

by Bruce F. Shank, executive editor

Chemical lawn care exceeds mechanical for first time

Lawn Care Industry magazine has revealed gross revenues for chemical lawn care exceeded those for mowing/maintenance for the first time in the seven-year history of the magazine's State of the Industry Report.

The survey questionnaire, mailed to 1,500 lawn care companies, places 1984 chemical lawn care gross revenue at \$1.5 billion, compared to \$1.3 billion for mowing maintenance. Chemical lawn care grew at an amazing 40 percent pace while mowing/maintenance grew at only 11 percent, which isn't bad compared to most other service industries. Combined, the overall lawn care industry grew 26.6 percent in 1984.

The survey also revealed a large increase in tree care equipment purchases by lawn care companies as they expand into tree and shrub care. Increases in spray tank and irrigation supplies purchases indicates trends toward liquid application and irrigation installation.

Open shops grow in California

William Burke, executive director of the San Diego Association of General Contractors, told the California Landscape & Irrigation Council recently 'open shops' are causing unions to rethink demands. Open shops employ both union and nonunion tradesmen.

Burke's group is now developing medical and other benefit programs for open shops. Such programs further weaken union strongholds in California. Unions, after winning major wage and benefit increases in 1983, have had to accept concessions in following years. LA landscape contractors refused to grant union demands last year causing a strike.

Burke warned the group of Los Angeles area landscape contractors that open shops that pay excessively low wages will only strengthen unions.

Garden centers join discounters

Garden centers are fighting falling consumer pesticide sales by aligning themselves with discount chains. A recent survey by Charles Kline & Co. showed discount stores have captured the largest share of the \$1.4 billion consumer pesticide and fertilizer market, 31 percent compared to 23 percent for garden centers and 21 percent for supermarkets and grocery stores.

In certain markets, lawn and garden centers have entered into agreements with discounters such as Gold Circle to recapture shares of the market. Garden center chains, like Petitti Brothers in northern Ohio, connect their yards to discount stores. Consumers shopping at the discount store are attracted by the plant material displays. Consumers benefit from trained sales people and better quality plant material without having to make an extra trip to a remote nursery.

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