

HOT TOPICS

Foreclosed properties: a new profit opportunity?

GRANITE SPRINGS, N.Y.—Amid the cycle of fluctuating economic conditions, the maintenance of foreclosures/relocations offers a significant opportunity for landscapers.

Personal bankruptcies and corporate downsizing has led to a dramatic increase in residential home foreclosures and relocations. Banks and institutional owners of such foreclosed properties contract out their resale and management to large, regional real estate brokers, which have emerged because of the tough economy. These brokers prefer to find one reliable and reputable landscape maintenance company to service all their accounts in a given area.

Maintenance of these properties is a necessity, predicated by local town zoning laws and aesthetic concerns. That translates into abundant work and profits. There is opportunity, for those inclined, to

expand well beyond the normal foundation of their clientele.

Real estate agencies and banks have no practical experience in the landscape management sector. The product is simple: that properties be kept in a presentable condition year-round with clear access (clear of snow and organic debris).

By offering a broad flat price rate in which all work performed in a given geographical area is the same, real estate brokers know what to expect and do not have to be concerned with contracted out properties on an individual basis. And the recommendation of your landscape services to the new property owner is what truly makes this an area any eager, aggressive landscape manager cannot overlook.

—The author, Christian Zenk, is chief operating officer of Zenk Country Landscapes, Granite Springs, N.Y.



Foreclosed homes require minimum maintenance and attention, but can be big money-makers if contracted correctly, says Chris Zenk.

Maintaining foreclosures...

Keys to success

- Know the primary sources of work (real estate agencies, banks)
- Incorporate into existing business (serviced any time)
- Minimum maintenance means maximum profit
- All money guaranteed at closing
- Document all work
- Insist your company's name be mentioned at closing (provide business cards)
- Network your services
- Separate crew for foreclosures/relocations

Requirements

- Contractual agreement with prices and/or workrate
- Flexibility to respond to request for estimate
- Authorization to begin work on each property
- Willingness to expand your service area significantly
- Certification as a vendor (\$1 million liability insurance minimum)
- Camera required for before/after photos (for confirmation and documentation of completed work)
- Facsimile machine, copier, computer, and answering service or secretary

—C. Zenk

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Good news, bad news on pesticide front

WASHINGTON—The new administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has asked Congress to ease a current law that prohibits trace amounts of some pesticides in foods.

At issue is the "Delaney Clause," which was passed in 1958. According to the *New York Times*, "The EPA has been in a dilemma about enforcing the Delaney Clause since the mid-1980s when studies began to show that residues of pesticides used on fresh food tended to be present at higher levels after processing."

Carol Browner, named EPA chief in December by Pres. Bill Clinton, believes the scientific community "knows more about these chemicals than we did 35 years ago," and that "these foods (containing the pesticides) are safe."

Several Congressional committees are expected to hear the EPA's new arguments against the Delaney Clause, including the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee led by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), and the House Energy and Commerce subcommittee headed by Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.).

Turfgrass resource guide being written by U.Ga.'s Karnok

ATHENS, Ga.—The Turfgrass Science Division of the Crop Science Society of America is compiling information for a "Turfgrass Management Teaching Resource Guide."

The purpose of the guide is to provide information regarding available teaching resources for individuals involved in turfgrass education or training in high schools, two- and four-year programs, extension, and private industry.

The various resource materials to be included are: videos, slide sets, computer software and services, books, periodicals, posters, etc. The guide will provide complete ordering information, including the individual, company or agency name, address, phone and fax numbers and any costs.

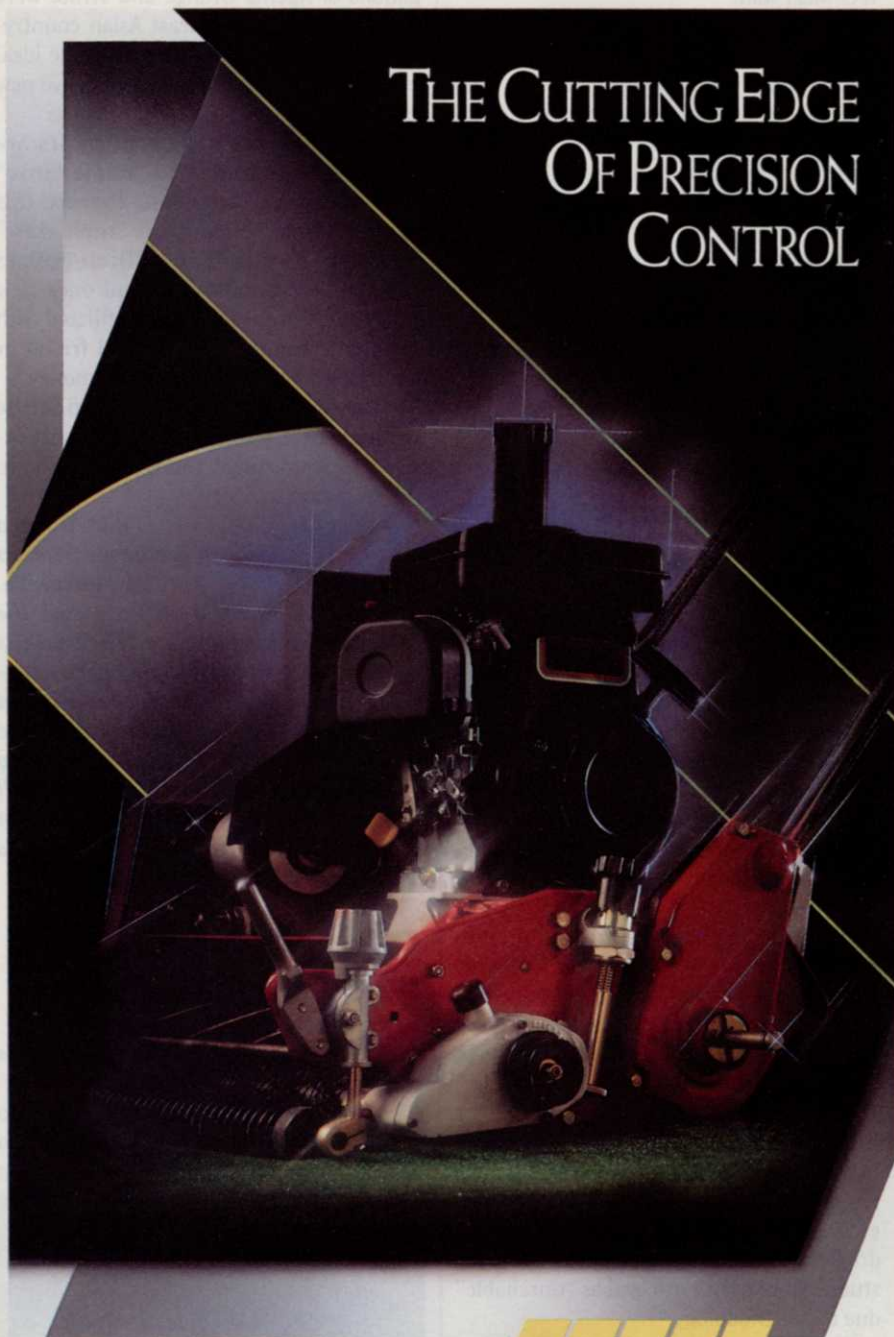
If you have or know of any potential teaching aids that should be included, contact Dr. Keith J. Karnok, Agronomy Dept., Plant Science Bldg., University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602. His phone number is (707) 542-0931 and fax number is (707) 542-0914.

The action by Browner is not expected to signal a general relaxation of current laws governing the use and sale of other pesticides.

"This is a major, major issue, the number one issue in the ag market right now," says Allen James, executive director of Responsible Industry for a Sound

Environment (RISE). "It could be bad news for specialty pesticides. It could further damage the image of pesticides in general.

"If a product has a large ag use and that use is lost, then how valuable does that product become in the specialty market? It might not be valuable enough to keep it in the specialty area."



Circle No. 141 on Reader Inquiry Card

Barricade®

Readers take on ChemLawn, chemicals, certification

Technical staff at ChemLawn praised

To the editor:

Having been a ChemLawn employee for 15 years, I was interested in reading your articles covering the history of ChemLawn (Oct., Nov., Dec., 1992 issues). Unfortunately, I feel that you have left out a very integral part of the ChemLawn story, the technical staff.

The technical training, combined with program development and research that was superior to any in the industry, provided the operation portion of the company the expertise that allowed ChemLawn to be years ahead of the industry.

S. Gary Custis
Kansas City, Mo.

Well said. That staff, which often helped us with articles for the magazine, was the best in the lawn care industry during ChemLawn's heyday. It should be a welcome addition to TruGreen's roster.—Ed.

Reader disputes 2,4-D arguments

To the editor:

I'm writing in reference to your editorial "Is the struggle for 2,4-D finally nearing a climax?" (Page 1, January, 1993 issue.)

Considering the fact that your magazine incorporates *Lawn Care Industry*, one would hardly expect you to take any other position than the one you have: basically "pro-pesticide" and "pro-2,4-D." You represent an industry which desperately needs the economical, and possibly irreplaceable herbicide, to help keep turf areas weed-free.

However, before you are so quick to write off the new 2,4-D study as foolhardy and a waste of money, several other factors should be considered. Especially if 2,4-D really is "the most widely used herbicide in the world."

We have read of the National Cancer Institute farm worker study, which points to a link between 2,4-D and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. In 1991, we also read of another study linking malignant lymphoma in dogs with 2,4-D contact. Both of these studies have been criticized as "unreliable" due to "methodology."

But what really makes it all rather haunting is the established link between Agent Orange and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in Vietnam veterans. Agent Orange

was a combination of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T. While most of the health problems related to Agent Orange have been attributed to the dioxin contaminants resulting from production, it seems likely that 2,4-D could also be a culprit.

Agent White, a combination of 2,4-D and picloram, was also used in Vietnam between 1962 and 1971. Some 17 million gallons of Agents Orange and White were sprayed over the southeast Asian countryside, which would make Vietnam the ideal place to include in any comprehensive new study.

Individual pesticide applicators are constantly reminded to "triple rinse" empty pesticide containers. Perhaps this latest study is the industry's "triple rinse" on 2,4-D. Twenty-two million dollars seems like a bundle to spend on a new safety study, until the person afflicted with lymphatic cancer is a personal friend or family member. Then, it is "only money."

Our first wish should be to find the truth about 2,4-D, no matter how expensive or inconvenient the truth may be to the lawn care industry.

R.M. Donnan
Donnan Landscape Services
McMurray, Pa.

We at LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT seek the truth as much as anyone. The truth is that—so far—no reliable tests have established a relationship between 2,4-D and any kind of cancer in humans. The National Cancer Institute recently announced, coincidentally, that it will soon begin a more thorough study of farm workers to try and corroborate the results of earlier, less reliable tests.—Ed.

Other certification programs are cited

To the editor:

When I saw my December issue, I was ecstatic...

...But it appears you people didn't do your homework very well. You failed to look at Florida and, I'm sure, other "deep

South" states ("Certifying the Industry," page 8). Here in Florida, we have the Florida Landscape Maintenance Association, which provides three certification programs.

I agree fully with your article: as an active member of the Gulf Coast FLMA, I see our biggest problem being apathy, ignorance, lack of professional self-esteem. Here in Collier County, there are approximately 1,500 licensed lawn care companies (and who knows how many fly-by-nights) who do more than just cut grass. The majority have been in business for several years or more; why they don't want to upgrade their image is beyond me. As I personally see it, they're doing just fine, don't need us, and can't see the need for professional unity, much less certification. (I wonder what if doctors and dentists had the same attitude toward the AMA and ADA?)

I am a Certified Landscape Maintenance Supervisor. It provides great personal satisfaction and keeps me in touch with what's new, what's being considered; and I have the privilege of meeting a lot of great people, who are each a wealth of knowledge.

As a woman in what is considered a man's field, I have to work harder in order to be taken seriously. Certification shows and reminds your peers that you have gone—and continue to go—that extra mile to work in an industry that demands physical labor. Success in this field requires a consciousness, a true dedication, and—above all—a love for what we do.

Shirley K. Koger
Naples, Fla.

We didn't mean to slight state certification programs in our article. But our coast-to-coast readership dictated major emphasis on national programs available to readers. Minor emphasis—as space allowed—was placed on state programs, though many state programs are the equal of the better national programs.—Ed.

NEXT MONTH:

- ☐ Our annual insect control guide, authored by Dr. Harry Niemczyk of Ohio State and Dr. Don Short of the University of Florida.
- ☐ A special "LM Reports" on hardscaping materials you can incorporate into your landscapes for maximum aesthetic appeal and profit.

PGMS votes to release Shulder



Shulder: leaving after 17 years at the PGMS

HUNT VALLEY, Md.

—The Board of Directors of the Professional Grounds Management Society voted not to renew the contract of executive director Allan Shulder at its fall meeting.

"We wanted to move forward faster than we have been," said PGMS president John Michalko of Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio. "It was a total board decision."

There are no specific plans to name a replacement, as the position may or may not be re-defined. Until that time, PGMS marketing director John Gillan is serving as interim director.

Shulder, who was informed of the board's decision following its November meeting in Indianapolis, had served as the PGMS's first full-time executive director since 1985. His contract expires March 31st.

During his 17 years as part- and full-time executive director, the PGMS has grown steadily in membership and programs. Three years ago, the PGMS became involved with the Associated Landscape Contractors of America and the Professional Lawn Care Association of America to create the Green Industry Expo. The society has more than 1500 members in the U.S. and at least six foreign countries.

Turf seedsmen cited

AROUND THE COUNTRY—News of interest from U.S. marketers of turfseed:

● **Dr. C. Reed Funk** accepted a royalty check from **Mike Robinson**, president of Seed Research of Oregon, for \$182,000 for sales of the following turfgrass varieties developed by Seed Research in conjunction with Dr. Funk: SR4000, SR4100 and SR4200 perennial ryegrasses; SR3000 and SR3100 hard fescues; SR5000 chewing fescue; Titan and SR800 tall fescues; and SR2000 Kentucky bluegrass.

● **Dr. Gerard W. Pepin** has been named executive vice president and general manager of Pickseed West, Tangent, Ore. Dr. Pepin will continue to oversee Pickseed's research, but **Donald Floyd**, who

joined the company in 1990, will be turfgrass breeder responsible for all day-to-day research activities.

● **Dr. Richard Hurley**, vice president and director of research of Lofts Seed, has been honored with the Outstanding Achievement Award from the Rutgers Turfgrass Alumni Association.

● **Royce R. and Sheldon Richardson** of Farmers Marketing Corp., presented \$100,000 in royalties to the New Mexico Crop Improvement Association for sales of NuMex Sahara bermudagrass developed at

New Mexico State University.

● The University of Arizona received \$14,000 in royalties from Seed Research of Oregon, \$14,000 for sales of SR1020 creeping bentgrass, developed by **Dr. Robert Kneebone**.

The University of Rhode Island received \$12,500 for sales of Providence bentgrass, developed with **Dr. Richard Skogley**.

● Lofts Seed's Golf Course Service and Support Division has expanded with the addition of **Kevin Driscoll** and **John Ferrell**.

THE CLOCKWORK ACCURACY OF PRECISION TIMING

VT 12

CONTROL SWITCH SET HOUR

TURN THIS KNOB ONLY TO SET

Barricade

Circle No. 142 Reader Inquiry Card

Mulching while mowing can save your department or your customer big bucks

ROCKVILLE CENTRE, N.Y.—For every half-acre you mow with a mulching mower, you can save \$693 in clipping disposal fees, according to a study by the Rodale Institute Research Center and Garden Way.

According to Dr. Terry Schettini of Rodale, "homeowners with a half-acre lawn in this area (Kutztown, Pa.) could generate 4.65 tons or 1,390 cu. ft. of clippings, and fill at least 346 36-gallon trash bags." Using an average town or community disposal fee of \$2 per bag, the typical homeowner with a half-acre lawn would pay at least \$693 per year in disposal fees—not to mention the cost of purchasing bags.

Schettini also said returning grass clippings to the test plots "seems to make them look healthier and grow more vigorously."

The study proved that returning grass clippings to the sod could provide the fertilization equivalent to 121 lbs. total nitrogen, 17 lbs. total phosphorus and 101 lbs. total potassium per half-acre.

Results from another study conducted at Cornell University seems to support Dr. Schettini's observation about turf appearance when mowed with a mulching mower.

The Cornell study showed 40 percent more growth when the grass was cut by a mulching mower instead of a rear bagger. The lawn was also healthier and more lush when treated with a slow-release natural organic fertilizer, according to results published by Dr. A. Martin Petrovic and Panayiotis A. Nektarios.

'National Lawn Care Month' coming in April

MARIETTA, Ga.—April is National Lawn Care Month, when the lawn care season officially begins for the more than 100 million people who spend a billion hours tending our nation's lawns, parks and sports turf areas every year.

"It's fitting that we celebrate our lawns in April, a month of renewal, and a month when we begin to spend more time outdoors," says Ann McClure, executive director of the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA).

Every year, Americans tend a national lawn the size of Indiana—about 25 million acres.

Researchers get a feel for how you can save up to \$1,386 per acre in clipping disposal fees, as they conduct a survey on the efficacy of commercial mulching mowers in the field.



HOT STUFF

Toma honored nationally—twice

CHICAGO—George Toma, recognized as the nation's leading keeper of professional athletic fields, has been honored by the Sports Turf Managers Association and CBS-TV, home of the "All-Madden" football team.

Toma received the Harry C. Gill Memorial Award at the STMA's annual meeting in Indianapolis late last year. He followed that by being honored by John Madden for his work preparing Candlestick Park for the NFC championship game Jan. 17th.

"Toma is admired by sports figures from owners and managers to players and promoters," said Dr. Jim Watson of the Toro Company. "He is often sought out by players who simply want to say 'Thanks for a field that permits outstanding play.'"

The Gill Award is given to a sports turf professional who has made significant contributions to sports turf management and represented the sports turf industry with dedication, enthusiasm and professionalism. The Madden award is given to NFL players and personnel who personify his football philosophy: hard work and a "whatever-it-takes" attitude.

A co-founder of the STMA, Toma has spent more than 40 years in the industry.



George Toma: dual honors for the veteran turf manager

ALCA releases client sensitivity report

RESTON, Va.—The Associated Landscape Contractors of America has released its Crystal Ball XIV Report: "Client Sensitivity in the Total Quality Landscape Contracting Company."

The report builds on the past two years' reports on total quality in the industry. This year's study continues to look deeper into the very center of the total quality concept. It further discusses the true test of a company's progress toward total quality by empowering every employee to practice continuous improvement. It explains how each employee becomes an internal client, and how to go about understanding and satisfying the external client, the customer.

Copies of the report may be obtained for \$5 (ALCA members) or \$15 (non-members, plus \$1.50 shipping and handling. Write ALCA at 12200 Sunrise Valley Dr., Suite 150, Reston, VA 22091; phone (703) 620-6363 or fax (703) 620-6365.