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many services

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trees, shrubs and other landscape plantings. Customers want qualified people with professional equipment to make applications and they expect the treatment to be made with care — care for both the lawn and for surrounding plants and properties. Service is the name of the business.

Two points are obvious from the previous discussion. First, the lawn service industry is unorganized and there is little chance that it will be organized in the near future. Secondly, there is no standard of quality for the industry and it is unlikely that stan-

dards could be agreed on and even less possibility that they could be put into effect. State and federal requirements for pesticide operators' license and label restrictions for the use of pesticides have made it more difficult for marginal operations, and some states require that the invoice must state the amount of fertilizer applied to a lawn. Other than these, the only standards are those set by leaders in the industry. An individual selecting a lawn care company should have a clear understanding of the services offered by the company, the materials that will be applied to the lawn, and the reputation of the company in question. □

Gas shortage cuts fertilizer output

From the New York Times

WASHINGTON FEB. 5 — Natural gas shortages have curtailed production of nitrogen fertilizers needed for spring planting in some of the country's principal growing areas, according to industry data and random checks with factory executives.

In addition, the executives say, transportation problems threaten delivery tieups.

The curtailments, including plant shutdowns in some areas and reduced operations in others, pose a new threat to food production and consumer prices in the wake of water shortages reported in the West and Middle West.

"I'm not going to be panic purveyor and push prices up, but we're apprehensive," Edwin M. Wheeler, president of the Fertilizer Institute here, said in an interview. "It's difficult to see how we can avoid some geographic snugness in supplies."

The problems, he said, exist primarily east of the Rocky Mountains, where the regions hardest hit are the Southeast and the upper Middle West. Several plant closings have been reported in the Southeast and plants in the

Middle West are reported running at varying fractions of capacity.

The curtailments have cut industry operations by about one-third at a time when factories are normally producing at their peak to meet seasonal demands, Wheeler said. Production is being cut by 70,000 to 80,000 tons a week, he said, with about 400,000 tons lost thus far this year.

Natural gas is critical for nitrogen fertilizer production because it is both a raw material for the product and a fuel for the production process.

Hydrogen is stripped from the natural gas under intense heat and combined under intense pressure with nitrogen from the air to create a product called anhydrous ammonia. The ammonia is used both in its natural state and in combined forms with other plant nutrients.

While some plants can substitute oil for fuel, experts say, they have no substitute for the gas as a raw material. Wheeler believes that the total loss of production will reach about 750,000 tons of anhydrous ammonia, or a little less than 5 percent of normal production. Other estimates ranged from 600,000 to a million tons. □