

RIGHTS-OF-WAY

Landscaping lures developers and tenants

In California's Silicon Valley, where competition for new industry is intense, the City of San Jose is building roads with attractively landscaped median strips to enhance land value and help lure developers and tenants.

In one such median strip project, on a 1.5-mile extension to Hellyer Avenue in South San Jose, the Oakland-based landscape architecture firm of Singer & Hodges has created an instant landscape, using 36-inch boxed trees and other large specimens.

But the landscape would not have flourished for long in the native serpentine soil, a real problem on the northern portion of the project, says landscape architect Ron Hodges. With too little calcium and too much magnesium, the soil stunts plant growth and distorts foliage.

B&B Landscaping of Mountain View, which installed the landscape, removed 12 inches of subsoil, says Hodges. "They ripped the bottom and added gypsum. The calcium in the gypsum displaces the excess magnesium."

An irrigation system was laid and a new soil mix imported. Hodges specified a sandy loam topsoil and CompGro, a sewage sludge-based soil amendment produced by the East Bay Municipal Utility District at its wastewater treatment plant in Oakland. A composted mixture of organic solids and fir and cedar bark chips, CompGro contains high amounts of humus needed for building good soil structure. It also adds nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and essential minerals to the soil.

The medians were mounded in the middle, sloping gently to the edges. Explains Hodges: "We wanted to maximize the amount of soil so that the plants—particularly the coast live oaks—would be well-established before hitting the serpentine subsoil." To protect the oaks from excess moisture, the landscape architects designed a sub-drainage system, with a perforated drain to each tree.

"Since the oaks are slow-growing, we used 36-inch boxed specimens to make an immediate impact. Everything else we planted was in scale with that," Hodges says.

Where it is difficult to maintain ground cover, Hodges opted for seeding a drought-resistant tall fescue.

Plantings throughout the project are drought-tolerant.



Shown above is a strip of right-of-way along Hellyer Avenue in San Jose that was designed to attract industry and residents to the area. This tract was designed by Ron Hodges of Singer & Hodges.

PESTICIDES

EPA kills special review of 2,4-D

The Environmental Protection Agency will not conduct a special review of 2,4-D because further research could not confirm suspicions that it causes cancer.

EPA spokesman Al Heier said additional studies suggest 2,4-D is not a carcinogen. "Some of the best toxicologists in the country looked at the data" and could not verify the link between 2,4-D and human cancer.

The possibility of a special review arose in 1986 after release of a National Cancer Institute (NCI) study of Kansas farmers using 2,4-D more than 20 times a year and mixing their own formulations. The study said farmers were eight times more likely to con-

tract non-Hodgkins lymphoma, a cancer of the lymph systems.

However, a followup study by NCI in western Washington found no increased incidence of cancer.

The EPA decision averted the possibility of new label restrictions or a banning of the herbicide.

"This is probably the best news I've heard in a long time," says Doug Fender, executive director of the American Sod Producers Association. "The significance of an effective herbicide on a sod farm cannot be overstated."

EPA will seek out long term studies of the effects of 2,4-D done by universities or manufacturers. "We will be

asking registrants (2,4-D manufacturers) to conduct some additional long-term studies," adds Steve Johnson, deputy director of EPA's pesticide hazard evaluation division.

The *New York Times* quoted staff scientist Diane Baxter of the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides (NCAMP) as calling the decision "outrageous," saying that results of the human studies conducted by the NCI should outweigh animal studies which the EPA has referenced.

In the meantime, EPA has classified 2,4-D as a Category D pesticide, one which displays no evidence of human carcinogenicity.