

# GREEN INDUSTRY EVENTS

## FEBRUARY

**10-17:** International Golf Course Conference and Show, New Orleans Convention Center. Contact: Linda Fortunato, GCSAA, 1421 Research Park Dr., Lawrence, KS 66049-3859; (913) 841-2240.

**11-13:** Woody Ornamentals IPM, Waltham, Mass. Contact: Kathleen Carroll, Univ. of Mass. Cooperative Extension, French Hall, Amherst, MA 01003; (413) 545-0895.

**18-23:** National Arborist Association annual meeting, The Registry Resort, Scottsdale, Ariz. Contact: NAA, P.O. Box 1094, Amherst, NH 03031; (603) 673-3311.

**18-21:** International Erosion Control Association conference and trade show, Reno, Nev. Contact: Ben Northcutt, P. O. Box 774904, Steamboat Springs, CO 80477; (303) 879-3010.

**20-21:** "Investing in Your Future," Rockville, Md. Contact: Landscape Contractors Association of Md, D.C., Va., 9053 Shady Grove Court, Gaithersburg, MD 20877; (301) 948-0810.

**21-22:** National Lawn Equipment Expo, Orlando, Fla. Contact: Thomas J.

Ganz, 2126-A Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, FL 33020; (800) 992-2562.

**22:** Women in Horticulture annual conference, Seattle (Wash.) Airport Hilton. Contact: Tory Galloway, (206) 784-6449 or Gina McCauley, (206) 567-4941.

**22-24:** Conference on Insect and Disease Management on Ornamentals, Orlando (Fla.) Peabody Hotel. Contact: Nancy Lawler, Society of American Florists, 1601 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314-3406; (800) 336-4743 or (703) 836-8700.

**24-26:** Beginning in the Nursery Business, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va. Contact: Continuing Education Center, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061-0104; (703) 231-8000.

**25-27:** Illinois Landscape Contractors Association Winter Seminar, Chicago Holiday Inn O'Hare. Contact: Julie Newill, ILCA, 2200 S. Main, Suite 304, Lombard, IL 60148; (708) 932-8443.

**26:** New Jersey Landscape '92, Meadowlands Convention Center, Secaucus, N.J. Contact: Skip Powers, 630 Valley Ct., Westwood, NJ 07675; (201) 664-6310.

**27-28:** Landscape Industry

Conference and Trade Show, Denver. Contact: Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado, 5290 E. Yale Circle, Suite 100, Denver, CO 80222; (303) 757-5611.

**29-March 1:** Tampa Bay Horticultural Trade Show, Florida State Fairgrounds, Tampa. Contact: Tampa Bay Wholesale Growers, 6804 Gunn Hwy. #C, Tampa, FL 33625; (813) 920-4393.

## MARCH

**2-5:** Vertebrate Pest Conference, Newport (Beach, Calif.) Inn. Contact: Dr. Terrell Salmon, DANR-North Region, Research Park Facility, University of Calif., Davis, CA 95616; (916) 757-8623.

**3-4:** Golf Course Design Principles, Cincinnati, Ohio. Contact: GCSAA, (913) 832-4444.

**9-10:** Landscape Design & Plant Materials, Bloomington, Ill. Contact: GCSAA, (913) 832-4444.

**10:** Turfgrass Stress Management, West Chester, Pa. Contact: GCSAA, (913) 832-4444.

## CUSTOMER SERVICE TIPS

### Brainstorm for service ideas

by Ed Wandtke

■ Bringing personnel together to work on a specific objective has long been used by companies as a method of increasing creativity. Apply the brainstorming concept to your customer service program in order to improve its effectiveness. This is more effective than telling your technicians or office personnel how they should handle customers.

**1.** Two days before the meeting, provide a list of topics to be discussed. Some employees need time to think about a topic before they can contribute effectively.

**2.** The first step on the day of the meeting is to narrow the topic down into a spe-

cific problem which all of the attendees agree upon.

**3.** Provide some quiet time for reflection on the topic. Ten to 15 minutes seem to work best. Encourage active participation from all of your employees. Ideas, no matter how off-the-wall, need to be presented because they may identify a different opportunity for solutions.

**4.** Use a flip chart. Write all suggestions down and hang the chart papers with them across the front of the room. Visualization of suggestions and seeing alternatives often will lead to additional input or clarification of potential solutions. Do not rush this process.

**5.** Have participants eliminate the least attractive suggestions. This allows them the opportunity to reinforce the better recommendations but avoid comment on poor or discarded ideas.

**6.** Then have employees rank the balance of their suggestions as "practicable," "possible," or "least unlikely."

Brainstorming is most effective when a problem is defined and then recommendations are directed toward solutions of only that problem. It will take patience and practice for the leader of the session to keep the participants on the specific problem. Future sessions will benefit from the time spent in initiating this method of improvement in your company. Employees will also feel their ideas are being considered by the owner.