

INFO CENTER

Useful literature and video offered to LM readers

HOW TO MARKET...The second edition of "Practical Marketing Techniques for the Landscape Company," a 90-page instruction manual, is now available from the Landscape Horticulture Center for Personnel Development. It is a compilation of notes, experiences, charts, graphs, examples, case histories and just plain common sense, all geared to the green industry. Copies are \$19.95, plus \$3 for shipping and handling. To order, call (800) 359-6647 or write Landscape Horticulture Center, 2509 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd., #109, Westlake Village, CA 91362. Checks, COD, MasterCard and Visa are accepted; quantity discounts are available.

OSHA STANDARDS...An easy-to-understand regulatory review of key OSHA standards specifically applicable to the green industry is available through the Professional Grounds Management Society. Interested parties have a choice of packets: (351) hazard communication; (352) small chemical disposal; (353) trenching standards; (354) spill control; (355) small quality generator; (356) confined space safety; (357) stormwater/wetlands; (358) underground and above-ground storage tanks. Cost of each packet is \$22; PGMS members get a discount. To order, call the PGMS and ask for Regulatory Review Guidelines: (410) 667-1833 or fax (410) 667-6178.

WEED IDENTIFICATION...Faculty at the Universities of Georgia, Auburn and Florida are making available for \$8 a book containing 437 color photos: "Weeds of Southern Turfgrasses." The 208-page book, sized 6 by 9 inches, has a waterproof, tearproof cover. To order, send a check payable to the University of Florida (Florida residents add 6% sales tax) to: Publications, P.O. Box 110011, Gainesville, FL 32611. Order book No. SP-79.

GUIDE TO GRASS...The free "Turfgrass Technical Manual," by Jacklin Seed Co., is designed to help golf course superintendents and turf professionals identify varieties, blends and mixtures, recommend seed

rates and planting instructions. The three-ring binder also contains troubleshooting information. To get a copy, contact the Jacklin Marketing Dept., 5300 W. Riverbend Ave., Post Falls, ID 83854, phone (208) 773-7581 or fax (208) 773-4846.

ON CUSTOMERS...A new guide book, "50 Low Cost Ways to Acquire New Customers" is written for small businessmen. Sections include 15 keys, 25 benefits people buy, the 9 P's of marketing, 7 business mistakes to avoid, 20 ways to make the sale and a 12-month plan to acquire new customers. To order, send \$10.70 to J.D. Todd, JDT Marketing, P.O. Box 3316, Wichita Falls, TX 76301 or phone (817) 692-7818.

CUSTOMER SERVICE TIPS

Handling customer complaints: get to the crux of the problem

by E.T. Wandtke

Unfortunately, relationships with your customers do not run smoothly all the time. As service providers, your attitude toward the customer's complaint can mean the difference between keeping a customer or losing several.

Here are some tips on how to deal with a customer complaint:

1. Discover what went wrong. This should be the time for fact-finding, not finger-pointing. During this discovery process, don't make any judgments or place any blame on the customer.

It is also important to discover the problem. Often we listen to a complaint on the phone and assume the cause before we hear all the facts.

Don't assume the cause of a complaint until all information is received and the customer's property is visited. Know 100

percent of the information before you decide on a course of action.

2. Discover who is responsible. This determination may take time, but it is very important to determine if an individual caused the complaint or if the cause of the complaint was outside the control of the employee or customer.

Many customers do not understand that agronomic conditions may not be anticipated or solved until they are discovered. Only by receiving the customer's complaint do you know the condition exists.

Explaining the causes of turf or ornamental problems requires care and understanding. The customer needs to understand what has happened on his or her property, how it came about, and what you are going to do about it.

Use the telephone correctly—Customer service personnel who handle

telephone complaints must know how to deal with complaints a little differently:

1. Have customer service reps pretend it is their company. What would they do if they owned the company? How would they help the customer? How would they follow-up to be certain the customer has been satisfied?

2. Give the customer time to explain the problem. Do not sound rushed. Apologize if you have to take another call. Then, when you get them back on the line, apologize for the delay and restate the problem.

3. If you are not certain about what to do, ask!

Customer service personnel should not make promises that the company might not be able to keep. They should tell the customer they do not have an immediate answer, and that the manager will return the call.

Most important of all, make sure they give the customer time to explain the problem, and that they're efficient and professional.