

## LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

# Landscaping giants merge

CALABASAS, Calif. — Oyler Brothers Company, Florida's largest landscape maintenance firm, has merged with Environmental Care, Inc. (EC), the biggest such firm in the nation. Details of the financial transaction involved remain undisclosed.

Oyler Bros. Company was ranked fifth last year on *Lawn Care Industry* magazine's Million Dollar Mower list with annual revenues of more than \$4.7 million. It has offices in Orlando, Jacksonville, Miami and Tampa. It will henceforth be known as Oyler Brothers Environmental Care, Inc.

Environmental Care, a subsidiary of Environmental Industries, Inc., has 1,000 employees at 15 branches in California and an annual revenue of \$135 to \$140 million, according to spokesperson Bob Scofield. This is the company's second acquisition outside California, its first in Florida.

"Our desire to consummate this arrangement with Oyler stems from the fact that it's a good, sound company that does quality work in a good marketplace," says Scofield.

Tom Oyler will remain at the helm of the Florida company, adds Scofield. Joining him will be EC's Gary Tungate, who will become branch manager in Orlando. No other management changes are anticipated. Says Scofield, "There is an excellent operation in place there (at



Merger principles, left to right: Bruce Wilson of EC, Tom Oyler, Burton Sperber of EC and David Rose of Environmental Industries.

Oyler) so there is no need to make wholesale changes," he says.

The merger effectively puts Environmental Care east of the Mississippi River for the first time. Its influence on the landscape market will now be felt from coast to coast.

Asked about future plans for expansion in Florida, Scofield says "Environmental Care is a growth company. Obviously we're not going in there in order to remain the same size. Our hope is that the combination of these companies will enable those people who were developing Oyler Bros. to expand even more because we're bringing the strength of Environmental Care on board." □

## STATES

### Federal judge upholds New York legislation

NEW YORK — Federal Judge Neal McCurn has ruled in support of New York State's right to require warning signs and other printed material for pesticide applications. The ruling was in response to a suit by the New York State Pesticide Applicators Coalition (NYSPAC).

The coalition claimed that the New York Department of Environmental Conservation's pesticide regulations were in violation of federal laws governing pesticide labeling.

Judge McCurn ruled that the DEC's notification requirements are a "complimentary adjunct" to federal law, to prevent unreasonable injury to man and his environment.

Options for NYSPAC in-

clude filing an appeal in either federal court or state court, or both, according to Walter D. Schroeder of the organization. "We have suffered many losses over the past six years," Schroeder wrote to NYSPAC members, "but we still continue to fight. If we did not fight, I have no doubt that they (the DEC) would have run over us by now. Even our losses have been victories because we slow them down."

Notification requirements under the state statute include 24-hour sign posting and signed customer contracts.

Other regulations that are not specifically spelled out in the statute, however, are on hold, pending a ruling by a state court. □

## Golf course building is up, architects say

CHICAGO - Golf course architects are approaching the "magic number" of new golf courses that must be built annually to cope with the increasing number of new players.

A survey of member firms of the American Society of Golf Course Architects reveals that 305 new projects and 268 remodeling assignments are in progress in the U.S. and Canada, both healthy increases from the previous year.

According to statistics from the National Golf Foundation, golf players jumped from 20.2 million in 1986 to 21.7 million in 1987.

Based on those figures, the NGF projects that approximately 387 new courses (one a day!) would have to open annually to correct the disparity between the number of players and courses available.

"I honestly believe we could build 400 new courses a year if financing were readily available," says ASGCA president Pete Dye. "If financing manifests itself, then it will be the responsibility of the architect and builder to meet this challenge and produce interesting golf courses that will make those millions of new golfers glad they came out to the course." □



Lee Hellman

### PESTICIDES

## Deer tick moves into new areas

BALTIMORE — The deer tick population in the United States is spreading, and with it the threat of Lyme disease.

According to Lee Hellman, Ph.D., the pinhead-sized, Maryland-based pest has been detected in a downward migration into the Appalachians, and may soon reach Virginia and other southern states. Cases of Lyme disease have also been documented in Western states and other world-wide locations.

Hellman says deer ticks attack when in the nymphal stage, which is also the time they carry the Lyme disease virus.

Adult females nest in rodents or pets, and then drop off in yards and fields to lay eggs. The first symptom of Lyme disease is a rash around the bite. If untreated, the rash will expand, and heart and nervous conditions or swollen joints may develop.

Two drawbacks in the battle against the disease are that only 75 percent of victims exhibit the rash symptom, and the disease is not always detectable in blood tests. According to Hellman, the disease can be easily controlled by antibiotics, but in some instances disease organisms have escaped the antibiotics and enter body tissue impervious to medication. There they will remain, causing recurrent symptoms.

"Lyme disease will be one of the major health control problems in the eastern United States," warns Hellman.

Hellman says the deer tick can be controlled by most materials now used against turf insects, such as Turfcam, Triumph, diazinon, Dursban, Sevin, or the soon-to-be-available insect growth regulators or synthetic pyrethroids. □

# SHORT CUTS

**MIDWEST HOT SPOT...**The drought took its toll on the state of Michigan in 1988. Paul Rieke, Ph.D. at Michigan State University, says portions of the state had .83 inches of rainfall during May and June. Usual rainfall for that time is 6.07 inches. Michigan experienced 37 days above 90°, a mercuric rise from the usual 11 days. Average per day rainfall from April 24-July 15 was .05 inches.

**HOUSES DOWN...**"We predict that single-family housing construction will continue to inch downward but will remain above the one million unit level." That prognostication comes from Stephen W. Scott, vice president at JI Case. Case, of course, has a vested interest in housing construction because it manufactures construction equipment.

**BE COUNTED...**The Michigan Turfgrass Foundation has begun a survey of the Michigan green industry. The purpose, according to Tim Doppel, president of Atwood Lawn Spray, is to determine the size and earning power of Michigan's turfgrass industry. "We intend to use the results to show just how important the Michigan green industry is and thereby generate dollars to support research at Michigan State University," says Doppel, who is in charge of the project.

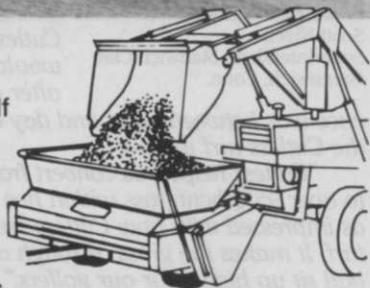
**PR DEPARTMENT...**"We all have a public relations department, whether we know it or not," says ServiceMaster vice president Rick White. White says "we are making impressions all the time on the people we serve and even people we don't serve." The four ways to impress people, hopefully positively: "the condition of our vehicles, answering the phones, the appearance of our employees and the quality of our work." White says "I think it's time for us to under-promise and over-deliver," instead of vice versa.

**BUG DETECTOR...**David Smitley of Michigan State reports the drought of 1988 greatly effected the insect populations in areas of Michigan. "European chafers and Japanese beetles expanded their territory, and there was some cutworm and bluegrass billbug movement onto golf course fairways because of the extreme contrast to other drought-stressed areas." Some fairways, he reports, suffered 50 percent turf loss. Interestingly, home lawns in the state showed little insect damage, with 95 percent being strictly drought stress. In fact, many bugs packed up and moved out of those lawns to find enough moisture.

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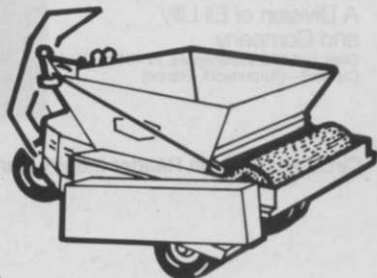
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NEWS from page 11

### GOLF

## GCSAA begins environmental management

LAWRENCE, Kan. — The GCSAA has contracted with Hall-Kimbrell Environmental Services to develop the first comprehensive environmental management program for the golf industry. Hall-Kimbrell is one of the nation's leading environmental consulting firms.

"We want to help superintendents make their golf courses as environmentally pleasant and safe as possible," says John Schilling, executive director of the golf superintendents association.

The GCSAA feels that coping with regulatory obligations and managing environmental and safety risks are increasingly being recognized as important professional priorities for its members.

The package being provided to superintendents consists of a Compliance Audit Notebook, an instructional videotape and additional printed material. The package deals with issues like pesticide handling and storage, worker safety, underground storage tanks, hazard communication standards and more.

It is available through the GCSAA, 1617 St. Andrews Dr., Lawrence, KS 66046. Cost is \$725 for members and \$900 for non-members. □

### LANDSCAPING

## Teamwork gets best results

BALTIMORE — Cooperation and teamwork between lawn care operators and customers remains a green industry issue. Clark Throssel, Ph.D. at Purdue University, believes one part of this relationship is to reconcile customer expectation with actual results.

Speaking to a packed house at the Maryland

Turfgrass Conference, Throssel said operators must instill reasonable expectations by realistic statements made in person and in company advertising. "Don't create false illusions of the perfect lawn," Throssel advised. "Avoid statements like 'weed free' or 'grub proof.' Rather, say 'weed control' or 'grub management.'"

Throssel also stressed the importance of homeowner involvement in post-treatment maintenance. "If they don't follow your suggestions," said Throssel, "the results will be less than expected."

Proper mowing height and proper watering are crucial to a successful program. "The numbers on the mower wheels do not refer to mowing height. If a customer says he is cutting at six inches, you can be sure he's looking at the numbers on the wheels."

Since many customers equate a lower height with a nicer lawn, the lawn care professional must advise them otherwise. "They need to know," said Throssel, "that lower mowing is harmful to root growth. The roots will not grow for five or six days afterwards."

"If your customers decide they'd like to experiment on their own," said Throssel, "let them know which species work best for that part of the country, and which species are incompatible. Turf-type tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass, for example, will not be successful."

"The competition in the green industry has left a limited customer base," warned Throssel, who suggested being as helpful and available as possible. That means looking for and meeting with prospective customers on Saturdays and weekends. □



Throssel

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## TURFGRASS

### New grass from the Emerald Isle

BELFAST, Northern Ireland — Logro, a dwarf variety of grass bred to grow not more than six inches high, is proving to be a boon to landscapers here. According to a press release, the grass is also being tested in Texas, parts of Canada, New Zealand and East Germany.

"Logro has a prostrate growth habit," says David Johnston, turf researcher for Queens University at the Horticultural and Plant Breeding Station in Loughgall, Northern Ireland. "It tends to grow horizontally along the ground with the result that there is good ground cover even after close mowing. It also maintains an attractive color, is disease-resistant and it needs to be cut about two-thirds as often as traditional types of grass. The potential for savings world-

wide is unlimited."

Herbicide-resistant varieties called Duchess and Countess are now being tested.

"Both varieties will give a magnificent green sward of almost 100 percent purity," Johnston continues. "And recent trials in Texas have confirmed that Duchess leads the field in terms of heat tolerance."

He sees money-saving uses for Logro on golf courses, athletic fields, schools grounds, office complexes, roadsides, cemeteries and airports. □

## LANDSCAPING

### ALCA study analyzes costs

FALLS CHURCH, Va. — A recent nationwide study reveals that cash flow is the most critical factor in the success of a landscape management company.

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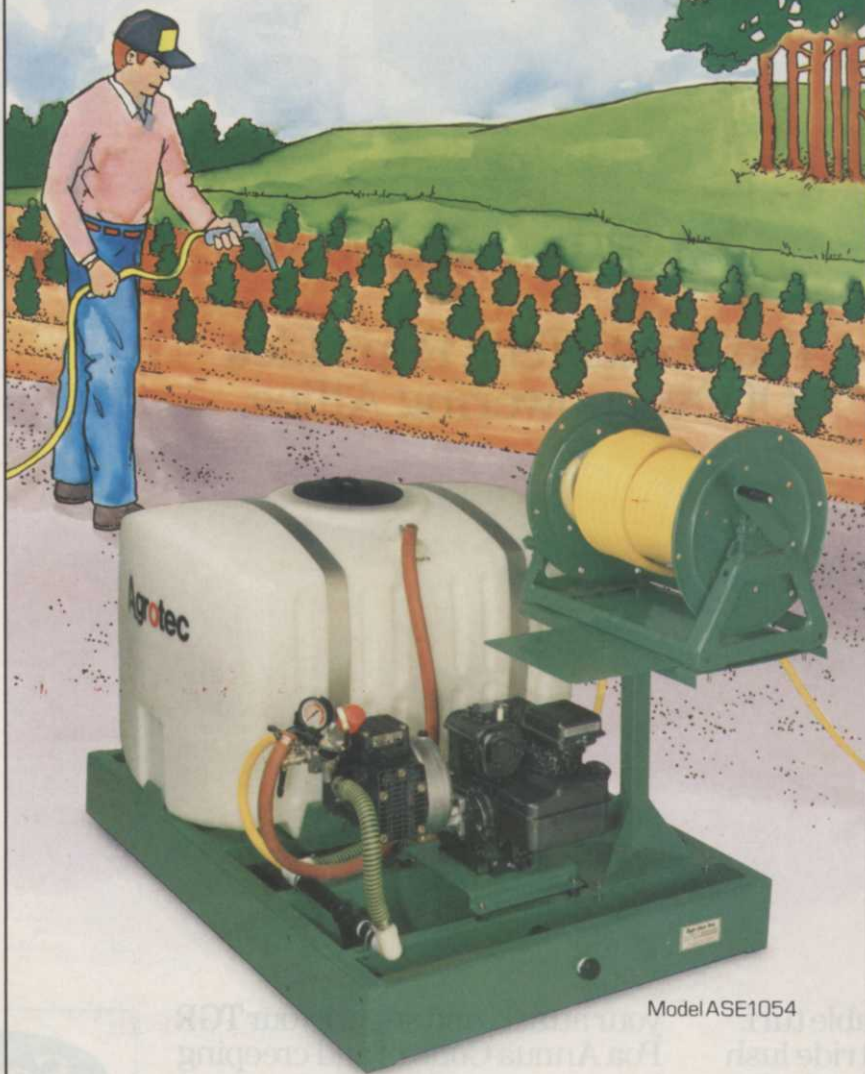
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ated Landscape Contractors of America) Operating Cost Study examines financial information provided by 326 contractors. The study was done by Ross-Payne & Associates of Barrington, Ill.

The study presents model financial ratios and industry averages for three separate groups of contractors: exterior landscapers, landscape management firms and interior plantscapers.

The study notes that while contractors have incorporated better management practices since 1979, profits have fallen by more than 50 percent. Much of this is attributed to their inability to pass along equipment cost increases.

Major categories include assets, liabilities and equity, sales, gross margin, indirect overhead, administrative overhead, and net profit before taxes.

In addition to the total averages, separate sets of averages are presented for three different revenue groups: under \$750,000, \$750,000 to \$2 million, and over \$2 million.

The report also explains various financial ratios, such as debt-to-equity, net fixed to current assets, degree of fixed asset newness, and others.

The 64-page study costs \$20 for ALCA members and \$30 for non-members. For information, contact ALCA at 405 N. Washington St., Falls Church, Va. 22046. (Phone: 703-241-4004.) □

## LAWN CARE

### Public image an issue for '90s

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. — First, some stats: recent industry surveys indicate 30 percent of a potential 7.5 million single-family home lawns are being treated by professional applicators. The EPA has detected traces of 17 pesticides in 23 states' groundwater. Fifteen others have been detected, but their sources are not identified.

*continued on page 22*

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## NEWS from page 18

For these reasons, Scott Harrison of Penn State University believes the industry must consider the influence of turfgrass and landscape management on water quality, and how lawn care is perceived in the public eye.

Harrison has collected data with respect to nutrient and pesticide use in urban/suburban landscapes. He knows the present aggressive regulatory stance on pesticide use will affect every company's programs, but he does not recommend a defensive posture.

"We have to adjust our management procedures. The industry must police itself rather than be negative," he says. He advises high standards of cleanliness, chemical disposal and personnel training. He also recommends "more intelligent landscape designs," using low maintenance, low nutrient requirements, and more customer education on en-

vironmental issues.

"If we're going to deal with the regulatory situation and a high degree of public scrutiny," concludes Harrison, "we must keep these things in mind." □

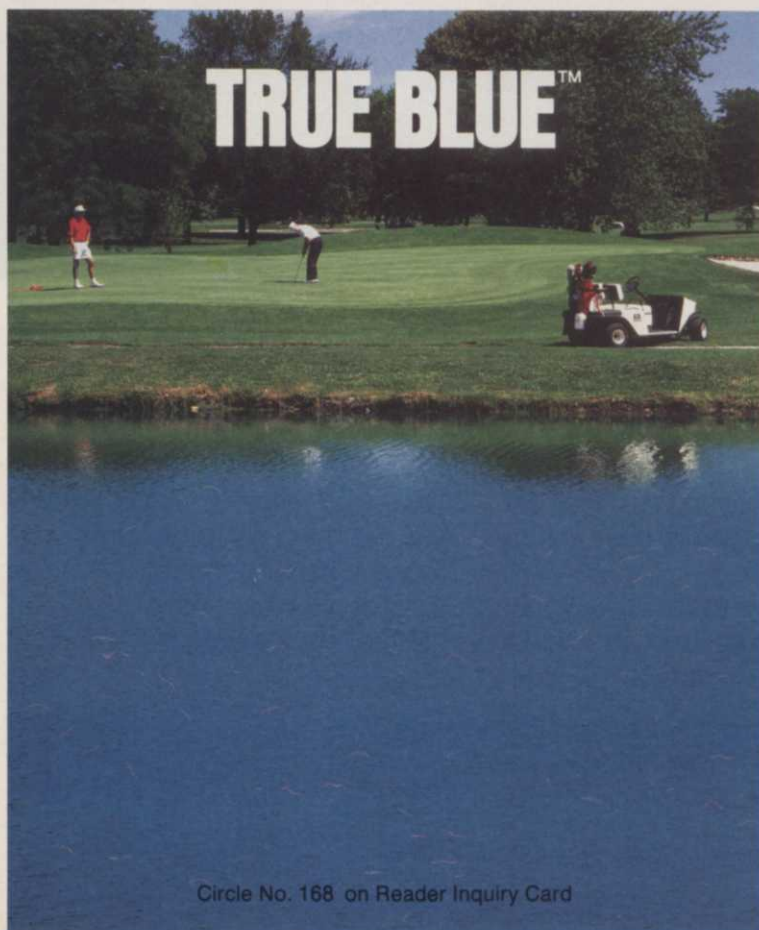
## MANAGEMENT

### Assist programs fight drug abuse

BALTIMORE — If you live in Maryland and believe employee drug abuse is a problem at your company, call Bill Lowry at (301) 225-6873.

Lowry, an official with the Maryland Department of Alcohol and Drug Abuse, addressed the Maryland Turfgrass Conference recently on how to identify and deal with drug abuse among employees, something he believes affects many companies at alarming rates.

According to Lowry, generally 20 percent of the nation's workforce is im-



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paired by alcohol, drugs or emotional problems, and probably 12 percent of any given workforce has a measurable alcohol or drug problem, resulting in massive financial losses for companies.

"We estimate that a company that has 1,000 employees with a \$25,000 per capital salary will lose \$1,125,000 due to absenteeism, overtime, tardiness and insurance claims." That figure does not include the costs incurred by poor decision-making on the part of the employee.

Lowry believes the antidote lies in employee assistance programs, a means whereby company superintendents report problem employees, or the employees are encouraged to come forward on their own with no threat of dismissal.

According to Lowry, most companies are too small to afford a program on their own. He notes that some companies are contracting with private, outside consortiums which establish a group assistance program for a number of companies.

In the meantime, Lowry recommends you look for signs that indicate drug or alcohol use is a problem: poor attendance, frequent absences, especially after weekends or holidays, unexplained disappearances, long lunches, or an adverse change in the employee's performance or personal appearance. □

## LANDSCAPING

### More production to meet goals

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Do you envision your landscaping company as a "production company?" Are you fluent in "production language," and do you generate "production numbers" to set goals and judge the output of your employees?

If not, perhaps that's the reason why business

is up one month, down the next.

In a back-to-the-basics seminar at the Landscape Expo here, Phil Christian of PDC Consultants seemed to be saying that the idea of "production" is a mind-set needed for consistency.

A production company should be organized so the entire company serves as a support system for each crew or "production unit." The units consist of labor, equipment, material and transportation. The production company must make timely and accurate production numbers on a project-by-project basis. Production goals are set by management, which monitors each crew's progress, making the necessary adjustments as needed.

Safety is another benefit of the production company. Training activities are structured around safe and correct procedures, strictly enforced by the crew chiefs.

"Increased productivity should produce an increase in quality if the production procedures are followed," advises Christian, "and projects are produced on schedule."

According to Christian, the importance of each production unit stems from policies and procedures designed to promote quality production. Good policies meet with little interference from management or managers.

Christian's theory of over-production says that the production units should be structured to meet any goal. □

### Correction

On page 46 of the February issue, a riding mower was misidentified. What was a Woods/Hesston Model 3150 is mistakenly identified as an Exmark 3150.

Woods/Hesston is an Oregon, Ill.-based manufacturer of professional lawn mowers. Exmark is based in Beatrice, Neb.