

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

GOLF

Is golf course construction heading for a slowdown?

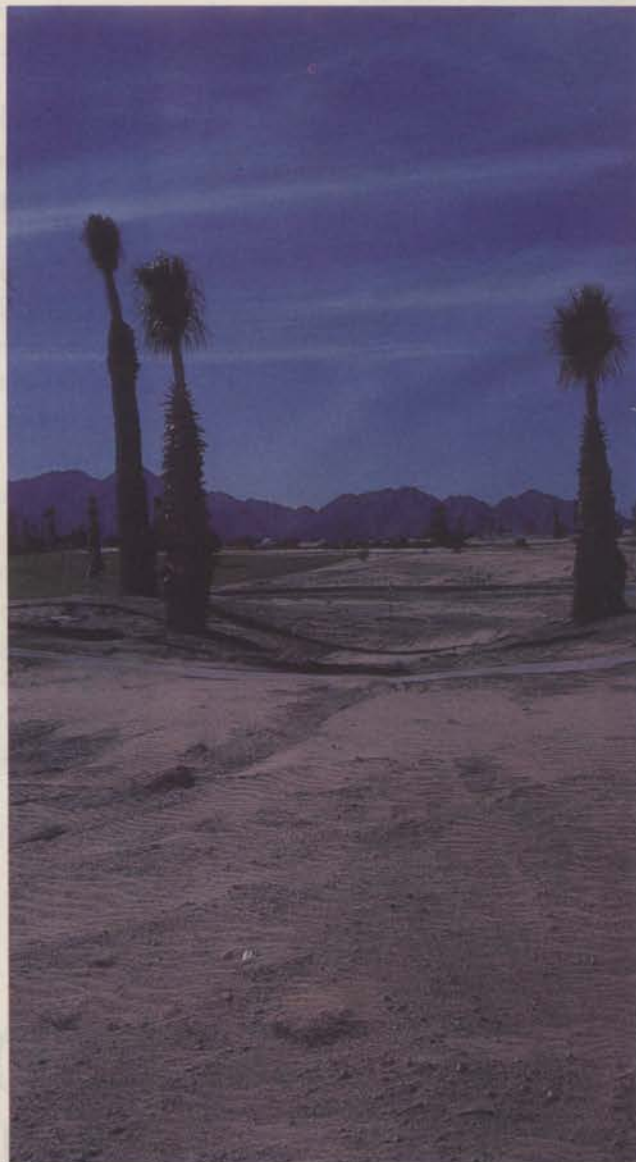
Despite a goal set forth by the National Golf Foundation of building one new golf course every day in the U.S. to meet golfer demands, the golf course construction market could be softening a bit.

According to The Lannert Group of St. Charles, Ill., hyperinflated land prices and the tightened availability of money for financing may well herald a swan song for sprawling large residential developments, especially those built around golf courses.

"This is the current situation, even though the game of golf is so popular that courses can't be built quickly enough to keep up with demand," says J. Christopher Lannert. But he says that, in coming months, relatively few developers will be able to buy land to build golf courses, with or without the residential aspect.

"The type of large-scale development that has been fueling the economy and inflating land prices is currently dying out," he notes. "This is occurring because of high land costs, inflationary interest rates and municipal and county approvals that take too long.

"In the future, we'll generally see more phase-by-phase developments. It simply is too difficult for the individual developer to get



Lack of affordable land and high interest rates may put construction like this in Palm Desert, Calif., in jeopardy.

a \$20 million land loan to finance his large-scale golf course project."

News from the American Society of Golf Course Architects is also on the pessimistic side. In a recent environmental impact survey by the organization, 39 of 40 firms indicated that they had experienced difficulties in obtaining permits for projects because of environmental concerns by governmental agencies.

"This survey vividly demonstrates the impact that environmental concerns have on the golf industry," says ASGCA president Dan Maples, "and the need for the industry to work with key agencies to develop mutually-acceptable guidelines that will be interpreted uniformly throughout the country."

Fifty-six percent of the ASGCA member firms cited wetlands as the primary problem they encountered in the permitting process. Other areas of concern were habitat, nitrates/chemical contamination, groundwater protection and pesticide use.

The ASGCA survey also determined that new golf course projects have experienced the most delays because of objections by the Corps of Engineers. Local planning commissions were also cited as bot

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CONSTRUCT from p. 8 tlenecks.

Delays of up to 30 months were reported, though most are delayed 8 to 12 months, according to the survey. Asked to present actual case histories showing the costs of these delays, the architects cited additional costs ranging from \$10,000 to over \$1,000,000. These costs came from additional financing, legal and consultant fees and rerouting the project.

"We have not done a good job of explaining to regulatory agencies, local boards and the general public how golf courses contribute to the quality of life," says Maples. "But we



Lannert



Maples



Fister

must go one step further to work with the EPA and COE to develop guidelines that will help the architect prepare a plan that will be acceptable without a great deal of revision. Key to that, of course, is having national standards on such key issues as wetland mitigation."

On a more optimistic note, Hale Irwin Golf Services has concluded that the environmental impact of typical maintenance procedures is beneficial overall, with minimal run-off of fertilizers and pesticides.

Senior vice president Patrick J. Fister presented the findings of a white paper at

the Golf Development Conference in Washington, D.C. He cited low chemical runoff rates, low topsoil losses, increased wildlife habitat retention/creation and water conservation.

Fister also addressed the international assembly of golf course developers on the development of courses in residential communities.

"I do not see primary home community developments slowing down in 'edge city' areas," Fister notes. "People are willing to commute the extra half-hour to live in that master-plan community. But I've seen it tougher for planned golf courses to get done closer to urban areas where land is prime." □

EQUIPMENT

OPEI draws more lawn/landscape pros

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Attendance at the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute Expo '90 by professional contractors and mowing companies increased by 124 percent over 1989, according to the organization.

"We zeroed in on (landscapers and mowing companies) this year," says Warner Frazier, president of Simplicity Manufacturing. According to Frazier, a special show announcement letter was mailed to commercial equipment users. Professional buyers were also able to view equipment in more than 40 outdoor commercial exhibits.

The OPEI show, held here every year, is largely attended by equipment dealers and distributors; however attendance is often used to gauge overall interest in power equipment markets.

Data released at the show by Association Research, Inc., shows a projected 4 percent increase in shipments of walk-behind mowers in 1990 over last year. Shipments of rear-engine riding mowers are expected to fall by 8.4 percent this year; shipments of front-engine lawn tractors should realize a 12.7 per-

cent gain. Riding garden tractors will see a modest 0.6 percent increase.

A few products that came to the attention of LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT are listed below.

- A new mower deck that might be of particular interest to professional mowing companies is Toro's Recycler. The deck's blade and deflector system are designed to cut grass down to fine particles and direct them back into the ground. The company predicts a 38 percent savings in mowing time for those who normally bag clippings.

- The PE 2201 trimmer from Echo is ready for use by the professional market. Equipped with a commercial-duty 21.2 cc engine, the trimmer features an all-position diaphragm carburetor with a purge system for quick easy starts, and an anti-vibration system to reduce user fatigue.

- Shindaiwa's Tornado cutter blade is a low-kick, heavy brush and tree blade. It has only six teeth and an easy feed ramped depth gauge located at the front of each cutter. The gauge reduces kickback and snag, says Shindaiwa, producing faster, easier cutting.

- Kubota celebrated its



Lawn care professionals drove them around the block a few times at the OPEI show, Expo '90, in Louisville, Ky.

100th anniversary during the Expo '90 by adding the W5021-PCC walk-behind mower to its commercial turf-maintenance line.

The mower's 5-hp, 8.91-cu. in. overhead valve engine puts out high torque at low speeds, so it can handle a variety of terrains.

- HMC Green Machine's new hedge trimmer has a two-cycle, 1.4 hp engine.

HMC reports that the trimmer can handle the day-to-day, high-volume use that landscapers require. Two 30-inch counter-oscillating blades made from carbon steel insure professional users of fast, effortless trimming and shaping with a minimum of maintenance. □

INDUSTRY

Chem companies boost education

WASHINGTON — Representatives of several companies that supply chemicals to the lawn care industry have joined forces to better educate those who use their products.

Delegates of several major chemical companies, working under the auspices of the Pesticide Public Policy Foundation (3PF), are working with other green industry organizations to create educational materials for chemical applicators.

The coalition's second meeting will be this month.

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