

LAWN CARE INDUSTRY

PLCAA courts regional/state groups: ARAs gain momentum

Allied Regional Associations are growing in numbers and influence—and providing leaders.

■ Robert Ottley doesn't wear the crusader's mantle comfortably. He's a more deliberate and soft-spoken individual as president of One Step Tree & Lawn, North Chili, N.Y.

Ottley admits he didn't realize what he was getting into when he said "yes" to a request that he chair PLCAA's Allied Regional Association (ARA) Committee. Even so, he's determined, in his soft-spoken way, to steer the committee toward a written document that spells out the relationship between the Professional Lawn Care Association of America and ARAs. More on that later.

ARAs: what are ARAs, you ask?

Surprise. If you're a member of any one of 19 state or regional lawn care/pesticide user organizations, you're also a member of an ARA. You may not know this because none of your dues goes to the PLCAA, and your membership in the state organization is entirely separate from PLCAA.

But your state or regional association communicates and cooperates with PLCAA. It keeps PLCAA informed of state and local issues, usually regulatory or leg-

Don Tannehill, Tridon Lawn Service, Inc., Olathe, Kans., ARA liaison from Kansas told PLCAA that 14 hort groups in state are measuring impact of green industry there.

islative, and PLCAA lends support where it can. The partnership, actually just worked out the past three years, hasn't been that perfect. But that's the plan.

That's what Ottley has been stressing too—more communication and cooperation between PLCAA and ARAs.

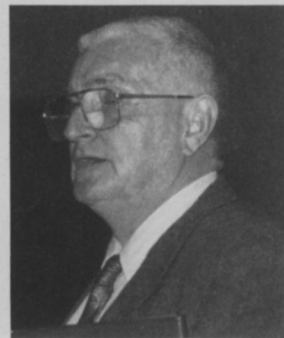
"I think there's been a feeling on the PLCAA board that, yes, we really want the ARAs out there. But, on the other hand, maybe we don't," says Ottley.

This is significant because:

✓ The combined membership of the 19 ARAs exceeds 3,000 companies, about three times larger than PLCAA's membership.

✓ ARA numbers are growing faster than PLCAA's.

✓ Local and state pesticide-use issues have had a more immediate and direct affect on LCOs' businesses than national issues, particularly evident since the U.S. Supreme Court, in its interpretation of FIFRA, ruled against federal pre-emption in 1992. (See related article on pre-emption.)



✓ PLCAA's leadership, itself, gets drawn from ARAs.

PLCAA, of course, literally grew out of its skin in the first six or seven years of



Robert Ottley, center, meets with Henry (Pat) Voges and his wife, Patricia, during ARA meeting in Washington D.C. The Voges represent the Nassau-Suffolk Landscape Gardeners Association, a Long Island-headquartered ARA.

its existence, until about 1986. Membership climbed, staff grew, so did the services it offered.

Then, figuratively, PLCAA hit the wall. It quit growing.

Its membership continued to sag alarmingly through the late 1980s. Until then, PLCAA's attention only fleetingly focused on state associations. What little attention they did receive seemed tinged with PLCAA's wish that state groups, somehow, bend toward becoming PLCAA chapters.

After all, PLCAA was *the* voice for the lawn application industry, and projections that it could attract 2,000 members by 1990 didn't seem unreasonable.

But the industry's continued maturation and consolidation stopped PLCAA's growth.

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financial crisis four years ago, the PLCAA board lured executive director Ann McClure from the Irrigation Association, chopped PLCAA's staff, and launched into annual self-examinations. These measures, coupled with more persistent membership marketing, stabilized the trade group.

About 1990 also, PLCAA 'rediscovered' state and regional lawn care groups which it eyed as potential "chapters."

PLCAA, after inconclusive debate, tacitly backed board member Robert Andrew's efforts to help grow a new crop of state lawn care associations.

Andrews, who owns The Greenskeeper, Carmel, Ind., hit the road and succeeded admirably, particularly in his home state but also in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. (The Ohio Lawn Care Association, in just four years, has 400 members alone.)

But how many of the member companies that belong to ARAs also participate and pay dues to PLCAA? Proportionally, not many.

Still, Andrews feels PLCAA could form state chapters, particularly where ARAs

don't already exist. (Texas and Illinois are obvious choices.)

"Perhaps, PLCAA can go in and, using its membership base in those areas, begin a true chapter concept. It would help get the state organization off the ground. Also, if it's worked right, it can generate additional members for PLCAA," says Andrews.

Regardless, Andrews says ARAs certainly haven't harmed PLCAA. That's because PLCAA deals with national issues, ARAs with state and local issues, a clear division.

"I've never believed the old argument that state groups detract from PLCAA. Now, after having served on the PLCAA board and as PLCAA president and after having started some of these groups, I feel even more strongly about it," says Andrews.

Mona Bond of the Iowa Professional Lawn Care Association, says ARAs still need "a more defined, structured" relationship with PLCAA. The flip side: PLCAA deserves more support, including financial support from ARAs. An ARA pays only \$150 annually to PLCAA.

"In my view, we reap a lot more benefits from PLCAA than that," says Bond

who, along with 23 others, met with Ottley this past February in Washington D.C.

Dale Amstutz of Northern Lawns, Omaha, Neb., was at that meeting. A charter member of the Nebraska Professional Lawn Care Association (NPLCA) and a PLCAA board member, he supports the growing link between ARAs and PLCAA.

"We got tremendous support from Norm Goldenberg (board member and TruGreen/ChemLawn vp) and Tom Delaney (PLCAA government affairs). They helped us put together a sample bill," says Amstutz of NPLCA's effort to get FIFRA into Nebraska. "PLCAA is most valuable in the legislative arena."

Not coincidentally, Amstutz, Andrews, Ottley—even PLCAA's president, Lou Wierichs of Appleton, Wis.—joined PLCAA's board after participating in ARAs.

Board members won't be too surprised when Ottley, on recommendation of this committee, asks for stronger ties with ARAs. But he's going to ask that ARAs take work harder to entice member companies to also participate in PLCAA.

—Ron Hall

Allied Regional Associations

(U.S. states in **boldface**)

Association of **Montana** Turf & Ornamental Professionals, Dennis Roberts, P.O. Box 90331, Billings, MT 59108; (406) 256-9499.

Association of Turf & Ornamental, Kermit Throckmorton, 8511 Walnut Hollow Cove, Cordova, TN 38018; (901) 753-6481.

Colorado Association of Lawn Care Professionals, Judy Maurer, P.O. Box 102502, Denver, CO 80250-2502; (303) 777-1578.

Grounds Management Association of **Wisconsin**, Lou Wierichs, Jr., P.O. Box 566, Appleton, WI 54912; (414) 739-5615.

Indiana State Lawn Care Association, Pat McGrady, P.O. Box 143, New Castle, IN 47362; (317) 836-4866.

Interstate Professional Applicators Association, Dan Behey, Eastside Spraying Service, P.O. Box 681, Kirkland, WA 98033; (206) 823-2600.

Iowa Professional Lawn Care Association, Mona Bond, 1051 N.W. Greenwood, Ankeny, IA 50021; (515) 963-1395.

Kentucky Turfgrass Council, Dwight Barkley, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY 40475; (606) 622-2228.

Lawn Care Association of **Pennsylvania**, John D. Wanner, 908 Second St., Harrisburg, PA 17102; (717) 236-2050.

Lawn Services Association of **Michigan**, Kay Ruffino, P.O. Box 608, New Baltimore, MI 48047; (810) 598-7158.

Massachusetts Association of Lawn Care Professionals, Karen Connelly, 1620 Sudbury Road, Suite 6, Concord, MA 01742; (509) 287-0127.

Nassau/Suffolk Landscape Gardeners Association, Patricia Voges, P.O. Box 489, Brightwaters, NY 11118; (516) 665-2250.

Nebraska Professional Lawn Care Association, P.O. Box 1197, Hastings, NE 68902; (402) 462-6161.

New York State Lawn Care Association, Robert Ottley, 4343 Buffalo Road, North Chili, NY 14514; (716) 594-1095.

North Central Turf Grass Association, Betsey Smith, P.O. Box 10444, Fargo, ND 58106-0444; (701) 232-0215.

Ohio Lawn Care Association, Ken Guenther, 2999 Silver Drive, Suite 200, Columbus, OH 43224; (614) 261-1221.

Professional Lawn Care Association of Mid-America, Olivia Golden, P.O. Box 35184, Kansas City, MO 64134; (816) 765-7616.

Professional Lawn Care Association of Ontario, P.O. Box 375, Mount Brydges, Ontario, N2C 2K6 Canada; (519) 471-2620.

Professional Lawn Maintenance Association of **Connecticut**, Gary Steward, P.O. Box 11, Watertown, CT 06795; (203) 274-0608.