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# OUTLOOK

The more we try to gauge trends in the economy the more we realize how unpredictable our complex economy is. It is complexity that is preventing severe problems currently.

That is not to say many are not being severely hurt by conditions at present. Hundreds of thousands of auto workers will tell you that. But the Green Industries may get just a light shower rather than a monsoon.

Nonresidential construction contracts are holding their own so far. Architects are keeping busy and even expanding in the Sun Belt. Non-residential landscape construction will benefit from winter contracts for a year or more. Highway construction has received a helping hand by a recent surge in Federal dollars. Erosion control and highway maintenance contractors will get a boost eventually from this news.

The maintenance contractor faces the toughest challenge with fertilizer prices jumping 15 to 20 percent, gas-

oline prices likely to rise another 30 percent, and similar price hikes for other petrochemicals and supplies. A recent survey by ALCA provides additional cause for concern because the average profit of landscape contractors was 4.24 percent. There is not much fat to work with. ALCA also reports average liabilities of \$321,000 on assets of \$520,000, \$171,000 of these fixed assets. Capital averaged \$197,000.

It is critical that everyone in the Green Industry get a handle on his books. Taking jobs for a loss just to get cash flow or to showoff may be a fatal mistake in a tight year such as this. Jobs should be priced individually, carefully, and with all overhead considered.

Business consultant Warren Purdy gave an excellent talk on costs at the ALCA show last-month. I'd recommend that local associations arrange financial management seminars as soon as possible to help their members keep dry in 1980.




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# LETTERS

On the front cover of the December issue the caption for the tree illustrated was Buckeye or Horse Chestnut. These two are as different as the silver and sugar maples. The Ohio buckeye (*Aesculus glabra*) has smaller greenish yellow upright panicle six-in. high flowers, is more roundheaded and broader, five leaflets and palmately compound, colors up a good orange in autumn and the winter terminal buds are clean.

Whereas the horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) usually has seven leaflets also palmately compound, poor fall color, very susceptible to leaf scorch, more upright, very sticky buds in winter and whitish flowers with red and yellow throated 10- to 12-in. flower clusters.

Dr. L.C. Chadwick, Professor Emeritus of Horticulture at Ohio

State University, is very emphatic in the differentiation of these two species.

Dick Sebian, Grounds Construction Foreman  
S.U.N.Y. Buffalo, NY

*Thank you for your correction. The fact that one is considerably more susceptible to leaf scorch is worth the attention of anyone who specifies trees for low maintenance landscapes. By the way, Dr. Chadwick has been writing Doug Chapman regularly on Doug's tree selection series. He still is emphatic on differentiation of trees according to hardiness, disease resistance, and proper use of trees in landscapes.*

Why isn't there more emphasis

placed on certification of landscaper skills? It is now being done in the automotive industry to weed out the schlock work.

K.S., Germantown, MD

*Your point is well taken by the executives of both the Professional Grounds Management Society and the Associated Landscape Contractors who are viewing such programs. There has been some resistance to certification in certain states due to ineffectiveness by government agencies and their enforcement. The association method of certification seems to be preferred. PGMS has just begun accepting application for certification. Interested persons should contact PGMS, Allen Shulder, 19 Hawthorne Ave., Pikesville, MD 21208, 301-653-2742.*