



# WT&T

## OUTLOOK

By Bruce F. Shank, Executive Editor

### A Market Worth Attention

While writing the State of the Industry Report I realized that suppliers aren't keeping up with you. You are changing and growing faster than they realize.

Put yourself in their boots. When you purchase advertising in most cases the business derived comes straight to you. When manufacturers advertise, the business goes to the distributor first. They wait much longer for feedback from their advertising.

Another thing we've learned is large manufacturers wrap up planning for the coming year in May or June. They are just getting initial feedback from distributors for the current year when they have to predict the next year. That is tough for anyone to do. They have to rely on historic information rather than current conditions.

To bridge the gap we often show them surveys we've done with you. We started doing regular research in 1978 and its paying off. We can prove to manufacturers, our advertisers, that you are changing and in what ways. Even then, historic data is used to challenge us.

Erik Haupt of the National Arborist Association said it best, "We have to utilize every bit of technical information out there to survive and prosper."

Some of our surveys had comments written on the bottom indicating the respondent doesn't read magazines or books or belong to an association. They know what's right for them. To me that's sad. I suppose they still use Bordeaux mixture for diseases.

My point is, without realizing it, I find myself defending the intelligence and business abilities of the landscape industry to its manufacturers and suppliers, when it should be known. The landscape architects and the lawn care businessmen have fought through this haze of disbelief to surprise everyone. They did it by unifying their efforts and proving with statistics their accomplishments.

Some of our efforts are beginning to pay off. Chemical companies are creating specialty products groups to serve the landscape markets. Stauffer, MoBay, and Rhone Poulenc are three examples. They have assigned staff just for our markets, to keep in touch, and to note change.

The lure of consumer sales still pervades the equipment manufacturers. Most of them started out on the professional side and moved over to consumer. Companies paying close attention to the landscape market will get the orders when recession lifts, or they have their distributors to thank for keeping close to the market.

The landscape markets are solid, healthy markets. They deserve complete or at least special attention.

Even the Census Bureau is adapting to the informational needs of the landscape market. That will help a great deal. It took associations pressuring the Census Bureau to accomplish the changes. It too was going by precedent and history rather than following our progress. Like agriculture, landscaping is far into the billions of dollars today. We deserve, or perhaps expect, more attention. **WTT**

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