arboretum, is the Ward-Meade mansion built in Civil War days. It overlooks the Kaw River and is now the center for garden club and conservation meetings.

the entire play area. The usual plan is to re-seed one third or half of a park in one season.

Some areas of the system, such as the golf course fairways, are given special treatment. The whole idea in re-seeding the fairways is to get them back into play as quickly as possible. The crews jump in and plow them up, get the seeding done, turn the sprinkling system on so the seed will germinate rapidly. Zoysia sod is used on the summer tees, bluegrass on the winter tees.

Fertilization and Weed Control

After the grass is established, the crew fertilizes with a 30-10 mixture, since tests reveal the soil doesn't require potassium, only nitrogen and a little phosphate. In areas with a lot of trees and shrubbery, the 30-10 gets the call. In straight grass sections, a straight nitrogen is often applied.

Last year, the park department got straight ammonium nitrate at the low price of \$43 a ton (this figures out about 6.4¢ per pound of actual N. from a fertilizer bulk plant in nearby Lawrence, Kan. The fertilizer was trucked in by the park crew.

"I am convinced that one of the keys to getting K-31 established," Showalter said, "is to get it in the ground at the right time. It should be fertilized with discrimination; mowed at the proper summer cutting height. Weeds don't invade thick turf. The only areas in which we do some spraying is where parks are bordered by private homes and there is some dandelion seed blowing. We don't spray for crabgrass.

"We do use Dacthal in high-use park areas, such as the walks around the rose garden, in the arboretum and around flower beds."

There is good reason for Joe Sherwood to duck as he maneuvers this 88-inch Heckendorn around some of the larger park trees. The park has five Heckendorns and smaller mowers such as the Allis-Chalmers B-10 in the top picture that's still powerful enough to pull a trash and clippings trailer.



Rents Heavy Equipment

As equipment gets bigger and more sophisticated, and labor costs rise, Showalter has to choose carefully, yet keep a vigilant eye on the budget. This year, the Topeka park department is working with a budget of about \$485,000. That seems like a lot, yet it doesn't permit purchasing the more expensive equipment coming on the market.

Last summer, the Topeka park people rented a six-plow tractor from a farmer, for use during the re-seeding period. This year, bids were asked with the idea of buying a six-plow unit. The lowest bid was \$7,300.

It was reasoned that for the six weeks' span during which this piece of equipment is needed most, renting would be more practical. This year, a local equipment dealer came up with the lowest rental bid of \$120 per week.

The six-plow is a handy unit for use on areas like the golf course fairways where the goal is to re-seed and get grass up quickly. The park's own three-plow tractors simply can't get the job done. Experience is that about 40 acres per day can be plowed with the six-plow models.

Mowing is done with a fleet of five 88-inch Heckendorn mowers. About 30 or 40 acres are cut per day on 8 to 10 gallons of gas.

Tree Planting

Showalter is a vigorous tree planter. Equipment is a key, the dominant piece a Vermeer tree spade. It was bought for the City Forestry Department, but is used most of the time by park crews.

Costing \$5,500 when purchased two years ago, the tree spade enables the park to buy large trees at reasonable prices from local nurserymen. Frequently, the park will buy when a nurseryman is cleaning out his inventory.

It is unfortunate, Showalter feels, that Gage Park, oldest and most developed park, is dotted with Chinese Elm. The elm was fine for the Depression era, because it was cheap, easy to establish and drought-resistant. Now the trees have reached maturity and many break up during icestorms and windstorms, creating extra chores for already hard-pressed park crews.

Elms are being systematically replaced with birch, hybrid locust, linden, pin oaks, maples, ash and pines. Pin oaks, however, aren't being planted to heavy quantity be-

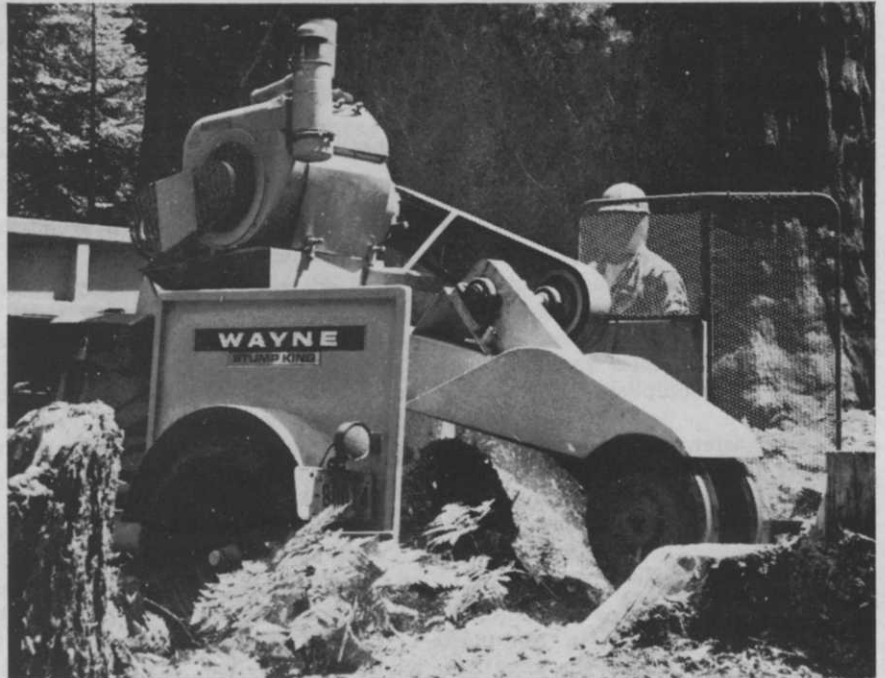
cause of the chlorosis problem they present as a result of the high ph count in the area. The soil ph usually runs 6.3, but the city water (often in excess of 8) pushes the ph factor above 7. This alkalinity makes most of the iron present in the soil unavailable. The result is leaf yellowing and in worse stages, dying branches and trees. Pin oaks also create a leaf problem from fall through April.

With some 100 species to care for, Showalter relies heavily on Bob Foster, chief horticulturist. Basic-

ly, the tree program centers on the use of long-lasting hardwoods. In some low, swampy areas, willow and cyprus are planted.

Instant Pine Forest

The tree-planting program received an exciting boost recently by the addition of what Showalter calls his "Instant Pine Forest." The park purchased a 65-acre site not long ago that was entirely devoid of landscaping. The opportunity then came to buy some 100 eight-foot pine trees from a Christmas tree



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A Vermeer tree spade enables the park department to purchase larger trees at more reasonable prices, and ones that survive vandalism better. Photo by Lowry.

farm at the bargain price of \$3 each.

The trees were lifted with the tree spade, balled and transported to trucks with a front-end loader.

A crew of a dozen men, using a backhoe to dig holes and transplant the trees, accomplished the feat in one day.

The master plan for the Instant Forest is to develop an arboretum where people can get "lost in a forest" in the heart of the city.

Without DDT, No Elms

In normal times, all pruning of trees and shrubbery in the parks would be charged to the City Forestry Division. Lester Terry, Chief City Forester, heads up a 32-man

organization. But these aren't normal times.

Last year, the Forestry Division removed more than 4,000 trees hit by Dutch elm disease. This year, the figure will be higher. The job is proving so arduous and time-consuming it's about the only chore the department can squeeze in, even with three aerial tower units available. A stump remover grinds the stump and a Good Roads Scavenger vacuums the chips.

DDT was used to fight the disease beginning in 1960, but the Audubon Society complained and the spraying was halted. A delaying action is being used by spraying with methoxychlor. The problem is that

Along with trees and turf to care for and weeds to control, there are extensive flower gardens to maintain in the 1450-acre Topeka park system. Bob Foster, chief horticulturist, is spraying.



this runs into more money than the city cares to spend, and more time than the city foresters have to spare. Chief Forester Terry is convinced it is only a matter of time until all elms in the city will be wiped out.

1966 Tornado Damage Remains

The disease has spread sharply since the tornado of 1966, which cut a four-block-wide swath through the center of the city. And Terry knows the disease worsened after the tornado. His theory? The tornado left in its wake a tremendous quantity of broken foliage that budded out with new growth. He believes the new, tender growth was more exposed to beetles that came along after the tornado.

The \$25 million tornado took its toll of the city's trees and park system. Some 4,000 trees were damaged. Three weeks elapsed before the park department and city forestry departments could clear debris from alleyways and streets.

Even now, the gaunt, grim outlines of trees disabled by the sausage-grinding impact of the tornado are visible in the area.

The comeback from the tornado has been heartening to Showalter and his staff. In one showplace park in the center of the city, damage to buildings and growth was almost total. Citizens of the neighborhood donated more than \$4,000 to rehabilitate the park. The government matched the donation. Today, the park has a new ball diamond, picnic tables, sidewalks, a few small buildings, and is being reforested.

With the city forestry department's time and energy taken by the elm disease and tornado, the park department handles fertilizing and spraying of trees. No deep fertilization is attempted, but some phosphate with nitrogen is used.

Calls Leaf Machine Essential

Among pieces of equipment Showalter feels are worth their investment many times is a leaf machine, bought in 1963. It attaches to a three-point hitch at the back of a tractor equipped with large turf tires. Operating by power take-off, the machine holds 45 cubic feet of leaves in the hopper. Leaves are dumped in a central location to form a compost, used as organic matter for flowerbeds.

The Topeka park system attracts young, bright, capable people at the skilled level. Typical are Bob Foster, the chief horticulturist, and his two assistants.

A big influence in drawing these

Dynamic ISTC Growth Coming — Davey

The International Shade Tree Conference, meeting in Portland this year, is going into a dynamic growth change of chapter regional meetings.

All chapters have enthusiastically developed extra meetings during 1969, and are planning many more to give local conference activity.

Dr. L. C. Chadwick, our retiring executive director, backed by the active executive committee has strengthened our international leadership by the establishment of a new office headquarters at Lincoln Square Center, Urbana, Ill., with two full-time executives.

Lincoln Square Center not only will give added space and improve facilities but in addition give ISTC a modern headquarters worth visiting.



Dr. Eugene B. Himilick, Illinois Natural History Survey, one of the conference's better known academic members, will become International Director.

Mr. Ervin C. Bundy will assume the duties of International Secretary and be directly in charge of our new office. Both Mr. and Mrs. Bundy will give this office their full attention. They have outstanding talent

and will put new blood into our Chapter-International activities, especially to back the chapter membership drives.

The Portland conference is unique in having a very high percentage of academic speakers and papers covering timely subjects of importance to our commercial, municipal and utility arborists. Field trips for municipal arborists and commercial exhibitor sessions will show the development in their respective fields.

Numerous local trips to the many beautiful spots of this hospitable state will be enjoyed by the members through the special events for the family. In this way, ISTC continues its policy of emphasizing the importance of the family.

—Keith L. Davey
ISTC President



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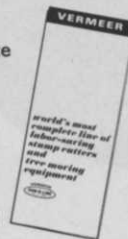
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well-trained people is the professional freedom they're given. They are urged to develop and execute their own programs. Among projects conducted are a test garden of mums for Kansas State University in Gage Park. Results are published along with results from five state experimental stations. The mum testing proved so successful that the horticulturists were asked to carry on a similar testing plan on annuals.

A smaller nursery is maintained at park headquarters. Items such as flowering pear, planted around the zoo building (also in Gage Park), are kept for replacement.

Takes Parks to People

If there is one overriding philosophy behind the entire Topeka park program, it is the idea of locating parks where the people are, then tailoring them to the people's needs.

The newest park to join the roster, the small one near the Capitol grounds and the senior citizens' home, is Showalter's idea of a people-located park. That park is just now in the process of being equipped and planted. But the plans reveal that the Capitol employees who will enjoy coffee breaks and luncheon periods in the park, and the residents of the senior citizens' home, are both being considered.