

LAWN AND TURF, INC. MEETING ALL CUSTOMER NEEDS



Grady Hassell, president of Lawn and Turf, Inc.

Lawn and Turf, Inc., is a full service distributor in Conyers, Georgia, 30 miles east of Atlanta. Equipment repair, leasing, educational seminars, irrigation component sales, and a small chemical business make up Lawn and Turf and keep its customers from looking elsewhere for supplies.

Each year, 1,000 companies spend more than \$3 million at Grady Hassell's 15-year-old distributorship. Customers include the city of Atlanta, 260 golf courses, 50 parks and municipalities, 35 lawn care companies, and 15 landscape contractors.

Grady has been in the turf equipment business for 21 years and says he enjoys every day. Established with the help of Jacobsen in 1964, Hassell now employs 28 persons and the walls of his 24,000 sq. ft. building are starting to bulge.

Lawn and Turf now carries Cushman, RainBird, Gravely, Excel, Heckendorn, Broyhill, Royer, Olathe, Par Aide, and Standard equipment.

The chemical business, maintained mainly as a service to equipment customers, grosses \$50,000 each year. Lines carried are Elanco, Du Pont, PBI-Gordon, Mallinckrodt and Toco.

"We don't really put much effort into chemicals and fertilizer because we do it as a service. However, for the effort put in the profit is good," says Hassell. "Equipment and service are the backbone of our business."

"We also carry the Jacobsen homeowner line as a retailer, not distributor. The \$25,000 brought in from this line still comes mainly from our commercial customers."

Lawn and Turf maintains an



inventory valued at \$650,000 at all times. Half is equipment for display and stock, and the other is chemicals and repair parts. Each year Lawn and Turf does about \$200,000 business in service and parts to equipment customers.

"Half our customers are equipped to do their own repair work," Hassell states. "The remainder depend upon us. Our biggest suggestion for equipment customers is that they bring their equipment in for winter repair and not wait until spring. In the winter, repairs can be made more carefully and getting parts from the manufacturer is less of a problem."

Other suggestions from Hassell are to maintain a stock of commonly replaced parts such as rotary blades, points and condensers, etc. "This year we've had more difficulty getting parts from manufacturers fast," Hassell says. "Manufacturers could not keep pace with the demand."

Lawn and Turf has a full-time staff of six in service. Usual turnaround is a week. Some items such as greensmowers receive priority.

"We like to think that all equipment is good and it's the local distributor or dealer that makes the difference," Hassell remarks. It depends upon the people and the service they provide whether a particular brand is strong in one area and weak in another."

Another service extra provided by Lawn and Turf is leasing. "We do ten to 15 percent of our equipment business this way through a company called Equico. The customer puts down about ten percent and then makes monthly payments. At the end of the lease he can buy the equipment if desired."

More than 600 people a year attend educational and product seminars at Lawn and Turf. Budget counseling is also offered to help supervisors justify equipment expenses to superiors. "The good supervisor knows how to do his job well, but often needs help in projecting his budget to present to his superiors. We help them justify purchases by showing efficiency improvements and helping them prepare necessary documents," says Grady.

"We have noticed in the past couple of years that budgets aren't getting completed and approved until July and August. Whereas budgets and purchases used to be approved early in the year, now it seems many more are buying after July. We now do probably half our volume in the second half of the year. Another factor is that companies try to get along without a piece of equipment first. Then, they place an order the day after they need it."

"Our major suppliers require stocking orders in September for about 60 percent of our annual purchase. We receive that stock usually by December. Beyond that, we have sales meetings to project customer needs on a weekly basis and make appropriate orders."

Hassell believes the greatest potential in the turf equipment business today is rotary mowers in the 25 to 72 in. range. These mowers range in price from \$3,000 to \$5,000 and were designed for use other than golf courses.

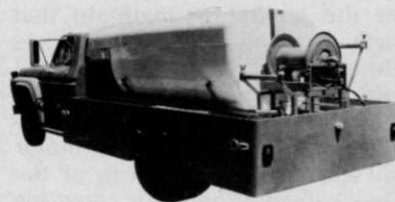
"The golf course market is tremendous, but since 1974 the golf market has not shown growth. It is mainly a replacement market," Grady states.

Most of Lawn and Turf's promotion is through direct mail and regional trade shows. "We send an attractive piece with a cover letter that hopefully doesn't end up in the trash like many direct mail promotions," Hassell says.

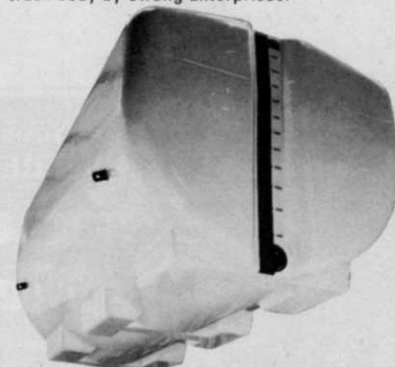
Lawn and Turf's formula of full service and a complete product line is working. In 1978 its sales increased 12 percent. Another reason is Hassell's attention to detail. He knows every percentage of productivity and sales without checking. Together, they make up a strong force in Georgia turf equipment sales and service. **WTT**



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