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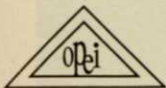
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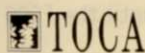
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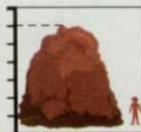
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My column concerning certification in the Oct. 98 issue of LM riled a few of you. It got your dander up and you let me know it. Some of you let me know that you agreed with what I wrote.

Thanks for your comments, both pro and con.

"Certifying landscapers should be used as a tool to separate informed, quality-minded companies from the rest of the competition," wrote Rick Poro, owner Cutting Edge Landscape, Hampton, VA, in response to the column. *"What gets us is the amount of 'scab' landscapers who don't register with the city, pay withholding, state and federal taxes, and on and on. Because of this they can lowball jobs, bringing down prices and quality."*

Jim Park, grounds manager for Point Loma Nazarene University, San Diego, CA, likewise feels that certification is a good tool against unscrupulous workers. *"This industry is long overdue for a way to measure the degree of competency of people working in this field,"* he wrote, in

part. *"I think certification is a great idea. It's good enough for most industries—why not ours?"*

Jones C. Abernethy III, a licensed landscape architect and contractor, added these thoughts: *"Protection of the public health, safety and general welfare is the primary goal of any licensure or certification program. The alternative to licensure and certification is that anyone can get \$25 worth of business cards printed and say that they are a 'professional' (fill in the blank) and go out and infect themselves on the public."*

"Any profession that does not wholeheartedly support certification and licensure as minimum requirements for practice is a profession not worthy of the name. Regarding education? Everyone gets educated a little bit every day as they go about their jobs. Just who is responsible for educating the jack-

legs, fly by nights and incompetents? The customers, inspectors, landscape architects? I don't think so.

"Certification is not 'a gate to keep competitors out.' Certification is one way to protect the public from incompetent practitioners. The success of an industry is to have people doing good work and satisfying their customers."

We appreciate all of your comments and plan to explore the issue of certification in more depth in future issues. **LM**

Agree? Disagree? Contact Ron at 440/891-2636; fax 440/891-2683; e-mail rhall@advanstar.com

You speak out loud and clear



Ron Hall

RON HALL
Managing Editor

[PEOPLE & PROJECTS]

Janssen heads Stiles Landscape


Joseph E. Janssen, CLP, took over as president of Stiles Landscape Service Co., Fort Lauderdale, FL. Janssen, the former owner of his own landscape firm also served as a regional manager for ISS during his 15 years in the industry. Stiles Landscape Service is a division of Stiles Corporation, a full-service commercial real estate development and investment company.

Vollmer Associates lands East Boston project

Vollmer Associates is providing the engineering and landscape architectural services for the rehabilitation of Constitution Beach, a 28-acre recreational breach facility in East Boston, MA. The project involves rehabilitating the beach with 3,760 cu. yds. of clean sand, replacing a pedestrian bridge and developing a small urban park. The \$4.5-million project should take about 18 months.

Gardener's Guild honored

Gardener's Guild, Inc., San Rafael, CA, earned a 1998 Waste Reduction Award for its program to recycle grass clippings and landscape waste. President and CEO Linda Novy said the company made "great strides in converting our waste stream to resource recovery" with help from its 200 Bay area clients.



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Spruce spider mites

We are having some problems in managing spruce spider mites. What would be the strategy or program we should practice?

— MINNESOTA

Spruce spider mites can present a serious problem if not managed properly. This cool-season mite is active in the spring and again in the fall when the temperatures are cool. However, most people notice the damage during summer and often treat at that time with mixed results. During summer, when the temperature is 80°-90°F or higher, mites will go dormant or undergo diapause (in effect, resting or inactive). At this time treatment response will be poor.

Reports indicate that some mite activity can occur during summer if the temperatures are cooler. In these situations, thoroughly check the suspect plants for mite activity. This requires shaking the spruce branches, which show the mite feeding symptoms of stippling, over a white cloth or paper. If mites are found, provide proper management as needed.

Treatment timing and rotation is the key for a successful mite management program. Often multiple applications of miticides may be needed throughout the season. The following mite management program guidelines should work in your situation.

Apply a fall or winter application of horticultural oil to manage the adult, nymphs and

overwintering eggs. Remember that oil does not have any residual. It can be a hit-and-miss operation so make sure to provide proper coverage, following the label guidelines.

Miticide products such as Morstan, Kelthane, Hexagon, Avid, Talstar, Dursban, Orthene soil injection and insecticidal soap can be applied in April-June.

Since the residual effect of some of these products may vary from a few days to three to four weeks and the economics and regulatory requirements vary from product to product, you will want to consider which product is best for you.

Inspect the suspected spruce plants for mite activity during summer. If found, treat as needed. If the mites are inactive, treatment performance may not be satisfactory at this time.

Mite activity may peak during fall so consider treating again with any of the above listed products during the September-October period.

Be aware that horticultural oil treatments will remove the blue color from blue spruce by removing the whitish coat. However, subsequent new growth will have the blue coloration.

Review the product label and other pertinent literature regarding economics, safety, efficacy, and environmental concerns. Use the chosen products on a rotation basis to avoid possible resistant population buildups. Read and follow label specifications for best results.

Needling Austrian pine

What causes the banding on Austrian pine needles? We see some browning of the needles. Is it related to a disease? What is the best control?

—WISCONSIN

Based on the description of the problem and symptoms you are describing, the problem is likely to be a needle blight disease caused by *Dothistroma pini*. This fungus can produce dark spots or bands on one-year-old needles. The problem begins to show up in late summer. Often the infected portion may be swollen and the needle section above this site turns light brown and dies. The tree may drop needles prematurely under severe disease incidence. As a result, the tree may have a thin canopy.

To control this disease, consider applying fungicides such as Bordeaux mixture, Cleary's 3336 or other copper fungicides in late April or early May. Provide the second application approximately three weeks later to help manage the needle blight disease.

Read and follow label specifications for best results. **LM**



BALAKRISHNA RAO
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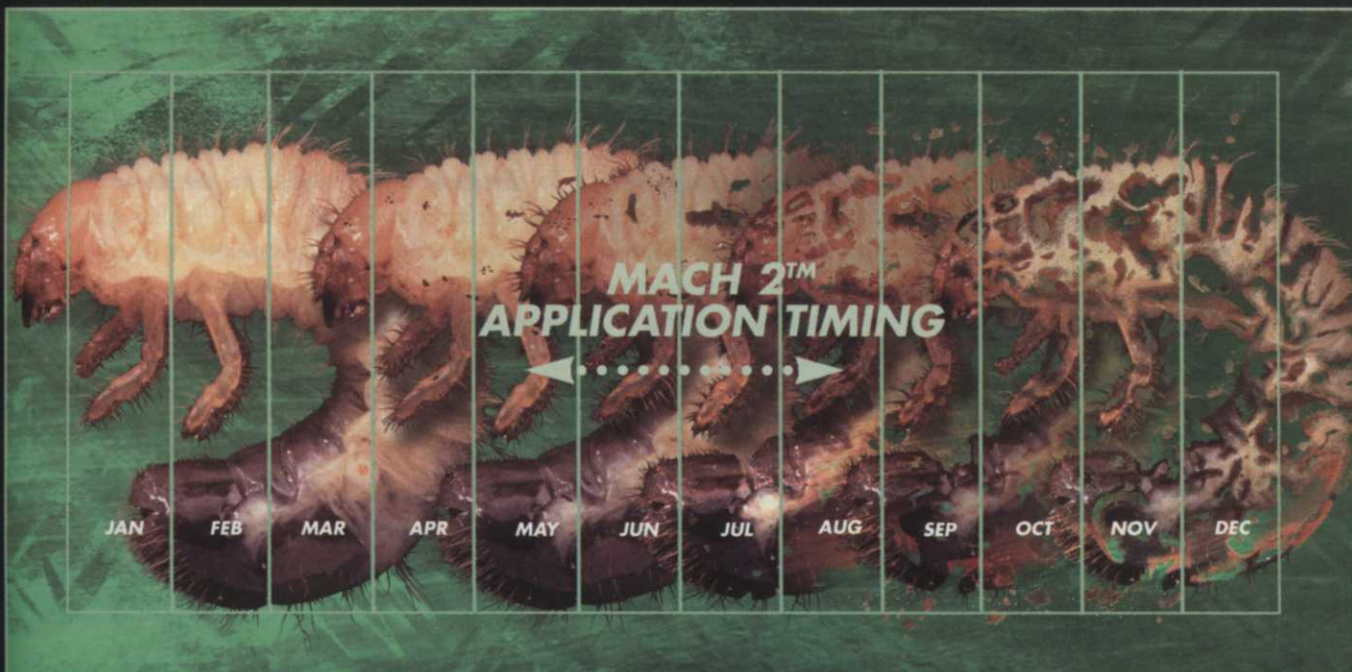
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Get in 'Lyme' for a new vaccine



Nancy Stairs

NANCY STAIRS
Technical Editor

For the few of you who spend much of your time working outdoors, Lyme disease may be something you have heard about. If not, be warned. Lyme disease has become the most common tick-borne illness and is one of the fastest growing infectious diseases in the United States. It has been reported in 48 states and most provinces in Canada, and the ticks are spreading geographically; not surprising given the suburban edge effect which is so popular for deer habitat, and mild winters which allow deer populations to continue

to increase. The disease is caused by a bacterium, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, which is carried by ticks (deer and rodents mainly). The highest risk areas are: New England, the mid-Atlantic states, the upper Midwest and the Pacific Northwest.

While Lyme disease has been identified as a problem for some time, one of the initial difficulties with this disease was the fact that it had so many different symptoms that could appear like

other problems. This was further complicated by tests that were sometimes inaccurate; some medical professionals who did not actually believe in the disease ("it's all in your head" school of medicine); and a failure to recognize the actual geographic occurrence of the problem through much of North America. Experts believe it is underreported by as much as ten times.

This was a problem because the only way to successfully treat the disease has been through identification and a course of antibiotics. The sooner this occurs the fewer and less severe the symptoms, but permanent immunity may not develop and reinfection is possible.

Of the many problems in identifying the disease are: 1) the size of the ticks (smaller than wood ticks) and nymphs (the size of a period on

this page) made them easy to miss; 2) the characteristic "bull's-eye" rash did not always develop in the first three days to weeks after the bite or could easily be overlooked; and 3) flu-like symptoms were either vague or nonexistent (headache, fever, fatigue, joint aches, muscle aches and stiff neck).

While any early symptoms would disappear, the disease could eventually reveal itself in a variety of problems affecting the joints, tendons, heart or nervous system, resulting in arthritis, heart abnormalities such as heart block and myocarditis (inflammation of the muscular walls of the heart), as well as:

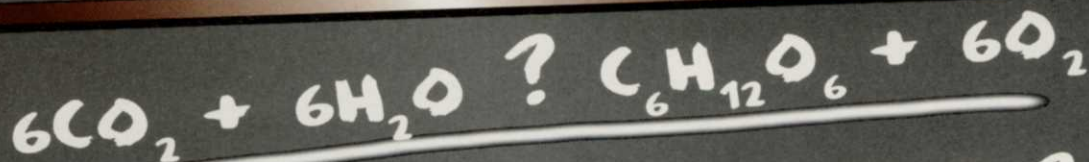
- ▶ skin lesions at multiple sites, not just the site of the tick bite;
- ▶ irregular heart beat, palpitations and fainting;
- ▶ intermittent joint swelling associated with inflammation (pain, heat and redness); and
- ▶ paralysis of the muscles on one or both side of the face, known as Bell's palsy.

SmithKline Beecham Biologicals has developed a vaccine for Lyme disease, LYMERix™ [Lyme Disease Vaccine (Recombinant OspA)]. It's been approved by the FDA and is expected to be available soon. The vaccine reportedly prevents the development of the disease in many cases. Questions remain and it's not clear yet whether booster shots will be necessary over time, based on the levels of antibodies required for prevention, and the long-term effects.

The vaccine is administered in a three-injection series with some side effects (injection-site reactions, flu-like symptoms and rash). LYMERix apparently works by inducing antibodies which enter the body of an infected tick when it feeds, entering the gut of the tick and killing it before it can transmit the bacterium to the would-be victim (www.lymerix.com).

Call the Lyme Disease Foundation at 800/886-LYME or their website at www.lyme.org for more information. **LM**

Agree/Disagree? Comments/Questions? Column Suggestions? Let Nancy Stairs know at 440/891-2623. Fax: 440/891-2675. E-Mail: nstairs@advanstar.com



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Scotts makes biotech alliances; cuts division

MARYSVILLE, OHIO—The Scotts Company reorganized its North American Professional Business Group in December and released 60 of the 100 employees in the ProTurf division.

Eco Soil Systems, Inc. also announced that its Turf Partners Division, which will exclusively distribute The Scotts Company's profession turf care products in the Midwest and Northeast, would hire a number of the former Scotts sales people.

Scotts said it reorganized its Professional Business Group to reduce annual operating expenses by \$2.1 million. "While this is a tough time to be implementing organizational changes, we felt that the

sales, service and cost savings benefits were substantial enough that we wanted to capture them in time for the 1999 season," said James Hagedorn who, on December 18, was named to the newly created position, president, Scotts North America.

Scotts said it will retain a consultative field sales force and field-based technical group to work with four independent distributors: Turf Partners in the Midwest and Northeast; BWI Companies, Inc. in the Southeast and Southwest; Wilbur Ellis Company in the Pacific Northwest; and Western Farm Services, Inc. in California. Scotts' Professional Business Group has already been

distributing its nursery and greenhouse products through most of these distributors.

"Based on our successful experience in distributing our horticultural products through these well-known distributors, we feel confident that this broadened relationship will bring better service and delivery to our professional turf and landscaping customers as well," said Hagedorn.

Scott C. Todd was recently named to lead the new Turf and Ornamental organization. In other news, Scotts:

► **announced a biotech alliance with Rutgers** to develop improved grasses for golf courses through genetic engineering. Scotts will receive exclusive worldwide rights to Rutgers' patented transgenic varieties of creeping and colonial bentgrasses.

► **announced a biotech collaboration with Monsanto.** Scotts and Monsanto are to share technologies including Monsanto's extensive genetic library of plant traits and Scotts' proprietary gene gun technology to produce improved transgenic turfgrasses and ornamental plants. The alliance will focus on providing professional and consumer benefits such as turfgrass that requires less mowing and water, and ornamental plants with larger and more plentiful blooms.

Methyl bromide phaseout pushed back

WASHINGTON, DC—The phaseout of methyl bromide was pushed back to the year 2005. The phaseout was supposed to occur on Jan. 1, 2001, but agricultural and green industry have been vigorously defending use of the fumigant which is widely used to prepare fields for planting, food crops and turf.

The American Nursery & Landscape Association (ANLA) reports that methyl bromide production and importation will now be reduced from 1991 levels as follows:

- 25% reduction in 1999,
- 50% in 2001,
- 70% in 2003,
- 100% in 2005.

The use of methyl bromide has been linked to the destruction of the ozone layer. The new U.S. deadline matches the phase-out date for other developed nations.

A recent GCSAA newsletter reports that the Environmental Working Group, an antipesticide organization, has resigned from the FQPA Tolerance Reassessment Advisory Committee over the delay in the phaseout of methyl bromide.

Arboriculture loses a friend

DENVER, CO—F. David Dickson, 58, battled cancer for six months before he died at his home on Nov. 5, 1998. Dickson was chairman of Swingle Tree Company of Denver, CO, and a former president of the National Arborist Association (NAA).



Dickson started his career in 1965 with the F.A. Bartlett Tree Expert Company in Connecticut. In 1967 he moved to Denver to become a tree pruner with Swingle, subsequently working his way up the ranks. After becoming president of the company in 1989, Dickson guided the firm's expansion and became chairman of Swingle in 1998.

Dickson made a point of donating the firm's services for civic good.



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AgrEvo and Rhone Poulenc-Agro create Aventis CropScience

FRANKFURT, GERMANY — Hoechst and Rhone Poulenc will join forces in life sciences, forming a new global company under the name Aventis.

Under the terms of the agreement both companies —Hoechst AG and Rhone Poulenc S.A. — will contribute all of the assets of their respective agribusinesses, namely AgrEvo and Rhone Poulenc-Agro in a new entity, which will operate under the new name Aventis CropScience.

This merger will create one of the top global agricultural companies with a strong crop protection and environmental health portfolio, a leading position in biotech-

nology and a growing involvement in the seed industry.

With the financial funding of more than \$ 400 million per year for research and development, the new company will sustain growth in the traditional crop protection market through new environmental friendly chemical entities as well as in the crop production market through innovative crop productivity enhancing solutions based on chemicals, new traits and superior varieties.

The new company, together with its affiliates, is expected to come into effect mid-1999. Before closing of the merger, both partners' businesses will be run separately.

ISS honored for work at Busch Gardens parks

TAMPA, FL — The August/September issue of *Amusement Today* magazine listed the "Best of the Best" in the amusement and theme park industries, as voted by park patrons. The landscaping at Busch Gardens, Tampa tied for second place in the Best Theme Park landscaping category,



with Walt Disney World and Disneyland. The number one winner was Busch Gardens, Williamsburg, VA.

ISS Landscape Management Services, Inc. has been making the landscapes at Busch Gardens, Tampa, FL, beautiful for the past 24 years. ISS also maintains the landscapes at Busch Gardens, Williamsburg, Adventure Island and Water Country, USA.

with Walt Disney World and Disneyland. The number one winner was Busch Gardens, Williamsburg, VA.

ISS Landscape Management Services, Inc. has been

[CLIPPINGS]

John Deere makes Scotts' tractors for sale through The Home Depot

RALEIGH, NC— This past fall John Deere teamed up with The Scotts Company to manufacture lawn tractors under the Scotts® brand name for sale exclusively through The Home Depot. There will be three models of lawn tractors, one yard tractor and one garden tractor as well as attachments.

"Scotts will have a quality, mid-priced lawn tractor that will uphold its reputation in the lawn care products business," said Mark Rostvold, senior vice president for John Deere's Worldwide Commercial and Consumer Equipment Division. "Home Depot will have as its store brand a name that's well accepted in the mass merchant marketplace and the level of quality that maintains its image in exceeding customer expectations. And John Deere will maintain a presence in the mass channel while continuing to support its valued servicing dealer network."

OPEL, CARB compromise on small engine emissions

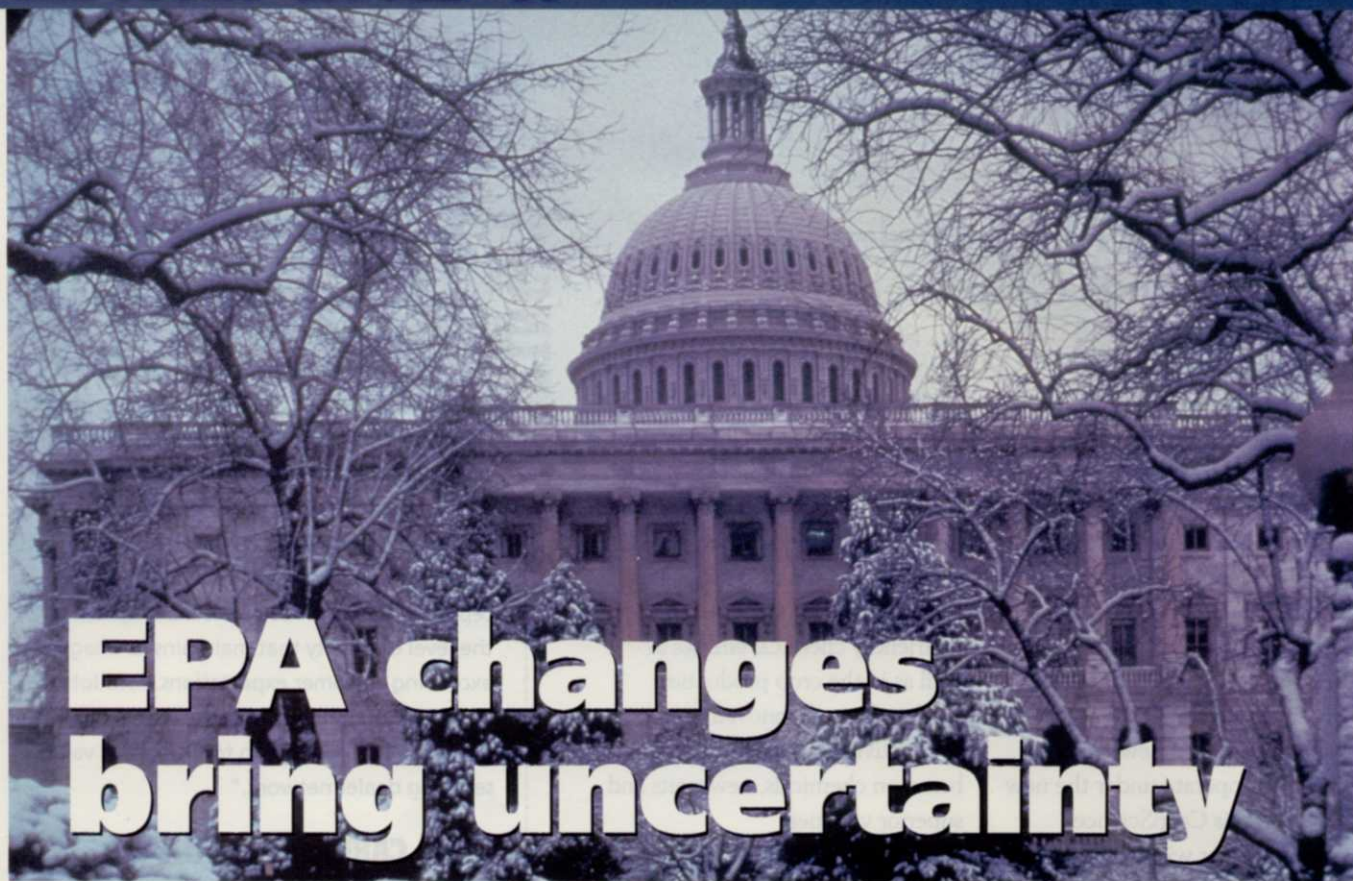
ALEXANDRIA, VA — An industry-negotiated agreement between OPEI and the California Air Resources Board (CARB) means that engines in the 25-hp to 35-hp range will not be subject to CARB's standards requiring catalysts and electronic fuel controls.

This will save money for companies which manufacture both consumer and commercial lawn and garden equipment. All engines below 35-hp will be subject to the same emissions standards for "below 25-hp" regulations.

The Andersons selects Michael Anderson president on Jan. 1

MAUMEE, OHIO— Michael J. Anderson, 47, became president and CEO of The Andersons, Inc., on Jan. 1, 1999. He had been president and COO of the company since Sept. 1996. He started with The Andersons in 1978. There are no plans to name a COO to succeed him, the company said. Richard P. Anderson, 69, former CEO continues as chairman of the business which was founded by his father Harold, in 1947.

The company is a full-line supplier of nitrogen, phosphate, potassium and compounded fertilizer products, in addition to operating six retail stores in Ohio.



EPA changes bring uncertainty

As if the FQPA isn't complex enough, EPA's high-level management changes will bring new faces and unknown agendas.

By SUSAN GIBSON/
Executive Editor

Although a new Congress will take its place this month, some of the more important issues in pesticide regulation will take place in the halls of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and local governments, according to David Crow, legislative contact for Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE), Washington.

On the local front, attempts to ban pesticide use on public lands continue to spread, with wide-ranging effects, reports Fred Langley, RISE manager of state government relations.

Both developments have the potential to change the ways lawn care and landscape managers go about their work.

FQPA tug of war

The best intentions of legislators may be tested as the EPA plans how it will implement the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA), Crow notes. Although the agency is charged with fair implementation of the act, many in our industry feel EPA isn't handling it correctly.

For instance, the EPA has an August, 1999 deadline to develop the first third of allowable FQPA tolerances for non-agricultural exposures to pesticides. To set the exposure levels, EPA must rely on either existing exposure data generated from tests (many of which have been conducted in the industry for pesticide certification purposes) or its own worst-case scenarios (an option EPA appears to favor). RISE and other industry groups fear the worst-case scenarios will generate unrealistic numbers for pesticide exposure and unfairly disqualify a number of materials.

"(The EPA) is thinking up worst-possible-case scenarios, which is a terrible way to regulate, especially with all the good usage data that is available," Crow says. "We (the industry) know a lot about exposure, how our products work, our market and the users. We know how people are thoughtful in the use of these products in and around their homes."

EPA's strategy to rely on its own scenarios ignores extensive evidence generated in years of testing by the industry, he adds.

"When the data is available, exposure is a tiny fraction of the model.

"EPA is acting as if we don't have this data and they can't get it readily," Crow points out. "Our exposures are reasonable, quantifiable and within the range of safety for the average family."

As the deadline approaches, RISE and other industry groups are talking with members of Congress, encouraging them to monitor EPA's process for implementing FQPA. The pressure is on to get EPA to determine tolerances for two to three years (based on current information), which would allow additional study, rather than set exaggerated, inflexible exposures in order to meet the August deadline.

Industry lobbying efforts cover two fronts, Crow explains — Congress and EPA. "We'll talk to anyone in Congress who will listen," he notes, to explain that several models are available to determine exposure, that deadlines can be extended to allow reasonable exposure levels to be set and that Congress should ask EPA to be accountable in developing its implementation programs.

When talking with EPA, industry lobbyists explain the development and use of their products, their knowledge of the market and consumer behavior and the their collective, extensive experience with those materials.

"Congress wanted to update the De-laney clause, but they didn't intend EPA to make drastic assumptions within a three-year period," Crow says. "Some members of Congress are confounded by this (EPA strategy). When people understand this is a smart industry and we have done really good work testing the molecules, they'll understand this is not an unknown thing."

He adds, "We have to make the case that no other industry (except pharmaceuticals) is tested and scrutinized as rigorously as ours."

"We'd like Congress to call the top brass

at EPA and tell them, 'We're watching you thoughtfully and if you're not even-handed, we can make changes in the law.'"

EPA's revolving door

Another area of concern is the new management of EPA. Resignations of key managers such as EPA Administrator Carol Browner and Lyn Goldman, EPA Assistant Administrator for Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances, leave huge gaps in the current leadership.

Yet to be named administrators will eventually fill those positions, overseeing EPA's direction and strategies on pesticide use and exposures. For the pesticide industry, the process gets tricky.

"We don't know who we will be dealing with," Crow points out. "We worked with Lynn Goldman for six years and we understood her viewpoint and negotiating style. The replacements could be someone we already know or someone new."

He notes that the critical element will be how much the replacements understand about the pesticide industry and its issues. "These are big jobs and the administration will have to fill them soon. It will be a crucial period with a lot of questions, and the uncertainty is troubling."

Public protests

When local ordinances eliminate certain pesticide uses or limit use in even minor ways, those are attempts by pesticide activists to get around the concept of pre-emption, warns Fred Langley. "Most (lawn or landscape contractors) would say, 'That's county business and I don't do business with the county,' but they present barriers to pesticide use."

The phenomenon is spreading, he notes, explaining that ordinances limiting pesticide use on public lands eventually set precedents for land use, which can carry over into land development projects. As an

example, Langley cites permitting processes that ask land developers to consider building pesticide-free housing developments. In Gaithersburg, MD, for instance, developers would have to install all-natural landscapes with no use of pesticides in landscape maintenance. This ordinance and similar strategies are appearing in isolated areas of New York, North Carolina, and Texas, he says.

"The difficult part for us is that while we can track state legislatures and help impact how it comes out, there is no tracking system for local initiatives. By the time we hear about some of these initiatives, the act has already happened," Langley explains.

He notes that there are two different understandings of IPM. "Activists define it as no pesticides, pesticides as a last resort or

"Pesticides have been villainized but pests are the problem. We've lost sight of what the problem is ..."

using only the least toxic pesticide." The industry may define it as "using the right product at the right time, choosing from all the tools available based on monitoring and doing what's appropriate."

Look for more local initiatives limiting pesticide use, Langley predicts. "Activists have targeted local issues as the weak underbelly of the industry. Even if you're nonparticipatory, they are busy at the local or county level. Keep an ear to the ground and report any initiatives."

He says that local issues are best handled at the local level. "Pesticides have been villainized but pests are the problem. We've lost sight of what the problem is and we need to hear the other side of the story beyond rhetoric and inflammatory language." □

The author is Executive Editor of Landscape Management magazine.

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Congress makes getting labor tough

The climate in Washington D.C. is anti-immigrant with government agencies focusing on solving the problem of illegal alien workers.

By RON HALL/ Managing Editor

Many landscape contractors rely upon Hispanic labor to install and maintain clients' landscapes. Most of these workers come from Mexico. It's getting tougher every day to find these workers. Here's why.

While Congress hasn't passed any new laws concerning immigration since 1996, it's told governmental agencies that it's time to start enforcing the laws that are on already the books. These laws are designed to stem the flow of illegal immigrants. To this — and to the hiring of more border patrol and Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) enforcement officers — some landscape contractors, particularly those that compete against firms with large numbers of seasonal migrants, say "hooray!"

They're everywhere?

Undocumented workers in the U.S. workforce is a big problem. The INS believes there are about 5 million undocumented aliens in the United States.

James S. Holt, Ph.D., senior economist with law firm of McGuiness & Williams, LLP, Washington, D.C., says that a U.S. Department of Labor survey in 1996 found



that 40% of seasonal agricultural workers admitted to poll takers that they were illegal workers. INS audits of businesses employing foreign-born laborers often discover that 60% to 70% of the laborers are working with fake papers, says Holt.

New programs and increased cooperation between governmental agencies are making it increasingly easy to identify them. The Social Security Administration, the Internal Revenue Service and the federal and state departments of labor are starting to share data. This data, including the growing pool of tax revenues collected from laborers with phony social security numbers, leads many people in government to believe that most newly arrived immigrants are not legally entitled to work here.

Avoiding a hassle

Many landscapers have already put systems in place to deal with this problem. They realize they can't afford to have their

Landscape business owner Joe Loyet, St. Louis, MO, right, has used Mexican-born crews for years. He says they are good workers.

workers, even a percentage of them, taken away in midseason by an INS audit.

Angie Lubenow with Munie Outdoor Services, Inc., Belleville, IL, says that one way that her firm checks out workers with suspicious work documents is to call Social Security (800/772-1213) and see if

that worker's social security number matches his name.



Angie Lubenow, Munie Outdoor Services, Belleville, IL, says it helps to build a strong relationship with local INS office.

Because of discrimination laws, an employer can only do this after that person has been hired or after he leaves the job.

"We took a real proactive approach," said Lubenow of her company's efforts to hire only properly documented workers. This included building a relationship with the local INS office.

But even the most conscientious landscape firm that employs foreign-born Hispanic workers can unwittingly hire illegal ones. False documents are easy to come by.

Slim pickins'

Labor contractor Robert Wingfield says the available supply of legally documented Hispanic laborers in the United States is drying up. Most were made "legal" in 1986 under a one-time amnesty provision in the Immigration Reform Act of that year.

Owners of small landscape businesses can still apparently find small numbers of these "legal" workers if they're persistent enough. Ken Heltemes, owner of A Growing Concern, Raleigh, NC, says that every fall he needs a little extra help with seeding and aerating. About a decade ago, he found some workers, again Hispanic, by walking up to them and asking them if they knew of anybody who wanted to work from August through October. Surprisingly, one said that he did and, over the course of several years, he returned each fall with friends or relatives.

"It was important that we got off on the right foot with them," says Heltemes, who got some language help from a local high school Spanish teacher. He says he was strict with safety training and work rules, but

"It was important that we got off on the right foot with them," says Heltemes, who got some language help from a local high school Spanish teacher. He says he was strict with safety training and work rules, but



Ken Heltemes, A Growing Concern, Raleigh, NC, used a local high school Spanish teacher to help him bridge the communication gap.

fair with pay and hours, the two things that the Hispanic workers are most concerned about.

Heading south

If you need more than a few laborers, you'll probably have to bring them in from Mexico or a Central American country. And, it's getting tougher every day to bring new seasonal workers into the United States, says Wingfield. For all practical purposes, this can only be accomplished through a program known as H-2B. Meeting the requirements of H-2B is time-consuming, and it can be costly.

Even so, Wingfield says that if a landscape business owner needs labor badly enough, he can, with some exceptions, still

get laborers south of the border. Wingfield is president of Amigos, Dallas, a firm that helps U.S. companies through the process of obtaining foreign-born Hispanic labor.

While the new Congress isn't expected to legislate away the flow of "legal" foreign-born workers this term, the mood in Washington is definitely anti-immigrant.

That's why Congress is stepping up enforcement of im-

migration law through a larger INS. Also, within several years, employers nationwide should be able to check to see job applicants' documents are in order by contacting government agencies over the telephone. There are several regional pilot projects in place now. Participation in this program, to date, has been voluntary.

Employers with illegal laborers stand

the possibility of losing these workers at a moment's notice should their operations be audited by the INS. This could become increasingly likely given the anti-immigrant mood in Washington D.C. □

Guestworker amendment sacrificed

Congress sacrificed the Agricultural Job Opportunity Benefits and Security Act of 1998 (AgJOBS) in October. But agribusiness interests, including groups like the American Nursery and Landscape Association, are likely to continue to seek a law allowing U.S. agriculture to use more labor from Mexico. It could also mean more available labor for landscape nursery owners, although landscape contractors would not qualify.

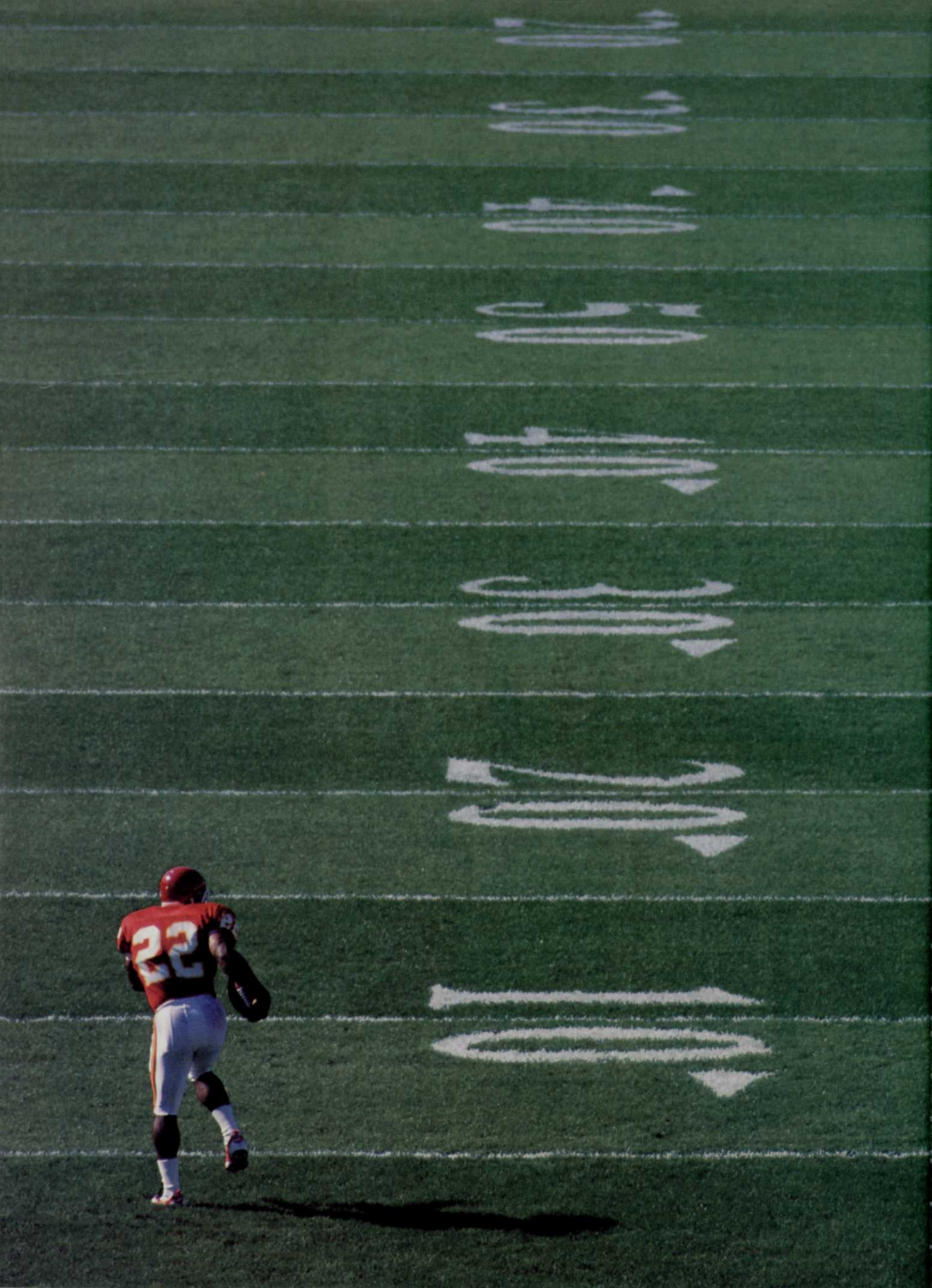
AgJOBS, if approved, would have reformed the H-2A agricultural guest worker program and allowed the importation of "an unlimited number of foreign laborers," said Mario Obledo, president of the National Coalition of Hispanic Organizations, which opposed the measure. Organized labor also opposed the measure, claiming that the farm labor supply is adequate and that U.S. residents, as well as other guest workers, would suffer if more workers were allowed to enter the country.

It looked like the amendment stood a good chance of becoming law. It passed the U.S. Senate in July, but in October, congressional leaders and White House staff compromised on an appropriations bill that excluded AgJOBS.

Expect more discussion in the new Congress about farm labor and the need for a revised agricultural work visa program. □



Robert Wingfield, president of Amigos, Dallas, TX, advises landscapers hoping to get laborers through the H-2B program to give themselves 90-120 days.



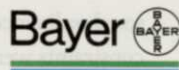
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Circle No. 107 on Reader Inquiry Card

Noise won't blow away

Landscape contractors should keep their ears open to the sound of controversy concerning the use of gas-powered leaf blowers.

By ROBIN PENDERGRAST

While the earliest attempt to control and influence leaf blower/power blower use was in Beverly Hills, CA, in the summer of 1976,

the recent controversy covers many states and has many asking "where will it all end?"

The evolution of the sound issue, in concert with emissions issues and local, county and federal legislation, has become a nightmare for commercial landscape contractors and grounds managers.

Since the Beverly Hills event, including the initial legislation that was introduced in Los Angeles in 1986, more than 400 municipalities have discussed controlling lawn and garden equipment and specifically, the noise associated with leaf blowers. In most cases, they have opted for common sense and practical approaches to these issues.

Finding resolution

Two recent cases outline the methods by landscape contractors to resolve this issue.

In Abington, PA, for example, someone read or heard that the way to control leaf blowers or lawn and garden equipment was to get rid of them. This concept became the opposition's answer to the problem.

Calmer and more responsible thoughts prevailed with landscapers and leaf blower activists attempting to create a workable and long-term solution. Collectively, they worked out a compromise.

Some communities impose short-term restrictions (seasonal, time-usage or decibel level), but do so without receiving any outside input. In Abington, the combined efforts of local landscapers, along with the leaf blower activists resulted in a "buffer zone" in and around residential areas. Here, landscape crews were restricted to half-throttle on leaf blowers and other select pieces of lawn and garden equipment.

The response revealed that activists can approach this issue calmly, and that landscape contractors were more than willing to reach a practical solution. Several local and national associations also offer practical information on working safely and quietly within a buffer zone. Using equipment designed specifically for quieter operation also helps.

Concerted efforts

In suburban Highland Park, IL, the program isn't so simple. Four years ago, various antiblower activists and the Environmental Commission, decided that blowers in any format were not needed between May 1st and October 1st. When the ordinance was put in place, challenges began immediately by landscapers.

The antiblower lobby informed the Environmental Commission that the ordinance was not being enforced and that seasonal ordinances and selected time constraints were not easily enforceable. They've been lobbying to ban all products that move debris, including electric, gas-powered, hand-held, backpack, two-wheel and three-wheel walk-behind leaf blowers.

Local organizations, including the Illinois Landscape Contractors Association,

and 11 companies that service most of the upscale homes in Highland Park, consolidated to monitor the situation and voice their opposition to the ordinances. Echo Inc. was also asked to provide support, and joined an ad hoc organization of landscapers working to create a workable solution.

As *Landscape Management* went to press, local landscape companies like Mariani Landscape, Scott Byron & Co. and Fiore & Sons are monitoring the situation and providing the facts to make sure that the potential reality of the "ordinance adjustment" doesn't evolve into a controversial and combative ban on leaf blowers.

Just another chapter? Probably not.

Other communities around the country have attempted to take up the charge, including an activist group in Texas. The goal is often to ban leaf blowers entirely.

Professional and commercial landscape operations must monitor the communities

...more than 400 municipalities have opened up their legislative doors to discussion on controlling lawn and garden equipment and specifically, the noise associated with leaf blowers.

in which they work and the technique and temperament of how their equipment is used, particularly leaf blowers.

Often, the statements made and the positions taken are not based on factual information and can have a negative, if not devastating, influence on the day-to-day activities of today's landscape industry. □

The author is a partner at International Marketing Exchange Inc., McHenry, IL, and has represented the industry on noise issues for more than 12 years.

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Circle No. 109 on Reader Inquiry Card

Irrigation faces move to conservation

New standards for design and installation, water audits, even certification in some locations will challenge those who provide irrigation products and services.

By BRUCE SHANK

Landscapes are a vital part of everyday community life and, as such, depend more on irrigation for proper care. The more governmental agencies get involved in public landscapes, the more other agencies, such as water districts, become involved. As standards improve, the need for irrigation grows.

While many of the issues involved with irrigation are not regulatory, they will have impact on the future of landscape management, especially in high-end projects located in both the North and the South.

Design weaknesses

The primary weakness of irrigation systems is their design, not the performance of individual irrigation components. A recent study in San Antonio, TX, revealed that water conservation efforts were hampered most by poor irrigation system design. Current technology to maximize irrigation distribution uniformity and to cut waste is not being used properly. The problem centers around older systems and those installed by do-it-yourselfers.

Conservation inconsistencies

States and counties vary in their approach to conservation. The Irvine approach is to use a tiered water rate structure based on metering and determining baseline water needs for landscapes. Once water use exceeds the baseline, prices skyrocket. The Las Vegas approach is to restrict the percentage of turfgrass used in landscapes. The Albuquerque approach is to assign trained water specialists with enforcement powers; so called "water police." It is a tougher version of the Palm Springs

approach, where agency personnel perform audits of large irrigation systems to gauge performance.

More states are implementing irrigation contractor certification programs that require training and testing. Government is getting involved in irrigation at a rapid pace across the country as growth, water infrastructure and water supply for the next century become serious issues.

Every year, irrigation becomes harder for landscape contractors to ignore. When you consider that the cost of an irrigation system averages 23% of the cost of a landscape installation, irrigation deserves the attention of contractors from coast to coast.

The only way a landscape contractor can be certain that his or her installation survives for one year or 50 years is with irrigation. High temperature records were set every month of 1998, while droughts tested water supplies in the Carolinas, Texas, Nevada and Massachusetts. Betting on weather over irrigation is no longer wise, when you consider the average customer's investment in real estate and landscaping.

Weather and pests are the two most serious threats to landscape plants. The pest control industry offers a significant arsenal to provide both preventative and curative management of diseases and pests. Irrigation, on the other hand, requires an infrastructure to supply needed moisture when droughts hit. Both quality and productivity of plants are significantly improved when periods of insufficient soil moisture are eliminated. **LM**

Bruce Shank is owner of Irricom, a publication consulting firm with offices in Palmdale, CA and Austin, TX. He can be reached at 800/455-4320.





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Engine side panels remove easily on Massey Ferguson tractors.



Deere tractors have 2-range transaxles for high and low operating speeds.



Model 1925 Boomer tractor powered by 34-hp diesel from New Holland. "Boomers" also available in 25, 27 and 29 engine hp.

TRACTORS

By CURT HARLER, Contributing Editor

There are a lot of factors to be considered when buying a tractor. Trash can be one of them, says J.L. Davis of Waco, TX. Davis, who owns a contract mowing and landscaping business, maintains a fleet of 18 tractors — all Massey Fergusons.

"People will trash about anything along the road," he says. Hitting old tires and other large items is, unfortunately, a commonplace test of the tractor's engine, body, driver's platform and PTO unit. That's why reliability and economy of operation are the top factors on Davis's checklist when shopping for tractors.

While most of the tractors Davis uses are equipped with mowers, landscape operators purchase tractors to do a variety of jobs and handle a variety of attachments. When buying a compact tractor, keep in mind that power can be delivered from the engine at three separate locations: the drawbar, the PTO (power take-off) shaft or through the hydraulic system. The drawbar is the simplest and usually works with pull-type equipment like a rake. The PTO delivers rotary motion at a constant speed, generally 540 rpm. The advantage of hydraulics is that they provide total control over output speed and easy reversal of motion without clutches or other overload devices.

Hydraulic systems generally are found on only the larger tractors in this size range. While they are wonderful for operating a range of equipment, they do present a whole new series of maintenance challenges, including pumps, fluid and hoses.

Davis has a final tip for any operation: maintain a good preventive maintenance program. "We change the oil and filter every 200 to 250 hours, regardless of how busy we are," he says. "And we're careful to keep the radiator airway clean."

If it's time to trade your old tractor in, here are several compact tractor models, designed with landscape operations in mind. Larger than riding mowers but smaller than farm equipment, these machines generally have an output in the 15-35 hp range.

AGCO CORP.
770-813-6000
www.allislawn.com

Agco Corp., Duluth, GA, produces the Massey Ferguson 1200 series of turf tractors. All feature quiet-running 3-cylinder diesel engines for power

and efficiency, with engine hp ranging from 15-38. Engine side panels remove easily, providing access for routine maintenance. All service points are conveniently located. The 1200 series comes with a variety of transmissions including 6 forward/2 reverse, 9 forward/3 reverse and 8 forward/2 reverse mechanical, plus a 16 forward/16 reverse synchro shuttle transmission.

Circle No. 250

JOHN DEERE
800-357-8233

www.deere.com

Three diesel models — the 755 with 20 engine, 15 pto hp; the 855 with 24 engine, 19 pto hp; and the 955 with 33 engine, 27 pto hp — all offer hydrostatic transmission with infinite speed selection. These compact utility tractors from John Deere are assembled in Augusta, GA. They have 2-range transaxles allowing high and low operating speeds, and offer dual-pedal, speed-and-direction control which leaves hands free for steering or operating other controls. Steering-assisted brakes are located on the left to allow independent wheel braking while right foot operates hydrostatic control.

Circle No. 251

INGERSOLL EQUIPMENT
920-582-5000

www.ingersoll-inc.com

The 3000 and 4000 series tractors from Ingersoll Equipment Co., Inc., Winneconne, WI, come with 14-20 hp engine options. Two of the models are offered with power steering. All come standard with hydraulic lift, and have a full line of hy-



Ingersoll tractors come standard with hydraulic lift.

draulically driven attachments available. Tillers, chipper/shredders, snow blowers, brush cutters, vacuums, log splitter, rear PTO's and mowers with mulching kits are available for all models.

Circle No. 252

KIOTI TRACTOR
919-291-7050
www.kioti.com

The Kioti LK2554 is a 4WD compact tractor from Daedong-USA, Wilson, NC. It comes with a 3-cylinder, water-cooled, 4-cycle diesel that delivers 26 hp. Unit has eight forward speeds and two reverse, a 2100-pound 3-point hitch and 7.34 gpm hydraulics. ROPS, power steering, differential lock, front and rear pto, hand and foot throttles and adjustable drawbar are standard. Options available include front end loaders, backhoes, mowers and snowblowers.

Circle No. 253

KUBOTA
888-4-KUBOTA



Kubota's 20-hp (at the PTO), 4WD tractor features single-pedal control

New for 1999, with 20-hp at the PTO is the 4-wheel drive B2710HSD from Kubota, Torrance, CA. It is powered by a 4-cylinder E-TVCS diesel engine. Innovative combustion chamber design delivers maximum power with minimum noise and low emissions. This unit allows single-pedal control of tractor speed and direction change between forward and reverse without clutching. Its hydrostatic transmission, color-coded controls and backlit instrument panel and ISO-mounted full floating deck add to operator comfort. Both rear-

and mid-live PTOs are standard. Tandem hydraulic pump boosts power levels to that of larger tractors.

Circle No. 254

NEW HOLLAND
717-355-1371
www.newholland.com

The new 25- and 30-series Boomer compact tractors from New Holland, PA, are powered by 3-cylinder diesels and offer fingertip controls. Made at a new factory in Dublin, GA, they come in 25, 27.3, 29 and 34 engine hp.

Pictured on page 32 is the top-of-line Model 1925, powered by a 34-hp diesel and available with hydrostatic live PTO or 9x3 gear-drive transmission, 540-rpm PTO, and 4-WD. All units are available with fixed or folding ROPS.

Circle No. 255

POWER KING
800-262-1191

The 1600 series tractors from Power King, Mendota, IL, are all shaft-driven, so there is no belt slipage. The 1620GV is a 20-hp, 4-



Power King tractors are shaft driven. The UT 622HV is powered by a 22-hp Kohler engine.

speed model; the 1622HV is powered by a 22-hp Kohler Command V-Twin engine and has a hydrostatic transmission; the UT 622HV is a feature-rich 22-hp unit with foot-control hydrostatic transmission, front hydraulic ports and a front PTO to drive a broom, blower or shaft-driven mower deck. Frame is made

of 2x3x1/4-inch channel steel and the unit has 15.75-inch clearance for the roughest terrain.

Circle No. 256

STEINER
330-828-0200
www.steinerturf.com

From Dalton, OH, comes the Steiner 525. Powered by a 23.5-hp Kubota water-cooled engine, and



Steiner's Quick-Hitch system allows easy attachment of equipment like mowers.

equipped with four-wheel drive, it is operated by foot pedals to keep the hands free to do other tasks. Unit

weighs 1,520 pounds and has a turn radius of just 63 inches. Works with Steiner's Quick-Hitch system which allows easy attachment of a range of equipment from mowers to bucket scoops to snow blowers. Also available are a series of 16- and 20-hp models designed for the turf market. **LM**

Circle No. 257

Landscape Management's

MOWING

Negotiate to save big

Before buying your next commercial mower, read this. It could save you thousands of dollars.

By ROBERT E. REAVES

Mowers are essential for landscape management. With the trend toward the use of larger mowers, astute negotiation between contractors and dealers is more important than ever. When it comes to buying mowers, what is negotiable? Does the size of your business give you leverage? How can you prepare for the final negotiation?

"Virtually everything is negotiable," says George Koratko, manager of Ramsey Waite Company in Eugene, OR. "A deal breaker is at about 10%, but it also depends on the size of the item. If we are looking at a \$600 to \$700 walk-behind mower, I am going to walk away at 15 to 16%. On the larger items it is going to be 10%."

"I would say there is nothing that is not negotiable," adds Bill Jordan, general manager of Industrial Vehicle and Turf Sales in Pontiac, MI. Jordan says there are many ways to be creative during your negotiation. "Dealers can offer a financing program that does not kick in for seven months. This would be attractive to a contractor who purchases a mower in winter."

Jim Sherman, manager of Turf and In-

dustrial Equipment in Santa Clara, CA, says price is always negotiable. "Contractors are going to compare and shop around, especially with larger mowers."

Tom Glikes, manager of Garden Rental and Sales, Inc. in Gainesville, FL, believes price is the number-one concern of landscapers. But they're also interested in financing deals. "In the past, there was not a finance option, but now it's of major importance," he says.

Ron Weingartz believes a fair price is more important to contractors than the lowest price. Weingartz is general manager of the Farmington Hills, MI branch of Weingartz Supply Company. "We try to sell the whole package, which means a fair price backed up by parts and service," he says. "We explain to contractors that a fair price is important, but it's only a small part of doing business."

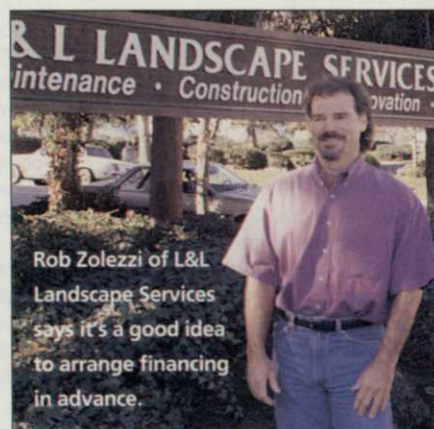
What's the best way to negotiate a mower purchase? Follow these steps the experts use:

Step one: do your homework

Before you set foot in a dealer's showroom, take an inventory of your mowing equipment. Make projections for the next two to three years.

A complete mower inventory does three things. It allows the contractor to get an accurate picture of equipment needs and set realistic goals for the future. It gives you negotiation leverage with dealers and lending institutions. And it sends a message that you will be coming back for additional purchases, services and loans in the future.

"About 10 years ago, I figured out how



Rob Zolezzi of L&L Landscape Services says it's a good idea to arrange financing in advance.

much equipment we bought during the year from each vendor," recalls Rob Zolezzi, co-owner of L & L Landscape Services Inc. in Campbell, CA. After he projected his mower purchases for the next two or three years, he met with several dealers. "I said, 'If I buy 100% of my mowers from you, what kind of deal will you offer me?'" He says once a contractor establishes this pattern, he's likely to stay with the same vendor over the long haul.

Good planning works well for R.B. Stout Inc., an Akron, OH-based landscape contractor with 21 maintenance crews. "Every year, we put together an equipment budget based on our projected growth," says

Mike Roberts of R.B. Stout Inc., Akron, Ohio, likes being able to give new mowers a trial run under real work conditions.



GUIDE

Mike Roberts, production supervisor. "Last year, we projected the addition of two maintenance crews, which required the purchase of additional equipment."

Step two: know the product

Product knowledge is essential. Contractors need to know the advantages between brands and types of mowers, says Dennis Williams, field manager for Park Landscape Maintenance Inc. in Las Vegas, NV. "Make some phone calls for recommendations from other contractors, read trade magazines, attend equipment shows and examine manufacturer Web sites."

Product knowledge is power when you are meeting with your dealer. It sends a message to the dealer that you know what you're talking about.

Probably the best way to learn about a mower is to use a demonstration model. "Today's landscape contractors are stepping up to larger pieces of equipment, and it's more expensive," says Kevin Haines, vice president of sales at California Turf Toro's Southern California distributor. "More dealers need to provide demos for their customers." Unfortunately, Haines says many dealers don't have trailers to move equipment around.

"It's always helpful for dealers to bring by new mowers for us to use, but they need to let us test them during May when the grass is growing," says Roberts. "A test drive on the driveway during January doesn't do much for a contractor in Ohio."

Roberts cautions against quick decisions. Generally, any new piece of equipment will work great for the first month, he says. It's after the first month of service that you can really tell.

Step three: learn negotiation skills

Strengthen your negotiation skills.

Books are an excellent tool prepare yourself for the process. *Give & Take: The Complete Guide to Negotiating Strategies and Tactics*, by Chester L. Karrass is a great book on negotiation. Thousands of dollars have been left on the table because buyers were not savvy enough in negotiation.

Remember, negotiation is not just a face-to-face matter. Special strategies for phone conversations and conflict resolution will help you.

Don't forget the most important negotiation skill of all — listening. We all like to talk (usually too much), but learn to listen. According to Chester Karrass, "Listening is the easiest way to recognize needs and discover facts. If you take the time to listen, you can't help learning. Listening is the one concession you can give that is guaranteed to get you more than you gave."

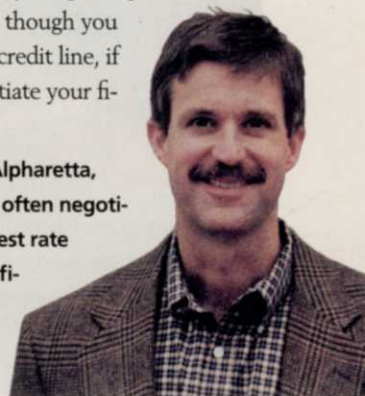
Step four: arrange financing

Establish credit *before* you buy or lease your mowing equipment. Contractors with less than perfect credit who wait until the last possible moment could be looking at a horrible 18% interest rate. "Rather than financing your equipment through various institutions, try lumping your financing through one institution," advises Ben Gandy, landscape management division manager with LTI, an Alpharetta, GA-based landscape management company. "You can often negotiate a better interest rate by consolidating purchases."

With a new business, start by establishing a relationship with your banker. Explain how your business operates, its growth rate and goals for the coming years. Provide your banker with recommendations from your customers and a list of your key accounts. Stress that you want a long-term relationship.

"Before you meet with your dealer, set up a line of credit with the bank exclusively for equipment purchases," says Zolezzi. "That way, if you want to go out and buy a \$10,000 mower, all you have to do is call your banker and let him know. The whole point is to get everything set up in advance. Even though you may not use the credit line, if you wait to negotiate your fi-

Ben Gandy, LTI, Alpharetta, GA, says you can often negotiate a better interest rate by lumping your financing through one institution.



nance rate the day you buy the equipment, count on a higher interest rate."

The same thing applies for equipment leasing he says. In this case, you may be dealing with companies like G.E. Capital or SAFECO. "Set up financing with them in advance. If more contractors negotiated credit lines and financing in advance, they would save a great deal of money."

Dealers agree. "Unfortunately, many contractors do not have a close relationship with their bank," says Weingartz. "A strong relationship is especially important for the small and medium-sized contractors."

Bill Jordan sees a great deal of variability in interest rates — another reason to work things out in advance. "We work with several leasing companies, as well as several financing companies. The financing companies range from a high of 18% to a low of 11% interest," he says. "We find that established contractors usually work out their financing beforehand."

Step five: lease or buy

Only you can make the right lease or buy decisions for your business. "Leasing may be the best option if a contractor puts a lot of hours on the equipment, while a conventional loan is usually a better choice for someone who really takes care of the equipment," says Weingartz. "A big plus for leasing is less capital is invested up

front; however, you are locked in with leasing and there are drawbacks for early pay out."

lease a lot because it means a lower monthly payment," says Zolezzi. "With leasing, you are paying 50% of the principal instead of the full principal in purchasing."

Step six: visit the dealer

The next step will be the dealer. "If this is your first trip, let the dealer know you are interested in a long-term relationship," says Williams. "You also need to bring up

options are essential to your decision.

Here are few value-added items to ask about: pre-season discounts on parts (filters, belts, blades, etc.); discounts for volume purchases; return policy on unused parts or special orders; dealer pickup and delivery for service of mowers under warranty.

Training programs for your crew (safety, mower repair); no-charge delivery service for parts; in-field repair service; purchase bonus (for example, a catcher with every mower purchase); free loaners during repairs; discount for drop shipment of unassembled mowers.

Finance incentives (no pay, no interest for 90 days); open charge accounts for parts and service; dealer advice on new products and technology; demo models from the dealer and discounts for on-time payments.

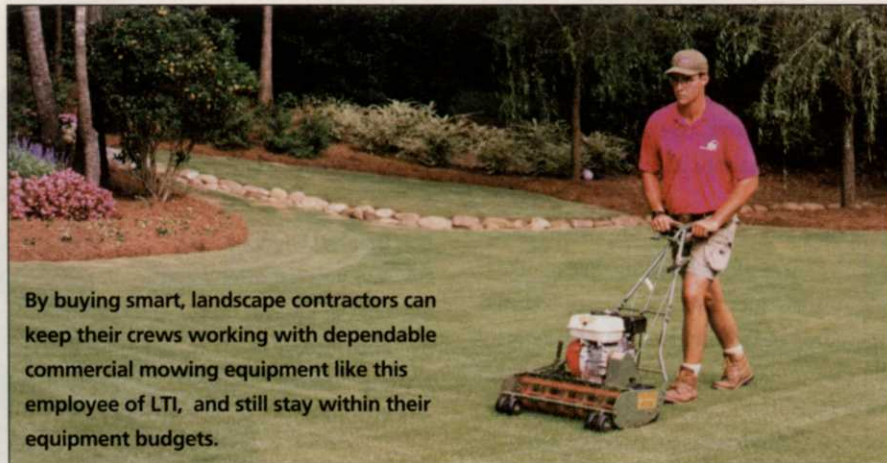
Step seven: choose the best bid

After you have received all your bids, examine each one. Make sure each dealer has provided you with a list of value-added options, along with his best price. If the dealer offered his financing program, compare interest rates and terms with your lending institution's finance arrangement. If the interest rate is lower than bank financing, ask your bank to meet it or offer you a lower rate.

This program has worked well for L & L Landscape. "After establishing this pattern, I've generally stayed with the same vendors year after year," says Zolezzi. "A lot of the large contractors are afraid to commit to one vendor, but I find if I commit all my mower business to one vendor, the result is better service."

The last phase of Step Seven is making the buy, possibly the easiest part of the whole process. By using a systematic approach to negotiation, you'll save money and keep your piece of mind. □

—Robert E. Reaves is with Irricom, a public relations and communications firm based in Austin, TX.



By buying smart, landscape contractors can keep their crews working with dependable commercial mowing equipment like this employee of LTI, and still stay within their equipment budgets.

front; however, you are locked in with leasing and there are drawbacks for early pay out."

"It seems like more people are leasing than purchasing for mowers in the \$15,000 plus range," notes Haines. "There are a number of lease packages out there, with interest rates from nine to 21%, depending on the state and the contractor's credit."

"The first thing you have to examine is how long you expect to have a piece of equipment," says Williams. "Based on the service life, ask yourself whether it is better fiscally to lease or buy." However, he urges contractors to be very careful about residuals in leases — things like damage, excess mileage and hours. "A lease makes sense when you are going to replace that mower within two to three years. Beyond that, purchasing is a better choice," advises Gandy.

Some contractors, like R.B. Stout, purchase all their mowers, while others like L&L Landscape Services prefer leasing. "I

some of the vendors you deal with and landscape projects you have worked on."

What if you need to purchase only one mower? "In this case, make sure you discuss your total purchasing plans for the year," notes Gandy. "This way, it gives the dealer an incentive to offer you a better deal to keep you coming back."

Here's a checklist for your meeting with the dealer:

- ▶ Discuss your current equipment status, along with your projections for the future.
- ▶ Tell the dealer you have arranged financing through your bank or leasing company.
- ▶ Ask about financing available through the dealer and compare with financing offered from the bank.
- ▶ Do not let low price be your single focus throughout the negotiation process.
- ▶ Ask the dealer to give you a bid.
- ▶ Assure the dealer that you are very interested in a fair price, but value-added



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Many Walker Mowers were used in our area but I felt we didn't have large enough accounts to justify the cost. As we grew, I realized how much time and energy a Walker could save us and increase our profits. We purchased a used Walker in '94 and I was very pleasantly surprised to see how well the Walker performed in small, confined areas. I soon realized the Walker can be used virtually anywhere it can turn around. The Walker has been the finest, most profitable investment we've made in our business. We can't imagine operating without it."—Arlan King

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Buy mowers with maintenance in mind

Don't wait until you buy equipment to decide how you'll maintain it. Whether you choose in-house or out-source, your strategy can pay off with longer life and higher efficiency.

By MARK H. NEIDICH

Buying a mower isn't a simple decision. You have to match the equipment to your needs, budget and type of work you perform. Look at the properties you service and determine these before you decide:

- ▶ Characteristics of the work to be performed (large or small, easy or hard to maintain, mostly mowing or additional services needed, etc.)
- ▶ The size of the properties
- ▶ The type of terrain
- ▶ How quickly you want the work completed on each property
- ▶ How much capital is available.

When you have determined the type of mower you need and how much you can afford, it's time to make the next critical decision — how you will maintain it. Depending on the size of your operation, the type of equipment you buy and the state of your business, this decision can have a huge effect on how profitable and efficient you are.



Buy for easy maintenance

Purchasing too large of a piece increases cost, while too small of a piece increases maintenance and reduces productivity. You'll get longer use and better return on investment by selecting the right piece of equipment for the job. This also will ensure a satisfactory maintenance history.

A good way to start is learn about your dealers and the type of equipment available to do the work. Take note that most manufacturers have distributors between them and the dealer, so look for dealers that have a strong relationship with their distributor, good parts people and a service department with qualified technicians to

You have to make a decision about how to maintain your expensive mowing equipment, either in-house or contracted.

perform warranty and/or service work.

When you pick your equipment, it should be one of your dealer's most popular models. This helps to assure parts availability by the dealer. He also knows the machine, so he can tell you the pros and cons. His service department will also be familiar with that model.

Standardize your equipment

I recommend you stay away from first-year equipment. Invariably, there will be engineering and production problems re-

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Dimension ^b	■	●	■	●	■	●	●	●
Team ^c	■	●	●	●	●	●	NR	NR
Ronstar ^d	●	■	NR	●	●	NR	NR	NR
Surflan ^e	■	■	■	●	▲	●	■	■

Level of control

● Medium

▲ Medium-High

■ High

NR Not registered

^aNovartis

^bRohm and Haas Co.

^cDow AgroSciences

^dRhône-Poulenc



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MOWING guide

lated to new designs. And as the owner, you will be in the middle of warranty problems, increased downtime and lower employee productivity, which may all result in higher costs for you. When looking at brands of equipment, commonalty allows you to standardize maintenance proce-

can be strengthened

- ▶ parts life can be monitored
- ▶ parts interchange can be increased and inventory costs lowered
- ▶ vendor repair can be more easily measured
- ▶ mechanics can be trained as a group

turer recommendations to initiate scheduled maintenance intervals and apply historical data on breakdowns and use to fine-tune the maintenance cycle.

Maintenance: In-house or outsource?

There are many reasons pro and con for in-house or outsourced fleet maintenance: the size of your fleet, the type of equipment, complexity, expected life, warranty and hours operated per year. Does your equipment dealer offer a service agreement for your particular type of equipment? Do you have a shop area, tools and equipment available for repair, parts inventory and qualified people? All this plays a part in determining if you will outsource completely, do it part-time, or make it full-time in-house.

The best method is a balance between in-house and vendor maintenance. While I think in-house maintenance is more desirable than outside, remember that work tends to expand to fill the allotted time. With in-house maintenance, time limits must be set. Also, a complete maintenance shop is expensive — the space, tools and people all add to the cost. Peaks and valleys in the workload complicate scheduling and may add to the costs.

Also consider that certain technical skills are increasingly harder to obtain and more expensive to hire.

The best alternative is to evaluate your current capabilities and survey vendor locations that will complement and support your operation. This will reduce your shop costs, reduce your need for technical skills and allow you to use your in-house operation in the most productive manner. □

Mark Neidich is fleet manager at Groundmasters, Cincinnati, OH, where he is responsible for a 45 trucks and 400 pieces of equipment, including tractors, turf spraying equipment, commercial mowers, small power equipment, snow plows, salt spreaders, trailers, and landscape renovation equipment.

THE IN-HOUSE OPTION

PRO

Little or no downtime
Scheduled workload
Equipment/truck maximum availability, which allows maximum use, giving greatest return on investment

CON

Skilled people needed to do the work
Workload variations
Shop set-up needed
Tools & equipment needed
Parts inventory needed
Some investment tied up in inventory
Training needed

THE OUTSOURCE OPTION

PRO

Don't need highly skilled technical people
No training necessary
Warranty on work performed
No special tools, parts required
Parts inventory dollars free for other uses

CON

Time travel adds to maintenance costs
More complex scheduling
Downtime
Need to qualify vendor

dures, stock fewer parts and train and monitor in-house or vendor labor.

Standardization also helps hold costs your constant. If and when abnormal repairs occur, you can apply this to your other units and inspect for similar features. Specific advantages to standardization include:

- ▶ operators can be trained as a group
- ▶ productivity can be more effectively measured
- ▶ manufacturer support in warranty

▶ short-term costs are more easily measured and long-term costs are more accurately predicted.

▶ cost comparisons can be made with similar types of equipment.

Once you have the right equipment, maintaining it for maximum performance is integral to low life-cycle cost. Planned maintenance, whether it's performed by a vendor or in-house, will give you equipment availability and maximize use, at minimum cost. Fleets should use manufac-

Making your mower pay off

Strategies to make your big-ticket landscape equipment like commercial mowers finally start contributing to your company's bottom line instead of pulling down your profits.

By J. PAUL LAMARCHE



Let's make a deal. You lend me \$10,000 for one year and at the end of the year, I will give you back exactly \$10,000. Better still, I'll give you back \$7,000. Is that a deal? Of course not! Obviously, you want and expect a return on your money. But if you don't think it's a good deal, why are you doing just this when it comes to your equipment and vehicles?

That's right. Every time you purchase a piece of capital equipment, you seem to be perfectly content to see it "depreciate" in value by 30% each year. An accepted cost of business, you might say. Or is it? Not getting a return on your investment has become acceptable.

This is an investment?

What happens when you buy a mower? Let's suppose you pay \$4,500 for it in 1996 and one year later it is worth \$3,150 (i.e. depreciation expense of 30% or \$1,350).

After 6 years, your total depreciation is \$3,970.57 and the residual value is \$529.43 (and if you think you will actually get that amount, good luck!). In other words, after 6 years, your investment of \$4,500 is returned to you as an expense of \$3,970.57 and \$529.43 in residual value. There is no return on investment. Some investment!

The problem with depreciation is that in following the income tax regulations and using depreciation as an expense in your budget (to determine your cost of doing

DEPRECIATION TABLE

\$4,500 Mower at 30% rate — 6-year lifespan for mower

Year	Balance	Rate	Depreciation
1	\$4,500.00	30%	\$1,350.00
2	\$3,150.00	30%	\$945.00
3	\$2,205.00	30%	\$661.50
4	\$1,543.50	30%	\$463.05
5	\$1,080.45	30%	\$324.13
6	\$756.32	30%	\$226.89
Depreciation Subtotal			\$3,970.57
Residual Value			\$529.43
Total			\$4,500.00

business), you are only accounting for the cost of the equipment or vehicle and therefore, shortchanging yourself when it comes to getting a return on investment for the equipment or vehicle.

Look at the following tables to see how depreciation and return on investment (ROI) affect your budget for pricing purposes.

What's wrong with this picture?

There is no return on investment! Let's go back to the offer I made. Didn't you expect something in return for the \$10,000 I borrowed from you?

You claim that your ROI is the profit that you made last year. Unfortunately, it's a sad fact that many entrepreneurs or owner/operators would make more money working for someone else. Not only do you pay yourself less than you pay

INTEREST TABLE

\$4,500 at 8% interest rate

Year	Balance	Rate	Interest
1	\$4,500.00	8%	\$360.00
2	\$4,860.00	8%	\$388.80
3	\$5,248.80	8%	\$419.90
4	\$5,668.70	8%	\$453.50
5	\$6,122.20	8%	\$489.77
6	\$6,611.97	8%	\$528.96
Total Interest			\$2,640.93
Investment			\$4,500.00
Total			\$7,140.93

your workers, but you are actually "eating your equity." Each year that you manage to stay in business, your net worth diminishes. If you are over-equipped and unable to charge your customers for this equipment, the problem is magnified.

Each year, the total value of all your equipment and vehicles diminishes in value. Ask yourself: What do you have to show for it?

What's a good return?

A good return on investment means that when your \$4,500 mower goes to the scrap yard, you have enough money (i.e. real cash, not just the ability to borrow more cash) to buy new or replacement equipment. If this isn't making sense to you so far, ask your father (those of you who inherited your business from your father) why he always paid *cash* for his equipment. He never had a charge card or a line of credit at the bank, did he?

You must charge your customers for your vehicles and equipment on every job so that you can get back every penny you paid over the 6-year life span of the mower, as well as your return on investment. Keep in mind that some equipment

will not last 6 years and others may last longer.

If this sounds outrageous or impossible, have a look at the table at left. If you invest your \$4,500 and earn 8% interest, you will earn \$2,640.93 in interest. This is "return on investment."

It's interesting that people who tell me it's difficult to get return on investment on vehicles and equipment are the same people who do not mind paying for their equipment over a 36-month bank term.

If they would continue to allocate those monthly payments (which were successfully made in the past) to a separate bank account for the three-year balance of the vehicle's lifespan, they would have ROI and have the cash to pay for a new vehicle.

Both examples at right show how to get a decent return on investment from your mowers, either those that are financed or those that are purchased with cash.

Cover your costs

The key is to charge adequately to cover your costs. How do you charge for equipment? There are three ways: 1. Guess; 2. Charge by the hour; 3. Include the cost of your equipment in your overhead cost.

More than 80% of all service companies use method number 1. Chances are, you may be in this category. The majority isn't always wrong, but here is a case where the other 20% have the advantage. Is it any wonder that we have so many bankruptcies? □

J. Paul Lamarche is a specialist in the lawn and grounds maintenance industry and author of "What the Market will Bare," from which this article was adapted. He can be reached in Wellandport, Ontario, Canada at 905/935-2648 (telephone/fax) or via email: ladybug@freenet.npiec.on.ca

RETURN ON INVESTMENT TABLE

Return on Investment (ROI) \$4,500 Mower

Mower Cost	\$4,500.00
Sales Tax (7%)	\$ 315.00
Finance Cost *	<u>\$1,593.76</u>
Total	\$6,408.76
*3 years at 10% (monthly payment \$178.02)	

Return on Investment Calculation (Total cost of mower) divided by (lifespan of mower x 2)

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \$6,408.76 \\
 & \quad 6 \text{ years} \\
 & = \$1,068.13 \\
 & \\
 & \$1,068.13 \\
 & \quad \times 2 \\
 & = \$2,136.25 \text{ per year} \\
 & \\
 & \$2,136.25 \text{ per year} \\
 & \quad \times 6 \text{ years} \\
 & = \$12,817.52^*
 \end{aligned}$$

*\$6,408.76 cost of mower & \$6,408.76 return on investment

\$6,408.76 return on investment + residual value of mower (\$529.43) should be adequate funds to purchase a new replacement mower.

If you paid cash, it would be:

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \$4,815 \\
 & \quad 6 \text{ years} \\
 & = \$802.5 \\
 & \\
 & \$802.5 \\
 & \quad \times 2 \\
 & = \$1,605 \text{ per year} \\
 & \\
 & \$1,605 \text{ per year} \\
 & \quad \times 6 \text{ years} \\
 & = \$9,630^*
 \end{aligned}$$

\$4,815 cost of mower & \$4,815 return on investment.

\$4,815 ROI & residual value of mower (\$529.43) should be adequate funds to purchase a new replacement mower with cash.

One Big Mean Yellow Machine

Blazer 360Z

- Floating Deck
- Deck Offset
- Floating Front Deck
- Zero Turn Radius



Special Financing Incentives Till March '99

Howard Price Turf Equipment • 18155 Edison Avenue • Chesterfield, MO 63005

MOWING guide

Eastman Industries
Portland, Maine
800/760-1680

The HM19S2 HoverMower from Eastman Industries is powered by a Suzuki 3.8-hp two-stroke engine and has a cutting width of 19 inches. The mower features a durable aluminum cutting disc with three Zytel composite metal-edged blades, a space-age plastic alloy deck for strength and durability and a 15-inch impeller that produces optimum air volume for hoverability and performance. With a cushion of air beneath the deck, the HoverMower can mow in any direction and in hard-to-reach areas without scalping. The model comes with 18-gauge steel handles and a vibration-reducing engine mount. Cutting height is adjustable from 1 to 3 inches.

Circle No. 258

Encore Manufacturing Co.
Beatrice, NE
402/228-4255

Encore's Prowler Front Cut has a dual path hydrostatic drive for more overall drive power, control and stability on slopes and around tight turns. Available in single or dual-tail wheels, the mower has a zero turning radius in both 52- and 61-inch cutting widths. A 20-hp liquid-cooled Kawasaki or 22-hp air-cooled Kohler engine is available. Also included is a flip-up deck.

Circle No. 259

Exmark Manufacturing Co.
Beatrice, NE
402/223-6300

Exmark has incorporated a 22-hp Kawasaki, liquid-cooled engine into its Lazer Z. Features include 52- or 60-inch full-floating decks, zero-turn maneuverability and a radiator positioned up-top to draw clean and



Exmark Lazer Z Liquid-Cooled

cool air. Instant-Adjust allows cutting height adjustments in 0.25-inch increments from a seated position. The mower also includes a wavy radiator screen to increase air flow and prevent complete blockage.

Circle No. 260

John Deere
Research Triangle Park, NC
800/537-8233

John Deere has the HD45 and the HD75 walk-behind hydrostatic mowers. The HD45 has a 14-hp overhead valve engine while the HD75 has 17 hp. They both are available with an oscillating 48- or 54-inch deck, but the HD45 also has a 36-inch deck available. The models have unitized hydrostatic transmissions with on-the-go tracking; speed and direction control; and parking brakes. A speed control lock lets you return every time to your preset speed and adjusts without tools. The HD75 also has a standard electric start.

Circle No. 261

Ferris Industries
Munnsville, NY
800/933-6175

Ferris Industries presents the ProCut Z Mid-mount zero-turn rider. The mower features a foot-operated deck lift and jumbo 23-inch tires, 25-hp Kohler engine, twin four-gallon fuel tanks, variable displacement hydro-drive system with Hydro Gear pumps and Ross wheel motors. Also featured is a 54- or 61-inch cutting width and a cutting height of 1.5 to 5 inches in 0.25-inch increments.

The mower has the Independent Drive Systems (IDS), which uses two separate reservoirs and hydraulic drives to prevent cross contamination of oil, as well as the IS independent suspension system which allows each wheel to move up and down independently, smoothing out the roughest turf.

Circle No. 262

Gravely
Brillion, WI
800-GRAVELY

The Gravely 260Z zero-turn machine features maintenance-free

Gravely XL Spindles and Gravely's Stay-sharp tungsten carbide coated blades. A five-inch-high deck, a redesigned cutting chamber and a 21-inch-wide discharge tunnel provides maximum air flow to expel clippings faster. The mower also includes a hydraulic deck height control and self-adjusting belts, a nine-gallon fuel capacity and 360-degree swivel antiscalp rollers. The



The Gravely 260Z

model is available with a 25-hp Kohler Command CV255 or a 22-hp Robin EH65V engine.

Circle No. 263

Great Dane
Sellersburg, IN
812/246-8770

Great Dane's walk-behind Zero Turn Surfer includes a stand-on platform nearly at the center of zero turn radius. The mower features a 48-, 52- and 61-inch cutter decks, 16-hp to 23 hp Kawasaki, Vanguard-B&S and Kohler engines and a hydrostatic drive system. Also included is a six-gallon fuel tank with extra wide mouth fill and a 2- to 6-inch cutting height.

Circle No. 264

Lesco
Rocky River, OH
440/333-9250

Lesco's 48- and 54-inch float deck rotary mowers were designed to promote maximum air flow for even dispersion of clippings while providing ease in height adjustment by a four-pin system for raising and lowering the cutting deck.

These hydro drive mowers with dual hydro pumps and drive mowers



Lesco "Float Deck" rotary mower with hydro drive

allow true zero turning radius while allowing for positive reverse and eliminating belt slippage in wet conditions. The twin ground-speed control levers allow for on-the-go adjustment to ensure straight-line tracking and hillside control.

Both models have five-gallon capacity fuel tanks.

Lesco offers the 48-inch cutting deck model powered by a 17-hp electric start Kawasaki engine and the 54-inch cutting deck model with a 20-hp electric start Kohler engine.

Circle No. 265

MTD
Cleveland, OH
330/225-2600

MTD introduces the 2260 Wide Track Mower in its new line of "MTD Pro" series. The mower features a 22-hp Kohler Command V-Twin OHV Engine and floating stamped decks with pivoting axles available in 48-, 54- or 60-inch sizes. Its dual hydrostatic control lets the operator perform true zero turns with pistol grip operation and allows for easy adjustment with no down time.

The mower also includes two ground-speed dash lever controls, 1.25-inch tubing handle bars and a five-gallon plastic fuel tank. The flat-resistant, extra wide 9 x 3.5-inch front caster wheels provide reduced compacting and easier maneuvering and create the better curb appeal of a finished cut.

The mower also features a 1- to 4.5-inch easy adjustment cutting height in 0.25-inch increments, re-

MOWING guide

quiring no tools to change the height.

Circle No. 266

Howard Price Turf Chesterfield, MO 314/532-7000

Howard Price Turf introduces a new vacuum attachment for its 360Z. The collection container has a capacity of 10 bushels and may be dumped from the operator's seat. The turbine operates off the cutting unit, eliminating the need for an auxiliary engine. The vacuum can be installed or removed with three pull pins.

Circle No. 267

Scag Power Equipment Mayville, WI 920/387-0100

The heavy-duty hydro drive system on the SCAG STHM provides smooth, even power to both wheels, controlled by a single foot-pedal control. A 13-quart nylon reservoir and heavy duty cooling radiator ensure longer drive system component life by preventing contamination and lowering temperatures.

The STHM Hydro Rider is available with 52-, 61- or 72-inch cutter deck and 20- or 22-hp Kohler Command engine. Optional accessories include a 44-gallon capacity grass catcher with auxiliary engine, a mulching plate and electric deck lift.

Circle No. 268

Steiner Dalton, OH 330/828-0200

The model ZTM 325 Steiner tractor is packaged with a Kohler Command engine with 25 hp at 3600 rpm. The 2-wheel drive tractor features zero turning, dual fuel tanks and foot-operated electric deck height adjustment. Included is a single park level, antiscalp rollers, twin hydrostatic controls with flip handles and a 61-inch deck cutting height of 1 to 5 inches.

Circle No. 269

Textron TurfCare & Specialty Products Racine, WI 414/637-6711

Jacobsen's Turfcats 500 Series

features the power of a liquid-cooled Kubota diesel engine with 22.5-, 28- and 33-hp engines. Mowers include a 12-gallon fuel tank and an accelerator with an adjustable pedal stop for setting a consistent transport/mowing speed.



Jacobsen Turfcats 500

Four heavy-gauge steel cutting decks are available and a new deck mounting delivers consistent cutting heights from one to four inches, in half-inch increments.

The 500 series has a new all-hydraulic traction drive and self-adjusting turn-assist brakes on the wheels to help ensure sure-footed stability. The hydraulic system oil capacity has been increased to eight gallons, which helps the system run cooler and last longer.

Circle No. 270

Toro Bloomington, MN 612/888-8801

The Toro Groundsmaster 3000 has a variety of choices. Available with either a 33-hp liquid-cooled Peu-



Toro Groundsmaster 3000

geot diesel, in two- or four-wheel drive, or a 45-hp gasoline-fueled Ford engine, the 3000 has low noise levels, being the lowest decibel rotary mower of its type. An Integrated Hydrostatic Transmission (IHT) combines transmission, axle

and PTO in a single housing. The fewer parts and the direct transfer of power will make for years of durable performance. The Groundsmaster 3000 also has a variety of decks available: 84" Guardian Recycler®, 84" Rear Discharge, 72" Guardian Recycler®, 72" Rear Discharge

and the new Contour 82. Additional attachments include: rotary broom, snow-thrower, debris blower and enclosed cab.

Circle No. 271

Walker Manufacturing Co. Fort Collins, CO 970/221-5614

A new sprayer attachment for the front of the Walker mower is easily mounted to all 42-, 48- and 54-inch Walker decks and offers a 96-inch spray pattern. The SP6640 Boom Sprayer features a 20-foot hose and adjustable spray tip that allows the operator to adjust the spray pattern from a 35-foot stream to a mist pattern.

Walker also has a "No-Catch" Deflector for a quick conversion of



Walker "No-Catch" Deflector

the Walker Grass handling System mower to a rear discharge mower. The conversion can be made in seconds by installing the deflector in the back of the GHS catcher box door.

Circle No. 272

Woods Equipment Co. Rockford, Ill 414-255-0100

Woods Equipment Co. has added the model 6225 Mow'n Machine to its line of zero turn radius mowers and offers a 25-hp Kohler engine with a 48-, 52-, 61- or 72-inch deck.

Woods' 6000 Series of Mow'n Machines feature eight engine options ranging from 14 to 25 hp, including diesel. The mowers are designed with a low, out-front, three-spindle deck, allowing easy mowing under shrubs and low hanging branches.

The products include instant forward and reverse action, dual lever controls and special operator comfort features to increase productivity. The spring-loaded attachment pins allow for quick attachment of the decks, snow throwers, sweepers or dozer blades.

Grass collection systems are available in 7.5-, 15- and 25- cubic ft. models. Woods' collection systems are composed of a detachable blower and twin plastic containers or a steel gravity hopper with a lever-controlled gravity dump system.

Circle No. 273

Capital crunch:

How to find financing

It's not impossible to raise capital for your operations, but it sure isn't easy. Find out how these experts view the process.

By GEORGE WITTERSCHEIN

Besides being an end, money is also a means to growth and success. Yet for many in the green industry, financing is a hassle. It needn't be. Knowing what our experts know can seriously reduce the pain of financing your business.

Get innovative

In Bellevue, WA, Rod Bailey and his partner Tom Graham have owned Evergreen Services Corporation since 1971. "We financed our original acquisition of the business in an innovative fashion," Bailey says.

"When the original owner decided to sell, we were consultants to the company, and we wanted to buy it. We didn't have any money of our own. So we borrowed some of the money from family and the rest of it from a bank," he explains. "The bank insisted we get a guarantor for the loan, so we went to another company and made them a deal: act as our guarantor and we'll give you free consulting services for three years. It worked!"

Their initial expenses were quickly followed by new financing needs. "Over the years, we've probably grown faster than our profitability would support, so we've relied heavily on banking relationships," Bailey says.

Those relationships can be hard to maintain as banks merge and people move on. But Bailey found that the effort of constantly making and remaking friends with a banker is worth it. "We've always believed banking is a partnership relationship and that your banker is one of your key advisors," he suggests. "Tom and I, both being MBAs, have had a good grasp of financial and business techniques. But most people in or industry can't say that. I'd recommend you form an alliance with three people: an accountant, a banker and a financial consultant."

Know your stuff

Another advantage of their MBA degrees was confidence in dealing with banks. "It's never bothered us to go into a bank and ask to borrow money...as long as we knew we could handle it. But there was one critical point in our development where we found it very helpful to get a federal Small Business Administration loan guarantee, and I would recommend people consider that as an avenue, too."

What advice would Bailey give his colleagues in the industry?

"First, I run into a lot of people in the industry who aren't comfortable with borrowing, because they lack the financial management knowledge they need to han-

dle it. I advise them not to go into debt, unless they are willing to gain that knowledge. If you're not familiar with financial management, projections, long range plans and pro formas, you should work with somebody who does."

Second, he believes in having a plan: "A well laid-out plan for how you're doing the financing and how you plan to pay that back over the years."

Third, the financing plan should be part of an overall long-range business plan, so you can put any financing decision in a strategic context. "If you set objectives for your business, they may imply you will need to borrow money. You can get a head start instead of waiting until you need to buy equipment yesterday."

In its own long-range planning, Evergreen tried to reduce leverage and achieve debt-free operation. They've gotten close several times, he says, "But whenever we bring our debt ratios down to the point where we can see paying off our debt, we get gutsy and start to grow again. You've got to be confident in what you're doing — if you're not, don't borrow money to do it!"

Use insider expertise

Joe Williams owns and operates Lawn Master Inc. Pensacola, FL. His wife, Elaine, and sons Scott and Jeff work with him, and Scott provides valuable accounting expertise in-house. "It's a lot better having him in-house because he keeps track of things," Williams reports. "Even though we retain an outside firm that does a lot of our accounting work for us, Scott

can translate what they're doing — and that lets us focus more on lawn care."

Scott's accounting knowledge has also helped Lawn Master obtaining financing.

"We've been able to go with some shorter terms for buying vehicles, and in fact, now we're leasing some vehicles to see if that may help us in the long run," he explains.

They've also built up a good working relationship with the bank. "We've stayed with the same one for almost 20 years now. The bank has been bought a couple of times, but we've been very fortunate in they've kept the local people we've been dealing with."

He too is a big believer in having advisers. "Get a good banker, a good attorney and a good CPA before you even think about buying equipment or hiring personnel." And before you start borrowing, make sure you can maintain a good cash flow.

"I can't overemphasize it. I don't care what kind of dollars you're making; if the cash flow doesn't go through, it can catch you in a bind real quick," he says.

Avoid these mistakes

Cash flow is not your only potential trouble spot — consultant Ed Wandtke of Wandtke & Associates in Lewis Center, OH, has his own list of them. Based on his experience in the green industry, he warns about the following:

1. *Using personal credit cards.* "Not only is this expensive, but it buries the debt where you can't see it," he says. "You're better off knowing what your debt is and where you stand with paying it off." And, when you can't get bank financing, there may very well be no need to resort to your credit card. "Right now, equipment vendors are far more willing to do financing than ever before. I bet that 90% of the time, you could open up a business in our industry with almost no line of credit, using vendor leasing financing for the equipment."

2. *Overbuying equipment.* "A common problem we have is that there's far too much used equipment sitting in the back facility spaces of most of the owners in the industry," Wandtke notes.

"And if you're getting into the business, start small. Don't believe you've got to have everything on Day 1, because in fact, you don't."

3. *Owning vs. leasing.*

"The technology of equipment is advancing so rapidly that you may not want to own it — as is the case with computers. Today, vendors may give you a two-year lease. All you'll have done is

pay the rental premium. It costs you, but it may be a lot cheaper than owning something outright that you want to replace with advanced technology."

Find lenders who understand

As vice president of Sheffield Financial Corp. in Clemmons, NC, Brian Burley is an expert on finding financing. His firm writes loans — \$150 million worth each year — for the green industry. (Sheffield is one of the several major players — such as Transamerica, Nations Credit and, for its own equipment, John Deere Credit.) Not only does Sheffield write that \$150 million, but it also has an astonishingly low delinquency and write-off rate of less than 1%.

Burley attributes that rate to knowing the industry. Sheffield offers loans directly to landscape contractors, or indirectly through dealers, so they see both sides of the equipment transaction. And they understand what he calls the industry's "unique cash flow problems."

"This is a seasonal industry," he says. "We know we have to show flexibility. A landscape contractor's ability to pay back a

loan can dry up in the winter, especially if it's mild and they don't have any snow to push. A bank may not understand that. The 12 months of the year all look the same to them."

Burley's advice is to find the right creditor — and then work with that creditor. "A lot of people start out in business and in two or three years, they're growing phenomenally. But they don't have the history that a bank wants. That's where companies like ours fit in. We know the difference a \$10,000 riding mower can make to someone who doesn't have a deep credit history but who is otherwise stable and a good risk.

"If a contractor is delinquent with a bank, it may not be as willing to work with him on making his payments as we are. Often, a customer who has paid well with us for a year and a half will call and say,

'I've just lost some accounts. I'm going to be short for the next two months. Can you work with me until spring?' We're going to be a little more understanding."

3 steps to financing

How would we sum up our experts' advice?

1. Gain financial know-how — or get access to someone who has it.

2. Use good judgment — buy only what you need. Also, consider leasing instead of owning.

3. Build and maintain the relationships. The creditor — someone who understands your industry and your company — is worth the effort it takes to build a friendship. Should that person move on, as so often happens in today's marketplace, dig in and make the effort all over again! **LM**

—The author, a freelance writer based in Mendham, NJ, is a new contributor to *Landscape Management* magazine.



Joe Williams



Ed Wandtke

How to minimize nitrate movement from turfgrass

By DOUGLAS T. LINDE, Ph.D.

Various researchers have determined that nutrient transport (including nitrate) in surface runoff from turfgrasses is minimal. In addition, researchers found that nitrate in leachate water from a moderately fertilized turf, even grown in sand, was minimal.

Despite the evidence that little nitrate moves offsite in surface runoff or leachate from turfgrasses, you still have to manage nitrate and other forms of nitrogen to reduce the risk of pollution. Also, careless ni-

trogen management can waste money and decrease turf quality.

Surface runoff is water that flows over the soil surface. It occurs when rainfall exceeds the soil's infiltration rate. Surface runoff may enter streams and lakes or it may infiltrate the soil downslope.

Subsurface runoff is rainfall that infiltrates and moves laterally in soil. It often exits the soil and enters a stream or lake.

Leachate is water that has percolated below the root zone.

Nitrates can move

Nitrogen, like phosphorus, can contribute to eutrophication of water resources; that is both elements promote plant growth in and along the banks of streams, lakes and ponds. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency considers the nitrate form of nitrogen a drinking water pollutant because of its potential to cause an uncommon condition in human babies and young animals called methemoglobinemia ("blue baby disease").

Nitrate is also highly soluble and can move readily in both surface runoff and leachate. It moves readily through soil because its negative charge prevents it from being held by the soil and it is actually more

prone to leaching into water resources than to moving offsite in surface runoff.

After applying nitrogen fertilizer, it is converted to plant-available nitrate in or on the soil. Any nitrate that has entered the soil cannot move offsite in surface runoff, but it can still enter surface water resources via subsurface runoff. If nitrate happens to be on the soil surface, it will infiltrate the soil as rainfall filters into the soil, until the soil is saturated. By the time runoff begins from turf, most, if not all, nitrate on the soil surface should have entered the soil.

What measures can you take to further minimize the potential of offsite movement of nitrogen and nitrate in surface runoff and leachate? Some of the following suggestions have been proven by research while others are common sense measures.

Promote healthy turf

Use recommended cultural practices that encourage a dense, actively growing turf. This includes proper mowing, irrigation, core cultivation, aeration and fertility. Nitrogen applied to a dense, actively growing turf is rapidly used by the turfgrass plants. The extensive mass of fibrous roots typical of actively growing turfgrasses can absorb available nitrogen at recommended rates. In general, turfgrasses are among the most efficient plants in using applied nutrients.

A dense, actively growing turf also reduces potential nutrient transport (including nitrate) simply because it actually reduces the amount of surface runoff. This was determined in a series of runoff studies



This large turf area shows how surface runoff occurs once the rainfall rate exceeds the soil's infiltration rate.

conducted over the past 10 years at Penn State University.

Water-in the fertilizer

"Watering-in" fertilizer generally refers to applying a light amount of water (0.1 to 0.3 inches) with irrigation soon after applying a granular fertilizer. This practice helps move the granules down into the turf canopy and on to the soil. The fertilizer, especially nitrogen, is then less likely to volatilize into the atmosphere, move offsite in runoff or be removed by mowing equipment. Also, nutrients contained in the fertilizer become available more quickly because water and microbes are more available to break down the nitrogen into the ammonium or nitrate form that plants can use.

Avoid excessive irrigation following fertilization because it can directly cause

runoff or leaching of water-soluble nitrogen fertilizers. Excessive irrigation can leave soils in a near-saturated condition, which increases the potential for surface runoff from additional irrigation or rainfall. Simply put, additional water applied to a water-saturated soil will either run off or pond on the surface.

Offsite movement of nitrogen can be influenced by the nitrogen source. Fertilizers with a higher percentage of water-soluble nitrogen (quick-release sources such as uncoated urea, ammonium nitrate, ammonium sulfate and short-chain methylene ureas) are more prone to offsite movement, compared to fertilizers with a high percentage of water insoluble nitrogen (slow-release sources such as IBDU, natural organics, coated ureas and long-chain methylene ureas).

Right time, right amount, right place

Timing, rate, placement and application method may have an influence on nitrogen movement. Applying soluble nitrogen when soils are nearly saturated, frozen or highly compacted directly increases the chance of nitrogen moving offsite simply because water runoff will be greater under any of those conditions. Apply nitrogen when the turf is actively growing to reduce your risks. Late fall, winter and early spring applications of soluble nitrogen are not recommended. If you want to apply nitrogen during those times, use slow-release sources to reduce potential movement. Also, avoid using fertilizer nitrogen to melt ice on roads, walkways and turf.

Avoid using excessive nitrogen rates per application. The plant can use only so

cont. on page 53

S.N.G

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- 28 30 Government Official - Government Commissioner, Agent, Other Government Official
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| 42 <input type="radio"/> C Tree Care | 47 <input type="radio"/> H Ornamental Care | 52 <input type="radio"/> M Landscape Installation |
| 43 <input type="radio"/> D Turf Aeration | 48 <input type="radio"/> I Landscape | 53 <input type="radio"/> N Snow Removal |
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4b. If yes, check which products you buy or specify: (fill in ALL that apply)

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| 58 <input type="radio"/> 4 Chipper-Shredders | 65 <input type="radio"/> 11 Mowers | 72 <input type="radio"/> 18 Trucks |
| 59 <input type="radio"/> 5 De-icers | 66 <input type="radio"/> 12 Snow Removal Equipment | 73 <input type="radio"/> 19 Turfseed |
| 60 <input type="radio"/> 6 Fertilizers | 67 <input type="radio"/> 13 Sprayers | 74 <input type="radio"/> 20 Utility Vehicles |
| 61 <input type="radio"/> 7 Fungicides | 68 <input type="radio"/> 14 Spreaders | |

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5a. If so, how often do you use it?

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102	114	126	138	150	162	174	186	198	210	222	234	246	258	270	282	294	306
103	115	127	139	151	163	175	187	199	211	223	235	247	259	271	283	295	307
104	116	128	140	152	164	176	188	200	212	224	236	248	260	272	284	296	308
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107	119	131	143	155	167	179	191	203	215	227	239	251	263	275	287	299	311
108	120	132	144	156	168	180	192	204	216	228	240	252	264	276	288	300	312
109	121	133	145	157	169	181	193	205	217	229	241	253	265	277	289	301	313
110	122	134	146	158	170	182	194	206	218	230	242	254	266	278	290	302	314
111	123	135	147	159	171	183	195	207	219	231	243	255	267	279	291	303	315
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112	124	136	148	160	172	184	196	208	220	232	244	256	268	280	292	304	316

cont. from page 49

much at one time. What is "excessive" depends on the soil type and condition, the turfgrass species and the climate. Any nitrogen that has been converted to nitrate but has not been absorbed by the plants is prone to leaching. "Spoon feeding" the turf with low rates of nitrogen on a more frequent basis (0.05 to 0.20 lbs. N/1000 sq.ft. per week) helps keep nitrogen levels more uniform throughout the season and improves their efficiency of use.

The placement of any nitrogen fertilizer on impervious surfaces increases the chance of nitrogen entering surface or subsurface water resources. Therefore, avoid applying granules or spray directly onto sidewalks, roads and driveways. You may need to

Choose an appropriate granule size for turf density to help granules move into the canopy.

use a drop spreader on turf areas next to these surfaces or remove any granules using a broom or a blower. Also, avoid applying fertilizer directly into any surface water such as streams, lakes or temporarily ponded water.

Foliar application of soluble nitrogen fertilizers may reduce movement of nitrogen in runoff and leachate compared to granular application. However, volatilization losses will be higher when using a sprayer or fertigation system. Soluble nitrogen granules, like uncoated urea, which remain on top of the turf canopy after application, have a greater risk of moving offsite in runoff compared to granules that have moved into the turf canopy by gravity or water.

Choosing an appropriate granule size for the canopy density will help granules move into the canopy. For example, on golf greens, smaller granules should be used so they can more easily move down into the highly dense canopy. Large or small granules can be used on lawn or athletic fields because the turf on those areas has a canopy that is less dense and more open than a golf green.

Although turfgrasses naturally do a great job of minimizing offsite movement of nitrate and other forms of nitrogen, there are certain management practices that can be used to even further reduce the chance for movement. The suggested practices are inexpensive to implement and should not decrease turf quality. Actually, some may even improve turf quality.

Educating yourself, fellow turf managers and your customers on this issue should give everyone a little more peace of mind when it comes to nitrate movement from turfgrass. **LM**

—Douglas T. Linde, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Agronomy and heads the Turf Management Program at Delaware Valley College, Doylestown, PA.

Events

JANUARY

20 Landscape Contractors, Turfgrass Managers & Grounds Maintenance Conference with Trade Show

Jamil Shrine Temple, Columbia, SC. Call SC Landscape & Turfgrass Association 803/772-9380

25-27: Central Environmental Nursery Trade Show (CENTS)

Greater Columbus Convention Center, OH. Call 800/825-5062, fax 888/665-2329

26-31 National Arborist Association Winter Management Conference

Weston Caesar Park, Cancun, Mexico. Contact Carol Crossland 800/733-2622, fax 603/672-2613, www.natlarb.com

27-29 Midwest Turf Expo

Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis. Contact Bev Bratton 765/494-8039, fax 765/496-2926, www.purdue.edu

28-30 New England Grows!

Hynes Convention Center, Boston. Call 508/653-3009, fax 508/653-4112.

28-30 Gulf States Horticultural Expo

Mobile Convention Center, Mobile, AL. Call Linda VanDyke 334/502-7777.

FEBRUARY

1-26 University of Guelph, Annual Turf Managers' Course

Holiday Inn, Guelph,

Ontario. Call 519/767-5000, fax 519/767-1114.

2 OSU Extension

Annual School Tom's Country Place, Avon, OH. Contact Charles Behnke 440/322-0127

3-5 Turfgrass Producers International Midwinter Conference & Expo

The Hyatt Regency Tampa, FL. Call 800/405-8873 or 847/705-9898

4-6 PLCAA Management Conference

Embassy Suites, Orlando, FL. Contact Heath Moore 800/458-3466, fax 770/578-6071, www.plcaa.org

4-7 American Nursery & Landscape Association Management Clinic

Galt House, Louisville, KY. Call 202/789-2900, fax 202/789-1893, www.anla.org

7-10 Fertilizer Institute annual meeting

Wyndham Annatole Hotel, Dallas. Contact Linda McAbbee 202/675-8250, fax 202/544-8123, www.tfi.org

10 JOB FAIR (Stockbridge School of Agriculture & the Univ. of Mass.)

Campus Center Auditorium, Amherst, MA. Call 413/545-2222.

12-14 GCSAA International Conference & Show

Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, FL. Call 800/472-7878, www.gcsaa.org

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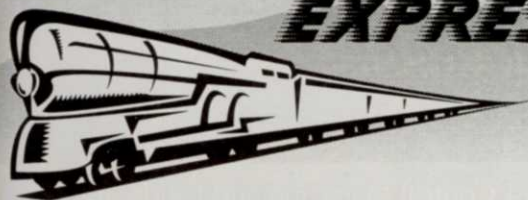
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Grab Bag

Pond Guy scores big frequent flier miles

Greg Wittstock, who describes himself as "The Pond Guy," might be the ultimate road warrior.

Wittstock, founder and president of Aquascape Designs, West Chicago, IL, started a 3-month, 57-city tour earlier this month to help contractors and retailers install and sell water gardens and related water features. Wittstock will be offering a day-long seminar entitled "Growing Your Water Feature Business Seminars" at each of the stops.

Greg says he will personally conduct each seminar. His travels began Jan. 4 in Pittsburgh and conclude March 31 in

Chatham, Ontario, Canada. To find out when the water feature road show will be in your neighborhood, call Aquascape at 800/306-6227 or 630/231-3113. To learn more about the company, visit its website at www.aquasapedesigns.com

Commercial mowers to take slight dip

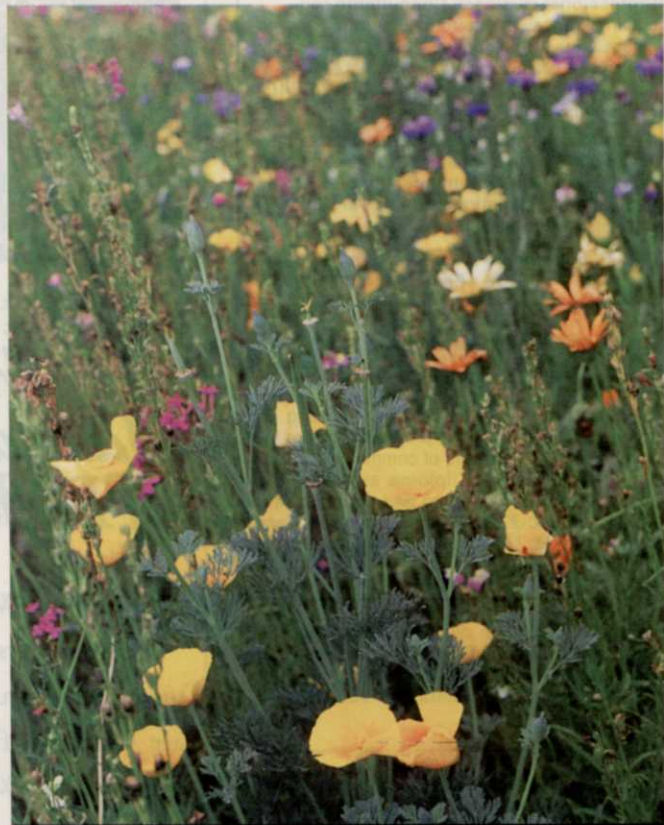
The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) forecasts a slight drop in shipments of commercial riding mowers and intermediate walk-behind mowers in 1999. For the 1999 season (units shipped from Sept. 1, 1998 through August 31, 1999), the OPEI says riders will decrease .3% to 64,933 units and intermediate walk-behinds will drop 3.2% to 48,116 units.

The forecast isn't considered gloomy for several reasons. First, shipments for model year 1998 were robust—97,400 commercial walk behind units and 65,100 commercial riding units. Also, the OPEI expects a small upturn in shipments of commercial mowers again in the year 2000 with riders expected to rise by about 5% and walk-behind mowers by about 1%.

The OPEI Commercial Turf Forecast is prepared quarterly by Association Research, Inc.

Ruppert honored

Ruppert Company, now a part of TruGreen/ChemLawn, received a 1998 President's Service Award in October, for its annual field days, working with the District of Columbia to renovate neighborhood parks and recreation areas. The award was established in 1982 to honor outstanding individuals, groups, businesses and/or organizations for their volunteer initiatives in addressing unmet human service, educational, environmental and public safety needs.



Wonderful winter wildflowers?

Plant breeders are doing marvelous things, but they haven't yet perfected growing wildflowers like this in the dead of winter, at least not in Ohio where we write and edit *Landscape Management*. This photograph of wildflower trials in Rolesville, NC, was taken in June at a Turf-Seed, Inc. Field Day. This coming June 15 the company is again planning its Field Day in Rolesville.

Hollywood Impressions

"A Walking Tour Through History" is a one day course, Saturday, February 8, featuring visits to historical landmarks, old groves and hidden gardens. Landscape architect, Rhett Beavers, will lead the tour which examines the remnants of mythic Hollywood. For information contact UCLS Extension Landscape Architecture Program at 310/825-9414.

Grab Bag features brief observations and prognostications throughout the green industry. If you have an unusual photo or comment you'd like to share with us, please send it in...

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