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PEOPLE

Runnin' Reb pride extends to campus

LAS VEGAS, Nev. — Students at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) have reason to celebrate again this spring: their varsity basketball team is apparently poised to defend its national championship at the upcoming NCAA tournament.

But students have another reason to be proud: the way **Dennis Swartzell** and his maintenance crews groom the campus. Landscape crews have even let school pride affect their attitude.

"Our tree crew calls itself 'Your Runnin' Rebel Tree Crew,'" says Swartzell, who heads up a staff of 34 responsible for 100 landscaped acres.

"Beyond that image the basketball team provides," says Les Raschko, "you can



Swartzell: in charge of 'poor man's overseed'

see an emerging, young, growing and proud university. Dennis and his staff do an outstanding job; we have a modern-looking, well-dressed campus." Raschko is

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The UNLV campus, an oasis in the middle of the southern Nevada desert, is seen in all its splendor in the spring.

PEOPLE from page 22
 director of university news and publications.

Swartzell came to UNLV 8½ years ago from the University of Georgia. He has seen student enrollment grow an average of 10 to 12 percent per year to a current total of 18,216.

"Las Vegas is two different communities," Swartzell observes: "the strip, with all its glamour, and the community we live in. The community has a direct involvement in

the arts and culture, (and) the gaming industry has made significant contributions to our campus.

Dominant turf is tall fescue, but common bermuda infestations necessitate overseeding the entire campus. Swartzell's crews perform what he calls a "poor man's overseed:" no scalping or dethatching or top-dressing. "We basically skip a mowing, distribute the seed, drag it in, roll it and mow it. We leave the

clippings as mulch. Timing is critical," he notes.

Though water use is not a critical issue yet, Swartzell thinks to the future.

"We've had seemingly ample water (from the Colorado River system) with no end in sight," he observes. "But we've realized that it's going to be an issue. We will eventually be moving to less turf, out of necessity. And we've pushed for computerized irrigation;

we're hoping to complete a feasibility study this year." That's not all.

"We're trying to introduce drought-tolerant plants like acacias and mesquites. Aleppo pines were introduced 20 years ago. The mulberries are fast shade-producers."

"Las Vegas," he further notes, "has always been looked upon as a suburb of California, but that doesn't really fit us. We've got more
continued on page 30

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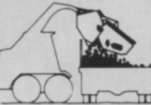
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of a Southwest look, but we need to have our own style, and that's tough."

The xeric demo garden could be a portent of the future. Swartzell takes pride in the three-year-old project that contains 150 species of plant material.

"It gives you the feeling of being in the middle of the Sonoran Desert," Swartzell says. "We're going to try and incorporate some garden features into other parts of the landscape."

Mountain States Nursery in Arizona donated shrubs to the xeric garden. Arid Zone Trees, also in Arizona, donated trees. And sixty tons of Aztec sandstone boulders came from John Muir & Co.

The xeric garden is awash in color by January. Cassia gives it a deep yellow color and 'Texas Ranger' leuco phyllums add blue.

"I'd personally like to try some more theme gardens: native, Mediterranean or even Oriental," Swartzell says.

While Swartzell himself becomes more involved in facility planning and site development ("We're filling up the vacant desert"), Paul Dzerk has joined the staff as horticultural specialist to train the troops, inspect construction, keep pest and registration records, and control quality.

And the inimitable Jerry Tarkanian, of course, maintains control of the Runnin' Rebs' basketball fortunes.

—Jerry Roche


President Bush honored by ALCA

President George Bush has won the first "President's Award for Environmental Excellence" sponsored by the Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA). He was selected, in particular, because of his America the Beautiful" program.

Steve Wharton of Steve's Landscaping, Ft. Worth, Texas, and David L. Phelps of Suburban Lawn & Landscape Services, Crownsville, Md. have been appointed to fill vacancies on the board of directors of the Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS).

Dr. Phil Robinson has been appointed director of research for Agri Growth Research of Indianapolis. He was previously with Hoechst-Roussel.

Winner of the Nebraska Turfgrass Foundation's Distinguished Service Award is Dr. Robert C. Shearman, a former LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT technical advisor. □



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