

# OLSEN DISTRIBUTING CO. CAREFUL, STEADY GROWTH

Olsen Distributing Company in Barrington, Illinois, is an equipment distributor and a chemical dealer. More than half of Bob Olsen's business is to retail turf supply outlets. Forty percent is direct to turf users in the landscape, nursery and golf course business.

"We've grown carefully but still quickly in our seven years of operation," Olsen says. "I think a problem with a lot of companies is that they grow too fast and then don't have the capital to maintain that growth. I've had to turn down lines in the past year that two years ago I would have given anything to get."

"Manufacturers don't put restrictions on what lines a distributor might carry, but the nature of the business does. When you carry too many lines, or competitive lines, you don't do justice to any of them," Olsen says. "I think when you go out

to sell and only have one line on your mind, you're going to zero in and do a better job selling that concept."

Olsen's theory of business is maintaining a variety of lines to fit the needs of individual customers. "You can put a higher priced item into an area where people are not really price conscious, but you have to put economical products into areas where they are demanded."

Olsen has his own private label on fertilizer formulated by Knox Fertilizer Company in Indiana. He also carries Swift's Par-Ex fertilizer's, Lebanon Country Club, USS Steel, and W.R. Grace.

Equipment lines are normally determined at the National Hardware Show. "You can get a good idea of what is on the market in one or two days," Olsen says. "Plus you can see and handle the actual product."

Olsen Distributing Company is represented at shows all over the country, such as The Garden Industry of America show in Kansas City last year and in Cincinnati this year. Olsen has been involved with the Mid-America Trade show for twenty years. He is a member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and will be in the Bobcat booth at their show in Atlanta this year.

Olsen discovered Bobcat from a quarter page ad in a trade journal. He picked up the phone, dialed the factory, and "its been a mutually tremendous relationship", he says.

He also distributes Power Trim, Hoffco, F.D. Kees, Columbia Products, and Hudson. Olsen does not feel that there is a financial advantage in handling his own private brands. "Today, with the major manufacturers and the dollars they have to put into advertising, one is not really more profitable than the other. However, maybe we have a town where there are two different retailers. We can put, say, W.R. Grace's Wonder-Grow line into one and then we can put our private label into the other. It gives you selectivity and flexibility."

All of the equipment handled through Olsen Distributing is sold through servicing dealers. Olsen feels the equipment he handles can only be as good as the dealer backing it up. "In finding new dealers, we normally go by recommendation. I had a recommendation and made a contact at the Regional Lawn Mower Association show and it resulted in a new dealer.

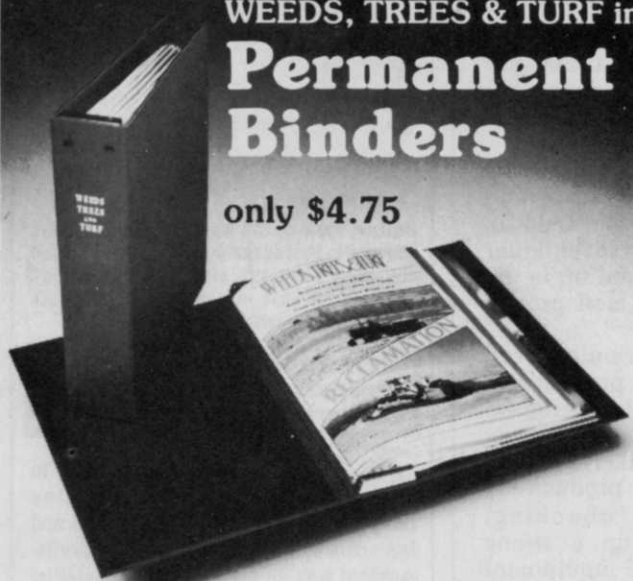
"I personally go and visit a potential dealer, and look at the man's service shop to see if he is adequately set up to service the type of equipment we have. I want all our equipment backed up."

To that end, Olsen Distributing Company also backs up its products. Olsen maintains a large inventory, stocking everything that they sell. Olsen feels that his customers have a definite service advantage. He also stocks parts for his dealers.

Prices are established according to the product and the policies of the manufacturers. Many items have suggested retail prices. Others, such as grass seed, are priced FOB from the factory. "In that case, we have to

**Preserve Your Copies of  
WEEDS, TREES & TURF in  
Permanent  
Binders**

**only \$4.75**



Custom-made binder easily holds entire year's copies of WTT magazine. Green binder with gold embossed logo protects your magazines and gives your library a neat appearance. Magazines can be inserted as they are received. Annual index in December issue makes it easy to find information you need quickly . . . Send check or money order to:

**WEEDS TREES & TURF**  
9800 Detroit Ave.  
Cleveland, Ohio 44102



**1978 Bob-Cat Distributor of the Year** award is presented to Bob Olsen and his wife Betty (right) by Wisconsin Marine's Dick Lehman.

establish a retail and wholesale price," says Olsen.

Olsen holds equipment demonstrations for his dealers. As soon as a new building is completed, Olsen plans to arrange seminars for customers with university turf experts.

Olsen orders most of its stock in October. It arrives in November and December.

"Right now is the best time to order equipment," says Olsen. "We have an early order program which delays billing until June when customers are beginning to receive revenue from their customers. We start delivering in January. Early orders are up 20 percent over last winter," Olsen boasts.

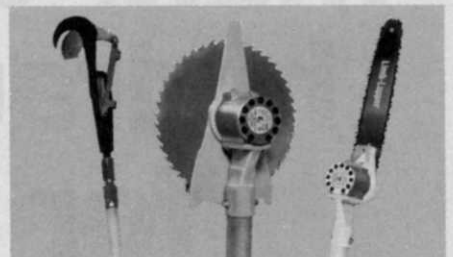
Olsen says the distributor reduces debt problems for manufacturers. "At our end we investigate customers if we need to. I knew many of my customers before starting the company and I depended upon them when I first got started."

For the future, Olsen is excited about distributing for LR Nelson, an irrigation supply manufacturer in Peoria. He has also added Disston rakes and tools. He fully expects 1979 to be another good year. **WTT**

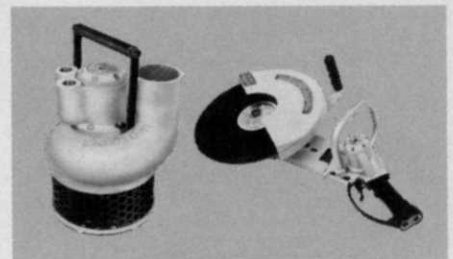
## CUT MAINTENANCE TIME and COSTS

### Limb Lopper Hydraulic Tools

Combine Limb Lopper versatile hand tools with your existing system for faster, more efficient maintenance operations. Use them with digger-derrick, bucket truck, other mobile equipment or portable power pack.



#### CUT AND PRUNE



#### PUMP AND SAW



#### DRILL AND TAMP



*Light, fast and tough!*

**Limb Lopper**

See your local dealer or write:

**Robinson Industries**  
11845 Burke Street  
Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670  
(213) 945-1077