

## Economy still faltering

■ Although the United States economy is experiencing one of the longest economic expansions in its history, indications are that the economy may not be quite as strong as it appears.

At least, that's what Lawrence Chimerine, Ph.D., told the attendees of the International Lawn, Garden & Power Equipment Expo earlier this year.

Chimerine, chairman and chief executive officer of Wharton Econometrics, explained that the current economic expansion is characterized by relatively slow growth, a severely depressed starting point and uneven economic performance. Consumer spending is starting to flatten out after several years of strong growth, he said. However, while a new boom is not emerging, he said, it does not seem likely that the economy will start sliding into another recession. A pattern of relatively flat or slow growth will remain in place for the next several years or even longer, he predicted.

Chimerine's outlook for lawn, garden and outdoor power equipment sales next year is for declines of three to five percent. One bright spot he sees is that consumer spending for remodeling is beginning to show signs of significant strength.

## Green industry called 'burgeoning'

■ What the National University Continuing Education Association calls the "garden industry" is "burgeoning." According to an article by George Faux in the NUCEA magazine, "landscaping and gardening ventures are among the fastest-growing businesses in high-construction areas."

Faux goes on to write:

"The landscaping and gardening markets have blossomed into multi-million-dollar industries. No longer the college kid down the block, today's typical landscaper is a well-trained and well-paid professional; a small firm of seven men can earn upwards of \$200,000 a year. The high cost of plants and shrubbery, together with an emerging aesthetic appreciation for the great outdoors, has moved consumers to seek such professional landscapers and horticulturists for their home beautification projects."

The article pointed out the many continuing education programs that provide courses to better prepare landscapers and horticulturists for today's competitive market.

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