

Simplified maintenance is the pattern along a fence line (left, above) when chemical weed control is used. The weed-free zone next to the building (above) helps in keeping rodents out of this food warehouse. Vegetation under control (center) has

been done with a custom application of Hyvar X-L bromacil. The treated parking lot (above) will stay free of weeds year-round. Note the ease of mowing when weeds along a fence line (above right) are kept away.

Small Plant Site Weed Control

Blue Ribbon Market For The Custom Applicator

SIGNIFICANT maintenance improvement dividends are within reach of small and medium-sized industrial plants that are plagued with weed control problems.

That's the report out of Detroit, where an experienced pest control firm has recently been broadening its service to include weed and brush control on plant sites and has been taking care of a persistent maintenance headache for many metropolitan plant people.

The weed story is told in the experience of Vogel-Ritt of Michigan, a branch of the Philadelphia-based Ritt Consolidated Industries Pest Control firm, and in the work that Vogel-Ritt is doing for scores of plants, warehouses, commercial firms, lumber yards, parking-lot operators and others not only in Detroit, but also in Flint, Bay City, Saginaw, and Lansing.

For the past several years Vogel-

Ritt has been building its capacity to provide custom-applicator weed control service for a segment of industry that is beset with a growing vegetation problem but has hardly known how to attack it.

On the one hand, small to medium-sized plants usually have limited unoccupied land on their sites; but they also are faced with constant maintenance budget pressures and are rarely in a position to keep landscape specialists on the payroll.

So when spring and summer come, the weeds take off—and a small but vigorous and untidy jungle quickly springs up along a fence line, next to a building, in the parking lot or on the rail siding.

To deal with problems like these, Joe Watkins, manager of Vogel-Ritt, says: "A plant maintenance man can have the weeds cut, chopped, or pulled; but he usually finds it's a job that takes a lot of costly hand-

work and must be done a number of times during the growing season. Labor is usually not available for the job.

"We have a new idea now for the small and medium-sized plant—it's a custom chemical weed control program, with all the worry and bother turned over to our specialists who can provide season-long control of unwanted vegetation through attention and treatment that improves the environment."

Benefits of chemical control have been familiar to maintenance men on larger plants which have long carried on vegetation management programs often with their own manpower and equipment. But now in smaller Michigan plants others are learning some of the advantages of a good program that may cost a few hundred dollars—or sometimes as much as \$1100-1200 for larger sites

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Weed control planning is the conference topic in a session between Travis Braun (1) and Joe Watkins of Vogel-Ritt. They direct the firm's service that keeps weed growth down. Small plant sites have a great need for this service.

SMALL PLANT SITE WEED CONTROL (from page 14)

—but will provide season-long control of weeds.

A Detroit food processor reports saving hours and days of labor in cutting and trimming, when the firm went to a chemical program to maintain a buffer, weed-free zone around its plant, thereby helping to reduce rodent problems.

An automotive parts firm noted improved employee safety and efficiency in outside storage areas with chemical weed control.

A tool and die company reported that employee health was a factor in their continuing interest, for without proper weed control, poison ivy and thorny bushes had been overrunning parking and storage areas.

A lumber company found that with an economical, effective weed

control program, insurance rates came down because fire hazards from dead weeds were eliminated.

Trucking company managers agreed that chemical weed control in parking areas reduced equipment rusting and deterioration of wooden vans and buildings, because the yards were no longer overrun with shoulder-high vegetation that held in moisture and humidity.

A small tool firm found that inventory losses were cut when dense vegetation adjacent to its plant and storage buildings was eliminated through an annual chemical weed program.

The Vogel-Ritt custom weed control program is really based on two simple but vital principles: 1) treating weed growth correctly with an effective residual material such as

Hyvar X-L bromacil and then 2) checking back on the treatment in a couple of months to be sure the customer received the kind of control which had been guaranteed. Behind this program, however, there is a lot of careful planning and detail; and no one knows it better than Travis Braun, who heads up weed operations for the pest control firm in Detroit.

Braun is a trained agronomist, with degrees from Cornell and Michigan State. He worked five summers on farms in New York, added herbicide marketing experience with Du Pont, and for the past half dozen years has been building the small plant site weed program for Vogel-Ritt of Michigan. This firm did its first weed control work as much as 15 years ago; but it was not until Braun was on the scene in 1966 that Manager Joe Watkins felt justified in pushing more aggressively into the small plant site weed field.

It's clear what Braun's know-how and training have meant to Vogel-Ritt customers. Every year the number of these firms has been growing.

Braun says: "We are in the small and medium-sized plant site market, because that's where our equipment and our applicator skills fit best. But really, we serve a blue-ribbon list of firms in the automotive, food processing, warehousing, machine tool and trucking fields. We have repeat business each year with 85 to 90 percent of our customers, and many of them ask us to increase the area we treat, after they see and evaluate results in an initial year."

Materials used by Travis Braun and the Vogel-Ritt applicators are quite basic. The primary residual chemical is Hyvar X-L which controls most common weeds and grasses for extended periods. Other

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chemicals in the program include spot treatment of Trysben 200 (for woody plants like vines) along with Ammate X as a control in areas where desirable vegetation is close by and Surfactant WK to increase weed control efficiency when growth has started. Chemicals such as Amitrole T and Paraquat are also used to knock down standing weeds, while the residual materials work primarily on roots and germinating seeds and stop growth before it starts.

Vogel-Ritt applicators, of course, follow product labels carefully, using a 1.5-3 gallon rate of Hyvar X-L to control annual weeds and grasses such as foxtail, rye grass, wild oats, ragweed and turkey mullein. A 3-6 gallon rate is used on perennials such as bluegrass, quackgrass, dandelion, dog fennel, goldenrod, plantain and wild carrot; a 6-12 gallon rate is used on hard-to-control perennials such as nutsedge and horsetail.

In addition to knowing how much product should be used to handle a specific weed problem, the Vogel-Ritt applicator brings equipment knowledge and mixing and spraying knowledge to the job, so that in a few hours a plant maintenance man's

weed problem is solved for the ensuing year.

One key step, however, is the weed control planning that precedes any treatment on a plant site. Braun, or one of his nine associates who call on plant maintenance managers, draws up a simple site plan to show the Vogel-Ritt customer exactly what areas will be treated and to tell the Vogel-Ritt applicator how to treat. The plan is a useful reference for a post-treatment check and for a review of the needs of this plant site a year later. It is also the basic estimating tool to help establish the price of Vogel-Ritt service on a job.

New ideas for better service are constantly being developed by a weed specialist like Braun. Following several years of trials by numerous investigators, Braun is now suggesting that there is really little reason to concentrate applications of residuals such as Hyvar X-L in the spring months. A fall treatment, he notes, will be effective for the following growth season, when it is properly applied. By extending the treatment season, Braun has been able to get better utility out of his equipment and thereby work to keep overall prices down, in the face of rising labor costs. Vogel-Ritt of

Michigan has, in effect, opened up a fall treating season for the smaller plant man, who may recognize that winter cold weather will indeed control existing weeds but it will not prevent their regrowth in the spring. The right amount of the correct chemical, however, will do that job until the end of the next growing season. And that can take a load off the mind of maintenance men during a busy spring or summer vacation period.

Vogel-Ritt's 40 service men who are making regular pest control service calls throughout Michigan are in an ideal spot to help their customers deal with weeds as well as pests and insects. They simply ask for help from their own firm's weed control division; and Braun and his associates are ready — to make a call, draw up a plan, schedule a weed treatment, and follow-up with a post-treatment site check.

"This kind of service is something a smaller plant man really appreciates," observes Braun. "We have found it helps our customer solve a tough problem — and one that can lead to a municipal citation when a city ordinance is violated while it is overlooked or ignored." We have

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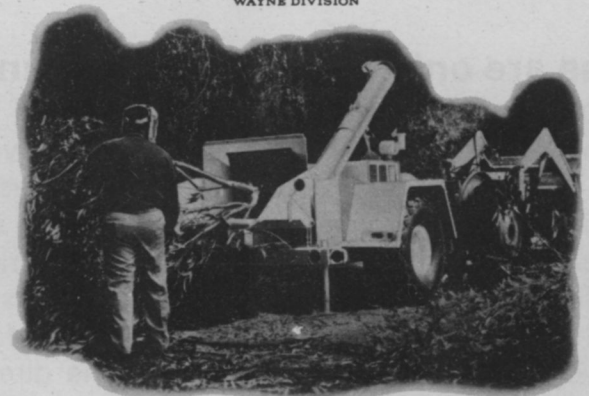
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Weed contrast outside Detroit plant is seen in treated area (foreground) and untreated overgrown area behind parked car. Hyvar X-L bromacil weed killer keeps weeds down for a full season.

concentrated on plant areas that involve anywhere from a half-acre to perhaps three acres of vegetation. We have helped eliminate mosquito-breeding areas and chemically trimmed weed and grass growth from fences, buildings, rail sidings and walls. We have helped auto dealers keep weeds out of parking lots; and the results a customer sees, as in a

paper company recently, usually encourage him to extend the first year's treatment. But sometimes our customer may want to take a program beyond where we feel he ought to go.

"When a man wants to go too far too fast, we may tell him to hold up, even though the delay costs us short-term business. We want to be **sure**—not **sorry** — about our work. Last

year, for example, we discouraged one firm from broadcasting residual materials over an area as large as a football field. We simply thought that his plan would not be desirable from an environmental view, for the area was surrounded with residences, and we did not want to establish a miniature dust bowl."

Training plays a big part in the success Vogel-Ritt has had in developing a small plant weed service program. Braun and Watkins have turned to a Du Pont industrial weed control specialist, Clinton B. Harris, for help in this area. Harris concentrated first on applicator know-how, and he has also established weed control principles in annual sessions with Vogel-Ritt's weed representatives.

"This type of training helps build individual competence and confidence," notes manager Watkins. "When we upgrade our thinking, we find chances for new service. And that's what our business has always been all about. We're getting our sales people out in the field to work with our applicators, so they will develop more knowledge to service the needs of small and medium-sized plant people. □

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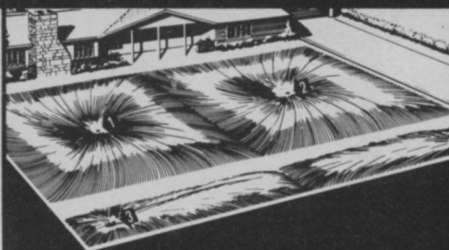
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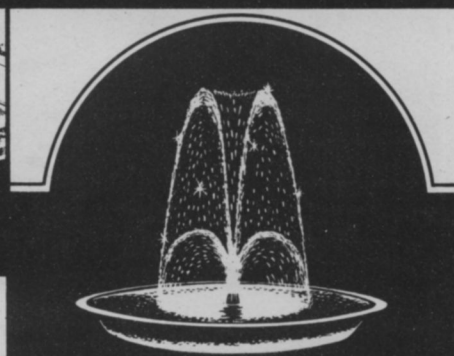
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