

ASK THE EXPERT

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Information on the green industry

Problem: I am in the process of opening a lawn and landscape management company. I plan to offer irrigation installation and repair and herbicide and fertilizer applications, but am a novice in that part of the field. Do you know where I can find any literature on these subjects or any courses I could take at home? (Florida)

Solution: Regarding the pertinent literature and/or courses in your field, contact the University of Florida in Gainesville or other universities in your area. Your local county cooperative extension service can give you a listing of local schools that offer courses in agricultural sciences. You may be interested in a four-year degree or a two-year associates degree in turfgrass and ornamental management areas.

Once you obtain enough background and confidence, the technical part of your business will be easier. These schools should provide you with the basic knowledge of programs related to your interest.

Developing a service on a program basis will require some scientific background and technical expertise. Therefore, if you are unable to obtain it through schooling, consider the following alternatives:

- 1) Work for another company as an intern or employee.
- 2) Hire a technical expert (advisor) knowledgeable about program development.
- 3) Hire a private technical consultant/contractor.

In addition to the technical aspect of the programs, you also need expertise in equipment, business management, and so on. Contact the appropriate experts to help you in this regard.

You also need to become familiar with federal and state laws pertaining to your interests. A pesticide applicator/operator license may be required in order to purchase and apply pesticides. This information may be obtained through your local Department of Agriculture and/or EPA office.

Attend seminars and/or conferences related to your interest in services. Also, become a member of local, state or national organizations such as Professional Lawn Care Association of America or International Society of Arboriculture. Subscribe to trade magazines, such as *LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT*, *Arbor Age*, and/or *Tree Care Industry* and cooperative extension publications and/or newsletters.

(ED. NOTE: See Page 1 for a list of some of the best trade organizations in the green industry. Additionally, the PLCAA has a home study course in turf management it conducts in cooperation with the University of Georgia. To find out more about this course, call the PLCAA at (404) 977-5222.)

Will horticultural oil harm flowers?

Problem: Will horticultural oil harm annuals or perennials growing beneath trees? Normally, we would have used oil before these annual flowering plants are planted. We are thinking of using oil at other times during the growing season when flower-

ing plants will be in bloom. (New York)

Solution: Based on the information that I have, and in checking with other researchers, I found no evidence of any phytotoxicity concern with horticultural oil on annual flowers (when applied according to label specifications).

According to University of California publication "Managing Insects and Mites with Spray Oils," narrow-range oils (Sunspray 6E) can be used in greenhouses on bedding plants, vegetable transplants and house plants such as azaleas, begonias, camellias, chrysanthemums, crown of thorn, dieffenbachia, ferns (excluding maidenhair fern), gardenias, geraniums, jade plant, most palms, philodendrons, poinsettias, portulacas, and on house plants (excluding ficus plants). Ficus plants show water-soaked spots from 1 percent oil application and necrosis from 2 percent oil application.

However, reports do suggest that under certain adverse environmental conditions, such as high temperature, high humidity and/or low soil moisture, some plants may be sensitive to pesticides in general. Other studies suggest that oils should not be applied to geraniums and mums in bloom, or to poinsettias during the bract expansion stage. Applications should be avoided when relative humidity remains above 90 percent for more than 48 hours or temperatures are above 90° F. Most of this information is from greenhouse and/or indoor plant set-up where relative humidity could be high.

Information on the effect of oils on understory plants, such as annuals in landscapes, is lacking.

Sometimes the problem may be related to not recirculating the hot mix from the hose into the tank prior to treating. On a very warm day, mixture in the hose can get very hot when the sprayer is not being used. In this case, the best thing to do is to recirculate the mix before treating.

Another way to minimize the spray drift/drip on non-target plants is to use proper applications, disc size and technique. Generally it is sufficient to wet the foliage instead of the past practice of spray to the point of drip.

Field experience has demonstrated that spraying the flowers with water after the application minimizes the potential for injury.

If you are thinking of using horticultural oil throughout the growing season for the first time, it is better to try it in a small area and learn more about the safe handling and potential phytotoxicity of the product before using it on a wide scale.

Read and follow label specifications for better results.

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Mail questions to "Ask the Expert," LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT, 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130. Please allow two to three months for an answer to appear in the magazine.