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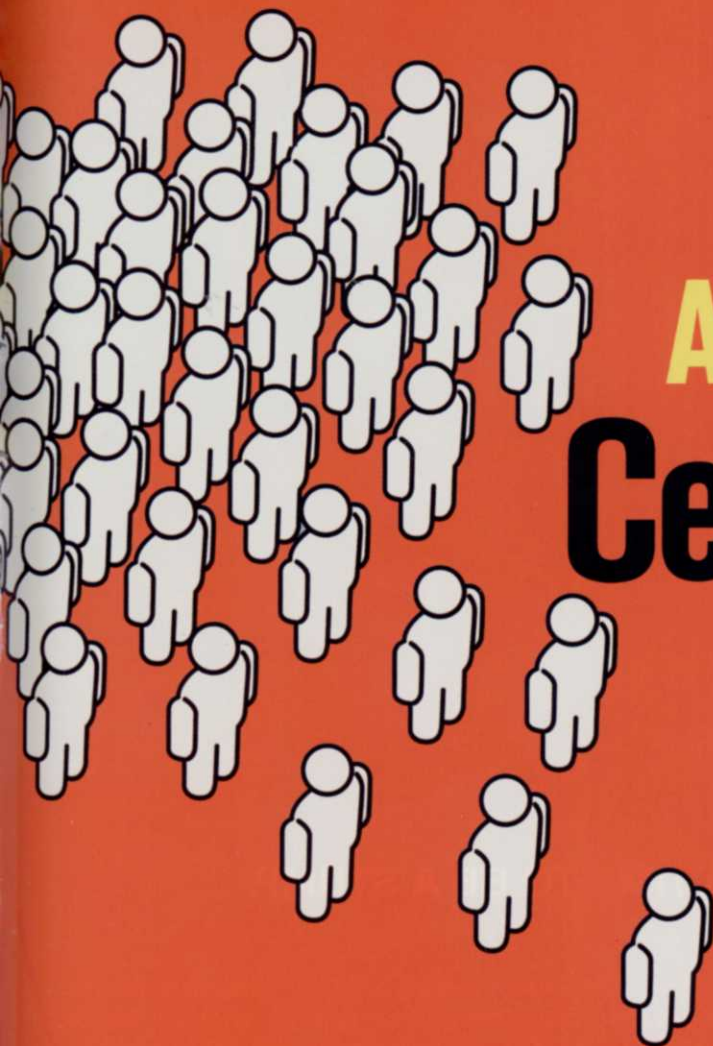
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that work

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Landscape MANAGEMENT

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Circle No. 103

next month

WHAT'S COMING UP IN JUNE

■ Cover story:

Brand to win

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■ Say goodbye to callbacks

They're costly; they're annoying; read this and they'll be gone

■ Mowing patterns

Here's one strategy to use to separate your service from the pack

■ Student help survival guide

If you train and supervise seasonal student help, this is a must read

■ Biostimulants to the rescue

What they are, how they can help you, when to use them

■ Snow/ice management

Review next winter's equipment choices, management strategies

■ Defeat the drought

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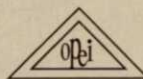
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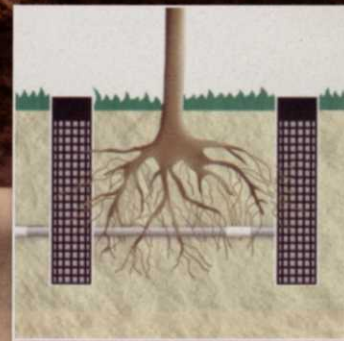


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shindaiwa
FIRST TO START. LAST TO QUIT.

BY JASON STAHL / MANAGING EDITOR

Work with a sound heart

As you send your teams out of your facility for a productive day in the field, don't feel guilty that you're not in Baghdad, helping our boys restore order. You've got your job to do, and they've got theirs. Now go do it. What you're doing is good for yourself, your employees, your customers and, ultimately, for your country.

If you're like me, you've been thinking how unfair it is for someone to be dodging bullets for your freedom while you're safe at home. I mean, if you love your country and what it stands for, shouldn't you be helping the cause?

Life can be unfair

Just after the war started, I was surfing through coverage on CNN.com and clicked on "Casualties of War." I saw a picture of a man who died when two helicopters crashed over the sea. He was a young, good-looking guy with bright blue eyes and a great smile. The next photo stabbed me in the heart — it showed him and his wife with their two children, aged 10 and seven. I immediately had a vision of this man's son grown up, looking at his father's picture on the mantle, lamenting about how many games of catch and lazy Sundays they missed.

How unfair, I thought, that these kids will grow up fatherless while mine won't. I wondered why his helicopter crashed while the wobbly wheel on the two-ton dump truck I passed the other day stayed on.

Fortunately, I came to my senses a short while later and realized how ludicrous these thoughts were.

Our soldiers would expect nothing less than for us to continue doing our jobs at home, just like we expect them to fulfill their mission. They're the best trained

people for that job, as you're the best trained person to do yours. They enlisted in the service knowing that one day they might have to put their life at risk. You took all of your money and started a landscaping business, accepting that one day you might lose everything.

Follow your path

We all have chosen paths in life, and we shouldn't look back after making those choices. Maybe the Vietnam War ended before one of you out there was called up for duty. If you had been drafted, how would your life have been different? There's really no point in trying to figure that out.

I'll tell you what you can do. Hug your kids every day. Don't grumble too much about losing a bidding war for a big commercial account. Be glad you were there to give it a shot anyway. And don't ever take for granted the smell of freshly cut grass again.

Compared to what our boys are doing in Iraq, our jobs and lives aren't that difficult. In that light, taking a reaming from Mrs. Smith for running over her daylilies with a mower isn't such a big deal.

Go do your job, and do it proudly. And when our boys come home, make sure their lawn is neater than the captain's quarters.

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Professional Products

We need to ask ourselves, "How do we get the consumer to purchase landscaping with so many other choices?"



Sell value, quality of life

It's amazing when you look at what's going on this year: lowest interest rates in 40 years, people afraid to put money into the stock market and war. With so many advantages on our side, I would guess that 2003 is treating most landscapers well.

Many of you reading this are probably thinking that I've taken one too many whiffs of compost lately. Obviously, low interest rates are fantastic because homeowners can borrow money as low as 4.25% on a line of credit. Or even if they refinance their home, they can save hundreds of dollars per month from the higher rates of 9% to 10% that were the norm. If you do the math, every \$100,000 of mortgage refinanced from 9% to 5.5% will save you \$237 per month, based on a 30-year mortgage. With rates this low, homeowners can refinance and borrow 40% more than they currently owe and have the same payment they're used to!

On your next appointment, give your customers the name of a good mortgage banker. Help them to see the benefits of refinancing their home so that they can afford a beautiful new landscape, including that backyard patio where they can entertain their friends.

Investing at home

Another advantage of being in the landscape business is we're helping people invest in their homes. Over time, home values continuously rise from 3% to 5%, depending on the area. In these conservative times, people will invest in their homes instead of the stock market. You can help them see their landscape as an investment because making 3% is a lot better than losing 30%.

Due to our war on terrorism and the war with Iraq, people aren't traveling as much as they have in the past. However, they still want the quality of life they're used to. So sell them on relaxing at home by having their very own retreat, spa or waterfall. I believe we tend to be negative about certain situations, but we need to become positive and stop talking about how bad things are. Sell and make things happen!

Changes needed

So, with all these good things, why did many landscapers have a slow 2002? I believe that we have to change the way we advertise and market ourselves to the customer. We're competing for consumers' money because they have so many choices of how to spend it, including remodeling their homes or purchasing home entertainment systems, new cars, boats and hundreds of other big-ticket items. We need to ask ourselves, "How do we get the consumer to purchase landscaping with so many other choices?"

Most landscapers rely on word-of-mouth promotion. In my opinion, word of mouth (referrals) is the best form of advertising, but we do little to promote our referral business. Small ideas that have worked for my company are sending newsletters to existing customers, telling them of all your services and asking them to refer their friends to you or even give you a list of friends who are thinking of landscaping.

— The author is President of the Ohio Landscapers Association and owner of Sagamore Soils and BET Trucking in Sagamore, OH. He first wrote this column for the OLA's "Growing Concern" publication. He can be reached at 330/656-5720.



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


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Circle No. 109

business ideas

BY ED LAFLAMME / GUEST COLUMNIST

Owners pay for a lack of systems or processes by working harder and longer hours and by not getting the returns they should from their companies.



Working hard, going broke

After working with dozens of landscape companies throughout the United States during the past year, it has become unmistakably clear to me why some companies make money and other don't.

Companies with processes make money. Companies without processes have to work harder to make money. Sometimes, they can't even work hard enough to earn a profit.

"The harder I work, the broker I get," is how one owner described it to me recently.

Create processes

Processes mean organization. No processes in place means lack of organization, which inevitably shows itself in too many unbillable hours. When you can't (or don't) charge for every hour that you or your crews are on the clock, profits disappear.

Can small companies make money without processes? Yes, but they can't grow beyond a certain size because they don't have the processes to grow. They're stuck. They can't take on more work to build revenues because there are no processes to get the work done in a logical, efficient manner.

Typically, the entire process of a small com-

pany revolves around the owner or one key manager, and without those key people directing everything all the time, things start to fall apart.

Unbillable hours

Curious about whether you have the systems we're talking about? Here's a quick test: Look outside your shop tomorrow morning when your workers arrive. Are they scurrying around like ants on a sidewalk full of crumbs, loading trucks, finding out what jobs they're going to, getting directions, repairing broken equipment and getting fuel — all seemingly at the same time?

These wasted minutes each morning are unbillable and eventually add up to hours. To make matters worse, they can lead to overtime hours by week's end.

As companies grow and crews multiply, the problem usually worsens. Unbillable hours can run out of control and then companies begin to lose money.

Owners, indeed everybody within an organization, pay for a lack of systems. Try as they might, and work as hard as they can, they can't overcome these inefficiencies.

So if you're "working harder and getting broker," try to figure out how many hours you're paying each week that are unbillable. That will get you to start thinking about ways to eliminate them.

Create processes that will simplify your operation. Then, instead of working harder, you'll be working smarter. Growth and prosperity will soon follow.

— *The author built and operated the largest landscape company in Connecticut before selling it in 1999.*

He now operates Grass Roots Consulting, Inc.

He can be reached at ed@grassrootsconsulting.com.

A.M. fast-break process

- ▶ Prepare work schedules the day before
- ▶ Load trucks the night before
- ▶ Hire a night mechanic to service trucks, equipment
- ▶ Fuel trucks the night before
- ▶ Set a time when all trucks must be off

industry almanac

NEWS YOU CAN USE



The Joint Color Guard at last year's Day on the Hill at Arlington

Special year for PLCAA's Legislative Day on the Hill

WASHINGTON, DC — There may be no more appropriate time to participate in PLCAA's Legislative Day on the Hill & Cemetery Project than this year. Mark July 14-15 on your calendars and lend your efforts to those of more than 100 other landscape and lawn care professionals.

The goal of the event is twofold:

- ▶ To help beautify Old Congressional and Arlington National Cemeteries.
- ▶ To meet with and educate legislators and regulators regarding the special issues facing our industry.

This is the 13th year that the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA) has hosted this special event. It has expanded its focus substantially since then. For example, the inaugural event was almost solely concerned with responding to a proposal to enact national lawn care legislation. Since then, industry members, under PLCAA's banner and guided by the energies of lawn care company owner Phil Fogarty, have donated thousands of hours of their time to fertilizing, liming and improving the two national landmark cemeteries.

The following sponsors and contributors support these landscape and lawn care pros' efforts: BASF, Bayer, Dow Agro-Sciences, Imery's, FMC, Helena, The Andersons, The Scotts Company, Riverday - A Nufarm Company and LESCO.

ANLA's biennial Legislative Conference set for Sept. 21-23

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The American Nursery & Landscape Association's biennial Legislative Conference is set for Sept. 21-23.

The theme is "One Industry, One Voice, One Future — Taking Care of Business." It will empower attendees to deliver to Congress a unified call for action on issues affecting the Green Industry and to learn the intricacies of bipartisan lobbying as well as the policy and political choices facing our industry and our country.

Here is a tentative schedule for this year's event:

Monday, July 14

- 6:45 – 7:15 a.m. — Arlington and Old Congressional Cemetery
- 7:30 a.m. — Arlington Cemetery Project
- 8:00 a.m. — Formal program at Arlington
- 11:30 a.m. — Lunch
- 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. — Day on the Hill briefing at Holiday Inn Capitol
- 5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. — Reception/dinner at Holiday Inn Capitol

Tuesday, July 15

- 7:45 a.m. — Breakfast On the Hill at Rayburn Building
- 8:00 a.m. — Invited speaker
- 9:00 a.m. — Hill visits begin

To learn more about the event or to register (there's no charge), contact PLCAA at 770/977-5222 or visit the Web site www.plcaa.org. Registration deadline is June 30. Deadline to reserve a room at the Holiday Inn Capitol (202/479-4000) is June 20. The PLCAA rate is \$149 single/double.

ANLA has confirmed the following speakers: political insider Charlie Cook, Minnesota State Representative Denny McNamara (a former grower and landscape professional) and Political Action Committee (PAC) expert David Rehr. Attendees will also get a chance to meet with national political figures at the signature ANLA Congressional Reception.

For more information, visit ANLA's Web site at www.anla.org or call 202/789-2900.

Gordie Bailey rides again . . .

NEWPORT, MN — Bailey Nurseries' Chairman of the Board Gordie Bailey will embark on the third and final leg of his coast-to-coast bicycle ride this June, raising money for the Horticultural Research Institute (HRI), a division of the American Nursery & Landscape Association (ANLA).

In the summer of 1999, Gordie celebrated his 64th birthday while en route from Oregon to Minnesota. The 2,100-mile ride was dubbed the "Tour de Hort" and raised over \$350,000 in contributions for HRI.

In the summer of 2001, Gordie set out from Bailey Nurseries' main office in Newport, MN, on the "Tour de Hort II" and rode over 1,200 miles to Cleveland, OH.



Bailey and the HRI Board of Trustees exceeded their goals by raising \$550,000 for industry research.

On June 30th of this year, Gordie plans to ride from Cleveland and arrive July 17 in Boston, where ANLA will be holding its annual conference. The goal for the "Tour de Hort III — The Finish Line" is to reach a combined total of \$1.25 million for industry research. Follow Gordie's progress and Jo's "e-mails from the road" at www.baileynurseries.com.

Bayer retains fipronil rights

MONTVALE, NJ — Bayer Environmental Science, a business group of Bayer CropScience LP, recently announced the company can continue to market the active ingredient fipronil and its mixtures to the turf and ornamental market. The announcement stems from Bayer CropScience AG's recent agreement on the divestiture of selected insecticides and fungicides to BASF AG.

HybriGene seeks APHIS permit

HUBBARD, OR — Bill Rose, President of HybriGene, says his firm has produced male-sterile bentgrass at its research lab in Kingston, RH, by introducing a gene into the grass. He says these male-sterile grasses produce pollen incapable of crossing themselves as well as other plants, eliminating the possibility that engineered genes can be transferred to other plants. HybriGene is applying for an APHIS permit to grow male-sterile glufosinate-resistant plants outside in field trials, says Rose.

continued on page 16

LESCO opens three new hubs

CLEVELAND, OH — LESCO announced the opening of three new regional distribution hubs in Chicago, Atlanta and Plano, TX. The company says the state-of-the-art distribution facilities can each serve more than 70 LESCO Service Centers and 30 LESCO Stores-on-Wheels.

In addition, LESCO announced the opening of its Haverhill, MA Service

Center, its first Service Center grand opening since 1998. It was followed by the grand opening of five additional Service Centers in:

- ▶ Brunswick, GA
- ▶ Douglasville, GA
- ▶ Lawrenceville, GA
- ▶ Arvada, CO
- ▶ North Aurora, IL

[CLIPPINGS]



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New Mellor lawn book available

David Mellor, master groundskeeper of Boston's Fenway Park, just finished his second book, "The Lawn Bible."

Mellor, a former editorial advisor for *Landscape Management* and *Athletic Turf* magazines, has been caring for some of the nicest lawns around for years for the California Angels, San Francisco Giants, Green Bay Packers, Milwaukee Brewers and now the Red Sox.

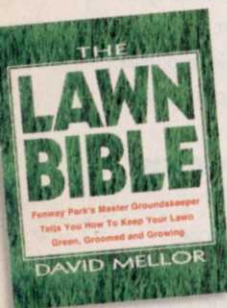
In "The Lawn Bible" (Hyperion Books), Mellor offers you everything you need to know about lawn care for your part of the country, including plant-

ing, mowing, feeding and troubleshooting, as well as tips, illustrations and anecdotes.

The Gospel of Grass, according to David, is:

- ▶ How to think like a lawn
- ▶ How to make a lawn child-friendly and a child lawn-friendly
- ▶ What combination of good soil, good seed and good sun adds up to a great lawn
- ▶ The mechanics and artistry of mowing
- ▶ How to win the war on weeds, pests and disease.

For more information about the book, which retails for \$16.95, visit the Web site <http://hyperionbooks.com/books/2003spring/lawnbible.htm>. To order the book, call 800/759-0190.



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Circle 111

continued from page 15

New Weed Man in Cincinnati

CINCINNATI, OH — Weed Man Cincinnati North West recently began operating in Butler and Hamilton Counties. This branch along with Weed Man of Northeast Cincinnati, which opened last year, now service the entire Cincinnati metropolitan area. They're two of the more than 60 Weed Man sites in the United States.

Toro preferred by Boston's Fenway

BLOOMINGTON, MN — The Toro Company recently announced that it has been named the Preferred Ground Equipment of Fenway Park. Turf Products Corp., the local Toro distributor, is also recognized as the Preferred Ground Equipment Supplier to the Boston Red Sox.

Spindler acquires BioPro

LAKELAND, FL — Spindler Enterprises purchased the BioPro line of fertilizers, micronutrients, biostimulants, soil amendments and pond bacteria. The Toro Company originally developed BioPro. TerraBiotics, who acquired BioPro from Toro, has sold the product line to Spindler Enterprises.

Symbiot partners with LESCO

CLEVELAND, OH — LESCO, Inc., one of the leading providers of products for the professional turf care and Green Industry markets, announced that it has been chosen as the preferred Purchase Power Partner (P3) to the Symbiot Landscape Network.

CLIPPINGS

MEDIUM DUTY TRUCK. HEAVY DUTY ATTITUDE.

A close-up, low-angle shot of the front grille of a red GMC truck. The grille is made of a silver, diamond-patterned mesh. The GMC logo is prominently displayed in the center, featuring the letters 'GMC' in a bold, red, sans-serif font with a silver outline. The truck's body is painted a vibrant red, and the lighting creates strong highlights and shadows, emphasizing the texture of the grille and the metallic sheen of the logo.

GMC

GMC | TOPKICK™



STRONG, SILENT TYPE.

Sometimes actions speak louder than words. That's why the all-new GMC TopKick offers a choice of powerful diesel engines, including the Cat® 3126E, the DURAMAX™ 6600, and the DURAMAX 7800. You can also choose the Vortec™ 8100MD V8 gasoline, the only gas engine available on class 6 and 7 medium duty trucks.* Together they deliver an impressive range of GVWRs from 16,000 to 61,000 lbs.† And they match up with a full complement of Allison®, ZF,™ TTC,® or Eaton® Fuller® transmissions. Amazingly, with its improved cab mountings and body sealing, the GMC TopKick remains incredibly quiet — whether you're idling or hauling. Once you experience the all-new GMC TopKick, you won't be able to keep quiet about it.

* Excludes other GM vehicles.

† When properly equipped; includes weight of vehicle, passengers, cargo, and body equipment.

FOR MORE



SEE WHAT YOU'RE MISSING.

Take a look at the all-new professional grade GMC TopKick. Engineered with a dramatically sloped hood and larger windshield, it gives your drivers an impressive view of what lies ahead, like people and equipment. In fact, the GMC TopKick provides a forward field of vision as near as 13 feet from the front bumper. That's twice as close as its nearest competitor.* Smartly designed with larger fold-in mirrors providing 126 square inches of surface area (including a 6" x 7" convex section), the new GMC TopKick offers a remarkable view all around. Add to that the tightest turning diameter within class 4,* and your drivers can safely maneuver around things like loading docks and garbage dumpsters. Not to mention the competition.

* Based on comparison of 2003 GMC TopKick C4500/C5500 to 2003 Ford F-450/F-550. Excludes other GM vehicles.

INFORMATION, VISIT US AT GMC.COM OR CALL 1-800-G



WIDE LOAD, MEET TIGHT TURN.

You never know what the road has in store for you. That's why the professionals at GMC engineered the all-new GMC TopKick with the tightest turning diameter within class 4.* With a setback axle and a wheel cut of up to 54 degrees, it helps give your drivers an edge on things like unexpected road work and poorly parked cars. Our engineers also designed the GMC TopKick with significantly reduced engine noise, vibration, and road harshness. That, along with a choice of powerful engines, makes the new GMC TopKick 100% professional grade. The road will always have its obstacles. But with the all-new GMC TopKick, your drivers will be equipped to meet them head on.

* Based on comparison of 2003 GMC TopKick C4500/C5500 to 2003 Ford F-450/F-550. Excludes other GM vehicles.

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The all-new GMC TopKick offers the kind of best-in-class features and engineering innovations only a company with more than 100 years of truck experience could deliver. Like a choice of diesel and gas powertrains, as well as an impressive range of GVWRs — from 16,000 to 61,000 lbs.* Equally important, the GMC TopKick surrounds your drivers in a quiet, highly functional environment so they can focus on what the road has in store. And they'll be well equipped to handle any situation with increased visibility and maneuverability. Clearly, this incredibly powerful truck has what it takes to get the job done. On time. On budget.

The all-new GMC TopKick. It's what happens when professional engineering is driven by heavy duty attitude.



GMC | **TOPKICK**

* When properly equipped; includes weight of vehicle, passengers, cargo, and body equipment.

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THE RIGHT TRUCK FOR YOU.**

Professional grade engineering is the foundation on which every GMC truck is built. And the all-new GMC TopKick continues that tradition by delivering what you want and need in a medium duty truck: strength, reliability, durability, and versatility. With frames ranging from 50,000–110,000 psi, there is a GMC TopKick for every use. And with its straight frame from front to rear with no protrusions, the GMC TopKick makes upfitting easy. So no matter what the job calls for, you can call on the GMC TopKick. Discover how the GMC TopKick can fit your business needs now and in the future.



Fast, easy, and safe deliveries are a real advantage in the real world, where tight alleys and cramped loading docks are often the norm. Added maneuverability minimizes hazards and increases efficiency.

**GMC TOPKICK C4500
Regular Cab—36.8'**

Nearest Competitor*—52'



A couple of degrees might not seem like much, but every driver knows—especially when backing up—that those degrees can be the difference between hitting or missing that badly placed dumpster.



For the inevitable tight squeezes, both driver and passenger sides feature cowl-mounted mirrors (for less vibration) that fold inward 90 degrees in either direction to be flush with the body of the truck.

A driver can't avoid what can't be seen. The TopKick's dramatically sloped hood helps increase forward visibility—and margins of safety.



* Based on comparison of 2003 GMC TopKick C4500/C5500 60" CA to 2003 Ford F-450/F-550 60" CA. Excludes other GM® vehicles.

F-450/F-550: 26'

GMC TopKick C4500/C5500: 13'

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Vehicles throughout this brochure shown with optional equipment. See dealer for details.

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People & companies

Bayer Environmental Science has hired **Sam Snyder**



Snyder

as Field Sales Representative in northern Ohio and **Ben Cicora** as Field Sales Representative in southern Ohio.

RedMax, Komatsu Zenoah America, Inc. recognized

William Vick, Territory Manager for RedMax Distributing, for surpassing \$1 million in sales.

The **Western Nursery & Landscape Association** named **Nicholas Hand** President.

Chapel Valley Landscape Company named **Sterns Lott** Virginia Commercial Sales Manager.

Skinner Nurseries has hired **Roger Claybaugh** and **Mike Vleck** as sales representatives.

Bozzuto Landscaping promoted **Christopher Green** to branch manager and **Marc Schmidt** to area manager. Green joined Bozzuto, Laurel, MD, in 1998 and Schmidt in 2001.

The **Iowa Nursery & Landscape Association** elected **Les Gehrels** President.

Stihl Inc. appointed **Günther Stoll** to Product Manager of chain saws.

Gowan Company named **Martin Petersen** Managing Director.



BioSafe Systems named **Melissa Gugliotti** Sales Director for the aquatics market.

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statistics

INDUSTRY TRENDS BY THE NUMBERS

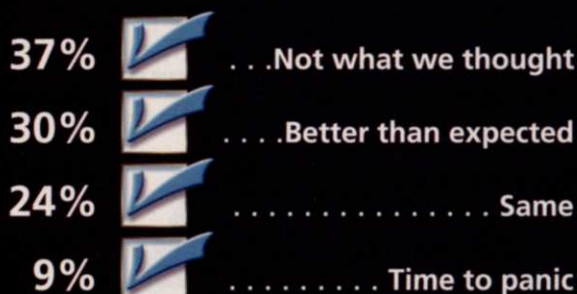
POWER LAWN & GARDEN EQUIPMENT SHIPMENTS (MILLION DOLLARS)

	1997	2002	2007
Lawn & garden equipment shipments	7615	8500	9900
Lawnmowers	3105	3370	3925
Turf & grounds equipment	965	1510	1965
Garden tractors & rotary tillers	810	760	870
Trimmers & edgers	660	635	770
Snow throwers	470	415	280
Blowers, vacuums & sweepers	235	300	360
Chipper/shredders & other	330	380	450
Parts & accessories	1040	1130	1280

SOURCE: THE FREEDONIA GROUP, INC.

Survey says...

Q How's your year going? Are you heading for a record season, or do you wish you could start all over again? To find out, we posted a survey on our Web site, and you responded. Here are the results.



Percentages based on 46 responses

Log onto www.landscapemanagement.net and answer our online survey. We publish the results here monthly.

CANADA GEESE BY THE NUMBERS



► Protected under federal protection through the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918

► Scientific name: *branta canadensis maxima*

► Avg. wt.: 15-17 lbs.

► Life span: 7-25 years

► Normally a goose will eat up to 3 lbs. of grass a day and leave behind 2 lbs. of droppings

► Reproduction begins at 2-3 years of age

► Eggs are laid in March or early April. A group of eggs are called a clutch

► Avg. clutch size is 2-5 eggs. Incubation period is 25-30 days

► Egg addling is endorsed by the Humane Society

► Adult geese lose their flight feathers (molting) about 8 weeks after their young are hatched. Molting birds are unable to fly

► Pairs of geese mate for life

► Geese usually return to where they nested or learned to fly

SOURCE: FLIGHTCONTROL

U.S. ECONOMIC OUTLOOK: APRIL 2003

U.S. economy (annual growth rate)	2001	2002	2003
Real GDP	0.3	2.4	2.4
Inflation (CPI)	2.8	1.6	2.6
Unemployment rate	4.8%	5.8%	5.9%
Fed funds rate	3.9%	1.7%	1.3%
30-year fixed mortgage rate	7.0%	6.5%	6.1%
1-year ARM	5.8%	4.6%	4.1%
Existing single-family sales	5,296	5,566	5,531
New single-family sales	908	974	928
Housing starts	1,603	1,705	1,683

SOURCE: NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS



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Circle No. 112



Count on it.

Advantage: Certification

Set your business apart with professional credentials that demonstrate your commitment to quality and to your clients

BY MICHAEL RILEY

While professional certification is still relatively new to the Green Industry, those who have earned their credentials are enjoying a competitive advantage. How much? That's hard to judge. But it's real. Certification brings increased knowledge and self-worth to the employee, credibility and respect to the business owner, and a sense of reassurance to customers that they're hiring the best in the business.

It's not just a piece of paper to hang on a wall. Educated clients know the value of professionally trained and certified contractors and crew members, and many are willing to pay a little more for it.

"To the extent that you can convey to prospects and clients the benefits of using certified people, you can get their endorsements and have a greater marketing advantage — and charge premium prices," says David Frank, owner of David Frank Landscape Construction, Georgetown, WI. "There are so many credentials that are for sale these days — this isn't



one of them. It means something to the Green Industry, and to those who don't know, you have to educate them."

Raising the bar

Frank is one of only a handful of contractors to be designated as a Charter Certified Landscape Professional (CCLP) — a distinction that comes from having passed a challenging battery of exams during the charter year of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America's CLP certification program.



David Frank

ALCA offers three certifications: Certified Landscape Professional (CLP), Certified Landscape Technician - Exterior (CLT-E), and Certified Landscape Technician - Interior (CLT-I). Anyone working in the industry is eligible to take the tests, although ALCA members receive a discount (tiered pricing is standard practice with all of the associations listed in this article).

"This isn't an easy test," says Frank. "Most people have to work at it two, three, even four times to pass. It's tough, but it's worth it. It improves the morale and self-esteem of our staff of roughly 300, and I've found it to be very beneficial in promoting our firm's professional image through our brochures, business cards and all of our marketing material."

Certification is the accredited acknowledgement by an organization or society that verifies a person's

tested knowledge of professional standards. Its roots can be traced back to medieval times when doctors were first certified after schooling. The concept of professional credentials eventually spread to encompass blue collar industries, and, by the late-1970s (the time when the Green Industry began forming its own programs), there were over 300 industry certification programs in place throughout the United States.

Beyond providing a well-rounded education to those who become certified, the concept of standardization establishes a baseline of competence for an entire industry. By raising the bar, people who achieve certification benefit by having a greater sense of pride and reinforced confidence. They feel good about themselves and their abilities, and produce a better product — which translates into more success for the

companies they work for, as well as increased customer satisfaction and esteem for the service provider.

Association involvement

As a key component in professional development and an overall package of member benefits, most Green Industry associations today have certification programs in place (see chart, p. 28, for a list of national ones).

A well-rounded education often involves certification in more than one area of the Green Industry. For example, the Irrigation Association (IA) and ALCA formed an alliance in 2001 to provide a "certification track" for contractors and employees who work in both landscape and irrigation.

"It's a professional development and learning experience designed to help the individual stay on the cutting edge of

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS BY ASSOCIATION

Association	Certification(s) offered	Contact	Phone	Web address
Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA)	Certified Landscape Technician – Exterior (CLT-E) Certified Landscape Technician – Interior (CLT-I) Certified Landscape Professional (CLP)	Marcia Higgins, BCA Professional Standards Mgr.	800/395-ALCA	www.alca.org
Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS)	Certified Grounds Technician (CGT) Certified Grounds Manager (CGM)	Tom Shaner Executive Dir.	800/609-PGMS	www.pgms.org
Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA)	Certified Turfgrass Professional (CTP) Certified Ornamental Landscape Professional (COLP) Certified Cool Season Turfgrass Professional (in cooperation with the Lawn Care Association of Pennsylvania)	Thomas Delaney VP of Government Affairs	800/458-3466	www.plcaa.org
Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA)	Certified Sports Field Manager (CSFM)	Suz Trusty Communications Dir.	800/323-3875	www.sportsturfmanager.com
Irrigation Association (IA)	Certified Irrigation Designer (CID) Certified Irrigation Contractor (CIC)	Kelly Benedetti Certification Mgr.	703/536-7080	www.irrigation.org
Snow & Ice Management Association (SIMA)	Certified Snow Professional (CSP)	Tammy Higham Executive Dir.	814/835-3577	www.sima.org
California Landscape Contractors Association (CLCA)	(Same as ALCA)	Tara Stout Events Mgr.	916/830-2780	www.clca.org

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Circle 113

changes in the industry," says IA Certification Manager Kelly Benedetti said of the program. "It's brought a new level of cooperation and visibility to both associations."

The Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS) is another association that works to promote certification through partnership, coordinating with the Association for Higher Education Facility Officers (APPA) and the American Public Works Association (APWA). PGMS was also the first Green Industry association to offer certification (1980).



Van Haasteren

"One of the most important things that you can do to improve your career is to continue your professional development," says George Van Haasteren, CGM (Certified Grounds

Manager). Van Haasteren is Director of Grounds for Dwight-Englewood School in Englewood, NJ, and chairs the PGMS certification committee. "Sure it's hard work; anything worth having is. But it's worth it."

Industry certification now includes cooperative efforts with universities.

Industry certification has expanded to include cooperative efforts with universities as well. The Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA) teams up with the University of Georgia to administer its Certified Turfgrass Professional (CTP) and Certified Ornamental Landscape Professional (COLP) programs. PLCAA also recently added a third certification for cool-season turfgrass profession-

als, offered through Penn State University in cooperation with the Lawn Care Association of Pennsylvania.

But you don't need a college background

to qualify for a Green Industry certification program. Each association has a complete listing of requirements based on experience and education, and offers study materials

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Circle 114

and frequent testing to all candidates. Most programs also require re-certification every few years in order to remain current with technology and industry changes.

All of this might seem like a lot of work. So why do it? "Certification shows that you're not only competent, but that you've taken the extra step to work through the process and affirm your professionalism," says Suz Trusty, Communications Director for the Sports Turf Managers Association.



John Gachina

It also earns respect from customers who can relate. "Property and facility managers have their own certification programs, which I think creates a greater respect for landscape companies that have certified employees," says John Gachina, CLT, CLP, of John Gachina Landscape Management, Menlo Park, CA. "Certification demonstrates a unique level of professionalism to customers and instills pride in the work force."

All of this might seem like a lot of work. So why do it? Because it shows you've taken an extra step.

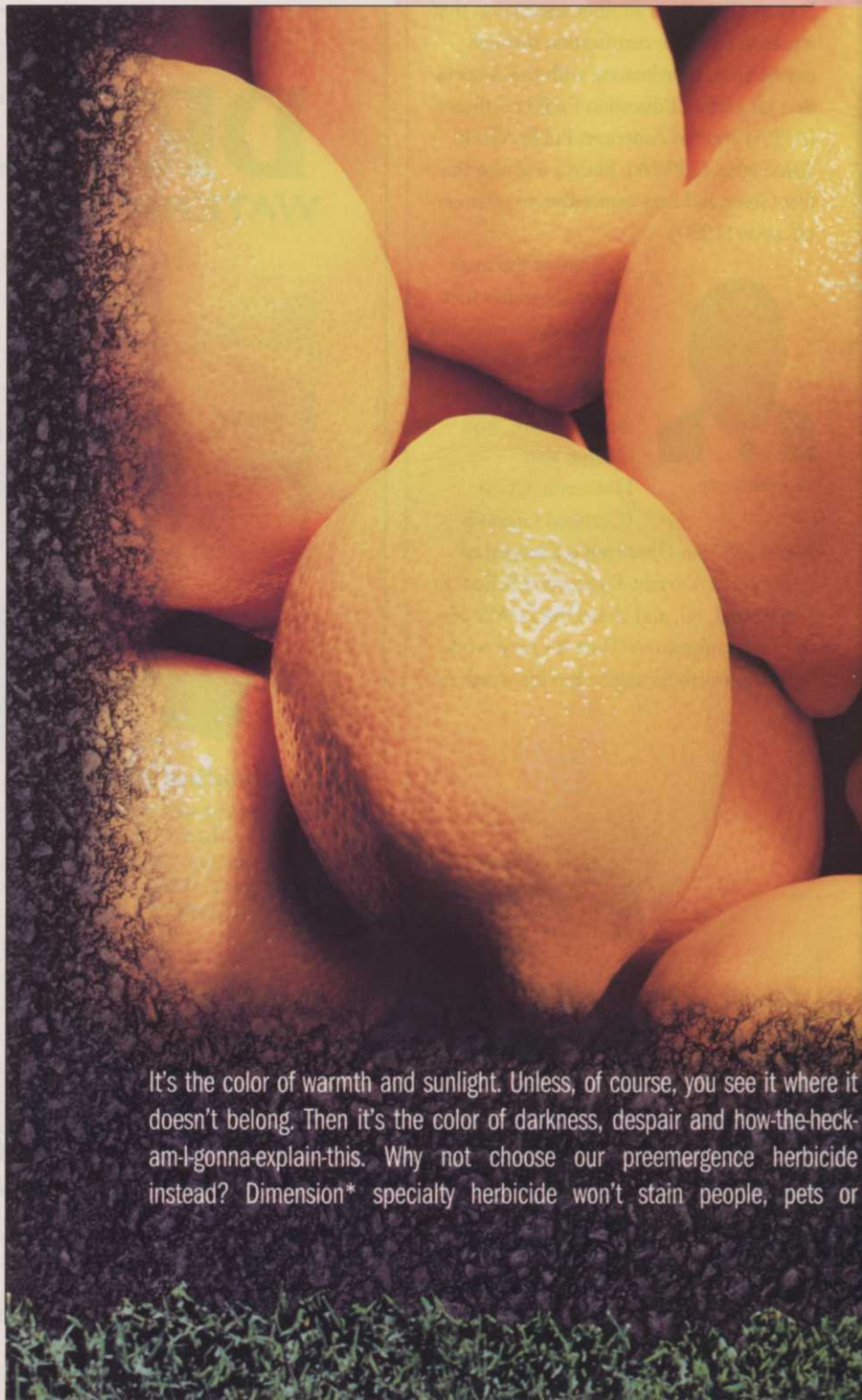
Coming of age

"The level of sophistication of the industry has progressed to where you can no longer view it as something that 'just anybody' can do," says Klaus Kumme, CLT, CLIA, of KL Landscaping, Castaic, CA. "Contractors now recognize that they aren't only in competition with each other but with

other industries that have well-developed certification programs.

"Customers have come to expect credentials from their professional service providers. Think of 'Mr. Goodwrench.'"

Are you more comfortable taking your car to a certified mechanic? It's not only the image but the substance of what certification means to the customer and to the person who's certified."



It's the color of warmth and sunlight. Unless, of course, you see it where it doesn't belong. Then it's the color of darkness, despair and how-the-heck-am-I-gonna-explain-this. Why not choose our preemergence herbicide instead? Dimension* specialty herbicide won't stain people, pets or

Kumme joined the California Landscape Contractors Association's program during its fledgling stages in the early 1980s, and was the first southern California testing chairman in 1984. He's worked

with other states to assist them in starting their own programs, and notes that while early resistance to the idea is common, it becomes popular once it catches on.

"It usually takes that one person who



Ron Kujawa

says, 'Hey, this could really work for us!'" Kumme says. "Once that happens, the ball gets rolling and people start benefiting from it."

Looking ahead

Regarding the future of certification, Kumme points to ALCA's relatively new Advanced Endorsements program, which offers credentials in specialties such as irrigation, masonry, low-voltage lighting and several other key areas.

"Advanced endorsements are on the cutting edge," says Kumme. "With water shortages and droughts growing into bigger issues, specialized knowledge is becoming more important than ever."

"When certification began for the industry, there was a misconception that it would automatically bring prosperity," recalls Ron Kujawa, CLT, CLP of Kujawa Enterprises, Inc.(KEI), Milwaukee, WI. "But it's a means to an end, not the end itself."

"We've taken the service industry a step further by promoting professionalism at every level," adds Kujawa, who also served as Chairman of ALCA's Certification Board of Governors for two years. "A customer with a sizeable investment in his or her landscape is going to have a higher degree of appreciation for professional competency." Hence the competitive advantage.

"There's a limited economic pie that we're all trying to partake of," notes Kumme. "Certification is one of the best investments you can make in your business, or, if you're an individual, in your profession — especially now, as the public's appreciation for certification continues to increase. With certification, everybody wins." **LM**

— The author is a freelance writer in Sacramento, CA, with extensive experience writing for the Green Industry. He can be contacted

at mriley33@sbcglobal.net.



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measurable goals**

BY RON HALL / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Some company owners insist that the best incentive program for their employees is also the easiest to implement — either produce or hit the road. Considering today's bleak economic news, that's probably enough of an incentive for a lot of workers.

Even so, many landscape and lawn service businesses get better results by developing strategies to boost employee efficiency and productivity. Today's cutthroat business environment almost demands it. It's not enough to just get the job done; it must be done well . . . and efficiently.

Fortunately, we can draw on powerful information that we've retrieved from several special Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA) events. This information came from people who learned (sometimes the hard way) what encourages employees to peak performance, and what to avoid in trying to stimulate your team members.

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Circle No. 115



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Incentive and bonus defined

First, let's define the terms "incentive" and "bonus." Some owners confuse the two, meaning, for example, that they consider the annual Christmas checks they hand out to select employees to be incentives. Not so — they're really bonuses.

Here's how my dictionary defines bonus: "Anything given in addition to the customary or



(Left to right) Steve Glover, Mike Russo, Jim Paluch and Dan Foley all had good incentive ideas at recent ALCA-sponsored events.

required amount; specifically extra payment over and above salary given to an employee as a reward." By contrast, an incentive is "something that stimulates one to take action, work harder." Given the choice between the two, most employers prefer the incentive route.

Along those lines, an experienced panel of landscape professionals shared their views at ALCA Conference in Tampa in 2001. That presentation generated dozens of questions from audience members on the subject of incentives.

Panel members were: Steve Glover, CLP, Symbiot Business Group and former co-owner of L&L Landscape, San Jose, CA; consultant Bruce Wilson, who helped build Environmental Care, Inc. into a \$125 million operation; Mike Russo, owner of Russo Lawn and Landscape, Inc., Windsor Locks, CT; Allen Davis, Vice President of R.A.R. Landscaping, Baltimore, MD; and consultant Ed Laflamme, former owner of Laflamme Services.

Panel members agreed that not every incentive they put in place worked; in fact, some backfired. But each of the panelists said that they eventually developed incentive plans that significantly improved their company's performance and increased profits.

Is there a single plan that works for all companies? Absolutely not, they stressed. Indeed, it's unlikely that any single plan will work for all employees within even a single company. This is particularly true if that company has separate administrative, managerial, production and shop

More than 100 great ideas

Gather about 300 landscape and lawn service business owners in the same room, ignite the passion that each has for his or her operation, then stand back. You're going to ignite a firestorm of creativity.

Business Consultant Jim Paluch, JP Horizons, fanned these flames at this past February's ALCA Executive Forum by challenging the owners to come up with great ideas to encourage their employees to work more efficiently and productively.

The owners responded with an avalanche of personal experiences. They shared strategies that produced positive results, strategies that fizzled and strategies that created unintentional results. They came up with over 100 different employee incentive ideas. The variety of ways that owners said they stimulated employees to work more efficiently in order to benefit both themselves and their companies was incredible.

At the end of several hours of animated discussion (the hum from the room could be heard halfway across the hotel), Paluch solicited some of the most popular suggestions from owners as he gathered up the notes each group compiled during the course of its discussion.

We thought that this information was too valuable to keep to ourselves, and Paluch has graciously agreed to share it with readers.

To get a list of all of the valuable incentive program suggestions arising from the ALCA Executive Forum that took place this past February, e-mail JP Horizons at Linda@jphorizons.com.

— RH

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employees. How, for example, do you encourage an office manager to increase the rate of accounts receivables with the same incentives you offer a field production worker to work more productively and safer?

End results key

Rule number one with the ALCA panel: Link in-

centives to performance and, ultimately, to results. In the case of managers, this means involving them in the budgeting process, then making them responsible for meeting or exceeding specific financial goals. If they do this, they may, for example, receive a predetermined percentage of the profits that they generate

above budgeted goals. Obviously, if they don't meet their goals and the company doesn't meet its goals, they don't receive the rewards.

Production workers, on the other hand, are offered incentives to encourage them to meet what they can control, such as budgeted labor man-hour goals, job quality assessments, equipment/tool care and worker safety. All impact a company's profitability.

The incentives, especially to crew members, don't always have to be dollars and probably shouldn't be. Some companies offer a gift certificate to a discount store or a prepaid phone card to call home. Or, how about special recognition such as "Employee of the Week" or a half-day off with pay?

No matter how carefully you put together your incentive plans, however, you will run into problems. The panelists generally agreed that employees — no matter the level — can get creative in finding ways to gain the incentives, sometimes with unintended results. And, if the plans aren't reviewed and modified, employees can begin to view the incentives as "entitlements," especially if the plans aren't tied directly to measurable performance.

Also, problems are sometimes unknowingly built into incentive plans. For example, selling an account at a lower margin than you're usually willing to accept (perhaps it's a high-profile account that you can leverage in your marketing), and expecting your production people to make up the difference is an incentive killer.

Encouraging employees to work smarter and more productively isn't an option anymore. Develop plans that make it clear to employees that they'll benefit along with your company, and watch your profits grow. **LM**

10 quick incentive tips

- 1.** Get input from your employees when you're developing your company's incentive plans. They'll tell you what's meaningful to them.
- 2.** Develop different types of plans for the different levels of employees within your company. One size doesn't fit all. The incentives you put in place to spur production in the field will mean little to the office manager charged with collecting accounts receivables. But who would argue that one task is any less important than the other?
- 3.** To some employees, the most effective incentive you can offer is the chance to advance within an organization. At the crew level, for instance, it can mean offering a slightly higher wage for a crew member who learns English or gets a driver's license.
- 4.** Base incentives on outcomes that employees can control, for example meeting/exceeding specific sales, production or cost-cutting goals.
- 5.** Consider linking management-level incentive programs to meeting/exceeding predetermined company profit goals.
- 6.** Provide managers with regular (quarterly or monthly) updates on company progress. If they're exceeding the goals, it will create more positive energy. If they're behind, they have time to make up the difference.
- 7.** Consider linking crew-level incentives to meeting or coming in below budgeted man-hours, while still maintaining a defined level of service. Keep a running score so that team members can tell at a glance where they stand.
- 8.** Consider both individual and "team" incentives. Peer pressure within a team can be a powerful incentive.
- 9.** Not all incentives need to be monetary. Special recognition, extra time off or getting to use the best parking spot at the shop for a week or month can spur positive performance, too.
- 10.** When you finalize your incentive plan(s), don't forget to include the phrase: "This is subject to change at any time for any reason."

— RH

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Be a good 'scout'



▲ Have a procedure in place for an owner or manager to check a customer's lawn when the applicator is unsure of the problem.

Train your applicators to diagnose and solve lawn problems before they get out of hand and make your customers unhappy

BY CHRIS LEMCKE

The procedures you put in place to evaluate customers' lawns, uncover potential problems and diagnose developing problems are the heart of any lawn care program.

They determine the timely and judicious use of fertilizer and pest control strategies — both chemical and non-chemical — by your trained employees.

Some companies refer to this process as scouting, while others refer to it as monitoring. Whatever you call it, do it consistently well and you'll differentiate your company and your program from competitors. Preventing problems on clients' landscapes and promptly correcting them builds customer satisfaction and boosts customer retention.

Top companies, in fact, provide all field employees with the basic knowledge to become lawn scouts. This requires ongoing training, but it's doable. Your technicians can be taught to recognize common lawn

diseases, plant-damaging insects and improper cultural practices.

What are the standards?

Beyond that, they must also be able to recognize when treatments are necessary to deal with a particular problem. Generally, treatment decisions are based on standards that your company has established for pest damage. At what threshold does pest activity threaten the lawn? Is overall turf health threatened? Is the infestation throughout the lawn? What are the patterns and the rate at which turf problems are spreading? These are some of the questions the technician must answer before deciding upon a treatment strategy.

Sometimes that strategy doesn't involve a chemical application. For example, just because a customer notices a few grubs while digging in a flowerbed doesn't necessarily mean that his entire lawn is at risk.

When the problem does require an application, many lawn care companies now use

low-risk products at their lowest label rates. They've trained their employees to apply them at the right time — when the problem is at the stage when it's easiest to control. Again, this is the value of training.

Procedures are a must

Occasionally, your technician (applicator) will be unsure of a particular problem or management strategy. Do you have a procedure in place to set up a service call so that the owner or manager can visit the property to assess the situation? The owner/manager can then share the results of the service call with the technician as a follow-up.

You may also want to encourage customers to become scouts for you. Tell them to call if they notice any lawn prob-

5 steps to successfully treat lawn problems

1 Proper training. Train your technicians to recognize specific turfgrass problems common to your area. They should also know the best strategies to deal with these problems, whether it's the application of a pest control product or a change in cultural management practices such as mowing or watering.

2 Regular monitoring. Make every technician a lawn scout, looking for signs of potential problems and, equally important, keeping customers



informed about what your company can do to improve their property.

3 Set a procedure for handling customer calls. Respond promptly

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◀ **Train your staff to recognize specific turfgrass problems in your area.**

to customer concerns. The longer it takes to see a customer, the greater the chance that a problem can worsen and cause more damage.

4 **Have a price list.** Can your technicians give specific prices for treatments while at the customer's site?

5 **After-treatment evaluation.** Set up a date to go back and check on the success of an application or change in cultural practice — and to make sure the customer is happy.

lems between visits. It's better to visit the property and identify the problem and solution than to try to diagnose and solve it on the telephone.

Once a decision has been made to treat a problem, respond promptly. The longer it takes to see a customer, the greater the chance that a potential pest can cause further damage. Establish a standard or procedure to inspect a customer's lawn for any concerns the customer may have within a certain period of time. A service guarantee will promise clients that you'll be there to evaluate any situation that pertains to the lawn's health.

After all this, make sure that the owner/manager or technicians evaluate the success or failure of any treatment. Establish a date to check on the success of an application or change in cultural practice — and to make sure the customer is happy. Keeping the customer informed and educated on his lawn is one of the most valued services lawn care companies can provide.

Customers want companies that can give them value. Often, that value is in what lawn care companies can provide over and above their programs: the management

of pests, identification of problems, monitoring for problems, treatment of any problems and evaluation of any treatments to make sure the turf is healthy. **LM**

— *The author is a Technical Coordinator for Weed Man USA. He can be reached at 416/269-5754 ext. 107 or clemcke@aol.com.*

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Circle 121

Gear up for graduation

Experienced grounds managers tell how to put extra color into the biggest weekend of the year on their campuses BY JASON STAHL / MANAGING EDITOR



Masons fix the main center island marker at UNC for graduation.

Every spring, grounds managers on college campuses see it coming like a monster thunderstorm, its towering purple thunderheads causing feelings of both excitement and dread. The event — graduation weekend.

This exciting time gives grounds managers the opportunity to showcase their handiwork to a large audience. But it's also stressful because so many additional chores are added to the regular, daily workload of maintaining the campus.

A common sense approach

At Illinois State University, graduation ceremonies are held inside, but that doesn't let Director of Grounds Operations Mike O'Grady and his crew off the hook. Before and after the ceremonies, people spend a lot of time outdoors, so the whole campus has to look sharp.

"We cancel vacation time prior to graduation," O'Grady says. "We work two to three hours overtime each day two weeks prior to graduation, sometimes three weeks depending on the growing season.



Mike O'Grady

All of this is done to detail the campus to a degree we'd like to keep it all the time. Hours and manpower, however, don't allow it."

The biggest problem with the overtime is the budget, says O'Grady, especially after a tough winter like this past one. "My overtime budget includes snow removal time, so if we've had a tough winter that budget is depleted," he says.

Student help during the weeks leading up to graduation isn't much of an option, says O'Grady, given that the students are

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Sprucing up mulch beds prior to graduation at UNC is a must.

Grounds managers show off their handiwork during graduation.

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busy studying for finals. "We also don't have the number of students we used to because we don't pay them a lot of money," he says.

Another challenge for O'Grady and his staff is installing flowerbeds in Illinois in mid spring. Frost is always a possibility. "We're not safe to plant until May 15, and graduation this year is May 7 through 10," O'Grady says. "We're really taking a gamble with the flowers we plant around the buildings used for the ceremonies. We plant those at the last possible minute."

The rest, O'Grady says, is simple maintenance. He calls it an "orchestrated method," where his staffers work in zones. But the number of crew members per zone isn't hard and fast. O'Grady will move them around for the sake of catching up on certain tasks. It all comes down to doing what needs to be done.

"If we see that some areas of campus are being used for activities that need addi-

tional cleanup, we'll let other areas go in favor of those," O'Grady says.

Time to impress

Graduation is definitely a time to impress for grounds managers, especially because you have alumni revisiting the campus and parents who might be considering sending their children there some day. In that regard, Chris Fay, Grounds Superintendent for the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, looks at the role of grounds manager as gracious host.

"I try to take a little extra time to visit the campus and talk to the visitors and even offer them rides in my golf cart," Fay says. "As a grounds manager, it's a great feeling to hear how nice they think the campus looks."

At Fay's school, alumni weekend coincides with graduation, which means six to eight classes, some who graduated 50 years ago, will be there to inspect the campus.

With so much work to be done, Fay is thinking of his strategy months beforehand. The list of tasks from the previous year is updated from January on, based on monthly meetings with a supervisor. "We



Chris Fay

get information generated through different offices that tell us when and where the independent graduation ceremonies are," Fay says. "We also identify the places where families gather to take photographs and make sure those areas are well-groomed."

Fay's staff alone can't possibly handle the trucking in and spreading of the 90 cubic yards of mulch needed for the ceremonies, so he subcontracts that out.

PR bonanza

"It's our biggest public relations tool," is how Michael Loftus, Director of Facilities for the University of Delaware, says of graduation weekend.

Commencement is held outdoors at the school's stadium. Since it takes a week to set up all the chairs, the field has to be ready at least a week before the ceremony. That requires some special turfgrass care.

"We spray growth regulators to keep it (the turfgrass) from growing," Loftus says. "Then, once the commencement is over, we're mowing right behind them as they're taking the chairs down."



Michael Loftus

Individual colleges at the University of Delaware will have their own convocation ceremonies at a dozen different locations, so Loftus tries to identify these sites ahead of time.

Like O'Grady, Loftus divides the campus into zones with different crews responsible for each zone. He lets each crew do its own prioritizing, but once the graduation schedules are revealed, the priorities are adjusted.

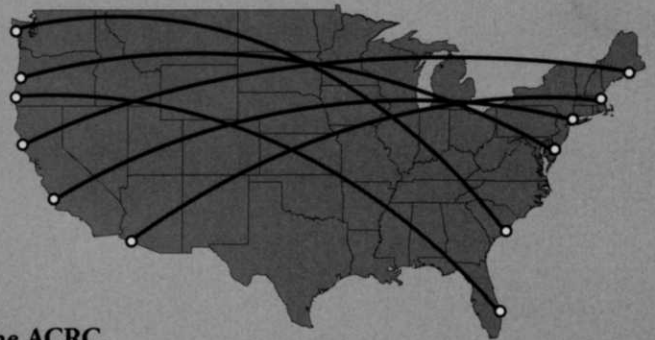
"This is definitely the biggest event of the year," Loftus says of graduation. "Spring is sprung, and to top it off you're trying to get ready for commencement." **LM**

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Seed supply shortages likely

Lock in orders of your favorite grass seed varieties. The buyers' market may be about to end

BY SUSAN H. SAMUDIO, M.S.C.

Landscapers have had it good for the last several years in that grass seed has been abundant and prices moderate. But things are changing, and market analysts point to a coming turnaround in the grass seed industry. For the first time in five years, there will likely be an undersupplied market. Your favorite grass may become hard to find this summer.

Acreage slashed

Throughout the Pacific Northwest, grass farmers have suffered losses and oversup-

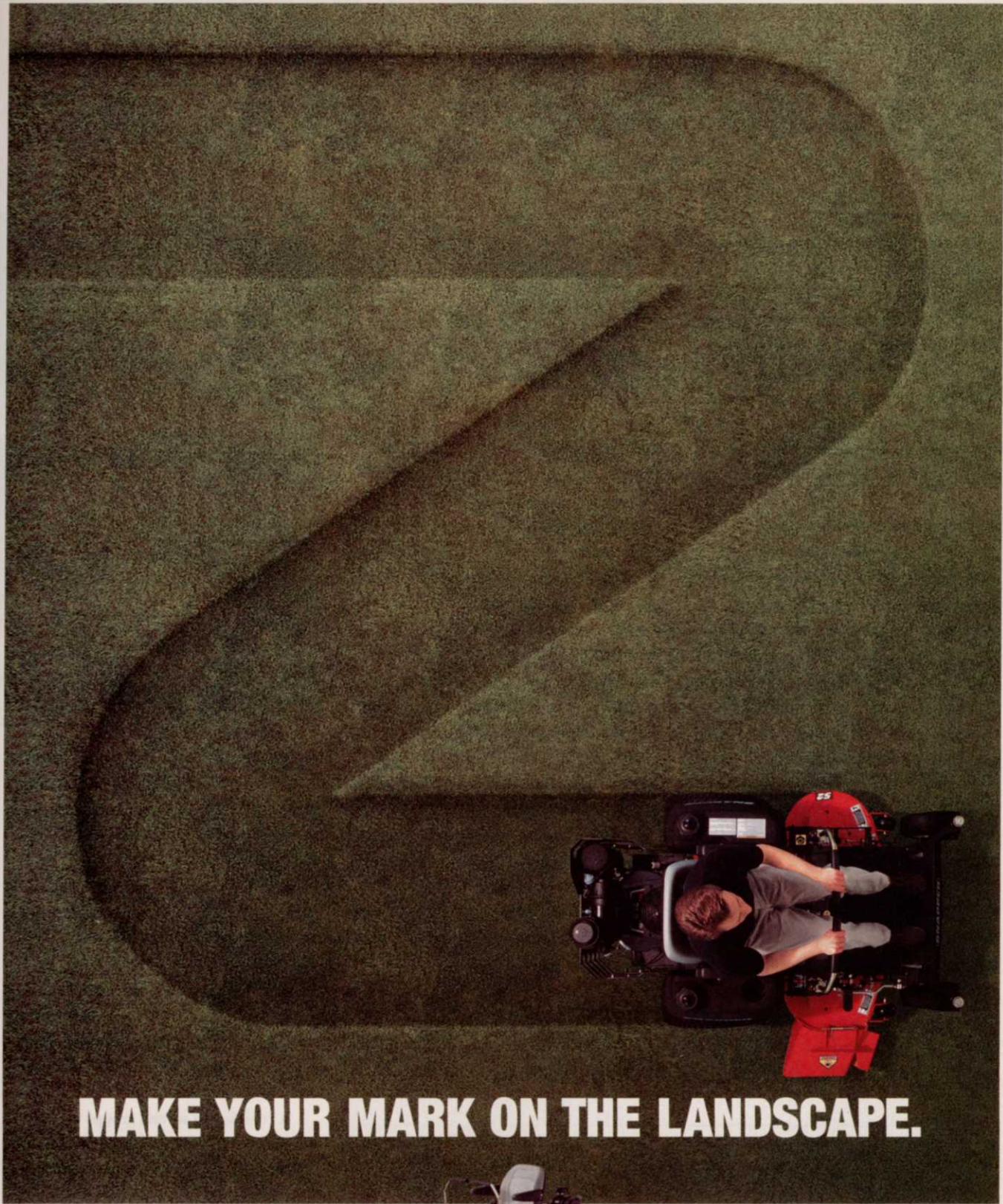


The author in a spring-plowed bluegrass field on the Rathdrum Prairie.

ply for the last three years. They've recently taken thousands of acres of grass seed out of production. Today's acreage for many companies is at levels not seen since the 1980s. The reasons behind the mass plow-out are varied. But for the end user, it spells spot shortages of popular varieties and the possibility of higher prices.

Many factors affect the seed supply: competition between grass and other crops for production, fall weather, field burning, bankruptcies and crop carryover, to name a few. Low seed prices and abundant supplies have left most grass seed growers and companies barely breaking even. To reduce the oversupply and make farming more profitable, production on almost every turf

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species has been cut as contracts run out on old acreage.

When grass prices are high, seed farmers often put as many acres back into grass as they take out. However, with the way prices have been the last few years, other crops like wheat, oats or clover appear more lucrative. Therefore, seed farmers are increasing their acreage of these crops and plowing their grass seed fields.

Balancing the ryegrass crop

Perennial ryegrass has had one of the biggest plow-outs. Oregon's perennial ryegrass acreage in the certification program dropped over 13,000 acres from 76,435 acres between 2001 and 2002 (below). Older fields have continued to be removed since last summer's harvest. Steve Rusconi, Simplot Grower Services Representative, says, "At a minimum, I expect a 15% reduction in perennial ryegrass supplies for 2003." Expect to pay more for perennial ryegrass this year — prices have already begun to go up this spring.

Leah Brilman, Director of Research at Seed Research of Oregon, also predicts a short ryegrass crop, adding that the perennial ryegrass carryover was gone by early spring.

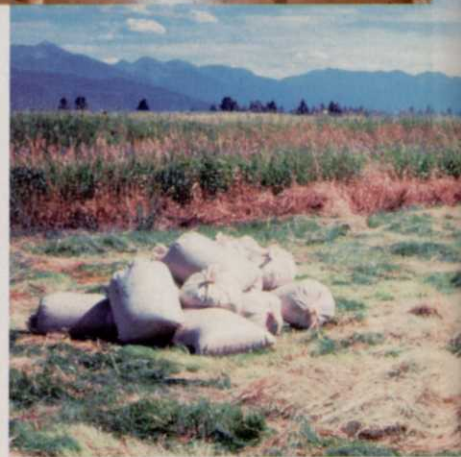


Bagged seed in Jacklin Seed's Post Falls, ID warehouse.

Similar reductions occurred with the fine fescues, which dropped 7,000 acres from 23,765 acres from 2001 to 2002. Nevertheless, seed supplies are expected to remain about the same as last year for the fine fescues, and prices should remain stable. Production of the bentgrasses has also remained about the same.

Tall fescue production in Oregon increased by 7,600 acres to 115,401 acres between 2001 and 2002. The new National Turfgrass Evaluation Program tall fescue trial planted in 2001 was the main reason for this increase. Since the 2002 harvest, however, tall fescues have joined the plow-out frenzy.

"I have heard several estimates that indicate over 50,000 acres of grass seed production has been planted to soft white wheat," says Gale Gingrich of the Marion County OSU Extension Service in *Seed Today* magazine.



Expect an adequate seed supply even with the plow-outs, since there was a large carryover of this crop from 2002. Prices are expected to rise this fall, however. Older varieties should be readily available, but new varieties will probably be in short supply.

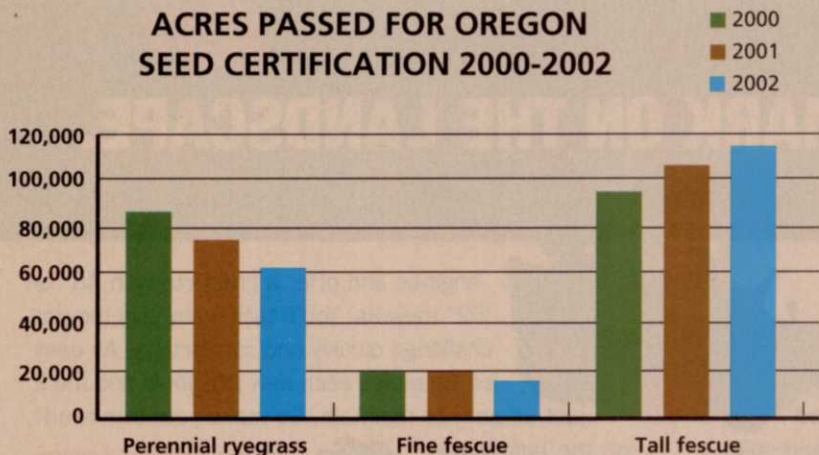
Ky bluegrass sings the blues

Big problems loom in the future for Kentucky bluegrass production. Field burning, which has been used for decades to stimulate Kentucky bluegrass seed production, is on the way out in Idaho. A total burning ban may go into effect within 18 months.

A coalition of several groups that includes environmentalists, health officials, tourism interests and concerned citizens have lobbied against grass field burning for several years. They may be able to get bills in the Idaho legislature passed this year.

Burning was banned in Oregon and Washington before 2000, but a ban on burning in Idaho poses a bigger threat to having bluegrass production in Idaho due to the climate and inability to do annual cropping.

ACRES PASSED FOR OREGON SEED CERTIFICATION 2000-2002



Leadership insights

GROWING GREEN INDUSTRY LEADERS

SUPPLEMENT TO LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

Show clients that you value their business

BY DAN FOLEY

- 1 Thank your clients.** Sincere words of thanks and appreciation are always welcomed by a customer.
- 2 Be the "best cost" provider.** Employ the best practices and use the best equipment. Don't overspend your customer's money. Do the job right the first time. Don't penalize customers with extra costs because of your internal errors. "Value engineer" the work with your clients to maximize results.
- 3 Be empathetic and considerate.** Think like a customer, and understand the client's situation and mindset. Implement the "partnership" approach. Always think "win/win."
- 4 Be professional.** Participate in industry events to continually gain knowledge. Educate the customer. Suggest new ideas/improvements to our clients. Be proactive. Not only should you always conduct yourself professionally, your appearance should say "professional," too.
- 5 Embrace the "we" culture.** Avoid the "not my responsibility" syndrome. All of us are accountable for

delivering on our service promise for our customers.

- 6 See quality from the customer's perspective.** Consistently produce phenomenal results in the customer's eyes. Discover the client's desired results. Follow up with our Quality Judging program.
- 7 Ask for feedback, listen, and take action.** Develop and use customer surveys, and ask questions such as —How are we doing? Is there anything else you need?
- 8 Be reliable and consistent.** Under promise and over deliver. Meet deadlines. Communicate in advance if a deadline needs to be extended.
- 9 Be committed to training all of your staff.** Don't practice on customers.
- 10 Communicate. Communicate.** The best communication is face to face, but don't hesitate to use the phone, e-mail or newsletters either. Train crew leaders to deliver customer visitation reports on every site visit. Remember, communicate. ■

Dan Foley is owner of D. Foley Landscape in Walpole, MA.

From the front lines

Train your employees on importance of service

To deliver exceptional customer service, every employee in every department from top to bottom must understand the importance of that service and buy into a company's efforts to achieve it.

Architerra, based in Indian Creek, IL, takes employee training seriously, but it wasn't until 2000 that owner Tracey Lester realized the need to train employees on how they relate to clients.

The company joined JP Horizons' Training Challenge program with a steadfast vision for success.

"We knew we would be faced with eye rolls and deep sighs when we pitched it to the bunch, only because we had tried things in the past but the follow-through was lost," says Lester. "We held firm to our commitment, and awesome things started to happen."

Crew leaders became more involved with clients, company communication strengthened and employees developed training ideas. New excitement and leadership was prevalent throughout the company.

Architerra has created a training circuit to let employees know how they can improve and grow within the company. Employees gain confidence in their skills and their potential, and crew leaders gain trained individuals.

"This program will help us obtain our main goal, which is to provide the best in client satisfaction, quality service and overall performance," Lester says. ■

"There are two primary choices in life: to accept conditions as they exist, or accept the responsibility for changing them."

—Dr. Denis Waitley



Running LAPS

BY JIM PALUCH / PRESIDENT JP HORIZONS

In service, little things mean a lot

The most significant opportunity for leadership development is allowing interaction between your team and your customers.

For some owners this becomes a scary proposition, especially the controlling owner who thinks only he can treat the customer the way it needs to be treated. I have watched many of these owners and often thought they would be better off allowing their employees to talk with the customer. The opportunity to interact with clients can have a magical effect on the company through developing leaders, enhancing relationships and increasing profits. Client interaction is simple when the process is understood.

Bob Coulter, past head of people strategy for Club Corp. and now a key program developer for JP Horizons, talks about customer interaction in a three-step process. Following are highlights that your leaders can implement to add to your customer relationships.

1 THE WARM WELCOME – Teaching how to say hello, extend a handshake and look the other person in the eye is the foundation of this step. Pay attention to how people greet each other. The individual that has true leadership potential knows these basics. Follow up with simple courtesies that, unfortunately, the client often does not hear from a contractor or vendor, such as: “Mrs. Smith, thank you for taking the time to meet with us on this pre-construction meeting. The next half-hour will certainly help in the overall success of your landscape.” In a training session, create a list of warm welcome opening statements and continually

practice them in foreman meetings and training sessions.

2 THE MAGIC MOMENT – Magicians are masterful at doing the unexpected. Magic moments in customer service are those unexpected things that will stick in clients’ minds, keep them talking about you, and most importantly, telling someone about your company. A magic moment can be a foreman presenting a computer-enhanced “after picture” of a key focal area in a pre-job walk through. It could be asking whether the client minds if you take notes so you capture the important details. It can even be picking up a piece of trash or snipping a branch during a site visit, just to emphasize your attention to detail and quality. Creating and role playing magic moments and asking in company meetings, training challenge sessions or production meetings who created a magic moment will bring an awareness in those individuals with the potential to be leaders.

3 THE FOND FAREWELL – As contractors, this fond farewell stuff may sound a bit mushy, but rest assured, the fond farewell is what will bring the audience to its feet. It is based on the ability to smile, shake hands and make eye contact. A parting statement that creates confidence, ensures follow-through and continues to develop positive feelings from the client toward the employee and the company is the grand finale to this magical performance. A parting statement such as: “Mrs. Smith, with the input you have given me, the expertise of our crews and the detail

Continued on page 3

BOOKSHELF



“Growing Dreams,” by Jim Paluch, is full of content and practical ideas as it systematically introduces the concepts of organizational excitement, a blueprint for every owner to use to energize their company and team. \$11.96 (plus tax for Ohio residents) and \$3.95 for shipping and handling.

“‘Growing Dreams’ is full of basic information put in a usable form. Anyone can grasp the ideas and put them to use immediately.” – Don Hartwell, President of Spruce Lane Farm, Calgary, Alberta

“Your chapter about Keeping The Good One reminded me of one of my key words for our best team members – “She or He is a real KEEPER” When it’s all said and done, it’s all about our people and you obviously get that. ‘Growing Dreams’ was a great read, a wonderful perspective for many of our processes and what a great operational blueprint for landscape businesses everywhere!” – James Martin, President of James Martin Associates, Vernon Hills, IL

“Just like Oscar and Curtis, I began at an early age mowing lawns around the neighborhood. I knew as a very young boy that I wanted to make horticulture my profession. My passion for pleasing customers and being successful has always dominated my life. I found so many things in this book that I could relate to. I’ve shared the book with many of my customers and all of my staff. This book is a “must read” for everyone who wants to be successful in the business world.” – Jay Mears, Plant Center Manager of Lancaster Farms, Suffolk, VA

Leadership Insights Q&A

Q How can the industry focus leaders on delivering quality to the customers?

A "It is the value and focus the organization places on quality that determines the focus of its leaders. If profits and other issues are more important, then the company's quality to focus will follow." — *Bob Franey, Total Landscape Inc., St. Louis, MO*

"Identify what customers want. Look at where we as leaders have our companies doing the right thing and where we are weak and why. Once you know that, plan and implement the improvements." — *Mike Leuders, Leuders Environmental Inc., Needham, MA*

"The best tool I have found for keeping our leaders focused on the customer is a business plan that allows them to keep score of the customer's satisfaction. We know once we have a customer for three years they are ours for the long run. New sales are a must, and of course we track that, but we also look very hard at how the customer votes on our service with their renewal "ballot". — *Phil Fogarty, WEED MAN, Euclid, OH*

Continued from page 2

of this design, we will complete a project we all will be proud of. Thanks, and please call or e-mail if you have any questions." Allowing your foreman and crew people to develop statements like this, practice them in group settings and leading discussion on how clients will feel hearing them will produce a magical transformation in your future leaders.

One last thought on this "Warm Welcome, Magical Moment, and Fond Farewell" concept. It can work the

same incredible magic in relationships between employees, departments, peers, associates, and most importantly our families. ■

Jim Paluch and the JP Horizons team, through decades of combined experience in business, bring people solutions to companies through innovative training, creating compelling visions and systematically growing leaders. Contact them through their Web site at www.jp horizons.com.

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Superior customer service should always be a company's top priority, regardless of location and clientele.

5 Joining the ALCA family

Participating in ALCA leadership leads to lasting relationships.

6 Learning to delegate

Husqvarna President Dave Zerfoss explains how delegating can help companies discover new leaders.

7 How did we do?

Utilizing surveys to gauge customer satisfaction helps companies keep clients front and center.

TRAINING TIP

Evergreen Lawn in Michigan gave disposable cameras to its crews and asked them to take pictures of high-quality and poor-quality work. Most of the pictures returned were of high-quality work, and the crews were able to see everyone's perception of quality. Some things that crews do that are not part of their services make a property look high quality, such as edging asphalt, washing trash cans, making sure the owner's newspaper is on their step, and so on. Sharing perceptions of quality opened the minds at Evergreen Lawn to greater performance. (*From The Training Challenge by JP Horizons.*)

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Wilson's Garden Center
Yard Smart

Going the extra mile

Ultimate Services and Allen Landscaping service high-end clients on opposite coasts. They provide a study in contrasts with a common goal – superior customer service.

BY CHERYL HIGLEY

His phone rings at 9 p.m. on a Saturday. On the line is a distraught client who can't sleep because a bee is on her sun porch. His only choice is to go and capture the bee. Sounds like a tiny problem, but it's all in a day's work for John Chiarella, owner of Greenwich, CT-based Ultimate Services.

Chiarella's clients are demanding East Coast movers and shakers with big money, and his approach to customer service is tailored to meet their requests –



John Chiarella

no matter how unusual. That's why it isn't uncommon for a client unhappy that workers left footprints in her snowy backyard to expect Ultimate Services to refill the prints with snow.

"My background is in horticulture, but you almost have to have a degree in psychology and psychiatry," Chiarella explains. "I don't know of anywhere else in the country where clients are this demanding. You have to be able to deal on their level, which is why no matter how bizarre of a request or how expensive it might be, you just do it."

Head to the West Coast, and you'll hear a completely different story.

Jeff Allen, owner of Allen Landscaping in Santa Rosa, CA, understands that East Coast mentality; but it won't fly in the Valley, where laid-back flexibility rules the day.

"I've run into those types of situations, but I don't play. I'm a local, and we operate much more in the California lifestyle," he says.

His clients are accustomed to that

Continued on facing page



Ultimate Services crew members work together to create a landscaping masterpiece for a client. Owner John Chiarella says he and his employees share a strong work ethic that always puts the clients first.



Jeff Allen, owner of Allen Landscaping, in Santa Rosa, CA, takes a hands-on approach to ensure his clients' landscaping visions are realized.

Building family ties with ALCA

BY CHERYL HIGLEY

Rick Doesberg has spent more than 30 years as a member of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America, including the last 20 in various leadership positions.

Doesberg, an ALCA past president, raves about the benefits he has gained from taking an active role in the organization.

"From a business standpoint, what we are and what we do we've learned from ALCA," he says. "By participating in leadership, I've developed management skills that have allowed me to be a better leader within my own company. I can't count the value I've gotten

from my relationship with ALCA."

A firm believer in the phrase "You only get out of something what you put into it," Doesberg says participating in ALCA events provides outstanding networking possibilities and is a good first step in moving toward a leadership role.



Rick Doesberg

Those interested in taking a more active role need only to identify a committee that interests them and call ALCA to volunteer.

ALCA leaders will meet at the Summer Leadership Meeting, being held in

ALCA

Tremblant, Quebec, in June to set goals for the organization. According to Doesberg, that meeting is a perfect example of ALCA's lasting impact.

"Today's ALCA leaders have been coming to this meeting since they were children because their dads were in ALCA leadership," he says. "They're now in the family business and taking on leadership roles. These kids have known each other a long time, and now they're sharing that leadership together."

For information on becoming active in ALCA, visit the web site at www.alca.org. ■



Continued from opposite page
attitude and even embrace it.

For example, one of Allen's clients was going into semi-retirement and wanted to work with the crews one day a week.

"For fun we sent her an Allen Landscaping shirt and hat and said if she wanted to work with the crew she had to wear it. And she did," Allen recalls.

For high-end clients, time is money, and both say making an efficient use of their clients' time is essential to creating long-term relationships.

"There is a tremendous amount of nurturing and trust that goes into this. And it takes a long time to develop that type of relationship," Chiarella says.

Allen agrees: "People's time is valuable, and getting time from them to educate them and show them what we're doing is critical. Communication is a big part of the relationship. We let them know our thoughts, but we understand the ultimate choice is theirs. We're in this for the long haul, and we make that clear."

Handling high-end clients takes a special knack, but both agree one constant that transcends locations and checkbooks is strict attention to outstanding customer service.

"Our motto is 'We Service the Client.



Ultimate Services offers a unique aviary department, with beekeepers who raise bees that are used to pollinate clients' flowers and harvest the honey.

Period.' Regardless if your customer is paying you \$500 or \$50,000, you have to carry the same mentality when it comes to customer service," Chiarella says. "The numbers are different, but the quality and service we deliver is the same. Now matter how difficult the clients are, service them with a smile and don't take anything personally. In the end, it's all worth the effort." ■



By the numbers

BY DAVID ZERFOSS / PRESIDENT HUSQVARNA

Delegation as a leadership skill

During my many years in the Green Industry, I've been privileged to work with hundreds of landscape contractors in various capacities, and I have developed a great admiration for those of you working in the field. You work hard, you take pride in your work and you are open to new ideas to grow your businesses.

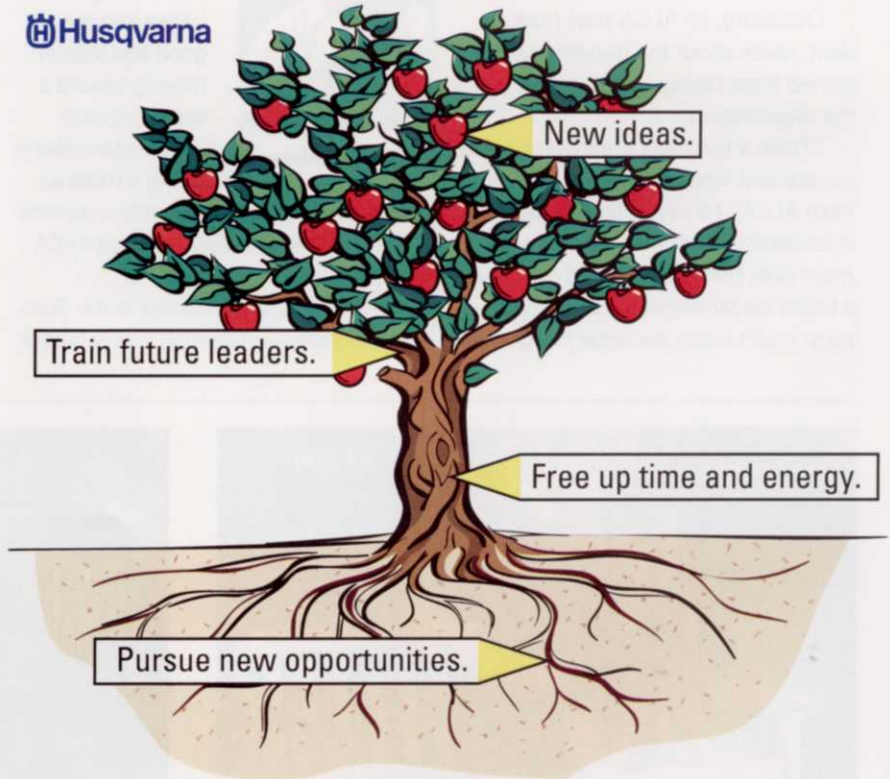
Why do you put in those long hours? If you're like me, you're trying to build something for your family and invest for a rewarding retirement. To accomplish this, you have to encourage breakthrough thinking among everyone in your company and also learn to delegate effectively to prepare your company for the future.

Delegating is one of the most overlooked keys to business success. It is also one of the most difficult skills for business owners to cultivate. You built your company from the ground up. Everything your company has achieved up to this point has your blood, sweat and tears all over it. It's difficult to let go and take even a small step away. But your company's future depends on your ability to let a few things go. Without effective delegation, your company will cease to grow and will eventually begin to fall behind.

We all know the obvious benefit of delegating tasks and responsibilities. Delegating spreads the work out and helps you do more with less. Just as a growing tree must send out new branches to support its new leaves and fruits, you too must be willing to let your company broaden its reach and reap new rewards in its own way.

There is another, less obvious benefit to effective delegation. By thoughtfully delegating assignments, roles and

 Husqvarna



tasks to others within your company, you have a unique opportunity to cultivate your company's future leaders. Going back to the tree analogy, think of this as the thoughtful pruning, fertilizing and care that enables a tree to become stronger, more resistant to adversity and ultimately more productive. When you let your employees stretch their abilities and try new things, you give them valuable, on-the-job-training that will enable them to become strong and effective leaders in the future. You also empower them to be your company's new "branches," leading your company toward new opportunities for growth and success.

Learning to delegate effectively will also make you a stronger leader. We've

all heard the adage about a chain being only as strong as its weakest link. When we try to do everything ourselves, we often become our weakest links – overworked, burned out and lacking fresh insights. On the other hand, when we delegate and nurture, we fuel our companies with fresh perspectives and ensure that each link in our chain is as strong as the next.

Look around your organization. Who has leadership possibilities? Begin to delegate projects to these new leaders and encourage breakthrough thinking. Continue to develop and nurture them through their growth process, and watch your business grow to new heights. ■

Survey keeps clients front and center

BY CHERYL HIGLEY

Loorne Hall, owner of Western Lawns in Oklahoma City, OK, wants to know what his customers think. Three years ago, he launched a customer survey to gather that feedback – for better or worse.

“Some customers are good at letting us know how we’re doing. Others we never hear from. But we wanted to know what all of them are thinking about Western Lawns,” Hall says.

Each month, approximately 200 sur-

veys are sent at random with billing statements. The goal is to survey each customer at least once a year. The comprehensive survey rates Western Lawns on the sales, service and administrative process on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest.

An account manager follows up immediately on any survey returned with a score on any line of less than 5 (did not meet expectations) or any negative comments. All surveys are summarized in the customer’s file for quick reference.

Filed doesn’t mean forgotten, however. Monthly reports are distributed

showing the average score for each line item and the total average score. The reports also show average scores from previous years, which gives Western Lawns a benchmark for improvement.

“Our goal was to know if we were just meeting or if we were beating our customers’ expectations,” Hall says. “It is important to measure the entire process. If you deliver good service but the sales process was poor or billing was wrong, the customer will be let down. Too often, people forget customer service is about the total experience.” ■

Finding My Replacement Thrival Campaign

Thrival Campaigns were developed by JP Horizons as a simple tool to allow companies to help employees focus on a specific result that will be accomplished and then systematically define and follow through on the specific actions that lead to this result. The process develops focus, clear expectations, accountability and a motivated team through their accomplishments.

One concept discussed in the Leadership Jam programs was “Great leaders are always looking to replace themselves.” The following Thrival Campaign can be used to help leaders develop their replacements:

THRIVAL CAMPAIGN			
CAMPAIGN		SPECIFIC RESULT	
	Action	Who	When
Dynamic Action 5:			
Dynamic Action 4:			
Dynamic Action 3:			
Dynamic Action 2:			
Dynamic Action 1:			

Name: _____ Company: _____

- **Campaign:** Finding my replacement.
- **Specific Result:** I have identified and prepared the individual that could fill my position requirements, allowing me the opportunity to grow and making my role more valuable with the company.
- **Dynamic Action 5:** I have a clear description of my next move, the skills to continue to develop and the replacement for my present position.
- **Dynamic Action 4:** I hold regular one on ones to coach my team through their thrivals and update the company on the progress.
- **Dynamic Action 3:** I have presented the team thrivals to my manager, discussed the candidates, reviewed a timeline for my growth and put it all into appropriate personnel files.
- **Dynamic Action 2:** I have met with my team one on one, reviewing the position description with them, discovering their interest and putting together a Thrival Campaign for their growth into the position.
- **Dynamic Action 1:** I have held a meeting with my department or crew to openly review my role and brainstorm what the position description should be. I have put their ideas on paper and back out to them.

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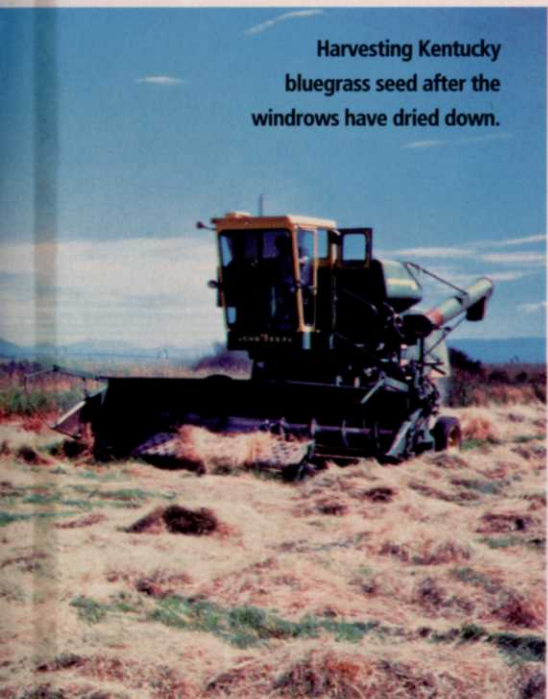
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Harvesting Kentucky bluegrass seed after the windrows have dried down.



Without this tool, most Kentucky bluegrass cultivars have greatly reduced yields. The loss of field burning and moving production to higher-priced irrigated land is making Kentucky bluegrass production costs increase. As with the other species, farmers are switching to other crops as contracts run out.

"Bluegrass acreage is way down in the Basin this year," says Dave Johnson, Simplot Grower Representative in the Columbia Basin of Washington. "There's probably only half as much acreage as two years ago." He expects average yields on the 2003 crop but notes increased weeds.

Last fall was very dry throughout most of the Northwest. The National Climatic Data Center determined the three-state region of Oregon, Washington and Idaho had below normal precipitation in nine of the 12 months in 2002, and that a short-term drought lasted from May to December. This affected the after-harvest greenup on grass fields and the effectiveness of some of the fall herbicides used to clean the fields.

PLS means value in seed buys

To be a savvy consumer, compare the cost of pure-live seed (PLS) per pound between lots. Purchases based on PLS ensure that you obtain the most viable seed for your money.

As an example, let's say Lot A has 98% purity, 85% germination from a seed test, and sells at \$0.60 per pound. Lot B has 85% purity, 80% germination, and sells at \$0.55 per pound. Which is the best buy? To calculate the cost per pure live seed, you would use purity multiplied by the germination and then divide by the cost per pound. Using this formula, Lot A actually costs \$0.72 per pound of PLS and Lot B costs \$0.80 per pound. Lot A with the higher price and quality is the better buy.

"Many plow-outs have been on the non-burned areas, including many that had poor fall greenup because of poor moisture," says Steve Bateman, Simplot Grower Representative on the Camas Prairie in Idaho. "The farmers are just taking them out since the seed yields won't be there. Bluegrass production in the state of Idaho is down about 20,000 acres."

Predictions from Kentucky bluegrass production areas all point to a reduced supply of both common bluegrass and proprietary varieties, which will make it harder to obtain good quality seed lots. Prices are expected to go up as this becomes more evident.

The dry fall in 2002 also created problems in Oregon's Willamette Valley. Rusconi says that about half of the new perennial ryegrass plantings and some of the three-year-old fields look weak. Growers are doing their best to push the plants by adding fertilizer. Many will also use growth regulators this spring to enhance seed yields. Brilman adds that the dry fall may affect the tall fescues more than the perennial ryegrasses since they aren't as resilient. She expects the tall fescues to have smaller heads and more light seed than usual.

Know what you're buying

Those of you who have only been buying seed for the last five to six years are used to a "long" market with plenty of seed, where only the best lots sell. This year there's less seed to go around, and consumers will pay a premium for seed lots with "zero other crop and weeds."

Seed labels include information on the seed purity, inert (plant chaff, etc.) and the percent of weed seed and other crop seed by species found in the bag. Lots that contain some weed or other crop seed are going to be more prevalent this year, especially with the dry fall reducing the effectiveness of pre-emergence herbicides. Before you buy, know which weeds will be a problem in your area and choose accordingly.

Expect spot shortages of some favorite varieties in both the perennial ryegrasses and Kentucky bluegrasses. Adjust your seed purchase plans, especially on newer varieties. Contact your supplier early for bookings, or have alternative varieties in mind when you're ready to purchase seed.

— *The author works for J.R. Simplot/Jacklin Seed. She can be reached at 208/777-6152 or ssamudio@simplot.com.*



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Summer pond *dreams*

This maintenance program will increase your customers' enjoyment of their special water feature

BY JEFF RUGG / MLA, ASLA

Here's what your customers envision when you're installing their pond: the murmur of water over smooth boulders, neon blue-green flashes of dragonfly wings, a tranquil pool of water dotted with red and yellow water lily blossoms, and colorful birds singing in the surrounding ornamentals.

Here's what your clients aren't thinking about: the maintenance required to keep their visions of the water garden alive. That will be your job.

But don't fear. It's not difficult if you follow the basic plan outlined in this article. And it can (and should) be profitable.

The maintenance will be essentially the same whether the pond is a basic water garden with plants and fish or a deep koi pond with no plants at all. That's because the biological ecosystems of all pond or water gardens are essentially cold-blooded. The life cycle of every organism, from bac-

teria to the largest cypress tree, is tied to the temperature of the air and water. Timing is the key to performing all maintenance chores pertaining to the plants, fish and other animals, filters and water. Maintain ponds on a thermometer basis, not by the calendar.

As the water temperature rises from 50° F to 70° F, begin preparing the life within the pond for active growth. This includes the fish if there are any.

Keep tabs on water temperature

When the water temperature approaches the mid-50s, consider changing the water in the pond. That's the temperature when the water from a hose tap or well is about the same as the water in the pond. Don't change more than 30% of the pond water. If the pond contains fish, test the water for ammonia, nitrite, nitrate, pH, alkalinity and salt levels. Test the water to be used for filling or for water changes, also. The level of nitrates in tap water can be deadly to fish,





but you won't know that until the fish are in bad shape, so test first.

Generally, the pond won't require a complete cleanout. Clean debris from around the pond's edge and then fill it back up, using water treatments as necessary to neutralize chlorine and ammonia.

Don't allow the pond to dry out or it will kill off most of the microscopic ecosystem components along with some plant roots growing in the gravel. An imbalance in the ecosystem allows algae to grow quickly.

Some trees such as oaks continue to shed leaves in the spring. You may need to clean the pond skimmer often if the leaf fall is particularly heavy. Remove all the leaves from the pond or else their tannin will make the water look like tea.

Fawn over the fish

Advise clients to begin feeding the fish as the water temperature rises above the mid-50s. Some food brands have more veg-

as the water warms. They can begin providing a food higher in animal protein when the water is in the upper 60s.

Advise them to feed the fish small amounts of food at one time, only enough the fish will find before it sinks or is caught in a skimmer. Smaller feedings will spread out the waste levels over time, and the bacteria will be able to keep up. Excess food promotes algae and higher levels of toxic ammonia. At colder temperatures, there are fewer bacteria available to consume the ammonia.

As the water temperature rises into the upper 60s, the fishes' immune system begins to strengthen. Even so, watch for signs of disease or parasites such as white patches, white spots and white edges on the fins and tail. Red streaks in the fins or on white areas of the body can be chemical or parasite problems. Red ulcerated areas are probably bacterial disease areas that can rapidly spread throughout the fish population.

Salt is the first treatment for most parasites on koi and goldfish. Three pounds of salt per 100 gallons of pond water will kill most pests. Since salt can damage plants, move the fish to a properly filtered holding tank for treatment. Use salt that is free of all additives such as anti-caking ingredients. Kosher pickling salt and sea salt for marine aquariums are best. Don't use water softener salt.

Koi and goldfish begin spawning when the water temperature rises to the upper 60s. They can overrun any plants during this activity, so use Aquamats or soft roping material if necessary. Eggs hatch in four to six days depending on water temperature. Most eggs and fry won't survive without special care. Be on the lookout for rising ammonia levels in a pond after spawning due to the increased activity of the koi and the decomposition of the eggs.

Frogs and toads may be attracted to

Take care of your koi (inset) properly and your experience with your pond will be that much more enjoyable.

etable protein in the mix for cool-water feeding, following the natural pattern of food availability. Plant material like algae is available early in the season, and animal material like fish and amphibian eggs, insects, tadpoles and small fish are available

POND MANAGEMENT

ponds as they look for places to breed. Male frogs and toads can create a nuisance by singing too loud for some clients, and it may be necessary to remove them.

Insects that have overwintered as larvae or pupas in the water will hatch and complete their life cycles as the water warms into the '60s.

Green it up

Submergent plants may be added to the pond when the water temperature reaches the mid-50s, hardy shoreline plants and water lilies as it warms into the 60s. Begin fertilizing plants when the water is in the 60s. Divide and repot plants when they're just starting to leaf out or when the water is in the 60s.



Above is a healthy pond free of leaves. A simple fish net (inset) is handy for removing leaves. Left in the pond, their tannin makes the water look like tea.

Algae are a big pond maintenance problem. Because it can grow in colder water than plants and bacteria that compete with it for nutrients, it



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—Phil Fogarty, Coordinator of PLCAA's Renewal and Remembrance Program at Arlington National Cemetery

Each year lawn and landscape companies and industry suppliers from across the country dedicate their time, expertise and equipment to beautify Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. The Professional Lawn Care Association of America salutes these volunteers and sponsors for their commitment to honoring the men and women who fought for our country. For a list of past volunteer companies, contact PLCAA at 800-458-3466 or by e-mail at plcaa@plcaa.org.

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Include periodic checks on the pond's filter system.



often gets a head start on the growing season. As the water warms, floating plants and lily leaves compete with it for sunshine.

High levels of green water algae can cause oxygen problems in the pond. Plants release oxygen during photosynthesis, but they consume oxygen all the time through respiration. At night, they release carbon dioxide that becomes carbonic acid. The acid lowers the pH at night, causing low oxygen levels and health problems in the fish. Limit the addition of nutrients (fish food, leaves, grass clippings) to the water and add nutrient consumers such as plants to keep the pond water in balance.

Make sure filter systems are operating as spring gets underway. Check skimmers

often to remove debris. Consider cutting back on the addition of beneficial bacteria to the biological filter.

Ah summer, the pond is alive

Summer is the time when customers most enjoy their landscape water features. The water is above 70° F, water plants are in full bloom and songbirds visit it each morning and evening.

If the water becomes very warm (over 85° F), keep an eye on the fish. If they are gulping for air at the surface or near the waterfall, the water is low in oxygen. Warm water holds less oxygen than cold water. Consider adding a fountain or aerator to increase oxygen in the water.

Water quality during the summer tends



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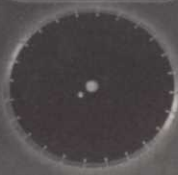
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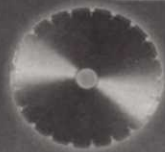
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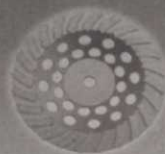
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to be stable, so you generally don't have to test it as often. However, it's always a good idea to keep records so you can accurately remember what the readings are at a later date or pick up on trends.

Watch out for neighbors spraying insecticides or runoff of fertilizer from lawns during a heavy rain. Also, check to see what product the community will be spraying for mosquito control. Most towns use sprays that aren't toxic to fish but some aren't as careful.

Use an automatic water fill valve to trickle water into the pond to replace evaporation. If you use a garden hose and tap water, don't leave it unattended. You might forget and replace all of the pond water with cold, chlorinated water.

A balanced diet

Instruct clients to feed the fish a balanced diet with a variety of fresh and pellet foods. Fish left to fend for themselves don't grow as much and may not put on enough fat stores to go into the next dormant season.

Healthy fish can grow rapidly and may grow too large for the pond. Too many fish babies may outgrow the filter system. Remember, fish grow and filters don't. It may become necessary to remove some of the fish or to enlarge the filter system to keep the pond in balance.

Frogs, toads and turtles will often leave the pond during the summer, and others may show up and become new members of the community. Watch out for turtles that eat fish or lilies. Also, keep an eye out

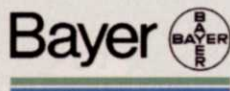


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A waterfall can increase oxygen in the water.

for herons or egrets. They can eat all the fish in a pond in a short time. You may need to cover the pond with a net or use a motion-activated water sprayer.

Get tropical

You can add tropical plants when the water temperature is in the 70s. This includes lotus, even though it can often survive being at the bottom of a frozen pond.

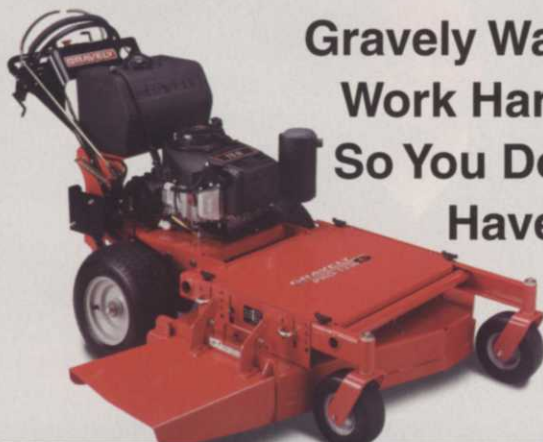
As plants blossom and shed leaves, remove the debris. If you remove the blossoms of some plants, you'll actually get more blooms. Some aquatic fertilizers need to be used monthly, while other products can be used seasonally. Fertilizing promotes more flowers in lilies and lotus plants, but follow manufacturers' directions.

Large koi can damage plants by constantly nibbling on the leaves and soil. Large gravel should be used to cover the soil in pots and be placed around the base of plants that are planted directly into the gravel.

Bacteria may not need to be added to the filters the rest of the summer because it should be growing on the surfaces of rocks in the pond. If the filter material is cleaned off, especially by chlorinated water or by drying, add new beneficial bacteria. **LM**

— The author is an employee of Pond Supplies of America with degrees in science, zoology, horticulture and landscape architecture. His weekly newspaper column, "A Greener View," is syndicated and appears in 400 newspapers.

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Circle 126

Property at a glance

Location: Allendale, MI
 Grounds Supervisor: Ken Stanton
 Category: School or University Grounds
 Total budget: \$522,000
 Year site built: 1963
 Acres of turf: 90
 Acres of woody ornamentals: 3.75
 Acres of display beds: 3,000 sq. ft.
 Total paved area: 54 acres
 Total man-hours/week: 1,120 in summer

Maintenance challenges

- ▶ Snow removal
- ▶ Keeping campus litter free
- ▶ Alumni House gardens/grounds

Project checklist

Completed in last two years:

- ▶ Transplanted 80 shade trees with tree spade
- ▶ Re-sodded football field
- ▶ Installed eight display gardens at Alumni House

On the job

- ▶ 9 full-time staff, 4 seasonal employees, 4 licensed pesticide applicators

Grand Valley State University

2002 PGMS Grand Award Winner for School or University Grounds

Taking care of the grounds at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, MI, is a big job. Just look at these numbers: 90 acres of turf, 3,000 sq. ft. of display beds, 54 acres of parking lots. And 19,000 students to make sure the trash pickup crew is always busy.

Ken Stanton's just the man for that type of job. A Certified Grounds Manager, Stanton uses all the skills and experience accumulated over 25 years in the grounds business to supervise 13 full-time groundskeepers in the summer. With three degrees, including a bachelor's degree in human resource management from Lake Superior State University, it's not surprising that Stanton's big on continuing education.

"I think that's important, keeping up with industry trends and changes," Stanton says. "I know it's increased my learning capacity and helped me deal with



Ken Stanton, CGM, left, supervises a staff of 9 full-time and 4 seasonal employees at GVSU.



the challenges that arise in my current position."

Eight individual garden spaces at the Alumni House and Visitors' Center must always be in tip-top shape as many parties, wedding receptions and other special events are held there. The GVSU must also look after the clubhouse grounds of the school's 18-hole public golf course.

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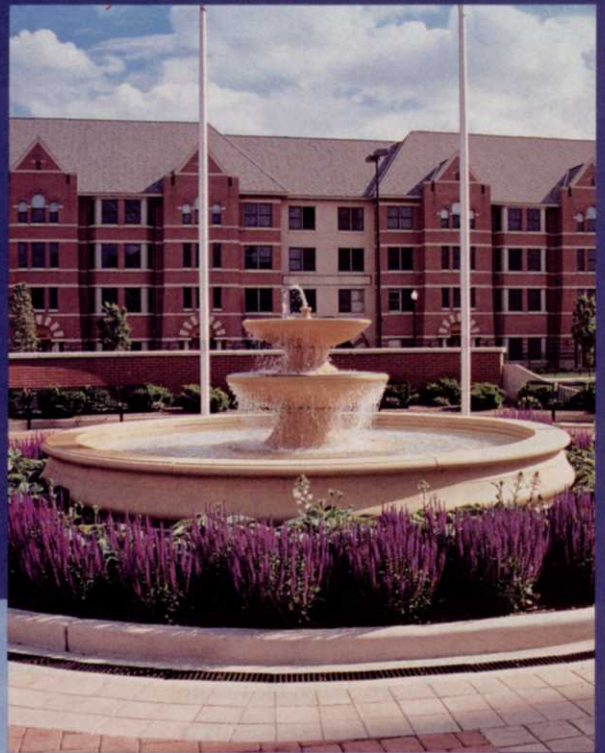
Editors' note: *Landscape Management* is the exclusive sponsor of the Green Star Professional Grounds Management Awards for outstanding management of residential, commercial and institutional landscapes. The 2003 winners will be named at the annual meeting of the Professional Grounds Management Society in November. For more information on the 2002 Awards, contact PGMS at:

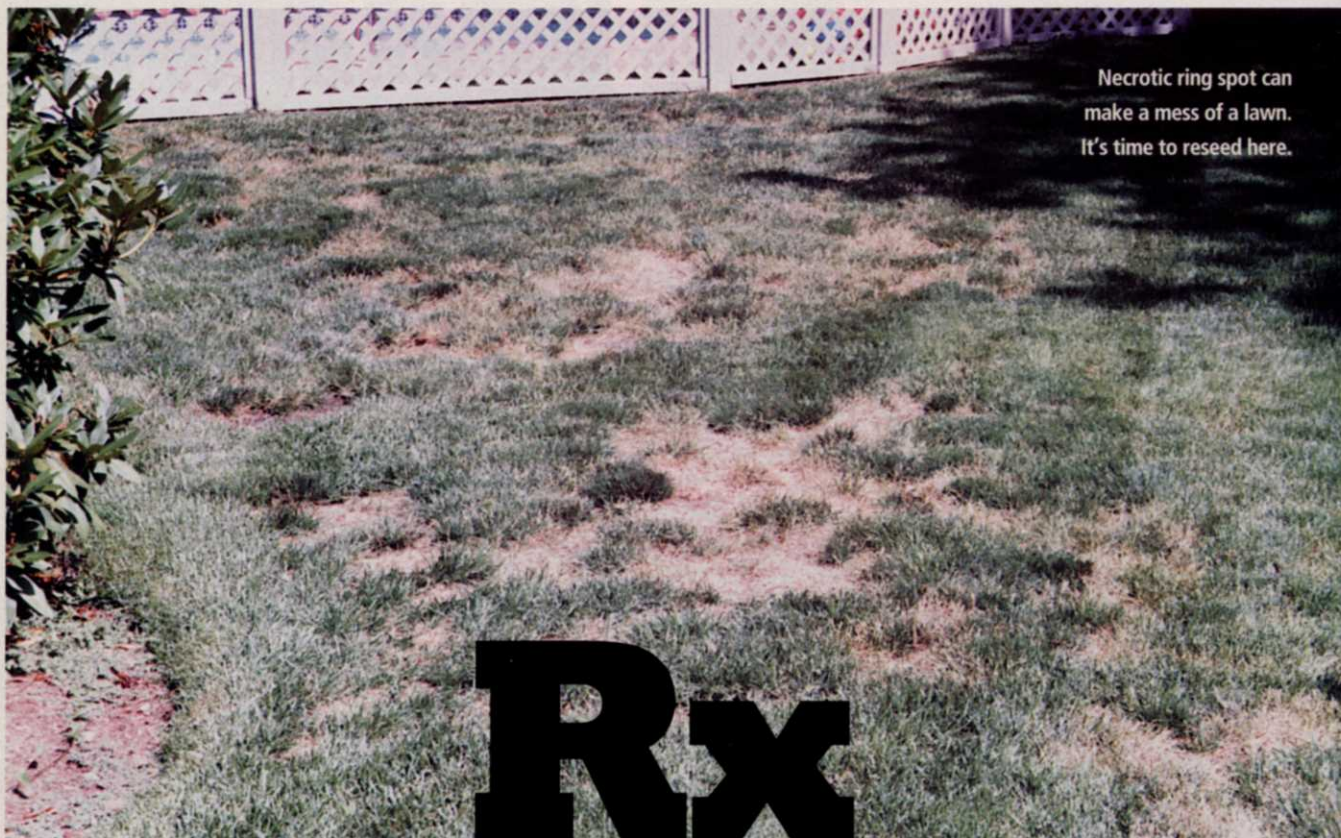
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A blend of trees, turf, beds and containers provide GVSU's 19,000 students with a pleasant learning environment.



The 3,000 sq. ft. of display beds get special attention from Stanton's well-trained crew.





Necrotic ring spot can make a mess of a lawn. It's time to reseed here.

Rx for sick turf

Spring is upon on us and disease pathogens are on the prowl, attacking new roots, crowns and leaves of turfgrass plants.

Most turfgrass managers dread the thought of diseases. Controlling them can be difficult because it involves not just one living organism, turfgrass, but a second living organism, the pathogen. When the two interact, it gets complicated and usually results with the turfgrass dying.

Some simple strategies can help you cope with most disease problems. The good news is that almost all turfgrass managers can learn them.

The "big picture"

Not all turfgrass problems are caused by pathogens. A pathogen is a microscopic living organism that interacts with a grass plant, one cell at a time. If the pathogen is allowed to kill enough cells, you'll see

Practical guidelines to diagnose and alleviate the effects of diseases that damage and destroy turfgrass

BY HANK WILKINSON, PH.D.

the dead cells, and that's the symptom of one plant's disease. If the pathogen is allowed to spread from one plant to the next, it becomes an epidemic. Typically, we don't recognize turf diseases until they approach the epidemic stage; that's the "big picture."

Be aware that nearly all pathogens that cause epidemics in turf are fungi. Bacteria have also caused epidemics in turf, but this is rare. Other microbes including viruses, nematodes, mycoplasmas

and viroids also attack turfgrasses, but so far we have no clue how much damage they're doing.

One of our challenges as turfgrass managers is to stop a pathogen from killing too many grass cells and causing an epidemic. This sounds simple, but the pathogens that attack grass plants have been doing it for thousands of years and are good at it. In addition, many of the cultural practices that we use to grow turf predispose it to attack by pathogens.

Plan for prevention

Turfgrass disease management can be divided into two phases: prevention and recovery. But since complete prevention isn't always possible, the best we can do is to minimize the severity of disease epidemics. Once an epidemic gets going, we have to do something to slow down the pathogen and also speed up grass growth.

It's unlikely that you can eliminate all disease-causing fungi, and you wouldn't want to if you could. Many of the fungi that cause turfgrass diseases are also important in nutrient cycling, especially in breaking down thatch.

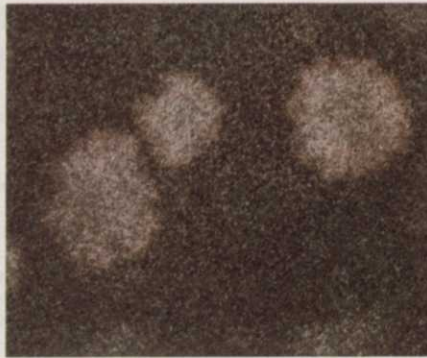
Here are some useful actions that will help you reduce the severity of damage caused by turfgrass diseases:

▶ **Plant the best grass genetic material you can for your area.** Study the NTEP results (www.ntep.org) for grasses with resistance to pathogens that are active in your area and also grasses best adapted for summer and winter survival.

▶ **Develop a history of climatic and edaphic (soil) conditions.** Temperature is the most important piece of information you need for predicting disease development, both in verdure and about two inches deep in the soil. Pathogens become active at specific temperatures, which can be used to predict their development and



Look for brown patch at the base of the leaves of turfgrass plants.



Dollar spot usually occurs as the result of infection in the leaves of turfgrass.

to initiate management practices to control them. Moisture is also important, but it's more difficult to measure and interpret. Moisture can exist as humidity (vapor) or as free water, but nearly all pathogens need it. The most important factor for disease is the length of time plant surfaces are wet.

▶ **Keep a record of disease epidemics in your area.** Know which, when and where diseases develop each year in your area. A given disease often develops in the same area of the same turf, year after year. However, you may only see it during years when conditions are favorable for pathogen development.

▶ **Know and watch disease "hot spots."** Whether you manage lawns or sports fields, specific locations will always develop disease epidemics first. Monitor them during the part of the year when the temperature and moisture are favorable for disease.

▶ **Communicate.** Thousands of eyes are better than your two. Call, visit, e-mail or read, but learn what others are seeing. Don't restrict your reconnaissance to your area. Know where diseases come from, and get information for areas up to 100 miles away from you.

▶ **Know your diseases.** Generally, only a handful of

Killers vs. non-killers

Is that turfgrass disease you're looking at a "killer" or a "non-killer?" By this, I mean what part of the grass plant is the pathogen attacking? You won't know until you get down on your hands and knees and take a hard look. A hand lens will be a big help.

The killers are going to cause the big turfgrass problems. Non-killers can generally be managed with mowing, fertilization and time.

Here are some general rules for assessing the threat from a turf disease:

- ▶ If it's attacking the crown of turfgrass plants, it's serious.
- ▶ If it's attacking the lower, older leaves, it isn't as serious.
- ▶ If it's attacking the new leaves or tips of grass leaves, it's going to get worse.
- ▶ If it's attacking the roots, it will predispose the turf to heat and drought, and could be serious.

pathogens routinely cause problems in an area. The "old-timers" and local plant pathologists will know which ones these are. It's a good idea to be able to recognize pathogens that show up occasionally, too.

Road to recovery

Maybe you got there too late or maybe you didn't see it on a previous visit, but you notice that a small disease epidemic is under way on the turfgrass you're maintaining. You have two options — reduce pathogen activity and/or grow new grass. Your course of action will depend on which disease you're dealing with and what part of the turfgrass plant is being attacked. (See "Killer" sidebar above.)

Useful disease references

Illinois Pocket ID Series: "Cool-Season Turfgrass Diseases," H.T. Wilkinson and D. Pedersen. ISBN: 0-9722902-0-6 (English); 0-9722902-1-4 (Spanish). Visit the Web site www.summitseed.com.

"Controlling Turfgrass Pests," T.W. Fermanian, M.C. Shurtleff, R. Randell, H.T. Wilkinson and P.L. Nixon. Third Ed. Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ. ISBN: 0-13-098143-5.

► **Diagnose the turfgrass disease.** With a bit of experience, you can combine your knowledge from scouting, temperature recording and handy reference materials to make a solid diagnosis. But why guess? Take some pictures of the disease with a digital camera and e-mail them to a local plant pathology lab to help you confirm the diagnosis.

► **Reduce or manage pathogen activity with cultural and chemical practices.** Even



When signs of stress appear, you can reduce pathogen activity or grow new grass.

though an epidemic is under way, you're not beat. To slow the disease's progress, consider both your cultural and chemical choices. This is where your knowledge and experience as a turf manager comes in. Determine the severity and speed of the epidemic and put together a program of cultural practices, fungicides, biological treatments or a combination of these.

► **Grow new turfgrass tissue.** Once a pathogen has attacked a turfgrass plant, there's no recovery. The cells have died, and they aren't coming back. However, that's where turf offers you a special advantage as a manager. Turfgrasses are vegetative and perennial, which means they'll grow new tissue as long as they have enough heat, water and nutrients. Unfortunately, some of the tougher diseases attack turf when the grass isn't growing, such as in the summer and winter. In the summer, it's possible but tough to push a diseased turf to grow; during winter in the north, there's no chance. All you can do is wait until the turf starts growing again, whether it's in spring or fall.

► **Remove diseased tissue from the turf.** Once you've reduced the pathogen's activity and started to grow new tissue, remove the diseased (dead) tissue from the turf. Turf recovery following an epidemic is dependent on growth. If heat and moisture conditions won't permit grass to grow, the turf will look like it still has an epidemic,

even though the pathogen isn't active. However, once the grass is growing, simple procedures like mowing, raking and top-dressing will remove the disease symptoms and restore the turf to health.

— *The author is a professor in the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences within the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He can be reached at hwilkins@uiuc.edu.*

TURFGRASS DISEASE ACTIVATION TEMPERATURES AND INFECTION SITES

Disease name	Activation temperature (°F)	Infection site
Anthracnose	46-61°	base of leaves
Brown patch	80-95°	base of leaves
C-15 decline	61-77°	leaves
Dollar spot	61-77°	leaves
Fairy rings	61-87°	thatch layer
Gray snow mold	32-55°	lower leaves
Leaf blights	61-77°	leaves
Necrotic ring spot	45-61°	roots
Nigrospora blight	61-77°	leaves
Pink snow mold	55-68°	lower leaves
Powdery mildew	61-77°	leaves
Pythium foliar blight	86-100°	leaves
Pythium root & crown rot	50-60°	crowns and roots
Red thread	61-77°	leaves
Rusts	61-95°	leaves
Smut	50-75°	leaves
Summer patch	68-70°	roots
Take-all patch	55-60°	roots
Yellow patch	46-61°	crowns and lower leaves
Yellow ring	61-77°	thatch
Yellow tuft	46-61°	crowns and leaves

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Spreaders and sprayers that last

BY CURT HARLER

“It’s got to last.” That’s the first thing Jack Robertson, owner of Jack Robertson Lawn Care, Inc., Springfield, IL, has on his mind when he goes shopping for a spreader.

“Stainless steel components are a must,” he continues. He knows stainless is a mixed blessing — while it extends the life of the equipment, it adds cost.

The next thing Robertson looks at is ergonomics. “A spreader has to have good balance and be comfortable to use,” he says. “Height makes a big difference.” Not only does it make a difference whether the worker using a spreader is 6-foot-4 or 5-foot-4 in. tall, but even the handlebar height of individual units can change the “feel” of a spreader. While Robertson Lawn Care has about 20 spreaders — all LESCO models — Jack has learned that different models have different ergono-

mics. Today, most of his units are the same.

“Another key point is positive shutoff and start,” Robertson adds. This is vital. Applications must begin and end at the right place.

Spread and aerate

“Combine a good top-dressing program with aerification and you’ll tighten your turf carpet,” says George Kinkead, President of Turfco, Minneapolis, MN.

This rule of thumb holds especially true on high school and community sports fields. Like everything else, football fields are being asked to do more. There are few special-purpose “varsity” fields left. Instead, most fields are used for football, track and field, soccer and other events both by the school and the larger community.

One way to do the job more effectively, Kinkead says, is to buy a spreader that will do an even number of passes up and down a field. If a machine will hold enough fertilizer to do four passes (up, down, up,



Spreadex’s LG-375 spreader holds 275 lbs. of material.

down), it can be loaded at the same end of the field every time. That way, there’s no need to bring an empty unit across a field or, worse yet, bring a truckload of fertilizer over the grass to the spreader.

Look for a spreader that will apply both heavy and light applications — down to 1/32nd or 1/64th of an inch — on a field. “A good spreader will spread as light as a dry martini,” Kinkead says.

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Circle #258

continued on page 73

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continued from page 70

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Spreader buying tips

"When choosing a spreader, look for a tire pattern that isn't aggressive," advises Bob Oelke, Agronomist with Dakota Peat & Equipment, Grand Forks, ND.

Nothing messes up a lawn, sports field or golf course quicker than ruts from a spreader. Tight turns can tear turf, and too much downward pressure will leave noticeable lines in all but the toughest turf.

"I like to see a tire pressure of one-half pound per square inch or less," Oelke continues. As an agronomist, he realizes that the ideal isn't always possible. However, when buying a drivable spreader, a landscape manager should check the tire footprint. Generally, the bigger the tire on a spreader, the more it spreads the weight.

Oelke has some other practical buying tips. "Look for a versatile, multi-tasking unit that will hold up," he says. A good unit will top-dress lawns, spread seed on sports fields, or put a uniform coating of compost over a park.

He says to get a product demonstration at your facility or on a typical lawn.

Another good idea: Be sure the unit you're buying uses standard, off-the-shelf components. Hoses, bearings and other replaceable parts shouldn't be machine-specific.

- WS-250 Lawn Wheelie is 2.5-gal. push-type sprayer

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Circle 130

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WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Get gone geese



Veteran grounds manager hopes his latest strategy no wild goose chase

BY RON HALL / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Mama goose flew in low with murder in her eyes. Her flapping, squawking attack sent co-worker Larry Aylward sprawling to the ground, his hands protecting his head.

Larry is Editor of *Golfdom* magazine, sister publication of *Landscape Management*. Our magazines are produced at the Advanstar Communications site in a suburban community 12 miles southwest of Cleveland, OH.

Grounds Manager Tom Sprague is taking steps to prevent this from happening again. He applied a product to the site's turfgrass to discourage geese from feeding. They're stubborn creatures, however, and the threat, although lessened, remains. One mother goose is nesting near a sidewalk, and we're giving her lots of room.

Although we see far fewer geese at our site this spring, we remain on high alert.

Sprague attributes fewer geese on our property to application of the product FlightControl Plus. He's hopeful it continues to discourage the geese.

The problem: messy honkers

Our editorial offices are situated on seven acres, about half being asphalt parking lot and the other half turfgrass and a pair of quarter-acre ponds.

Sprague has tried many strategies to discourage the geese from hanging around our property. The geese always see through these ruses and return to foul our sidewalks.

By mid-summer each year, as many as 20 to 30 geese are swaggering around our headquarters like they own it.

The solution: "anti-feedant" product

Sprague applied the FlightControl Plus full strength in mid March (one gallon per acre). He obtained the product from the nearby LESCO store and put it down with a 50-gallon sprayer pulled behind a Steiner tractor. He expects the product to remain on the turfgrass at least until he mows.

The product is described as an "anti-feedant." After geese ingest turfgrass treated with the product, they go elsewhere to feed. It reportedly causes an unpleasant but harmless reaction in the guts of geese. Geese can see the compound in the ultraviolet light spectrum and will fly over and avoid treated sites.

As of the third week of April, there have been just the occasional goose sighting on our property. Sprague feels that it will take several treatments this season to convince the geese to stay away.

For updates on our experiences, e-mail us at tsprague@advanstar.com or rhall@advanstar.com. **LM**



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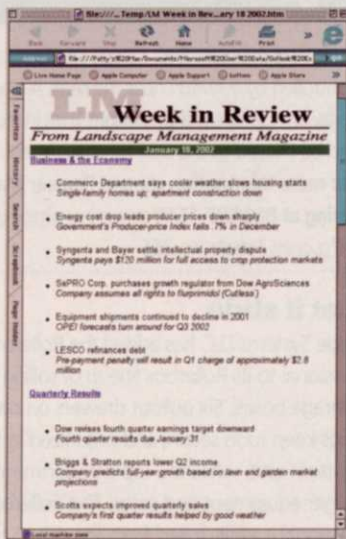
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For more information contact Valvette Systems at 818/887-1866 / circle no. 250

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For more information contact Deere at 800/537-8233 or www.johndeere.com / circle no. 251

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Go mow

Land Pride's all new 44- and 52-in. Razor Z riding mower is just right for small to medium residential areas. This mid-mount mower offers a large capacity fuel tank, turf type drive tires, low center of gravity, close coupled design and choice of seats. The hydrostatic drive gives immediate response to directions from the twin lever controls.

Adjust cutting height in 1/4-in. increments while mowing at a forward speed of seven mph and rear speed of five mph.

For more information contact Land Pride at 785/823-3276 or www.landpride.com / circle no. 252

silicone-filled electrical connectors. Called DryConn Waterproof Connectors, the new branding initiative includes King's logo, packaging, colors and more. The promise of the DryConn brand is that for any splice, especially where moisture exists — landscaping, irrigation or any direct bury application — DryConn Waterproof Connectors are the perfect solution.

For more information contact King Innovation at 800/633-0232 or www.king-innovation.com / circle no. 253

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12-14 Snow and Ice Management Symposium / Buffalo, NY; 814/835-3577; www.sima.org

17 Cornell University Field Day / Ithaca, NY; Sponsored by NYSTA; 800/873-8873; www.nysta.org

26 Northeast Ohio Lawn Care Seminar / Wooster, OH; 800/510-5296; www.ohio-lawncare.org

June

12-14 The Super Floral Show / Salt Lake City, UT;

July

14-15 PLCAA's Legislative Day on the Hill & Arlington Renewal Project / Washington, DC; 800/458-3466; www.plcaa.org

14-15 Summer Express Short Course / Collegedale, TN; Sponsored by the Chattanooga Association of Landscape Professionals; 423/855-6113

16 Michigan Turfgrass Field Day / Lansing, MI; 517/321-1660; www.michiganturfgrass.org

16-20 ANLA Convention & Executive Learning Retreat / Boston, MA; 202/789-2900; www.anla.org

23-25 TPI Summer Convention & Field Days / Dayton, OH; 800/405-8873

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 - Features from the May issue of *LM*
 - Sign up for our weekly newsletter, *LM Week in Review*
 - Green Industry news
 - Follow LM staffers as they visit various companies "On the Road"
 - Check out the latest listing of upcoming Green
- Industry events
 - Have a question about grounds management or other topics? Click on "Reference Shelf" for an answer
 - Place a classified ad
 - Have an opinion on something? Speak out and maybe you'll be featured in "Let's Hear It"
 - Read the bio of your favorite LM staffer
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Receive FREE information on products and services advertised in this issue.

Landscape MANAGEMENT

May 2003

This card is void after July 15, 2003

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

CONTRACTORS/SERVICE COMPANIES

- 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. Which of the following services does your company provide? (fill in ALL that apply)

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

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 <input type="radio"/> A Aerators | 39 <input type="radio"/> H Herbicides | 46 <input type="radio"/> O Sweepers |
| 33 <input type="radio"/> B Blowers | 40 <input type="radio"/> I Insecticides | 47 <input type="radio"/> P Tractors |
| 34 <input type="radio"/> C Chain Saws | 41 <input type="radio"/> J Line Trimmers | 48 <input type="radio"/> Q Truck Trailers/Attachments |
| 35 <input type="radio"/> D Chipper-Shredders | 42 <input type="radio"/> K Mowers | 49 <input type="radio"/> R Trucks |
| 36 <input type="radio"/> E De-icers | 43 <input type="radio"/> L Snow Removal Equipment | 50 <input type="radio"/> S Turfseed |
| 37 <input type="radio"/> F Fertilizers | 44 <input type="radio"/> M Sprayers | 51 <input type="radio"/> T Utility Vehicles |
| 38 <input type="radio"/> G Fungicides | 45 <input type="radio"/> N Spreaders | |

5. Do you have internet access? 52 Yes 53 No

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

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

LMINET

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
111	123	135	147	159	171	183	195	207	219	231	243	255	267	279	291	303	315
112	124	136	148	160	172	184	196	208	220	232	244	256	268	280	292	304	316

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- 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
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- 36 E De-icers
- 37 F Fertilizers
- 38 G Fungicides
- 39 H Herbicides
- 40 I Insecticides
- 41 J Line Trimmers
- 42 K Mowers
- 43 L Snow Removal Equipment
- 44 M Sprayers
- 45 N Spreaders
- 46 O Sweepers
- 47 P Tractors
- 48 Q Truck Trailers/Attachments
- 49 R Trucks
- 50 S Turfseed
- 51 T Utility Vehicles

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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
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110	122	134	146	158	170	182	194	206	218	230	242	254	266	278	290	302	314
111	123	135	147	159	171	183	195	207	219	231	243	255	267	279	291	303	315
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best practices

GUIDELINES TO HELP AN INDUSTRY GROW

Pick 'big picture' things

BY BRUCE WILSON

Most Green Industry companies struggle with developing and implementing training programs. It's always a topic at industry conferences. Like most companies, we've done things that have worked and things that haven't worked. What we've learned can certainly be useful as you try to improve your company training.

Identify weak spots

Start by identifying where a lack of training shows up in your operations. Focus on the things that affect the customer experience, result in accidents, show up in lost profits and cause stress in the organization. In doing this, pick "big picture" things, not isolated aggravating incidents. After all, mistakes will happen even after training people. Also, create a list of improvements you want to make through your training programs.

Before you start to develop your own internal training, look at what's already available through your trade associations, suppliers and local universities. There's a lot out there.

Here are a few things that work:

Pictures overcome the language barrier. If you're trying to improve quality, take pictures of the job done right and the job done wrong. Use the pictures to focus on correcting mistakes you see on your jobs. For example, if your mowing crews aren't creating good mowing patterns, take pictures showing what the finished product should look like if it's done right. Also, take some pictures of the unacceptable mowing job to show the wrong way.

Pick your best crews to train and orient new hires. Starting out new employees with the right



Bruce Wilson

habits is the best way to go.

For group training, train in short doses. Short training meetings on simple topics tend to work better than long training sessions. Re-

member to target your trouble spots.

Tie pay increases to learning new skills. You want the employees to want to learn new things.

Set up a training area with a TV and a VCR. Make it available for employees to view tapes.

Many tapes are available through ALCA and through equipment suppliers.

Keep in mind that training is an investment. Untrained employees cost you in many ways: lost profits, lost customers and accidents that kill your insurance rates. Make sure your investment is a wise one by establishing the outcome of your training before starting. And place some accountability on those being trained.

Sound off

The amount of training material available to landscape companies, lawn service firms and grounds departments is incredible. Professional organizations such as ALCA, PLCAA, PGMS and ANLA produce quality training manuals and tapes over a range of topics.

Many suppliers produce valuable training material as well, usually targeted to the proper use of equipment and materials. Often it's available in both English and Spanish.

Check with your distributor.

To comment on this month's "Best Practices" column by Bruce Wilson, contact him at bwilson@wilson-oyler.com. Wilson spent 30 years with Environmental Care, Inc., before partnering with Thomas L. Oyler to form the Wilson-Oyler Group, which offers consulting services. Visit www.wilson-oyler.com.



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