

VIEWPOINT

by Bruce F. Shank, Editor



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Smaller associations could use economies of a central service

This past month I spent days with leaders of both the National Arborist Association and the Professional Grounds Management Society. It is now clear to me that smaller associations may have fewer members and smaller treasuries, but their reason for being is as important as larger industry associations. Their significance is too often overshadowed by the larger groups with full-time professional staffs and sophisticated publications. As a result, association leaders who volunteer their time and energy occasionally feel less important than leaders in big associations.

Do we really need all these smaller, individual market associations? Can all Green Industries be organized and represented by the American Association of Nurserymen?

The answer to these questions may be found in the creation of our newest industry association, The Professional Lawn Care Association of America.

The lawn care businessmen who formed this group obviously felt their needs were not being met by existing associations. Furthermore, they needed a unified voice just in their industry to deal with fly-by-night operators who frequent all Green Industries, especially those in a rapid growth position.

In the first three months of existence, PLCAA created a code of ethics, circulated it to industry and consumer media, and reacted to one unsubstantiated charge from a regional sod producers association. They have promptly moved to guard their reputation as ethical businessmen and to show that their service is as vital to the Green Industry as any other.

Therefore, it is clear the existence of PLCAA is justified, as is the existence of other associations created to meet the needs of specific market segments.

At the same time we need to take care of the industry overall and to make association membership reasonably affordable.

Directors of landscape, arborist, and nursery associations meet periodically as a council. All national industry associations should take part in this council.

Perhaps one of the problems this council should discuss is the problem of paying for numerous association memberships. Due to rising costs, both the member and the association are financially pressed for funds. Individual membership associations are feeling the pinch the most.

There is a need for specific market associations and an overall organizational body.

The subject of associations and membership needs vast attention. There are many aspects to explore, such as interassociation cooperation, representation in governmental affairs, and joint sponsorship of industry research and development.

As there is a need for the specific market association, there is need for an overall organizational body. This organizational hub could economically provide association needs such as printing, billing, and technical data. There are many things it could do to organize, support, and direct the flow of industry resources for the benefit of all markets.

Perhaps this is dreaming, impossible, or simply naive. Perhaps we are all too wrapped up in our own worlds to cooperate and rock the boat. But it makes sense and it could happen if the interest is there.

The central body already exists in the American Association of Nurserymen and allied agencies. If AAN is willing and the other Green Industry Associations are willing, it's worth a shot.

WTT