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LETTERS

Ambiguous contracts

To the editor:

For 14 years, my company has specialized in providing complete lawn maintenance service for townhome and condominium homeowner associations. We currently maintain over 7,000 units at more than 30 locations with gross sales of over \$1 million.

Over the years, I have been asked to bid on many properties—from the quite exclusive to the moderate—and usually the contract specifications were not well-defined.

They were unclear to both the contractor and homeowner.

The following are some of my favorite unclear quotes:

• "...cultivating of trees and shrubs shall be done as needed but not less than two times."

• "...sidewalks and curbs will be edged as required."

• "...all turf areas shall be mowed approximately once per week."

• "...all shrub beds are to be weeded periodically."

There are a hundred more!

The contract specifications are unfair and bewildering to contractors, homeowners, board members, maintenance committee personnel, and property managers.

It is true that many properties differ in the services required to maintain them to a particular level. However, the guesswork and mystery can be omitted from the process by simply specifying the amount of times a service should be performed to reach the client's desired results.

In the Chicago area, weekly turf mowing can be stated in the lawn specifications; however, it should be followed with, "this bid shall include 20 mowings...or 21 mowings..." or whatever the client's needs and budget dictate. This takes the guesswork out of estimating and clearly states what the customer can expect.

If the client desires to have superbly-conditioned turf, twice-a-week mowing would be necessary during certain weeks. The amount of mowings would change to 26...or 27...or 28, and this should be made clear in the contract specifications and stated precisely in the bid.

By simply specifying the precise frequency of a service, the property manager, homeowner, and contractor can work together to reach a desired level of maintenance that could fit into a desired budget.

Michael Cavaliere
Best Lawns
Addison, Ill.

Taking the first step with pesticides

To the editor:

Your editorial in the March issue did a great job in alerting your readership to future problems with the EPA. They (EPA) are just now getting around to taking a look at non-food crops.

As an old hand in the ag chemicals business and being on the receiving end of their regulations since the day the agency was born, I can offer this gem of advice; you can expect to see a lot more EPA involvement in non-crop areas.

You have many counterparts in the ag business whose experience you could draw on, and who would welcome you as an ally. But you are already taking the important first step, and that is trying to get your readers to involve themselves in defending their "turf" (pun intended).

Your work is cut out for you, because most people will not even write their congressman, much less give a short speech at a local garden club, Kiwanis or Rotary meeting.

The unfortunate thing about this is that these local folks talking to neighbors and congressmen can do more to create positive public attitudes than all the lobbyists put together.

I started about three years ago to offer myself as speaker to any group in south Georgia that wanted to hear the industry side of pesticides. I have found this to be most rewarding (though not monetarily). Most audiences know very little about the ag business and are delighted to hear about it. I end up enjoying these sessions as much as, or more than, the audience.

I really hope that you keep the pressure on your guys to talk to their local clubs and congressmen. It will pay off handsomely.

Robert E. Gartman
Tifton, Ga.

Natural turf in domed stadiums?

To the editor:

I am a reader. It's great to be loved. Sports turf will be in the public eye for many moons. The National Sports Turf Council will be covering all the bases, exerting influence to improve the quality of all playing surfaces.

Natural turf in domed stadiums is intriguing, and it will come to reality at a high but justifiable cost. While that development is taking place, there will be a widespread concerted effort to develop safer sports turf on many thousands of high school athletic fields. Domed stadiums may capture headlines, but the moms and pops will identify with those who help to prevent injuries to their children.

"No injuries in four years." A high school field in Ohio and one in Pennsylvania document this claim. The "mentor" in Ohio was a golf course superintendent. An ex-county extension agent masterminded the one in Pennsylvania. No headlines on these so far. Too insignificant to attract attention? The involved parents are delighted! So are the kids, the coaches and trainers!

NSTC wants to spread the benefits of safer sports turf evenly across the board.

Fred V. Grau
Chairman/NSTC
College Park, Md.

Yes, Environmental Industries No. 1

To the editor:

Thank you for honoring us by including Brickman in your article listing "Landscaping's Elite."

I need, however, to correct an error arising from any impression you may have gotten from me regarding the relative ranking of Brickman and Environmental Industries.

The fact that they produce revenues three to four times that of Brickman Group makes the statement quoted to me that "they may have beaten us overall" misleading.

Like many firms which look up to Brickman for the successes which we are fortunate to enjoy, we look up to Environmental Industries as the recognized leader in our industry.

I applaud WEEDS TREES & TURF for its efforts in surveying the industry and providing much-needed information to the consumer. I might suggest, however, that it would be prudent to research information on firms listed but not supplying information for your articles by such means as Dun & Bradstreet listings.

Once again, thank you for your efforts toward enlightening our industry.

Bruce A. Hunt
Brickman Industries
Laurel, Md.

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