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Landscape MANAGEMENT

OCTOBER 2000 / #10 / VOLUME 39

features

cover story

24. Partnering with Hispanics

Mexican labor for a price

BY RON HALL/SENIOR EDITOR

28. Make it win-win

Build a strong relationship with Hispanic employees

BY GEORGE WITTERSCHEIN/CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

32. Four factors for success

Help immigrants assimilate more quickly

BY GEORGE WITTERSCHEIN/CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

36. 15 threats to your business

Watch out for these 'killer factors'

BY GEORGE WITTERSCHEIN/CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

labor crunch

40. Picture this

Movies, videos, even your own film clips can make training much more fun

BY PHIL FOGARTY

grounds management center

42. Award-winning landscape management

University of Missouri's distinctive campus

inside

E-business 2000 ▶

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departments

columns, news & more

7. On the Record

One voice, one message

BY SUE GIBSON

8. Events

Who, what and when

11. Green Side Up

Good news down Mexico way

BY RON HALL

12. My Way

You may be an inventor

BY BILL CHUMLEY

16. Industry Almanac

Bioalmanac for pesticides, Husqvarna's purchase, OPEI's forecast looks good

tech center

44. Jobtalk

Louis-Dreyfus estate improves its soil's health

BY KEVIN HATTORI

48. LM Reports: Living on the Edge

BY CURT HARLER/CONTRIBUTING
EDITOR

51. Ask the Expert

Maple anthracnose, messy cottonwoods, why the rust?

BY BAL RAO, PH.D.

53. Products

57. Product focus: Wall to Wall

Retaining walls

ending notes

64. Cleanup Crew



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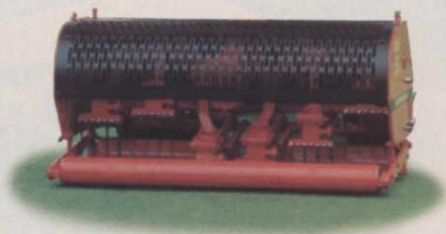
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One voice, one message

Our industry is huge, but not unified. There are many local associations for lawn care operators, landscape contractors and grounds managers, each with opportunities to network with peers and learn something to improve your future. If you don't belong, you should.

At the national level, you have many choices: ALCA, PLCAA, PGMS, ANLA, IA and more. These groups help you network, increase technical and management knowledge, become certified and improve employee programs. You've asked for these services, and the associations responded.

But while each association serves its members, the industry as a whole rarely benefits. I don't see many efforts to show your work has value for homeowners, property managers, regulators and politicians, investors or students looking for a "green" career.

These associations try to do this but their resources are limited and frankly, they've been directed by members to do otherwise. Many co-sponsor the yearly Gallup poll measuring consumers' use of professional landscape services. But there is no coordinated program of public relations targeting shared key groups — those who buy, regulate or staff your services.

Right now, you handle PR on behalf of your industry, in your own marketing and political efforts. If you believe in licensing and professional operations like Troy Hall, owner of Hall's Horticulture Design in Charlotte, NC, you educate your customers yourself. "Public awareness of registered landscape contractors and the extensive testing we must go through should set us above the rest. Whether it does or not is up to me as a sales person," he says.

He's right, but I also think it's up to your associations

to help. It's time to focus more associations' efforts on spreading the message of value. You can't do it alone.

More bang for the buck

Here's what I'd like to see: One unified program, funded by participating organizations, developing first-class public relations and lobbying on behalf of the entire professional landscape management industry. Starting goals with key groups could be:

Consumers — Develop an appreciation for the value of professional landscape management.

Commercial buyers — Understand how professional services benefit their property values.

Investors — Provide accurate and comprehensive industry research.

Regulators and politicians — Provide quick response, accurate data and coordinated lobbying.

Students — Increase existing efforts to explain how great a landscape management career can be.

With one voice, the associations would not have to reinvent the wheel and would have a new "critical mass" carrying more weight with regulators. These messages of professionalism and service value will eventually increase your own respect and rewards.

I'm serious about this and pledge to help get this thing organized. But you need to tell your associations this is important work, with benefits for all. Many voices together make one strong message. Let's talk!

There is no coordinated program of public relations targeting shared key groups — those who buy, regulate or staff your services.



events

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25-28 International Maple Symposium / Lisle, IL; Sponsored by the Morton Arboretum; 630/719-2468

26 Southeast Texas Grounds Maintenance Conference / Conroe, TX; 936/539-7822

28-30 American Society of Landscape Architects Annual Meeting and Expo / St. Louis, MO; 202/898-2444

NOVEMBER

1-3 Eastern Regional Nurserymen's Association Expo 2000 / Atlantic City, NJ; 800/376-2463

4-7 Green Industry Expo and Conference / Indianapolis, IN; Sponsored by PLCAA, PGMS, ALCA; 800/458-3466

9-11 Tree Care Industry Expo / Charlotte, NC; Sponsored by the National Arborist Association; 800/733-2622

12-14 20th International Irrigation Show / Phoenix, AZ; Sponsored by the Irrigation Association; 703/573-3551

14-16 Virginia Turf and Landscape Conference and Trade Show / Virginia Beach, VA; 540/231-9738

14-16 New York State Turfgrass Association Conference and Show / Syracuse, NY; 518/783-1229

28-30 North Central Turfgrass Show / St. Charles, IL; Sponsored by the Illinois Turfgrass Federation; 312/201-0101

DECEMBER

4-7 Ohio Turfgrass Foundation Conference and Show / Columbus, OH; 888/683-3445

7-8 MVTA Lawn and Turf Conference and Trade Show / Columbia, MO; Sponsored by the Missouri Valley Turfgrass Association; 573/882-2301

12-14 New Jersey Turfgrass Expo / Atlantic City, NJ; 732/821-7134

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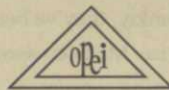
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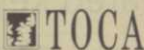
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Good news down Mexico way

At the invitation of Jeff West, vice president of GTO International L.L.C., I flew to central Mexico this past July. What I learned there encouraged me, and it should encourage you, too. Read about the growing role of Hispanics in the landscape industry on page 24.

But first you should know more about Jeff and his company, GTO.

GTO is the labor contracting company that West founded. GTO is the abbreviation for Guanajuato, the Mexican city where his company maintains an office.

West graduated from Arizona State University with a degree in horticulture and spent the next 11 years as a golf course superintendent in Arizona and California. He returned to his home state of Michigan to build a golf course at the Wyndgate Club. He's now involved in several entrepreneurial ventures, including GTO, and works mostly out of his home.

A necessary thing

West got involved with finding Mexican labor out of necessity. In 1995, the INS took away his Mexican workers as they were building the golf course. The INS said they were working with fake social security cards.

So he researched the H-2B program as a way to provide himself and his employer a pipeline to dependable and "legal" workers from Mexico. He traveled to Mexico, met with workers and talked with government officials. From there, it wasn't too hard to find Mexican workers for other U.S. landscape businesses, too. For a price of course.

I went to central Mexico because I wanted to see where so many of our Green Industry's workers come

from and how we recruit them. I wanted to know why these mostly young men leave their families for 9 to 10 months each year to mow for 10 hours a day, 6 days a week. The answer was too obvious — employment.

Like I mentioned before, most of what I learned should encourage labor-strapped U.S. landscapers.

First, there is a huge pool of healthy, willing young Mexican workers eager to work in the U.S. That means that as long as our government allows us to bring them in through the H-2B program, we can select and keep the best.

Next, Mexican state officials support efforts by U.S. industry to establish training programs in Mexico. In fact, they're willing to help set up these programs. The more dollars that their citizens earn, the better for their local economies.

On a more controversial note, incoming Mexican President Vincinte Fox stated he wants a freer flow of commerce across the U.S./Mexican border, something akin to the United States' relationship with Canada. This isn't going to happen soon even if Mexico's new government begins doing its part to halt illegal immigration.

Jeff West is not counting on uncertain immigration policies to drive his business. Instead, he's banking on U.S. demographics that suggest the need for evermore labor, and the eagerness of Mexican workers to fill that gap.

Contact Ron at 440/891-2636
or e-mail at rhall@-
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There are more young Mexican workers
eager to work in the United States
than we could ever assimilate into the workforce.



The landscape industry hasn't been around long and therefore is still **wide open** for innovation because everybody is always looking for ways to save time and labor.



You may be an inventor

You may not see yourself as an inventor, but you might be. If you've run a landscape company for any length of time, chances are you've "invented" a labor-saving tool or piece of equipment.

You came up with the product not because you thought you were another Edison, but you saw a way to save either time or labor. You felt that you (or your employees) were working too long or too hard on a specific task. What you may not realize is that other landscapers could benefit from your invention, too and that your product could become a commercial success.

I've been in the landscape business for almost 30

years, and I don't like hard work any more than you do. That's one reason why I keep my mind open to developing new products either to save labor or solve a particular problem.

But I don't usually stop there. When I come up with a new product that I feel a lot of other people could benefit from, I take the extra step. I patent and bring the product to market. It doesn't even have to be a landscaping product.

For example, one of my most successful inventions is a product called the Drainbox. I came up with the idea for it when I noticed that homeowners had just two ways to dispose of rooftop drainage, and neither was satisfactory in neighborhoods where the houses were close together. They could let the water flow from downspouts around the foundation of their houses, or direct it away with unsightly pipes or tubing. The houses and landscapes might look nice, but your eyes are always drawn to those pipes. They don't look good.

So I experimented with a system that would direct the water from the downspouts into an underground "drainbox" (www.drainbox.com) away from the house. When I had a system that worked, I obtained a patent and began production.

Most of the other products I've developed have been for the landscape industry, like my first patented product in 1981 called the "Total Landscape Machine." The combination box blade/soil pulverizer/earth remover saved my crew almost 30% time on every soil renovation task — every fourth job we were working on free time. My most recent invention, the "Tongue Twister," is a lawn care equipment trailer that's been generating a lot of interest at equip-

Will demand warrant the expense?

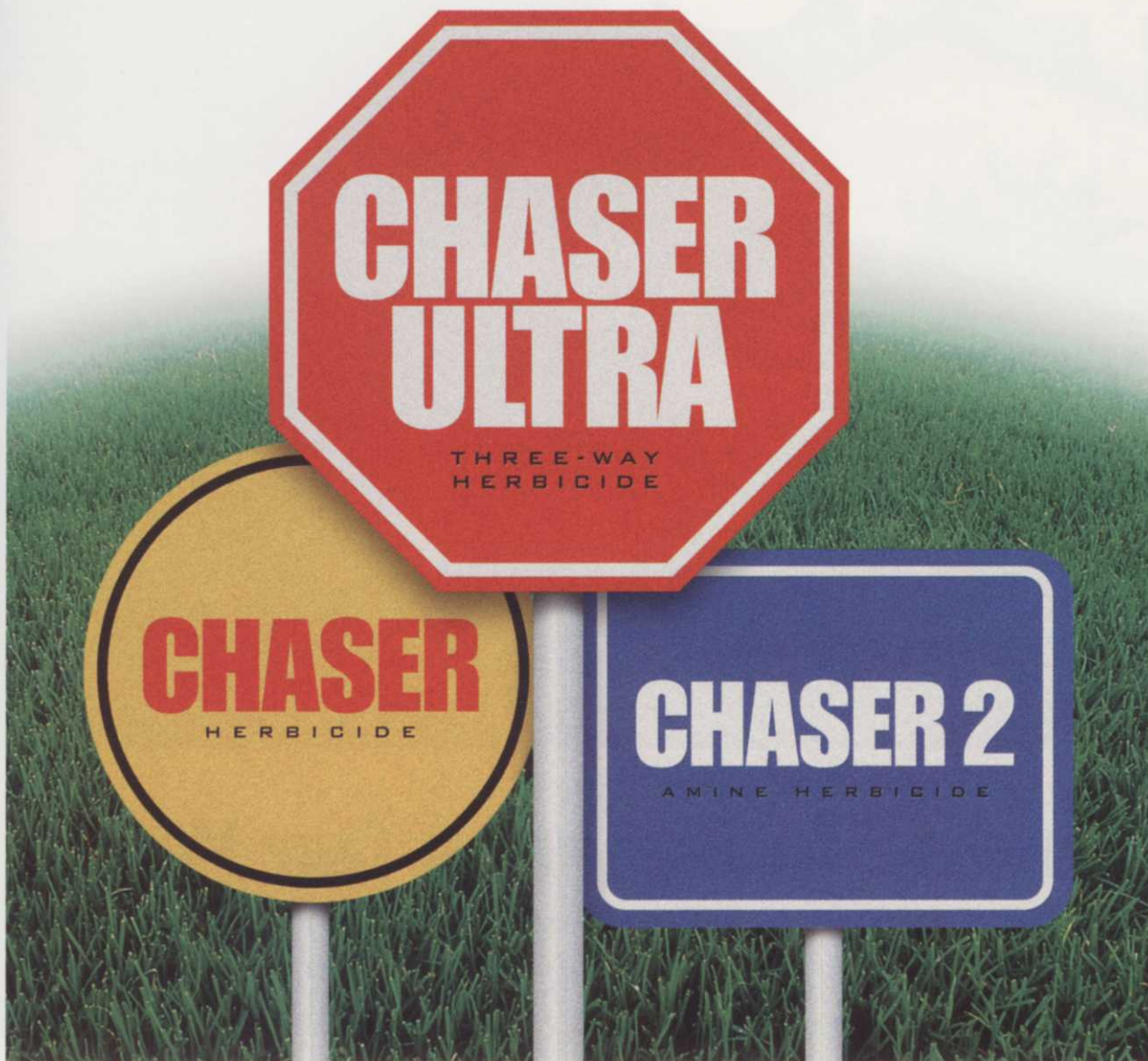
Turning a good idea into a marketable landscape product can be expensive, but it can also be profitable.

If you have an idea for a new product, the first step is to determine if it is, in fact, new. You will need to do a patent search. An experienced patent attorney can help you fulfill the requirements of the U.S. patent office, including the drawings.

Unless you're convinced the market will respond to your "new" product, you may be scared away by the \$20,000 to \$25,000 you will need to invest to get a patent.

continued on page 15

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Author Chumley's "Tongue Twister," a trailer with both front and rear ramps.

continued from page 12

trade shows. The trailer is equipped with both front and rear ramps. A side-mounted hydraulic motor can swivel the trailer 40 degrees in either direction, so you can remove the equipment you need from either the front or rear of the trailer.

I am far from a genius when it comes to inventing — everything I've come up with has been a result of my practical experiences as a landscaper since borrowing a mower and starting my own maintenance business in 1972. I was married, had a new baby, a new house, a new car and not much money, but looking back on it, it was exactly the right thing for me to do.

I've been in the landscape business ever since, growing and adding services to fit the changing marketplace in and around Greenville/Spartanburg, SC.

To all potential inventors, I say this: The landscape industry hasn't been around very long and therefore is still wide open for innovation because everybody is always looking for ways to save time and labor.

This translates into opportunities to de-

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— Bill Chumley is president of Reidville Products International, Reidville, SC. He can be reached at 864/433-0446.

Chumley believed in his "Drainbox" enough to patent it and create its own Web site.

Husqvarna acquires Bluebird

CHARLOTTE, NC — Husqvarna acquired Bluebird International Inc., a manufacturer of commercial dethatchers, aerators, seeders, sod cutters and other turf care equipment.

"We believe that Bluebird will be an excellent complement to the product line currently offered as a result of the acquisition of Yazoo/Kees last October," said Bengt Andersson, CEO of Husqvarna Worldwide.

Husqvarna will continue to market the Bluebird brand through existing Bluebird dealers and its distributor network. Terms of the purchase were not revealed.

Simplot adds Lange-Stegmann

BOISE, ID — With an eye on expansion to the East Coast, Simplot Turf & Horticulture acquired the professional product line from St. Louis-based fertilizer formulator Lange-Stegmann. The deal includes the Lange-Stegmann production facilities for its professional products in the golf, landscape and lawn care markets.

"We're committed to bringing our products and service to the national market," said Bill Whitacre, president of Simplot Turf and Horticulture.

continued on page 18

CLIPPINGS

'Biocalendar' helps plan pesticide applications

BY JAMES E. GUYETTE / CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Landscape managers can help their operations blossom simply by watching the plants grow. Tracking and recording when certain plants bloom can pinpoint the best times to treat for specific insect pests. Dr. Dan Herms, an entomologist at The Ohio State University, has developed what he calls a "biological calendar" that predicts the emergence of tree and shrub pests — and thus the best time to spray — based on when ornamental plants bloom. "By knowing the order that pests occur, managers can plan their pesticide strategies," he says. "The sequence remains remarkably constant from year to year."

The calendar shows, for example, that European pine sawfly eggs hatch at the same time as first bloom in PJM rhododendron, and that gypsy moths hatch at full bloom in Spring Snow crabapple. (Herms' study is specific to his area of Ohio, but similar work has been accomplished in Illinois, Kentucky and Michigan. Check with your local extension office.)

To prepare his study, Herms looked at the blooming times of 86 ornamental plants and matched them with the activity of 40 insects and mites. The result was a list in order of what happens when. It works because the development of plants

Good timing is a benefit of the biological calendar, ... it allows landscape managers to spray when a pest is present — not before or after.

and insects depends on the temperature, and the order of this development is the same every year. "What you see in one year is going to hold in other years, which is why it's important for you to make these observations while you're applying your own controls."

For instance, Herms found that eastern *continued on page 17*

Turfco Direct offers fall money-making kit

As all landscape professionals know, marketing is half the battle when trying to increase profits, no matter what the season. Turfco Direct knows that, which is why the company has come out with the "Fall MoneyMaker Kit," a free package of marketing materials to help landscape professionals sell aeration and overseeding services to their customers.

The "Fall MoneyMaker Kit" includes customer brochures, suitable for mailing and/or use as handouts and door hangers, that describe the benefits of both aeration and overseeding. A "plan of action" explains how to use the materials for best results and how to effectively sell these services to new and existing accounts. Also, there are pricing guidelines to help lawn care firms establish profitable pricing for their own area.

For more information about the "Fall MoneyMaker Kit," call Turfco Direct at 800/679-8201 or visit www.turfco.com.

continued from page 16

tent caterpillar eggs hatch under particular temperature conditions. The date varied from March 28 in a warm spring to April 4 in a cooler one, but it always coincided with full bloom in Corneliancherry dogwood, which also occurred at the same time.

Other examples are holly leafminers, emerging at full bloom in Amelanchier 'Regent;' and bronze birch borers, appearing when black locust blossoms peak.

Until now, bronze birch borers' emergence has been especially hard to forecast. "We found that it can be accurately predicted simply by watching black locusts bloom along the highway," Herms explains. "When black locusts begin to bloom, that's when you need to make an insecticide application for bronze birch borer."

Timing helps

Good timing is a benefit of the biological calendar, he observes. Instead of relying on the date or a schedule of regular applications, landscape managers can spray when a pest is present — not before or after. Pesticide use is cut, yet control is the same or better. This is especially true for hard-to-detect pests and those susceptible only at certain stages.

The end result is fewer, yet more effective, pesticide applications, according to Herms, who adds that you can create your own biocalendars specific to your climate and business operations.

The biocalendar can benefit an IPM program by making short-lived pesticides such as insecticidal soaps and oils more effective through timely application. Pesticides with longer, residual effect-types might not be needed.

Herms, a professor at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center in Wooster, based his biocalendar on three years of observations in the center's Secret Arboretum. He is currently preparing a similar biocalendar relating to weed control, which should be ready in three years.

Herms believes you can design a biocalendar with just a year's worth of observa-

tions by using existing field techniques. "You're keeping records on the pesticide applications anyway, and you can just add another space on the form to list the plants that are in bloom," Herms explains.

"If your timing is correct (during a specific battle), you can make that same application in following years," for your firm's biocalendar. "Follow-up monitoring is critical."

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continued from page 16

Becker Underwood acquires MicroBio

AMES, IA — Becker Underwood, Inc. acquired UK-based MicroBio Group Ltd. The acquisition includes the exclusive production and marketing rights of all MicroBio biofertilizers and biopesticides for the professional turf, agriculture and greenhouse markets.

Remember your absentee ballot

INDIANAPOLIS, IN — This year's Green Industry Expo is set for Nov. 3-7 at the Indiana Convention Center. Tuesday, Nov. 7, is election day, so if you're planning to attend the GIE and intend to vote, consider voting by absentee ballot (at least two weeks in advance). You can find out your state's voting requirements by calling your local election official.

Legionnaires outbreak traced to soil

ATLANTA, GA — Two women from Oregon and Washington are believed to have contracted Legionnaires' disease from potting soil in the first such cases ever reported in the U.S. A California man's death from Legionnaires' in May may also have been connected to potting soil, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. Potting soil has previously been blamed for outbreaks in Australia and Japan.

Legionnaires' disease is a form of pneumonia that was discovered after an outbreak that killed 34 people at a 1976 American Legion convention at a Philadelphia hotel.

RISE predicts uphill struggle

WASHINGTON — Pesticide activists' attacks on the use of specialty chemicals will become more of a critical issue for professional applicators, predicted Allen James, president of RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment), at the association's annual meeting here last month.

"The intent is not just to attack our industry, but to destroy it," James said. He named various conflict areas at the local, state and federal levels.

The growing movement to include pesticide use as a key issue in children's health leaves both pesticide producers and applicators vulnerable, James noted. "They have found the one area where we're the most vulnerable."

While the specialty chemical manufacturing industry backs its case with comprehensive research, the movement is having success, especially with regulators, said RISE staffers.

Rampant myths

Fred Langley, RISE manager of state government relations, noted key initia-

tives to limit or eliminate pesticide use in Massachusetts, California, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, New York, Minnesota and New Mexico, which either passed or were defeated narrowly.

Expect more pressure or local or statewide pesticide regulation in the future, Langley predicted. The groups are active, networked and at many levels, and industry data means very little to them. "Myths are rampant at those levels," he said.

David Crow, legislative contact for RISE, predicted a dramatic turn for the worst if the Gore-Lieberman party wins the November election. Sen. Barbara Boxer's (D, CA) many efforts to limit pesticides on federal properties will continue, he predicted, along with several other Administration and legislative efforts.

All RISE staffers called for a strong defense of pesticide testing and safety, plus education on the destructive and unhealthy effects of pests.

—Sue Gibson

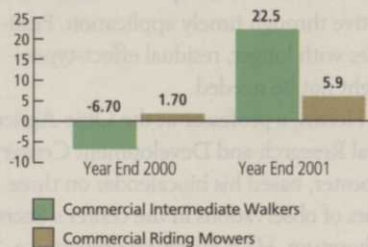
CLIPPINGS

Commercial mower sales to remain strong, says OPEI

ALEXANDRIA, VA — The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) predicts that while shipments of all consumer product categories will be slightly down in 2001 due to rising mortgage rates and declining housing starts and resales, commercial mower sales will continue to be strong.

For commercial turf equipment, intermediate size walk-behinds were down slightly in 2000 but OPEI predicts an increase in 2001. Commercial riding rotary turf mowers continued their strong growth in 2000, and OPEI says those sales will continue to be strong in 2001.

For the 2000 model year, consumer walk-behinds lost .4% to 5,901,846 units, while all riding units reached 1,662,836 units, a 3.2% increase.





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John Deere stores feature new look

DAVENPORT, IA — Bright showroom lighting. Streamlined display shelves. New signage. Colorful interiors. These elements are all part of the new John Deere "superstore" designed to enhance the buying atmosphere for customers.

River Valley Turf, a John Deere dealership for commercial and lawn and garden equipment, was one of the first new "superstores" to be built from the ground up. The idea for the new design, however, was conceived in 1998 as part of the Image 2000 program, which included in-store

merchandising plans and specific design instructions.

"We'd like to have all the stores like this, but different areas wouldn't lend themselves well to it," said Randy Davis, manager of retail marketing. "Our dealers are independent, so how each store is made is up to them."

It's no wonder Davis would like to see all stores take on the new, 21st century retail design. Sales are apparently up. "We have noticed considerable sales increases in certain products — particularly handheld ones."



Bright showroom lighting, new signage and colorful interiors are elements of the new John Deere "superstores."

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Circle 109

Oak tree epidemic spreading in northern California

It first appeared on tanoak in Mill Valley, CA, in 1995, but since then, Sudden Oak Death has been reported from Mendocino to Santa Barbara counties, with Marin, Santa Cruz and Monterey counties showing epidemic levels.

So far, the primary cause of Sudden Oak Death, which has affected tanoaks (*Lithocarpus densiflorus*), coast live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*) and may be spreading to black oaks (*Quercus kelloggii*), is still unknown. Symptoms include drooping shoots in tanoaks, and bleeding in coast live oaks, black oaks and tanoaks.

Treating Sudden Oak Death is difficult

without knowing the primary cause, but the Marin County University of California Cooperative Extension has created a Web site with tips on how to maintain and in-

crease tree health. The site also has the latest information on Sudden Oak Death.

Log on at <http://cemarin.ucdavis.edu/index2.html>

Info Center

VIDEOS AND LITERATURE FOR THE GREEN INDUSTRY

SPRAY HOSE REELS... abound in Hannay Reels' four-color hose reel catalog with information on its most popular products. For a copy, contact Hannay Reels, 553 State Rt.. 143, Westerlo, NY 12193-0159 or visit www.hannay.com.

CLASS IS IN SESSION... especially now that the ACRT Institute of Arboriculture and Urban Forestry has issued a catalog with 44 pages on all of ACRT's training opportunities for skills building. For a free copy call ACRT at 800/847-3541 ext. 240 or fax a request to 330-945-7200 or visit www.acrtinc.com.

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4e Plugged In

E-commerce provides green industry with a new way of doing business.

By David Weinstock

10e Computers and E-Maintenance:

Fad, folly or the future? By Joel Jackson

12e Questions Abound

Where do distributors fit in the e-commerce equation?

By Peter L. McCormick

15e Tips: Buying Online

It's getting easier to buy green industry items online.

By Russell Shaw

16e Take Advantage of the Web

Columnist realized value of the Internet and hasn't looked back.

By Chuck Keough

17e Will Surf for Work

The Web's a great place to go job hunting. Here's a primer for the golf and landscape industries.

By Joe Dysart

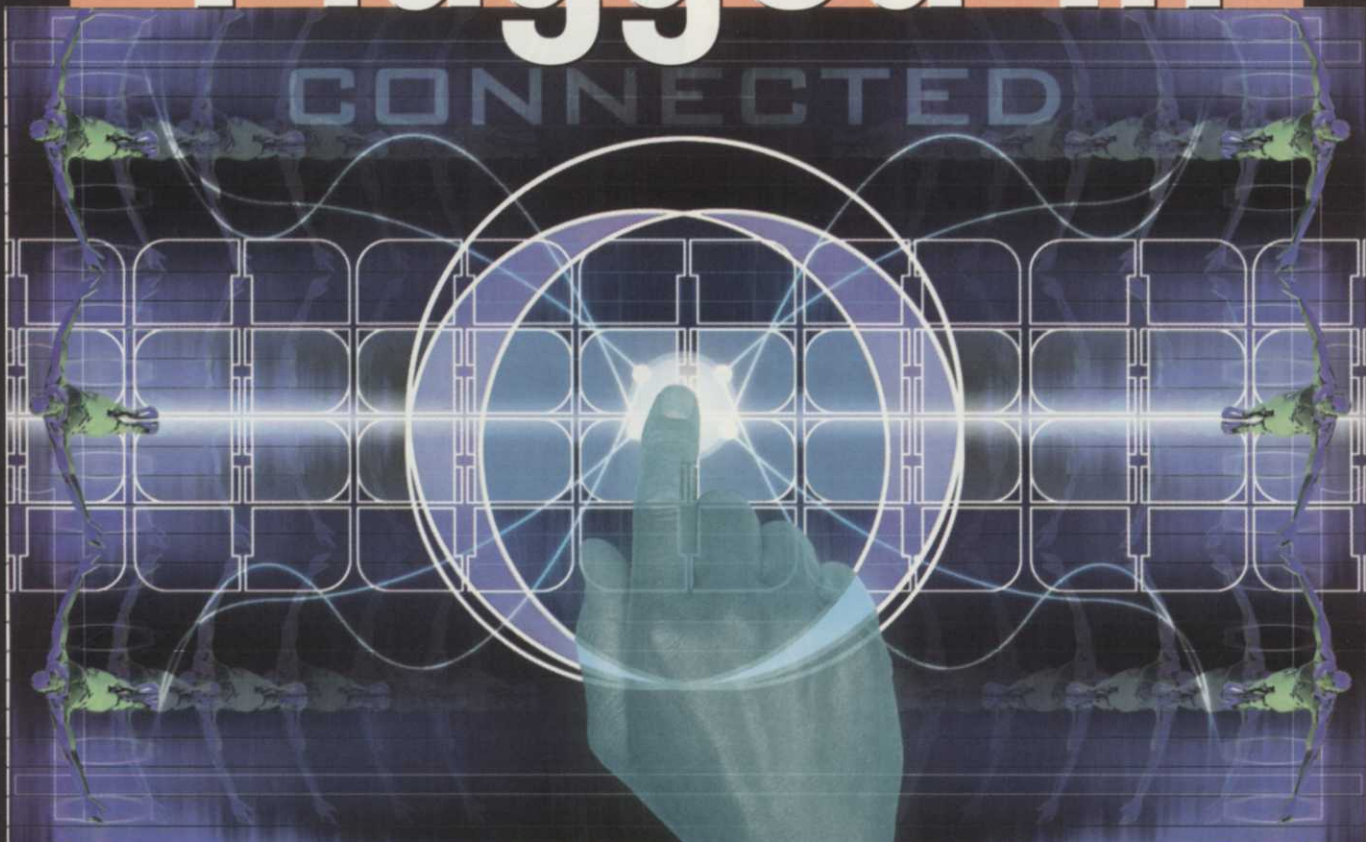


20e Defining E-commerce

An online glossary.

Plugged In

CONNECTED



E-commerce provides green industry with a new way of doing business

By David Weinstock

Harry Albert is one of a new cadre of green industry business people who are tearing down the old way of doing business and establishing a new order with help from the Internet.

In January, Raleigh, N.C.-based Albert, who worked in marketing and sales for Rhone-Poulenc and Union Carbide for 24 years, shed the traditional business model of product distribution for the new world of electronic commerce. Last winter, Albert went to work for XS Inc., which operates a neutral Web-based agricultural product and equipment exchange called XSAg.com.

The site's success prompted him to convince XS founder and CEO, Fulton Breen, to launch a second site called XSTurf.com, which will be online early next year.

The fledgling state of Albert's sites typifies nearly all sites in this new industry segment. A veteran operation, such as eGarden.com, has been around for about two years. It was only in the first or second quarters of this year that most firms first sold goods or services.

The Web sites are free-market exchanges where buyers and sellers negotiate prices on a per transaction basis.

"We don't own any of the products that are sold here," Albert says. "We just assure that the products people offer exist and that the buyers have the money

to pay for what they purchase. Then we facilitate the transaction, just like the New York Stock Exchange.”

The difference between Albert's online trading floor and the one on Wall Street is that his is a Web site. Businessmen like Albert who were the first in the green industry to take advantage of the Web have discovered that e-commerce is a more efficient way to connect with customers and close a sale than advertising to an audience and using the telephone or even making personal contact.

Going golf

Golf course maintenance distributors are making the same discovery about the Internet as landscapers. Sites like San Diego-based GolfSat.com are creating marketplaces, consulting services and virtual communities for superintendents in which to exchange management information, and buy equipment and supplies.

GolfSat.com offers an electronic catalogue that features a more than 100,000-product equipment catalogue; localized weather service; online technical references on turfgrass insects, plant diseases, weeds and species; and a golf industry application service provider (ASP), or a company that buys software packages and puts those programs on a server (a large computer with techno-gurus managing it) located on the Internet. The site goes live in January. CEO Mike Scott says that 200 courses from North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Arizona and California have been involved in a beta test since April.

When the company learned that many superintendents don't have on-the-job access to computers or the Internet, it developed a low-cost program for them. For \$29.95 a month, users can sign up for GolfSat.com's hardware package, which includes a personal computer, software and Internet access.

GolfSat.com's technical reference is a gigantic database with articles on current university research.

“Let's say a superintendent wants to know about dollar spot,” Scott says. “He can access the reference to look at research information and, with another click, look at product information on how to control it.”

The company recently completed work on the global information system component of an ASP program to enable superintendents to call up planned views of their courses, set the rate of fertilization, compute how much will be used, hit the execute button, deduct how much

will be pulled from inventory and trigger an order.

GolfSat.com is also creating an ASP offering for distributors. “They'll be able to establish golf course product discount centers that will contain all the products in their inventories, the products' technical specifications, and pricing information skews and discounts,” Scott says.

What it takes

Choosing an Internet Service Provider (ISP) is an important step toward getting involved in e-commerce. You should know that more popular services like AOL have Internet interfaces with quirks that prevent them from properly displaying some Web pages.

In addition, access for some ISPs can be difficult to secure in areas where subscriber demand outstrips the number of open lines. The service provides easy setup for Web pages, but the pages are very basic and nothing like what a decent Internet site designer and ISP could do.

You should pay no more than \$25 a month for dial-up access. Don't bother with firms that don't offer unlimited access for their monthly fees.

Now's a great time to buy a computer because there are many inexpensive models available. However, beware of discount deals offered by computer hardware manufacturers, many of whom trade discounts for several year commitments to ISPs. These may not be as desirable as they appear because some services are not suited

Continued on page 6e

“Use the knowledge of your
web developer—use him
or her as a consultant.”

—Melanie McGee,
president,
ImageNation

Plugged In

Continued from page 5e
for commercial access.

There are several access options: dial-up connection, Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN), cable modem and T1.

Dialup connection is the slowest of the four options. It comes standard with PCs and is accomplished through a phone modem over normal telephone wires. The fastest speed with this device is 56.6 kilobits per second (KBS).

A more speedy option, available over standard telephone lines, is DSL. Several DSL varieties are available from regional phone companies or broadband communication providers such as Rhythms Net-Connections in Englewood, Colo.

"DSL offers speeds varying from 7.1 megabits per second to 144 kilobits per second, depending on how far your business is from your community's central telephone system switch," says Chris Hardman, Rhythms' director of public relations.

Another option, ISDN, is less cost-effective than DSL, and its speed increase over DSL is negligible.

Another access option is a cable modem. Because it comes through the cable system, it doesn't tie up a telephone line. It costs an additional \$40 to \$70 per month and provides access speeds from 500 kilobits to 1.5 million bits per second. However, speed diminishes by the number of subscribers connected to each access cable.

A T1 connection is the next best thing to direct feed from the Internet backbone. At 1.5 million bits

per second, downloading 100-megabyte files will go as quickly as cutting dry grass in the late summer.

E-commerce options

Getting to the Web is easy as long as you have a Universal Resource Locator (URL) or Internet address.

Typically, a customer or broker goes to a site, registers as a user and provides contact and credit information to create an account. Then the person is free to log on and purchase or sell goods.

Buyer registration is usually free, but not always. For

example, *Golfsat.com* will charge a \$19.95 monthly membership fee and 6 percent transaction fee on sales. Commissions on most green industry e-commerce sites vary from 2 percent to 6 percent.

Most firms assure the existence of sellers' goods and buyers' credit. Money moves from an escrow account once the product arrives. Delivery can be coordinated through the dot.com.

Options available to buyers and sellers vary greatly. Some offer auctions, fixed price or name-your-price transactions. *eGreenBiz.com* of Boulder, Colo., offers online auctions and direct sales and also recently premiered a request for a bids system for plants and equipment.

PlantFind.com, a Boynton Beach, Fla.-based service that finds both common and rare plants, features separate chat rooms for agriculture and horticulture operators. It also helps sellers market goods through Web pages it designs and creates free of charge.

Michael Ferraro, president of *PlantFind.com*, has negotiated a deal with Plant and Supply Locator where users can look up materials in its directory and discover if they are available at *PlantFind.com*.

The Internet's advantage, he says, is that it pulls together a fragmented market and allows for buying hard-to-find products quickly and inexpensively.

Other firms, like *eGarden.com*, which has an interactive calendar of lawn and garden industry events, draw users in with content.

"We have a news area and regional reporters who feed us news items," says Linda Watson, *eGarden.com's* president. "We also have a stock listing for the top 25 lawn and garden companies."

Green2go.com hired Kris Sweet, editor of *Ornamental Outlook*, to generate copy for the news, weather and industry information section of its Web site. The site also has a staff entomologist, Suzanne Wainright, who answers pest-related questions.

In the golf industry, one new e-commerce venture is the tee time reservation network, where courses enter into contractual agreements with services to allow golfers to book tee times on their courses.

Book4Golf.com of Scottsdale, Ariz., which launched its site in January, lists all courses in North America on its site and has 1,000 of those courses under contract. Around 300 of those courses were "bookable" as of mid-July, says Marney Edwards, senior vice president of *Book4Golf Vacations*.

Book4Golf.com takes a 3.5 percent to 5 percent commission of the total round price. In one week in June, the firm booked more than 2,100 rounds of golf online.

Continued on page 8e

Here are some of the many green industry Web sites that you'll find useful:

gcsaa.org
turftech.com
usga.org/green
ngf.org
bidmgr.com
wunderground.com
turfnet.com
ntep.org
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"It's made things simple. Once someone puts in an RFP, we respond to it, and we get the business or not. The convenience is great."

—Matt Bunch
Operations Manager
Carolina Eastern-Maloney
Ravenel, SC

"For us, I really believe the big benefit is the auction site. It's a good way to get movement on products you don't need anymore."

—Frank Onesty
Contract Manager
York Distributors
Linthicum Heights, MD

"We're in Missouri, and we bid on some things in South Carolina that we would never have known about otherwise. Greentrac has taken us from being a localized business to being more nationwide."

—Bill Kendrick
PTS Turf Products
Independence, MO

"Greentrac brings business from all over to your doorstep. It's like having a solid salesman on the road, only with no gas expenses."

—Bennett Denemark
Sales Executive
Sumter Small Engine
Sumter, SC

who says greentrac.com works?

"We needed flags with logos for the golf course we're opening. I attached files of logos to my RFP and got responses within a day or two. It was that simple. I got exactly what I wanted, as quickly as I needed it."

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Plugged In

Continued from page 6e

Build your own?

The secret to Web commerce is to bring traffic through a site. Without visitors, a Web site has just as much value as a bad catalogue or billboard.

First, those who wish to have their own Web sites should ask themselves what their goals are. Then they should hire professional Web site developers to turn their visions into reality.

Melanie McGee, president of Cleveland-based ImageNation, designs and implements Web sites.

"I would like customers to have ideas of how their sites should look and function, but not concrete demands," she says. "Many people forget that form should follow function."

While she says logos, promotional materials and other advertising materials help sites, she cautions against imitation. "When a client demands that its site look exactly like joe-bob.com's site, [the client] may be selling itself short."

Decide what the site should do for the businesses.

"I don't think that many people understand the capabilities of good Web developers," McGee says. "They

"The 18,000 buyers that represent those co-ops will come to us when they are looking to purchase lawn and garden and outdoor living products online."

— David Harper, CEO, eGarden.com

can put more than an advertising-type of site online. If you can dream it up, it can probably be done. Use the knowledge of your Web developer. [Those people] are excellent sounding boards for ideas."

Of course, being ready to built your site makes life easier. It's also a good idea to have everything on disc in digital form. Electronic data (brochures, databases, letters, etc.) is easier to work with than paper-based data.

Big bucks

If you're thinking about creating a site for a wholesale or distributing business, be assured that this enterprise is more expensive than a promotional site.

"There is a tremendous up-front cost, in the neighborhood of several hundred thousand dollars," says eGarden.com's Harper.

John Cochran, president of eGreenbiz.com, says his firm's startup,

Survey Says

We surveyed landscape contractors, lawn care operators and grounds managers to discover their e-business tendencies. We found:

- ▶ **One in five** have their own Web-sites (21 percent).
- ▶ **More than half** (53 percent) use the Internet for business-related purposes (71 percent of grounds managers, 55 percent of landscape contractors and 46 percent of lawn care companies managers said they use the Web for business).
- ▶ **50 percent** use the Internet to find product information.
- ▶ **47 percent** use it for weather news.
- ▶ **45 percent** participate in e-mail or bulletin boards online.
- ▶ **28 percent** find association information online.
- ▶ Searching for general information is the most popular use for **89.5 percent**.
- ▶ Searching for industry information is second most popular for **82.9 percent**.
- ▶ **35.5 percent** said they make purchases on the Internet.
- ▶ **Mean hours** spent online are 4.18 a week

We asked 100 Golfdom readers: How often do you use the Internet in your work? They responded:



which launched April 1, had software costs of \$2 million.

Once a site is built, the next task for a site owner is to generate traffic through promotion and advertising. Albert's XSAg.com site was recently recognized by *Farm Journal's* AG Web Service as having the second best recognized commercial agricultural site on the Web, behind John Deere & Co. Albert says his site's monthly transactions are in the millions of dollars and that there are 50,000 registered users.

When it comes to traffic, *eGarden.com's* Watson, *Green2go.com's* Gardner and *Plantfind.com's* Ferraro talk about building a critical mass, which means a large number of buyers and vendors.

Launched as a retail site in December 1997, *eGarden.com* currently has 150 vendors and projects it will have 500 by January. Eighteen months after founding the site, Watson sold it to U.S. Home and Garden. Last November, *eGarden.com* went wholesale and launched an auction site. In July, it opened a virtual store that offers 26 categories of goods in lawn and garden and outdoor living products.

The operation sells goods to both consumers and retailers. In fact, the latest feather in its cap is signing a long-term agreement with the nation's three largest hardware cooperatives — Ace, Tru-Serv and Do-it-Best — to be their exclusive online sales outlet.

Partners and alliances are the building blocks of these businesses. *Plantfind.com's* Ferraro has cut a deal with the Plant & Supply Locator directory. In return for becoming that publication's exclusive online agent, Plantfind.com will help find it new growers' markets.

What's the fate of offline wholesalers?

When asked whether online distribution foreshadows an end to real-time

businesses such as brokers and distributors, online business people take a deep breath and say, "No."

Right now, e-commerce sites need vendors as much as they need buyers. Harper and Watson both say that buyers and sellers at their site switch hats all the time. They may come in to sell equipment but, while they're on the

site, they might see some fertilizer available at a price from which they can make a profit.

Like so many others, green industry professionals have to get used to the idea of engaging in commerce on the Web. With online transaction sales percentages increasing every year, they can't afford not to. ■



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Computers and E-Maintenance: Fad, Folly or the Future?

have you succumbed to the computer age? Do you surf the 'Net? Do you Yahoo? What is your computer IQ rating — two tin cans and a string, or a Pentium 5? And what does any of this have to do with growing grass?

While computers have made a huge impact on our culture, remember that they are only a tool — not a silver bullet to help repair your every woe. The time savings and efficiency that computers provide are directly proportional to how well you understand how to use them. For example, many superintendents over 50 don't care much about computers, and those in their 40s find computers challenging. But superintendents in their 30s understand random access memory and megahertz, and those in their 20s wonder why their entire courses can't be mowed robotically from their offices.

We need to remind ourselves that even in this electronic age there are still many courses with manual irrigation systems and six-man crews. To this legion of superintendents, computers will remain *Star Wars* toys of the future. But there's no discounting computers' increasing influence — they've even changed the way *I* do business.

I've been the editor of *The Florida Green* magazine for the Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association for 10 years. Over that decade, computer and software improvements have allowed my publisher and I to graduate from faxes to e-mails and from hour-long file downloading sessions to pdf formatted files which take minutes to send and receive. I can view the entire magazine design on my monitor and make any necessary changes *before* it goes to press — a vast improvement over the pile of faxes on the floor.

But what about computers and e-maintenance? There's a tremendous buzz at industry events about online purchasing, GPS mapping and operational tracking. But what does it all mean for the superintendent on a daily basis? If the response to my poll is any indicator, I'd say the pace of computerization of golf course maintenance is slow. I sent out a simple questionnaire to 99 Florida superintendents via my e-mail network and asked them how they used computers at work and only 10 responded.

But for those who use computers, the advantages will put them light years ahead of their competition. Data manipulation helps superintendents prepare budget reports with phenomenal speed, and rapid communication by e-mail has virtually eliminated the phone tag game. And let's not forget the No. 1 computer use in golf course maintenance — irrigation management.

As for online purchasing, it's a feature that's hyped a lot but used sparingly — for the moment. Superintendents are a conservative group who don't like to be treated as guinea pigs. But this will change as a new generation of workers whose lives are shaped by the Internet join our ranks.

There's no doubt that a computer can be a powerful tool on the administrative side of the job. Now sign off from the GCSAA Web site and go check on the crew. There are some things a computer can't do — yet. ■



Joel Jackson, the author of this column, retired from Disney's golf division in 1997 and is director of communications for the Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association.



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Questions Abound

Where do distributors fit in the e-commerce equation?

By Peter L. McCormick

The dawning of e-commerce in the green industry brings more questions than answers in these early stages, particularly concerning the impact it will have on the front-line customer service provided by local distributors — not to mention the effect on the distributors themselves. Will the convenience of 24-hour-a-day ordering override the consultative selling skills of local salespeople? Will the promise of discount pricing lure a buyer away from his long-time local supplier? Will overnight shipping be fast enough when products or supplies are needed *now*?

Ask a golf course superintendent or sports field manager and you'll get a different answer to these questions than you will from a lawn care operator or landscape contractor. Even though these businesses share a common thread in the green industry, they are

different and are often served by different suppliers.

Since superintendents and sports field managers are stationary and have predictable budgets and buying patterns, they are easily serviced by local or regional distributors and their field salespeople. Being only one step removed from the manufacturer, these field salespeople tend to be well-trained and offer agronomic consultation and extended product demonstrations as part of their service. Equipment setup, warranty service, delivery and credit are also offered by the local distributors.

Lawn care operators, on the other hand, are usually on the move, preferring to order from their local suppliers by calling them on their cell phones or stopping by on the fly. They tend to be serviced by local two-step dealers who purchase from regional distributors rather than directly from the manufac-

turer and have limited field sales staffs, if any. Landscape contractors rely less on their local dealers for consultation, equipment setup, delivery and even credit. As entrepreneurs with profit motives, they also tend to be more price sensitive than at least the private club sector of the golf industry, which tends to let quality and service override price concerns.

The great unknown is how e-commerce fits into this scheme of things. One who can temper conjecture with experience is George Kinkead, president of Minneapolis-based Turfco, a manufacturer of specialty turf equipment for the golf, sports turf and landscape segments of the green industry. Turfco took the e-commerce plunge in late 1999 with the Turfco Direct e-commerce initiative, and it has been a revelation, according to Kinkead.

"We have two distinct markets and distribution systems for our products," Kinkead says. "Our topdressers, material handlers and overseeders are targeted at the golf and sports turf markets, and have always been represented and serviced well by our traditional distributors.

"On the other hand, our lawn care products — the sod cutters, edgers and aerators — had historically been handled by a two-step dealer network. With specialty products like ours, the dealers were too far removed from us to achieve the expertise needed to properly sell and service our products," Kinkead adds.

Turfco launched Turfco Direct "as a way to reach those end users of our lawn care products who were dissatisfied with their local service, as well as open up new markets where we had no representation at all," Kinkead says. "Now those landscape contractors and lawn care people are dealing directly with us and are pleased because they're getting much better service."

By eliminating one step in the supply chain, Turfco reduced its pricing on its lawn care products to the market level, Kinkead notes.

"We wanted to establish one price for our products that was fair and competitive," he adds. "The net result was that pricing dropped slightly in some areas and dramatically in others, depending upon how much some dealers were marking up our products."

Turfco will be adding more lawn care products as well as a range of service parts to Turfco Direct in the near future, but has no inten-

tion of marketing its golf and sports turf products via e-commerce. "The needs of the lawn care and fine turf markets are very different," Kinkead says.

On the turf supply side of the industry, Bob Lippman Sr. has concerns about the emergence of e-commerce. Lippman, a former superintendent and manufacturer's representative, founded Westchester Turf Supply in Lincoldale, N.Y., in 1976. He and his son, Bob Jr.,

Will the convenience of 24-hour-a-day ordering override the consultative selling skills of local salespeople?

sell fertilizers, seed, chemicals and other supplies to 150 golf courses in the metropolitan New York area.

"I just don't see how these e-commerce companies are going to fit into the picture," Lippman says. "The competition between local distributors of turf supplies is strong, not to mention the national companies like Lesco and UHS. Particularly with pre-season programs on pesticides, we're operating on very low — often single digit — profit margins. It's to the point where we're almost cutting each other's throats, profitwise. There's little for an e-commerce middleman to share."

Lippman also questions how well the e-commerce companies will service the needs of his accounts in the traditional sense.

"We have been contacted by several dot-com companies to entice us to participate with them, and I have asked them pointblank whether anyone in their company knows anything about growing fine turf," he says. "They admitted they don't. They're just going at it as a buy-and-sell commodity type of thing when this industry demands more."

Local distributors provide other services like warehousing, staggered delivery schedules and emergency deliveries when needed, Lippman notes.

"Many superintendents don't like to inven-

Continued on page 14e

Questions Abound

Continued from page 13e

tory large quantities of pesticides or fertilizers for insurance reasons," he adds. "Plus, if a guy calls and needs a case of Daconil in a hurry, we'll have it to him in an hour in most cases. He's not going to get that service over the Internet — at any price."

Some shipping companies refuse to handle restricted-

Will the promise of discount pricing lure a buyer away from his long-time local supplier?

use or other hazardous materials, and there are licensing issues as well, Lippman says.

"New York state, for instance, requires a pesticide dealer to have a dealer's license," he explains. "We go through the same testing as the end users do, and at least one person in the firm has to be a licensed pesticide applicator."

Further confusing the issue are the recent agency pric-

ing programs implemented by some chemical manufacturers, and the contracted areas of distribution established and enforced by most manufacturers. With agency pricing, the manufacturer sets a firm retail price and holds title to the product, even while it's in the distributor's warehouse. The distributor can't adjust the price up or down, and is paid a commission or agency fee by the manufacturer for selling and handling the product.

"Agency pricing is a disincentive to shop around," Lippman says, "because you're going to get the same price from everyone."

Greg Nicoll, superintendent at Maplewood (N.J.) CC, doesn't mince words when discussing his needs and the future impact of e-commerce on the green industry.

"As a young superintendent, I attribute a great deal of my success so far to my local suppliers," he says. "If I come in at 6 a.m. and find I need of a case of fungicide, I can make a call and it will be here by 7:30. That's very important to me. I'm much more concerned with the consistent health and playability of my golf course than saving a few bucks here and there."

Kinkead likens the dawning of e-commerce to the advent of the adjustable wrench.

"E-commerce is going to be a tool in the toolbox, but not the only tool," he says. "Many people think when one thing evolves, another dies. That isn't really the case."

Certain products will be supported more by e-commerce than others, Kinkead says. "The commodity products — seed, fertilizer, tee and green supplies, hand tools — will be the first to take off, particularly in areas where service isn't up to snuff," he adds.

Manufacturers and front-line distributors must continue to justify premium prices and products with premium service and support in the Internet age, Kinkead stresses.

"Everyone who touches or handles a product has to add value to it," he says. "The guy who thinks, 'I have this territory, these are my customers and they will do business with me,' is a dying breed."

Turfco is planning to use the Internet to help its distributors add value and improve customer service. Its Turfco Direct service center offers charts of the most common service problems with any machines and how to fix them. Solutions are easily available to salespeople and end users.

"If our salespeople can answer customers' questions — or the customers can access the information themselves — the customers will feel better about our products and be more likely to purchase them again," Kinkead says. ■

Peter L. McCormick is president of Skillman, N.J.-based TurfNet Associates, a provider of print and online information services for the golf course industry.

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Tips: Buying Online

By Russell Shaw

From bunker rakes to mulching equipment, it's becoming easier to buy green industry-related supplies online.

The benefits of ordering supplies and services over the Internet are numerous. You can visit any number of sites and get instant pricing information, as well as technical specifications. Since they can be updated in a few minutes, Web sites will likely have more current prices than that product brochure a turf equipment salesperson dropped off in April.

The best e-commerce sites have other useful features, such as frequently asked questions lists about the products they offer; geographically searchable lists of service technicians and contractors authorized to handle products; pages with e-mail, phone and fax numbers of the company representatives in your area; and e-mail links to vendors themselves.

Green industry e-commerce is, of course, only a small example of the worldwide procurement revolution that the Internet is sparking. The worldwide B2B market is forecast to grow from \$145 billion in 1999 to \$7.29 trillion in 2004, according to Stamford, Conn.-based Internet commerce analysis firm Gartner Group. By 2004, B2B e-commerce will represent 7 percent of the forecasted \$105 trillion total global sales transactions.

"The B2B explosion is imminent, fueled by a combustible mixture of investment financing, IT spending and opportunistic euphoria that is being funneled into startups and brick and mor-

tars' e-commerce initiatives," said Leah Knight, principal analyst for Gartner Group's e-Business Intelligence Services.

Most e-commerce experts break e-commerce into four distinct sectors:

- Companies that sell goods or services directly on their own sites.

- Independent "trading exchanges" operated by third parties specific to an industry or group of industries, where merchandise or services are offered for sale from various and sometimes competing vendors. Examples include Golf-sat (www.golfsat.com) and Greentrac.com (www.greentrac.com).

- Auction sites that take competitive bids via e-mail and then verify the transaction after the expiration of the auction period. One example is Auction Equipment.com, which has a section for landscaping supplies.

- Industrywide e-marketplaces, administered by a consortium of companies in a given industry or by a trade association. Although turf management e-commerce has yet to appear in this arena in any meaningful fashion, this is the hottest sector, one which Gartner predicts will be responsible for 37 percent of all B2B online transactional revenue within three years.

How to find supplies

Your most effective strategy to finding supplies online is to use an Internet index or search engine. Indexes, such as Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com), list groupings of Web sites by category. Search engines such as Google (www.google.com) go through much of the Web every few weeks and construct giant indexes of

Web pages. By entering two search terms, say "sod" and "buy online," you'll see a specially created search results page with listings of, and links to, sod vendors that let you buy over their sites.

Is ordering safe?

Despite the sensational headlines that erupt when sites are "hacked," most online ordering is safe. Most sites that take credit card numbers are encrypted, which means the information you type into an order form is given a unique code by your browser that only the merchant's or site's e-commerce processing software can decipher.

Just as your bull detector goes off when you meet a bunk-artist salesperson in the real world, there are standards you can use to verify if a Web site you're thinking about buying from is legit. After all, in the real world, a face-to-face meeting, a handshake, a hand-signed contract all help foster trust. Yet in e-commerce, you don't get to see your seller's face — just its Web site.

Just in case you have even a little doubt, the Better Business Bureau suggests you avoid doing business with sites that can't be checked. "If a site will not divulge a street address and telephone number, something fishy is probably going on," the BBB says.

Fortunately, these incidents are rare. If they weren't, businesses wouldn't be flocking to Web-based purchasing. ■

Russell Shaw, a Portland, Ore.-based free-lance writer, covers e-commerce issues for various publications and Web sites.

Take Advantage of the Web

back in 1998, I was one of the first landscape professionals to realize the value of the Internet. Since then, I've never looked back.

As a 23-year-old owner of my own lawn care company, Lawnicure, I could already feel my knees and back giving out. So I decided to work smarter, not harder. With an initial investment of \$300, I created a Web page that described my company and the services I offered, and put my Web domain name (www.lawnicure.com) on my business cards. I also put that domain name in with my Yellow Pages advertisements to stretch my advertising dollars.

A month later, I added a lawn care message forum to my Web page so that landscape professionals who visited the site could say hello or ask me a question. This forum became popular, so in January 1999 I registered the domain www.lawnsite.com, sold my lawn care company and started selling advertising space on the site.

As hundreds of thousands of lawn care company owners started visiting my site monthly, manufacturers saw the value of sponsoring LawnSite.com with a banner (a small rectangle with the sponsor's company advertisement in it). Some people who see a certain product advertised might have something negative to say about it in the public discussion forum, but others with different experiences will talk highly about it. The great thing is that the manufacturer can jump into the discussion as well.

Today, LawnSite.com is the most popular lawn care message forum on the Internet with more than 600,000 monthly page views, 20,000 different discussions on commercial lawn care and 1,100 registered lawn care company owners.

Forum participants enjoy the interaction with their peers. Ed Wagner of www.turfquip.com sums it up nicely: "Lawn care operators nationwide share a common set of industry specific problems — poor public perception, lack of profitability, availability of labor and changing technology, to name a few. By sharing common concerns, LawnSite members are able to reach common solutions by saving time, money and shortening the learning curve."

Moving forward, I've invested \$10,000 additional dollars in hiring a software programming company to add a lawn care company directory and online marketplace to my site. I'm also creating LawnSites.com, which will offer web page design services to lawn care companies.

All landscape professionals will eventually use e-commerce to benefit themselves and their companies. Watch out, local parts dealers, because you can't compete with the low overhead the Internet offers — LCOs will buy directly from wholesale outlets for big savings and the product will be delivered to their doorsteps. LCOs will also be able to research before they buy by talking to thousands of their peers across the country, not to mention getting industry news and events in minutes. Manufacturers will be able to reach a new market and get insight from LCOs on what they're looking for in equipment. Consumers will be able to find lawn companies and receive bids in minutes.

If your company is not using the Internet, your competition is. You're missing out on a vast amount of knowledge and giving extra money to your local parts dealer to cover his overhead. If you're looking for an excuse to buy a new computer, the Internet is one you should take advantage of. ■



Chuck Keough
Owner,
LawnSite.com

Will Surf for Work

The Web's a great place to go job hunting.

Here's a primer for the golf and landscape industries

BY JOE DYSART

There may have been a time in America when it was easier to get a job, but if someone remembers, please let us know. With the unemployment rate regularly dipping below 4 percent, it's a stupendous time to go job surfing. And as luck would have it, the Web offers tools aplenty for the employment-seeking opportunist.

But before you hit the job boards, a stop by www.job-huntersbible.com would be beneficial. Maintained by Dick Belles, author of *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, the site is full of insights and tools for job searching on the Web. Another great source is *The Guide to Internet Job Searching*, by Margaret R. Dikel, France Roehm and Steve Oserman.

As you might expect, green industry-specific job boards are great for quickly honing your search. But these boards do not offer many frills. If you're looking for in-depth research, job-seeking advice and a high volume of offerings, you'll also want to check out the general interest boards.

As with most things on the Internet, the opportunities for finding a green job through the Web are growing exponentially as its user base continues to grow. Job seekers have literally thousands of general interest job boards from which to choose — and dozens of boards devoted exclusively to green jobs.

Indeed, by January 1998, 17 percent of *Fortune* Global 500 companies were cruising the Net for employees, according to iLogos.com (www.ilogos.com), a market research firm. Last year, the figured jumped to 45 percent. Over-

all, high-tech market research firm Forrester Research projects that businesses will be spending \$1.7 billion by 2003 to snap up new employees via the Web.

Either way, boards that show up first in popular search engine returns to keywords like "golf jobs" or "landscaping jobs" should be among the first ones to try. Job boards that send e-mail alerts are also handy.

Other features to consider with a job board: How easy is it for employers to post a new job offering, and what's the overall feel of the site? If the site feels friendly, professional and first-rate, there's a better chance the employer behind the board is offering the same kind of position.

Green-specific job boards

Green industry-specific job boards generally aren't as sophisticated as the general interest boards. But given that the boards are essentially in the backwoods of the Web, chances

Finding work

Check out these green industry sites if you want to go job hunting or look for capable workers:

greenindustryjobs.com
getajob.com
nurseryman.com
landscapejobs.com
gcsaa.org
turfnet.com
earthworks-jobs.com
greensearch.com
amigos-inc.com
brickmangroup.com
florapersonnel.com

Continued on page 18e

Will Surf for Work

Continued from page 17e

are greater that you'll come across a new opening no one else has seen.

A good place to start in this category is www.greenindustryjobs.com, where you can scan for job offers in four categories — irrigation, landscaping, tree care and nursery. You can search for jobs by date posted, state, territory, province, region or zip code.

www.nurseryman.com offers an informal jobs and resume-posting bulletin board, and www.landscapeworks.com appeals to an extremely narrow niche. For the scientifically inclined, www.earthworks-jobs.com is a source of job openings for plant, forestry and soil scientists.

More than a few golf and landscaping industry types are attracted to the industry by a desire to do something good for the earth. There are no shortage of boards that specialize in jobs that emphasize a healthy respect for the environment. Among these are www.ecbonline.com (Environmental Careers Bulletin Online), www.environmentnetwork.com, www.ejobs.com and www.ahs.org/horttops.html (Hort Opportunities).

General interest job boards

Not surprisingly, general interest job Web sites offer a more sophisticated site design, more job and career help tools — and many more green jobs. Of course, the downside is that these boards are so popular, you're chance of seeing a new job first is slim at best.

All of the boards below placed among the top 10 most-trafficked job boards in 1999, according to Media Metrix, an Internet media market research firm. All placed among the top links recommended by Top 10 Links, a Web-site review firm that rates sites based on traffic, usability and best overall performance. They are:

www.monster.com: For many analysts, Monster is essentially the benchmark by which all other job boards are measured. Sporting an extremely slick interface, Monster allows employers to post jobs in real time and gives them access to more than one million résumés. Loaded with columns and articles on job hunting, Monster also offers detailed online ad-



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Landscapejobs.com appeals to an extremely narrow niche.

visories for those thinking of switching careers, transferring military skills to the private sector and other special-case scenarios. You'll also find chat rooms to swap job search war stories, and you can research company profiles.

www.careerpath.com: Offering a simple, inviting, uncluttered home page, CareerPath also automatically imports ads from employer sites twice a week — so you know the listings are current. Green job hunters here can also search ads posted on the Web or by nearly 90 affiliated newspapers. The chat rooms, bulletin boards, articles and other features you'd expect at a top board are here. As a bonus, there are live, scheduled chats with leading recruiters and career counselors.

www.careermosaic.com: If you're a recent college grad looking for a green job, this should be one of your first stops. The entire site emphasizes help for the recent grad, including a résumé writing help center. For the especially adventurous, there's also a special domain devoted to employers outside the United States who are seeking job candidates.

www.hotjobs.com: In addition to the standard services found at other top sites, HotJobs enables you to control which companies see your résumé online. It has an easy-to-use tracking service that will inform you how often your résumé has come up in a search, and how many times it has been viewed. Another perk: HotJobs offers a free e-mail account to any and all takers. Plus, a number of employers have links here that lead back to their company home pages.

www.job-search-engine.com: Strictly a meta-search engine and not a job board, the site queries hundreds of job boards for a specified green job and returns links to all job boards offering such posts. Essentially, it's the place to go for a quick down-and-dirty look on what green jobs are available and nothing more. ■



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Defining E-Commerce

Address verification — Process used by a credit card processor or other party to verify that a customer's ordering address matches its records.

Authorization — Process of making sure you have enough money in your bank account or line of credit to afford the item you want to buy. If all goes well, an authorization code is created and the money is deducted from your account/line of credit.

Back end/Office — The secret password-protected part of an e-commerce site where the merchant does the dirty work of managing the site, counting the money, and adding and/or deleting pages. It's similar to the back room of a regular store — except nobody (hopefully) comes out to say, "If it's not on the shelves, we don't have it"

Banner — An often-annoying interactive advertisement on a Web site that will pop up by just brushing it with a cursor at the most inopportune time.

Card not present merchant account — Account allowing merchants to process credit cards without the cardholder actually being there. Internet merchants need Card not present merchant accounts

to conduct business online.

Certificate authority — Third party which verifies the identity of merchants and their sites.

Check-out stand — Shipping and payment-processing area of an e-commerce site. Contains bill-to and ship-to information, along with payment method.

Commerce server — Server that manages and maintains transactions and back-end data for an e-commerce Web site.

CyberCash — Secure gateway for authorization and capture of credit-card funds.

Cyberpunks — Knowledgeable computer buffs with attitude.

Delayed settlement processing

— Once a transaction has been authorized, the merchant must ship goods before transaction can be settled. Delayed settlements are stored online until the merchant selects the transactions for settlement.

Digital or electronic cash —

Also called e-cash, it is making payments by transmitting a number from one computer to another. The numbers, just like those on a dollar bill, are issued by a bank and represent specified sums of real money. Digital cash is anonymous and reusable, like real cash.

Digital certificate — Issued by a certificate authority, it verifies to the shopper that the virtual store is asso-

ciated with a physical address and phone number, which can increase the shopper's confidence in the merchant.

Digital signature — Digital code attached to an electronically transmitted message that identifies the sender. It's like a written signature, and is important for electronic commerce and a key factor in most authentication methods.

Digital wallet — Encryption software that's used like a real wallet during e-commerce transactions. It holds a user's payment information, a digital certificate to identify the user and shipping information to speed transactions. The "wallet" is also encrypted against fraud.

Disintermediation — Cutting out the middleman, such as when Internet-based companies bypass traditional retail channels to sell directly to customers.

Electronic check — Takes money from users' checking accounts to pay bills.

Electronic wallet — Stores your credit card numbers on your hard drive in an encrypted form.

Cookie

Message given to Web browser by Web server. The browser stores the message in a text file called `cookie.txt`. The message is then sent back to the server each time the browser requests a page from the server. The purpose is to identify users and possibly prepare customized Web pages for them. When you enter a Web site using cookies, you may be asked to fill out a form providing such information as your name and interests. This information is packaged into a cookie and sent to your Web browser, which stores it for later use.

SSL

The SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) Protocol was developed by Netscape Communications, which provides secure communications between the server and client, preventing others from capturing or viewing the data being exchanged.

Encryption — Process of creating secret codes to protect stuff flying through cyberspace.

Extranet — Extension of corporate intranet that connects the internal network of one company with the intranets of its customers and suppliers. Makes it possible to create e-commerce applications that link all aspects of business relationship, from ordering to payment.

Hypertext — Text that contains links to other Internet sites and documents.

Interchange — The exchange of information, transaction data and money among banks. Interchange systems are managed by Visa and MasterCard associations and are standardized so banks and merchants worldwide can use them.

Micropayments — Transactions in amounts between 25 cents and \$10.

Order confirmation — E-mail message notifying you that an order has been received and will be processed and immediately sent.

Portal — Aims to be the first place people see when entering Internet, especially within an industry category; has links galore, perhaps a search engine, to encourage its popularity as a "port of entry."

Shareware — Software that can be used on a trial basis for free. Payment is expected if used after trial period.

Real-time credit card processing — Credit card purchase is authorized while a shopper is still online. If credit is denied, the shopper has opportunity to fumble around for another credit card to try.

The screenshot shows the infoplease.com website interface. At the top, there's a search bar with the text 'All Business'. Below it, the 'Computer Glossary' section is visible, listing various computer terms with their definitions. The terms listed include ASCII, bandwidth, binary code, bit, boot, browser, bug, byte, CD-ROM, and clip. The definitions are concise and informative, such as 'ASCII: Abbreviation for American Standard Code for Information Interchange, an encoding system for converting keyboard characters and instructions into the language that the computer understands.'

www.infoplease.com

If you've ever wondered what terms like ASCII, megahertz and URL mean, the computer glossary at www.infoplease.com will provide you with detailed definitions of those terms and more.

User ID — Unique identifier selected by a person opening an account on an e-commerce site.

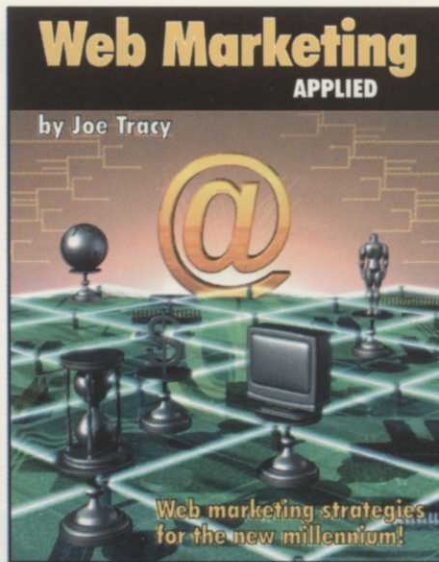
Weight threshold/Price threshold — Method of charging for shipping. Merchant

defines various price ranges and assigns a dollar amount for shipping charges to each range. ■

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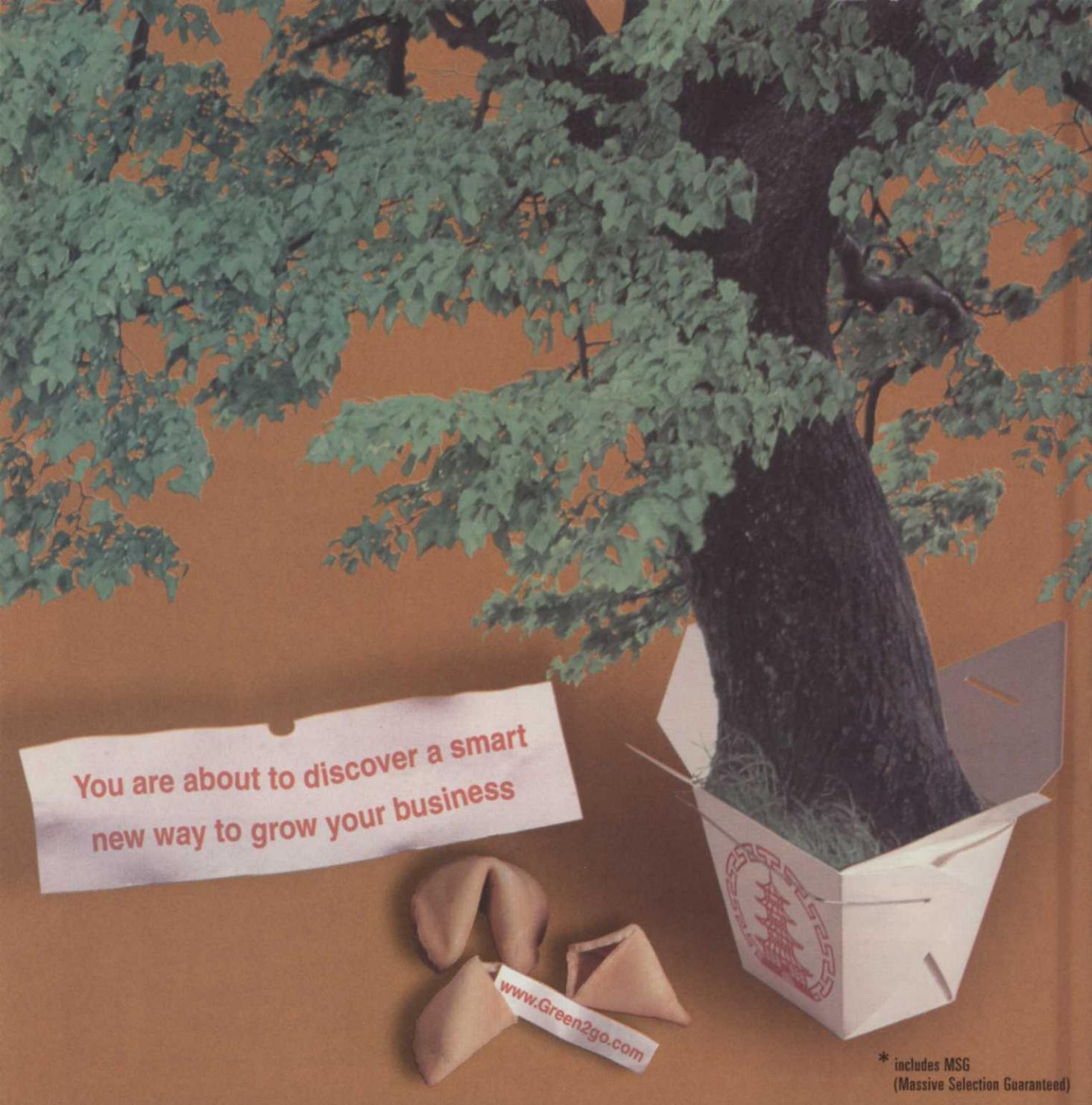
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The Hispanic

Our industry's appetite for landscape laborers from south of the border just keeps growing and growing

BY RON HALL / SENIOR EDITOR

The green mountains of central Mexico, once the source of most of the world's silver, are giving up yet another precious commodity — workers.

U.S. industry is tapping rural Mexico for able-bodied laborers with the same desperate eagerness that the Spaniards of the 17th century sought precious metals. This time the Mexicans, many of whom are grossly under-employed, eagerly oblige.

In fact, they're so willing to work that they often go to incredible lengths — and often at great danger to themselves — to do so. As many as 50,000 migrants sneak across the border illegally each month, say authorities.

Most are seeking employment. Many intend to stay in the United States.

A smaller number of alien workers enter the payrolls of U.S. firms through sanctioned programs. The most popular with landscapers is H-2B, an alien worker program that allows seasonal employment of unskilled workers when domestic labor is unavailable.

Labor-starved landscapers snatch up both sources of labor. But the firms

that want to make sure their foreign-born workers will be around the entire season are increasingly using H-2B.

H-2B, born during an overhaul of U.S. immigration laws in 1986, has a quota of 66,000 workers annually. About 93% of H-2B certified workers come from Mexico, says C. Scott Evans, operator of the labor solutions firm SILC-H2B, Bay City, TX.

The rules for U.S. businesses wanting to participate in the program are relatively simple, but most landscapers discover that completing its many requirements are tedious and that rounding up the workers can be daunting, particularly the first year they need H-2B workers.

The program, in addition to giving landscapers a source of labor, has spawned a handful of "labor solutions" entrepreneurs.

For a price, these labor specialists will find

the alien workers and wade through the documentation that qualifies them for U.S. employment.

The price of labor

How much does it cost to obtain H-2B certified workers? The price varies depending on which of the several labor contractors you deal with. Generally, the more workers you need, the lower the price of each one. But at least one labor contractor charges a flat fee no matter how many.

If your landscape firm requires 100 or more workers, you may pay as little as \$325 annually per worker, says Robert Wingfield,



RANDY LYHIUS

Partnership

who's been finding Mexican labor for landscapers for more than a decade at Amigos Labor Solutions, Dallas. But if you only need a few laborers, you could pay as much as \$650 per employee, he says.

But Scott Evans, SILC-H2B, says: "I've never quite figured out how to charge per worker." He charges a flat fee no matter how many workers a company needs. He says the amount of legwork needed to gain H-2B certification for 10 workers is essentially the same as it is for 1,000.

Even so, somebody still has to recruit and make sure the workers have the necessary paperwork in Latin America.

The take home message: Check out the qualifications of the labor contracting firm. Ask for the names of clients.

Putting a price tag on human labor seems like a cold-blooded way to calculate the worth of fellow humans. But don't forget that H-2B workers base their actions on dollar signs, too.

Labor in Mexico is abundant and cheap. The average salary for an auto worker at a Mexican assembly plant is \$.90 an hour compared to U.S. workers, who makes over \$20 an hour for essentially the same

work. And when H-2B workers arrive in the U.S., they expect to work at least 50 hours a week at fair laborers' wages. Most send a portion of their earnings back to Mexico to support families, and many return to their homes in November or December with \$4,000 or \$5,000 in their pockets.

Most companies that already have H-2B workers have little difficulty keeping them (at

least the ones they want) or adding to their numbers. That is, if they treat them fairly and with proper respect.

There's the story of the landscaper in southeastern Michigan who grew complacent with his Mexican construction crew and was lax about getting everyone back. After struggling through the first two months of the following season with labor he had managed (with great difficulty) to recruit locally, the business owner literally

continued on page 26



Robert Wingfield

Seasonal labor users join forces

U.S. companies using the H-2B seasonal alien worker program are banding together. About 180 individuals and companies have already joined the fledgling National H2B Users Association (NHUA), reports C. Scott Evans, Bay City, TX, who is heading the group.

Individuals and companies that are dependent on the continued availability of seasonal labor from outside U.S. borders make up the majority of NHUA's membership. These include landscape, construction and hospitality firms, among others. The group also includes companies that recruit and place H-2B workers, says Evans, president of one such firm, SILC-H2B.

Evans says that he will be at the Green Industry Expo, Indianapolis, IN, Nov. 5-7, to promote the NHUA.

Labor specialists

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continued from page 25

greeted the return of his seasonal foreign employees with hugs. Not only that, but he began treating them with newfound respect.

"The best recruiting opportunities come when a company can recruit within itself or within its community," says Evans. "You'll get good workers by asking your existing foreign workers if they have rela-

tives or friends who would like to work for your company.

"This solves a lot of problems. The new worker will already have a friend when he arrives, he will likely have a place to live and he will have a ride to and from work."

Get a move on it

You may or may not be in a similar situa-

tion, but if you're considering employing legal Hispanic labor in your landscape operation for next season, begin the process now. It's going to take you about 120 days to meet the requirements.

To qualify for seasonal workers through H-2B, you must convince authorities that you can't find a sufficient number of local or domestic workers. This isn't a difficult

More value from trained workers

Several years ago, Jeff West, who runs the labor recruiting company GTO International LLC, Rochester, MI, traveled to Mexico. His goal was to establish a week-long program to train Mexican workers for seasonal employment in the U.S. Green Industry.

He felt, and continues to feel, that a trained worker — any trained worker — is more valuable to the U.S. Green Industry than an untrained worker.



Jeff West, left, and Douglas "Buck" Buchanan operate GTO International out of offices in Rochester, MI, and Guanajuato, Mexico.

West's goal was to train Mexicans how to operate mowers and other landscape maintenance and construction equipment. But he also thought they should be advised on more practical matters, such as simple English language instruction.

"We wanted to give the people in the program an idea of what to expect when they arrived on the job in the United States," says West. "We wanted to let them know that the

streets aren't paved with gold and the work will be hard. We wanted to get them off to a good start because we knew that the first year on the job is the hardest."

At the time, West was director of golf at a championship caliber golf course in southeastern Michigan that needed seasonal workers.

Also, he was just beginning his own company to access and deliver Mexican workers to U.S. companies who needed seasonal help.

Mexican officials liked West's idea. They whisked him to 10 different locations within the country in as many days, seeking a suitable site for the training program.

West selected Guanajuato, a quaint jewel of a colonial city with about 100,000 residents. It's set in a narrow mountain valley in central Mexico, easily accessible because of good roads in all directions and an international airport at nearby Leon, a city of about 1 million people.

That first program turned out to be both a success and a failure, says West.

"We lost money," he explains. "Obviously, we couldn't charge the workers money to participate, and when we asked landscapers if they would pay more for a trained worker, they said no."

On the plus side, almost all of the 20 workers who completed the program turned out to be excellent employees, returning to work for the same employer each spring. In fact, several now speak English and perform skilled tasks.

West continues to travel to Mexico to re-establish a training program for Mexicans seeking seasonal employment in the U.S. landscape industry.

He also remains convinced that, in the long run, U.S. firms will see the value in hiring better-trained workers.

"The best recruiting opportunities come when a company can recruit within itself or within its community." — C. Scott Evans, SILC-H2B

task. In most parts of the country, there is a shortage of local applicants to work for the wages you pay laborers. Even so, most landscapers seem more inclined to pay labor contractors (see our list) to recruit foreign workers than wade through the paperwork themselves.

Wingfield, of Amigos, says that every year, U.S. businesses get closer to filling the H-2B quota of 66,000 workers, so companies planning to use H-2B should get a move on it.

"The landscape industry isn't the only industry that needs and wants these workers," says Wingfield. "Anybody who has a seasonal need can get them."

Well, almost anybody. Landscape com-

panies in the states of Arizona and California have difficulty convincing authorities that their labor needs are seasonal.

In other states (or particular regions within a state), a complicated set of federal regulations has set the wages for laborers so high that contractors can't afford to meet them. The H-2B program mandates that alien seasonal workers be paid the prevailing wage for labor in the area the company operates in. In Long Island, NY, for instance, this wage approaches \$13 an hour, too high a figure for most contractors there.

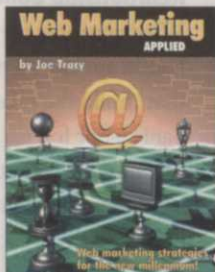
"I think the U.S. Department of Labor

and the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) are trying to tweak these programs," says Wingfield. "I don't think they expected the response from all of the industries."

For example, authorities in some states are demanding to see some landscape company payroll records to make sure their Hispanic workers are truly seasonal.

Even so, H-2B remains the most popular and surest route to gaining landscape labor. That's not likely to change in the short term, insists Wingfield.

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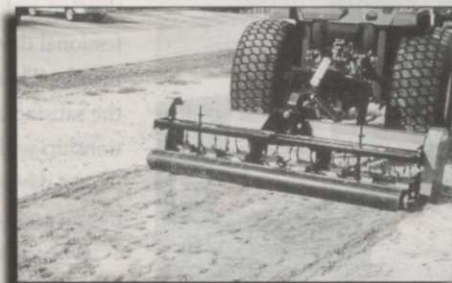
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How to build the Hispanic relationship

Doing a few little things for your Hispanic workers will keep them happy...and coming back

BY GEORGE WITTERSCHEIN



Jacobsen Landscape Design & Construction draws much of its Hispanic workforce from communities surrounding its Midland Park, NJ, headquarters.

A number of forward-looking companies are building on the fact that Hispanics come from another culture and have different motivations. The business rewards are many: less turnover, more motivation and productivity, and upward professional development of talented Hispanic people. There's also the human reward like the satisfaction of being in a personal relationship with your workforce, plus the day-to-day satisfaction of working with a happier group of employees.

One such company is Jacobsen Landscape Design & Construction in Midland Park, NJ. The 22-year old firm employs 50 to 60 employees in peak season. About 80% of their field workforce comes from nearby Hispanic communities — the people are either citizens, green-carded or temporary.

"If I didn't have these guys, I wouldn't be in business," says president Glenn Jacobsen. "There is no local Anglo labor force here. I realized that pretty early on, and I established a relationship with some Mexicans. That was the beginning.

"I help people," Jacobsen continues. "That's my philosophy. If they're going to work for me and be committed, we'll help

them as much as we can. Like anyone else, they appreciate that kind of treatment. And if they can help me, it's a two-way win."

Apparently, that's just what has happened. The early core group of Mexican workers has, in turn, greatly assisted his business. Many of them are still with the firm — in any given year, nearly all of his Hispanic labor force comes back after the winter lay-off — and they've brought their relatives and friends to apply for positions as well.

Relationship builders

What accounts for their loyalty? Jacobsen Landscape does a number of specific things that "build the relationship" with the Hispanic labor force.

Fairness. "Whether you're Hispanic or any other nationality, the key is treating people fairly to get their respect," Jacobsen says. "If you're fair to people, they're fair to you. And if you take advantage of people, they're going to take advantage of you. Fairness doesn't apply just to your Hispanic workers — it's a whole philosophy of business. I deal with my clients and my other employees that way."

Respect their family orientation. "This is something you do on a personal level every day — asking about their families and so on. The family unit is very important in Hispanic cultures. I learned that early on with the Mexicans, but I also know that it holds true with most of the South Ameri-

continued on page 30



WHAT IF

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Circle No. 113 on Reader Inquiry Card

continued from page 28

can countries. I have a lot of respect for that," he adds. "In turn, they helped me with hiring because they felt that this was a good place for their friends and relatives to work. Some were not treated fairly working elsewhere in the industry, and being treated well here impressed them."

Recognize the nationality. "We've found that it makes sense to keep people from the same country within a crew," Jacobsen notes. "They do have different cultures and different ways of doing things, so if you keep them together, they seem to develop better rapport."

Career and personal enrichment. "I have quite a few foremen who have come from this group — it's something that happens naturally. If they're here long enough, and if I see that they have skills and the desire to stay, I encourage them to move up. A lot are bilingual," he adds. "We're hooked in with a private language company that teaches them English, so I'm subsidizing their development." It's another example of the company's "Benefit them, benefits us" philosophy. The four-month language program includes a code of conduct covering attendance, completion of homework and passing grades. Students who keep to the code receive a bonus.

Sessions with a consultant. "The idea to help with their immigration paperwork was something that Angelo Miño pointed out to us," Jacobsen reports. "Angelo is a consultant who helps Green Industry companies with their Hispanic work forces. I met him at a trade show and we hit it off immediately because we think along pretty similar lines about the value of helping people. We brought him in to communicate with our people last December, and we're going to have him back at least once or twice this year." (See sidebar.)

Personal assistance. Jacobsen helps its immigrant laborers with the kinds of bureaucracy they often find daunting: immigration paperwork, drivers' licenses, car loans, mortgages and others. Office Manager Donna DeLuccia draws a lot of that responsibility.

Cultural exchange. The company has now sponsored two annual exchanges of culture based around Thanksgiving Day. "It wasn't my idea — it came from one of the guys," admits Jacobsen. "I wanted to have a celebration at Thanksgiving, instead of at Christmas, because by then many people are back home already. But one of my Hispanic people said, 'Can we add a Mexican feast?' I agreed. They prepared the Mexican feast, and I reimbursed them and gave them time off to do it. We did an American Thanksgiving (meaning turkey and mashed potatoes), and they prepared a Mexican feast based on roasted sheep and rice. The whole production force was there. It was a pretty successful event — the people really do like that form of acknowledgement."

Holidays. "We are aware of Mexican and other holidays, and we observe them," Jacobsen explains. "That's showing respect for their heritage. We don't give days off — it's really just a matter of posting it on the bulletin board. They want the acknowledgement and want to see that you understand when their important times are. Our American holidays don't mean too much to them, other than a day off. When we offer recognition of their own holidays, it goes a long way."

How Jacobsen wins

Has the company's philosophy solved its hiring problems in a painfully tight labor market? Yes, but not entirely. Jacobsen still has labor and hiring issues. "I don't know if I will ever get to the point where I

Latin American holidays

observed at Jacobsen Landscape:

Mexican Independence, September 15

Ecuadorian Independence, August 10

Peruvian Independence Day, January 18

(Mexico) la Virgen de Guadalupe, December 12

(Ecuador) Batalla de Pichincha, May 24

won't," he says. Most of his pain comes from success — because the company is growing so rapidly.

"We had over 20% growth last year. With that, you need to have a good supply of people. We're at a pretty strong hiring level, and every year we seem to get better. But the company's growing so rapidly, it's tough to have the people ready for the positions. If we weren't good with our people, we'd never be able to support that kind of growth. For example, 95% of the people we laid off for the winter last year came back in the spring. I think that's a pretty good ratio, and a good indicator that things are working. We're proud of it."

What about other sources of labor? The company may eventually have to turn to the Federal H2B program for more workers, despite the well-known hassle factor. And Jacobsen has recently developed a rapport with the local Ecuadorian community in New Jersey — again, the fruit of the fairness policy.

They had an Ecuadorian group come in last year for the first time. "I asked them to bring more guys in this year, and they have," says the company president. "Once you're fair, they usually bring in friends and relatives!"

— *The author is a contributing editor based in Mendham, NJ.*

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Four factors for success

Want to help your Hispanic employees assimilate quickly? These four factors will get you started

BY GEORGE WITTERSCHEIN

Assimilating Hispanics into an organization won't happen overnight, but it can happen with less hassle, better communication and good feelings.

Angelo Miño is human resources and safety director at Signature Landscape in Olathe, KS, and also a consultant in the field of Hispanic labor forces in the industry. A well-known Hispanic speaker at industry meetings, he stresses four factors to keep in mind when dealing with a Hispanic labor force: family, country, god, support.

"These four factors apply generally across Hispanic peoples," Miño says.



Angelo Miño

"Build them into your training and safety courses as a way of creating loyalty and ties between the employer and the workforce. They are so important for us Hispanics — recognition of them will tell me

that you want to work with me. In turn, I'll know that I have to do something extra for you. That's what loyalty does."

Miño listed the four factors for assimilating



Humberto Moran's skills in small engine repair landed him a job in a mower maintenance shop.

ing Hispanics, and how you can apply them:

1. Family is important to us

"The extended family is what moves the Hispanic people. Make use of this concept by inviting members of the employee's family to become a little bit more active in company life," Miño says. "For example, when I start a new safety program, I will request my employees to bring me pictures of their wives and their kids, and I will put up a sign saying 'Please work safely — you are important to these people!' Sometimes I ask the wives and the kids to write letters to their husbands or fathers asking them to please work safely. And let me tell you it works — with both Anglo and Hispanic people.

"To increase work quality and produc-

tivity, I give out calling cards so that people can call their families without any extra expense," he adds. "Or I allow one of my employees to call from the phone in my office. That might give me an opportunity to speak with an employee's mother briefly and say, 'Thanks for having such a great boy — he's one of the best people here. But you don't want to speak with me — you want to speak with him!'"

Miño's firm also holds open houses and field days open to the families. "Since in the Hispanic employee's mind, 'It's not just me, it's my family,' make his family part of the company celebrations," he suggests.

"Take one second to ask, 'How are your kids doing in school?' When a child is

continued on page 34

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THE HISPANIC PARTNERSHIP



Miguel Angel Arredondo, 23, is from Irapauto, Mexico, and is familiar with irrigation.

continued from page 32

born, put up pictures of the baby and mother on the safety bulletin board," he notes. "Let brothers, sisters and others come and apply for jobs in your company. As a family unit, they will take care of your business like it was their own."

2. We are very patriotic people

"I always advise my clients to create 'international corners' with flags, caps or mementos from a given country and display them on the wall. It's a kind of small museum with a sign that says, 'This company celebrates our multicultural heritage,'" Miño says. "Buy the flags of each of the countries that your people come from, and display them in the break room. When they see their flag every morning, it will motivate them. The message is: 'My boss cares about me. He took the time to go and find my country's flag and put it on the wall.'"

Miño notes the displays are also good tools for marketing. "They tell your clients that you respect your employees and your clients as well, because our United States customer base is increasingly multiracial and multicultural. Plus, if clients and prospective clients see that you take good care of your employees, they may get the

impression that you will take good care of their properties also," he says.

3. We like people to respect our beliefs

Approximately 87% of the United States Hispanic population is Catholic – usually, deeply so. How do you celebrate this factor?

"Change your holiday structure for Hispanic employees," Miño recommends. "If your company offers seven holidays a year for the Hispanics, keep five of the American holidays and switch two. (Memorial Day and Labor Day really don't mean anything to us.) Let the Hispanic people take two days to celebrate really important religious feasts. For example, Mexicans are big on December 12, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. And June 24th, the feast of San Juan, is very important for Puerto Ricans.

"That policy will help your safety rates!" he adds. "Some of my client companies have told me that on the 13th and 14th of December, there are some accidents in the workplace and they want to know why. You're asking them to come to work the day after! The night before, there has been a big celebration – they wait until midnight to go to church and sing the birthday hymn to La Virgen de Guadalupe, and

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then they go and drink and dance! If they show up for work the next day, they'll certainly be tired. They won't produce, and they will expose you and others to the risk of accidents."

His own firm has its own schedule. "Our company is closed on Good Friday. That is a day we celebrate, spending maybe all day in church," he says. "If I'm working that day, and I know my family is in church doing the right thing while I'm not, I won't concentrate on my job anyway. And, of course, that's when accidents happen."

4. From my amigo, I expect support

"Help them with their legal issues, to get drivers' licenses, to build credit," Miño recommends. "Support is important. I like to bring in local financial companies to teach the employees how to develop and use credit. That will build loyalty to your company. With a credit rating, I can buy a house, and I'll be a more responsible worker. I need to pay off that mortgage! So I'll work harder and learn the language."

He also recommends owners pay for someone in the company to become a notary. The employees won't have to take time off and spend money to get documents notarized. "I teach managers how to deal with paperwork to help their employees, like how to get translations done for them," he notes.

This year, Signature Landscape brought in a company to do tax returns. He explains: "This was a big hit – the Hispanic employees, who are even more nervous than you are about their taxes, felt secure. Their company was there with them. That's support!"

— The author is a contributing editor based in Mendham, NJ. For more information about Miño's consulting firm, call 913/438-3364 or contact www.hispsummit.com.

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Circle 117

15 threats to your

We asked three industry pros for 'killer factors' they see as threats to business. Here are 15 things to avoid

Our three sources

BOB ANDREWS is CEO of The Greenskeeper in Carmel, IN, a chemical lawn care company in business since 1981. It concentrates on high-end residential customers and has a newer golf course and sports field division.



RON KUJAWA is chairman of the board of KEI Inc. in Cudahy, WI, and has been in the landscape industry since 1967. KEI, a \$5 million company, is principally a landscape management firm, but also does design/build, interiors, industrial weed control, snow and commercial turf equipment sales.



VICKIE CATE runs Evergreen Interiors in San Diego, a high-end interior landscaping company. Evergreen serves commercial and high-end residential customers.



What drives companies like yours out of business? We asked three experienced landscape pros for their opinions on 'killer factors' to avoid. They are Bob Andrews, CEO of The Greenskeeper, Carmel, IN; Ron Kujawa, chairman of KEI Inc., Cudahy, WI; and Vickie Cate, owner of Evergreen Interiors, San Diego.

Their key items range from management weakness (lack of capital) to personality problems to hiring a bookkeeper that embezzles your company cash. In the spirit of helping you stay in business, here's what we learned about the major mistakes to avoid.

Andrews: Sound business fundamentals

Bob Andrews believes that having a solid fundamental business is the best way to avoid mistakes, but he's seen many people make these mistakes:

1 Lack of fundamental business education. "A lot of new Green Industry people are good technicians, but when it comes to paying taxes, shopping for insurance, buying materials and leasing buildings, they don't know enough. So they go out of business, and they go out pretty quickly," says Andrews. If you don't understand certain elementary business operations, educate yourself, he recommends.

2 Under-capitalization. Smaller firms are often operating on whatever personal resources they have — the mortgage on a house, family loans, etc. "It's

a firm rule that if you figure it's going to take \$100,000 to stay in business, it really will take \$200,000," says Andrews.

3 Lowball pricing to buy business. "New people usually don't have any reputation yet and are not getting referral business. The only way they can figure to get a customer base is to come in as the cheapest on the block. That doesn't work. The easiest competitor for me to take out is the guy who just wants to undercut me. We watch a few of them come in and go every year. The customer who will take them is often the customer we don't want anyway," he adds.

4 Trying to grow too fast. Andrews explains: "I see a number of businesses attempting to grow so fast that they lose control. They can't staff the new work or service it. So they start doing poor quality work for both their old and new customers, and lose everything."

5 Too much marketing. "It doesn't make sense to sell 200 more customers if you're going to lose the 200 you already have. But this is a trend — we see it in some of the larger firms that



Charge a fair price for your services and you won't attract clients seeking the lowest price.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF KEI INC.

business

BY GEORGE WITTERSCHEIN



Be open to new ways to improve your operation but keep the focus on your firm's core business.

are really more marketing oriented than service oriented," Andrews says. "We know we can sell on our service — that's fairly easy. Keeping the customer is a different ball game."

6 Can't delegate/burnout. "If you want to be an owner, you better bring your lunch to work with you. I see a lot of people who say 'I'm working 14, 15 hours a day... I can't find good help.' Then they see their buddy who works for the Postal Service punching out after eight hours. Some of them can't take it and just bail out. A lot of businesses fail because the individual is just not prepared for the rigors of running the show," he explains.

7 Failure to get involved. "I was president of PLCAA in 1992 and feel strongly about this one. We're pretty much Lone Rangers in our industry. There's not a lot of networking that goes on automatically. You work by yourself and don't have a lot of opportunities to feed off your colleagues. That's why being

involved in an industry trade association locally and with PLCAA nationally has been extraordinarily valuable for me over the years. It has allowed me to meet other people in the same industry, and has helped me become a better person and a better businessman," he adds.

Kujawa: Be realistic

Ron Kujawa sees potential problems crop up when landscape operators fail to focus, set realistic expectations or ignore vital business components like cash flow.

8 Unrealistic expectations. Kujawa explains: "This is a seasonal and cyclical industry. Snow is an extremely profitable item, but it's also very cyclical. An above average snow year could mean a great year of profitability — or a below-average snow year makes for average profit. Too many people base their financial planning on always having a great year." If it doesn't happen, they don't have a recovery plan, he adds.

9 One egg in the basket. "I see firms with only one account — like a big property manager's regional office. Suppose that property manager gets disenchanted with you, or dies, or leaves town or gets replaced? You have to be somewhat diversified, and that means you must make new contacts continually and consistently," Kujawa recommends.

10 Loss of focus. "You have to have a focus, too. You can't go off on every tangent," he says. "Some years ago during a recession when home building was not very vigorous, a lot of landscape construction people got into maintenance. All they accomplished was that they screwed up the market. They didn't understand the maintenance business and they lowballed prices. Now that there's a lot of activity in the home construction market, many people have succumbed to the temptation of leaving their core business — maintenance — and going after construction work. That's a different business! If you jump around, you're likely to let your core business and your long-term customers suffer. You're liable to lose them, and when building falls off, you may have a difficult time recapturing them."

11 Poor cash flow. "More people go out of business because of the lack of cash flow than for lack of profitability," Kujawa states. "Therein lies a huge problem. Younger people in business often confuse cash flow and profitability. You can be profitable, but if your cash flow isn't there, you get in deep trouble (with vendors, for example). And your employees might leave you!"

continued on page 38

continued from page 37

12 No focus on people. "The key to all of business is good people," Kujawa stresses. "Focus on them. Take care of and retain good people. If they're happy, they'll make your customers happy. Many of us are great at planting and growing but can't deal with people. It's a common cause of business failure."

15 ways to build your operation

- ▶ Educate yourself; become a business person.
- ▶ Arrange for enough money to operate in a smooth manner.
- ▶ Price to make your services profitable, not just to get business.
- ▶ Have a plan for growth and stick to it. Extra business may sound good, but if you overextend yourself or lose money on the work, what is the gain?
- ▶ Sell only enough business you can reasonably handle.
- ▶ Learn to delegate; you can't do it all.
- ▶ Get involved with other landscape professionals.
- ▶ Have realistic expectations.
- ▶ Diversify your customer base.
- ▶ Focus on your key services.
- ▶ Understand and maintain good cash flow.
- ▶ Focus on people.
- ▶ Be 'in' the business; take it seriously.
- ▶ Always try to improve.
- ▶ Make sure key players are trustworthy.



Take care of and retrain good people. If they're happy, they'll make your customers happy.

13 Not 'being' in business. "You have to make a decision: Are you in business, or are you buying yourself a job? There's a low barrier to entry in our industry — two friends can buy themselves a job. They work on every job themselves. They make \$15 or \$20 an hour. And for some people, this is a good thing. They do excellent work and make a decent living," he explains. "But when they decide to add crews to get bigger, they find they can't work every job themselves. Now they need systems and processes. And they encounter things like overhead, supervision and labor issues — you name it. All of a sudden, they're in business. If they don't understand the difference, they're gone."

14 Complacency. "You'll be in trouble if you don't know what's happening on the cutting edge and if you're not continuously trying to improve your operation," he says. "You need to be aware, to keep learning, to keep doing things better than before. If you don't, one day you'll find you can't compete properly any more. That happens with too many people."

Cate: Screen trusted associates

Vickie Cate's firm handles mostly interior work, but her experience applies to any aspect of a Green Industry operation:

15 Don't hire a crook as your bookkeeper. Evergreen is a 20-year-old, \$350,000 a year company with about 10 full-time staff working for commercial and high-end residential customers. Vickie likes to get out into the field, do sales work and oversee her technicians. So a few years ago, when she found a competent, apparently trustworthy, take-charge bookkeeper, she was delighted.

"Little did I realize that we were a cherry waiting to be picked!" Cate explains. It turned out the go-getter bookkeeper went on to:
 ▶ kite checks and help herself to at least \$65,000 of company funds, and
 ▶ pull off the classic embezzler's stunt: turning the staff against the owner ("She's flighty and incompetent") and towards herself ("You can trust me, I get things done around here").

"It wasn't that I ignored the books completely," Cate says. "I looked at them.

And while I didn't balance the checkbook, I reviewed it. I knew what we took in and what went out. And eventually, there were problems."

Her bank came to think so, too. "We went from having \$50,000 to \$60,000 a month cash flow to a \$300,000 a month cash flow in the checking account! The bank saw that as a red flag."

Eventually, Cate had her CPA firm teach her how to conduct an audit of her books. "I performed the audit myself because the cost of hiring someone to do it was prohibitive," she explains. "I sat down every night and worked painstakingly to reconstruct the entire payables ledgers of my company." What she found horrified her so much that she stopped when she had only reached the first two years of the bookkeeper's five-year stint. "I didn't have the stomach to look back beyond that," Cate confesses.

The result of the audit was a federal prosecution of the bookkeeper for violating banking regulations, and a one-year jail sentence. For Cate, though, getting justice was not enough to solve her problems.

Too close for comfort

By the time Cate did her audit, all of her technicians had left (convinced by the bookkeeper that they were on a bad ship), and she owed all kinds of money to unpaid creditors. Fortunately, three factors saved Cate's firm:

- ▶ friends in the business agreed to do some of her jobs;
- ▶ she landed a huge contract that was all profit pass-through to her just at the right time, generating a lot of cash quickly;
- ▶ after she phoned all her creditors and explained her tale of woe, they agreed to spot her more time.

"It was a very close call," she said.

But how did an otherwise sharp businesswoman get taken in?

"When she applied, the bookkeeper told me that she had previously worked for a number of doctors' offices, all of which had gone bankrupt and out of business," Cate explains. "I was filled with sympathy for her and she was owed all kinds of money! Of course, I should have been asking myself, 'Why did the doctors all go out of business?'"

"Second, the woman's husband was in the military, so they had moved around a lot, making her past hard to pin down. Finally, the embezzler was just plain good at what she did," she said.

Cate's advice is take nothing on faith when hiring somebody who will have access to your finances. Check out everything. "And after you hire them, watch your books like a hawk!"

— The author is a contributing editor based in Mendham, NJ.

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Circle 118

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Tim Clark
Executive Lawn & Landscape



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Circle 119

Picture this

BY PHIL FOGARTY

A new employee shows up on a Monday in May. Everyone is running around like maniacs trying to shake the weekend and deal with the list of folks who called off work that morning. The supervisor brings the new person into a back room and positions him or her in front of a 13-inch television/VCR.

"Watch this. I'll be back in . . . a little while," he says.

And as a generic training video on safety standards begins playing, the interest in a fresh face changes into a glazed and dazed look.

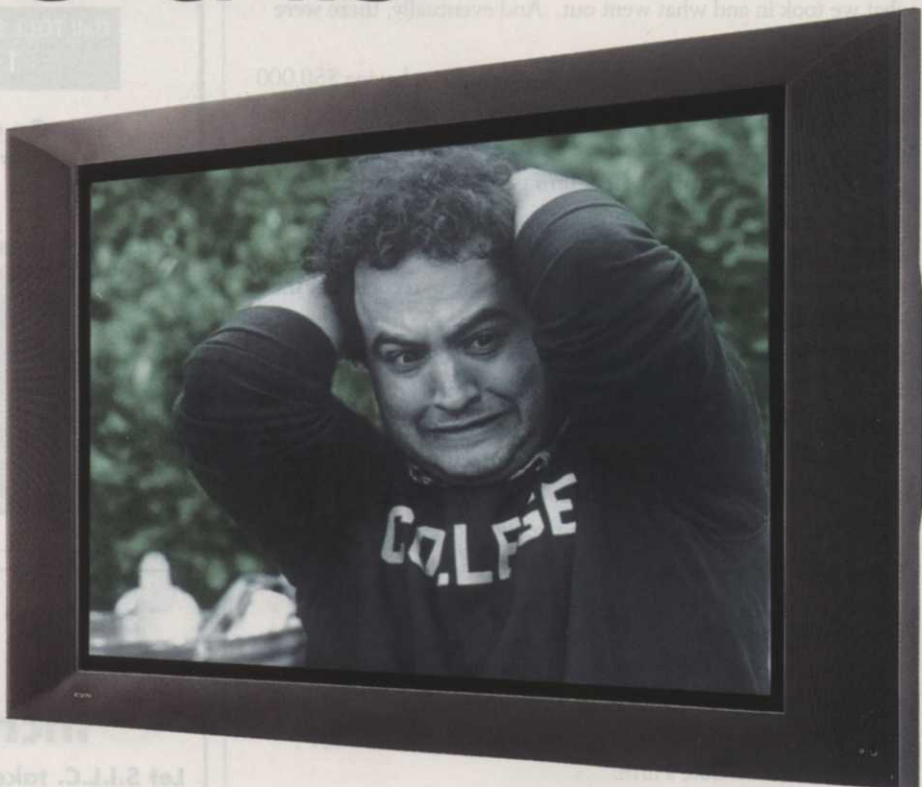
New twist, old idea

Let's try that again with a little twist.

This time, the new employee reports on the day of your weekly training session. He participates in a review of your mission and even offers a suggestion on how to become a better leader for the company.

In this session, the instructor turns everyone's attention to the TV for a video "moment." The tape runs and the group moves out of the work context as they watch an excerpt from "Animal House." As John Belushi charges across the screen, their smiles turn into thoughts of how that movie clip pertains to the topic of the day.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, a well-timed and focused video clip is worth at least one chapter in the company manual. Here are a few ways you can use your VCR to keep people interested and having fun:



JOHN BELUSHI: CORBIS IMAGES

You don't have to be an A/V nerd to spice up training. Movies or video clips can make your sessions fun and interesting

- ▶ Use video to emphasize an idea. By using film combined with a live presentation, you get the best of both worlds.
- ▶ Screen your video clips beforehand for inappropriate footage. There is a fine line between humor and vulgarity. When in doubt, ask yourself how theaters would rate it and stay away from anything rated "R."
- ▶ Keep it short — less than five minutes if possible. If an average audience can only pay full attention to a human in person for eight minutes without being involved, imagine their short attention span watching a screen.
- ▶ Set the stage for the video and have questions ready for review right after the viewing.
- ▶ Use all kinds of sources. Motion pictures, TV reruns, professional training tapes and even home movies can work.
- ▶ Consider using a digital camera for instant PowerPoint displays.

— *The author leads the Skills Development Series training system, sponsored by American Cyanamid and Landscape Management. For more information, call JP Horizons at 440/254-8211 or email pfogarty@stratos.net.*

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Circle No. 120 on Reader Inquiry Card

Property at a glance

Location: University of Missouri, Columbia, MO

Staff: University of Missouri Landscape Services

Category: School or university grounds

Total budget: \$1,510,000

Year site built: 1839

Acres of turf: 261

Acres of woody ornamentals: 32

Acres of display beds: 3

Total paved area: 160

Total man-hours/week: 1,980

Maintenance challenges

- ▶ Entire site snow removal
- ▶ Burning the wildflower planting
- ▶ Eliminating paths
- ▶ Maintaining Botanic Garden quality

Project checklist

(Completed in last two years):

- ▶ Established Botanic Garden
- ▶ Designed and built a 3-acre South Quadrangle
- ▶ Created a capital campaign – “The campus garden...a living legacy”

On the job

- ▶ 43 full-time staff, 13 seasonal employees, 18 licensed pesticide applicators

University of Missouri

A 1999 Grand Award Winner of the Professional Grounds Management Society for School or University Grounds

With a 700-acre campus, the University of Missouri, a land grant college founded in 1839 and the first institution of higher education west of the Mississippi, presents many challenges to its crew, Landscape Services.

Climatically, the grounds are a turf-grass transition zone, USDA hardiness zone 5 and an ecological transition zone between the hardwood forests of the Ozark Plateau and the open rolling prairie.

The majority of the university's display gardens, plants and 38,000 annuals are located at the 104-year-old Francis Quadrangle. The annuals are located in the campus' highest maintenance zone, designated as Class A. Peace Park, a four-acre greenspace on the border of campus and downtown, contains over 200 trees representing 50 different species. Trees are watered for three years, and shrubs for two. With an average of 250 trees and 1,000 shrubs planted annually, the staff is kept busy, especially during dry spells.

- ▶ The Columns, the only remains of the Academic Hall, are the symbol of the University. Shown here with Jesse Hall in the background, this is the second most photographed spot in Missouri.





◀ With more than \$60 million worth of construction work on campus each year, Landscape Services keeps one crew busy with repairs. Here, workers resod following a major utility project.

Editors' note: *Landscape Management* is the exclusive sponsor of the Green Star Professional Grounds Management Awards for outstanding manage-

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ment of residential, commercial and institutional landscapes. The 2000 winners will be named at the annual meeting of the Professional Grounds Manage-

Society in November. For more information on the 2000 Awards, contact PGMS at 120 Cockeysville Road, Suite 104, Hunt Valley, MD; 410/584-9754. Web-site: www.pgms.org





Louis-Dreyfus estate revives soil

Healthy plants are the result of a healthy plant ecosystem. Careful soil analysis and long-term treatment brought the gardens at this famous estate back to their glory

BY KEVIN HATTORI

Walking amongst the amazing variety of flora found at the Louis-Dreyfus estate in Mt. Kisco, NY, it is difficult to believe the property is located less than an hour from New York City. Many liken this estate to a world where nothing is in distress, but that wasn't always the case, says its manager, Lewis Sparks.

When Sparks took over the estate in the spring of 1990, there were no gardens, small wooded ornamentals, perennials or annuals. One of the first things he did was to "open up some ground" to create some herbaceous gardens and vegetative areas. When he began planting, Sparks was baffled when the new plants did not do well.

He also noticed that many of the trees were producing an overabundance of seeds, a common occurrence when trees

are under severe stress or in a state of decline. It was then that he began to suspect something was wrong with the soil.

"William (the owner of the estate) has always been a big-time tree mover," says Sparks, "so I knew I had to do something to change the way things were being done." Although regular fertilizer applications were being made, Sparks knew there was something bigger that needed to be addressed. "It wasn't that the property wasn't always nice," he says, "but we kept seeing problems pop up on a frequent basis that pointed to certain nutrient deficiencies."

In 1992, Sparks met Growth Products' founder Clare Reinbergen and discovered they both believed healthy plants are the result of a healthy plant ecosystem, including the soil in which the plants grow. In short, what was in the soil was as vital to the plant as sunlight and water. "Clare

“Managing an estate and making it better is always a work in progress. Change won’t happen overnight, but it will happen if you are diligent about pursuing it.” – Lewis Sparks

made me more aware of the possibilities of affecting things in the soil,” he says. “I liked the whole scientific aspect to their program. It wasn’t ‘complicated science,’ but science grounded in soil health and testing.”

Sparks found huge stockpiles of chemicals when he arrived at the estate. However, there was no history of how the estate had been maintained. What was clear was that the tree maintenance firm that had previously tended the estate had taken what he terms a “big gun” approach with chemicals, spraying everything without regard to long-term effects. A side effect of that approach was the elimination of beneficial insects and

organisms. “As far as I could tell, this had been going on since the mid-1970s,” he said.

Investigating the soil

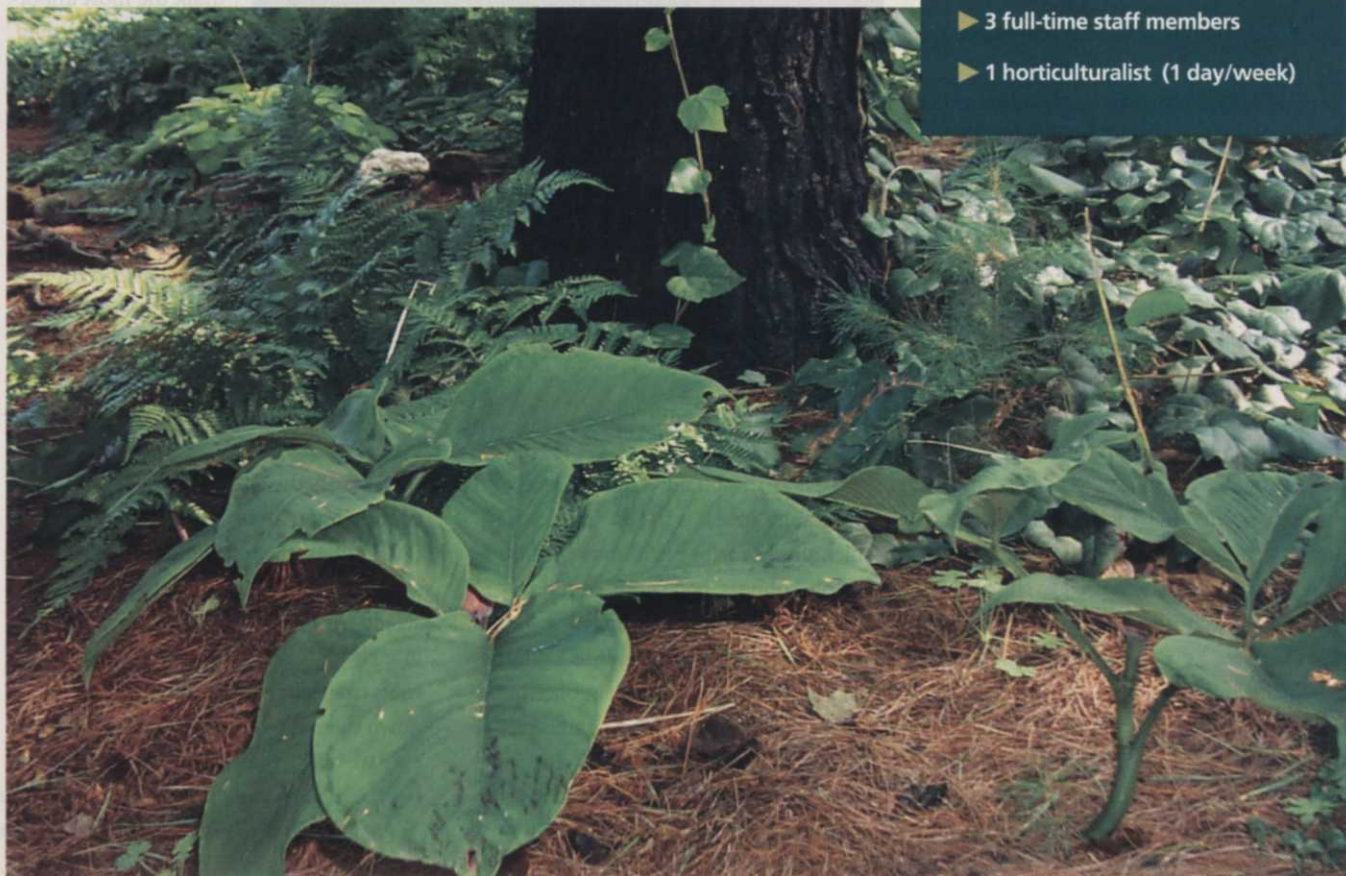
After consulting with Reinbergen, Sparks decided to take soil samples. The results confirmed that something was wrong with the property’s soil structure.

Testing conducted in 1994 revealed that the soil contained excessively high levels of phosphorus (in many places, it was found to be 10 times the normal levels found in the area) throughout the estate’s root zone, an element that tends to form insoluble

continued on page 46

Louis-Dreyfus estate

- ▶ 19 landscaped acres
- ▶ 80 additional acres to be used for conservation and reintroduction of native species and wildlife plantings
- ▶ A wide variety of tree species (80% of which were moved to their present locations), including:
 - ▶ 12 different kinds of European beech
 - ▶ Dawn redwoods (very rare)
 - ▶ Pin oaks
 - ▶ Norway maples
 - ▶ Sugar maples
 - ▶ White ash
 - ▶ Tulip trees
- ▶ All gardens and terraces on the estate were designed and implemented by Lewis Sparks
- ▶ 3 full-time staff members
- ▶ 1 horticulturalist (1 day/week)



continued from page 45

materials in the soil. High levels of phosphorus have also been known to reduce soil pH levels, and additional testing showed that the property's pH levels were indeed low, around 5.5. Perhaps most telling of all was the extremely low organic matter percentage — 5% is desired, but most of the estate's soils were around 3% to 3.5%.

Sparks knew dramatic changes were needed. The obvious step was to stop all applications of phosphorus. Reinbergen also recommended repeated applications of a soil amendment (in this case, Essential was used). She hypothesized that the organic solution, which contains humic acid, would solubilize the excessive phosphorus in the soil. This would allow the phosphorus to be used by the plant or moved out of the root zone. She also believed that the humic substances, plant extracts and kelp contained in the product would address another critical situation — the need to increase the percentage of organic matter in the soil.

Soil pH challenge

When the time came to raise the soil's pH, the high calcium levels presented a tricky problem. Lime application was not a viable option because it would have increased the calcium levels further, so potassium carbonate (which has an alkaline pH) was used to raise the pH slowly. Finally, the turf still needed to be fed, so a fertilizer solution containing slow release liquid nitrogen and potassium was used to supply important macronutrients without worsening the existing phosphorus problems.

Sparks has been conducting his soil testing every two years since 1992, so enough time has passed to show the effects of the prescription program he undertook. Recent tests show that the pH levels now average 6.5 — one point higher than before the pro-



Lewis Sparks (left) tells author Kevin Hattori about the Louis-Dreyfus estate's soil problems.

estate's plants. Sparks believes there are a number of things contributing to this: "I think the most important thing is that the plants are stronger

Lewis Sparks' experience

- ▶ 10 years retail nursery experience
- ▶ 20 years estate work experience (10 years at Dreyfus)
- ▶ Board member, Bedford Tree Advisory Board
- ▶ Member, Yorktown Grange Committee

gram. More important, a soil pH level of 6.5 is optimum since it is the one pH level at which the 12 major plant nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, sulfur, calcium, magnesium, iron, manganese, boron, copper and zinc) are available as a group. The estate's phosphorus levels, once outrageously high, have dropped significantly (24%). And the percentage of soil organic matter throughout the estate is now 4.4%, far closer to the ideal of 5%.

Most telling of all is the health of the

now because they are being fed by what is in the soil. We get fewer weeds than we used to, even though we haven't used herbicides for eight years. We do get occasional flare-ups of fungal disease on some of our grassy areas, but it is important to note that they are never long lasting. They never seem to spread, and the turf always mends itself." To combat the fungal disease, he applies a biological fungicide twice yearly.

As far as the effects of the improved soil conditions on his plants are concerned, Sparks offers the following illustration: "The soil here used to be so bad that when we would use blowers, the existing turf would literally blow away. There were just no roots to speak of. Now, the roots are way down there. We're always amazed whenever we check the soil and rooting." **LM** — *The author is director of public relations at Growth Products, White Plains, NY. He can be reached at 800/648-7626.*



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Circle No. 121 on Reader Inquiry Card

Living on the edge

BY CURT HARLER /
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Just as a bit of starch accents the clean lines in a shirt, a sharp cut accents the edges where grass meets a path or flower bed.

At Evergreen Landscapes Inc., Newbury, OH, Dan Harb figures his edger paid for itself and made him money the first year. "I was looking for something that cuts a nice edge," Harb says. His choice was the Trenchmaster (see page 49).

"If you try to do it by hand, everyone's edge turns out looking different. With a machine, it is nice and uniform," Harb continues.

In addition to improving aesthetics, Harb wanted to speed up a labor-consuming job. "The machine costs a lot of money," he admits, "but with less labor required, it paid for itself in less than a season. If you don't do a lot of edges and beds, it might not pay back as fast."

Still, both he and his customers are impressed with the sharpness of the cuts the unit produces — and that makes for a good, long-term business relationship.

Check out the edgers below to find one that will put a crisp border around your jobs.

ARDISAM, INC.
800/345-6007

www.ardisam.com

Both the K286B and the K226B edgers from Ardisam, Cumberland, WI, are powered by 3.5-hp Briggs & Stratton engines. Each has adjustable cutting heights from 0 to 4 in. and feature cutting



angle adjustment. Frames are solid steel, and the robot head adjusts from horizontal to vertical. The 286 has dual steel hub wheels for extra stability. The 226 has a single front wheel; at 65 lbs., it is 2 lbs. lighter than the 286.

Circle #260

BLUEBIRD INTERNATIONAL
800/808-BIRD

www.bluebirdintl.com

Cut sod quickly and efficiently with the SC-18 from Bluebird, Denver, CO. The unit has the same 4-wheel drive power of the



**XT120SE stick edger
from John Deere**

- ▶ **Create nice and uniform edges; jobs done by hand all turn out different**
- ▶ **Speed up a labor-intensive job**
- ▶ **Make more money, especially if you edge a lot of beds and lawns**

older version, but features improved transmission design. A depth control knob offers consistent cut. Anti-vibration folding handle makes unit easy on the operator. Comes with 5-speed transmission, including two transport speeds, two cutting speeds and power reverse.

Circle #261

BROWN MANUFACTURING
800/633-8909

www.brownmfgcorp.com

The Trenchmaster line from Brown, Ozark, AL, will trench up to 7 in. deep and 2 in. wide with



the 100-lb. F-702; or a full foot deep and 3 in. wide with the 210-lb. F1201. The Bed Edger models, including the 8-hp F-780H and 9-hp F-990H, feature Honda engines, steerable wheels and interchangeable rotors for versatility with landscape or trenching jobs. Units edge 10 to 30 ft. per minute or trench 7 to 30 ft. per minute.

Circle #262

CARSWELL DISTRIBUTING
800/929-1948

www.carswelldist.com

The Robin BE221 Precision Edger distributed by Carswell, Winston-Salem, NC, weighs just 12.6 lbs. It is powered by a 21.7 cc engine and draws fuel from a 17-oz. tank. Unit has solid state ignition, a loop handle and a 57-in. flex

shaft. The BE221 can be fitted with two-toothed blade accessory. Overall dimensions are 69 in. long, 13 in. wide and 12 high.

Circle #263

JOHN DEERE
800/537-8233

www.deere.com

Put the finishing touches on the job with the XT120SE stick edger from John Deere, Research Triangle Park, NC. Large, 9-in. blade, angled shaft and wide guide wheels make maneuvering along curbs, sidewalks and landscaped areas easy. This unit has a 1.2-hp Deere M-Series engine. It has a 54-in. flex shaft and a cutting depth of 2.5 in. Smaller cylinders with thinner fins help dissipate heat faster. Lined clutches and intake silencers mean quiet working.

Circle #264

HUSQVARNA
800/GET-SAWS

www.husqvarna.com

Two new edgers from Husqvarna, Charlotte, NC, feature the E-tech engine which runs stronger and cleaner. The 322E has a 24.5 cc engine that develops 0.9 hp with a maximum no-load rpm of 11,000. The 325EX has a 22 cc engine that develops 1.2 hp at 11,000 rpm. Both have noise ranges of 96 to 102 dBA, 1.3 pint fuel capacity and weigh about 11.5 lbs. Sturdy guard above the blade prevents stoppage due to gravel and soil. Both have isolated support wheels and quick-cutting depth edges.

Circle #265

LESCO, INC.
800/321-5325

The LHE-2500 Stick Edger from Lesco, Rocky River, OH, is a fast

unit designed for the professional turf care market. It has easy-



to-use wheel height adjustment for controlling edging

depth, rubber debris flap to minimize material kick-back, and large rubber gauge wheel for good tracking. The 8-in. blade is powered by a 25.6 cc engine with dual-ring pistons and anti-vibration mount.

Circle #266

LITTLE WONDER
877/596-6337

www.littlewonder.com

The Xtra from Little Wonder, Southampton, PA, is a hybrid stick/walk-behind unit with the maneuverability of a stick edger and the power of a wheeled edger. It weighs just 16 lbs. Its



cross-blade system cuts through the thickest overgrown grass quickly and neatly. Unit has 6-position height adjustment and a 6-in. wheel that carries the machine's weight. It is powered by a 34cc 2-cycle gas engine.

Circle #267

REDMAX
800/291-8251

www.redmax.com

New for this fall is the HEZ2500 stick edger from RedMax-Komatsu Zenoah, Norcross, GA. Powered by the Strato-Charged Carb Tier II certified 25-4 cc 2-cycle engine, it is a low-emission, lightweight, high-powered edger. It runs a third longer on a tank of fuel-mix than the standard 2-cycle engines. Shaft is solid steel. Guide wheel, with steel ball bearings, is adjustable.

Circle #268

SALSCO, INC.
800/872-5726

www.salsco.com

Cut a cart path edge or create a new bed with the Model 09043 from Salsco, Cheshire, CT. Unit is powered by a 13-hp Honda engine with oil alert and hydrostatic forward/reverse. Options for cutting include the V-Groove that cuts to 9 in. for new beds or trenching, straight edge for narrow trench work, and combined Sod-Buster and Dish-type blades to break up sod. Optional brush mower deck is interchangeable with cutter deck by removing six bolts.

Circle #269

SCAG POWER EQUIPMENT
920/387-1000

Lightweight and compact, this edger from Scag, Mayville, WI, features a 10-in. milled-edge blade for deeper edging and longer life. Unit is constructed of 1/4 in. x 1 1/4 in. bar stock for strength. It has no moveable parts near the drive head, no springs, and no sliding booms or tilt quadrant to wear out. Powered by a 3.5-hp Briggs engine with Dura-Bore cast



iron cylinder sleeve. Features specially designed handle bars and dual engagement levers.

Circle #270

TANAKA

253/333-1200

www.tanakapowerequipment.com

Check out the TLE-550 walk-behind edger from Tanaka, Kent, WA. It features a 50 cc, 2.5-hp engine with transistorized elec-

tronic ignition and Walbro carburation. The 10-in. cutter blade runs to 3-in. maximum depth and is controlled from the handle to nine cutting depths. Also available are portable edgers, the TPE-2510 with 24 cc, 1.3-hp engine; and the TPE270PF with 26 cc, 1.4-hp engine. Both have 8-in. blades and a 3-in. cutting depth.

Circle #271

TRU-CUT

323/258-4135

The Pro-Series power lawn edgers from Tru-Cut, Los Angeles, CA,



feature four Honda-powered models ranging from 2.5 hp to 4.0 hp. Units come with throttle lever and clutch depth controls at top of handle. Comfort hand grips make it easy to work all day. Blade is a 10-in. x 2-in. steel cutter. Strong protective belt and blade guards have an easily replaceable debris deflector. All models come with an all-steel, heavy-duty welded frame.

Circle #272

WALKER MFG.

800/279-8537

www.walkermowers.com

Edge at 3 to 4 mph with the Stevens Coultter Blade Edger at-



tachment for mowers made by Walker Manufacturing, Fort Collins, CO. The self-tracking coultter disk is mounted on a swing arm to smoothly and quickly trim grass along the concrete edge of sidewalks, curbs and cart paths. There are big labor savings, less mess, and no flying debris. Simple mechanical blade engagement, quick-mount bracket on the tractor, self-sharpening blade, and single hitch pin height adjustment make it easy to use.

Circle #273



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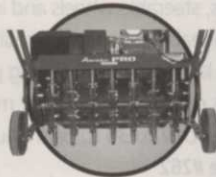
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GIE-1100

ask the expert

BY BALAKRISHNA RAO

Anthracnose on maple

I have a Japanese maple that has white spots on some of the leaves and dying branches on the top. What is the problem, and how do I treat it? Also, do you know where I can find a dwarf apple?

— MICHIGAN

The foliar symptoms you have described suggest anthracnose fungal disease. The dieback you mentioned could be related to a number of stress factors. For example, if the root system is damaged, the corresponding top growth will show declining symptoms. Generally, maples produce surface roots. If these roots are cut off or damaged, the connecting aboveground parts will show dieback.

Another reason for the dieback is the activity of maple wilt fungal disease caused by *Verticillium* sp. To further diagnose this, take a finger-sized branch, remove the bark and look for greenish discoloration. If the twig is dry, it may not display the green well. In this case, slightly wet the cut surface and look for greenish discoloration in the xylem. If the xylem is plugged by fungal activity, wilting and dieback will occur.

For positive diagnosis, send representative samples to the diagnostic clinic or the Cooperative Extension Service. For anthracnose disease management, apply fungicide treatments in early spring two to three times at 7- to 10-day intervals. For maple wilt disease management, reduce stress and improve plant health care through proper mulching, watering and fertilizing.

To find a dwarf apple, contact some reputable nurseries such as Stark Brothers, Henry Fields, Gurneys Seed and Nursery

Co., and Miller Nursery. Make sure the dwarf apple trees are adaptable to the cold hardiness zone in your area.

Why all the rust?

We are seeing more and more rust disease in lawns. Do you know why? Also, how can we manage this? Some of our clients think we are spreading the disease through our mowers, shoes, etc.

— MICHIGAN

Rust disease makes lawns unattractive. In many situations, however, turf will recover.

In recent years, there has been an increase in rust problems. One factor could be related to not bagging clippings. Many cities are now imposing laws that don't allow you to collect clippings after mowing. This exposes healthy turfgrass to infected turfgrass clippings, and under certain conditions will spread disease.

It's also possible to spread the disease with mowing equipment and shoes but this is usually not the main cause. The reason is because there are disease-causing agents in other areas as well. Unless the turfgrass is susceptible and favorable conditions exist, the disease will not establish just because spores are present. For any disease to occur, there must be a susceptible turfgrass, virulent pathogen and favorable environment.

For disease management, consider using fungicides such as Bayleton, Rubigan, Banner or Heritage. Repeat treatments as needed. Two to three applications at 10- to 14-day intervals should provide adequate control. Where feasible, pick up the clippings, and water as needed in the morning.

Messy cottonwoods

Each year, nearby cottonwoods shed seeds with a fluffy, cotton-like substance, and this creates a problem. How can we get rid of these? Is there a product we can inject to eliminate these messy seed structures? When should we treat?

— ILLINOIS

Cottonwood trees (*Poplar* sp.) can present a serious problem when they begin to produce seeds, which are attached to cotton-like outgrowth. During the seed production and dispersal period, they can be blown to different places by the wind. This can trigger allergies or become a "messy" nuisance.

Florex growth regulator, a spray treatment, can eliminate undesirable, messy fruit. It is best to apply the treatment when most of the flowers are open in the spring. More research is needed to fine-tune the suitable treatment period. Applying from full bloom to petal fall in the spring should be adequate. Thorough coverage is important. While treating, make sure there are no nontarget objects like cars in the area since Florex causes a reaction on car paint.

I'm not familiar with any products you can inject for fruit elimination. Following good application techniques will help minimize drift potential.

Read and follow label specifications for best results.



Manager of Research and Technical Development for the Davey Tree Expert Co., Kent, Ohio

SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO: "Ask the Expert" Landscape Management; 7500 Old Oak Blvd.; Cleveland, OH 44130, or email: sgibson@advanstar.com. Please allow two to three months for an answer to appear.

ask the expert

BY BALAKISHNA

Want a new source for pest information?



www.pestfacts.org

Termites, cockroaches, rodents, even poison ivy and other nasty weeds. They're all pests, which means they can cause real problems that pose health and safety risks to children and adults. The good news is now you've got the Pest Facts Information Center at www.pestfacts.org. It's a handy resource discussing the problems caused by pests, as well as the safe and responsible use of urban pesticides and related issues. So don't just sit there...log on.





Easy stump removal

BlueBird International's new stump grinder maximizes cutting performance with its 14-in. diameter blade with carbide-tipped teeth, offering a variable cutting depth up to 12 in. A HiPower Double V drive belt offers more operating stability and control. An adjustable, ergonomic handle reduces operator fatigue, and user-friendly lift handles simplify transport to and from job sites. The stump grinder comes with either a 9- or 11-hp Honda engine.

For more information contact BlueBird at 303/288-5880 or www.bluebirdintl.com / circle no. 250

Washing parts

National-Spencer's new 20-gal. capacity parts washer removes particles and soil from mechanical parts. It features a fusible-link steel cover that closes automatically in the event of a flash fire, stores up to 12 gallons of solvent, and re-circulates 50 gallons of solvent per hour. A built-in drain and chrome-steel flexible spigot come standard, and an optional cleaning brush attached by vinyl hose is available through special order.

For more information contact National-Spencer at 316/265-5601 / circle no. 251



Turbo-charged chipping

Ariens' Pro Chip 12115 features a turbo-charged 115-hp diesel engine with 15-in. x 17-in. throat capacity. The only 12-in. capacity, 90° chipper in the industry, its SaverCut eliminates dead space behind the feed wheel, reduces



jams, and uses less fuel than machines with a 45° angle cut. A switch on infeed and discharge chute hinge prevents machine from operating when hinge is open.

For more information contact Ariens at 800/678-5443 / circle no. 252

Clean with power

Landa Water Cleaning Systems introduces a line of economy, natural gas-heated, hot-water pressure ENG washers that range from 2.8 to 10.6 GPM in water volume and 1,000 to 3,000 PSI in pressure. Features include an enclosed



cabinet, the ability to support up to four remote washing stations, the ability to be fitted with LP gas, and 50 ft. of high-pressure hose rated for up to 5,800 PSI.

For more information contact Landa at 800/547-8672 / circle no. 253

Better brush chipper

Vermeer Mfg. Co.'s BC625A brush chipper can handle brush and debris up to six inches in diameter. It features a four-sided bed knife and a



thick cutter disc for more cutting inertia, and an improved variable speed hydraulic system that delivers 20% more torque to the feed roller. Three engine options are available, including a 20-hp Honda, a 25-hp Kohler Command, and a 23.5-hp water-cooled Perkins diesel.

For more information contact Vermeer Mfg. Co. at 888/837-6337 or www.vermeermfg.com / circle no. 254

No more mower downtime

With its stay-sharp Tungsten carbide-coated blades and maintenance-free Gravely XL spindles, the Gravely 260Z zero-turn mower is designed to reduce maintenance



downtime. Available with either a Kohler Com-

mand OHV 25-hp engine or Robin OHV 22-hp engine, the 260Z's larger fuel tank and air-flow deck allow for all-day mowing.

For more information contact Ariens at 800/678-5443 or www.ariens.com / circle no. 255

Grinding away

Morbark introduces the Wood Hog, a 90,000-lb. horizontal grinder with horsepower options from 860 to 990, a 49-in. diameter grinding drum mounted on a 8 1/2-in. shaft and an aggressive feed system that allows for product output of up to 400 yds. per hour. Standard features include auto feed system, wireless remote control, magnetic end pulley, hydraulic

continued on page 54

continued from page 53

dual fold discharge conveyor and self-contained air compressor.

For more information contact Morbark at 800/233-6065 / circle no. 256

The answer to de-thatching

Growth Products' Control De-Thatcher is an organic inoculant concentrate containing microbes that produce enzymes which digest protein in thatch. Other enzymes break down organic matter into nutrients for other beneficial soil microbes.

For more information call 800/648-7626 or www.growthproducts.com / circle no. 257

Compact skid steer

Finn Corp.'s new Eagle 250 compact skid steer is a "hydraulic power plant" that helps labor



crews do more work faster, and with fewer personnel. A 25-hp Kohler engine generates a hydraulic flow rate of 13.4 gpm. Full power is delivered to wheels and tools at same time. Oil cooler is standard. Quick-change feature allows

attachment changes in less than one minute. Over 30 attachments are available, including trencher, tiller and box rake.

For more information contact Finn Corp. at 800/543-7166 or www.finncorp.com / circle no. 258

Know where you apply

Riverdale Chemical Co. introduces Razor SPI, a broad spectrum post-emergent herbicide with a blue dye spray pattern indicator to show applicators where the product has and hasn't been applied. Razor SPI contains glyphosate which controls a variety of herbaceous plants, including Canadian thistle, velvetgrass and knapweed.

For more information contact Riverdale at 800/345-3330 / circle no. 259

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1. My primary business at this location is: (fill in ONE only)

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- 02 255 Landscape Contractors (Installation & Maintenance)
- 03 260 Lawn Care Service Companies & Custom Chemical Applicators (ground & air)
- 04 285 Irrigation Contractors & Consultants
 - Other Contractors/Service Companies (please specify) _____

LANDSCAPING/GROUNDS CARE FACILITIES

- 05 290 Sports Complexes
- 06 295 Parks
- 07 305 Schools, Colleges & Universities
 - Other Grounds Care Facilities (specify) _____

SUPPLIERS AND CONSULTANTS

- 08 355 Extension Agents/Consultants for Horticulture
- 09 360 Sod Growers, Turf Seed Growers & Nurseries
- 10 365 Dealers, Distributors, Formulators & Brokers
- 11 370 Manufacturers
 - Other (please specify) _____

2. Which of the following best describes your title? (fill in ONE only)

- 12 10 **Executive/Administrator** - President, Owner, Partner, Director, General Manager, Chairman of the Board, Purchasing Agent, Director of Physical Plant
- 13 20 **Manager/Superintendent** - Arborist, Architect, Landscape/Grounds Manager, Superintendent, Foreman, Supervisor
- 14 30 **Government Official** - Government Commissioner, Agent, Other Government Official
- 15 40 **Specialist** - Forester, Consultant, Agronomist, Pilot, Instructor, Researcher, Horticulturist, Certified Specialist
- 16 50 **Other Titled and Non-Titled Personnel** (please specify) _____

3. SERVICES PERFORMED (fill in ALL that apply)

- 17 A Mowing
- 18 B Turf Insect Control
- 19 C Tree Care
- 20 D Turf Aeration
- 21 E Irrigation Services
- 22 F Turf Fertilization
- 23 G Turf Disease Control
- 24 H Ornamental Care
- 25 I Landscape Design
- 26 J Turf Weed Control
- 27 K Paving, Deck & Patio Installation
- 28 L Pond/Lake Care
- 29 M Landscape Installation
- 30 N Snow Removal
- 31 O Other (please specify) _____

4a. Do you specify, purchase or influence the selection of landscape products?
 58 Yes 59 No

4b. If yes, indicate which products you buy or specify: (fill in ALL that apply)

- 32 1 Aerators
- 33 2 Blowers
- 34 3 Chain Saws
- 35 4 Chipper-Shredders
- 36 5 De-icers
- 37 6 Fertilizers
- 38 7 Fungicides
- 39 8 Herbicides
- 40 9 Insecticides
- 41 10 Line Trimmers
- 42 11 Mowers
- 43 12 Snow Removal Equipment
- 44 13 Sprayers
- 45 14 Spreaders
- 46 15 Sweepers
- 47 16 Tractors
- 48 17 Truck Trailers/Attachments
- 49 18 Trucks
- 50 19 Turfseed
- 51 20 Utility Vehicles

5. Do you have Internet access? 52 A Yes 53 B No

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

- 54 A Daily
- 55 B Weekly
- 56 C Monthly
- 57 D Occasionally

101	113	125	137	149	161	173	185	197	209	221	233	245	257	269	281	293	305
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
105	117	129	141	153	165	177	189	201	213	225	237	249	261	273	285	297	309
106	118	130	142	154	166	178	190	202	214	226	238	250	262	274	286	298	310
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
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AD INDEX

132	BASF	33
116	Bio Plex Organics	34
118	California Landscape Lighting	39
105	Chevrolet Truck	5
123	Daniels Pull Plow	54
104	Dixie Chopper	2
112	First Products	27
109	Foley Enterprises	20
102	Grasshopper Co	CV3
113	Grasshopper Co	29
108	Greentrac.com	19
125	Icom Industries	58
114	John Deere	31
107	John Deere Credit	9
101	LESCO	CV2-1
111	MidAm	22
121	Ohio Turfgrass Foundation	47
110	Rain Bird Sales	21
106	Redexim Charterhouse	6
128	Remote Control Technologies	59
	Rexius	17
131	Rohmid	10
117	Roots	35
103	Textron	CV4
122	Turfco Mfg Inc	50
120	Union Tools Irr/Signature Controls	41
130	United Horticultural Supply	13-14
119	Vander Kooi and Associates	39
124	Versa Lok Retaining Wall Systems	58
126	Visual Impact Imaging	59
127	Weed Man	59

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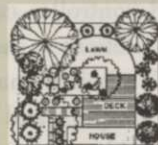
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Twenty-six landscape professionals were recently honored for being the best in landscape design, maintenance and lighting at the 42nd Annual Beautification Awards presented by the Orange County/Long Beach Chapter of the California Landscape Contractors Association (CLCA).

The "Sweepstakes Award" for best overall entry went to Bruce Wayne Co. for the Crockett Residence in Newport Coast. Richard Taylor & Associates took home the "President's Award" for best entry in any landscape installation category. The



Stuart J. Sperber

"Judges' Award" for maintenance was awarded to Brian Smith & Associates.

The CLCA's top honor, the "Meridian Award," was also presented to Stuart J. Sperber for substantial beautification of the environment. Sperber is president and co-founder of Valley Crest Tree Co., Inc., Calabasas, CA.



LEO MICHAEL

Geese go bye-bye

There once was a story 'bout a goose named Gil, landed in a field and let out a little shrill, took off on the fly and told his buddies to make a break, the source of his fright was an inflatable snake.

It's true, folks. As reported out of the *Tacoma News-Tribune*, Mick Davis, a maintenance superintendent for Commencement Bay Mill Co., had enough of the geese that had taken over the company's front lawn, so he went to the local store and bought a snake-shaped inflatable lawn decoy for \$6.99. When the flock of 30 geese showed up, the lead goose saw the snake, turned tail and took off, with the rest of the flock following. Apparently, only two gutsy geese strut around the lawn now. It just goes to show there's more than one way to skin a cat, er, goose.

Recruiting edge?

In the highly competitive college recruiting market, Temple University may have just picked up an edge — at least with prospective students who love scenic surroundings. Temple's Ambler campus has officially been designated an arboretum, having ful-

filled the requirements set forth by the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta (AABGA). The 187-acre campus features rolling hills, forest, fields, and many learning gardens: an herb garden, ground cover garden, native plant garden, rock wall, woodland garden, wetland garden, trial garden, along with large

perennial borders. The Temple University Landscape Arboretum, open to the public, is cared for by horticulturist Stephanie Cohen, who was recently given the 2000 Garden Communicator's Award by the American Nursery and Landscape Association (ANLA).

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