

OUTLOOK

By Bruce F. Shank, Executive Editor

Planning for Recovery

Timing is critical in planning for economic recovery. Jump too soon and a good idea may flop. Wait too long and others will have the momentum and the materials on hand when business comes.

Economists now see high interest rates through 1981 and falling in spring or early summer '82.

So, we are looking at late spring or early summer before housing starts begin increasing again. Companies, encouraged by faster depreciation, should act quickly to take advantage of lower interest rates for commercial construction. From a landscaper's point of view, new residential landscape construction will not take place for six or more months after residential recovery and 12 months or more following commercial construction recovery. From now until the autumn of 1982 new business will be hard to find.

One interim solution may be the home improvement market. Focus marketing where recovery time is much shorter.

It is a good idea to learn alternative financing for your type of jobs. You should be able to intelligently discuss the advantages or disadvantages of second mortgages, home improvement loans, and management of taxes with a potential customer. Ask your accountant to keep you informed on all creative methods of paying for landscaping.

Another thought, it's one thing to tell a homeowner that landscaping increases the value of his home. It's another thing to prove it with comparable listings from a real estate firm in the area. Equal to value of real estate is how quickly it sells. Real estate brokers have had it fairly rough in many areas. You may be able to help them move more houses with alteration of landscaping.

In late spring, start meeting with building contractors in your area to judge contract potential for the fall. Let them know you want to bid on their projects. Early news of a potential job can help prepare you to bid it carefully.

Maintenance

Recent news of possible shortages of preemergence herbicides for 1982 should not be ignored. Some adjustment will be necessary for maintenance operations and golf courses. Contact your local distributor immediately for his stock situation.

Take a good look at your equipment and seek advice on improving depreciation deductions. If it becomes apparent that a unit will not make it another year without major overhauling, perhaps you can take advantage of 1982 tax law changes and still reserve the equipment this year. Many manufacturers have spring delivery programs.

Major investments such as irrigation may fit nicely into depreciation planning. Tractor manufacturers are anxious to sell due to decreased agricultural machinery sales.

The point is you have to gauge many factors to set your recovery timing. If you just wait for things to happen, chances are you will take longer than others to bounce back. Haven't we all waited long enough? **WTT**

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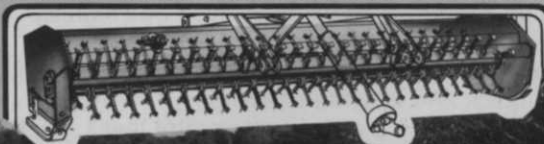
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