

## What do ya mean my credit's no good?

"I've been buying supplies from you and your dad for years. Now you tell me my credit's no good and my business isn't worth taking a risk on."

These words are common today in agriculture as small farmers, who overextended themselves during the late 70s, find their payments too high and their equity shrinking.

We should never forget how closely tied we are to agriculture. What happens in agriculture will impact us no matter what we do.

Being a stepchild to agriculture has been considered more a restraint than a benefit. Agricultural manufacturers still lump golf and landscape sales into what they term 'specialties', using a footnote on corporate reports to list the specialty markets.

This oversight has been recognized by a few progressive manufacturers. Others are being forced to adapt to 'specialties' as agricultural distribution is put to the test by changes in ag purchasing.

As a result, our lines of supply are going to change during the second half of this decade.

For example, Deere and Ford dealers will start competing more aggressively with current landscape equipment dealers. Although, they may leave golf equipment up to current manufacturers, they will go after the lawn care and landscape maintenance markets.

Realizing this, landscape distributors have already started to fight back. Storr Tractor, a New Jersey Toro distributor, added 35 local dealers in the New York metropolitan area to uncover landscape buyers using homeowner and agricultural equipment. It's working says Storr's Harold Block.

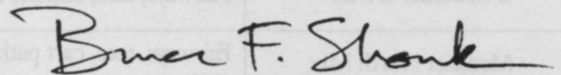
The short-line equipment dealer, on the other hand, may not be able to fight off the challenge of both the ag and major landscape equipment distributors.

The chemical distribution business faces the largest overhaul. Manufacturers are reorganizing specialty chemical sales. They have identified the big buyers in the landscape market and are tempted to go direct. At the same time they'd like to leave landscape and golf sales entirely up to large regional distributors. Realizing this, the big regionals are pushing hard and cutting prices to increase their share.

The local chemical distributor's markup keeps shrinking. His incentive to stay in business is drying up. He may be the first one in the Green Industries to hear the cold words, "I'm sorry, your business isn't worth the risk anymore."

1985 begins a critical period for many landscape distributors. It's worth our closest attention. Therefore, Weeds Trees & Turf is calling 1985 'The Year of the Distributor'.

You'll want to read our expanded distributor coverage this year. It is designed to keep you informed so you can plan your purchasing with confidence.



By Bruce F. Shank, executive editor

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