

Lawn care image better in '90s

Outgoing PLCAA executive director Ann McClure reflects on green industry changes over the past six years.



This month, Ann McClure leaves her post as executive director of the Professional Lawn Care Association (PLCAA) to become executive director of the International Gas Turbine Institute, headquartered in Atlanta.

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT spoke with McClure recently about her six-year tenure with the association.—ed.

LM: Your PLCAA responsibilities began with testimony to a Senate Subcommittee hearing on Toxic Substances. That was quite a start.

AM: "I had the help of some of the major players in the industry as well as media consultants. The PLCAA staff knew the government affairs situation at the time, and the PLCAA committee members helped me understand what was going on in the industry, and what the industry's response needed to be in order to position the industry appropriately. Jumping right in like that and representing the industry on a national level was a good start."

LM: You certainly worked with a fine team at PLCAA. What do you feel are your major accomplishments?

AM: "I wanted to make sure the association had continued respect from the industry; government agencies; and the public.

"We've made such inroads in public perception. PLCAA is used several times a week as a resource for information, whether it's from national publica-

tions, universities, government agencies or state groups. That was my hope and continued to be. I think we've succeeded in establishing a reputation of respect among those constituencies for being knowledgeable, responsible and active on behalf of the green industry.

"The other was to insure that from the inside we had a stable fiscal position, and that the staff was knowledgeable about our financial process, so that each one could see to their individual responsibility comfortably, knowing what they could do and should do, in order to remain [fiscally responsible].

"We have an excellent group of professionals here right now.

"We have grown to a point of featuring and serving the concept that all of our members are 'ambassadors' for the industry, and we're trying to give them the tools they can use to tell their communi-

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—Ann McClure

ties that they are environmental stewards, and to tell their communities the many benefits of turf. This has been our focus the last couple of years.

"Our members are confirming to us that they want to give back. [The services donated to] Arlington Cemetery recently was a good example of that. I think it's reflected in the PLCAA awards program, which is centered around community service and environmental improvement. This is the message we're helping our member 'ambassadors' carry to their communities."

LM: How do you see the green industry's growth in the days ahead?

AM: "Our impression has been that there are a lot of small companies coming up in the industry. They're the hardest ones to find, unless they call on the PLCAA for resource help when they're getting started.

"As a general observation, I think a lot of companies are forming every year. In any business, there's always some who make it, and some who don't.

"The ones we're in contact with are so excited

about what they're doing. They're pleased with the fact that they can get the business started, and they're excited about the potential. So if they run their businesses right and are judicious about their business investments as they grow the company, there's an awful lot of opportunity for them.

LM: ChemLawn/TruGreen/Barefoot—good for the industry, or not?

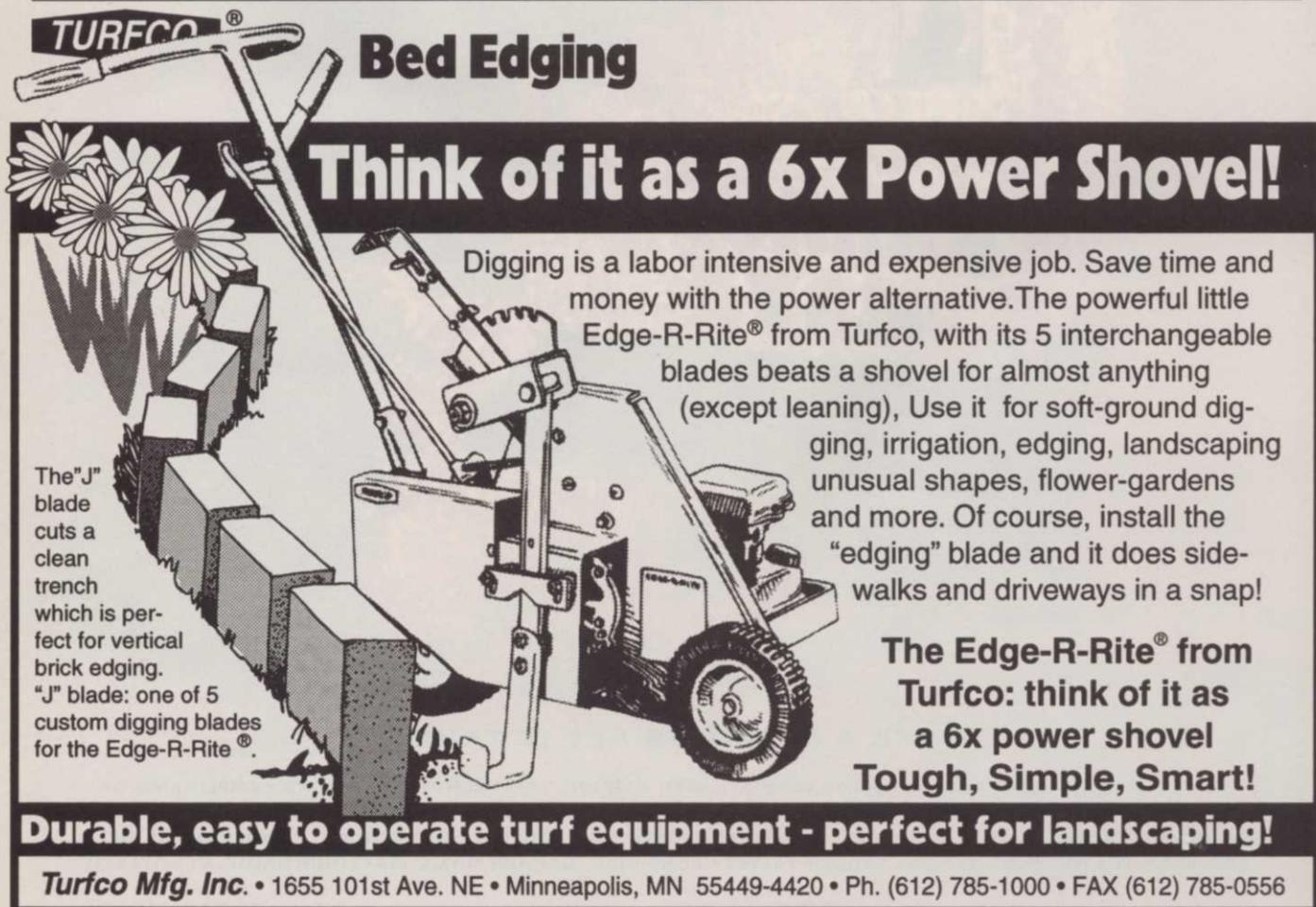
AM: "At this point, the latest [CL/TG/BF] big purchase impacts the industry in that everyone is waiting to see what happens!

"By the same token, what it left us with is a giant in the industry and a lot of small to medium size companies.

"From a management point of view, it's left two major arenas for the customer to choose from: they can choose the giant that works in its way, or they can choose the smaller company that can take advantage of whatever the larger ones can't do.

"Each group has an advantage; how they deal with those advantages is up to any one company.

'We're trying to give our member 'ambassadors' the tools they can use to tell their communities that they are environmental stewards, to tell their communities the many benefits of turf.'



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"The very huge company can work on the basis of gaining from its economy of scale. Whatever advantages they have in doing things in a very big way are obvious. You've still got the smaller companies that can take advantage of the lack of flexibility that large companies often have. And some of the smaller companies grew up in the community rather than coming in from outside.

"Whether you're the big company or the small or the medium-size one, your job is to sit down and identify the advantages you have over the other, and then make sure you take advantage of it.

"It's going to be a lot of fun watching the companies involved work those advantages. It will be interesting to see how it impacts the entire industry. Anyone who says how it will impact is overstepping any point of knowledge he's got. None of us can really say how the chips will fall in the end."

L.M.: What's up with the Green Industry Expo? Will we see any new partners at the next GIE show?

AM.: "There are a number of different industries—and associations representing them—who could potentially have an interest in partnering in some way, or participating in some way in and around the Green Industry Expo.

"With that in mind, the GIE set up a task force to receive any proposals and to see whether there are any groups that might be overlooked.

"Naturally, some folks have said they're interested, some have said they're not; none of it has come to anything specific at all.

"To the best of our knowledge, as a result of the last board meeting, (March 2) it looks as if there will be no obvious change in the 1997 show. For the time being people are just sort of brainstorming on it." □

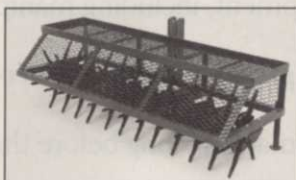
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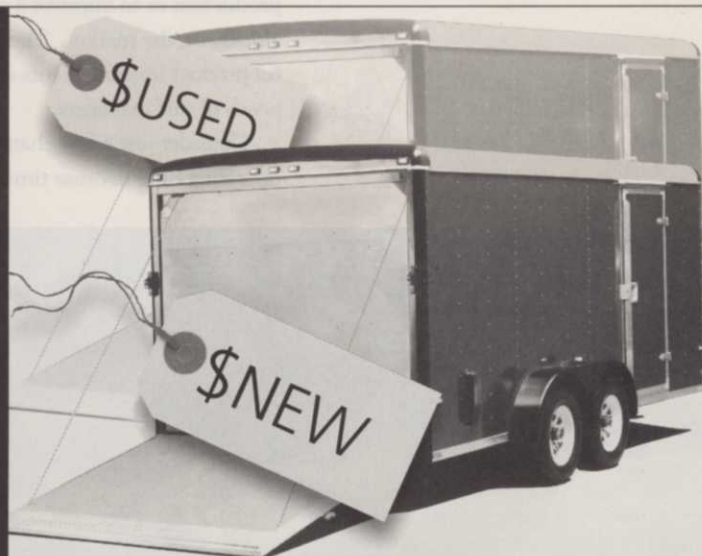
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