



Industrial weed control offers firms a number of advantage — safety, appearance and public relations are as important as any. Here Rich Tate of Chem-Trol sprays an industrial site in the Kansas City, Kansas area. Although weed problems are often similar, differing locations usually demand a wide variety of treatments.

KNEE DEEP IN WEEDS

Chem-Trol Weed Control A Business With A Future

NOT so many years ago, most industries, if they worried about weeds at all, probably went no further than a little trimming and mowing here and there.

In those days, the management of most industrial plants wasn't concerned about presenting an attractive image, but that's changed. Many of today's plants are surrounded by elaborate landscaping and there is a general concern in most businesses

for a neat, clean appearance; not only for a better "image," but because a neat, clean plant means added safety from fire and personal injury.

Plant managers are finding out that cleaning up plant sites isn't as easy as it might seem. Although weed killers and machinery are readily available, they usually aren't the answer for a complete job.

"There just isn't one chemical on

the market today that does the complete job of weed control," says Darrel Odle of Chem-Trol, Inc., Kansas City, Kansas, a vegetation control firm whose operations extend throughout a four-state region that includes Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Iowa.

"Quite a few plants have spent money and time trying to control weeds themselves," Odle says, "but they haven't been able to do a complete job. By the time they call us they've probably gotten the easy-to-kill weeds, but the really tough ones have them stumped.

"We've found that just about every job requires at least three different chemicals, and some may take as many as five or six to get complete control. That's why it's really not a job for somebody who doesn't know anything about it. He could spend an awful lot of money before finding the right chemicals to do the job on a particular site."

"We specialize in bare ground control," points out Bud Tolman, the other partner in the eight-year-old operation. "Our jobs range from a steel mill to pipelines and utility lines. And every one is different.

"Every job requires a different chemical application," Odle adds. "We usually base our bare ground control on Princep herbicide, or Pramitol, which is a soil sterilant. Then we'll add whatever else the job requires. Each chemical does a different job. Princep gets the germinating weeds and Pramitol is especially important in our first application to knock down the weeds that are up. Then, in the early spring, we generally add a contact herbicide like Dalapon or TCA."

"The main reason industrial areas are so rough to clean up," Tolman comments, "is the fact that they're usually located in areas that have never had anything but weeds. That means the ground is thick with seeds, and you find just about every kind of weed imaginable.

"The percentage of perennials is high, too. They just take over when nothing is done to control them, and they're always tougher to kill."

The weed control business is more than enough to keep Chem-Trol's staff on the run most of the time. In fact, Odle says, there are only a couple of months out of the year, usually January and August, when the trucks aren't constantly on the job. And that just about leaves enough time to service equipment so it's ready to go during the busy stretches in early spring and fall.

"And there is considerable more potential to explore," Odle concludes.