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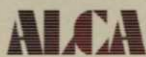
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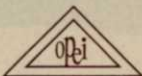
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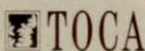
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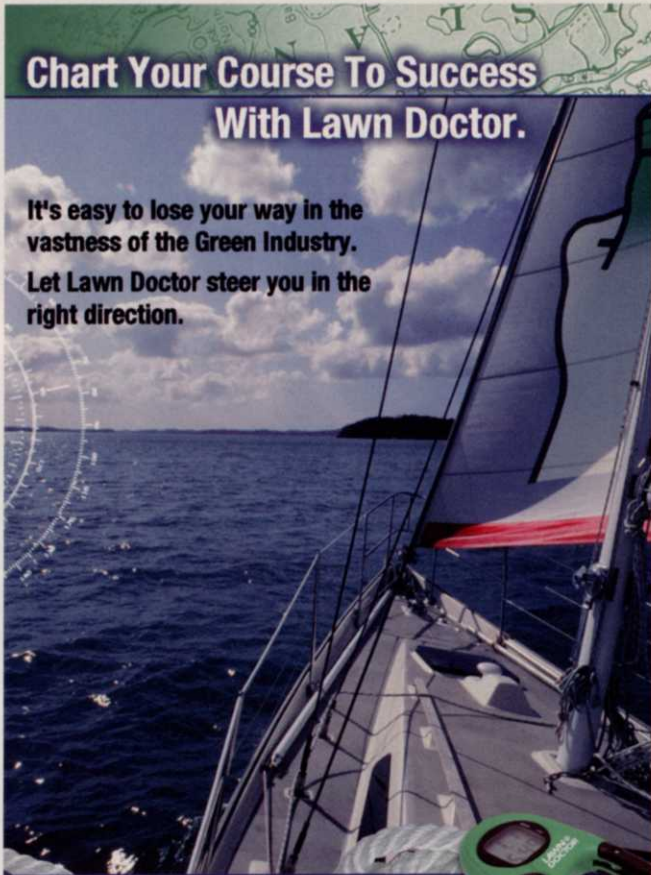
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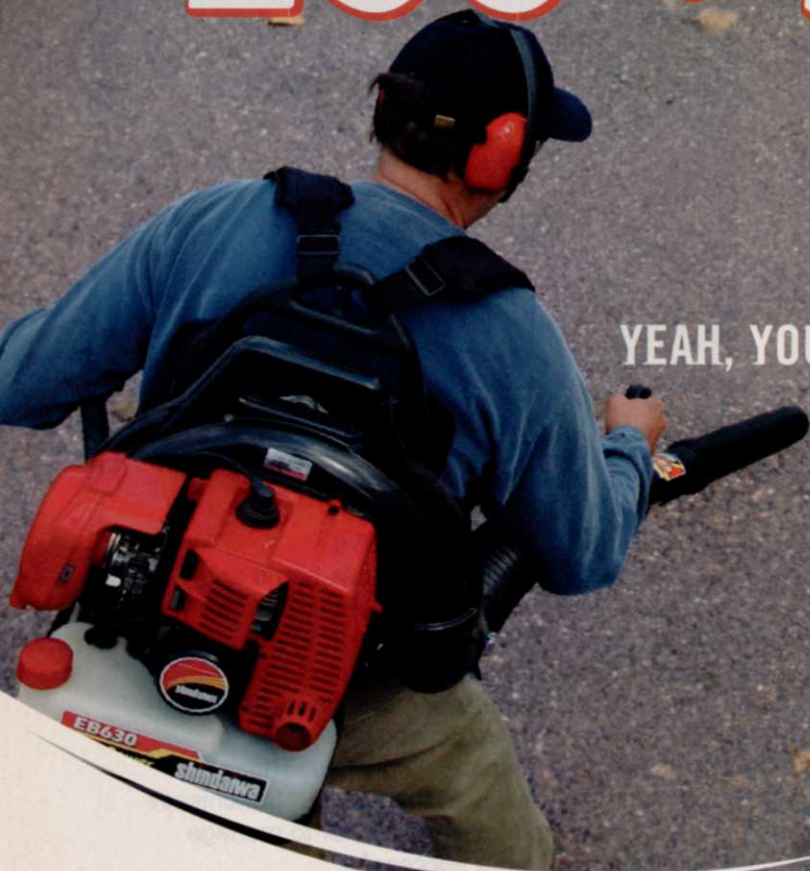
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Here's the real Lone Ranger

The Lone Ranger really wasn't so lonely if you think about it. He could always count on his faithful sidekick Tonto. He also had Silver, his horse. In a very real sense, they were his support team. Tonto offered wise counsel that the Lone Ranger greatly appreciated when the bullets started whizzing around his ears. Silver (I'm guessing here) provided the warm fuzzies that kept the Masked Man's spirits on an even keel. We all need backup from time to time.

In those golden days of yesteryear, not even this Western hero waded into the dust of battle relying solely upon a pair of six shooters, his own wits and the conviction that right would triumph. ("You first, Tonto.")

Dogged determination not enough

In today's killer-competitive marketplace, it's discouraging to see so many of us maintain a "Lone Ranger" mentality. In fact, it's painful to witness a friend or acquaintance building or trying to build a business based almost exclusively on dogged determination.

Self-reliance is a great quality, but attempting to operate, not to mention grow, a landscape or lawn service operation as a one-man gang is ultimately self-defeating. All of us need the support of knowledgeable colleagues and advisors, be it in an official or unofficial capacity. None of us can run fast enough or work hard enough on our own to achieve the success most of us desire.

Don't take this as a knock on one-person operations; it's not. Thousands of tiny landscape and lawn service operations compete with the big boys, and reward their owner/operators with fair financial returns and robust career satisfaction. I meet them at trade shows and business conferences. And that's precisely the difference — they're out there mixing it up.

These small operators are building "networks" of like-minded people who are willing to swap experiences, those things that have worked for them, and those that haven't.

New friends can help you

Industry conferences are the places to begin building support networks. That's where you learn what successful operators are doing. That's where you make friends and recruit colleagues who'll trade ideas with you.

These affairs aren't just for the "big" guys or the guys and gals who have "made it," if there are such people. They're probably more valuable to those of us just getting into the business or those of us who have made a commitment to our professions but can't seem to get our operations where we feel they should be.

The conference season is here. Now until March, they'll be taking place for every segment of the Green Industry. Participate in as many as you can. You'll discover people willing to help you for no reward other than your friendship and your willingness to share your experiences with them.

Contact Ron at 440/
891-2636 or e-mail at
rhall@advanstar.com



Industry conferences are the places to begin
building your support networks.

BY JUDITH M. GUIDO / GUEST COLUMNIST

Promote what makes your company unique
and say goodbye to the commodity game.



Unleash the power of your UVP

Are you tired of being a participant in the commodity game? You don't have to play this game by identifying and capitalizing on your unique value proposition (UVP). If you don't have a UVP, it's time to create one.

A UVP is simple to understand; it's the reason people should buy from you. That's why it has to be understood by everyone in your company and clearly communicated to customers and prospects.

What value really is

Customers don't often judge values and costs accurately or objectively. More often than not, they act on perceived value. Does Fed Ex really deliver faster and more reliably? If this is true, is it worth the high price that it demands? The U.S. Postal service will argue that their service is faster and more reliable, delivers to more places than Fed Ex, and is less expensive. However, judging by the 45% market share that Fed Ex demands, most consumers perceive otherwise.

The power of perception

Let's look how one company created a UVP for what's basically a commodity. Try to guess which popular company we're referring to.

This product costs two or three times more than others in that category and takes longer to deliver to customers, usually when their time is most precious — during their morning commute.

If you guessed Starbucks, you're right.

How often have you waited too long in a Starbucks' line only to shell out \$3.50 for a cup of coffee? If you did a blind taste test, would you be able to dis-

tinguish the Starbucks cup of coffee from the \$1 corner coffee shop cup? Maybe, maybe not. Yet the perceived value of better taste or aroma (product differentiation), ambience, hip setting, status and image (service differentiation) justifies the excess cost and time in consumers' minds.

Understand the customer

The key to winning, keeping and attracting customers is to understand their needs and buying processes better than competitors do. A company gains a competitive advantage to the extent that it can position itself as providing superior value to selected target markets, either by offering lower prices or by providing more benefits or unique products and services to justify higher prices.

Positioning begins with actually differentiating the company's marketing offer so that it will provide more value than the competition. Think through the customers' experiences with your services and product.

► **Product differentiation** — Define how and why your products are different.

► **Service differentiation** — What makes your services different from your competitors?

► **People differentiation** — Gaining a strong competitive advantage by developing the right team.

These are just a few ways to help you identify and create your UVP. Communicate it throughout all forms of communication both internally (employees) and externally (customers and prospects).

— *The author is a partner in KehoeGuido, a strategic consulting firm specializing in the Green Industry.*

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inside the owner's head

BY JASON STAHL / MANAGING EDITOR

Lorne Hall

► Western Lawns

Lorne Hall owns Western Lawns, a \$4.7 million full-service landscape company located in Oklahoma City, OK. About half of the company's business comes from commercial maintenance clients. In peak season, the company employs 95 people. Hall is a member of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America and JP Horizons' Owners' Network.

You have a good head for business, don't you?

Yes, I have an accounting degree from Southern Nazarene University. My guys will tell you I'm a good bean counter, but I get carried away sometimes, and it's helped me to realize that fact. I've probably relied on myself too much and not sought outside help because I feel that accounting is my strength, but I've seen the error of my ways over the last couple of years. We still do our own accounting, but we've recognized the need for help from a consultant.

You're from Oklahoma. Does that mean you wear a cowboy hat and boots?

You're pretty much on the mark there. There's a lot of western heritage here in Oklahoma, and yes, I do have cowboy boots in the closet and wear them from time to time. I even go to the occasional rodeo. It's not what everybody does, though. The vehicle of choice here does seem to be the pickup truck. But more than any of that, Oklahoma is a bunch of



great people. I don't think you'll find a friendlier, more hopeful bunch of people. Maybe that comes from Roy Rogers' "never-met-a-stranger."

How did you start in this business?

I started doing landscaping to pay for college. The first summer, I had two pushmowers and a pickup truck. I didn't have enough lawns to support me, so I worked a part-time job and mowed lawns on Friday and Saturday evenings. The next year, I had enough properties to hire a couple college buddies. In 1988, I started doing my first

commercial work. When you compete on the commercial side, there are more entry barriers. Plus, you're competing against professional companies. Those things take the fly-by-night guys away.

Where will your company's growth come from in the future?

There are two things we see as a focus: commercial maintenance and design/build. Over the last three years, a lot of our growth has come from landscape contracting. But we see ourselves doing less of that and focusing on the other two disciplines.

What do you do when not in the office?

I spend a lot of time with my family — my 10- and 14-year-old daughters. We also do a lot of church activities at the Nazarene church I belong to, and I'm on the Board of Directors of the Bethany Chamber of Commerce.

What are you doing for a college fund for your two daughters?

We've got 40 acres of land we escape to on Saturdays and work on growing trees at a mini-nursery we've created to help start a college fund for them. I got tired of seeing their stock portfolios go down as college costs went up. A few years ago, I thought there would be a tree shortage, but more competitors have put in tree farms and now I think there will be a glut.

What's your competitive strategy?

We just do our thing and do it right. In Oklahoma, we don't have as many national players as other markets or CLPs or ALCA members, so we focus on being a leader on the professional side. That's pretty much been our focus.

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Three rules for success

1 Grow in stair steps. In other words, there have to be periods of leveling off to let your employees and systems catch up to you.

2 Know the difference between doing design/build and doing landscape contracting. There's a big difference between doing landscaping contracting and doing design/build. In design/build, the goal is to create a gorgeous landscape and install it with the best quality plants. The goal in contracting is to be the lowest bidder and deliver the greatest amount of value for the dollar.

3 Focus only on the things you do best. These are things that you have a passion for and that drive your economic engine.

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in the know

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Texas landscapers think big at state fair

BY RON HALL /
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

DALLAS — How would you like six million people looking at a landscape that your company designed and installed? If you were a landscape professional in the Dallas area, you can make it happen and put some signage there, too. After all, you'd want everyone to know who did the work.

Roundtree Landscaping, Inc. (RLI) is one of 21 landscape companies here that have installed gardens (at their own expense) for the State Fair of Texas, which ran from Sept. 26 to Oct. 19. The fair, the largest in the United States, attracted about three million visitors.

While some of the gardens are being disassembled after the fair's run, RLI and five other companies are leaving theirs in place. Why not? Non-fair activities will draw another three million visitors over the course of a year.

The 277-acre entertainment and recreation complex known as Fair Park is owned by the City of Dallas, which also boasts the Cotton Bowl, the Music Hall and eight museums.

Hey, let's involve the TNLA, too

Johnette Roundtree Taylor, president of RLI, says that the idea for the landscapes at Fair Park came from the president of the State Fair, Errol McKoy. She suggested that the best way to enlist the help of the professional landscapers was to go through the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association. When he invited TNLA members to



Horticulture students at Skyline High School in Dallas are partnering with RLI to maintain a permanent landscape and garden at Fair Park.



the site for a meeting and tour earlier this year, local landscapers got excited about the opportunity.

They began working just after Labor Day. By the time the Fair began, 21 landscape companies had contributed landscapes and ornamental beds to Fair Park. Each garden had a different theme, and

Roundtree
Landscaping is one of
21 Dallas-area firms
beautifying Fair Park.

they were judged according to category. These weren't insignificant gardens, either. Most required extensive designing and several weeks to install, says Taylor.

Her company's contribution to the Fair

was a 25-ft. by 100-ft. garden consisting of three sections — a center area with a walkway and benches. Guests facing in one direction see a formal English garden with color and herbs. On the opposite end is a native Texas landscape with a dry creek bed and native landscape plants.

"We wanted to design something similar to the theme of the Fair, which was 'Taste and See.' I think that's one of the big trends with consumers these days. Seeing plants in a landscape is more exciting to people than seeing them in a nursery," says Taylor, who started RLI in 1984, and is a proud alumnus of the Louisiana State University School of Landscape Architecture.

The take-home message of this cooperative project is simple: Give some time and effort and get a lot of good publicity.

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Count on it.

Competition a blooming success

BY RON HALL /
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

BEREA, OH — Never doubt the power of professional grounds management and neighborhood gardens to make a community's pride swell.

So says Janet Biddlecombe, organizer of a community-wide effort to beautify and showcase the public parks and the private properties (both residential and commercial) within this city of about 18,000 people near Cleveland. Their efforts, in response to a relatively new nationwide competition known as America in Bloom, paid off as the City, home to charming Baldwin-Wallace College and once known for its sandstone quarries, placed first in its category (cities with 15,000-20,000 population). But more importantly, says Biddlecombe, the wife of Mayor Joseph Biddlecombe, it attracted volunteers from almost every service organization and club within the city.

"There's something about gardens and beautiful landscapes that gets everybody involved, and that's the whole idea behind this program and competition," she adds.



Berea's green downtown

A small group of judges from America in Bloom visited the City this past July and spent 1-1/2 days surveying its parks, tree program, landscapes and backyard gardens. The City was one of several the organization honored during an awards symposium in Chicago in September.

Biddlecombe says the effort cost about \$6,000 in donations and called for several thousand hours of volunteer effort (at least 600 on her part). The city's parks and grounds department helped spearhead the effort.

Biddlecombe says the effort was worth it, especially considering the cooperation and spirit of community that it fostered among the city parks/grounds department, local businesses (many of which updated their landscapes) and volunteers. She says several nurseries have already offered their help, and she's hopeful local landscape companies will step forward as well when the city prepares for the 2004 competition.

To learn more about America in Bloom and to see this year's winners, visit the Web site www.americainbloom.org.

CLIPPINGS

John Deere to equip NFL's Bears

CHICAGO, IL — The Chicago Bears recently named John Deere their new preferred provider of grounds care equipment for the newly renovated Soldier Field. The sponsorship agreement is for the 2003-2004 season. The multi-year partnership opportunity includes in-stadium signage; radio, print and online advertising; as well as merchandising and hospitality. Soldier Field's grounds crew will be clad in uniforms complete with the John Deere logo.

Schiller-Pfeiffer nabs BedShaper

SOUTHAMPTON, PA — Schiller-Pfeiffer, Inc., manufacturer of Little Wonder and Mantis Landscaping & Gardening Power Equipment, announced the acquisition of the BedShaper line of self-propelled and tractor mounted edgers from Pro Industries, Inc., Ephrata, PA.

Syngenta requests diazinon removal

GREENSBORO, NC — Syngenta Crop Protection, Inc. requested that the registrations for all of its remaining products (agricultural and outdoor non-agricultural) con-

continued on page 16



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People & companies



The Boston Society of Landscape Architects named **Joseph T. Geller**, partner of

Boston-based **Geller Associates Inc.**, the recipient of its 2002 Excellence Award.

the Rutgers University in the Department of Plant Biology and Pathology, its Award of Excellence for 2003.

Swingle Tree & Landscape Care hired **Tom Kosinski** as Plant Health Care Supervisor.



President of Specialty Products for **Crompton/Uniroyal**

Chemical, with CropLife America's Workhorse award.

Tecumseh Products Company promoted **Paul Krishnan** to Vice President of its Engine & Transmission Group.

Shindaiwa Kogyo Ltd. named **Shindaiwa** President **Tom Bunch** as the newest member of its Board of Directors.

The PRO Group, Inc. named **Steve Synnott** President and Chief Operating Officer.

Schiller-Pfeiffer, Inc., manufacturer of Little Wonder and Mantis Landscaping &



Gardening Power Equipment, hired **Stuart Bryan** as President.

Maruyama hired **Frank Petersen** as General Sales Manager. He will be responsible for all sales efforts in North and South America.



Environmental Turf appointed **Stacie Zinn** International Marketing Director.

The Musser International Turfgrass Foundation awarded **Eric Watkins**, currently a Ph.D. candidate from



Profile Products LLC promoted **Joe Betulius** to Vice President, Sales.

RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment) honored **Laurie Treu**, Vice



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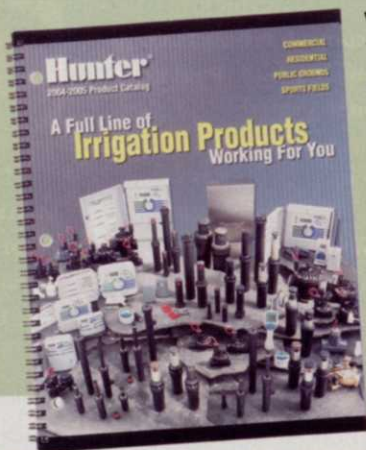
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Info Center

VIDEOS AND LITERATURE FOR THE GREEN INDUSTRY

Hunter releases new 2004-2005 Irrigation Products Catalog

Hunter Industries has released a new 2004-2005 Irrigation Products Catalog featuring the manufacturer's complete line of rotors, sprays, valves, sensors, controllers and central systems. All of the equipment is



shown in full color with application photos and detailed information on water-saving benefits. The spiral-bound reference book is available free to industry professionals by calling 800/733-2823 or by contacting Hunter on the Internet at www.hunterindustries.com.

[CLIPPINGS]

continued from page 14

taining the organophosphate pesticide diazinon be voluntarily canceled. The cancellation order is effective immediately. Any distribution, sale, or use of the products subject to this cancellation order is only permitted in accordance with the terms of the existing stocks provisions of this cancellation order. This action affects only registrations held by Syngenta.

Ewing merges with Oasis

PHOENIX, AZ — Ewing Irrigation Products has merged with Oasis Irrigation. The merger has created Ewing's new Moreno Valley Branch, the 123rd Ewing branch in the nation and second in Riverside, CA.

Peterson improves customer support

EUGENE, OR — In order to offer customers more responsive parts service in Southern California, Arizona and Nevada, Peterson Pacific has allied with Con-Way Logistics, Inc. (Con-way). Peterson parts will be stocked at Con-way's state-of-the art distribution center in Mira Loma, CA.

U.S. EPA registers Emerald fungicide

RESEARCH PARK TRIANGLE, NC — BASF's Emerald fungicide recently gained registration from the U.S. EPA. The product, based on a new chemistry, showed excellent performance against dollar spot in university and golf course trials. Boscalid (BS 510F) is the active ingredient in Emerald.

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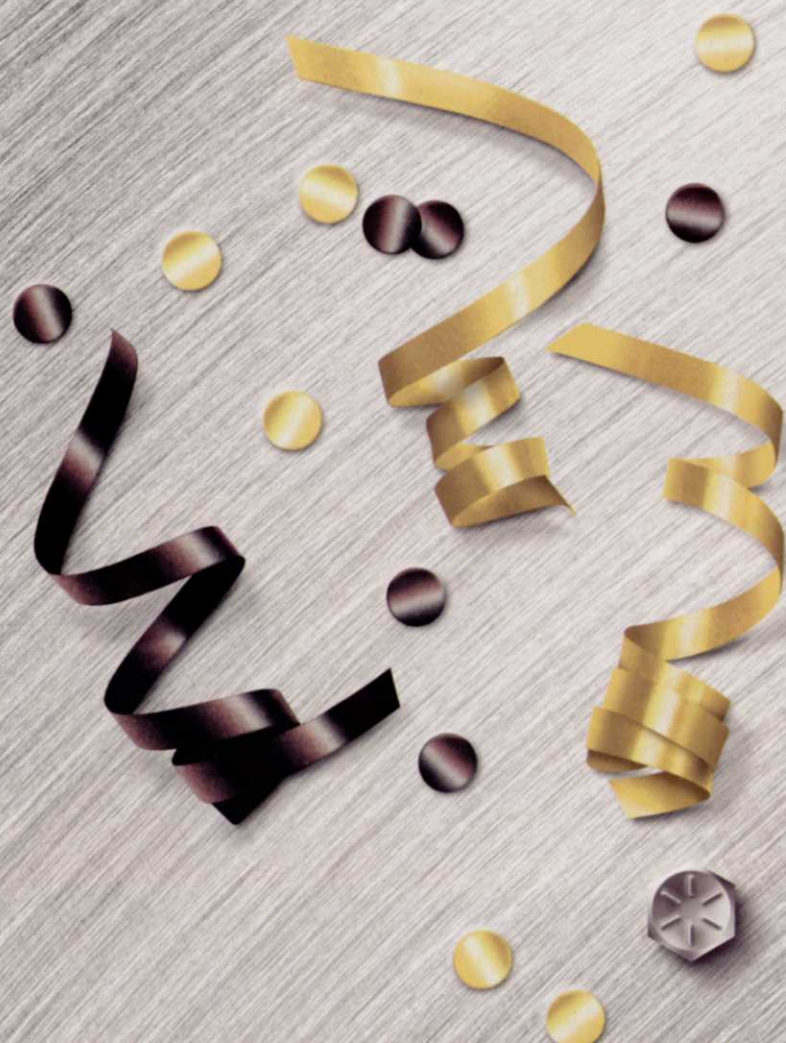
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28 HP



29 HP



31 HP



33 HP



35 HP

Vanguard™ BIG BLOCK Engine Specifications

Specifications Common to All BIG BLOCKS

CARBURETOR . . . . .	.2bbl int vent	STARTER . . . . .	.Solenoid shift
CYLINDER SLEEVE . . . . .	.Iron	CRANKSHAFT . . . . .	.1 1/8" keyway
GOVERNOR . . . . .	.Mechanical	OIL PRESSURE SWITCH . . . . .	.Optional
AIR CLEANER . . . . .	.Cyclonic	ALTERNATOR . . . . .	.20 amp
MUFFLER . . . . .	.5" Round	LUBRICATION . . . . .	.Full pressure
BEARING TYPE . . . . .	.Steel backed aluminum bearings	EMISSIONS . . . . .	.Carb/EPA approved

Air-Cooled BIG BLOCKS

	25 HP AC	27 HP AC	29 HP AC	31 HP AC	33 HP AC	35 HP AC
BORE	85.5mm	85.5mm	85.5mm	85.5mm	85.5mm	85.5mm
STROKE	78mm	78mm	78mm	78mm	86.5mm	86.5mm
DISPLACEMENT	895cc	895cc	895cc	895cc	993cc	993cc
OIL CAPACITY	2.3 Liters	2.3 Liters	2.3 Liters	2.3 Liters	2.3 Liters	2.3 Liters
COOLANT CAPACITY	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
WEIGHT	.125 Lbs without muffler; 134 Lbs with muffler					
DIMENSIONS	.15" x 20" x 28" or 388mm x 496mm x 718mm					
TORQUE FT-LBS	48	48	48	48	53	53

Liquid-Cooled BIG BLOCKS

	25 HP LC	28 HP LC	29 HP LC	31 HP LC	33 HP LC	35 HP LC
BORE	81mm	81mm	85.5mm	85.5mm	85.5mm	85.5mm
STROKE	73mm	73mm	78mm	78mm	86.5mm	86.5mm
DISPLACEMENT	752cc	752cc	895cc	895cc	993cc	993cc
OIL CAPACITY	2.6 Liters	2.6 Liters	2.25 Liters	2.25 Liters	2.25 Liters	2.25 Liters
COOLANT CAPACITY	3.5 Liters	3.5 Liters	3.5 Liters	3.5 Liters	5.1 Liters	5.1 Liters
WEIGHT	148 Lbs	150 Lbs	150 Lbs	150 Lbs	153 Lbs	153 Lbs
DIMENSIONS	See Note #1	See Note #1	See Note #2	See Note #3	See Note #3	See Note #3
TORQUE FT-LBS	40	41	48	50	56	58

Note #1: 25.4" x 18.9" x 24.4" or 645mm x 480mm x 620mm
 Note #2: 25.4" x 18.9" x 25.2" or 645mm x 480mm x 640mm
 Note #3: 25.4" x 19.3" x 25.2" or 645mm x 490mm x 640mm



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statistics

INDUSTRY TRENDS BY THE NUMBERS

UTILIZATION RATE

The utilization rate is a labor hour metric calculated by dividing applied time (hours charged to jobs on time tickets) by total time paid to production staff. For example, if a foreman is paid 50 hours in a week, and 40 of those hours are charged to job tickets, the utilization rate is 80% (see below). High profit maintenance companies keep this rate at 90% or better. High profit installation companies keep it at 75% or better.* How big a difference does utilization make? Consider the following: a \$10 per hour production person working at 90% versus 80% utilization and clocking in at 1,800 hours in a year will produce \$3,000 more in profit at the higher rate than the lower rate. Monitor this number and keep it high...or lose out on profits.

*Note: Travel time is applied time since it should be estimated and charged to a job.

Calculation

Applied Hours	40 hours	= 80%
Paid Hours	50 hours	


SOURCE: KEHOEGUIDO

U.S. SEED DEMAND (MILLION DOLLARS)

Item	% Annual growth				
	1997	2002	2007	02/97	07/02
Seeds demand	6425	7320	8750	2.6	3.6
Field crops	4485	5020	5940	2.3	3.4
Grass & forage	685	825	1045	3.8	4.8
Vegetable	680	750	860	2.0	2.8
Flower	505	640	800	4.9	4.6
Fruit, tree & novelties	70	85	105	4.0	4.3

SOURCE: THE FREEDONIA GROUP, INC.

ABOUT HOW MANY HOURS DID YOU WORK LAST WEEK?








> 70 hours	4%
65-70	7%
60-65	16%
55-60	14%
50-55	15%
45-50	12%
40-45	17%
< 40 hours	13%
No answer	2%

SOURCE: LM SOI SURVEY

Survey says...

Q Despite the economy, most readers tell LM's editors that this year was an up one in the landscaping and lawn care business. We're wondering if you've got a feel for what's ahead as the cold weather looms.

- 38%  It's going well! Most of last year's snow and ice removal customers renewed.
- 29%  We're located in a warm-weather state. We just feel sorry for y'all up North.
- 20%  We never did snow and ice. Hope we never do.
- 11%  We didn't get as many renewals as we hoped. We're working on it.
- 2%  I hate getting up before dawn in sub-zero temperatures. We dropped that side of the biz.

Percentages based on 66 responses

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



For three days this month, more than 6,000 people will visit this year's Green Industry Expo (GIE) in St. Louis. The number includes those attending the three related association conferences, people trying out the mowers, diggers and other hardware at the outdoor Product Field Day, and the exhibitors themselves.

The GIE is the cooperative effort of the Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS), the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA) and the Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA). It's managed by PLCAA and a two-person staff dedicated solely to its marketing, booth sales and growth. Its direction, however, is in the hands of a nine-member board. Each of the three participating associations gets three seats on the Board.

GIE here

Continued ALCA/PLCAA/PGMS cooperation bodes well for bigger, better shows to come

BY RON HALL / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Three of the board members represent the supplier community.

The GIE is often referred to as THE trade show for landscapers, lawn service providers and grounds professionals. At first glance, however, 6,000 people seems pitifully small considering that conservative estimates put the number of landscape and lawn service operations in the United States at more than 75,000. That

doesn't include thousands of in-house grounds pros, either.

Numbers don't tell the whole tale of the

GIE, though — not in light of the thousands of landscape and lawn service operators who enter the industry, survive for a year or two, then move on to something else.

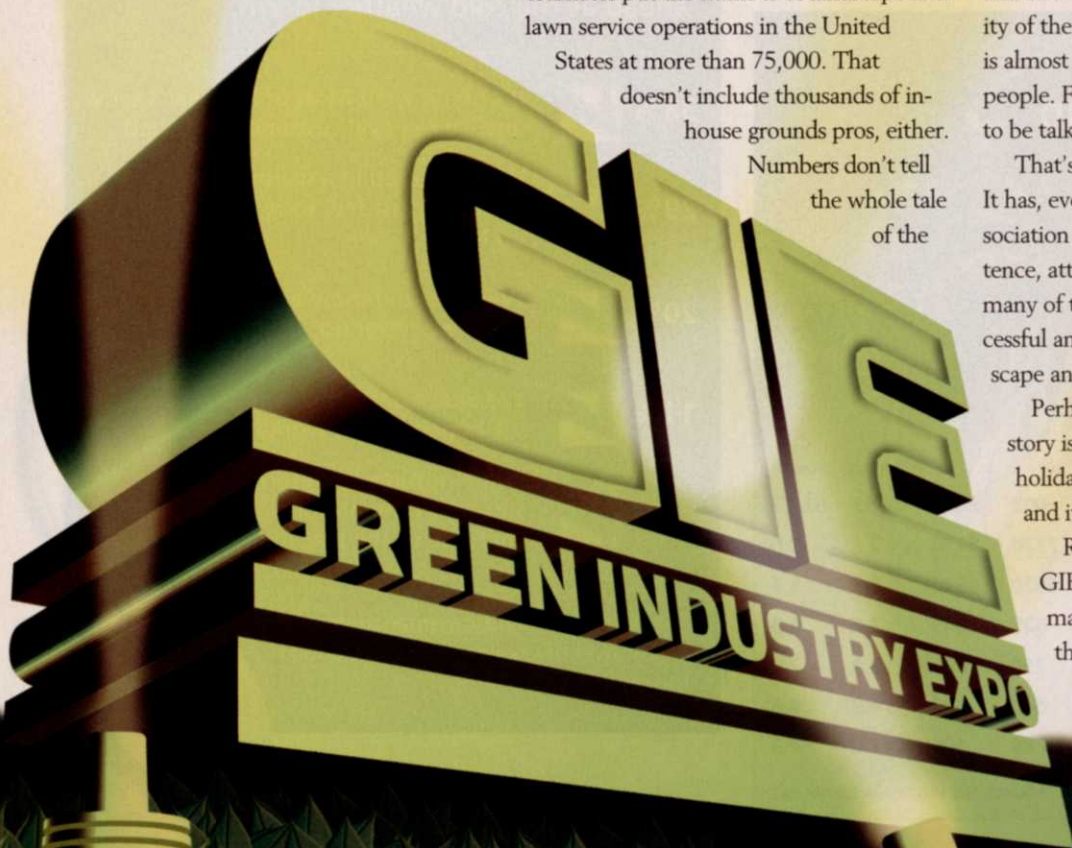
Quality always matters

As Ron Kujawa, a former ALCA president and one of GIE's founders, says: "The quality of the people who go to the trade show is almost as important as the quantity of people. From a vendor's standpoint, I want to be talking to owners and managers."

That's been one of the GIE's strengths. It has, even in its first years when inter-association squabbles threatened its existence, attracted and been supported by many of the Green Industry's most successful and energetic, if not largest, landscape and lawn care companies.

Perhaps a better way to tell the GIE story is to draw a parallel to the classic holiday movie, "It's a Wonderful Life," and its hero, George Bailey.

Realizing that revenues from the GIE and its concurrent conferences make up more than 25% of each of the three participating associations'



to stay

operating budgets, what would these associations and their respective segments within the larger Green Industry be like today without the GIE?

It's fair to ask:

► Without PLCAA's proactive legislative activities, what additional government regulations might there be to restrict professional lawn applicators?

► Without a robust ALCA and the spirit of idea sharing and networking that it's fostered, how would the public perceive — and to what degree accept — professional landscaping and landscape maintenance services?

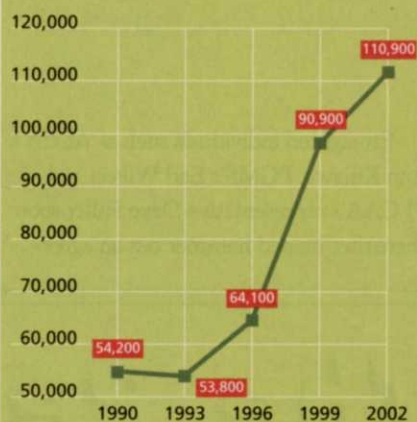
► Would ALCA, PLCAA or PGMS be able to offer to the industry their incredible array of educational materials (both business management and technical) and related services?

► What level of respect could in-house grounds professionals earn from their employers without the PGMS certification and Green Star awards programs?

Worth outstrips size

A strong argument can be made that the worth of the GIE to landscapers, lawn care and grounds professionals far outstrips its size. But that wasn't so apparent in its in-

Total square footage



fancy. The GIE, a marriage of the former ALCA/PGMS Green Team trade show with the larger PLCAA show, had a short honeymoon.

"I was the one that came up with the idea," says former PLCAA Executive VP James Brooks. "I'm not bragging because it just about got me lynched."

Brooks says he saw that by merging the two shows he could grow the number of attendees and also attract more mower and equipment vendors, categories the PLCAA show needed help with.

Where to next for a bigger show?

The Green Industry Expo (GIE) is getting too big for its britches. That's not such a bad problem to have, although it will challenge show organizers.

Within as few as two or three years, the GIE will likely be too big to return to many of the cities that previously hosted it. They won't have the exhibit floor space necessary for a trade show that displays so much hardware and demands so many aisle booths. The GIE will have to move up to the next tier of convention cities, locations such as Orlando, which will be hosting the 2005 GIE, and someday perhaps Atlanta, Houston or Dallas.

"Right now, I don't research any exhibit hall that isn't at least 350,000 square feet," says Eleanor Ellison, GIE

Trade Show Director. "We're having to look at locations where we're not the big fish in the pond anymore."

This presents a dilemma for the GIE Board that has, during the show's first 13 years, selected cities from St. Louis eastward, with the exception of one show in Ft. Worth, TX. The Board's picks have been based on the following criteria:

- within driving distance for a large number of landscapers, lawn applicators and grounds pros to boost the presence of regional exhibitors and walk-in attendees,
- ample and reasonably priced accommodations,
- locations that allow vendors to set up and break down exhibits without too much union expense, and

► the location for the increasingly popular outdoor Product Field Day be within a short bus trip of the exhibit hall and in a location with mild November weather.

One of the ideas that has been broached, but not seriously debated yet, has been moving the date of the GIE to August, the time of the year marking a mid-summer slowdown for most potential show goers. That would, of course, allow the GIE to visit northern cities. But that's not presently on the Board's radar as its members gear up to renegotiate the next five-year agreement among the three associations.

"We've done a good job of meeting the strategic goals set by the GIE board, including the square footage growth per year," adds Ellison.

Far-sighted individuals such as ALCA's Ron Kujawa, PGMS's Earl Wilson and PLCAA's representative Dave Fuller soon thereafter helped hammer out an agree-

ment for the initial joint trade show in 1990. It wasn't long before disagreements threatened its future, one of the key issues being PLCAA's role as the show manager.

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Total attendance



"We had to get a lot of kinks worked out. It was a big job to keep everybody happy," recalls Wilson, who turned 79 on Oct. 3 but still attends every GIE.

It wasn't until the mid-1990s, in fact, that the three associations settled most of their key disagreements, and the GIE's long-term prospects looked more solid.

"There's a lot better spirit of working together. It's been quite a change from the first time I was on the Board," says two-time supplier rep Michael Dietrich of LESCO.

"Yes, the board has had its ups and downs," agrees Gerald Grossi, also a second-termer, "but the cooperation among the three associations is very good now."

This cooperation has given the GIE a firmer base upon which to grow and evolve. And, just like the industry, the GIE has changed and evolved.

"Over the last decade, the industry has become so integrated with companies offering all varieties of different services that we need to have this broad-based show," says Robert Andrews, a former president of PLCAA and one of the early GIE supporters. "From the industry's standpoint, and from the standpoint of the exhibitors, having this one big event is a good idea." **LM**

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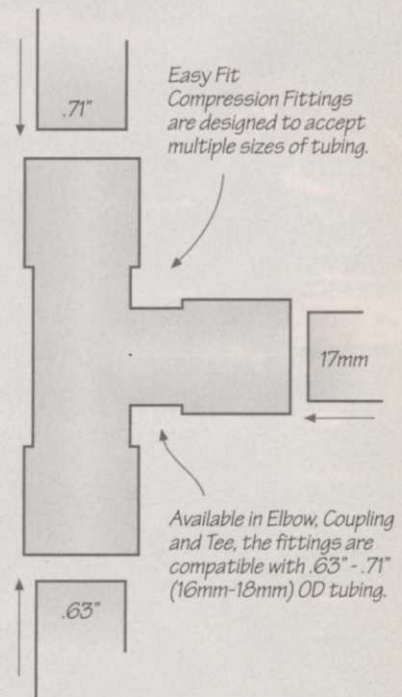
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'03

PEOPLE

of the Year



John Van Etten

GROUNDS MANAGEMENT

BY JASON STAHL /
MANAGING EDITOR

If you know John Van Etten, you'd half-believe that a cut in his arm would yield a torrent of potting soil. Ornamentals, turfgrass and annuals are the kinds of things that give him goosebumps. Who else would spend his spare time planting heirloom varieties of seeds to grow things that cause people to gasp and say, "What the heck is that?"

That's part of what he currently does as landscape manager for Hoffman Development, a company that owns a variety of car washes and Jiffy Lubes. Lately, customers getting their oil changed have been calling headquarters to ask about a silvery gray mystery plant that Van Etten surprised them with.

"It's a cardoon, an ornamental artichoke plant," he says. "It has a strong vertical element to it, and around this time of year bears edible artichokes. Past their prime as a

vegetable, it blooms a purple flower like a centurion."

From as early as the age of 9 or 10, Van Etten distinctly remembers developing a great love of the outdoors. At first, wildlife biology was his target. During his high school years, he did a stint at a vocational technical school and majored in landscape conservation. Ultimately, it was a friend who steered him from the wildlife conservation track.

"He was a wildlife conservation officer, and told me my chances of getting a job in that field in New York were slim because it was so competitive," Van Etten says.

After earning an ornamental horticulture degree from the State University of New York-Uoster, Van Etten immersed himself in a variety of occupations, from tree climber to greenhouse manager to landscaper, to "know how things should be done." Running his own landscape business was never a thought. "My decision

was based a lot on the seasonality of the occupation," he recalls.

In 1986, he found a job he would remain at for the next 17 years: grounds superintendent of Mohonk Mountain House, a resort in New Paltz, NY. And so also began a 17-year battle with deer that tried to ravage his plants. In the process, he became the foremost authority on the subject, writing articles in national magazines and contributing valuable research to local cooperative extension services.

Along the way, he joined the Professional Grounds Management Society, but he was more than just a token member. As with all of his endeavors, he rose from the pack to become vice president of the society's Northeast Branch. This year, he will become a member of the Board of Directors.

"The Society has afforded me the opportunities and tools to excel as a professional," Van Etten says. "Their certification programs are top-notch in that they impart inspiration for success by challenging your skills and abilities."

Career Timeline

1979-80 — Works at first job in industry at Vineyard Lodge Resort in Uoster Park, NY

1981-83 — Manages the nursery at Adam's Fairacre Farms, a retail garden center

1984 — Graduates from SUNY Uoster with a degree in Ornamental Horticulture

1984-85 — Works as a tree climber for Mountain Tree Care

1985-86 — Works as a landscape foreman and supervisor for Cedar Ridge Landscaping

1986 — Hired as grounds foreman for Mohonk Mountain House

1994 — Joined PGMS

1995 — Promoted to grounds superintendent for Mohonk

2001 — Elected vice president of PGMS's Northeast Branch

2002 — Hired as the landscape manager for Hoffman Development

For another profile, turn to page 30 ►



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'03

PEOPLE *of the Year*



Roger Mongeon

LAWN CARE

BY RON HALL /
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

For decades, the Weed Man, founded by visionary Des Rice in the early 1970s, stayed pretty much north of the border. Although its franchise operations spanned Canada from coast to coast, making it the single largest lawn care provider there, it had virtually no impact in the U.S. market...that is, until Roger Mongeon came along.

It seems strange to be honoring a chemical engineer with our "Person of the Year" award. But the startling growth of the Weed Man brand in the United States over the past three years testifies to his business acumen, much of it gained during a 10-year stint in management with Union Carbide. In fact, that's where Mongeon was working when he recalls recognizing the opportunities that lawn care can offer an entrepreneurial spirit.

"We were having dinner with a neighbor in Toronto and he was telling me about his Weed Man franchise," says

Mongeon. "When he took me to his computer and showed me what he was doing, I could hardly believe it."

Soon thereafter, Mongeon switched careers and purchased a franchise of his own in Hull, Quebec Province, which is just across the river from Ottawa, the nation's capital. He didn't stop there. Within seven years, he had expanded the operation with franchises in Montreal and Ontario Province. More recently, his company moved into British Columbia. This season, his company's Canada locations will record sales of about \$60 million.

But Mongeon is not containing his vision or his ambitions to Canada. He feels there's plenty of opportunity for the Weed Man in the U.S. market in spite of larger and better-established operations such as TruGreen-ChemLawn and The Lawn Doctor.

After a start that saw Weed Man struggle to reach \$1 million in annual sales after two years, he sees the Weed Man building momentum. He points to two primary reasons:

1. The recruitment of a small group of savvy U.S. lawn care operators to serve as sub-franchisers. "It's been one of the joys of my business life to work with the professionals we have," says Mongeon.

2. The implementation of standardized business, training and support systems in every franchise location. "Every time we ran into a problem, we developed a system," he recalls.

This season, Weed Man U.S.A. will have sales of \$17 million and Mongeon is budgeting revenues of \$22 million for 2004. Within 10 years, he's confident that revenues will hit the \$200 million mark.

Are there any clouds on the horizon? You bet, he says, ticking off telemarketing do-not-call restrictions and the use of lawn care chemicals as the industry's two greatest long-term challenges.

"It's a fight, no doubt about it," says Mongeon. "We've lost the pesticide battle in Quebec, but in the end, IPM (integrated pest management) will win out if there is any intelligence in this world."

Mongeon has also been on the forefront of the battle against unreasonable (in some cases nonsensical) anti-lawn care legislation in Canada, particularly in Quebec Province.

Career Timeline

1977 — Graduates from the University of Ottawa with a B.S. in Chemical Engineering

1977 — Joins Union Carbide, starting a 10-year career in various management positions

1987 — Purchases first Weed Man franchise in Hull, Quebec

1989 — Purchases Weed Man Montreal, Quebec

1994 — Gathers a group of shareholders and employees from an inner circle of family, friends and former colleagues and expands into Ontario

1995 — Sees franchising opportunity in the United States. Turf Holdings Inc. incorporates and begins campaign to sell Weed Man franchises

1997 — Opens first corporate office in the U.S.: Weed Man Denver, CO

1998 — Opens second U.S. office in Minneapolis, MN

1999 — Expands Canadian operations to British Columbia

2002 — Joins a coalition of lawn care professionals and helps develop a strategy to help the Canadian Lawn Care industry battle negative environmental pressures

For another profile, turn to page 32 ►

Sure Thing #1:

**THE SUN
WILL RISE
TOMORROW.**



PEOPLE *of the Year*

Turning over the Crystal Ball

BY RON HALL /
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

None of us can predict the future with any certainty. Some of us help build it, however. For almost 30 years, Tom Lied was the chairman of the Crystal Ball Committee, and he has been and remains a great builder whether he's designing a project in which he remains active or, on a grander scale, building an industry. He's recently passed on the latter task to colleagues.

We think it entirely proper to honor Tom Lied a second time within the pages of our magazine, recognizing, in particular, his efforts in advancing the mission the Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA). Indeed, it's difficult to conceive of the landscape industry without ALCA, which he helped found in 1962, and the Crystal Ball Committee that to this day remains critically vital to the industry's maturation.

Lied credits some California landscapers, who were already benefiting from their own organization, for planting the seed for a national association of landscape contractors. Taking that idea, he and a handful of other landscapers met at LaSalle Hotel in Chicago.

Tom Lied *special 'lifetime'* **achievement**



LANDSCAPE CONTRACTING

"The questions we asked ourselves were: Should we have a national organization? If so, what should it be called? How do we get it started?" recalls Lied.

"Then we went about writing the bylaws, choosing a name and choosing a location for our first Dutch-treat convention. It was in New Orleans, and we chose our first president, Julian Graham."

Six years later, Lied served as ALCA's president. When he left the office, he didn't leave his enthusiasm for the organization behind. Instead, he and several other like-minded landscapers came up with the idea of the Crystal Ball Committee. The Committee's protocol and goals have remained basically the same for almost 30 years.

"We were an emerging industry that was hard pressed to keep pace with the activity that was requested of it," says

Lied of the early days of the Committee. "We had to make time to find a way to help plan the future of our industry rather than respond to what was dealt to us."

The Committee found its voice at the Lied's rustic north woods cabin where small groups of landscapers met almost annually for more than 20 years. These friendly but intense brainstorming sessions produced documents and guidelines that thousands of landscapers now rely upon.

While Lied turned the Committee over to others in 2002 and his service with ALCA is behind him, he's gratified to see both entities continue and prosper. "It's a great thing to see other people pick up on your ideas and carry them forward and make them much better than you ever conceived. And that's what's happening now." **LHM**

Career Timeline

1942 — Tom works summers, Saturdays at father's (Delmar) new landscape business

1955 — Receives degree in Ornamental Horticulture from Michigan State; minors in Landscape Architecture

1956 — Returns to the family business

1961 — President of Wisconsin Nurserymen's Association

1962 — One of the original founders of ALCA; buys half of family operation, becomes full partner with father

1965 — Helps to found the Wisconsin Landscape Contractors Association (WLCA)

1966 — Incorporates company as Lied's Nursery Co., Inc.

1967 — President of WLCA

1969 — President of ALCA

1970 — Joins with other ALCA members to form Crystal Ball Committee

1970-2002 — Chairs Crystal Ball Committee

1984 — Robert Lied, Tom's son, joins the firm. Three generations (Del, Tom, Robb) run the family business

1993 — Receives first ALCA Landscape Service Award, now called the Lifetime Leadership Award

1996 — Robb becomes president of Lied's; Tom, CEO and landscape architect

2003 — Tom and Carol Lied celebrate 50 years of marriage

Sure Thing #2:

**WATER ROLLS
OFF A DUCK'S
BACK.**



Eliminate the weakest link

In the service industry, it's probably your people

BY BILL HOOPES

I believe the old adage, "A chain is only as strong as its weakest link." And the more time I spend in the lawn service industry, the more I'm convinced that critical link is spelled p-e-o-p-l-e.

People are critical to success.

Ask yourself the question that's constantly on our minds at Scotts LawnService (SLS): "Are we doing enough to ensure that our people are adequately prepared and enabled to perform in a satisfactory manner? Or, do we blame staff failures on the old 'hack' — that there just aren't any good people out there anymore."

Each year, businesses prepare an annual budget. Ours is based on and reflects what we want and expect to happen the following season. We look at history, the economy, homeowner buying trends, regulations and a host of other factors. Then, after hours of discussions and dickering on the computer, we finalize the plan.

Historically, the decisions about how to grow the business, do a great job of servicing and retaining our customers, and enhancing our professional image tend to assume that somehow the people will be there. The reason we make this assumption is because it just cannot be any other way. You must have people.

No plan will succeed without an effective team of people. But ensuring that they're present, prepared, empowered and well directed isn't simple. Still, the plans are communicated and, too often, the dice are rolled.

I never cease to be amazed at how many of us gamble each year that we'll be able to find and keep enough of the right kind of people to "make it happen."

Stop rolling the dice

At Scotts, we realized that, without a staff of top quality stars in our branches, we couldn't properly support our brand and its time-tested image of trustworthy reliability.

We realized that whether or not the

Scotts patented fertilizer around which we build our product programs is the best, success in the service sector would elude us without the delivery system. We decided that the only prudent thing to do would be to make a sizeable commitment to our associates. It's all about lawn service professionalism.

As a past president of the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA), I've been fortunate to meet and share experiences with business people coast to coast, and I know we're all in this together.

It is generally believed that many if not most homeowners think that all lawn services are pretty much alike, and that we [LCOs] are going to deliver somewhat less than expected levels of service.

Part of the problem is that most of us sell hard. In our enthusiasm, we promise or leave the impression that, once homeowners are on our service, their problems are history no matter the weather, water restrictions, etc. So, in a sense, we've created the monster.

To succeed in delivering on our promises, it becomes apparent that our people are pivotal. As the customer decides whether to cancel his or her service, the fertilizer manufacturer or weed controls we use in our services become less a decisive part of the process.

continued on page 36

Sure Thing #3:

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continued from page 34

So, we've come full circle. Once again, it seems like it's all about people. In order to succeed, we've all got to pay special attention to our investment in what the consultants now refer to as "human capital" — so that people will receive the same consideration as a new truck or pump system in the business planning process. And hey, if calling people "human capital" helps elevate the importance of our people, then "human capital" it is.

If you want a professional image, put professionals in your trucks. At Scotts, we made a decision to invest heavily in our associates. We're currently doing that, and to remain competitive you may have to do the same. Providing a higher level of professionalism in America's residential neighborhoods will only serve to help us all.

Below are some of the people-focused activities that make up our SLS strategy. You won't find any magic, and nothing is proprietary. Use what you like but take away an understanding of one company's commitment to what I believe is the most important link in the success chain: people.

► **Create a company culture.** Our culture is based on a long and ongoing commitment to providing the best possible service and results. We understand that doing this takes a sizeable up-front investment. We're making that investment. Incentive programs for our field-based associates now emphasize service and customer retention versus just revenue creation. We want all associates to understand clearly how important quality and professionalism are at our company.

► **Commit to the strongest possible staff.** As everyone knows, people will make the difference. In our hiring process, we're committed to searching for those folks who stand the best chance of success. We screen for those who want our job versus just any job. We work hard to get referrals



Training both in and out of the classroom helps create careers, not jobs.

from our current associates because we've learned they make the best new hires. And we understand that, if we run a shoddy operation, we'll never retain the kind of associates it will take to continue growing. Of course, top industry compensation, benefits and a positive workplace environment with reasonable goals and hours are all part of the plan.

► **Train and develop employees.** To help attract and keep the best associates, we've developed a Career Path Development Plan. We want each field associate to view his/her job as a career rather than just a job. We don't refer to treatment folks as technicians — they're Territory Service Representatives.

Each new TSR begins his/her career as a TSR Trainee. Then, through a combination of in-class training, on-the-job experiences, examinations, "check rides" and time on the job, the trainee moves to TSR level 1, 2, 3 and on to Senior TSR.

The whole process can be accomplished in just over two years. At our company, the days of the "lawn tech" are gone.

7 ways to strengthen your chain

- Create a company culture
- Commit to the strongest possible staff
- Train and develop employees
- Offer great service line products, programs and results
- Conduct management development
- Push ongoing positive reinforcement
- Give maximum support for the field organization

► **Offer great service line products, programs and results.** Nobody wants to work hard at delivering on customer expectations, then be disappointed because the products or programs weren't up to snuff. We don't allow our TSRs to fail. Each person on the branch team knows why our programs are the best they can be.

► **Conduct management development.** Your best people will demand the opportunity to grow. And, if you want your company to grow, you'll need to think about succession planning. Who will fill the next expansion opening? Our MOTS Program (Management Operations Training School) is now in its third year. Each new first level supervisor is trained in basic supervision, company philosophies and standards. This

program focuses mostly on the skills needed to lead effectively. Promising first level sales, service and office managers who qualify go through second and third stages of management and leadership training. Once the three-part development program is completed, the Branch Manager candidate is ready to be promoted to a position with greater responsibility.

► **Push ongoing positive reinforcement.**

If you want to extend positive motivation, most of us understand that money alone isn't the answer. While compensation and benefits are expected to be on par with industry standards, our managers know that we appreciate and value their contribution. Whether driven to grow inside the organization or to simply be appreciated and assured of a great career, we emphasize constant positive feedback to our branch staffs. From TSRs up, we recognize our people at each mandatory Monday morning meeting. We supply branch managers with special "Kudo Cards," awarded for doing a great job. The Scotts Company has recently kicked off the new "Star Program." Associates who have a good idea, do a good deed in the community or make a significant contribution in some other way can win up to \$10,000. And to keep the growing going, we offer our staff the PLCAA [CTP] Certified Turf Professional and [COLP] Certified Ornamental Landscape Professional certification programs.

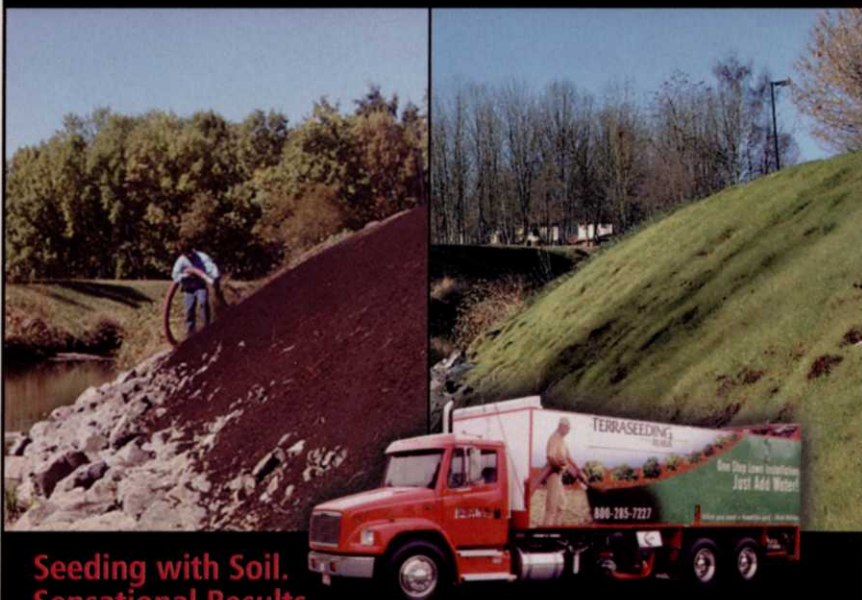
► **Give maximum support to the field organization.** This year, we provided a specially trained and qualified FSM or Field Support Manager in each operating region. The FSM is there to support sales, customer service and operational areas. Whether helping to open a new location or giving a hand to a struggling new field manager, we have made this additional investment to ensure that our managers have the skills and tools necessary throughout the year. To further support operations,

FSMs work closely with branch Training Coordinators, veterans who mentor new hires and ensure our front line people are correctly and completely trained and that

performance standards are being met. **LMI**

— The author is Director of Training for Scotts LawnService. He can be reached at 937/644-7207.

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Property at a glance

Location: Nashville, TN

Grounds Supervisor: Mac Smith

Category: Amusement/Theme Park

Total budget: \$126,000

Year site built: 1974

Acres of turf: 0.5

Acres of woody ornamentals: 2.9

Acres of display beds: 6,200 sq. ft.

Total paved area: 3 acres

Total man-hours/week: 135

Maintenance challenges

- ▶ Container gardening — 34 baskets and 73 containers

Project checklist

Completed in last two years:

- ▶ Installation of Christmas décor
- ▶ Additional grounds maintained by staff — General Jackson Showboat & Ryman Auditorium

On the job

- ▶ 4 full-time staff, 0 seasonal employees, 0 licensed pesticide applicators

Grand Ole Opry

2002 PGMS Grand Award Winner for Amusement/Theme Park

Just as the Grand Ole Opry is an institution in Nashville, TN, so is Mac Smith. Smith has worked there since 1970, when he started as a seasonal worker. In fact, his early experience at the Grand Ole Opry made him change his mind about wanting to be a forest ranger.

"I switched my major from agriculture to ornamental horticulture," Smith recalls. "I just loved the stuff I was doing at the Grand Ole Opry."

Smith also says his love of the outdoors came from his grandmother and mother, both of whom were avid gardeners. When relaxing at home, he does his own personal gardening, but he also likes to fish and golf. But he makes it clear that his job at the Grand Ole Opry doesn't give him much time for these things.

"It's a 24-hour job with all the stuff that's going on," he says. "The biggest challenge is the amount of work we have to do with the size staff we have."

The four-man staff not only is respon-



There's not much to mow at the Grand Ole Opry, but every task puts strain on the crew's time.



sible for the Grand Ole Opry grounds but the exterior cleaning of all sidewalks and buildings.

"I'm comfortable with our staff size right now, but our workload pushes us," Smith says. "We receive extra projects that don't pertain to horticulture, and those dictate what we can do and when."

This year, the staff added the exterior grounds for the General Jackson Showboat located on the Cumberland River to their responsibilities.

PGMS
Landscape
MANAGEMENT

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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The Grand Ole Opry House is home of the world famous Grand Ole Opry Show. Therefore, it requires world famous grounds care.



The variety and color of the Grand Ole Opry's 6,200 sq. ft. of display beds are aimed at wowing visitors.



Recover an ailing business with the right software

BY SUE GUARD

What are the symptoms of having too much software to deal with? There is confusion, bewilderment, inconsistency, headaches, sighing, tension, too much time spent searching for the "right" disc, *ad infinitum*.

Short of employing a computer consultant or business software expert, get out pencil and paper and jot down what you absolutely require to run your business more efficiently. Then, pitch any discs that don't comply to your standards and only confuse your work effort.

Most software today has been designed and written just for the Green Industry by former Green Industry folks.

Some has been written by pros who understand the complexities and problems facing landscapers today.

Though some software programs are limited in scope, others provide fully integrated business solutions, but you have

to do a bit of research yourself. Log on to the vendors' Web sites to see exactly what's available, how it fits your business requirements and if it's compatible with your PC or Mac system.

Several companies even provide a "sample" of their programs and allow you to download a portion of their software for you to "taste test."

Remember, though, a software system should increase your productivity and give you significant information for making reasonable business decisions. Information should be accurate, up-to-date and professional. You'll find the great majority of software vendors provide their services, technical support and assistance in an honest and credible manner.

Keep the table that follows in a handy place for quick reference when the need arises.

Remember, the right software will cut your labor significantly; the wrong software may cut your profits significantly. Know what you need by the need to know. **LJM**

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continued on page 42



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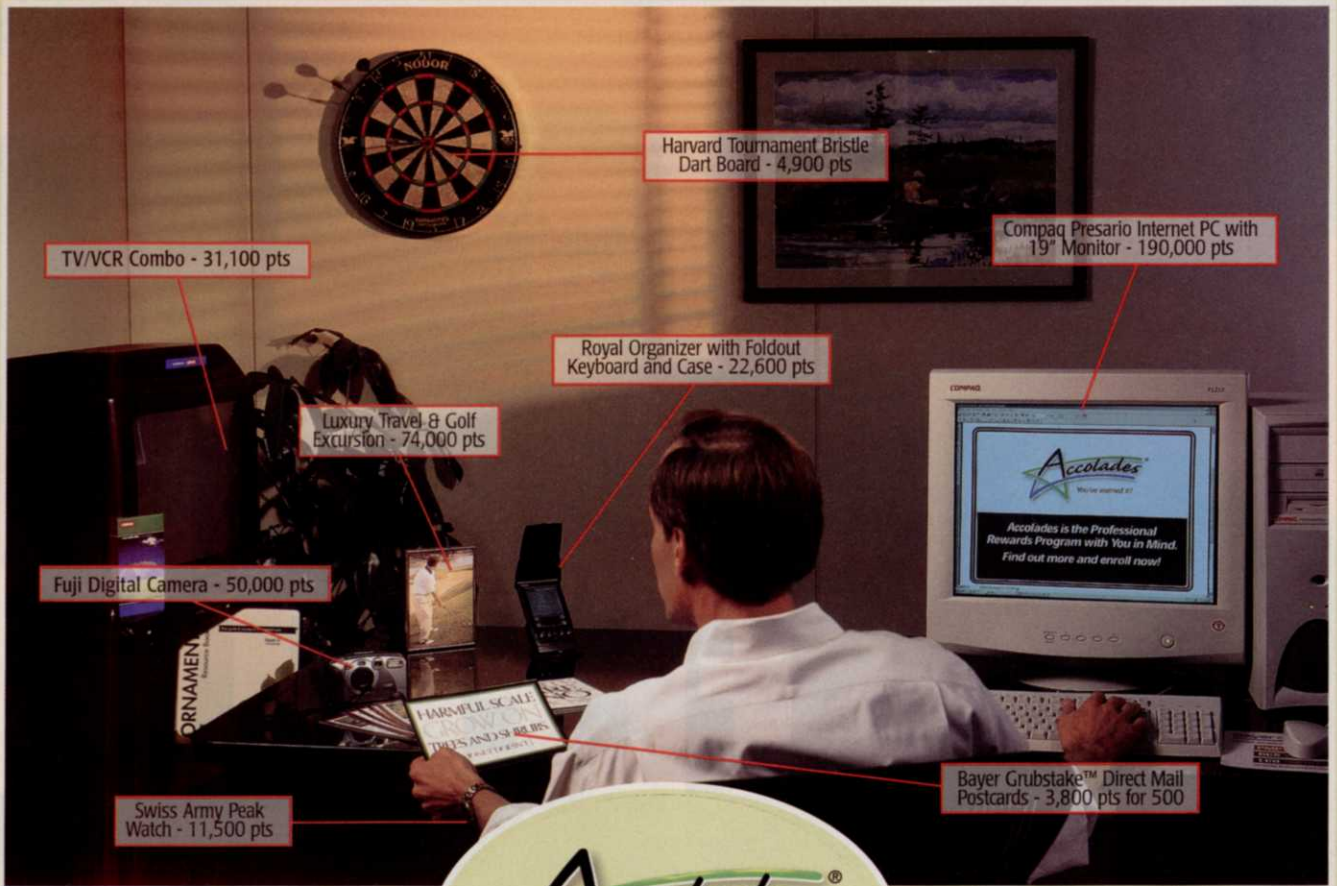
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PERFORMANCE.

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Circle No. 115

Sharp ideas for the shop

BY CURT HARLER

A sharp mower blade is just as important to maintaining good turf quality as variety, selection and regular nitrogen applications.

A dull blade damages grass leaves, leaving them prone to disease. It leaves behind a ragged, ratty looking lawn. The solution is to sharpen mower blades regularly and properly.

According to engineers at Magna-Matic Corp., Waldo, WI, the first step is to clean the blade. Check edges for nicks or burrs on the underside of the edge. If they're present, grind them off with a grinder. Take off only the burr — don't grind the underside of the blade.

Typically, it's easiest to use the left hand to provide a firm, downward push to keep a flat, constant contact and move the blade along the grinding wheel. The right hand provides the back-and-forth motion against the wheel. Lefties can do just the opposite.

Next, engineers in the Stens Technical Service Department recommend sharpening both

ends of the blade at the original angle, being sure to remove equal amounts of material from each end. This maintains blade balance. Don't grind around the corner at the blade's tip. If the cutting edge cannot be sharpened in a straight line to within one-eighth inch of the end, replace the blade.

Don't force a blade into the grinder. This will heat the blade, causing it to lose temper.

Check blade balance. Balance a blade by just grinding a little more metal off the heavy end of the blade. Never try to straighten a severely bent blade. Once you've finished balancing the blade and checking it for straightness, clean any jagged edges with a hand file.

When looking for a good blade sharpener, be sure the unit will sharpen both standard and mulching blades. The better grinders also will sharpen either left-rotation or right-rotation blades. The broader the adjustment angle, the better.



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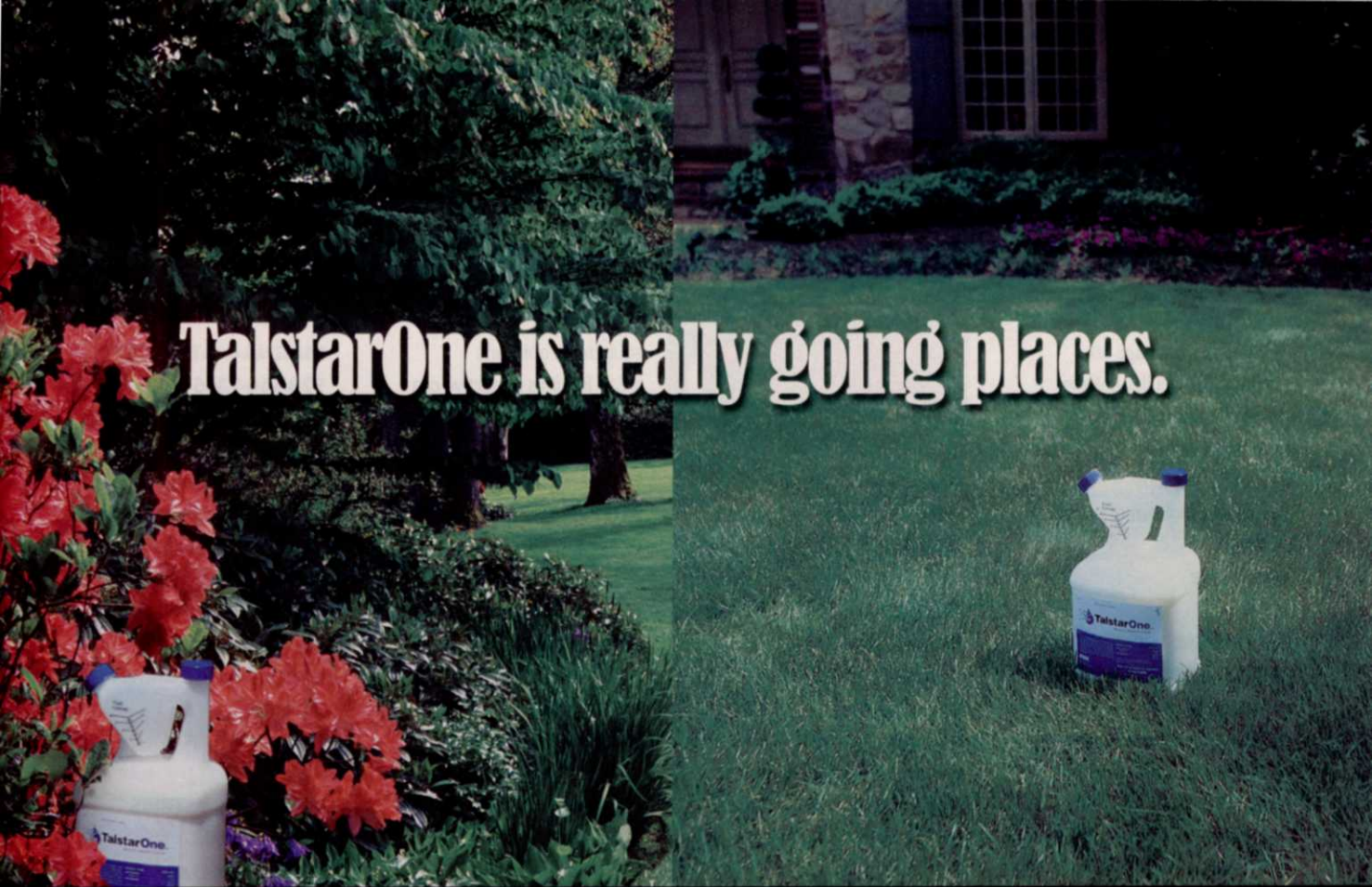
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continued on page 48

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And since TalstarOne multi-insecticide is water based and contains no alpha-cyano group, it's tough on pests, but easy on plants. It has no odorous or plant-damaging

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TalstarOne multi-insecticide. It's the only flowable product you'll ever need. For more information, contact our Customer Satisfaction Center at 1-800-321-1FMC, or visit: www.talstar-one.com.

TalstarOne multi-insecticide will replace Talstar® F insecticide. All existing inventory of Talstar F insecticide is still actively registered. To make sure TalstarOne multi-insecticide is registered in your state, check with state authorities or call 1-800-321-1FMC.



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TalstarOne™
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continued from page 46
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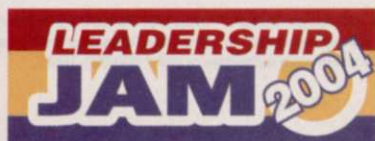
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Circle 117

ask the expert

BY BALAKRISHNA RAO

Sick sycamore?

A sycamore tree in our customer's yard doesn't seem to be losing its fruiting bodies. We don't remember this happening in past years. Is there something wrong with these trees?

— CA

Based on your observations, it doesn't appear that the sycamore trees are in any danger. The trees can retain a few fruit balls that will drop later. Perhaps in previous years you didn't see the fruit balls because the tree might not have had as many fruits developed. Or they were aborted, possibly killed by frost.

These undesirable fruit balls can drop onto lawns, decks, etc. and cause a mess. To manage the problem, treat with a plant growth regulator called Florel. Although the treatment timing is critical, not much is known about the proper application timing for sycamore. Reports indicate that treating from full bloom to petal drop is preferred to prevent pollination and subsequent fruit elimination. However, more research is needed to fine-tune the recommendations.

Reports also indicate that Florel plant growth regulator can affect the paint on automobiles. Therefore, make sure the vehicles are moved away from potential drift areas.

Wilting away

One of our employees said they heard someone mention a product called "Ammate," which is used to prevent the spread of oak wilt. What is it? How and when we should use it? What does it do?

— IL

Looking through some literature, I found

that some professionals use fuel oil or fuel oil plus ammonium sulfamate (Ammate) to prevent the spread of oak wilt disease fungus (*ceratocystis fagacearum*) from a diseased tree to a healthy tree. Affected trees should be treated by making a deep girdle or axe cuts in roots and applying the material to the runoff point. This should be performed as soon as evidence of oak wilt is detected and before the tree wilts 50%. This treatment will kill the infected and diseased tree and should prevent disease spread to healthy oak trees nearby.

A large scale problem

Some of our customers' magnolia trees have many bumps on the stems that are whitish in color. When squeezed, sap comes out. Do you have any idea what they might be?

— IL

Based on your field observation, the problem appears to be magnolia scale. Magnolia scale (*neolecanium cornuparvum*) is one of the largest and most destructive pests on magnolia trees. When mature, adult females can reach about 1/2-in. in diameter. They are tan-brown, often covered with a whitish, waxy material. They lose this waxy coating at the time when the eggs hatch and crawlers are produced. They're commonly found on several species of magnolia, such as saucer, star, lily and cucumber tree.

Magnolia scale is a sucking pest, and can build up on branches in large numbers year after year. Growth of the tree can be reduced, and with heavy infestations, affected branches often die, possibly leading to death of the tree. This soft scale pro-

duces a large amount of honeydew, which falls on the leaves and branches. A dark, black colored fungus called sooty mold grows on the honeydew. Sooty mold affects photosynthesis and indirectly weakens the tree.

Magnolia scales overwinter as dark colored nymphs on twigs. As they molt in the spring, you can distinguish between male and female. Males are smaller (1/8 in.), turn white and emerge as small pink to yellow gnat-like insects. Female scales continue to grow and, by June, change to a brownish-purple color. At that time, they begin producing large amounts of sticky honeydew. By July, they develop a white waxy coating and, by late July to early August, the females produce young nymphs called crawlers. These crawlers move around and settle down on the twigs, feed and overwinter.

To manage these destructive pests, consider treating with insecticides or horticultural oils (often called summer oil). Insecticide treatments should be targeted against the 2nd instar crawlers as they settle down around late August to early September. Horticultural oil treatments also can be effective if applied against the 2nd instar crawlers. This helps reduce scale population. Proper coverage of stems and leaves is very important. Dormant oils can be applied in October to November and again in March to manage the overwintering nymphs. Thorough coverage, periodic inspection and treating as needed will help manage magnolia scale in the long run.

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

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



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"Has changed our lives - more time to extend areas of our business. Just love it!!"

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"Best mower sold! I love it and my customers love it."

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"No other mower does it like a Walker"

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"The best investment I have ever made!!"

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"I am 67 and could not be in business without my Walker - We love it!"

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1. My primary business at this location is: (Fill in ONE only) 403RS
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 255 Landscape Contractors (Installation & Maintenance)
 260 Lawn Care Service Companies & Custom Chemical Applicators (ground & air)
 285 Irrigation Contractors & Consultants
 Other Contractors/Service Companies (please specify) _____

LANDSCAPING/GROUNDS CARE FACILITIES
 290 Sports Complexes 295 Parks 305 Schools, Colleges & Universities
 Other Grounds Care Facilities (specify) _____

SUPPLIERS AND CONSULTANTS
 355 Extension Agents/Consultants for Horticulture 360 Sod Growers, Turf Seed Growers & Nurseries
 365 Dealers, Distributors, Formulators & Brokers 370 Manufacturers
 Other (please specify) _____

2. Which of the following best describes your title? (Fill in ONE only)
 10 **Executive/Administrator** - President, Owner, Partner, Director, General Manager, Chairman of the Board, Purchasing Agent, Director of Physical Plant
 20 **Manager/Superintendent** - Arborist, Architect, Landscape/Grounds Manager, Superintendent, Foreman, Supervisor
 30 **Government Official** - Government Commissioner, Agent, Other Government Official
 40 **Specialist** - Forester, Consultant, Agronomist, Pilot, Instructor, Researcher, Horticulturist, Certified Specialist
 50 **Other Titled and Non-Titled Personnel** (please specify) _____

3. Which of the following services does your company provide? (Fill in ALL that apply)
Maintenance/Services
 A Mowing F Turf Fertilization C Tree Care
 B Turf Insect Control D Turf Aeration L Pond/Lake Care
 J Turf Weed Control E Irrigation Services N Snow Removal
 G Turf Disease Control H Ornamental Care O Other (please specify) _____

Design/Build
 I Landscape Design M Landscape Installation P Irrigation Installation
 K Paving/Deck/Patio Installation Q Other (please specify) _____

4. Type of customer served? (Fill in ALL that apply)
 A Commercial B Residential C Both

5. Which of the following landscape products do you purchase or specify? (Fill in ALL that apply)
 A Aerators G Fungicides K Mowers P Tractors
 B Blowers H Herbicides Y Ornamental/Nursery Products Q Truck Trailers/Attachments
 C Chain Saws I Insecticides Z Pavers/Masonry/Bricks/Rocks R Trucks
 U Engines W Irrigation Systems (Hardscape Materials) S Turfseed
 V Erosion Control X Landscape Lighting AA Skid Steers T Utility Vehicles
 F Fertilizers J Line Trimmers N Spreaders BB Water Features

6. My firm's annual revenue is: (Fill in ONE only)
 A \$2,000,000 or more C \$1,000,000 - \$1,499,999 E Less than \$500,000
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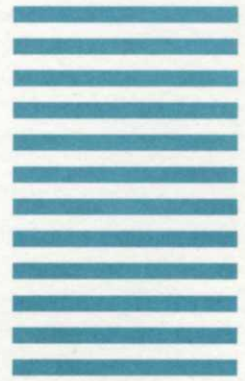


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 Other (please specify) _____

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 20 Manager/Superintendent - Arborist, Architect, Landscape/Grounds Manager, Superintendent, Foreman, Supervisor
 30 Government Official - Government Commissioner, Agent, Other Government Official
 40 Specialist - Forester, Consultant, Agronomist, Pilot, Instructor, Researcher, Horticulturist, Certified Specialist
 50 Other Titled and Non-Titled Personnel (please specify) _____

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 V Erosion Control X Landscape Lighting AA Skid Steers T Utility Vehicles
 F Fertilizers J Line Trimmers N Spreaders BB Water Features
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109	121	133	145	157	169	181	193	205	217	229	241	253	265	277	289	301	313
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112	124	136	148	160	172	184	196	208	220	232	244	256	268	280	292	304	316

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For more information contact Dakota at 800/477-8415 or www.dakotapeat.com / circle no. 250



Shifting gears

Kubota enters the utility vehicle market with its new RTV900, which will be available in four configurations — turf, general purpose, recreational and worksite. The new utility vehicle will be in dealers' showrooms in February 2004. Standard features include Kubota's Hydrostatic Transmission (HST) and hydraulic power steering. The HST boasts a braking feature that never allows the vehicle to

enter a free-wheel status when traveling downhill. Also standard is a retractable seatbelt and OSHA-certified ROPS. The new model's three-range shifting provides low (0-10 mph), mid (0-18 mph) and high (0-25 mph) operational speeds. It also features 4WD with a 2WD selection and is powered by a Kubota three-cylinder, liquid cooled diesel engine rated at 22 PTO hp.

For more information contact Kubota at 888/458-2682 or www.kubota.com / circle no. 251



Chip it away

Salsco calls its chipper a giant in a small package. The model 608 is powered by an 8-hp Honda or Briggs & Stratton engine, and the balanced impeller is 13 in. in diameter by 1 in. thick. It's mounted on a frame with axle and pneumatic tires and can be towed by a tractor or a standard tow bar.

For more information contact Salsco at 419/797-1203 / circle no. 252

Keep on truckin'

American Cargo LLC introduces the Heritage cargo van, available in 10-ft. through 16-ft. lengths and 72- to 96-in. interior body heights. Standard features include a larger bulkhead door, Galvaneal steel rear frame, rear roll-up door with stainless steel rivets and new rear bumper system.

For more information contact American Cargo at 800/283-3993 / circle no. 253



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Encore Power Equipment's Z-Series of riding mowers now has a 60-in. deck, as well as 42-, 48- and 52-in. decks. Each mower also has a lower center of gravity for greater stability. Durable automotive-style drum parking brakes have also been added. Larger dual gas tanks extend the running time, and molded-in cup holders offer convenience. Other features include a 19,000 FPM blade tip speed, 8.5 mph speed, and 10-gauge skirted deck with a 10-gauge shell and 7-gauge bolt-on top plate.

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Circle 119

events

WHAT, WHEN & WHERE

November

17-20 Turf and Ornamental Seminar / West Lafayette, IN; 765/494-8039; www.agry.purdue.edu/turf

18-20 International Irrigation Show / San Diego, CA; 703/536-7080; www.irrigation.org

22 Field Day / Salem, OR; Sponsored by the Oregon Landscape Contractors Association; 503/253-9091; www.oregonlandscape.org

December

2-4 RMRTA Annual Turfgrass Conference & Trade Show / Denver, CO; 303/770-2220; www.rmrtat.org

9-10 Turfgrass Institute and Trade Show / Duluth, GA; 800/687-6949

9-11 New Jersey Turfgrass Expo / Atlantic City, NJ; 732/821-7134

9-12 Ohio Turfgrass Conference and Show /

Columbus, OH; www.ohioturfgrass.org

10 IPLLA Winter Workshop / Carmel, IN; 317/575-9010

January 2004

4-6 The Western 2004 Annual Convention & Trade Show / Kansas City, MO; 816/233-1481

5-Feb. 20 Winter School for Turf Managers / Amherst, MA; 413/545-2484

7-9 Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show / Brooklandville, MD; 800/431-0066; www.mants.com

13-15 CONGRESS 2004 / Toronto, Canada; 905/875-1805; www.locongress.com

19-20 Nebraska Nursery and Landscape Assn. Winter Conference & Trade Show / Omaha, NB; 402/450-7192

19-22 Mid-Atlantic Horticulture Short Course / Virginia Beach, VA; 757/787-9451

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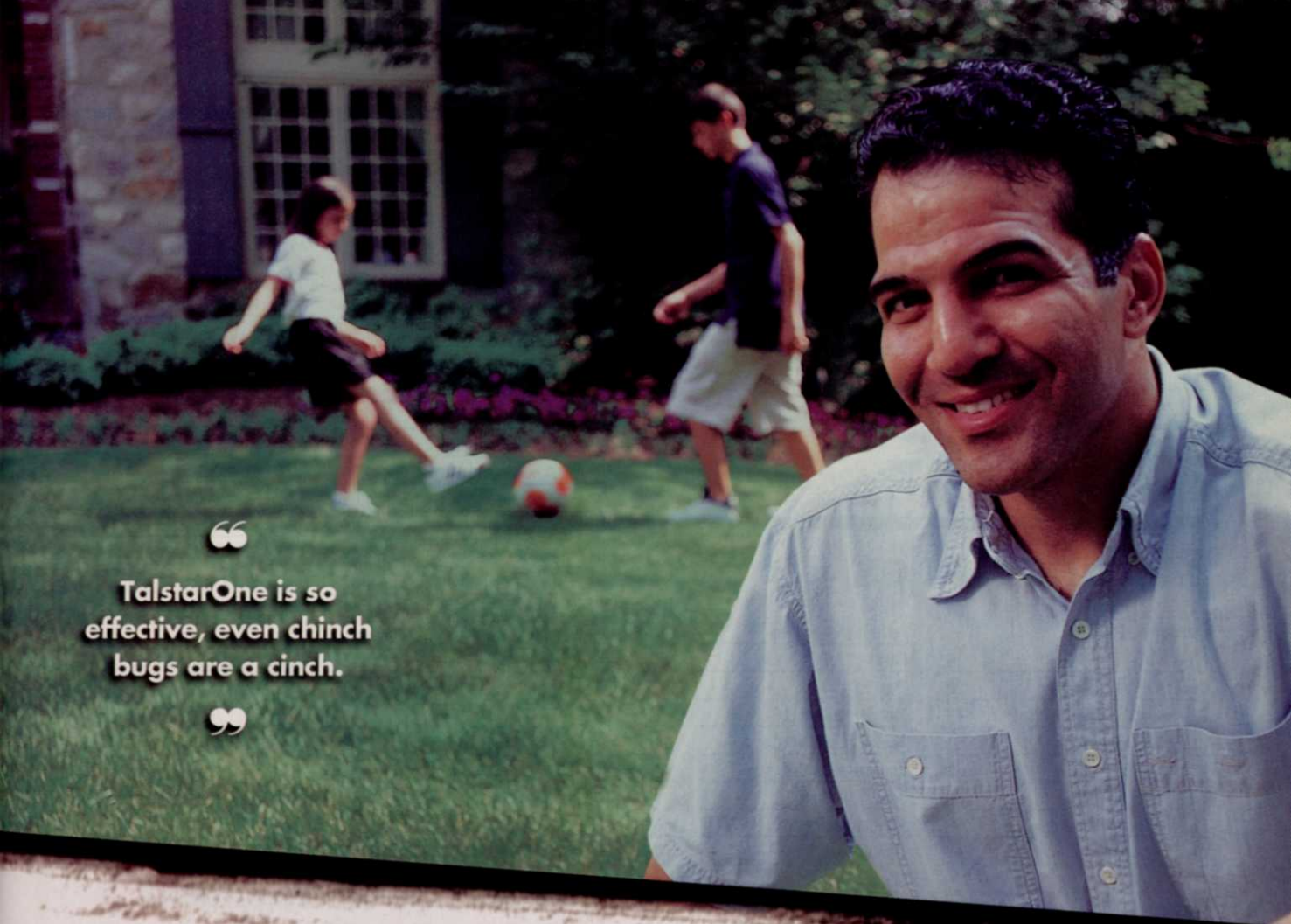
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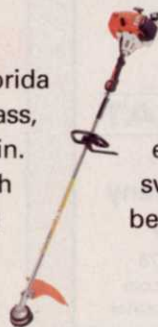
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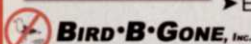
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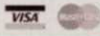
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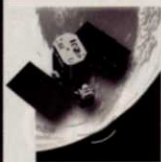
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best practices

GUIDELINES TO HELP AN INDUSTRY GROW

Make them pay for themselves

BY BRUCE WILSON

If you attend an industry conference, it should pay for itself. I had that concept drilled into my head by an influential mentor, Joe Marsh. He said that before you leave, you should pin down the total cost of attendance, airfare, meals, hotel, conference registration and any other related costs. It should then be your objective to plan to come back with some new idea that can save at least that much — but you should be thinking many multiples of that cost total.

Here are some best practices for getting the most out of your conference season:

► **Spend your money wisely.** Go to conferences that have agenda topics aligned with your improvement needs.

► **Go to conferences that encourage networking.** I skip conferences in Las Vegas because everyone splits after the sessions and heads for the casinos and shows. I like the ones in the sleepy towns where there's nothing to do.

► **Begin with end in mind.** Be-

come a heat-seeking missile when it comes to getting information.

► **No matter how good someone says an idea is, it isn't that good.** Ask a lot

of questions about what could go wrong.

► **The best ideas are hardest to find.** They usually come from the less talkative people. I have found that if you can draw out the people who listen and take notes, you'll find the hidden treasures.

► **You have to give to get.** If you aren't willing to share some of your tricks of the trade, you won't be trusted and won't be able to maximize your success.

► **Get reports from employees.** If you send employees, ask them to come back and give reports on their learnings to those that stayed behind and held down the shop.

► **Act when you get back.** Take your ideas and do something with them.

► **Eliminate fuzzy thinking.** In my mind, there's some fuzzy



Bruce Wilson

thinking that goes on among some attendees.

An example is that many small companies think they must learn from similarly small companies because they have the same issues, and that the

solutions offered by bigger companies don't apply.

Choose to learn from successful companies, regardless of their size. In fact, most successful companies know they learned from others and are grateful, so they want to help others as a way of giving back to the industry.

► **Talk with competitors.** Some companies also think that they won't be able to learn from their competitors from their own market because they won't share. The fact is that many successful contractors see the opportunity to create good competitors in their market as being good for the market. You want to build friendly competition in your own market. They'll leave you alone and go after the jobs of the contractors they don't know or like.

Sound off

Does your company regularly participate in trade shows? How effectively do you utilize such a great opportunity for learning and networking? Does it turn out to be a chance for your hard-working employees to party, or do they actually get something out of it? And do you have a tried and true way of implementing what you've learned into your daily operations when you get home?

To comment on Bruce Wilson's advice on handling the trade show circuit, contact him at bwilson@wilson-oyster.com. Wilson spent 30 years with Environmental Care, Inc. before partnering with Green Industry entrepreneur Tom Oyler to form the Wilson-Oyler Group, which offers consulting services. Visit www.wilson-oyster.com.

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WORKER: Tony WEEK: _____

DATE	DAY	START TIME	LUNCH	END TIME	WORK DONE	JOB	TOTAL HOURS
	Monday	7:50	No	4	Net Trim Spray	Crestview	8 1/2
	Tuesday	7:50	No	4	||	Crestview	8 1/2
	Wednesday	7:50	No	4	||	Larchmont Crestview	8 1/2
	Thursday	7:50	No	4	||	Larchmont	8 1/2
	Friday	7:50	No	4	||	Larchmont	8 1/2
	Saturday	7:50					
	Sunday						

SIGNATURE: Tony TOTAL HOURS: 42 1/2

REALITY?

Employee Report

Created 12/19/2003 5:48 PM

Tony Peterson

Jobclock Name: Crestview Apartments **Date Range:** 12/15/2003 through 12/19/2003

Start	End	Activity	Hours
12/15/2003 7:13 AM	12/15/2003 12:02 PM	Irrigation	4:49 hours
12/15/2003 12:50 PM	12/15/2003 3:17 PM	Irrigation	2:27 hours 7:16 hours
12/16/2003 7:20 AM	12/16/2003 12:06 PM	Irrigation	4:46 hours
12/16/2003 12:57 PM	12/16/2003 3:31 PM	Plant	2:34 hours 7:20 hours
Jobclock subtotal			14:36 hours

Jobclock Name: Larchmont Property

Start	End	Activity	Hours
12/17/2003 7:08 AM	12/17/2003 12:01 PM	Plant	4:53 hours
12/17/2003 12:41 PM	12/17/2003 3:07 PM	Plant	2:26 hours 7:19 hours
12/18/2003 7:16 AM	12/18/2003 12:15 PM	Erosion control	4:59 hours
12/18/2003 1:05 PM	12/18/2003 3:16 PM	Erosion control	2:11 hours 7:10 hours
12/19/2003 7:21 AM	12/19/2003 11:50 AM	Concrete	4:29 hours
12/19/2003 12:40 PM	12/19/2003 3:39 PM	Concrete	2:39 hours 7:28 hours
Jobclock subtotal			21:57 hours

Employee subtotal **36:33 hours**

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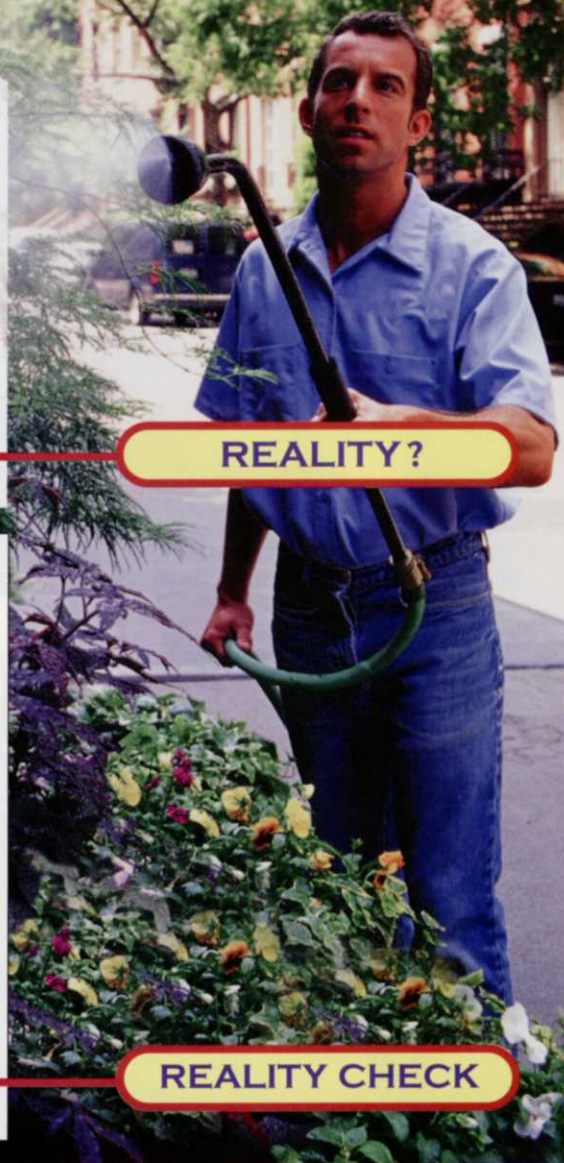
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