

Start your planning now for spring garden shows

By James E. Guyette

■ Consumer home and garden shows are great ways to market your landscape company, and now's the time to plan for shows scheduled in spring of 1995.

For more than a decade, McHenry Landscaping in Chesterland, Ohio, has participated in such shows. It reports a remarkable rate of selling success. "We probably generate 30 percent of our work from that," says landscape construction supervisor Kevin Czajka.

Patrons at these events will seek advice by running a proposed landscape design by the assembled staffers—and often they can be convinced to sign-up as a client, although sometimes the results are not immediate.

"People recognize you year after year. I've seen this happen a thousand times. They'll call and say, 'We talked about this (project) three or four years ago and we want you to do it,'" Czajka recounts. "It's a

Trade shows can accommodate just about any landscape display.

long-term process. We get a lot of leads and we have to go through them."

The type of people passing by the display can vary greatly depending on the caliber of the show itself. Attendees will range from the very wealthy to just plain folks.

"At the Cleveland Flower Festival we get more high-dollar residential," says Czajka. Other shows may attract more commercial clients or those with fewer

needs, he adds. "Sometimes you'll get someone who just wants one tree. It depends on the show."

Part of McHenry's marketing strategy is tracking which show produces more suitable results.

Smell the roses—A company considering a display at a home and garden show needs to check the quality of the other landscapers involved and the quality of the show itself, Czajka advises.

A home and garden show display can cost from \$10,000 to \$30,000. The show itself will pay a company a per-square-foot "subsidy" to erect a garden scene, but that money is inconsequential.

"They should expect to spend three to four times the subsidy," reports Paul J. Schrimpf, associate show manager at Advanstar Expositions, producer of the Cleveland Flower Festival. "But the subsidy is a good starting point."

Proper planning is the key to presenting a successful show scene, according to Czajka and Schrimpf. "It's a different world indoors, so seek advice," Schrimpf says. "Things look different under indoor lighting."

By discussing indoor displays with landscape managers in other towns you can determine such things as plant selec-

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Dan Schultz, left, and Kevin Czajka of McHenry Landscaping say planning is most important when presenting a display at a home and garden show.

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tion, pond placement, pump technology and worker scheduling.

Asking for advice from other landscapers in the same show that you're considering may not be the best idea because of the competition involved for the coveted ribbons. "There are a lot of bragging rights and prestige that go along with those awards," says Schrimpf.

"You're competing against the best guys (and gals) in the city," Czajka points out.

From the ground (floor) up—Putting together the display itself takes plenty of careful advance work. The planning stage alone can take 20 to 30 hours. At McHenry, Czajka meets with owner Tom McHenry and landscape maintenance supervisor Chris Dowhan to plot the general thrust. If it's a "celebrity garden" based on a local personality, the subject's favorite plants, colors and lifestyle habits are considered. Landscape designer Dan Schultz then steps in to draw the plans. All this starts in September for a February show.

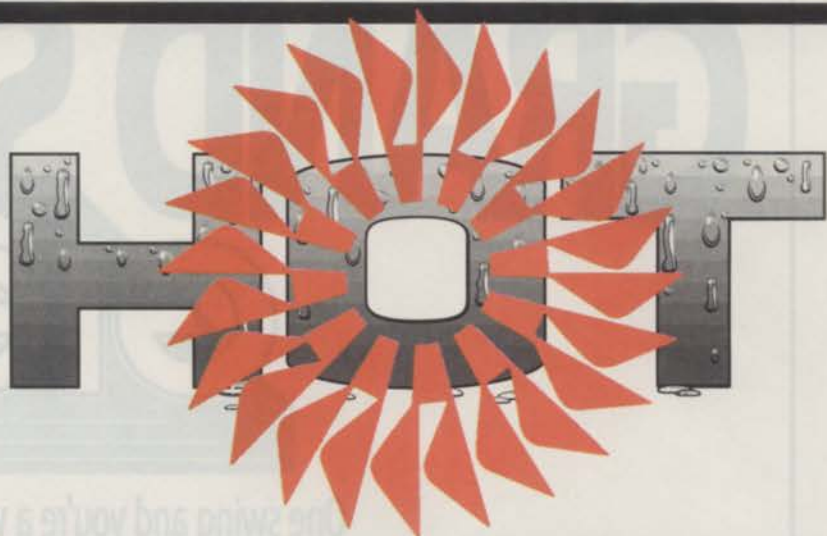
As much as possible is constructed at company headquarters. "If it can be built ahead of time we'll do it and haul it down on a trailer," Czajka says. With a walkway or patio, the stones are assembled and numbered and then taken apart to be toted to the site. Flowering plants are forced at the McHenry greenhouse.

At the convention center, a layer of sand is placed as a base atop plastic sheeting, then topsoil is brought in with the rest of the materials. "It's very similar to doing it outside," says Czajka. "It's watered every day by hand—normal maintenance."

If a landscape manager wishes to keep valued employees busy during the off-season, mounting a display project can reach that goal. "This year we brought back three people who normally would have been laid off during the winter," Czajka reports.

In addition to boosting the company's bottom line through increased visibility and sales, producing a home and garden show scene can help improve worker morale. Says Czajka: "All of us look forward to it every year. You meet and talk to a lot of people."

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Beware summer heat stress, fatal in 1 of 10 severe cases

■ Now that the warm season is just around the corner, and you and your co-workers will be spending long hours outdoors, you need to keep on the lookout for signs of heat stress.

Heat stress is the illness that occurs when your body is subjected to more heat than it can cope with. The personal protective equipment worn during pesticide handling activities can increase the risk of heat stress by limiting your body's ability to cool down.

Mild forms of heat stress will make you feel ill and impair your ability to do a good job. You may get tired sooner, feel weak, be less alert, and be less able to use good judgment.

Severe heat stress is fatal to more than 10 percent of its victims—even young, healthy adults. Many who survive suffer permanent damage. Sometimes, the victims remain highly sensitive to heat for months and are unable to return to the same work.

Learn the signs and symptoms of heat stress and take immediate action to cool down if you suspect you or one of your colleagues might be suffering from even mild heat stress.

Symptoms—Signs and symptoms may include:

- fatigue (exhaustion, muscle weakness)
- headache, nausea and/or chills
- dizziness and/or fainting
- severe thirst and/or dry mouth
- clammy or hot, dry skin
- heavy sweating or complete lack of sweating
- alerted behavior (confusion, slurred

speech, quarrelsome or irrational attitude).

Drink!—When you work up a sweat or need to quench a thirst, remember the cheapest, healthiest, most readily available refreshment there is: water. A body needs six to eight 8-ounce glasses of fluids every day. Water is non-caloric and non-fattening. By drinking lots of water, your body learns to retain less fluid. And always drink past the point of quenching your thirst; the extra water will guard against dehydration.

First aid—It's not always easy to tell the difference between heat stress illness and pesticide poisoning. The signs and symptoms are similar. Don't waste time trying to decide what's causing the illness. Get medical help.

First aid measures for heat stress victims are similar to those for persons who are over-exposed to pesticides:

- 1) Get the victim into a shaded or cool area.
- 2) Carefully remove all personal protective equipment and any other clothing that may be making the victim too warm.
- 3) Cool the victim as rapidly as possible by sponging or splashing the skin—especially the face, neck, hands and forearms—with cool water. If possible, immerse the victim in cool water.
- 4) Have the victim, if conscious, drink as much water as possible.
- 5) Keep the victim quiet until help arrives.

—Information courtesy of the Professional Lawn Care Association of America, through its newsletter