

OUTLOOK

By Bruce F. Shank, Editor

Associations, Manufacturers Wrestle With Segmentation

Regional landscape-related shows have been outdrawing many national shows and this is discouraging to national associations trying to build larger memberships and to gain more support from manufacturers at their shows. Manufacturers, trying to get the most out of their show budgets, are also torn between regional and national shows.

Apparently, segmentation has not only increased among the various landscape markets, but regional segmentation is growing. Most recent examples are the lawn care show in Memphis, and the regional nursery and landscape shows in California, Florida, Texas, Ohio, and the Northwest. Some of these shows are drawing thousands of attendants and hundreds of exhibitors while national shows attract perhaps 30 exhibitors and 400 attendants. Obviously, the GCSAA show is an exception.

Manufacturers are adjusting marketing efforts to this segmentation although their marketing budgets may not increase accordingly. 1981 has been a year of change for many Green Industry suppliers in regard to marketing.

I've spent most of my time the past five weeks visiting associations and manufacturers. The subject of shows was on the minds of both groups. Many manufacturers are relying on regional shows. Chemical companies selling products under Special Local Needs labels may pull out all stops for particular regional shows. However, with these exceptions, manufacturers would prefer to concentrate on national shows.

Chemical makers with limited production, especially manufacturers of preemergence herbicides, find it convenient to sell basic chemicals to large regional distributors for reformulation and marketing. Equipment manufacturers, aware of weaknesses in depressed regions, direct marketing efforts at growth regions and assist distribu-

tors in those regions. Clearly recession has encouraged segmentation. As a result, regional associations are receiving more support from national manufacturers.

Meanwhile, national associations are strongly opposed to further segmentation on the national level. Groups that have developed in the last two years, the Professional Lawn Care Association of America and the Interior Landscape Association, have irked the officials of existing national associations.

Some national associations have chosen to reduce services in light of economic conditions. Others are



sharing resources to provide member services. The Interior Landscape Association and the Interior Landscape Division of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America met in May to discuss areas of duplication in service and to plan for future cooperation. The American Institute of Landscape Architects is currently voting on the issue of joining with the American Society of Landscape Architects.

The concern is most obvious when regional groups attempt to become national. A recent case is the announcement by the California Landscape Contractors' Association that it has changed the name of its Landscape Industry Show to National Landscape Industry Show for 1982. I can understand

'Southwest Landscape Industry Show,' but 'national' makes show organizers look somewhat big-headed. Granted California is probably the biggest market, but the regional association should make an effort to be more cooperative on a national scale.

I just feel that regional groups should remember their roots. There are many things that depend upon national impact which regional groups can't supply by themselves. These include lobbying for and against Federal legislation, financial support of needed research, and supplying national data to support the registration of needed chemicals and the development of needed equipment. Believe me, manufacturers and government officials won't accept a person's word anymore. They need proof before they act. One regional group may influence two senators and a few congressmen, but that won't get a Federal bill passed. It takes national effort to influence Federal legislation and product decisions by national manufacturers.

Segmentation is justified only by changes in the market. Since the onset of recession changes have been minimal with the biggest shift toward sunbelt cities. Cooperation and consolidation, where practical are needed to maintain integrity and a healthy level of growth.

Nursery Business Up in Midwest, Northeast

Drought and insects have taken their toll and homeowners and professionals are buying plant material in dramatically improved volumes, report nurserymen in the Midwest and Northeast. Homeowners are making the decision to fix up what they have rather than buy new homes with 16 percent mortgage rates. Perhaps there is also new awareness of the energy benefits of landscaping. We'll get specific information on the first two quarters of 1981 and pass it on as soon as possible.

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