

# SELECTING SOFTWARE

Few landscape and lawn care businesses can run effectively these days without computers. Last month, LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT told business owners what to look for in computer hardware and software. This month, we review some of the software programs available to the green industry.

by Rudd McGary and Ed Wandtke

**M**onths ago, we sent out inquiries to companies that program computer software for the green industry. Many companies were kind enough to respond by sending us their actual software for appraisal. Others sent us literature.

Here is our appraisal of the companies who sent programs. For the names of those companies who sent literature, see the accompanying list.

## Landscape

### Computerized Studio Management *Landscape Business Data Manager*

This is a menu-driven business program for landscapers with seven main parts of the menu.

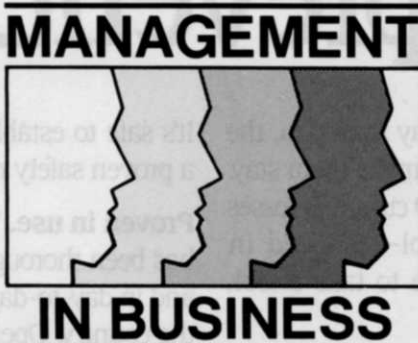
The daily activity log has sections on employee hours, customer activities, and posting daily activities to the bill log. It can also review previous work. The customer billing will print bills for all work done within the month. The printing is done on standard forms available at any computer supplies store.

The financial records section enters customer payments, changes in those payments, customer's payment history, all customers' balances, plus a section on banking and cash disbursement.

It has sections on vendors and check reports.



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This covers most of your needs for A/R and A/P. Payroll computes pay for a specific employee. It does not print checks.

The quarterly tax reports compile the sales, payroll and unemployment taxes for your company. The business report prints out income, payroll, checkbook, disbursements, monthly bill, service history and customer mailing labels. The lead tracking section gives you a record of the name, address, date of visit, estimate and comments for each of the leads you enter. It doesn't have a field for source of lead.

Overall, this is a very usable program for landscapers. There are areas that aren't covered, such as marketing information and general P&L capabilities, but it does have most of the basics needed for a landscaper. A job cost analysis section would be a good addition for this software. It is easy to understand, menu-driven, and would be a good program for those companies beginning to computerize with a cost low enough that it is affordable by most landscapers.

### Quintessence Computing

See lawn care review.

### Landscape Computer-Aided Design

#### Abracadata

*Design Your Own Home/Landscape Design:* This program is a surprise, mainly because of price. It is written to be very simple, for use by almost anyone with an interest in landscape design. As with any of the computer-aided design (CAD) programs, it is used with some sort of pointing device so that you can work your designs on-screen.

The Apple II software is strictly a landscape design program, although other modules are available.

The instructions are easy to follow, and persons without any prior background in computers should be able to boot it up and use it.

There are many things this program doesn't do like estimating, growth simulation for plants, job costing and plant data base. However, its price is inexpensive enough that you should consider it as a tool that can be helpful in beginning

your CAD work. It is available from dealers around the country.

### Landcadd Inc. *Landcadd*

This is a very powerful design tool. In addition to the regular modules, a set of construction detail disks have been released recently. They sell for \$99 for six or \$795 for all 54.

While this is a sophisticated system, it isn't hard to use. It gives a wide range of uses for the landscaper and also gives management information that can be used in bidding and cost analysis. Originally designed by an ASLA member, it takes into account almost all of the variables needed to show a very professional design. The key to its cost is the detail available and the total writing of the software. This package is available from dealers who act as the support system.

(For both of the above CAD programs, an additional cost will be the printer or plotter you use. These vary greatly in price, from \$750 to \$10,000+. It depends on the quality and speed you want from your printing peripheral.)

## Vehicle maintenance and repair

### Diagonal Data Corp. *Fleet maintenance*

This is an extremely powerful program designed for use with multiple-vehicle companies. If you're just starting a company in landscape or lawn care, this isn't for you. But if you're getting to a size where vehicle maintenance is an important component part of your total costs, this program would be extremely valuable.

The program can be customized so that any type of company can use it. The key to its usage isn't only the number of vehicles in use but also the complexity of the types of functions that the vehicles perform. It can be upgraded from the PC configuration to a multi-task, multi-user one and this allows for growth in the company.

This may not be for all companies, but it certainly is an invaluable tool for those who want to be able to control a vital part of the cost components of operation in the green industries and who are large enough so it is a necessity.

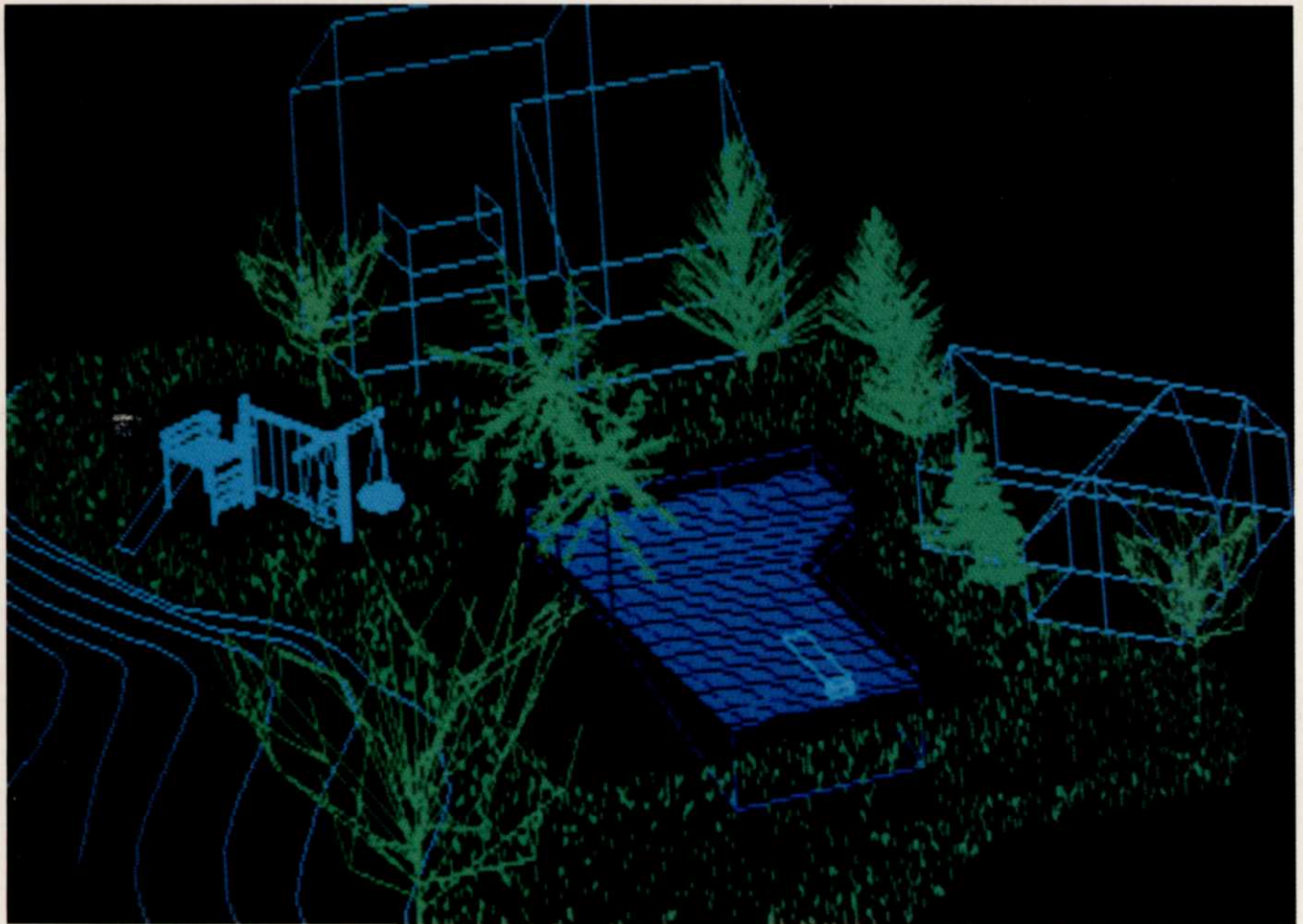
## Lawn care

There are six programs reviewed here. All six are sound and fair value. They are listed in alphabetical order.

### ADS Software

*ADS Residential/Commercial Services, Accounts Receivable*

This is one module of a larger package written by ADS. The other packages are general ledger, accounts payable, payroll and inventory. All are integrated into the general ledger program, although not on a real time basis. ADS Software, Inc. writes business programs for use specifically for the small business, a category that fits many of



Landcadd's software program lets companies design sites in color.

the owner/operators in the green industry.

The A/R program consists of several operations, including an integrated invoicing program available.

It is a well-written program, which takes into account the repetitive billing systems used in the green industry. Routing information is also available on this package. The only concern is that it is a generic package, albeit well-written, and this will mean that certain types of functions found in lawn care aren't in the package as it stands. Menu-driven, it has an easy-to-learn fill-in-the-blank format. This program has good audit trail features which guard against double entry.

It should be noted that other programs are available in this ADS series so that you could begin to use other parts of information control as you became comfortable with your computer system. The generic nature of the system makes it one that all small businesses could use, but it also means that you will have to adapt some of your procedures to the program. ADS is well known for its software and deserves its strong reputation. Your question is whether or not to begin with a generic program for your needs.

#### Comp-U-Green

**Management Systems for Lawn Care Industry**  
While the target market for this software/hardware package is described as companies with multiple-branch locations, it can also be used by the single-location company with expectations of growth. It is a powerful program consisting of eight modules, although it isn't necessary to purchase all of them at one time. The price will depend on the modules that are purchased. It should be noted that the price includes hardware as well.

Report generator and word processing modules are only available when using the Contel Tiger mini-computer.

The A/R module consists of production work and routing reports, invoice printing, daily work posting, open invoice reports, service calls, customer information screen, daily sales status, daily ledgers and daily posting. In this module are square foot and dollar amounts for all routes, work orders, a daily recap of production, and listings of all new sales and cancels for the day. These then can be translated into monthly work.

The sales system module can be used with personal sales or telemarketing systems. It shows all estimates pending with the source of the lead, estimates completed, and a mail file is used to develop your own list.

The inventory module gives you daily fill tickets and route reports showing the chemicals, miles, gas used and time needed. Reports are generated for each applicator. The usage for each chemical is updated as dollar amounts and units are used. The reports can be run for any amount of time. On a periodic basis you can see inventory cost, status, adjustments (purchases), chemical use, trucks and production management reports by applicator. This module also has employee records, employee evaluation records, and time clock entries.

The accounts payable module tracks all outstanding bills, bills paid and checks written. It also has vendor analysis reports and cash flow reports based on due dates of outstanding bills. It automatically updates to the general ledger system and reconciles your bank statement.

The general ledger has daily journal entries which, if active on the other modules, are automatically done. An income statement, balance statement, asset depreciation, and loan schedule reports are available in this module.

As you can see, this is a complete lawn care package. Don't be put off by the prices, they include hardware. This is best used by larger mul-

multiple location companies with multi-task, multi-user needs, but some of the companies currently using it are smaller. There is more to the program, but this brief overview will give you an idea of the depth of the program from Comp-U-Green.

#### Distribution Management

##### CLC1

This menu-driven program was designed for a lawn care company. More than 70 lawn care companies currently use CLC1 as their computer system. While it can be used by the smaller company, no less than 500 customers is the suggested lower limit. CLC1 focuses on companies experiencing growth over the 2000 customer number. The program has a great many features; mentioning all of them would overload the page. Here are some that specifically pertain to lawn care companies.

Many of the applicable variables in the customer file are available on both daily and a weekly list basis. This part of the program gives you control over all the standard customer interactions a lawn care company would have.

The invoice section prints invoices in generic, blank and pre-printed forms. It also shows invoices printed but not posted.

The credit/cash section gives control over your cash functions in the company. Within this program you find credit memos, cash receipts and journals for both, customer aging A/R information and an aging trial balance. In addition, this section controls your daily cash receipts and has a hold system for customers past due. A special feature is a series of "flags" that come up for specific customers, which will help in collecting receivables and avoid rendering services to non-paying customers.

The report section, a valuable set of management tools, includes reports on routing, daily

production, application scheduling, monthly production, commission reports, customer history reports, monthly cancellations, sales report by routes, sales by salesmen, a production receipts journal, and a sales tax-by-tax code report.

We believe that all of these are important areas for management to control in order to affect the profitability of the company.

What isn't here? Payroll, vehicular maintenance, marketing and financial forecasting, among others. The company provides the customer with an executive summary of functions

of the program as well as documentation, approximately 300 pages in length, which is easily usable and user friendly, as most menu-driven programs are.

#### Practical Solutions

##### Lawn Care Management System

More than 65 companies use this popular program. It is written for both large and small companies. As with many programs, the first use is generally in the A/R area with billings and past due accounts the focus of the first-time user.

The customer module provides standard in-

formation as well as route lists, and service request lists. The information can be sorted several ways and gives a trail in information concerning individual customers as well as grouping these lists according to the owner/operator needs. This interfaces with the Word Perfect word processing program for use in designing various types of letters for use in customer communication.

The A/R section handles all billing functions and includes sections for pre-payment handling, billings, cash trails, and credit policies. Estimate

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PROGRAM	MANUFACTURER	HARDWARE	PRICE	SOFTWARE
Landscape Business Data Manager	Computerized Studio Mgmt. 6143 Jericho Tpk. Suite 26 Commack, NY 11725 (516) 499-8891	IBM PC compatible (dual floppy disk, but hard drive is recommended)	\$895	Daily activity log, customer bills, financial record management, payroll, quarterly tax reports, business reports, lead tracking
Design Your Own Home/Landscape Design	Abracadata P.O. Box 2440 Eugene, OR 97402 (503) 342-3030	Apple II series (dual floppy); IBM PC compatible, XT, AT; used with paddles, graphics pad or joysticks	\$69.95 (Apple) \$99.95 (IBM)	architecture, interior, landscape
Landcadd	Landcadd 10418 E. Tanglewood Franktown, CO 80116 (303) 688-8160	IBM PC, AT, XT; used with pointing device	\$4395 (includes all modules, Autocadd system)	site planning, landscape design, irrigation design, estimating, plant data base, growth simulator
Fleet Maintenance	Diagonal Data 2000 E. Edgewood Dr. Lakeland, FL 33803 (813) 666-2330	IBM PC, XT or IBM 36	\$4950 (PCXT) \$14,950 (36 series)	parts inventory, tire inventory, fuel and oil usage, monthly parts report, quarterly maintenance forecast, scheduled work order summary, schedules vs. actual work order summary, personnel performance analysis, reason for repair listings, parts and labor journals, procedure descriptions list, variable costs listing, master vehicle listing
ADS Residential/Commercial Services Accounts Receivable	ADS Software 707 5th St. NE Roanoke, VA 24016 (703) 344-6818	PC compatible	\$695; \$995 with general ledger	customer records, customer file listing, sales posting, customer statements, aged trial balance, sales reports, past due notices, general ledger update
Management Systems for Lawn Care Industry	Comp-U-Green 3718 Antioch Ct. Cincinnati, OH (513) 733-0969	CADO	\$8,000 (single-user) \$14-20,000 (multiple-user)	accounts receivable, sales systems, inventory, general ledger, accounts payable, payroll, report generator, word processing
CLC1	Distribution Management Systems 11823 Arbor St., Ste. 110 Omaha, NE 68144 (402) 330-6620	Data General mini-computer	\$3500 (single-user); \$4500 (multi-user with \$1000 terminal add-on fee)	standard customer information, letter printouts, daily cancellations, area lists of customers and prices, daily sales reports, customer reports by route and name, zip code locators, tax file list, unpaid hold list
Lawn Care Management System	Practical Solutions 500 W. Wilson Bridge Rd. Worthington, OH 43085 (614) 436-9066	IBM compatible with 20 mg hard drive	\$4500	accounts receivable, daily activity report
The Lawn Assistant	Real Green 2775 Hagerty Rd. Walled Lake, MI 48088 (313) 669-1118	IBM XT/AT with 20 mg hard drive	\$3500; \$4095 with general ledger	standard customer information, daily activity
AM+	Quintessence Computing 3001 Lake Austin Blvd. Austin, TX 78703 (512) 477-9038	IBM compatible or Digital PDP series	\$4000 (IBM); payroll \$2500, inventory \$2000, general ledger \$2000, accounts payable \$2000	accounts receivable, customer information, order processing, management information

forms, pricing routines, and credit policies are programmed to fit the individual company at no additional cost.

The daily activity report can be used to show territories, zips, types of treatment and customer type. Various reports show the different treatment programs offered by the company and correlating that to the total customer list.

Employee information is also available giving a tracking of performance and evaluation, including closing percentages and activities done by applicators.

## LANDSCAPE SOFTWARE

The following is a list of companies which also have developed software for the green industry. These companies contacted LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT, but did not send programs to review for this article.

Computer Associates Inc.  
36 Thurber Blvd.  
Smithfield, RI 02917

Computerized Business Solutions  
5660 W. Cypress  
Suite A  
Tampa, FL 33607

Display Data Corp.  
Executive Plaza IV  
Hunt Valley, MD 21031

Fortunate Enterprises  
3365 Oleander Dr.  
Spring Hill, FL 33526

The Green Scene  
5842 Tampa Ave.  
Tarzana, CA 91356

Microbilt Corp.  
P.O. Box 723368  
Atlanta, GA 30339

Nicholas Data Service  
2497 East Bay Dr.  
Suite 210  
Largo, FL 33541

Rainbow Systems Inc.  
P.O. Box 81  
Somerset, NJ 08873

Simplicity Business Computer  
Systems  
P.O. Box 4595  
111 Freestate Blvd.  
Shreveport, LA 71107

Small Business Management Systems  
92 Walling Rd.  
Warwick, NY 10990

Softwhere?  
P.O. Box 3336  
Yuba City, CA 95992

Thornton Computer Management  
Systems  
424 East U.S. 22  
Maineville, OH 45039

Charles Vander Kooi  
Estimating Software  
P.O. Box 621414  
Littleton, CO 80162

Payroll and accounts payable functions are not included in this program.

Perhaps the most important part of the entire program is the number of reports available for management use, 47. While many first-time users don't use the program's total capacity (this is true of all of the programs reviewed), these reports will give a manager an excellent basis of information to be used in operating the company.

The program is targeted to companies with 1000+ customers with at least four trucks. The ability to grow to multi-task, multi-user configuration is done with the Unysis system so that the growing company can expand its computer capacity as the needs occur.

The program is easy to use, the documentation is concise, and it can be employed by anyone from the first-time user with a growing company to the larger company seeking ways to control the information and manage through use of the information.

### Real Green

#### The Lawn Assistant

This program is designed for use with smaller operators, but the company will release programming for multi-task, multi-user configurations in December, 1987, so that growth companies can use the basic configuration and upgrade at a later date if warranted.

The program, as with most of those reviewed, focuses on the operations side of lawn care. You can set up your lawn programs, show your routes, your pre-pays and the condition of the lawns you are servicing. The rounds are set so that routing is available and can be done using the program.

Customer information includes standard variables as well as changes in lawn program, special applications, the current customer status, cancellations and the reasons for them. All customers can be printed out by number, name, streets, routes and zips. Invoices will be done with a sheet feed printer.

Transactions are posted with adjustments available as well as a payment entry screen. In the sales tax category, both accrual and cash basis systems are available, something that will prove valuable with changes in the reporting systems being implemented. The daily activity of lawns sprayed is available, including information on employee, round, service codes, rating of the lawn, problems encountered and extra product used.

There is no payroll or inventory capability. One of the features of this program is its speed. Because a very fast programming language is used, the operator gets information and reports very quickly. This isn't a function of the

machine itself, but rather of the programming design. This translates into less computer time needed for operating, something that can be very valuable.

This program would be extremely useful for the smaller growth company and with the expected addition of the multi-task multi-user programming would be expandable to larger companies. It is being used by 35 companies.

One additional feature is an "800" phone number for users to call with questions. This may turn out to be handy if you have continuing dialogues with the company.

### Quintessence Computing

#### AM+:

Quintessence Computing provides both multi-task, multi-user configurations as well as PC software for lawn care, landscape maintenance, tree care and nurseries. The package being reviewed is for the lawn care industry.

The AM+ program is menu-driven, making it usable by current clerical staff.

Customer information includes standard variables, service remarks, special services, payment tracking, map/route coding, beginning-date-of-service, mailing labels, and post cards/mailers for follow-up marketing. A master customer list for mailing or phone work is available.

The work order section delivers information for the work to be processed, special features and remarks for the specific customer, service descriptions, and automatic inclusion of credit balances.

The A/R includes daily sales and receipt journals for audit trailing, aging reports, sales tax liabilities, repetitive billing, and dunning notices at user-defined intervals.

The management section has information concerning sales totals by customer type, geographical or employee, production statistics by employee or geographical area, advertising results, customer counts by employee and geographical area, sales by period, cancellation analysis, and the ability to produce marketing letters.

AM+ is an extremely powerful program, particularly with the addition of the extra modules of payroll, A/P, G/L and inventory. All of the modules are integrated into the general ledger package, giving a management tool which is valuable to any company. While the program reviewed is written for use with smaller companies, it has the capability to expand to large configurations of multi-location companies with multiple cost centers, budgeting and historical comparisons.

Even with all this sophistication, it is usable by companies with as few as 500 customers. **LM**



The Lawn Assistant from Real Green focuses on the operations side of lawn care.