



# FUTUREVISION

The 1990s will bring more judicious use of chemicals, a more aesthetic landscape and closer involvement between management and labor, according to a panel of respected green industry executives.

by Jerry Roche, executive editor

**S**ociety will play an increasing role in the ability—or inability—of landscape managers to perform their job functions in the 1990s, according to a panel of industry experts.

Intensive maintenance of college campuses will become increasingly important as schools vie for their share of the shrinking student population.

At last year's Green Team Conference in St. Louis, three noted landscape managers—Jeff Bourne of Montgomery County, Md., John Michalko of Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland and Thomas Smith of Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati—agreed that things will not get any easier for fellow practitioners in this decade.

Here are some problems cited by the experts:

- Fewer students seeking a college education
- Loss of government's "sovereign immunity"
- What Bourne calls "life-cycle responsibility"
- Loss of certain pesticides in the landscape

## College woes

"According to one study, the number of 18-year-olds nationwide will fall by 360,000 to about 2.4 million in the next five years," says Michalko. "About 19,000 seniors will be lost in Ohio alone in that period. Which means that budgets will be very, very tight" among collegiate building and grounds supervisors.

"Two things are at play in terms of colleges," adds Bourne. "The other is that fewer educated people will be coming out of colleges—certainly in our business—to provide that educated entry-level employee."

Michalko says that total enrollment will continue to drop, and that competition for the prospective student will increase.

In another poll, fully one-half of the students queried ranked a visit to the campus as the most important factor in their choice of colleges, Michalko points out. Sixty-two percent name appearance as "an influence."

"We have to keep our appearance of the campuses up, no matter what," Michalko contends. "If you have the facility, that'll help your enrollment stay up, which in turn will keep your budget up."

## Sovereignty gone

"Risk management" and "cost containment" are the two biggest buzz phrases in the public sector, Bourne says.

In the past, governmental agencies could rest behind the protection of



**Thomas Smith:** Training and communication are buzzwords.

sovereign immunity, which means that the government cannot be held financially liable in many cases. Losing much of their sovereignty means that governmental agencies are being forced more often to pay for accidents on their property.

"Risk management is a profession unto itself," notes Bourne. "The two primary (factors) are public negligence and public liability. It's a popular aspect of today's social climate that if you can win a suit against the government, you can retire and be independently wealthy for the rest of your life."

Not only will government landscapers be subject to these new risk management policies, but so also will private contractors doing business with the government, Bourne says.

"The boilerplate of contracts with government has suddenly become about an inch-and-a-half thicker," he notes from experience. "There are now an incredible amount of forms dealing with the risk of you doing business with the government. That's a part of your business as a contractor that you're going to have to live with. And it's simply going to continue to get worse."

Bourne notes that most public agencies are moving toward self-insurance. Each unit in his division, for instance, has to ante about \$500 per year per vehicle into a "kitty," the funds of which are used to pay damages incurred in accidents. "So the cost of doing business with government and the cost of government doing business is escalating," Bourne concludes.

With stricter rules concerning the



**Jeffery Bourne:** Fewer educated entry-level employees in the future.

application of pesticides, landscape managers will be faced with further restrictions on their businesses, the panel contends.

"By 1995, every ounce of hazardous materials must be traceable through its entire life," Bourne notes. "And you are a part of that chain of responsibility."

This will mean an increase in paperwork and an edict that pesticide handlers be more than "spray-and-fly" jockeys. With these new regula-

**Not only will government landscapers be subject to new risk management policies, but so also will private contractors doing business with the government, Bourne says.**

tions, Bourne says, "chemical maintenance will become more proper and more restrictive. It may well be relegated to time-consuming areas only."

Adds Smith: "We have to be taking a selective and responsible approach with chemicals. MSDS sheets are going to become increasingly important, along with right-to-know, chemical toxicity, LD<sub>50</sub> values and IPM. We're going to be looking at the entire landscape ecosystem 10 years down



**John Michalko:** The number of 18-year-olds in U.S. is declining.

the road, and not just try to control one particular problem at a time."

#### **Futurevision**

Smith also says that the mindset of the landscape manager will play an increasing role in the effectiveness of his or her organization.

"The companies that continue to look for new and better ways of doing things will be the ones that will spiral up," he notes.

"We've got to find new ways to keep the (landscape's) original essence. You can never quit thinking about automation. Anything that implies that the status quo is better than change gives the wrong impression. The good companies like IBM are always fixing things that aren't broken. They're finding better ways of doing things, cutting costs and improving quality—even when current performance is good, because they know it could be better. In Japan, any operation that will affect any other operation by 1/10ths of one second is looked at."

Most of all, changing for the better implies making your employees better employees, Smith continues:

"'Training' and 'communication' are two buzzwords as we look into the future. Training should be a continual process; that's the way you're going to keep good people. You've got to learn to get things done through others while building them in the process, and then teach them to do the same thing.

"Certain things won't change as we move forward. People need respect, attention and love, and they always will. Give people the opportunity, and they'll feel their opinion is valued." **LM**