

Industry works through heat, drought

Dallas— Summers on the Southern Plains summer are typically hot and dry—but not so hot and dry so early in the season. This year, triple-digit heat greeted mid spring, and as August approached it hadn't relented. A bigger concern for green industry pros was drought. By mid July some areas of north Texas hadn't seen significant rain in over a month.

"The heat is pretty normal for this time of the year," said Cody Whelchel, Cody Lawn Care, Ft. Worth, TX. "It's just that it got hotter quicker and for longer this year. It's been hard on the people doing the work."

Temperatures in Dallas exceeded 100° F almost every day in July with no relief forecast as the month ended. The same was true in Oklahoma. Wes Hadsell at Hadco Lawn & Landscape in Bartlesville, OK, reported 21 work days over 100° F through mid July.

"Our May and June seemed like our normal July and August," said Hadsell. "We send our guys out with a lot of water. We start early, and the guys have chosen to work a little bit longer days and take Fridays off to recoup."

Ed Herndon at Phillip's Landscape Mgmt. Inc., Ft. Worth, TX, said maintenance crews throughout the city are working in spite of the heat.

"Our maintenance schedules are so full, we need a full day to get through it all. We come in at 6:30 a.m. and it's hard to get on any properties earlier than that."

Cody Whelchel says the grass, particularly St. Augustinegrass, thrived on the heat and had to be regularly mowed on his accounts which were irrigated.

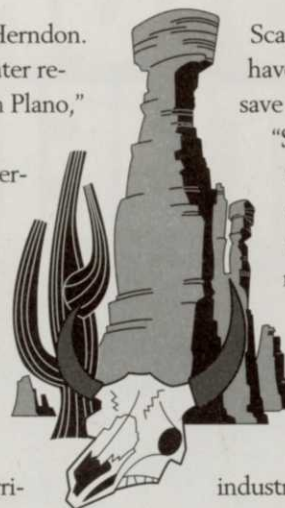
Not surprisingly, irrigation services have been in great demand.

"All of the cities surrounding Dallas are instigating water rationing programs, and we have to go around each and every city and set our customers' controllers to match the cities' rationing programs. It's keeping us

hopping," said Herndon.

"We have water restrictions here in Plano," said Gary LaScalea, owner/operator of Gro-Green. "It's the first time for that since I've been here in 13 or 14 years. Everybody's trying to irrigate and irrigate to keep things alive."

"Any call regarding a sprinkler system is an emergency now," added Doy Geller, general manager TechScape, Inc., Richardson, TX. But, even with those accounts that have irrigation systems, Tech-



Scape's crews often have to hand water to save plants, he reported.

"Sometimes I have to have guys work on weekends just to water, just to make sure plants that we've recently installed don't die," he explained.

In spite of the industry's best efforts, many customers will be losing trees and ornamentals because of the drought. "There's been so much construction in Dallas that we have difficulty in getting trees now," added Geller.

Drought not the only problem

EAST TEXAS— Drought stresses trees, but the damage does not end there. When trees are stressed they are weakened and become less able to withstand additional stresses. In many cases, when a tree fails it is not simply due to a single cause but to a number of stressors which were simply too much for the tree. For trees which survive a drought situation, the additional stress factors include diseases and pests.

One concern is a group of insects, commonly referred to

as "shade tree borers". This group includes, among others, longhorned beetles, metallic wood-borers, cottonwood borers, poplar borers, locust borers and re-headed ash borers. However, once you see the signs of borer infestation, it is too late.

The best method for treating borers is preventive. Maintaining tree health is important and that includes watering. Fertilizing, pruning dead and dying branches are also important steps in preventive tree care. Should bor-

ers be a concern in your area, it is important to have correct identification of the pest.

According to Dr. James Robinson, entomologist with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, trunks and tree limbs up to 0.5 inches in diameter can be sprayed with a solution of lindane or chlorpyrifos, with the first treatment being in April when the insects first emerge. Later applications in late May, mid-July and August are also recommended.