



Lewis E. Coleman, of Automated Lawn-Builders, Inc. checks out equipment prior to a job. He's contracted 14 million feet of lawn this year.

Home Lawn Care Boom In Chicago

BUILDING ATTRACTIVE, healthy lawns takes more than water and a fertilizer spreader!

Many homeowners around Chicago apparently are learning that lawn care isn't as easy as they thought it was, and that's why Lewis E. Coleman, general manager of Automated Lawn-Builders, Inc., of Roselle, Illinois, says his company is finding a steadily growing market throughout the Chicago area and its outlying suburbs.

"If the homeowner is after a good looking lawn," he says, "they're finding they often can't do it themselves. Or they just don't have the time to devote to it or the equipment."

"And since we can offer these services at a reasonable price to the homeowner, more and more of them are letting us take care of their whole lawn, doing everything except watering and mowing."

A complete lawn service package is a primary feature of the Automated Lawn-Builders program, with

varied programs for spring, late spring, summer and fall. Cost to homeowners is only three cents a square foot for the complete package of insecticide treatment, fertilization, dethatching, reseeding, aerification fungus control and spot weed control, due to the unique patent pending automated combine.

The complete program includes four regular visits; the first in the spring includes such items as seeding, fertilizing, crabgrass and spot weed control, aerating and a service recheck. Other programs include features needed at different times of the year; fungicide in late spring as well as grub proofing and further weed control. Fall application includes more reseeding, weed control and fertilization.

"As the service has expanded, we've found with the right kind of machinery, insecticide, fertilizer, seed and so on, we can offer the program economically, without having to finance reworking and call backs ahead of time, because we don't

have very many," Coleman points out.

"But it took quite a while to develop the program we're using now. We tried other insecticides before settling on Diazinon as the most effective for this area, for example. We've followed the same prices with other inputs for good lawn care," he adds.

An extensive advertising program has been a major tool in getting the young company rolling. Dennis D. Paige, president of the corporation, handles advertising duties himself, including extensive newspaper advertising in both daily Chicago papers and suburban papers.

The suburban papers have probably been more valuable to our business than the major dailies in the area," Coleman says, "since they reach the people who make up the majority of our prospective customers."

Another advertising tool was a tabloid newspaper size, four-page bulletin on Automated Lawn-Builders services. The bulletin even included a year-round "Guide to Better Lawns" for "do-it-yourself homeowners."

Concluding the "do-it-yourself" section is the comment, "If it sounds like work—it is. There's an easier way," etc.

Advertising and good results have gone a long way toward building the business, Coleman points out.

"When we have a customer, we mail a short letter to neighbors, mentioning whose lawn we're taking care of so they can be sure to take note of it. Often this technique has resulted in a number of new customers," he adds.

Developing the right chemical, fertilizer and seed formulas took quite a bit of time, Coleman concedes. "And we're still trying new programs as we hear about them," he adds.

"But for now we're pretty well settled, using Diazinon for chinch bugs and most other insects, Dacónil fungicide, and Sylvex 2,4-D for weed control. Fertilizer and seeds vary at times, but the seed mixtures have been developed for this area through work with the University of Illinois," he adds.

With a crew of five scheduled for this summer's work, Automated Lawn-Builders anticipates a good year. Roughly 14 million square feet of lawn has been contracted for 1973, Coleman says, almost double previous years with the sale of two new franchises.

"Not bad for only five years of work," Coleman concludes. □