

A time-saving tool

CLIP for Windows, a computerized lawn industry program, helps lawn care business owners eliminate business inefficiencies.

By RON HALL/ Managing Editor

You hear it all the time, "Time is money." Don't believe it; time is more valuable than money.

Time is not replaceable. It's the most valuable resource any business owner manages. This is particularly true in the green industry. There are so few productive hours in each season. Doing things right the first time and keeping the hours spent on mundane, repetitive tasks to a minimum contribute to a robust bottom line. Tasks that are repetitive are made for computers. Beg for computers. Most green industry businesses are using one or more off-the-shelf software programs such as QuickBooks, MYOB, Peachtree, Microsoft Word, Excel, etc. These programs promote a professional appearance and generate necessary business reports. However, chances are that even if you are using one of these software packages, or something similar, you're still suffering from paperwork overload.

Off-the-shelf software just does not cut it when it comes to certain areas of your green industry business. Routing and scheduling remain the stuff nightmares are made of;

billing is a headache just waiting to happen; job costing can cost you sleep.

Why spend late nights and early mornings under the paperwork siege when the right software program can handle your repetitive tasks and categorize the massive amounts of data they generate into a readable format that enables you to make informed business decisions fast?

One of the popular programs designed specifically for the needs of the green industry is called CLIP. It has been on the market for over a decade and has a large number of lawn care business users. Where off-the-shelf software falls short, CLIP picks up the slack by tying your customer base into your job scheduling, routing, billing and job costing.

"We have approximately 700 jobs. CLIP saves us a lot of time as far as keeping track of them," says Peggy Moyers, Moyers Lawn Care, Rockville, MD.

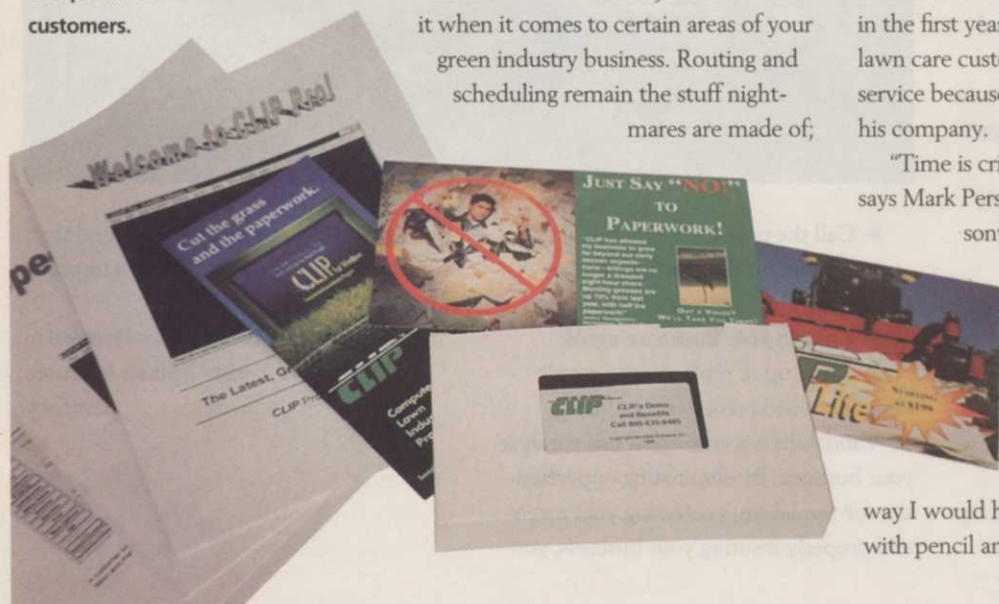
Peggy says every afternoon the crews bring back their work orders and she enters that data into her computer. She says it usually takes only about 40 minutes. Then she prepares and prints out the next day's route sheets.

Marty Allen, Environmental Expressions, Gaithersburg, MD, says, "before I got CLIP, I spent three days a week in the office doing paperwork." He says the software allows him to do the same amount of work in only 10-15 minutes each day. He estimates that using the software saved him \$20,000 in the first year alone. It's also allowed him to service lawn care customers he would not have been able to service because of the flexibility the software gave his company.

"Time is critically important in maintenance," says Mark Perschel, Perschel Brothers Services, Jacksonville Beach, FL. "I know exactly how much money I am making per man, per hour on every job."

His crews enter information into a Remote Data Collector as they enter and leave each job site. "We have 300 properties all with differing schedules. There is no way I would have time to keep track of them all with pencil and paper," says Perschel.

Sensible Software provides a large amount of marketing and product support material to customers and potential customers.



ID turfgrass on your computer

Turf-ID is a computer program to aid turfgrass managers, extension personnel and consultants in the vegetative identification of some common turf and weedy grasses.

The program was developed and is being offered by the North Carolina State University Dept. of Crop Science. Turf-ID uses a dichotomous key developed by J. M. DiPaola. The key currently covers 48 grasses. A glossary, digitized illustrations and help information are included in the use of the identification key.

Turf-ID requires an IBM-compatible computer with 512 Kb available RAM, VGA graphics capability and one of the following operating systems: DOS 3.3 or higher, Windows 3.X, Windows 95, Windows NT 3.5 or higher. Turf-ID can run from a diskette, but a hard drive is recommended. The program requires about 800 Kb of hard drive space. Diskette size both 3 1/2" and 5 1/4".

Cost is \$50 (\$40 educational) with proceeds going to a scholarship fund for a turf major. Send order to: *North Carolina State University, Attn: Art Bruneau, Box 7620, Raleigh, NC 27695-7620.*

CLIP operates on an IBM PC compatible system using the Intel 80386, 80486, Pentium or later chip. These systems must have at least 200 megabytes of hard disk, a 3 1/2" high density desk drive, and at least 8 megabytes of RAM. You can use any Windows compatible printer. A Super VGA color monitor is recommended.

Sensible Software, Inc., 9639 Doctor Perry Road, Suite 123, Ijamsville, MD 21754. 800/635-8485.
<http://www.clip.com>. **LM**

LCA home page helps consumers find a landscaper

The Landscape Contractors Association of MD-DC-VA now has a web site for landscape professionals and consumer access: www.lcamddcva.org.

Consumers searching for a landscape professional can now find companies that meet their specific needs by using a "find a landscape professional" link. Searchable by types of work and geography, the consumer will immediately be able to locate firms that can meet their landscape needs.

The site also contains information about the association's upcoming events and programs. Scott Brinitzer, LCA president, says both the public and LCA members will be able to access information about the association and its members outside of regular business hours.

San Diego awaits irrigation show

Now's the time to start planning for the 1998 Irrigation Association International Irrigation Show in San Diego on November 1-3. Don't put it off any longer. Call the IA today at (703) 573-3551 or register over the web at www.irrigation.org. Lock in your reservations and start planning your perfect convention.

Held in the expansive San Diego Convention Center on the waterfront, the show will have irrigation experts from more than 60 countries. More than 6,000 are expected to register for the annual event. The exhibition floor sold out in May for the fourth year in a row!

EETC has certification program

Schools across the United States are excited about the prospect of gaining certification from the Equipment and Engine Training Council (EETC). At the organization's meeting in Milwaukee, WI, in May, the 120-plus participants received copies of the new "Outdoor Power Equipment Technology Program Certification" publication.

For a school to become certified it must meet the industry's standards for providing professional training facilities and tools; ensuring instructor competency; and teaching industry-specified and desired subject matter.

Each of the three levels of certification will require compliance with specific standards for the facility, instructor qualifications, and curriculum competencies.

Level 1 covers two and four-stroke engine competencies,

Level 2 covers electrical, driveline, hydraulics, and hydrostatic competencies,

Level 3 covers compact diesel & generator competencies.

Bruce Radcliff, incoming president of the EETC, said that "one of the primary goals of the EETC for the coming year is to provide accreditation to six to 10 schools in North America. The first school accreditation should be complete by early June."

A second goal outlined by Radcliff was for the EETC "to see a measurable increase in the participation of OPE dealers." He said the involvement and experiences of OPE dealers are needed for the success of EETC. For more information about the EETC, contact Virgil Russell, Executive Director, at 512/442-1788 or opecert@io.com.