

Believing in his own people

MURRYSVILLE, Pa. — Irrigation expert Tamas (Tom) Tanto thinks that having the right people in the right place at the right time is vital.

"We feel it is very important to take our own employees to out-of-town jobs, and not hire local people there," he explains. "We might have one inexperienced person in an eight-man crew, but he's from our home base and we're training him. Most of our crews have been together for a long time. They work long hours—seven days a week to meet the deadlines—and they do quality work."

Some irrigation organizations send out two or three experienced people, and then hire locally to fill out the crew. But often they find it difficult to get on-site



Tamas "Tom" Tanto (right) confers with David Alexandrowicz, superintendent at St. Clair C.C. in Venetia, Pa.

help of any kind. And they face the problem, right after payday and as a project winds down, that some local help will not show up.

Tanto's company installs irrigation systems for Arnold Palmer, Jack Nick-

laus, Reese Jones, Robert Trent Jones and other top golf course designers. It also re-does irrigation on top-notch, well-known existing courses.

Tanto's 67 employees restrict themselves to an area

extending from Maine to Florida, and from the Atlantic Ocean to Ohio. They work hard to keep on top of 20 to 25 concurrent projects.

Tanto, a 1956 Hungarian refugee who earned a civil engineering degree from the University of Pittsburgh, built complete golf courses until 1974. Then the energy crisis convinced him he should concentrate on irrigation, the least energy-dependent and his favorite phase.

How does he keep up with the fast pace he's set for himself?

"It takes a combination of things," he says. "Good people, good equipment, a commitment to finishing jobs right and on time...it's a matter of putting several pieces of a puzzle together."

Tanto has found it im-
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portant to use reliable trenching and vibratory plowing equipment, which can be maintained by distributors wherever he goes. After trying a bit of everything, he has settled on Ditch Witch: six 30 hp trenchers and one 65 hp trencher, along with five 35 hp lawn plows and various attachments, including two earth saws.

"We expect to get 2,000 feet a day out of each machine and crew," says Tanto. "Usually, we run only one machine at a time on a job. Trenching is normally finished by noon, and the whole day is spent laying pipe."

Tanto also recently acquired a Ditch Witch P40

rod pusher, specifically for a course whose manager would not allow him to saw across roads and cart paths. It's "smaller and lighter than any rod pushers we've used before," he says.

Tanto himself visits all job sites frequently, discussing needs with course officials and making sure their schedules are being met. His "normal" 18-hole irrigation job on a new course takes about 60 days.

What about the future? The demand for new golf courses is increasing almost exponentially, and competent irrigation companies are getting busier. What once was a seasonal activity has become a fast-paced, year-round, high-tech activity for dedicated people like Tanto and his crews.



Paul Thomas (left) and Joe Ardolino were responsible for renovating the baseball field at Towson State University.

Towson's renovation: using all the resources

BALTIMORE — When East Coast Conference officials decided that Towson State's baseball team couldn't play on its home field if it qualified for post-season play, Paul Thomas and Joe Ardolino knew it was time to renovate.

Thomas is grounds supervisor and Ardolino assistant athletic director at this small suburban college. Together they transformed the school's baseball stadium from censure to championship quality, as evidenced by the Beam Clay College Diamond Award won last year.

"The most important

step you can take is also the least expensive step," notes Thomas. "And that is to have a conduit between you and the coaches." Thomas notes that there is no shortage of egos to be found on any coaching staff, which underscores the need to have a strong communicator in close contact with coaches.

"We tried very hard to establish positive dialogue with athletic administrators to get a total picture of their needs instead of working on a game-by-game or as-needed basis," says Thomas.

Finding the money for

Finding the money for renovation is as difficult as removing 20 years of poor maintenance, Thomas added. The key is to put all the resources at your disposal to work, says Thomas.

"Convince your athletic department to do for you what it does for its sports programs," says Ardolino. Towson State coaches and ballplayers helped lay sod and the local utility company supplied about \$10,000 worth of trenching and plumbing work. "That's a real important part of our project. We knew we couldn't do it as a one- or two-man show. You need support."

Thomas also suggested to think big when making plans. Tell coaches and administrators of the field's potential and be a good salesman. "Don't walk in and hit them with the price right away," says Thomas. "I think it's better to go in one day and say, 'These are the improvements we want to make.' Give them the improvements and come back

later and tell them how much it will cost."

Ardolino and Thomas say their successful renovation has had a carry-over effect on the rest of the college. "We were able to go to the president for more money and, as a result of our success, we got an increase in our maintenance budget and have three new full-time people."

—Will Perry

Dr. Gwen Stahnke, previously with the University of Nebraska, has replaced the retired **Dr. Roy L. Goss**, who was turfgrass specialist at the University of Washington.

Mike Robinson of Seed Research of Oregon recently presented a \$500 research grant to **Tom Cook**, representing the Oregon State University Department of Horticulture.

Judy Brede, Jacklin Seed Company's warm-season grass breeder, has been promoted to the position of Director of Warm-Season Grass Research. □

LETTERS

Customers pay for your labor

To the editor:

Right on with your editorial "As I See It" in the November issue. You have reaffirmed the fact that customers, not the company, pay our labor. In order to elevate the quality and maintain the talent we need to provide the professional services our clients are demanding, we must re-evaluate our pricing policies. Not only will wages have to go up, but we must learn how to provide full-time employment with minimal or no seasonal layoff, and we must provide a good quality benefit package.

My investigation this past season tells me that our young people completing two- and four-year courses in horticulture are being

heavily recruited—many have as many as 12 job offers at very respectable wages. I am sure none of us wants to cut our business by 20 percent because we cannot get the necessary labor force.

Much will be said and written in the next few years about this serious problem, but your editorial hits it where it's at. Get the charges for services up, work efficiently and compensate our people acceptably.

Ritchie B. Skelton
Lied's,
Sussex, Wisc.

To the editor:

I am writing regarding the article "Biocontrols for the Green Industry" (November, 1989, LM), I agree that new developments in pest biocontrol research

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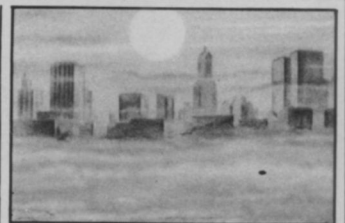
Savage Heat Waves, Water Shortages, Parched Farms Year After Year After Year

The National Arbor Day Foundation Urges You to Plant Trees to Fight the Greenhouse Effect

The Greenhouse Effect may take hold of the Earth in your lifetime.

If that happens, the huge polar ice caps may melt, causing oceans to flood coastal cities. Drought will plague America's breadbasket. Rivers that supply water to cities will dry up. Heat waves will be commonplace.

A sharp increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide is a major cause of the Greenhouse Effect. Trees remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, but mankind has destroyed a third of the world's forests.



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