

Government Cutbacks Force Increased Efficiency

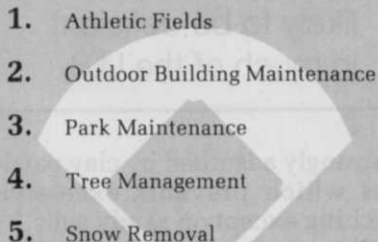
Park superintendent job grows
as staff size and budgets shrink

By Maureen Hrehocik, associate editor

The economy has put a tight lid on government landscapers' budgets, and according to the results of a Weeds Trees & Turf survey, staff sizes have stayed the same or decreased.

The average budget for government maintenance in 1983 is \$270,000, with an average \$50,000 budget for landscape construction. The average staff size is 17.5, with number of personnel ranging from 1 to 175. "Our staff has been reduced to one-half its original size in 1975 through the attrition process. But the areas of respon-

Most Important Areas of Work

- 
1. Athletic Fields
 2. Outdoor Building Maintenance
 3. Park Maintenance
 4. Tree Management
 5. Snow Removal

involved in municipal government landscape management of, on the average, 1,020 acres (50 under some form of irrigation). Those answering the survey came from a broad range of city, state, county and military landscape management, including school superintendents, grounds foremen, crew chiefs, park rangers, gardeners, airport managers and entomologists.

Athletic fields, outdoor maintenance of buildings and park maintenance ranked among the most important areas of care for the respondents. Least important

were military installations, cemeteries, golf courses, street and airport maintenance.

The most common type of machinery owned by managers were tractors, small push mowers, chain saws, large riding mowers, dump trucks, string trimmers and fertilizer chemical spreaders.

Most contract out tree trimming and plant and landscape installation . . .

Repairs are most frequently done by state, county or city service departments or city mechanics. Many repairs are done by the equipment operator.

A resounding majority of those who answered the questionnaire were responsible for purchasing chemicals, seed and equipment for their agency or division, usually under bid. Most budget planning is done in February and March.

Fertilizers were the most frequently used chemical by a majority of the respondents, followed by herbicides for turf weed control and herbicides for total vegetation control. Few used growth regulators or wetting agents.

Trade magazines, publications and journals provide the primary source of information for new seed varieties, chemicals and equipment. Company sales reps, seminars and advertisements are

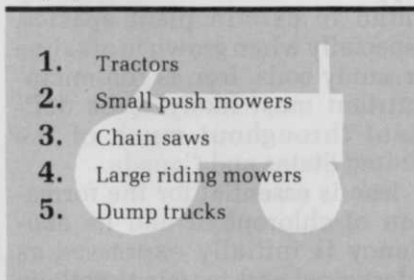
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sibility and maintenance have increased," said one respondent. Another respondent said with the tight money situation, he will be feeling the effects for a "few more years, at least."

One park superintendent said his 1983-84 budget plan of attack will be greater use of chemicals, large mowing equipment, specialists, park planning, maintenance management, low-maintenance turf and computer use.

The majority of respondents were in supervisory positions and

Most Common Types of Equipment Owned

- 
1. Tractors
 2. Small push mowers
 3. Chain saws
 4. Large riding mowers
 5. Dump trucks

Regularly-Used Chemicals

1. Fertilizers
2. Herbicides for turf weed control
3. Herbicides for total vegetation control
4. Tree Insecticides
5. Fungicides

also used to decide a maintenance program as well as purchases.

Most contract out tree trimming and plant and landscape installation as well as tree removal, grading, asphalt repair, ballfield dugouts, snow removal and tree moving.

Most landscape managers agreed the property they managed is in passable shape for its use and felt that major improvement in public landscaping would be a hard issue to sell to voters.

An almost equal split of respondents thought a degree was necessary to perform the duties of government landscape manager, while the other half thought it was unnecessary. Some of their thoughts:

***"We normally have too many other duties beside the care of the land. The persons hired by our school district learn from trial and error or from a salesman. We normally pay too low to hire professional employees."

***"It (degree) would be helpful to some degree, but my duties are so varied, the degree would be of limited benefit."

***"A degree requirement may eliminate well-qualified non-degreed persons. But extensive knowledge is definitely needed for quality results."

***"This is a highly competitive and technical profession. Our entry-level positions require only a high school education, but

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almost all our entry level staff have degrees. A degree specifically in horticulture or business is not necessary, however, but they should be the two of the most useful disciplines to be considered."

And on the other side of the coin:

***"You deal with so many people from all walks of life you must know the material and be a good business executive as well."

"The ideal person is one with a degree AND experience." **WTT**

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