

HOT TOPICS

Homeowners spend billions, but don't know real benefits

BURLINGTON, Vt.—Seventeen million U.S. households spent \$12.5 billion on professional landscaping and lawn care services in 1993, according to a recent Gallup survey sponsored by three green industry organizations.

But surprisingly, most homeowners do not recognize the real benefits of a well-kept lawn, the survey revealed.

The survey also noted that the number of homeowners using landscape professionals was up 29 percent over 1992, and expected to grow by an additional 6 percent this year.

Results (accurate to $\pm 3\%$) were based on personal interviews with a representative sample of 1,665 U.S. households about their 1993 spending on these services:

1) lawn/landscape maintenance: fertilization, mowing, renovation, insect/weed control, pruning, mulching;

2) landscape installation/construction: plants, walkways, fences, decks, pools, other water features;

3) landscape design: professional design/architecture services.

Average 1993 household spending on landscape services was \$721. Lawn/landscape maintenance received the largest share of total homeowner dollars at \$6.4 billion. Installation/construction was next at \$5.6 billion, then design at \$381 million.

The largest average household expenditures were on installation/construction at \$2,791, followed by maintenance at \$445 and design at \$424.

Other highlights:

● Americans 50 years of age and older accounted for nearly half of all expendi-

1994 U.S. HOMEOWNER LANDSCAPING AND LAWN CARE SURVEY Conducted by The Gallup Organization

Service	1993 Expenditures			
	Households %	(millions)	Avg. \$ Spent	Total \$ Spent (in billions)
Maintenance	15	14.5	\$445.2	\$6.455
Installation/construction	2	1.9	\$2,971.0	\$5.645
Design	1	0.9	\$423.8	\$0.381
TOTAL	18	17.3	\$721.0	\$12.481

Service	1992-4 Expenditures					
	1992		1993		1994 (est.)	
	%	(millions)	%	(millions)	%	(millions)
Maintenance	13	12.1	15	14.5	14	13.2
Installation/construction	1	0.8	2	1.9	4	3.5
Design	0.1	0.5	1	0.9	2	1.6
TOTAL	14.1	13.4	18	17.3	20	18.3

Source: The Gallup Organization

tures on maintenance services.

● The western U.S. had the highest average expenditures on maintenance services, \$536.

● Americans 30-49 years old accounted for 83 percent of installation/construction sales, plus highest average spending in this category, \$3,482.

● Homeowners in the South had the highest average spending on installation/construction: \$6,147.

● Women accounted for 70 percent of spending on design services, twice that of men.

● The mid-Atlantic region accounted for nearly half of all landscape design spending.

Non-recognition—Yet, only 12 percent of American households recognize turf's environmental benefits, the survey noted. Helping purify and cool the air, and filtering groundwater lagged far behind such benefits as beautifying the neighborhood.

"It's surprising to those of us in the turf care profession that the environmental benefits are not recognized more widely," says Lou Weirichs, president of the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA). "Our society is the most environmentally conscious in history, yet the public apparently isn't aware that they are doing their part to help the environment just by taking care of their lawns."

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Not surprisingly, demographic groups that rated lawns most highly include people still in the active workforce, the over-30s, college-educated householders, married couples, those with business or professional occupations, wage earners with annual incomes of more than \$40,000, and people who live outside the central cities.

Besides the PLCAA, other groups that sponsored this first-of-its-kind national survey were: American Association of Nurserymen (AAN), American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA), International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) and National Arborist Association (NAA). It was conducted in cooperation with the National Gardening Association.

RECOGNIZED BENEFITS OF A PROPERTY WITH A WELL-MAINTAINED LAWN AND LANDSCAPE

Benefit	% of sample
A property that helps beautify the neighborhood	45.0
A place of beauty and relaxation for the family, employees or visitors	38.6
A property that reflects positively on its owner	38.4
A property that has increased real estate value	35.3
A comfortable place to entertain, work at or visit	32.5
A property that provides a safe, high-quality play area for children	26.7
A place that provides a pet exercise area	12.7
A property that helps to purify the air	12.4
A property that helps to cool the air	12.2
An environmentally friendly property that filters water that drains into the ground	12.1
Other	1.2
None of the above	7.4

(Totals greater than 100% due to multiple responses)

Source: The Gallup Org.

Lawn equipment prices could zoom if EPA finalizes new law

WASHINGTON—Prices of lawn/landscape equipment could jump if the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalizes a draft proposal on new emission controls for two- and four-stroke lawn mowers, chippers, tillers, tractors, leaf blowers, trimmers and edgers.

If adopted, the proposal would establish emission ceilings for hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxide. Engine manufacturers would have to get engines certified at those levels by Aug. 1, 1996.

These controls would be just the first of a two-phase control program. Additional, tougher restrictions would be imposed by the agency by the end of the decade.

Industry reaction—Jed Mandel, a spokesman for the Engine Manufacturers Association, says the EPA proposal "is substantially different and significantly more stringent than anticipated."

Don Purcell, president of the Portable Power Equipment Manufacturers Association (PPEMA), says the Phase 1 standards are feasible. But he also says he expects prices to increase, and some models to be taken out of production. And certain parts of the proposal should be changed, he adds.

The EPA promised that its small non-road engine emissions program would resemble the one adopted by the California Air Resources Board (CARB), which goes into effect in 1995.

Once the EPA approves the CARB program, other states will be free to adopt it, instead of following the EPA program. Manufacturers are therefore hoping for the CARB and EPA programs to be similar.

The new proposal, however, contains engine requirements that are not part of the California program. Mandel says that Phase 1 provisions "would be very, very

expensive" for manufacturers, and the costs would be passed along to buyers.

The EPA estimates that the price of lawn mowers would increase about \$5 per unit as a result of Phase 1. Mandel argues that engine manufacturers feel that is too low an estimate.

According to Mandel, the carbon dioxide standard for four-stroke lawn mowers is unachievable.

"At such levels, significant in-use performance problems and customer dissatisfaction occur on certain production-line engines," he says. "Field-testing shows that the lean performance levels cause engines to stumble, die or otherwise be unable to accept their loads." He is pushing for a more relaxed standard.

Needs more time—Mandel says the industry would need at least an additional year beyond 1996 to get all engines certified, because there is no existing technology available to reach Phase 1 standards.

Purcell would also like to see the deadline moved back. PPEMA members realize that the EPA requirements cover the large trimmers and blowers used by the landscape industry, and the CARB standards omit those products.

Companies such as Toro have also had complaints about the EPA proposal. David McIntosh, vice president and general manager of Lawn Boy's consumer division—a Toro subsidiary—says that Lawn Boy's two-stroke lawn mowers might have to be removed from the market if they had to meet Class 3, 4 or 5 emission levels for non-handheld equipment, as proposed by the EPA. Toro wants two-stroke lawn mowers moved up to Class 1 or 2, with the four-stroke lawn mowers.

—Stephen Barlas

GIE show is set through 1999

MARIETTA, Ga.—The Green Industry Expo is "go" through 1999.

The three sponsoring associations of the annual fall trade show for lawn and landscape professionals entered into another shareholder agreement through that year. Lou Wierichs negotiated for the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA), Jeff Bourne the Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS) and Rick Doesburg the

Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA). PLCAA continues as trade show manager.

The 1994 GIE is set for St. Louis, Nov. 14-17. It's held in conjunction with educational conferences sponsored by ALCA, PLCAA and PGMS. For more information contact GIE at 1000 Johnson Ferry Rd., NE, Suite C-135, Marietta, GA, 30068-2112. Phone: (404) 973-2019; fax: (404) 578-6071.