

## SOME RECENT LAWN CARE TRANSACTIONS

- ChemLawn (Worthington, Ohio) purchased Shur Lawn (Lincoln, Neb.)
- ChemLawn purchased Lawnrite (Long Island, N.Y.)
- Ecolab (St. Paul, Minn.) purchased ChemLawn
- New England Green (Springfield, Mass.) purchased Mister Lawn Care (Grand Island, N.Y.)
- New England Green merged with Turf Pro (Plymouth, Mich.)
- Rollins (Atlanta, Ga.) purchased New England Green
- Barefoot Grass (Worthington,

- Ohio) purchased Tempo 21 (Chicago, Ill.)
- Tru-Green (Atlanta, Ga.) purchased R.W. Collins (Satellite Beach, Fla.)
- Tru-Green purchased Lawn Groomer (Normal, Ill.)
- Tru-Green merged with Excellence (Louisville, Ky.)
- Waste Management (Oak Brook, Ill.) purchased Tru-Green
- All-American Turf Beauty (Van

Meter, Ia.) purchased Shur Lawn (Omaha, Neb.)

- Ever-Green (St. Louis, Mo.) merged with Superior Lawn (Louisville, Ky.)
- Lawnmark (Peninsula, Ohio) purchased Spray-A-Lawn (Orrville, Ohio)
- Thoma Brothers (Erie, Pa.) purchased Fox Valley Professional Lawns (Appleton, Wisc.)
- Laidlaw Transportation (Canada) purchased Monroe Tree and Lawn-tender (Rochester, N.Y.)

## LANDSCAPE PROFILE

### ONCE A HERO

In the old days, lawn care companies were heroes with homeowners. Today, negative media has changed that. But through education and custom-designed programs, McGinty Brothers Professional Lawn and Tree Care is winning again.

by Heide Aungst, managing editor

**C**harlie McGinty remembers the good ol' days in lawn care. Those were the days before the EPA, before the big operations like ChemLawn, before sign-posting and before media exposés.

"Back in those days it was more fun," says McGinty, president of McGinty Brothers lawn and tree care of Chicago. "Taking on a new lawn, you were a hero overnight when you turned a weed patch into a weed-free lawn. A lawn taken care of by us really stood out. Nowadays, there are not as many super-weedy lawns."

And, nowadays, homeowners are more likely to interrogate a company than praise them. That wasn't true in the '60s. "At that time, the issue was educating the public that there was lawn care," McGinty says. "It was quite a project until ChemLawn came along."

McGinty's father started spraying lawns in the late 1950s with a two-wheel cart. McGinty took over in 1960, and ran the business part-time

while he worked in the Chicago forestry department. In 1963, the business became full-time. In '65 he incorporated. This year, projected gross sales are \$1.4 million.

Although Charlie maintained the name, McGinty Brothers, his brother

never joined the company. The name fits the company today, since several of Charlie's sons are involved in the business. Chuck McGinty Jr. is involved in many aspects of the company, including his position as maintenance manager of the fleet of 26 vehicles. Tim and Brian are spray technicians.

#### Other changes

Through the '60s, McGinty Brothers continued to grow, but changed little. Then came the early '70s and the formation of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The chemicals used by McGinty Brothers changed along with the lawn care industry. McGinty remembers using calcium arsonite and Zintron to control annual grassy weeds. McGinty used DDT for elm tree spraying.

Insurance problems have changed for McGinty Brothers, as they have for many lawn care companies. "We



Charlie McGinty discusses his successful business with lawn manager Charlie Meersman.

used to have a difficult time because of our tree work, but now carriers are more concerned about pesticides," McGinty says.

Things also changed drastically when ChemLawn started in the early '70s. Suddenly, family-run companies like McGinty Brothers had competition. And they had to find ways to compete.

Sales manager Pat McEntree and lawn manager Charles Meersman have designed and presented a company seminar/general training program. Management, office and production personnel are brought together for presentations on professionalism, safety, customer relations and possible problems in the field. "These seminars have had a positive impact in all phases of the operation," says McEntree.

"We used to rely on word-of-mouth and a little advertising in local papers," McGinty explains. "In the '70s we used direct mail. But the '80s demand new marketing strategies, some of which are winter telemarketing, trade magazine ads and—still most important—word-of-mouth."

#### Customer communication

Communicating with customers is perhaps what's kept McGinty Brothers in business. "We have an excellent reputation in this area among customers, universities and people in the industry. If that's success, I guess we're successful.

"But what I really attribute the success of our company to is the dedication of our people, especially our managers and office personnel."

JoAnne Hedrick and her office staff, Geraldine Opland and Jeanne Heinrich provide professional and personable first-time contact with prospective customers and handle any current customer questions. The company has 25 full-time employees and about 10 college workers in the summer. Last year, it laid off only one employee in the winter. The rest keep busy pruning trees. (The company has a full-service tree department that includes spraying, feeding, trimming, removal and land clearing.)

McGinty has expanded his training program so most workers are familiar with both the lawn and tree care businesses. Meersman observes that, "over the years, client awareness has increased appreciably, requiring more knowledge and professional field personnel."

#### The program

Meersman explains that the

company's full lawn care program includes five applications, but that there are variations because clientele range from 1000-sq. ft. lots to the whole Illinois tollway system.

McGinty Brothers uses both dry fertilizer from Lesco and Classens and liquid fertilizer from Nice 'N' Green and Tyler Enterprises. The company blends its own fertilizer for each application by time of year and current weather conditions. Lescosan is used for crabgrass control. UAP herbicides are also used, as is Dursban for insect control.

#### Seeding

Another growth area for McGinty Brothers has been in slit-seeding and overseeding lawns in the spring and fall. Slit-seeding is done in two directions in a diamond-shaped pattern with a blend of bluegrasses and ryegrass. Core aeration and dethatching are done if needed.

Hydroseeding are the fastest-growing area in the company.

McGinty Brothers is active in the year-old ANVIL (Association for the use of Native Vegetation In Landscapes). McGinty vice-president Jim Safron works closely with Chicago's Lafayette Home Nurseries in doing golf courses, commercial properties and residences with native plants.

Some of the material is drilled into the ground with a Rangeland Drill, others are hydroseeded with a mulch. "The key is using enough seed and enough mulch," Safron says. "We use wood fiber mulch with a tackifier from Conwed or Weyerhaeuser."

McGinty Brothers has worked with prairie plantings for more than three years and plans to continue that addition to the lawn and tree care operation. Expansion, customer communication and employee dedication could lead Charlie McGinty to even more success down the road.

Maybe someday, 1987 will look like the good ol' days. **LM**

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## LANDSCAPE PROFILE

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# THE BEST POLICY

Honesty with customers is vital to effectively communicate with them. And communication is vital to a healthy business, as The Davey Company's Milwaukee regional manager knows too well.

by Jerry Roche, editor

**S**ome people don't realize that lawns, like people, get tired and need rejuvenation."

Bill Whitmire, white shirt spotless, tie knotted neatly at the neck, is giving you his softsell.

"We get a lot of residual customers who don't buy the hardsell," he says. "Here in Milwaukee, you have to try to build a relationship with lawn care customers. The lawn business has become so competitive that the lawn care customer is looking for expediency. It's service more than price."



Bill Whitmire

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