



The beautiful main quadrangle of Central Missouri State campus presents a favorable first impression to prospective students and their parents.

# LANDSCAPE MANAGER OF THE YEAR



Training his crew members to have confidence in their ability to keep a campus beautiful and pride in their work separates this year's contest winner from others.

by Terry McIver, associate editor

**V**ince Patterozzi, our 1990 Landscape Manager of the Year, decided to begin a career in the green industry after a drive through the Shawnee Hills region of southern Illinois.

As Patterozzi describes it, he was "captivated by the beauty" around him.

That appreciation for the great outdoors motivates Patterozzi every day as grounds manager for Central Missouri State University.

An employee of ServiceMaster, Patterozzi manages more than 1100 acres of university property, including 12 athletic fields, the Pertle Springs golf course, a 200-acre nature

area, a small airport and the main campus. Said one judge, "Patterozzi's attention to detail is extraordinary given his limited budget."

Patterozzi's management skill is often admired by university President, Ed Elliot, and other university department heads impressed with the beauty of the university's campus and athletic fields.

Pat Daly, the university's physical plant manager, believes Patterozzi is a great teacher.

"His biggest challenge," says Daly, "is to educate the grounds personnel in proper grounds maintenance procedures, such as seeding, fertilizing, mowing, chemical application and irrigation installation and scheduling.

"Not only has Vince been noticed

and rewarded for his activities by having a quality program," says Daly, "but from my perspective as manager, it also sets a pace for the other people in the physical plant to make things happen."

Daly says all front-line workers go through an intensive training program on all maintenance procedures. Patterozzi has scheduled more than 30 days of training time for his crew in 1990. Recent topics have been "Elements of Pruning," "Athletic Field Design and Maintenance," "Irrigation Training," and "The Safe Use of Herbicides," as well as programs in leadership and communication.

"If we can't communicate with each other," he says frankly, "absolutely nothing's going to get done."



The Central Missouri State playing field is one of 12 athletic areas kept in top condition by Vince Patterozzi and his dedicated crew.

Patterozzi's concern for his crew extends beyond the type of work they do for the university. He wants to build their confidence for challenges and opportunity that might lie ahead.

"If everyone has a belief within himself that he could someday resign and easily get a job outside the university, then I've achieved my goal."

Patterozzi has established a quarterly overseeding program for the school's athletic fields, which are seeded with bermuda and ryegrass.

"In the summer, when activity is lower," Patterozzi notes, "the bermuda fills in well. Rye is overseeded in the fall and winter."

"In the past," Patterozzi explains, "people didn't understand that the research being done at universities was important when choosing turf seed." Patterozzi now watches the national trial results each year when choosing seed. Non-irrigated sloped areas are seeded with warm-season species.

#### Environmentally aware

While Patterozzi agrees that the hysteria over herbicide use is overdone, he believes that there is a negative



Vince Patterozzi: Fosters leadership and technical excellence among his staff at Central Missouri State University.

perception lately toward any kind of spraying around the campus. For that reason he tries to keep the turf as dense as possible, thereby reducing spraying.

Patterozzi believes the two most pressing green industry issues are a shortage of qualified and motivated workers, and the need for further use of integrated pest management. The successful grounds manager of today, Patterozzi says, must possess a high degree of technical skills in areas such as chemical control product application, irrigation system know-how, and plant and seed selection.

"It is also important that people be multi-dimensional in their jobs, so that no task becomes overburdening," says Patterozzi. "But perhaps the most important thing a person must do is to develop communication and people skills, for if we do not have workers who believe and trust, we will never accomplish our goals."

A landscape management professional for 12 years, Patterozzi completed his undergraduate and graduate studies at Southern Illinois University, largely under the tutelage of Dr. Herb Portz, who Patterozzi says remains as one of his most admired role models.



The grounds at Leisure World have been planted with drought-tolerant plant life.

## Runner-up: Managing a busy world

Milt Johns, first runner-up in our annual contest, is landscape director with Professional Community Management. He manages the landscaping and lawn care for Leisure World, a retirement community of 22,000 people in Laguna Hills, Calif.

Johns manages 750 acres of turf and shrubery, used by "very active adults, who play everything from checkers to lawn bowling."

A winner of a National Landscape Irrigation award, Johns recently completed a retrofit of the communities irrigation system to accommodate drought-tolerant plant life.

The retrofit involved splitting up stations, adding valves and controllers where necessary, and replacing and moving heads to accommodate the new design.

"It was very labor-intensive and costly in terms of trenching and material needs," says Johns. "Essentially we're working with the hardware we have in the ground. We're retrofitting to a point where we minimize water waste due to misting," or other water-wasting occurrences.

Johns recently came up with a new method of collecting waste from job sites, resulting in a six-man staff reduction. The company now processes compost into mulch and soil amendments, while saving \$200,000 per year in trash-related fees.

### Work incentives

Like contest winner Vince Patterozzi, Johns believes in the positive effect work incentives have on the workers, smart enough to take advantage incentives. This past year, he devised an incentive-based productivity improvement plan.

"As we institute new mechanization, and as we increase services we provide," Johns explains, "we are obviously increasing our workload. We're trying to get our foremen to work more efficiently without adding staff. The ones able to do that and not compromise quality are evaluated and they are compensated accordingly."

Johns spends much of his time with the residents of Leisure World, "communicating why we do what we do, why we are changing some things, or how we can save them money and increase their services."

Johns meets with three committees and three boards each month, and uses audio-visual presentations, charts, graphs and financial information.

### Safety, insurance big issues

Johns thinks worker safety and rising insurance costs are two of the significant challenges facing the green industry in the 1990s.

"We equip the men with as much safety equipment that we can find, including respirators and back supports. We mandate [safety equipment] use to be in front of any legislation or litigation."

"The successful grounds manager must have thorough education in ornamental horticulture or related, 'hands-on' experience,' in all areas of the green industry," says Johns, "as well as a 'forward-looking' attitude to move his business through the changing demands on the industry." □



Milt Johns: Pay workers well, and keep them safe.