

WT&T
PROFILE

THE LANDSCAPE CONTRACTOR MARKET



LANDSCAPE CONTRACTOR MARKET STATISTICS

To get a handle on the statistics of the landscape contractor market, WEEDS TREES & TURF randomly surveyed its readership in this profession.

According to John S. Shaw, executive director of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America, there are 5,000 to 7,000 bona-fide landscape contracting firms in the United States. The magazine has 4,700 landscape contractors in its circulation. We sent questionnaires to 1,000 of them and 144 were returned. This represents approximately three percent of the market, a statistically significant percentage.

The sample firms' answers indicate slightly more emphasis toward construction as opposed to maintenance. Construction with trees and ornamentals exceeds that with turf. Maintenance, however, is predominantly in the turf area. The percentage of firms doing design is below the percentage of firms doing construction types of landscaping.

Residential work makes up an

average of 65 percent of business for landscape contractors according to the survey. Commercial jobs account for an average of 28 percent. Fifty-three percent of the respondents do an average of 25 percent of their business with general contractors or developers. Only four percent indicated involvement in land reclamation.

Correlating the type of work done with whom it is done for indicates the dominant kind of work done by landscape contractors is residential construction.

The vast majority (87 percent) own their equipment. Nine percent said they lease some of their equipment. Landscape contractors spend an average of \$10,585 for equipment in a year. Projected to the total number of contractors in the circulation, a total expenditure for the industry of \$49,000,000 is derived.

The number of pieces of various types of equipment based upon survey returns indicates the importance of the landscape industry to equip-

ment manufacturers. The most commonly owned types of equipment are pick-up and dump trucks, tractors, rototillers, tractor mowers, manual (trim) mowers, and aerators. A third of the respondents own a backhoe. Approximately one out of five firms own hydromulchers, sod harvesters, and fork lifts. Roughly a tenth own flat-bed trucks, trenchers, bulldozers, and tree spades.

Equipment buying takes place primarily in the months of January through March.

Chemical expenditures averaged

Percentage of landscape contractors performing various services.

design	76%
seed bed preparation	64%
seeding	81%
sodding	78%
hydromulching	21%
ornamental planting	90%
tree planting	84%
turf maintenance	63%
tree pruning	8%
ornamental pruning	3%

Percentage of landscape contractors buying equipment and chemicals by month.

	Equipment	Herbicides	Fertilizer	Insecticide	Fungicide	Soil Amendments	Growth Regulators	Adjuvants	Surfactants
January	13%	6%	6%	4%	5%	3%	9%	8%	7%
February	18%	12%	10%	8%	9%	4%	13%	17%	17%
March	21%	23%	18%	21%	20%	16%	22%	29%	24%
April	9%	14%	14%	18%	16%	18%	13%	17%	17%
May	6%	13%	7%	10%	14%	11%	9%	17%	14%
June	4%	6%	7%	9%	8%	9%	13%	4%	3%
July	6%	5%	4%	9%	8%	7%	4%	0%	3%
August	5%	7%	9%	8%	9%	8%	0%	0%	0%
September	6%	8%	11%	4%	5%	13%	4%	4%	3%
October	3%	4%	7%	4%	3%	7%	4%	0%	0%
November	3%	3%	5%	2%	2%	4%	4%	4%	7%
December	5%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	4%	0%	3%

Amount of equipment owned by landscape contractors.

\$3,744 per year per firm, with a total market figure of \$17,400,000 based upon 4,700 firms. Most chemical buying takes place in March. However, a significant amount of chemical buying occurs in April, May and September. Chemical buying is not as winter-oriented as is equipment buying.

The median number of full-time landscape staff members was three. The median number of seasonal or part-time workers was six.

The annual gross revenue of contractors responding was \$173,718, with a median figure of \$100,000. Projecting the average to the magazine's qualified circulation in the market provided a total revenue figure of \$800,000,000. Projecting total market revenue using 7,000 firms gave a figure of \$1,216,026,000.

When asked what they charged for various services the following rates were obtained:

sod—average 27¢/sq. ft., median 25¢/sq. ft.

seeding—average \$71/1000 sq. ft., median \$50/1000 sq. ft.

hydromulching — average \$52/1000 sq. ft., median \$40/1000 sq. ft.

Aerating — average \$19.50/1000 sq. ft., median \$11/1000 sq. ft.

Advertising expenditures are greatly centered around Yellow Page advertising. Eighty-four percent of the respondents use the Yellow Pages at an average cost of \$900 per year. More than half advertise in newspapers at an average annual cost of \$1,200 and a median cost of \$300. Direct mail and brochures are used by a fifth or more of the respondents. The average spent for direct mail was \$1,000, with a median of \$500. Brochures cost an average of \$500, with a median of \$200 per year. Other types of advertising used are radio (10 percent spending an average of \$1,200), television (4 percent), and trade journals (7 percent for an average of \$275). Seventeen percent indicated costs of selling in person for an average of \$1,100 and a median of \$500.

The respondents to the survey have a good feeling about the coming year. Nearly three-fourths expect an increase in business this year. Seventy percent reported gains averaging more than 20 percent in 1977.

WTT

Type of Equipment	% who own this type	projected # of pieces owned by 4660 contractors	projected # of pieces owned by 7000 contractors
aerator	41%	2960	4470
backhoe	35%	2320	3500
bulldozer	12%	920	1390
cultivating disks	26%	1800	2720
fork lifts	16%	760	1150
hydromulcher	18%	1120	1690
tractor mowers	59%	5970	9010
manual mowers	75%	25,700	38,800
rototiller	70%	6090	9190
sod harvester	17%	1200	1810
pick-up truck	84%	8770	13,200
dump truck	76%	7490	11,300
flat-bed truck	9%	1040	1570
tree spade	13%	840	1270
trenchers	12%	720	1090
tractors	57%	6130	9250



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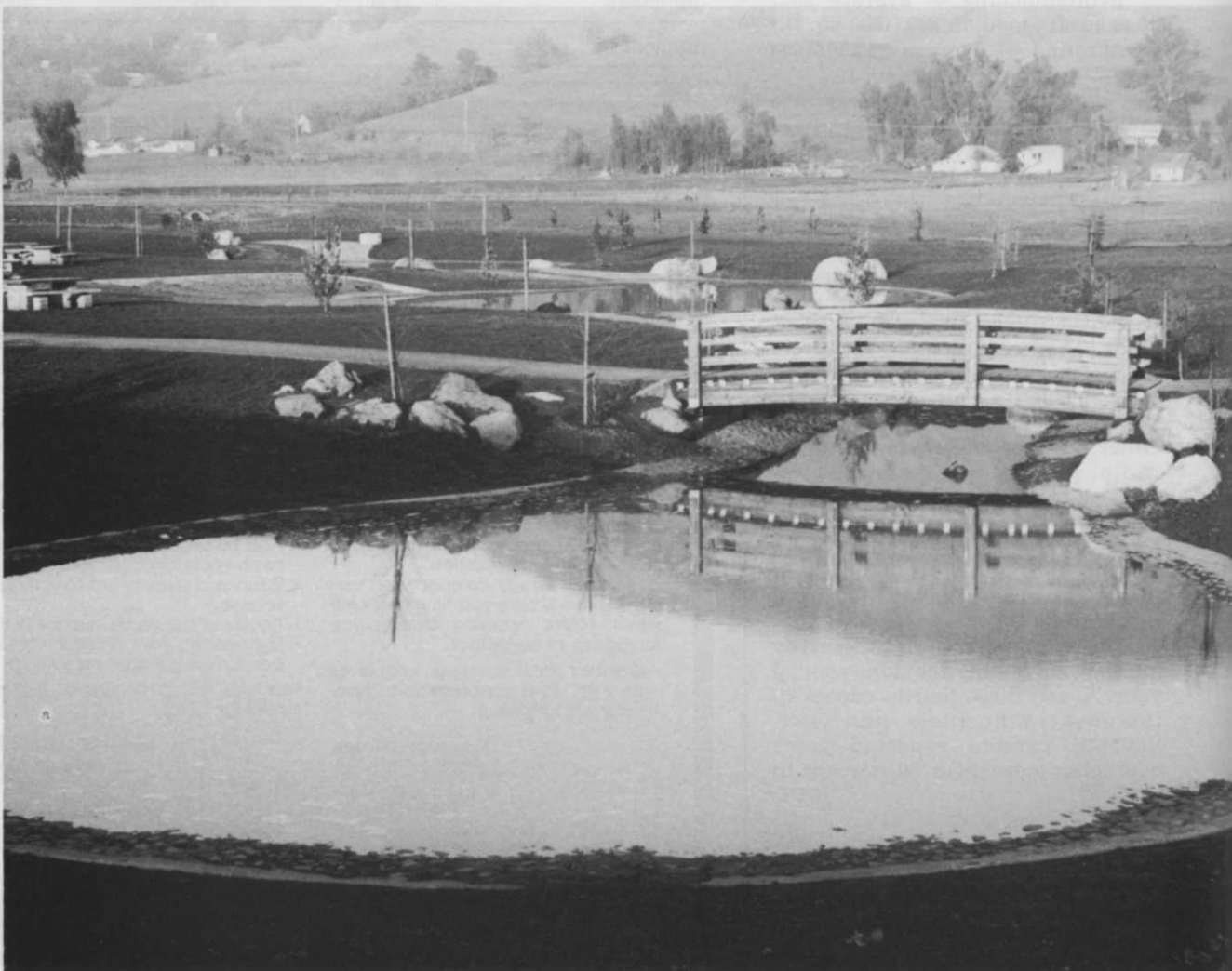
CONTRA COSTA: GENERAL LANDSCAPING AND HYDROSEEDING

Landscape contractors in the Oakland/San Francisco area have contended with drought for nearly three years. Until recently, lack of rainfall placed a damper on business, but Ken Gerlack (CLCA), president of Contra Costa Landscaping Inc., in Martinez, discovered some relief by being one of three Bay Area contractors offering hydroseeding for erosion control.

The rain finally returned this winter and Gerlack, and vice president Burt Harrington anticipate a boom this spring.

Contra Costa depends primarily on commercial construction and maintenance for its \$750,000 business volume. Nearly 90 percent of construction is derived from bidding on public and private work. Currently, construction represents 40 percent of gross revenue, maintenance 35 percent, and hydroseeding the remaining 25 percent. Maintenance

Athletic fields and park areas are two specialties for Contra Costa.



nance business should jump with favorable growing conditions this year.

Gerlack and his permanent staff of 12 keep tabs on new construction by subscribing to a local construction newspaper and participating in the local builders' exchange. Since most work is based on architectural specifications, only a small amount of design work is necessary.

Contra Costa's seasonal staff numbers 25 from March through October. During the off season, Gerlack does much of the hydroseeding work to maintain a healthy cash flow.

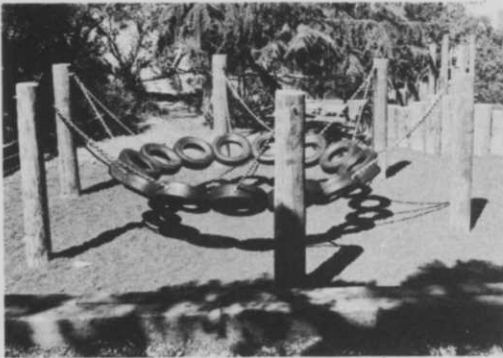
In the Bay Area, exposed soil from any type of construction is highly subject to erosion since the topography is hilly and the rainfall great. Consequently, the revegetation market is larger than normal and hydroseeding is playing an increasingly significant role in it.

Contra Costa does relatively little residential work, primarily large estates. The Bay Area is one of the last holdouts of the estate gardener. There are a significant number of very wealthy homeowners in the San Francisco area who invest more than \$200,000 in a home. A small percentage of these still have full-time gardeners and many have part-time gardeners.

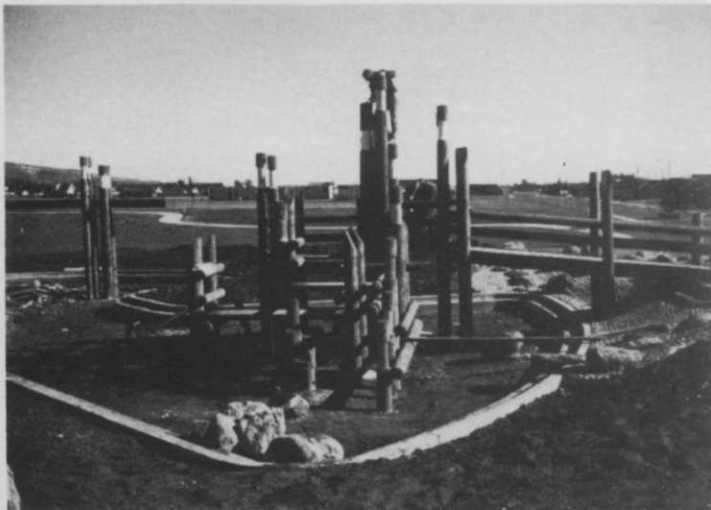
Another factor is the large number of uncertified, generally untrained individuals who, because they are enamored by outdoor occupations, are willing to do basic maintenance chores at below standard rates.

Types of work subcontracted out by Gerlack are large earth moving, much of the irrigation and drainage installation, and structural jobs such as construction of patios, decks, sidewalks, and fences.

The company has not experi-



Playground equipment should be a part of the park, not just structures placed there. Here are a few of Contra Costa creations.



Contra Costa

enced a great demand for interior landscaping service although it has completed a number of inside jobs. Gerlack is especially proud of an indoor landscape he did for the Marin County Courthouse. The company does not aggressively seek indoor maintenance contracts at the present time.

One growing area for Contra Costa is maintenance of public athletic fields. Getting the fields in shape for the football season and repairing them afterward are two tasks more school officials are giving to professionals. Often, much of a school's athletic budget is derived from gate receipts of games played in its stadium. Consequently, the production of athletic contests is as much a business as it is a public service. Gerlack is currently working with a number of school systems for their stadium maintenance.

Contra Costa has a greenhouse for some of its plant stock. No retail selling of nursery stock or wholesale selling to other landscapers takes place.

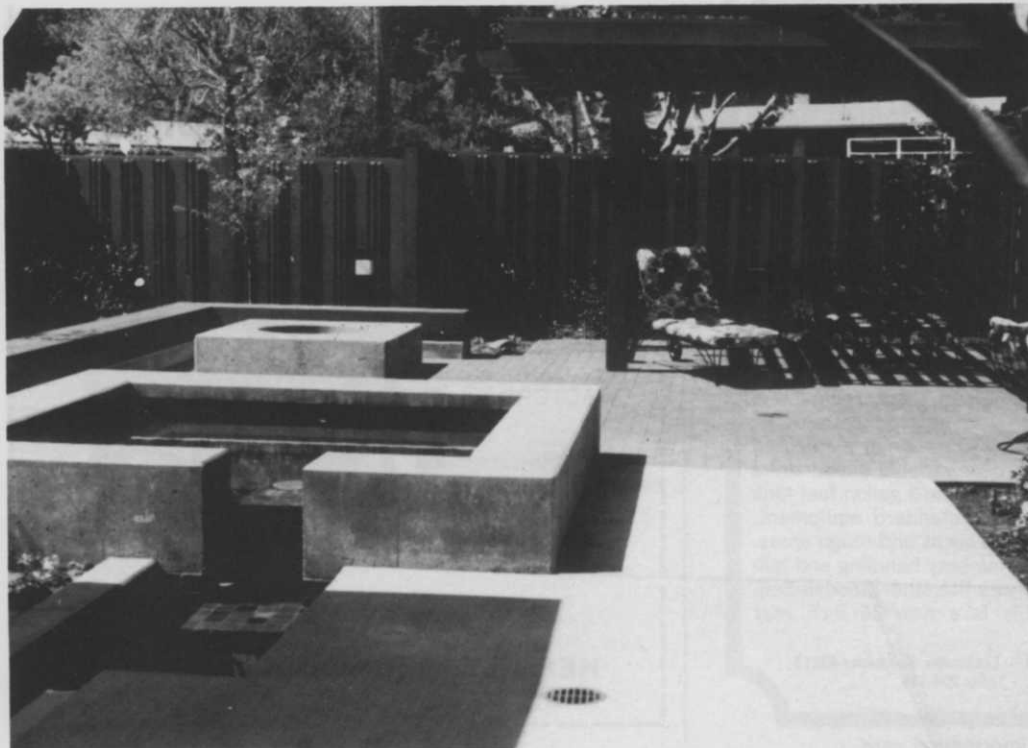
Shunning large inventories, Gerlack purchases most chemicals by the job. Except for fertilizer, he makes monthly purchases of herbicides, fungicides, pesticides, and conditioners. These purchases total roughly \$15,000 per year.

Equipment expenditure per year averages \$25,000. He buys all vehicles rather than lease them. An inventory of Gerlack's equipment shows the following:

passenger autos — 8
pickup trucks (¾ ton or smaller) — 8
dump trucks — 2
tractors — 2 Massey-Ferguson 40 hp, 1 MF 65
hydroseeder — 1 Finn
riding mowers — 6
push mowers — 6
rototillers — 3 walk behind

1 tractor drawn
dethatchers — 2 walk behind
1 tractor drawn
forklift — 1 tractor attached
aerators — 3 walk behind
1 tractor drawn

Gerlack estimated his repair and maintenance costs at \$5,000 per year. He keeps an inventory of problem parts such as belts, pulleys, etc. He does not keep a large inventory of backup equipment and stresses the importance of proper equipment care to his men. If a mower does break down Gerlack has to drive 70 miles to get service.



Residential landscaping entails combining manmade structures with nature's to provide a relaxing atmosphere.

Contra Costa

When asked about prices for certain types of work, Gerlack said nearly all his prices are bid according to specifications and costs. Rates for sod installation, he said, can be as little as 20 cents/sq. ft. for large areas with little soil preparation or

as much as 40 cents/sq. ft. for small jobs with considerable soil preparation.

Contra Costa does little advertising. It carries an ad in the state's landscaping magazine for its hydroseeding service. Beyond this, it has

brochures for selling maintenance service. Most of the job seeking is done by staying on top of the local building scene to be included in all available bidding.

If Gerlack has one single concern, it is the abundance of untrained and uncertified landscape contractors in the area. He anticipates the number of such people to jump when the market takes off this spring. He is a certified landscape contractor and thinks anyone spending money on landscaping should check the credentials of any individual claiming to be a contractor before giving the go ahead. Gerlack dreads competing with the "have pickup truck, will do anything" firms. They are the only negative aspect of what he anticipates to be a banner year for the landscape contracting business in the Bay Area this year.



Only three landscapers offer hydroseeding in the San Francisco area. Contra Costa is one.

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DISANTO COMPANIES: DESIGN, BUILD AND MAINTAIN

When DiSanto Companies moved into new and larger quarters in Cleveland two years ago, it renewed and increased its commitment to the landscape industry.

The DiSanto brothers, Dennis and George, decided it was time to expand their outdoor construction and maintenance business into the areas of design, lawn care, and interior landscaping. As a result, DiSanto is now in the top three in the Northeast Ohio market following a 30 percent increase in business in 1977 to more than \$750,000.

Short range goals are to purchase a large, local tree care company, increase its share of the lawn care market, and to continue to actively bid on both interior and exterior construction and maintenance projects.

Since last year, DiSanto has had a full-time landscape designer, Martin Pawlikowski, a graduate of the Ohio State landscape architecture program. Dennis DiSanto predicts that more landscape construction work will be under separate contract from the general building contract as landscapers develop their own design capabilities. The landscape work is often the last completed on a project and, if done improperly, can hold up acceptance and consequently payment to the general contractor. "If it's a sizeable project and the owners or the clients want to make sure the job is done properly, they will pull the landscape contract out of the general contract," Dennis says.

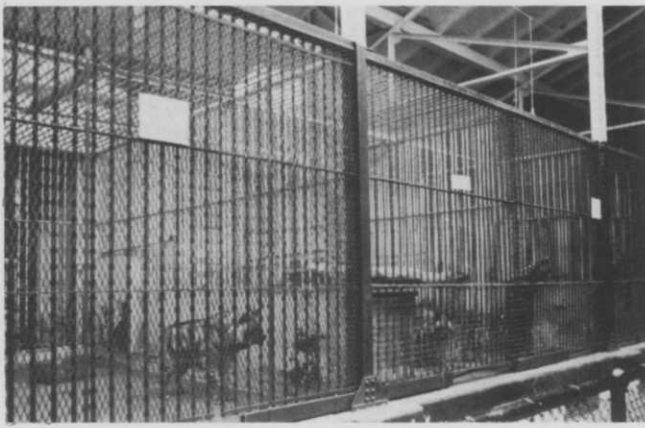
Landscaping has been a part of the DiSanto family for many years. Fred DiSanto, father of Dennis and George, was an estate gardener and exposed his sons to it. In 1959, the company was formed primarily for maintenance. The company's promise has been, "only what your turf and trees need and only when they need it. Some adjustment to this philosophy has been required for the lawn care division.

The company has its own greenhouse, but stays out of the retail



Putting the final touches on the zoo job are (l. to r.) George DiSanto, Dennis DiSanto, Carolyn Brown, and Martin Pawlikowski. The rewards of their efforts in exterior and interior design projects. (right)





Just like the real thing

Before and after photos of the Cleveland Zoo. The old facilities were ugly bars and bare cages. The new quarters have creature comforts like trees to swing on, rocks to climb, and jungle foliage in the background.



The trees are constructed of fibreglass and cement over a steel frame (top). Behind the cages protected by heavy screen are the tropical plants (left).

DiSanto

nursery business. "Retailing is a whole different ballgame from contracting," says Dennis. "It's tough to control both successfully. You have to separate the books because one side might be eating up the profits of the other." He mentioned a case of a business in both retailing and contracting where the retail end was draining the profits of the contracting end. Cost accountants told the owner to phase out or sell the garden center and concentrate efforts on the contracting business. DiSanto sells a small amount of its plant stock to other landscapers in the area.

The advantage DiSanto has over many landscape contractors is the ability to do all types of landscape work from design to maintenance. Currently, 90 percent of the projects designed and constructed by DiSanto are maintained by its crews during and after the guarantee period. It also can, and will, do any size job from maintaining a residential lawn to designing, constructing, and

and small trucks are on three-year leases. Usually, DiSanto buys the vehicles at the end of the lease. Maintenance and repair costs were slightly more than \$40,000 in 1977. DiSanto estimates that for every three pieces of equipment he has one piece in backup.

The company has the following equipment:

- aerator — 1
- forklift — 1
- tractor mowers — 12
- push mowers — 30
- rototillers — 2
- tank trucks — 1
- pickup trucks — 4
- dump trucks — 2
- vans — 3
- tractors — 2
- spray rigs — 3
- cars — 5

Dennis has strong words to say about some of the equipment. "One of our biggest problems is equipment maintenance and repair. Not so much the trucks or tractors, main-

times each day. You can't afford to leave equipment at a job site, it has to be transported." DiSanto tries to impress upon his employees to take care of the equipment.

The company spent approximately \$30,000 for chemicals in 1977. "We do not carry tremendous inventories of chemicals because the products change rapidly within the market," DiSanto says. "We stock up for our spring application, reorder in June for our summer application, and order again in July and August for our fall application. We don't believe in tying up the money or space for a whole year's supply of chemicals."

DiSanto's three divisions each have a different approach to advertising. The landscape division depends entirely upon word-of-mouth advertising. The lawn care division uses direct mail and Yellow Page display advertising. The interior landscaping division uses the Yellow Pages, local magazines, and something extra, a newsletter. The newsletter has proven very effective in educating the customer about the need for regular maintenance.

The interior landscape division, Interior Green, was created in 1975 when DiSanto was awarded the contract for a new mall in Akron, and in response to a growing demand by its customers for tropical plants. In 1977, the division's revenue exceeded \$200,000. DiSanto hired Carolyn Brown, who had experience with tropical plant care at the retail level, to help design and direct the division. Interior Green's latest achievement is providing both spectators and animals in the Cleveland Zoo's new primate center with a tropical environment. A unique design makes the animals appear in a jungle-like setting without the animals actually being near the plants. DiSanto worked with a firm to build cement and fiberglass trees for the monkeys and gorillas inside their cages.

Interior Green has not limited its services to large, commercial clients. It also serves residential, small commercial, and industrial offices with installation and maintenance of tropical plants. Maintenance service includes watering, fertilizing, pruning, pest control, and addition of seasonal flowering plants to add color. Malls, banks, department stores, and office buildings are Interior Green customers.

Interior landscaping presents new challenges to a landscape company, DiSanto says. "All your plant

"When you spend \$3,000 for a mower and it's in the shop once a month at \$150 each time, you get frustrated."

maintaining the huge, two-level, indoor shopping center Randall Park Mall.

The comprehensive design/build/maintain approach is paying off for DiSanto. It is invited to bid on nearly every major landscape project in Northeast Ohio. And when quality is considered equally with price, DiSanto often gets the job. One side effect of emphasis on quality in design is the loss of public jobs due to the one-sided price consideration of public bids.

Types of work subcontracted out by the company are large irrigation work, stone work, and hydroseeding. The company does most of its own patio and deck construction. DiSanto does the rest with an in-season staff of 35 and an off-season staff of eight. In 1977, construction and maintenance each accounted for half the company's business. Very rarely does the company do only design.

Expenditures for equipment in 1977 totalled nearly \$45,000. All cars

ly cutting equipment. I just don't think the manufacturers have really addressed themselves to the landscape contractor who is using equipment six days a week. They are building equipment for the golf course and residential markets, not for the guys who are cutting millions of square footage.

When you spend \$3,000 for a piece of equipment and you have it in the shop more than once a month at \$150 each time, you get frustrated. The main problems are belts, pulleys, reels, chains, and adjustments. The local repair shops can't meet our needs nor can they provide overnight service. That is why we have backup equipment."

DiSanto showed us an old Jacobson estate mower. "They stopped making this mower two years ago. We thought it was a great mower and can't understand why they stopped making it."

"The manufacturers don't seem to realize that we load and unload mowers from trailers six or more

material comes either from Florida or California. Transportation to Ohio is risky because of the delicate nature of the plants. To fill an order for one major project may require three or four different suppliers and three to four months to get the material.

"The important thing with tropical material is the lead time necessary to acclimate the plants to their new growing conditions. Without this adjustment period, during which the plants are shaded, and gradually adjusted to lower temperatures, and humidity, the plants' chance for survival is only 60 percent. DiSanto claims that contracts are now beginning to require acclimatized material. "There are many things unknown about tropical plants and interior landscaping. It's a learning experience trying to keep these plants alive and healthy in a foreign environment."

Interior landscaping is also spreading into residential jobs. A few large homes are now being built or remodeled to accommodate tropical plants as a central feature.

The lawn care division, American Green Corp., incorporated in

1976, started primarily by making the lawn applications for existing maintenance accounts. Designed for the homeowner who does not wish a complete maintenance program, American Green applies herbicides, fungicides, and insecticides as a liquid spray and fertilizers in granular form. The firm also offers liming and a choice of liquid fertilization. Crabgrass preemergents can be mixed with the dry fertilizer and applied together.

The lawn care division uses vans which contain an 800-gallon tank for spraying and enough room for two tons of dry material. This system permits American Green to apply the various chemicals selectively, rather than using the same mixture for all accounts in one day.

As mentioned earlier, the company promises its customers, "only what your turf and trees need, and only when they need it." DiSanto and American Green manager Al DiSante (not DiSanto), have adjusted this policy slightly to align it with the lawn care customer's attitude. "The average lawn care customer is interested primarily in price and

visible results with no headaches. They do not appear to care what you put on their lawn." To confuse the customer with a large number of decisions and prices can make selling difficult. The company is still very willing to discuss alternatives with an interested customer.

Three supervisors are certified chemical applicators. Although the company has eight year-round employees, DiSanto has made it a major goal for the next two years to find a way to employ all valued employees year-round. He is working on other ideas, like interiorscaping, to keep his employees busy in the winter.

One thing that has helped DiSanto and other landscapers in Ohio is periodic meetings held by the state extension service during which contractors candidly discuss major problems. At one recent meeting a landscape contractor from Michigan discussed his business.

The company belongs to the Associated Landscape Contractors of America, Inc.; the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation; the American Horticultural Society; and the Ohio Nurserymen's Association.

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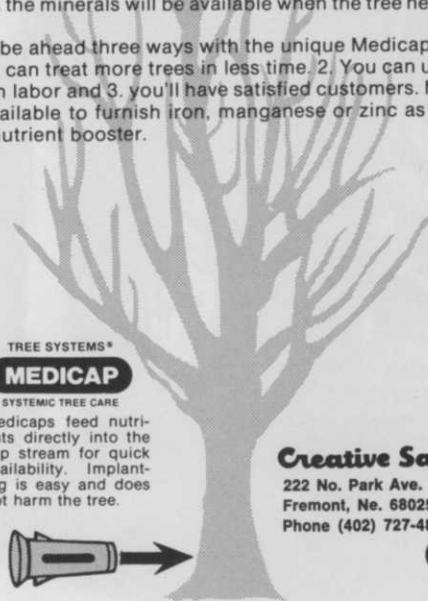
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LADYBUG INDUSTRIES: MAINTENANCE SPECIALISTS

Frank Timmon's Ladybug Industries landed its first commercial landscape maintenance job five years ago. The company now has three locations in Florida (Jacksonville, Fernandina Beach, and Boca Raton) and is grossing in the area of \$545,000 a year. The company performs only maintenance work, and some plant replacement and installation of annuals.

"We basically don't advertise. We have a quarter-page in the Yellow Pages, but for the last three years we've done no soliciting at all," says Timmons. "We've got a very good reputation in the cities and we're known for quality."

How does a company which doesn't advertise account for a 28 percent increase in business over the year before? "The bulk of our business is coming from good clients who have opened another facility or

bought another piece of property, or are operating in another city and want us to look at that. I think word of mouth and reputation has contributed to our growth as much as anything," says Timmons.

The company has 37 full-time employees. "We shoot for \$9.00 to \$9.50 per man hour," Timmons says. "We bid a lot of our work on condominiums and apartments on a unit cost basis. This will run anywhere from \$5.50 to \$8.00 a unit per month, depending on the density of the project, how much mowing there is to do, and how much shrubbery and bed work there is. You can put a good-sized mower in there and mow like crazy. Get in and get out. Others are quite sophisticated in their landscaping and they are time consuming."

Ladybug Industries handles only about 15-20 customers per year. "We

Royal Palm Plaza in Boca Raton is maintained by Ladybug.



Ladybug Industries



Ladybug keeps the busy shopping center trim and colorful. It has numerous courtyards and tree-lined walkways.



don't have a tremendous number of customers," says Timmons, "we've just got good-sized customers."

Business for Ladybug Industries is seasonal to an extent. "We start cutting the crew down around the first to 15th of October," says Timmons. "Then we'll build it back up between the 15th of March to the 15th of May, depending on how the weather goes."

The company does fertilization and shrubbery spraying, in addition to other maintenance work such as mowing. At this time, all large areas of lawn spraying are subcontracted, though there are plans to add this service in the future.

Shrubbery spraying involves several different chemicals, says Timmons, but they are readily available and we don't maintain large inventories. "We do have enough on hand to do anything we want to when we need to do it. Right now, we spend annually \$5,000 to \$7,000 on chemicals and about \$30,000 to \$32,000 on fertilizers. We find that granular is better for our purposes."

Getting and maintaining good equipment seems to be a general headache for large-scale landscape contractors. Timmons echoes that sentiment. "The equipment that is available for landscape maintenance is either for the homeowner, or it's geared toward golf course operation. "We're much harder on equipment because we're mobile. We're loading and unloading either once, twice, even five or six times a day from a truck or trailer and it just gets used much harder. For example, we'll run an edger five to seven man-hours per day. The edgers that are available today are also those available to homeowners, where they might edge for an hour or two every two weeks. They just do not hold up.

Ladybug Industries probably spends \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year for new equipment. Approximately \$24,000 to \$25,000 is spent annually for equipment parts and repair.

As far as equipment inventory, Ladybug Industries maintains one car, a four-wheel drive vehicle, six vans, and two pickups. It owns two Kubota diesel tractors (17½ and 22 hp), two 16 hp tractors, and a number of Toro Groundmasters for mowing. All equipment is owned. Other equipment includes about 35 push

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Ladybug Industries



The plaza contains almost 200 different shops and offices.



mowers, two Ryan thatchers, and three sprayers (25, 55, and 100 gallon). These sprayers are geared for hand nozzle spraying, all that is needed for the shrubbery spraying Ladybug does.

Four employees are certified pesticide applicators; all are in a supervisory capacity.

Finding qualified people is getting to be less of a problem according to Timmons. "When I first started there wasn't much interest in maintenance per say, but in the last three years it has begun to change."

"We're getting more and more inquiries from people who are graduating or will be graduating. We do still find, however, that the college graduate is not as interested in maintenance as he is in growing and landscaping, architecture, or design/build, that sort of thing.

"We will expand in the future. The type of things we will go into will be irrigation, the spraying end of the business, and of course, heavier into maintenance. We could possibly develop remedial crews where we go in and refurbish a landscape. I don't think though, at this-point-in-time, that we will get into design/build, reclamation, or that sort of thing."

Timmons feels that government regulations pose a problem. "We're concerned with EPA actions, especially the nematode problem. EPA has taken all the effective chemicals off the market. If we can't cure a problem like nematodes, the grass is slowly but surely going to be eaten up and we won't have any work to do.

"Our industry has made some good strides in the last couple of years. However, I do feel that, as far as a professionalism is concerned, we've still have a long way to go. We're probably the only service business that still is not looked upon as a professional service."

"I think the future of our business is quite bright. I see more large companies getting much larger. I see a lot of opportunity for us. Primarily because bigger and bigger jobs are becoming available. The small guy just is not going to be financially able to handle those kinds of opportunities.

"We do need to work continually to get to the point where we're considered professionals.

NAUD BURNETT: CONSTRUCTION AND DESIGN

By Naud Burnett, Dallas, Texas

Presented during the American Association of Nurserymen's 102nd Annual Convention, July 16-20, 1977, in Seattle, Washington. The presentation was arranged for by the National Landscape Association.

From its inception, the goals and policies of my companies were based on my personal experiences and observations while working for another firm, gaining invaluable experience over a seven-year period. I had the fortunate experience of being assistant to the president of a large landscape company, and sat in on all private business discussions and client contacts throughout the day. He was a master salesman, with impeccable taste, and I was an interested and observant student of his techniques and decisions.

When the situation occurred for me to leave and start out on my own it was necessary for a deep soul searching of what, where, and how, since my capital was limited. My success has been based on those past experiences, and the desire not to make the mistakes which I had observed of my previous employer. Needless to say, I have, unfortunately, repeated many of those mistakes, but have always recharted my course to correct them.

Basically, the business is built on a complete personal service of a landscape architect from beginning

to end. Personal taste, style, and experience of the landscape architect are extremely important, so that the landscape becomes an integral part of the entire, unified design. The design is based on the client's wishes and utilitarian needs, while being compatible with the architectural design, and reinforcing the architectural concept.

The landscape plan and installation become a personal art form for that specific client, and that particular design would not necessarily fit the needs of another client in the same house or building.

For an insight into our business, the following will explain how and why we do what we do.

I am a graduate landscape architect, and was teaching in college at the age of 19. Teaching did not give me the personal satisfaction I was seeking, so I chose to work in private practice for seven years. This is my twentieth year in business for myself. My goals have changed, and I have sold my business to my key personnel. I am now working for them for a minimum of five years.

Many people cannot understand my selling out and supposedly semi-retiring, but I am satisfied with a well-thought-out plan of financial security, more time with my family, and other business interests. It's now time for another generation to work 12 hours a day.

My interest also lies in the estab-

The landscape plan and installation become a personal art form for the client.

Naud Burnett

lishment of a new Hydro-Culture industry for growing plants indoors and out-of-doors without soil. It is a revolutionary concept, and is very exciting and stimulating.

We are proud of our 20 awards over the years, but especially the personnel who are responsible for the hard daily work which bring these successful jobs to a completion. Without them, it would not be possible.

Actually, the overall business is divided into two organizations. One handles design and supervision on a professional basis, with a staff of six landscape architects. The other is a landscape company which only installs plantings, with a staff of 30 to 50 employees.

Qualifications for landscape architects are much different than for landscape company personnel. They must show a flair for design, good taste, and quick understanding of problems and solutions. They should be the type of person who would make a good future partner. They can be found only by many interviews with prospective employees, and proving to the specific person that you have something to

offer them as well. Always make sure they understand "no moonlighting".

Landscape personnel qualifications vary with positions, but always honesty, knowledge, and integrity are uppermost in mind. A company-oriented person is always sought.

Qualifications for landscape architects are much different than for landscape company personnel.

Actually, little business is sought on a landscape level, as 70% is self-generated from a complete package service, and 30% comprises miscellaneous work not involving plans. Two expert sales personnel handle these miscellaneous jobs and bids, as well as the contract work from plans. Only seldom would we bid or install a job planned by another landscape architect. We do no maintenance work.


Our landscape architectural firm keeps a current prospect list (computerized), with a constant update. A regular newsletter is mailed out to this list. It has been highly successful and creates conversation.

Seasonally (twice a year), the landscape company goes back to old clients and plants spring flowers or

bulbs in the fall. This falls into the miscellaneous jobs that are not sought after. It is beneficial in keeping the older gardens blooming and up-to-date, and it allows for corrections in maintenance performed by others.

Approximately 70% of the cost of the average landscape plan is involved in the installation of construction other than plantings. The design firm gets bids from reputable



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qualified contractors, and the figures are outlined on a format so the client can make the selection of the contractor.

Contracts are signed with each individual contractor, and we charge an inspection and coordination fee of 12% of everything except swimming pools, which are 6%. No fee is charged if our company installs the planting, but is charged if done by others.

Fees for work involved are billed monthly, based on amount of bill approved for contractors. Contractors' bills are sent to us for approval, and forwarded to the client to be paid direct to the contractor. Any

Any changes in plans are confirmed by letter to eliminate any misunderstanding.

changes in plans or quotations are confirmed by letter and owner's approval, to eliminate any misunderstanding when the job ends up with a different cost.

The landscape contracts are clearly outlined as to the services, warranty, and materials to be used with a flat quotation for the job. A 30% request for prepayment is made, and subsequent periodic requests for payment are made as work progresses.

Visual aids used are photographic albums, slides shown at the office conference room, and personal tours of existing gardens.

All estimates from both firms are broken down into detail. We have no sales pitch, but rely on our integrity, experience, and reputation. Low key sales: here it is — this is what it costs — you're buying it. We do explain that if they wish, the cost could go up or down with more expensive materials or smaller sizes. Clients seem to be pleased when you say here it is, study it, and we can get back together if you don't want to make the decision today. It is going to be more expensive next year.

All warranties on construction are by contractors. Landscaping warranty covers loss for one year, with a clause for exceptions due to "acts of God." Landscape architects are insured for professional liability for one million dollars.

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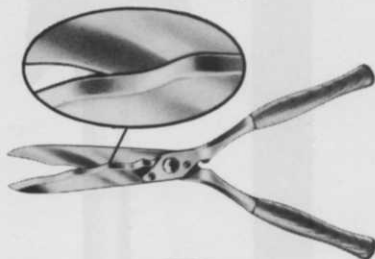
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where cost is not as important as quality and responsibility. It personally gives me the satisfaction of seeing beautiful jobs executed; that is as important an ingredient to life as making money. If there is any image we attempt to project, it is that we strive for perfection that is never attained.

Our personnel are trained in weekly meetings, and taking new employees along on appointments.

Charges for landscape plans and specifications are based from experience on time involved in solving a particular problem. In most instances, the fee is a flat fee, but we also do work on percentage and time

We strive for perfection that is never attained.

basis. The plans and specifications are very detailed, and vary in cost from \$400 to \$30,000.

We normally work within a ten state area on landscape plans, and stay within the Dallas metroplex on landscape contracting.

Our sales personnel are urged to wear coats and ties (sometimes difficult in Dallas summers). Planting crews wear uniforms.

We have no sales yard, as we do no retail business, but we have a storage lot where typical specimens may be observed in container or permanently planted in a landscape setting. Our plant holding area is one acre in the central city, and 20 acres on the outskirts of the city. Our offices are well located, and expensively furnished.

We advertise in D-Magazine, newsletters, and Junior League Magazine. All hit the upper market. Our logos are used on all publications and printed matter, and are distinctive. Letterheads, business forms, etc., have been in a constant state of evolution over the period of 20 years. Signs are used on trucks that are identical to easels used on each job. These are excellent advertising tools at no constant expense.

I hope this gives you an insight into the inner workings of one Dallas landscape firm. Undoubtedly, these procedures are repeated by each of you, with variations, as no one does anything the same way.

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