

The parks maintenance department in Oak Ridge, TN, encourages citizens and workers to grade its work.

Report Card for Parks

by Maureen Hrehocik, managing editor



One of the picturesque flower gardens in Jackson Square.

Not too many maintenance departments receive comments about their maintenance practices from the public, that is unless they make an all-out effort to solicit them.

The parks department of the City of Oak Ridge, TN, has done just that, and the results have shown a "dramatic" increase in productivity as well as quality of work.

Bill Sewell, director of recrea-

tion and parks and Larry Bailey, parks superintendent are behind the project that lets citizens grade the landscape upkeep of the city's buildings and facilities, athletic fields, community parks and flower gardens.

"What we found is that our personnel began to look at their work more than just a job and more as a personal responsibility because they knew the citizens of the town would be looking carefully at

what they did," said Bailey. "Their specific areas of responsibility improved dramatically."

Bailey has taken the concept one step further. The employees also grade their work.

"They're their own worst critics," he said.

Bailey, 36, has devised a comprehensive 81-page grading manual with guidelines and photographs of "acceptable" and "unacceptable" levels of mainte-

nance in certain areas. The areas are then given checks. At the end, the checks are tallied up and converted to a percentage, much like in school.

... specific areas of responsibility improved dramatically,

"We would like all of our areas to be at least a 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale)," said Bailey.

The improvement to the entire city's landscaping has improved tremendously since the outset of the new program.

and was considered a "boom town."

All of the flurry has long since passed, but a commitment to the town hasn't — especially when it comes to maintenance.

Bailey has been with the division of recreation for 13 years and supervisor for six of them. He oversees 1,100 acres of turf including 15 public buildings, 12 athletic fields, 12 flower gardens, eight city parks, two baseball fields with Tifway (T- 419) bermudagrass infields, five regular softball fields and four soccer fields. The majority of turf is K-31 tall fescue.

He works with a \$194,399 budget and has the help of 6.5 people year-round and two extra helpers

tions related to grounds maintenance, athletic field maintenance, beautification, safety, preventive maintenance on equipment and other related topics and use the department's VCR as a training tool," Bailey explained.

Bailey's degree is in Forestry from the University of Tennessee. He has also taken short courses on turf management and landscape

Bailey has made an on-the-job training program a long-term goal to have implemented by summer 1985.

maintenance, but the availability of taking his crewmen with him to such seminars, hasn't been there.

"I'm hoping this will give us an opportunity to offer our employees something very essential to the performance of their duties," he said.

Weeds & insects

Bailey says his biggest maintenance headaches are weeds and pest control.

Chickweed, dandelions, nut-sedge, crowfoot, annual bluegrass, henbit, kudzu, wild garlic, plantain, purslane and ground ivy are the weeds that give Bailey and his crews the most trouble. His treatment for the weed problem depends on the weed itself and its location.

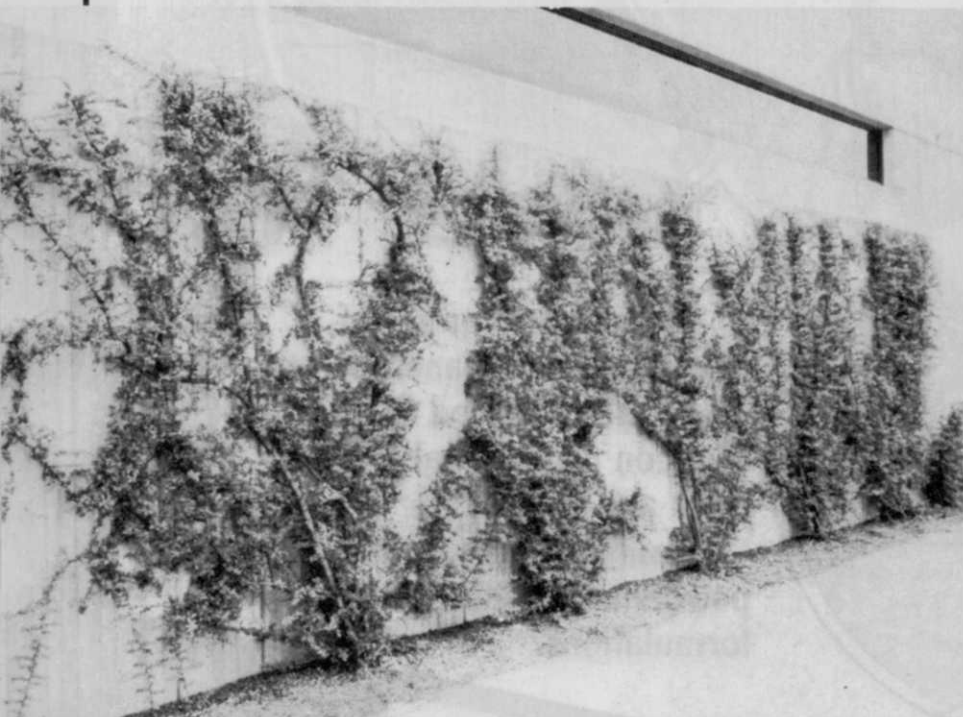
"We do a lot of spraying of non-selectives around tennis courts, bleachers and play equipment," he explained.

Soil testing is done to decide fertilization on areas that receive intensive landscape maintenance which would include athletic fields, flower gardens and the grounds around public buildings.

For the past few years he has had an increasing problem with Japanese beetles.

"At first we started setting traps out for them, but they didn't

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Spurred by public review, the Oak Ridge crews use attention-getting plant displays for extra attention, like these climbing shrubs.

"We're here to put in more than our eight hours," said Bailey. "We take a lot of pride in what we do."

Energy center

Oak Ridge with a population of about 29,000, is a major energy center.

During World War II, the atom bomb that destroyed Hiroshima was developed in Oak Ridge. It had a population then of 75,000

in the summer, mainly to work on the ballfields.

Training is goal

Bailey is very concerned about the training of his employees and has made developing an on-the-job training program a long-term goal to have implemented by summer, 1985.

"I'd like to acquire video tapes and other audio-video presenta-



Lewis Mitchell cares for a flower bed in Jackson Square.

“We’re here to put in more than our eight-hours. We take a lot of pride in what we do.” — Bailey.

work. In fact, they seemed to attract more of them. Then we started spraying with Sevin which has slowed them down, but they’re still a nuisance. People have begun making their own traps. Japanese beetles effect more than 300 different species of trees and shrubs. There aren’t many things they don’t like.”

Mowing in most parks and around three electrical substations is contracted out.

There is no irrigation on ballfields, but Bailey is in the process of developing an irrigation system for one of them.

WT&T



Left to right: Oak Ridge parks crew Lewis Mitchell, Ken Lemons, Larry Bailey, William Rhodey and Eugene Wells.