

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.

COMMAND PERFORMANCE.



Innovation

Competition out there is tough. But you can always count on Ditch Witch equipment to help you keep one step ahead of the other guy. Take the 255sx for instance. It can help you bury sprinkler pipe *without trenching* and with minimal turf damage. In fact, no other lawn plow can outperform it. Now that's innovation!



**Ditch
Witch**

The Charles Machine Works, Inc.
Perry, Oklahoma 73077-0066
Toll-Free: 1-800-654-6481

Circle No. 118 on Reader Inquiry Card