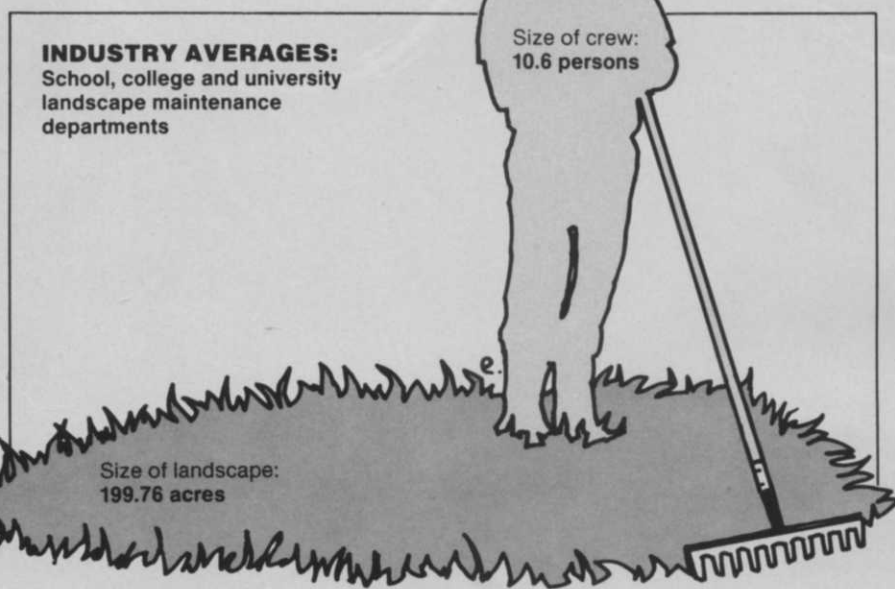


# RED TAPE MANIA

Landscape superintendents at the nation's schools, colleges and universities are responsible for a wide range of services. For most, however, the worst part of the job is cutting through miles of governmental 'red tape.'

by Jerry Roche, editor



Imagine trying to create a beautiful landscape with both hands tied behind your back.

In many instances, landscape superintendents of schools, colleges and universities have to contend with this problem on a regular basis. The problem, you see, is filling out a pile of government forms to requisition a couple bucks for a new rake.

And many schools, colleges and universities are government-funded.

Although Gary Parrott of Michigan State University points to the many advantages of working in this sector, he also notes that "there's too much red tape" accompanying government funding. Larry Thompson of the University of Illinois at Chicago adds, "One disadvantage is not being able to hire those who you want for a specific position because of Civil Service rules. Another is having to bid for

equipment, and then hoping you get what you want."

Susan Daniels of the University of Georgia agrees. "As a previous assistant manager of a nursery, I had

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*'We can all dream. That's what makes this job so challenging and interesting.'*

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a lot of adjustment coming into a state institution. They are a world apart from the regular business world.

"In the institution, it is considerably harder to reach goals, and very discouraging. But it's not impossible."

### Vandals a concern

An exclusive WEEDS TREES & TURF survey conducted earlier this year among landscape superintendents at schools, colleges and universities turned up some more interesting information. For instance:

- 78% of the respondents called vandalism "a concern" of their department;
- accordingly, nearly 45% of the respondents said that they have recently altered trimming/pruning practices in order to provide better campus security;
- most campuses (about 45%) are located in suburban settings;
- the average campus is almost exactly 200 acres;
- although 71% of the landscape managers get institutional discounts on equipment, just barely over half take discounts on chemicals; and
- 87% of the landscape managers buy all their equipment.

### Running the gamut

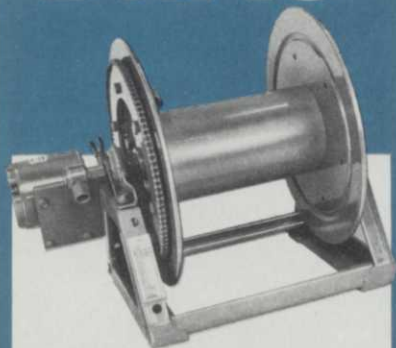
The tasks landscape maintenance departments are asked to perform could well be the most diverse in the entire green industry. It is not unusual to find the same crews that maintain the landscape taking care of streets and roads, signs and holiday decorations. These are the same people who sweep parking lots, remove snow in the winter and handle trash and waste disposal.

"We do everything," claims Robert Karras Jr. of the University of Wisconsin at River Falls. "Every day is different. My crew is also the labor force to move offices, tables, etc., throughout campus. We also tackle new landscape projects."

Notes another superintendent: "One advantage to this job is that I have access to other departments in the physical plant such as carpentry, painting, welding and electrical. Another is access to students for part-time employees. A disadvantage is that the landscape department usually receives last consideration...but I have noticed an increased respect for the groundskeeper and an increase of support services."

There are other advantages to this type of work. Foremost, most campus managers can take discounts on equipment and chemicals. According to the survey, 71.3% get an average discount of 15.2% on equipment, and 50.3% get an average discount of 14.7% on chemicals. One

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## LANDSCAPE PROFILE *continued*

### AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR SCHOOL/COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY LANDSCAPE MANAGERS

Parking lots	90.3%
Athletic fields	82.4%
Snow removal	78.2%
Central, adjoining campuses	72.7%
Special events	70.9%
Dorm/ fraternity areas	37.0%

*Other areas of responsibility mentioned: offices, irrigation systems, nursery/arboretum/ botanical garden maintenance, research facilities, playgrounds, sign maintenance, interior plants, painting, streets and roads, Christmas decorations, hospitals, trash/waste disposal, some residences, sod farms, basic construction, lakes and ponds, wooded areas, ice maintenance in winter*

respondent noted discounts of up to 55% on both chemicals and equipment.

Of course, there is a flip side to this argument. Most necessities are put out to bid, and therefore what is actually bought is not always exactly what is needed for the job.

*Nearly 45% of the respondents said they have recently altered trimming/pruning practices in order to provide better campus security.*

### Recognition

Survey results also reveal an interesting trend toward more administrators recognizing the importance of a good-looking landscape.

"Outside appearance has been re-emphasized recently," said one respondent. "However, budget and manpower restrictions leave some requests being denied."

"I find that more emphasis is being placed on the landscape," said another. "What was good enough three years ago isn't today."

"Administrators do place heavy

emphasis on the landscape," added a third manager. "The budget does not always cover all that they want, but they are fairly generous if they can see results."

One administrator responded to the survey. Here is what she wrote: "As in all cases, administrators—myself included—want the best possible landscape for the least cost. If it becomes apparent that I must have additional funding, I believe that I can obtain it with proper justification."

If budget restraints are a concern, the intelligent campus landscape manager will begin growing his own plants, as many already do. Nurseries and greenhouses have been found to be great dollar-savers.

Overall, responses to the WT&T survey were positive. Most school, college and university landscape managers like the campus atmosphere and the thoughtfulness of students and administrators in complimenting their departments.

One final respondent had this interesting observation, rather echoing the thought of many others:

"Perhaps with lottery money coming in this state, we can prepare a replacement budget. I'm almost sure some changes will be made, directing such funding to areas not currently approved.

"Well, we can all dream. That's what makes this job so challenging and interesting." **WT&T**