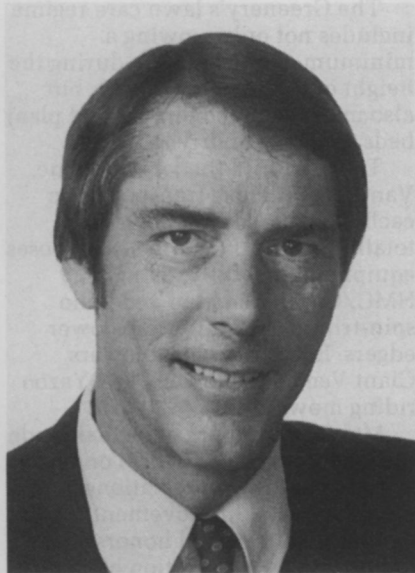




Chemlawn president Jack Van Fossen says "there is still a large potential for lawn care service" despite recent problems.



Jim Brooks, president of the PLCAA, says the lawn care industry will have to "stand up and fight. It's just never done that before."

press release attributed the loss, at least partially, to "negative, inaccurate, and incomplete media stories about the safety of lawn care products, both on national and selected local television and in the press." The negative coverage, the release continued, caused an increase in cancellations and a decrease in new customer inquiries.

"We believe the slowdown is a reflection of shifts in both consumer

attitudes and spending patterns," says ChemLawn chairman/CEO Jack Van Fossen. "There is still a large potential for lawn care service. But the rapidly changing marketplace requires greater emphasis on quality performance and value added to meet consumer needs."

ChemLawn, too, announced this year that it would post a sign on every lawn after chemical treatments. Other LCOs are slowly, hesitantly following suit.

"We'll get through it all, but there are a lot of potholes," says Brooks. "The industry will have to stand up and fight. It's just never done that before."

Despite all the problems, the

industry continues to thrive.

According to the *Lawn Care Industry* report, chemical lawn care revenues grew from \$832 million in 1984 to \$932 million in 1985. Median growth was 20 percent per company.

Overall, purchases of chemicals, seed and equipment were predicted to increase 11.65 percent this year with dramatic increases in the purchases of pre-emergence herbicides and plant growth regulators (see chart).

In 1984, the average LCI reader had 724 lawn care accounts. That number increased to 1068 (32 percent) in 1985, yet another indication that the industry continues to be a viable—and profitable—one. **WT&T**

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## LAWN CARE... CAREFULLY

Hilton Head's veteran landscape management company exercises extra care when applying chemicals to the island's fragile environs.

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It's a resort...a retreat...a retirement community.

Hilton Head Island is many things to many people, but its main attraction is the serenity of its ocean-surrounded landscapes.

Hilton Head has 10 plantations, each with homes, villas, and commercial properties which must follow strict architectural guidelines. The landscaping throughout the island follows a similar conservative pattern, though it rarely wavers from Hilton Head's "paradise island" blueprint.

Maintaining that beauty has been anything but serene for the island's lawn care and landscape professionals. Three harsh winters, including snow on one occasion, and the severe drought last summer have made the job a challenge to even the island's best landscape managers.

Only three chemical lawn care companies work on Hilton Head. Because of the wealth on the island, most homeowners can afford to hire landscape contractors for combined turf and landscape care.

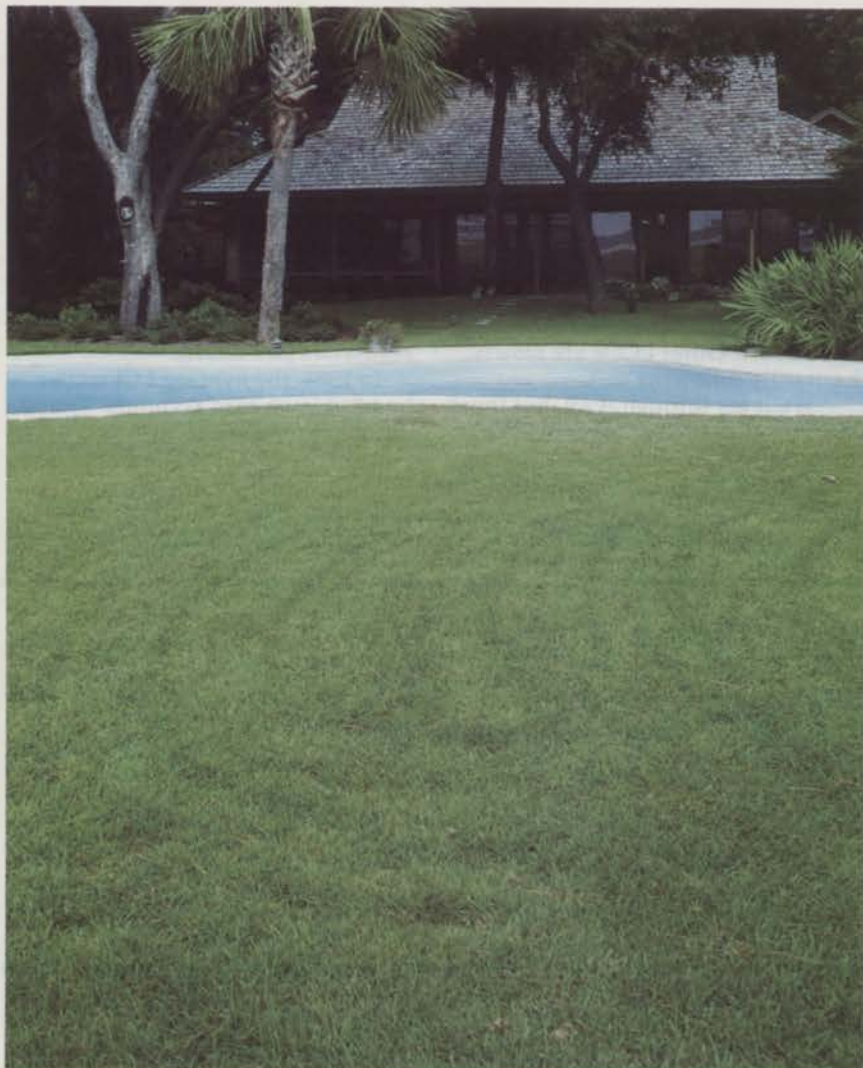
### The award-winner

The Greenery, an award-winning design/construction/maintenance landscape company, handles about 300 residential and commercial maintenance accounts on Hilton Head. Founded by Berry Edwards in 1973, the Greenery is one of the oldest landscape companies on the island.

With age comes experience and a lawn care philosophy that differs from the newer, strictly chemical lawn care companies.

"Some of the turf/lawn care companies have a program to come in and spray whether it's needed or not," says Tom Van Hise, the Greenery's general manager for maintenance. "They may provide a better product in the long run, but with these recent comments on chemicals, our philosophy will be safer."

The island is concerned with chemicals running into the marshes or ocean and damaging the fish. But most of the controversy focuses on



The Greenery's lawn care regime involves not only mowing the lawn, but edging around flower beds and pools.

the island's 20 golf courses, since they generally use more chemicals than the landscape companies.

The Greenery's program includes pre-emergence herbicides used throughout the growing season. Fungicides and insecticides are applied in the spring, with follow-up treatments only when necessary.

Fertilization works the same way. Each spring, the Greenery applies a slow release, 15-0-15 fertilizer and repeats applications as needed.

Turf on the island is primarily centipede grass, and is almost always sodded, rather than seeded. "Centipede grass does not require as much fertilizer," Van Hise says. "It's more drought resistant than either St. Augustine or bermudagrass, and it's come back after three winters of cold weather."

### Drought duress

Although the harsh winter weather damaged many plant materials on the island, the drought caused more trouble for lawn care specialists. With only about a half inch of rainfall in three months, lawns needed extra irrigation. "One unusual problem was that we used a lot more herbicides this year because a lot washed off with the irrigation," Van Hise says.

His crews had to irrigate as often as seven days a week in some cases. Several customers complained about high water bills. During the peak of the drought, however, irrigation was cut back to twice a week in an effort to conserve water.

Van Hise also blames the drought for the severe insect and fungus infestations this year. "The drought stressed the plants, making the



Maintenance general manager Tom Van Hise notes that the Greenery sprays insecticides and fungicides in the spring, then follows up only as needed.

infestations rampant," he says. "It's much worse this year than in past years."

The Greenery's lawn care regime includes not only mowing a minimum of once a week during the height of the growing season, but also mechanical edging around plant beds, walks, and drives.

To make sure the jobs get done, Van Hise provides transportation each morning for his 12 crews, totalling 34 workers. He also chooses equipment carefully, using only HMC/Green Machine and Echo spin-trimmers, Trail-Mate power edgers, Echo backpack blowers, Giant Vac push blowers, and Yazoo riding mowers.

Making that extra effort has made the Greenery the only firm on the island to earn several National Environmental Improvement Awards, and national honors from the American Association of Nurserymen. Some of the awards were for architectural design and construction, including building decks, fountains, and formal gardens.

In fact, maintenance is only a small part of the Greenery's operations. But it's the part which is visible when the island's population swells from about 30,000 to 70,000 each summer.

And, as long as Hilton Head's erratic weather continues, lawn and landscape maintenance will also be one of the Greenery's biggest challenges. **WT&T**

—Heide Aungst