

GREEN INDUSTRY NEWS

INDUSTRY

'Scapers see growth in '89

WASHINGTON — Though expansion wasn't as great as it was in 1987, landscapers did meet their 1988 expectations and remain optimistic about increasing business in 1989, according to results of the 14th annual Landscape Business Survey by the National Landscape Association (NLA).

Work that accounted for the greatest sales increase in 1988 included residential renovation (+69%) and new commercial landscaping (+60%). This year, 84 percent of those polled said they expect new residential landscaping sales to increase, followed by residential renovation (+78%).

Last year NLA members predicted a 13.9 percent increase in business and enjoyed actual expansion of 13.7 percent. This year they are looking to grow by as much as 14.3 percent.

The table at right illustrates regional variations as well as overall averages from the NLA survey. □

LAWN CARE

PLCAA says it will add to staff

MARIETTA, Ga. — The Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA) is moving ahead with plans to hire a communications specialist and a director of state government affairs. The goal is better relations between PLCAA, its members and state

NLA December 1988 Business Survey

The accompanying tables show regional variations, as well as the overall averages from the current survey.

Region	1988			%Change Reported-88/87	1989			%Change Expected-89/88
	% Up	Reporting Same	Down		% Up	Reporting Same	Down	
NEW RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPING								
Northeast	86	4	10	+11.9	88	7	5	+15.8
Southeast	64	18	18	+9.9	73	21	6	+9.1
Great Lakes	78	7	15	+11.9	90	10	0	+13.3
Great Plains	67	12	21	+5.4	86	10	4	+8.9
Survey Avg.	74%	9%	17%	+10.1%	84%	12%	4%	+12.2%
NEW COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPING								
Northeast	58	19	23	+12.5	65	19	16	+11.1
Southeast	56	25	19	+7.8	71	23	6	+11.1
Great Lakes	71	18	11	+10.2	78	15	7	+10.5
Great Plains	50	12	38	+2.3	59	18	23	+1.6
Survey Avg.	60%	19%	21%	+9.2	70%	18%	12%	+9.0
RESIDENTIAL RENOVATION								
Northeast	73	17	10	+11.6	78	22	0	+12.1
Southeast	67	23	10	+10.7	73	27	0	+11.4
Great Lakes	70	23	7	+11.3	85	15	0	+10.8
Great Plains	72	17	11	+7.8	88	12	0	+11.2
Survey Avg.	69%	21%	10%	+10.7%	78%	21%	1%	+11.0%
COMMERCIAL RENOVATION								
Northeast	28	64	8	+2.5	53	43	4	+6.8
Southeast	36	50	14	+4.8	45	55	0	+7.1
Great Lakes	45	49	6	+4.7	52	45	3	+5.4
Great Plains	20	30	50	-3.0	60	40	0	+5.5
Survey Avg.	36%	50%	14%	+3.2%	50%	47%	3%	+5.8%
RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE								
Northeast	68	24	8	+12.2	59	29	12	+9.7
Southeast	50	46	4	+16.7	45	45	10	+7.0
Great Lakes	61	32	7	+7.2	70	30	0	+6.1
Great Plains	83	17	0	+9.1	80	10	10	+7.5
Survey Avg.	63%	31%	6%	+11.8%	61%	32%	7%	+7.9%
COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE								
Northeast	48	48	4	+11.4	62	38	0	+17.8
Southeast	71	17	12	+12.5	80	20	0	+16.2
Great Lakes	56	41	3	+6.6	61	36	3	+5.5
Great Plains	50	40	10	+5.0	60	30	10	+4.5
Survey Avg.	56%	36%	8%	+10.2%	65%	31%	4%	+11.5%

Source: NLA

lawmakers.

"We anticipate that with more activity in the area of issues management, we're going to need someone to help us in terms of better communication with members and all kinds of allied groups," says Jim Brooks, executive vice president, regarding the communications specialist post.

The specialist will assist existing staff, particularly in the production of the association newsletter, and communication with member chapters on issues related matters.

Brooks said the state affairs position was created so that PLCAA can have someone to focus on regulatory matters. The director will monitor state legislative and regulatory activities relative to the lawn care industry and recommend and coordinate PLCAA's response to those activities.

Brooks said the state affairs director job would most likely be filled first. The communications specialist position should be filled by June. □

TURFGRASS

U of C releases zoysia research

RIVERSIDE, Calif. — The new zoysiagrasses are a truly minimum maintenance turf variety that grows best when planted by stolon. In addition, its slow root regrowth is a bigger problem than phytotoxicity following pre-emergence herbicide application, according to researchers at the University of California here.

Results from a preliminary study of nitrogen fertilization of the new zoysiagrass El Toro tend to confirm its potential as a minimum maintenance turfgrass.

"When unfertilized or fertilized at a low level, the El Toro zoysiagrass produced a sward of poor color but one of adequate density and fairly pleasing appearance," reports Vic Gibeault, Ph.D., cooperative extension environmental hor-

LEGISLATION

New law: trouble in California

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The legislative juggernaut continues to roll in California. The latest episode in the state's ongoing efforts is S.B. 2126, which states that after January 1, 1990, no public agency may apply an herbicide or pesticide without written recommendation by a licensed "pest control advisor." Public agencies are any facilities funded by taxpayers.

According to John Ford of Contra Costa County, agencies have one year to "grandfather in" the bill's

requirements. That means certain educational requirements will be waived for those who have been advising for the past few years.

Stan Strew, executive director of the California Agricultural Producers Association (CAPA), said advisor applicants must have a high school diploma and at least two years practical experience within the individual agency. CAPA sponsored the bill, which is predicated on the fact that public agencies are up front

in the public eye, particularly those in the highway department. According to Strew, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) recently went through numerous lawsuits brought on by improper, non-supervised applications.

If S.B. 1226 is vigorously enforced, it could affect the operations of herbicide applicators. According to Ford, 40 percent of all herbicides brought into California are used by public agencies. □

SOD

Sod companies get wise to market

SAN DIEGO — Many of the secrets to success in the sod business are based on close attention to basic market indicators and the size of the bottom line.

Companies have become more careful than ever in the attention they pay to housing starts, interest rates and size of inventory.

"We as an industry have become more cautious due to the ups and downs," says Jim Huggett of Long Island Farm, Marshall, Wis.

"You know you're in a downturn," says Huggett, "when you look out the window day after day and see that you're doing the same amount of mowing, and you realize your bottom line is stagnant. It almost catches you by surprise."

Huggett and other sod producers believe strongly in the interest rate as an accurate prophet, due to its affect on housing starts.

"We as producers can and should do our homework," says Huggett. Get in contact with customers, builders, and read the Dodge reports.

Larry Smilsky of Cookstown, Ontario,



Workers on a sod farm harvest the product.

Canada, held off on certain land lease renewals during a recent slowdown to be on the safe side, and also engaged in some "general belt tightening."

When it comes to expansions or sudden upswings in business, Smilsky acts strictly by demand, and is careful not to forget his most loyal customers in the heat of battle.

"Over the short term it's better, of course, to have extremely high demand," he admits. "But over the long term, your (oldest) customers expect you to be there to take care of them." □

ticulturist. Minimum maintenance turf of decent density and appearance resulted with low nitrogen applications, he added, while moderate to high nitrogen treatments resulted in a sward of deep green color, high density and overall turf quality.

A second study conducted in Irvine by J. Michael Henry shows stolon planting to be the best way and mid-June the best time for planting and establishing El Toro in Southern California.

Grasses planted with stolons established much

faster with summer and spring planting times than those grasses planted by the plug method, according to Henry. There was little difference in establishment between the two planting methods for grasses planted in the fall.

continued on page 14

SHORT CUTS

EL TORO from page 11

A third study, also conducted at the university's Riverside facility, showed that sod producers need to be more concerned about slow root regrowth than phytotoxicity when applying some commonly-used pre-emergence herbicides between harvests to El Toro zoysiagrass sod swards.

David W. Cudney, Cooperative Extension Weed scientist here, reported that only atrazine treatments showed a color reduction. Oxadiazon and atrazine treatments didn't significantly reduce root length. Benefin, at its lower application rate of 3 lbs. Ai/acre, resulted in slight reduction in root length. The high rate of benefin and both rates of bensulide, pendimethalin and prodiamine reduced root length, as did combination treatments of benefin plus trifluralin, benefin plus oryzalin and benefin plus oxadiazon. □

DISTRIBUTORS

Dealer says industry faces important issues

NORTH RIDGEVILLE, Ohio — The green industry has some important issues to face in the coming years, according to Larry Munn.

"Things are changing," says Munn, who is celebrating his 30th year as an equipment dealer. "I understand the grass clippings are causing problems with the EPA. So manufacturers are scrambling to deal with this problem as far as innovative equipment goes." Some companies, like Excel Industries, have equipment that automatically mulches the clippings.

In parts of the country, laws exist to outlaw people from collecting and then dumping grass clippings because of possible pesticide contamination.

"Mulching grass is not new," continues Munn.

Munn, originally an agri-

KEEPING IN TOUCH...Dick Bare, president of Arbor-Nomics, Inc., of Norcross, Ga., sends newsletters to all of his commercial and residential clients. "The Turfette" is for turf customers. "The Buggette" goes to tree and shrub customers. The letters are sent five times a year and contain topics such as lawn care, disease control and water conservation. "The newsletters have helped us build up the company," says Bare. "I try to write them like a friendly letter." Bare has learned the importance of image, and he wants to let his customer know that he's friendly, concerned, and easy to talk to.

HOUSING STEADY...The short term outlook for housing starts is pretty good, according to **Gopal Ahluwalia**, a Washington, D.C. housing analyst. Ahluwalia forecasts 1.39 million new homes to be built in 1989, down slightly from the 1988 figure of 1.49 million. Looking further ahead, he predicts 1.5 million new homes for 1990, and 1.6 million for both 1991 and 1992. Changing demographics will cause a slowdown in 1993. The ideal home size has also grown considerably. According to Ahluwalia, 1,200 sq. ft. was ideal 25 years ago. Today, homeowners want 1,800 to 2,000 sq. ft. Of course, paying for it is another story.

KEEP THEM SINGLE...Marriage can wreak havoc with your employee health coverage. Speaking from his experience as an employer, **Tim Doppel**, president of Atwood Lawn Spray, Sterling Heights, Mich., says medical coverage for a single male costs \$800 per year. But as soon as that worker ties the knot (and what self-respecting boss wouldn't include the wife in the health plan?) the cost soars to \$3000.

ONE NAME, NEW OFFICE...Arizona-based Environmental Earthscapes/The Groundskeeper has grouped both companies under the name "The Groundskeeper." According to president **Jack Hasbrouck, Jr.** Recent "changes in the market demand for our services combined with increased regulation of our industry has caused us to re-evaluate our prior decision of maintaining separate divisional names." Hasbrouck said he was licensed to apply pesticides only under The Groundskeeper name, "and if I did a landscape construction under the Environmental Earthscapes name, I'd have to have The Groundskeeper subcontract to my own company." The Groundskeeper recently opened a new facility in Tucson.

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cultural dealer, took on turf equipment in the early 1980s. Turf sales to industrial/com-



Munn: Grass clippings will be a problem.

mercial users now make up 85 percent of his sales.

"We took on the turfgrass industry for one reason. When the recession hit, we realized that the growth of grass is not affected by the cyclical nature of business. The only thing that affects its growth is Mother Nature," says Munn. □

LANDSCAPING

Developers going full service

LONG GROVE, Ill. — Landscaping will continue to

have a high priority among leading developers and property managers, says Mark Hunner of The Brickman Group Ltd.

"With competition on the increase, developers understand that they must use every available resource, including high-quality professional landscaping, to develop their properties cost-effectively and to give them the competitive edge in attracting and keeping the best-qualified tenants or buyers," Hunner notes.

"Reflecting the growing use of full-service business consultants and suppliers, we foresee an increase in demand for full-service landscape management companies to creatively meet the landscape design, contracting and maintenance needs of developers and property managers."

The reason why? According to Hunner, whether a consequence of the last recession, the after-

math of 1987's stock market crash or the rise in mergers and acquisitions—companies have streamlined and no longer have in-house landscape staffs.

"And when one company is responsible for an entire project," concludes Hunner, "it often can build in efficiencies that reduce the total cost of services when contracted for separately." □

LITERATURE

Association data base now on line

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Barring any serious snags, American Association of Nurserymen members have, by April, access to a data base full of legislative information and the names of industry contacts.

Information in the data bank is based on member responses to surveys requesting the names of known state personnel currently involved in water availability and management, groundwater issues, and data on current or pending legislation in those areas.

"Some of the people will be affiliated with state governments, horticulture extension agencies or universities," says Brian Corsini, director of grower services for the association.

The data base is free to members as part of the Water Management Committee's work for the association.

Corsini said he is also working on putting the information into a computerized bulletin board format which allows other modem-equipped computer operators to call and access a specific menu containing congressional updates and other pertinent information. □

MANAGEMENT

Talk with the boss

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Your primary resources as a golf

course superintendent are the people working for you, which is why it's essential that you let them speak openly with you.

"Almost without exception, each and every worker knows more about his or her job than we do," says Randolph P. Russell, manager of Parks and Recreation for the city of Austin, Texas. In order to get the most from them, says Russell, we need to listen, have an open attitude and explain our reasoning while caring for and trusting them.

Speaking at the 60th annual GCSAA conference here, Russell said that it's also important to accept failure. "Look at failures in a positive manner," Russell says, "Turn them into teaching tools."

The keys to success in dealing with your higher-ups, such as green committees, is to have a positive attitude, always offer a concrete plan or presentation, never confront them, but take on the role of a problem-solver, and never get upset in front of them.

"You control your relationship with your boss," says Russell. "You cannot rely on your job to speak for you. Create the ability to speak for yourself." □

GOLF

New GCSAA prez sets priorities

AURORA, Colo. — As the new president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association, Dennis Lyon plans to keep the GCSAA strong and successful, with concentration on the issues.

"GCSAA membership recently passed the 8,000 mark," says Lyon, "and we recently certified our 1,000th superintendent."

Lyon says the association's annual conference in Anaheim was a hit, with 150,000 square feet of space sold to exhibitors, and an attendance figure of more than 15,000.

According to Lyon, who

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is golf course super for the city of Aurora, Colo., the biggest issue facing the golf industry is "the environmental fate of pesticides." The GCSAA, says Lyon, is committed to funding research in that area. "We're taking the high road in dealing with the issues. We hope to work with legislators and the EPA to better help them make informed decisions." □

GOLF

Use soil tests for best care

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Soil test reports are gaining in stature as another step towards improved golf course maintenance, according to Tom Turner, Ph.D., University of Maryland.

The prime motivator in soil testing should be to prevent nutrient deficiencies in turf. Less frequently, the soil test is helpful in diagnosing degrees of toxicity.

Turner believes checks for nutrient imbalance will soon be more common. "Especially with these high sand content putting greens, the potential for micro-nutrient problems increases."

"One thing that you want to use soil tests for is monitoring your fertility program," says Turner. "If you've been in a deficiency situation, test periodically to see how quickly you can start correcting it."

Factors to consider in making phosphorus and potassium recommendations are soil level and soil condition. Sand and clay, for example, each have different nutrient requirements and compaction considerations. □

Chemicals

Preparation is best protection

DOVER, Ohio — A consulting and design engineer firm has been formed here to help the green industry develop safe and efficient systems for the storage,

mixing and handling of chemicals.

Haskett/McCausland & Associates is designed to provide protection from spillage and leakage, significantly reduce or eliminate storage and disposal of chemical waste products, and increase speed and safety in loading and handling operations, as well as other chemical-related services.

The firm is at 425 W. Howe St., P.O. Box 337, Dover, Ohio 44622; (216) 364-1442. □

CONFERENCES

Warren meeting explores drought

AUSTIN, Texas — The continuing water shortage and its domino effects on the turfgrass industry was the main topic of the recent Warren Turf Kick-off Conference.

"The widespread drought of 1988 is merely hastening the focus on a challenge that we must face in this country," said Tom Bose of ABM Irrigation. "We have a finite amount of water in our country—we're not making any more—and we're using it, altering it, or transporting it to booming sunbelt population centers at unprecedented rates," said Bose, who predicted nationwide government regulation of water by the year 2000. □

SEED INDUSTRY

Jacklin expands into southwest

POST FALLS, Ida. — The Jacklin Seed Company has established a southwest office in Phoenix, Arizona and a research station in the Yuma and Imperial Valley areas.

Research at the Arizona facilities will be focused on warm-season grasses, particularly the improved and newly released Bermudagrasses and zoysiagrasses. Plans include doubling the Ari-

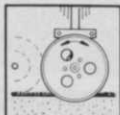
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zona acreage in 1989 and 1990.

Doyle Jacklin, director of marketing, said the new division will enable the company to do extensive research and grow seed of the improved warm-season varieties.

"Our capability of growing zoysiagrass from seed, rather than the old slow method using plugs or sprigging, broadens the market for zoysia markedly," Jacklin said.

The facilities will also enable the company to grow and develop its new Bermudagrass varieties which are more cold tolerant. "The new varieties will replace common types of Bermuda in areas which have previously experienced winter damage," said Jacklin. □

AGRONOMY

Shatter aerate or hollow tines?

The biggest aeration controversy involves the comparative effectiveness of hollow tine coring vs. solid, or shatter-coring.

Instead of removing a core of soil, the solid tine pushes it further down. The general consensus is that solid tine coring is not very effective, and might do more harm than good.

"Whenever you drive a solid tine into the ground, you're displacing a good deal of soil," says Doug Chapman of Dow Gardens, "and there may be a potential for damage, or further compaction. Basically, there's evidence that drier soil, or greens with high sand content, benefit most from shattering effects."

Robert Morris says a general feeling exists among superiors that shatter-core aeration doesn't create enough disturbance within the turf to make it worthwhile.

Jerry Faubel, superintendent at Saginaw (Mich.) Country Club, prefers hollow tine coring.

"It benefits the soil in two ways: core removal

helps the soil internally, and the cores left on the surface work well toward thatch control."

Faubel says solid tine coring is very difficult to use for several reasons. "Soil moisture conditions must be very specific. If the soil is too moist you lose the shattering effect. Second, the solid tine has the tendency to lift the surface. When you punch something in there, the space has to go somewhere. You either destroy air space or lift the soil.

"As far as greens are concerned," continues Faubel, "we might aerate occasionally. We're on a sand top dressing program, so we don't need to aerate the greens annually." □

BUSINESS

Hidden costs boost hourly pay

LANSING, Mich. — Employee benefits are the unseen labor costs that turn \$6 per hour employees into \$9 or \$15 per hour workers.

Tim Doppel of Atwood Lawn Spray, Sterling Heights, Mich., points out that an employee might question a \$6 per hour wage after writing out the bills and seeing the totals on the gross receipts. But Doppel reminds that there are many factors that make up what might be called a hidden labor rate.

Beyond the base hourly rate, contributions to FICA—Social Security—can be about 7.5 percent per employee, matched by the employer.

In the insurance category, the biggest deduction is unemployment insurance. "Whether or not there are claims," said Doppel, employers pay state and federal unemployment tax; and depending on your experience ratio, you could pay as little as 2 percent, or up to 10 percent of the first



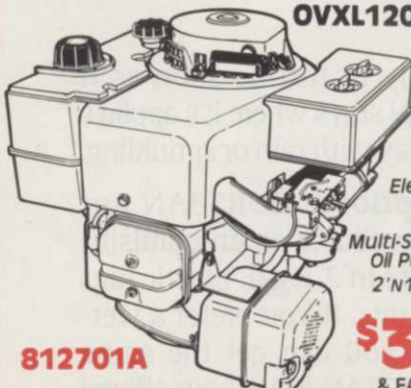
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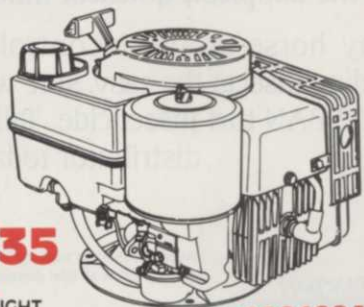
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Liability insurance protects the entire company in case an employee causes an accident. Depending on the company's experience ratio, it goes from 5 to 6 percent. In the quality of life category, perks such as sick days, paid vacations, training days and medical and dental coverage all add up. □

LAWN CARE

LCOs growing for several reasons

NEW ORLEANS — Increased customer demand and a strong desire for greater profits were the main reasons lawn care operators (LCOs) expanded their services in 1988, according to a Dow Chemical Company survey.

Ninety-nine percent of LCOs polled said they now offer services beyond traditional lawn care, while 88 percent said they've seen an increase in customer demand for different services in the past year.

Additional services most frequently offered are tree/shrub fertilization and insect spraying (64 percent), mowing and lawn renovation (59 percent) and landscape planning (41 percent).

Forty percent of LCOs said their customer base turns over 5 to 10 percent a year, 28 percent reported a 15 to 20 percent loss and 25 percent said they lose 15 to 20 percent of their customers annually.

LCOs suggested various tactics that could reduce customer attrition, including better customer communication and education, better and more service, improved weed control and enhanced employee training.

The LCOs were polled at Dow's booth at the PLCAA meeting in New Orleans. □

PLCAA

\$10,000 donated for NY court fight

MARIETTA, GA — The Professional Lawn Care Associa-

tion of America has given \$10,000 to the New York Pesticide Coalition war chest. The money is to help the Coalition in its ongoing court battle against New York state pesticide regulations.

"PLCAA is ready to challenge unreasonable regulation and legislation on a case-by-case basis and to put both dollars and people behind that fight," says PLCAA president, Robert F. Parmley.

PLCAA believes the New York lawsuit represents a significant step in the struggle for reasonable regulation of the use of pesticides, both for lawn care services and the entire green industry. A 1987 law enacted by New York state, plus further regulations enacted by the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, require customer contracts, prenotification and posting when pesticides are applied. PLCAA, the Coalition and other national trade associations feel the regulations and the law are unreasonable, overly broad and unjustified, given the pesticide safety data available.

PLCAA reports it has dedicated nearly a third of its 1989 operating budget to issues management, which covers legal activity, personnel, and a variety of public relations and coalition-building activities.

"Our mission is clear," said Parmley. "We have put a high priority on issues management." □

BUSINESS

Literacy center opens at Briggs

MILWAUKEE — Briggs & Stratton has been awarded a federal grant by the United States Department of Education for the purpose of promoting literacy in the workplace.

The grant will be implemented by a partnership comprised of Briggs & Stratton, Local 232 Allied Industrial Workers and the Milwaukee Area Technical College, says Gerald Zitner, VP of Human Resources. □