



Vegetation control around markers and monuments cuts labor costs in Bloomfield, Conn. Manager Vito Patrissi uses Pramitol herbicide to eliminate unwanted vegetation.



Weed control under fences keeps mower maintenance at a minimum. Fences have a clean appearance year-round.

He Makes Trimming Easy With Chemicals

SUBSTITUTING CHEMICALS for hand trimming in cemetery maintenance programs can pay off in reduced labor costs and appearance as long as programs are carefully managed.

Vito Patrissi, manager of two cemeteries owned by the Mount Saint Benedict Cemetery Corp., at Bloomfield, Conn., says chemical control of grass around raised markers, monuments, fences, and other areas has become an important part of the maintenance program for the 160 acres of cemetery grounds.

Properly managed, Patrissi says, a chemical program will give attractive results as well as cut costs. As with almost every other chemical treatment, however, careful application, and therefore proper training for employees, is important.

The chemical program has been used at the two cemeteries for a number of years. One of the cemeteries is little used now, and many of the older gravesites are irregularly laid out, making mowing a difficult chore.

"This was the area where we first started using chemicals," Patrissi says. "Most of the older sites were sold without endowed care contracts, and since this cemetery dates to the 1870's there are many of these to maintain. So cost was extremely important.

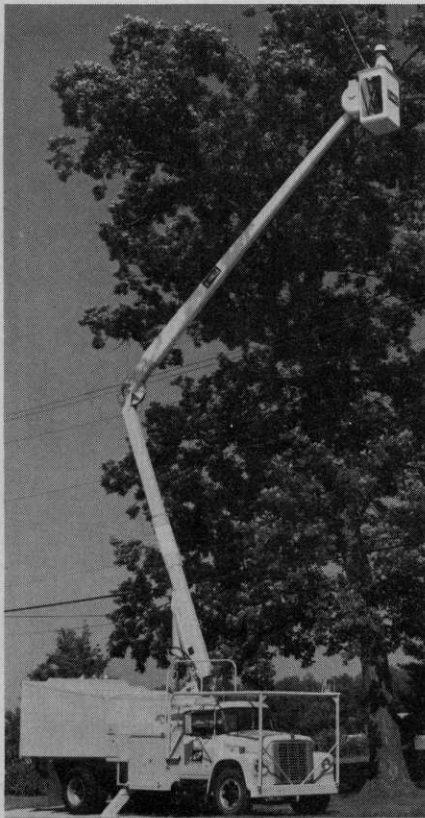
"We're also using a chemical program in newer areas of the cemetery, too, but here careful use is even more important because visitors will complain if the work is unsightly."

A number of different chemicals could be employed in such a program, according to Patrissi. Pellets and liquids work best in terms of ease of application and mixing, although wettable powders and modern spray equipment make the job easy, too. The most economical weed control program will provide at least season-long control, he says. Pramitol and Atritol have both been used in the Mount Saint Benedict program.

Spraying a band of Pramitol about four inches wide around monuments has virtually eliminated the need for hand trimming, Patrissi points out. This is called chemical trimming.

For the first few days after spraying the grass does look kind of unattractive, notes this superintendent. But once the grass area has been completely controlled, the treated area has a neat, trimmed appearance that requires little or no maintenance.

Care should be taken in applying any bare or clean
(continued on page 56)



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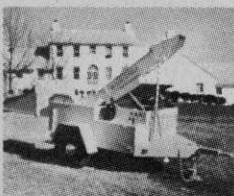


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Patrissi points to the excellent weed control around this marker. Mower operator need not mow closer than four inches. Hand trimming is virtually eliminated.

CHEMICAL TRIMMING (from page 18)

ground material near trees, shrubs or other valuable plants. On sloping terrain, for example, uneven weed control may result, especially if heavy rains follow application.

"Areas where people have planted flowers in the past are also noted," Patrissi says. "These areas are also left untreated."

A home-made spray rig is used at the Mount Saint Benedict cemeteries. Mounted on a ski, the unit fits neatly onto a Cushman maintenance vehicle or in the back of a small pickup. Similar manufactured units are available, as are back-pack spray rigs which could also be used.

"Frequent inspections of all equipment is vital," says Patrissi. "If there are any leaks they're sure to lead to complaints." And, as you might suspect, the applicator plays a critical role when it comes to spraying. The wrong move of the wand or gun, walking through a sprayed area, dragging hose across a sprayed area—all can lead to highly visible complications within a few days. That's why it takes a professional applicator who is trained in herbicide application techniques.

Patrissi says early applications will give full-season control. Grass is trimmed, then allowed to grow back for a couple of days, then sprayed.

"If the application is made right after the ground thaws, the area looks very near clear through fall," he says.

"We try to limit application to the times of the day when there's moisture in the soil. If the moisture is there, it helps eliminate leaching problems, since the herbicide will penetrate as the moisture is taken up by the grass roots. With a dry soil, a heavy application could leach or spread before it penetrates into the soil. Usually we'll spray early in the morning, up until around 11 o'clock or so."

Even with the care needed in application and management, chemical treatments are paying off, Patrissi says.

"In the older cemetery area, which is 10 or more acres, it requires about a full week's work to trim around the large number of raised memorials. Now, with chemical trimming, we've cut mowing time to about one day for two men."