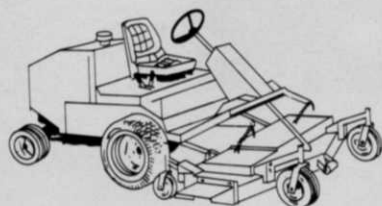


## Doing More With Less

School landscape managers seek ways to increase maintenance efficiency.

By Bruce F. Shank, Executive Editor

### School Mowing Equipment.



Riding Mowers

88% of schools have an average of 4



Trim Mowers

88% of schools have an average of 8.7



Mid-Size Walkers

23% of schools have an average of 3

Managers of school landscapes are facing a potentially severe mismatch between funding and property use according to the latest *Weeds Trees & Turf* survey. Nearly 70 percent of the school landscape managers reported their budgets have grown less than the inflation rate. Thirty percent said their budgets had not been increased at all.

"Doing more with less" was a common remark from survey respondents. "We have to be able to keep the campus and playing fields in usable condition with less help and more field use," said one respondent. A private college director of grounds said, "The most significant challenge in the next ten years will be to keep the campus maintained to high standards. With talk of budget cutbacks, reduction in manpower, and the college wanting to make the campus a showplace, it will be necessary to come up with new ideas and equipment to get more work with less money, labor, and water."

A public university landscape manager told *Weeds Trees & Turf*

accountability for expenditures and labor will be asked before budgets are increased or saved from cutbacks. "Computerization of operations by the school administration will force us to look at our work more as preventative than

"With budget cutbacks, manpower reductions, and the need to make the campus a showplace; we need new ideas to do more work with less money, labor, and water."

just maintenance. I would say my position will and has become more of a manager and planner than a working position."

A management view of his private school by one director of facilities is, "Probably the biggest challenge to me has been to

accommodate all of the various teams with playable fields. Next in line is water availability. Then women are becoming more interested in all sports. This is putting a drain on the available space. We are now in the process of proposing construction of two new fields, but this also adds to our water problem."

A public school general foreman has a bare bones attitude, "Due to the excessive damage done to school property, landscaping will have to become more basic, meaning a bare minimum of shrubs and beds. Flowering plants and bulbs are now extinct. Trees have to be larger when planted or they don't stand a chance. Seeding lawn areas is almost impossible to do anymore."

School landscape managers are more equipment oriented than chemical oriented. Some feel a responsibility to keep chemical usage down in public areas. As a result, they favor an equipment solution to efficiency. "Manufacturers and distributors can help me by producing things that can do more than one job," said a public school landscape manager.

General campus areas and athletic fields are the predominant responsibilities of school landscape managers. A third of the respondents also are responsible for gardens or an arboretum. Interior plants were described as a responsibility by 12 percent of the group. Less than five percent cared for golf courses.

A fourth of the respondents give some jobs to landscape contractors. While a large majority of the managers feel their crews can do a better job than the contractors, nearly half see the benefits of less equipment overhead and freeing up staff for other duties. Labor

*Continued on page 62*

seems to be more of a concern than equipment cost to the schools.

Schools that use contractors spend an average of \$4,700 for maintenance and \$4,000 for planting. The average amount spent per year for landscape equipment purchase is \$10,735. In addition, the schools spend an average of \$4,136 to maintain equipment each year.

The respondents spent an average of \$5,900 for landscape chemicals in 1982.

The riding mower is king to the school landscape manager. Less than 25 percent use large, walk-behind mowers, proven to be more efficient than riders in 32- to 60-inch widths for many areas. Trim mowers abound with an av-

erage of more than 8 per school. If school managers follow efficiency tests by landscape contractors, they will replace many of the trim mowers and a few of the riding mowers with mid-size, walk-behind rotaries.

More than three-fourths of the schools have seeder/spreaders (2.7 each average). Sixty-five percent have spray units (1.6).

Aerifiers, proven to help compacted, heavily used areas, are owned by more than 60 percent of the schools. Less than a fifth of the schools own wood chippers.

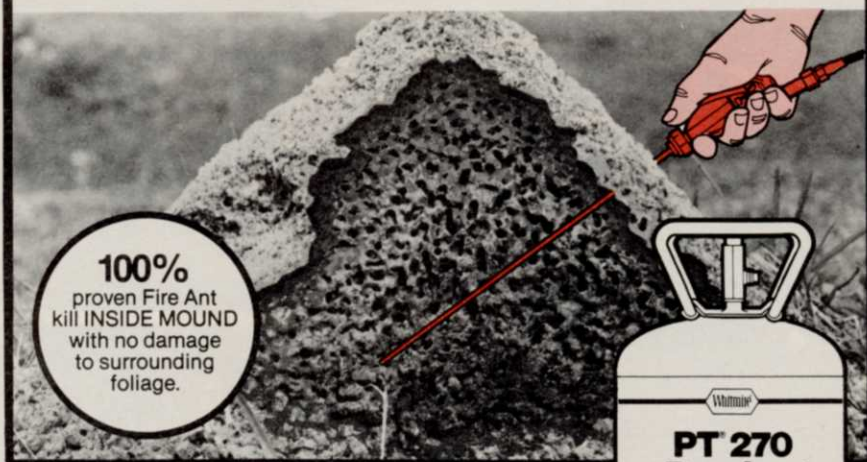
Pickup trucks are the primary transportation of school landscape crews with an average of 2.5 per school. Larger trucks are owned by nearly 60 percent of the schools responding and 35 percent use smaller turf vehicles and trucksters.

Comparing this year's survey to the one *Weeds Trees & Turf* published in August 1982, contractors are not gaining school work. They have actually lost some of the school work, dropping from 33 percent to 23 percent.

Equipment expenditures have risen roughly 8 percent and chemical expenditures have gained nearly 20 percent. It does appear that landscape staff size has decreased markedly. This year's respondents average only five full-time landscape crew members compared to eight in our last survey.

There is a clear desire to reduce labor-intensive landscape tasks by reducing high maintenance plant material and designs and using more efficient equipment. School landscape managers are trying to get students and the public involved in their programs to gain their support. They are also trying to get a better handle on job costs to justify the budgets they have or to receive increases. There is the sense they are seeking, and could justify, solutions to efficiency in maintenance. Increasing use of athletic fields is taking a bigger chunk of their budgets. They will invest in methods to lower maintenance costs where possible. **WTT**

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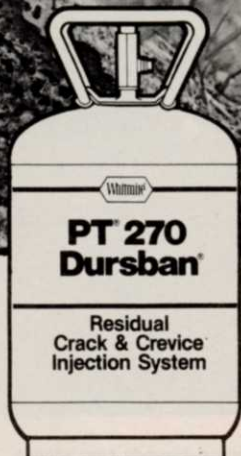
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