



IN-HOUSE AND PICTURE PERFECT

The Eastman Kodak landscaping team operates as a well-run business within a larger corporate structure.

by Terry McIver, associate editor

"Pretty as a picture" is an apt description of the grounds surrounding the Eastman Kodak headquarters in Rochester, N.Y.

That snapshot look was achieved through the dedication and professionalism of the company's 20-man landscape section. The section operates as an independent service within the company, to provide landscape consulting and design services, installation and maintenance for all Kodak properties in the Rochester area.

Cost-saving idea fruitful

According to section group leader Jim Voorhies, streamlining was begun two years ago when Kodak wanted to improve cost efficiency.

"The company wanted us to go through all the various service businesses within Kodak—such as landscaping, parking lot operations, mail delivery—to determine whether it would be more cost-effective to have the services performed by an outside

agency," recalls Voorhies. "We found this landscaping operation to be compatible with an outside contractor."

An in-house landscaping team is not a new concept, but Kodak wanted to be sure it was getting the best return by having the service done by a Kodak crew. Other sections in the company are thus charged for services performed.

"It's not like the money is leaving the company; it just moves within the company," explains Kevin Grapensteter, section supervisor of the landscape operation. Return on sales and assets are targeted for all available services, and the team has to bid on any new projects considered by upper management. "We have a slight advantage over an outside contractor," admits Grapensteter, "in that we don't have some costs such as advertising or equipment mortgages."

Regardless, the Kodak landscape section operates like any successful landscaping company. A thorough mission statement dictates that all

services be performed in a way that takes into consideration any neighborhood concerns or environmental impact, uses resources effectively and performs the work safely and efficiently.

Sharing the dollars

The Landscape Section had a 1989 operating budget of \$1.2 million, dispersed among seven lines of business: lawn maintenance; new installations and restorations; tree and shrub maintenance; bed maintenance; vegetation control; property management; and snow removal.

Of the seven businesses the Lawn Maintenance, Vegetation Control, Tree and Shrub Maintenance and New Installations divisions are the busiest.

Lawn Maintenance receives 47 percent of budgeted dollars to care for 216 acres. Those responsibilities include mowing, edging, thatching, rolling, aeration, fertilizing, chemical application, irrigation, litter pick-up

and spring/fall clean-up.

Vegetation Control requires chemical application at stone, mulch and fence line areas, along with field and slope mowing of 500 acres. The New Installation business designs and selects plant material and installs all landscaping of new building sites associated with Kodak Park and the Kodak offices in downtown Rochester. The Tree and Shrub Maintenance division prunes, trims, fertilizes, irrigates and applies needed chemicals to 28,500 plants. Tree varieties include Austrian pines, maples, flowering crabtrees, locust trees, and

andorra junipers.

Equipment costs for the division were also lowered after it hired its own mechanic. "In the past," explains Grapensteter, "we had contracted a certain amount of dollars to the Kodak garage." But when it came to repairing either a truck needed in a hurry to transport Kodak products to a dealer or a piece of lawn equipment, business sense dictated that the lawn equipment repair be put on hold. "Now we don't have as much down time," says Grapensteter. The Kodak landscaping fleet includes two Howard mowers, a number of out-

front rotary mowers, and equipment from Cushman, Yazoo, Bobcat, Ford and John Deere.

Well trained, licensed crews

Voorhies says Kodak believes the growth and customer satisfaction of the landscape department is a direct result of career-oriented employees who are proud of their accomplishments:

- 60 percent have earned associate degrees;
- 80 percent have had previous landscaping experience;
- 85 percent are New York State licensed pesticide applicators.

All employees are versatile and trained to assist other sections within the department.

"The last six or seven people we've hired have had education in the (horticulture) field plus prior experience; some owned or still own nurseries," says Voorhies. "We have nine maintenance crews of two to five men each," explains Voorhies. "They report to fully equipped work stations, each with its own group leader. The group leaders are familiar with their designated area and have a good rapport with people they work with."

Good ideas get around

Each duty is organized independently along geographic lines. The layout requires group leaders to make decisions, prioritize work loads and use resources as conditions warrant.

An on-going cross-training program ensures maximum use of personnel and resources while developing experience for back-up personnel. Grapensteter says cross-training not only gives insight into how another area operates, "it introduces ideas from one area to the next. Therefore, a time- or money-saving idea can work its way through."

To maintain a quality workforce, cross-training is supplemented with safety seminars and alternate work hours for improved equipment use.

To increase productivity during the growing season, various activities are scheduled during winter months. Educational seminars and training sessions are conducted, group leaders meet, safety meetings are held. Winter is also a good time to prune trees and remove dead vegetation from along security fence lines.

Grapensteter says that to find good part-time help, the division visits local colleges to recruit horticulture students who are interested in working for Kodak during summer.

"If they can pick up some useful information during the summer and get paid for it at the same time," says Grapensteter, "we both win." **LM**



Flower beds adorn one of the original sections of Kodak park, making the old look new, neat and attractive.



The Kodak Landscape Section designed and installed this picnic area for workers' lunchtime breaks.