

Cleveland audience wakes up to new upbeat tree & turf program

This green industry duo 'puts its money where its mouth is' on a radio program devoted to good advice and good fun.

■ Turn the dial of your AM radio to 1300 WERE Cleveland at 8 a.m. Saturdays to listen to a different kind of call-in garden show.

You'll be among the 10,000-plus listeners tuning into the shenanigans of Lauren Lanphear and Phil Fogarty in their weekly 1 1/2-hour tree-and-turf radio program, *The Root of the Matter*.

There's no question they're enjoying themselves, but the fun stuff is rationed out with larger doses of "how-to" advice on lawns, shrubs and trees. That's what listeners now expect from the two, not that they don't appreciate the duo's light-hearted approach to the subject matter. The program's rising viewer ratings show conclusively that they do.

"After all, the program's on at 8 a.m. Saturdays. If we want people to listen, we'd better be entertaining," insists Lanphear.

Lanphear, representing the Forest City Tree Protection Co., is the tree expert; Fogarty, from Crowley Lawn Service, is the program's resident lawn and ornamental guru. And—more often than not—Fogarty is a willing although sometimes unsuspecting straight man to Lanphear's good-natured wit.

The two try to make the call-in show entertaining even if they can't always make it humorous.

For example, when Lanphear took listeners on a weekly radio tour identifying different historic trees in Cleveland—those present when Moses Cleaveland founded the city in 1796—telephone calls to the station flooded in.

Many people asked for a list of the historic trees, while others suggested trees in their neighborhoods that Lanphear might add to the list.

(Cleveland, for many years was known as *The Forest City*, a nickname promoted by Leonard Case, a Cleveland mayor in the

1850s. The Forest City Tree Protection Co. was founded by Lanphear's grandfather in 1910.)

Then there are Fogarty's turf trivia quizzes, and Lanphear's "Arbor Jeopardy" segment.

Fogarty and Lanphear began their unusual radio partnership in June 1991, starting a 27-week run that ended in November. This past February, they kicked off a 39-week run for the 1992 growing season.

The two men "broker" the 1 1/2 hours of radio air time. They must come up with the money and material to make it work. They're helped by several sponsors, but admit they could use a couple more. Some of costs of the show come from their own pockets, they admit.

"I don't think either one of us ever saw it as a money-making deal," claims Lanphear. But they'd sure like to break even.

Typically, the two men alternate Saturday mornings at the radio station. The one that's not at the station will, sometime during the other's broadcast, telephone into the program for some chat and to answer some questions. Occasionally, both men will do a show together.

Local and even national guest experts are common. For example, Rod Tyler of Kurtz Brothers, a Cleveland-area company, is to talk about composting, while researchers like Dr. Wendell Mullison and



Loren Lanphear took WERE listeners on a tour of historic trees.

Dr. Tom Watschke all will be fielding questions from listeners sometime yet this spring.

"We can do it through a telephone hook-up," explains Fogarty. "They can talk to our callers. It sounds just like they're here in the studio."

Lanphear and Fogarty both admit that their motives for doing the program are—in addition to dispensing helpful information about landscapes/lawns and the green industry—business-based.

"It's a great way to give your company name credibility," says Fogarty. "And you immediately become the expert."

Adds Lanphear, "Our goal is to build our name recognition within the community."

Fogarty feels green industry business owners in other communities can develop equally successful shows.

"We (industry) could gain control of that hour every Saturday morning and talk about water quality as it relates to turfgrass, and talk about the benefits arising from the correct use of pesticides in lots of different markets," he says.

—Ron Hall



Phil Fogarty says the radio station's ratings rose for the Saturday morning tree & turf program.