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Solo also finds professional exposure a reason to attend the show. "One of the things I have found most beneficial about the show in terms of contacts and exposure is not so much the general public as with other people in the trade. It's almost like a reunion of sorts where you reestablish a lot of business contacts with suppliers, architects and designers, or contractors. I find this to be particularly worthwhile," Solo remarked.

Does the garden show really provide many leads? Rich Baron, president of Suburbun Landscaping, Inc., Berea, OH, thinks so.

"I was in a position years ago that I was bidding against people at the show and wasn't getting anything. I wondered why the builders knew so much about the other contractors. I looked into it more and found out they knew more about the contractors because they stopped into the Home and Garden show and talked to them," Baron explained.

"These guys in business don't want to have you come to their office, and try to sell your product. But, if they can talk to you on a Friday night for 20 minutes in a relaxed atmosphere and get an idea what you're about and what you can offer, they tend to remember that more so than somebody pounding them with all kinds of mail," Baron said.

Loonsten has also seen an increase in the number of leads from the show, especially in the last few years.

"We find that we are getting more and more direct leads from the show. Originally, we didn't. People kind of put it in the back of their minds. It was kind of a goal. They'd always say,'When I can afford to do this, I'm going to have Frits Loonsten do it. Now, it's more direct from the show," Loonsten said.

"The incentive for being in a garden show is just very simply the hope of achieving some leads in a very off-time of the year."

However, Solo says it depends on the year where he is concerned. "It really varies from year to year. There are some years we get a tremendous volume and there are some we get

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Wilmore Nurseries' *exhibit at the 1984 Colorado Garden & Home Show.*

none at all. It's really difficult to say what the controlling factor is. The thing about the local garden show here is the percentage of people who are realistically potential clients is very small because you're talking about a cross section of the general public whereas our clientele is not such a broad cross section," Solo explained.

Getting leads from the show isn't the reason to display, according to Spena. "If you look at it as leads, it's like saying 'how many dollars can I make?' That's not the reason to be in the show. I worry if the garden looks good."

Is a local garden show really worth all of the time and hard work?

Loonsten, whose business may spend up to $35,000 at the show each year, thinks so. "We lost very little from our show. We couldn't afford to lose a lot."

"The incentive of the show is exposure ..."

But, Jim Grabo, president of Highlands Hardware & Nursery, Denver, CO, disagrees.

Solo takes it year by year and has started to diversify his gardens.

"One of the attitudes we've taken with our local garden show is that it's an opportunity to do something unique.

We don't want to do traditional things anymore. It might not be widely accepted, but if nothing else, it would show that we have diversity. That'a probably a little riskier approach, but we figured the garden show was a safe place to take the gamble." **WT&T**

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Ken Kubik and Bert Jones, owners of Grass Roots, a golf supply business in New Jersey, believe the best way to keep customers is to keep them happy with quick and reliable service. Their formula's working; sales have increased seven times since the company was founded six years ago.

Back to Basics

by Maureen Hrehocik, managing editor

Ken Kubik's corporate *philosophy is to provide quick and efficient service to his customers.*

Ken Kubik's original career plan was to become a minister. A stint on a golf course at age 12 changed that.

Today, Kubik's partnership in a metropolitan New York golf course supply wholesaling business is flourishing and the 39-year-old credits his golf course "hands on experience" as invaluable in making that happen.

From caddy, Kubik progressed to other jobs around the course and finally became assistant superintendent at Crestmont Country Club in West Orange, NJ, assisting course superintendent Peter Pedrazzi. That job lasted 14 years.

"I had thought about becoming a minister, and I had thought about majoring in labor management, philosophy, anthropology or sociology, but after working on the golf course for so many years, my true love was turf. I loved the job because it wasn't sedentary."

But when Kubik was in his 30s, he felt it was time for a change.

"I had been at the golf course since 1973 and had worked as a sales manager at Andrew Wilson in New Jersey and felt myself reaching a plateau."

Kubik did a lot of soul searching and felt his ideas and energies could best be developed through starting his own business.

"The name for the business, Grass Roots, kind of developed naturally. For me, this decision was getting back to basics, and I wanted my business to reflect that," explained Kubik.

So, in December of 1978, Grass Roots was founded.

Controlled growth

Kubik's current business gives him everything but time to be sedentary.

He and his partner, Bert Jones, make about 42 sales calls a week. Grass Roots services about 150 golf courses in a 75 mile radius of the firm's home base of Mt. Freedom, NJ.

"Everything they say about starting a business is true," says Kubik.

"Even though I've been around golf courses my whole life, you still have to prove yourself and get reaccepted in a new position. It's as much selling yourself as your products."

Grass Roots represents Royal Coach-Buckner, Swan Hose, Lebanon Country Club Fertilizer, Aquatrols Aqua Grow, Lofts Seed, Mobay Standard Golf Company's Pro line, Par Aide golf products, Milliken's Blazon and PeneTurf, among other lines.

Kubik is very conscious about controlled growth for the company. He does not want to expand his lines only for the sake of expansion. The same holds true for the territory he covers.

"It's very important to us to fill our current commitments and to provide the type of service we've become known for before branching out anymore."

Sales since the company was founded have gone up seven times. Kubik reports 30 percent more growth this year than last year. He and Jones are considering some plant expansion and warehouse improvements.

"This market has been competitive and will continue to be competitive," Kubik predicts. "Experience is extremely important. I consider myself an ever-changing constant. We want to give better service every time we go out. It doesn't matter if the order is for a caseload of chemicals or a tee marker, superintendents in this area

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are used to getting things when they need them."

Kubik estimates he is competing with anywhere from 12 to 18 firms in a 75-mile radius.

Quickness is one of the attributes Grass Roots arms itself with to combat the competition.

"This is not only a competitive area sales wise, but also among golf courses," Kubik says. "When a superintendent needs something he needs it *now*. We react to the situation."

Kubik and Jones make up the company's sales team. Their wives take care of the office and bookkeeping work. The company also employs three deliverymen.

Kubik says he and Jones enjoy a special kind of business relationship in that it is a true partnership—decisions are made together and there are no petty rivalries.

I can't express the respect we have for each other," says Kubik of his partner.

Before joining Kubik, Jones was a vice president at Andrew Wilson and a sales manager at John Manville.

On the road

Grass Roots is a firm believer in trade shows. Kubik says his company goes to shows for visibility and to pick up new lines.

"It's a good way to get to know the manufacturers and for the manufacturers to get to know you. If you don't get off on the right foot with manufacturers, it can break you."

Another area where Kubik feels the industry can be broken is in federal regulations.

Kubik plans to continue developing his company through his "elastic band theory."

"The federal government is overregulating the professional," he says. "The professional shouldn't be penalized because of the incompetence of others. This industry doesn't need alarmists."

Kubik feels the best interests of the industry can be served through local and state legislators and industry associations.

"We really are self-regulating and licensing dealers and superintendents."

What's ahead

Kubik plans to continue developing his company through his "elastic band theory"; that of slow, controlled growth.

"We will become even more solidified, stronger and with more credibility," Kubik predicts.

And did starting his own business fulfill that niche Kubik felt in his 30s?

"More than I ever anticipated," he says. "I'm a more complete person. You get physically exhausted, but it's exciting. There's something about having your own business—you cause and solve your own problems."

Besides pumping hours into the business, Kubik says it's important to him to find time for his wife and four children and to play tennis, soccer and handball. (He was town tennis champ six times.)

Kubik and Jones have another company philosophy that they credit to the firm's steady growth. According to Kubik, "We limit ourselves to making the same mistake only once." **WT&T**

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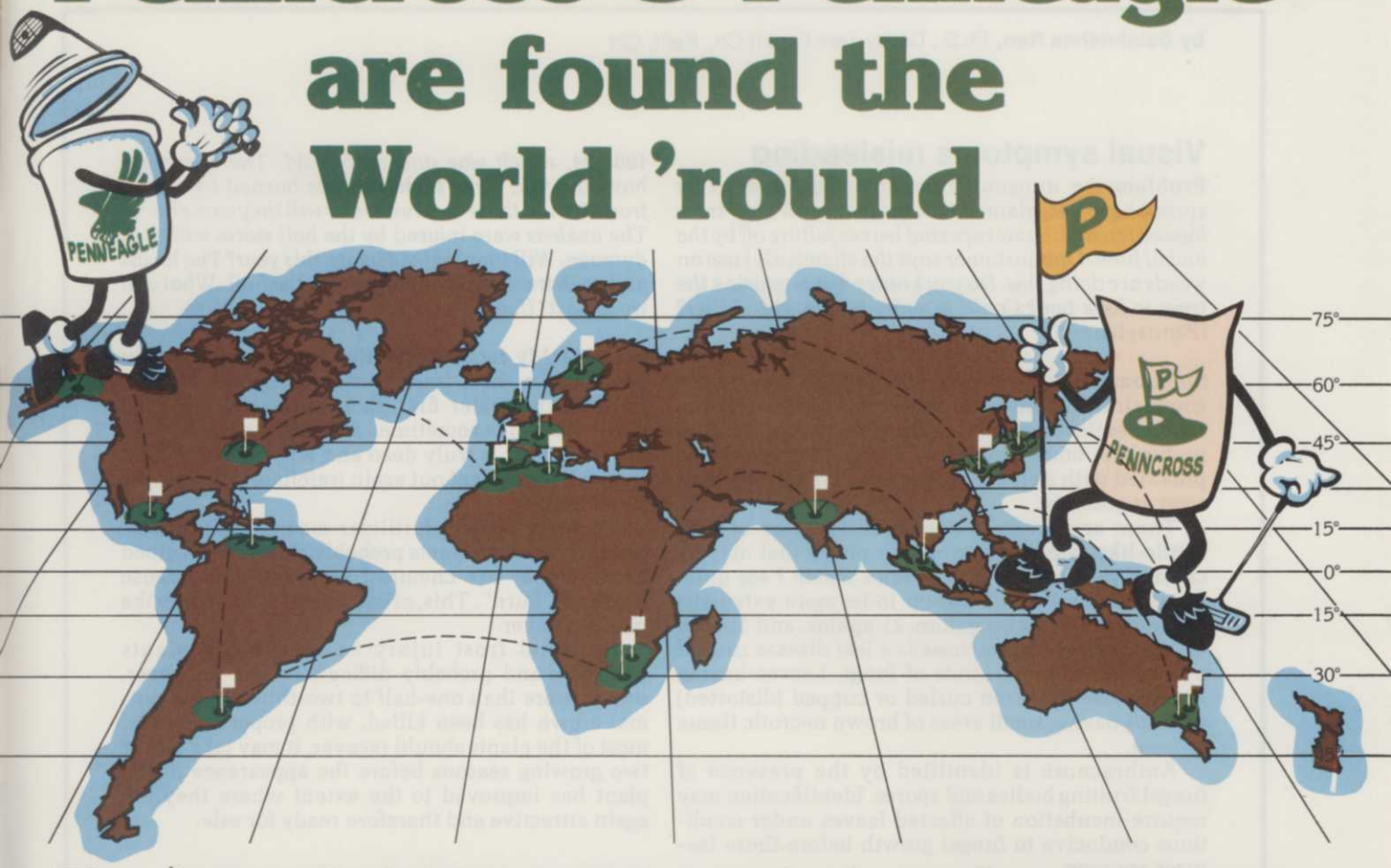

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PROBLEM SOLVERS

by Balakrishna Rao, Ph.D., Davey Tree Expert Co., Kent, OH

Visual symptoms misleading

Problem: *An unusual number of customers this spring have complained that the leaves on their trees looked terrible. Some reported leaves falling off by the end of June. One customer says the chemicals I use on weeds are doing this. Do you know what is causing the trees to look bad? Could it really be the weed killer? (Pennsylvania)*

Solution: It is very important to respond to customer complaints like these. In nearly all cases where the right chemical was used in the right way, the actual problem is nonchemical. The customer should be provided with a clear explanation of the problem as soon as possible.

There are several nonchemical causes of herbicide-like symptoms on woody plants that may be causing your problems. The ones which I see quite frequently and which appear to be more extensive this year are: 1). anthracnose, 2). aphids, and 3). cold or frost injury. Anthracnose is a leaf disease caused by several different kinds of fungi. Leaves having anthracnose are often curled or cupped (distorted) perhaps having small areas of brown necrotic tissue present.

Anthracnose is identified by the presence of fungal fruiting bodies and spores. Identification may require incubation of affected leaves under conditions conducive to fungal growth before these features are seen.

Aphids are small, soft-bodied insects which suck plant juices. Some, but not all, aphids have been found to produce substances chemically similar to plant growth regulators. The end result of aphid feeding is distorted foliage -- cupped, curled, crinkled, and/or undersized leaves. These symptoms are similar to herbicide injury. However, you will be able to find honeydew (a sticky, sugary, aphid excrement), skins, eggs, or the insects themselves when aphids are involved. It may require a hand lens or microscope to clearly see aphids, or other insect signs.

Low temperatures also produce foliar symptoms which mimic herbicide damage. Low but not killing temperatures result in crinkled or wrinkled leaves. Frost and freezing temperatures kill tissue turning it black or dark brown. The entire leaf may not be destroyed and the blackened tissue may be found only at the growing tips and margins of the leaf.

The foliage in question can, and in cases of possible litigation, should be analyzed for the presence of herbicide. There are laboratories which for around $50 or more can detect and identify the more commonly used herbicides.

"Wait and see" is best approach

Problem: *We have around 500 boxwood plants and a number of Sunburst locust, flowering crab, redbuds, and azaleas in our nursery. These were damaged by a hail storm and cold temperatring the winter of 1983-84, which was unusually cold. The boxwoods have the first three inches of tips burned by sun or frost. Should these be trimmed or will they come back? The azaleas were injured by the hail storm with bud damage. Will they leaf out again this year? The locust and crab trees show damage from the hail. What can we expect? (Iowa)*

Solution: My recommendation for the damage you describe; i.e., hail, frost, winter injury, would be to fertilize and water first, then prune out the dead tissue later. It is sometimes difficult to determine in the field what is truly dead and will not come back from what may leaf out again (refoliate) after proper treatment.

To some people, fertilizer means an inorganic product. Such products probably should be avoided because they are chemical salts and could cause fertilizer "burn". This, of course, would not help the plants recover.

Hail and frost injury can make the plants unsightly and probably difficult to sell. However, unless more than one-half to two-thirds of the normal crown has been killed, with proper treatment most of the plants should recover. It may take one or two growing seasons before the appearance of the plant has improved to the extent where they are again attractive and therefore ready for sale.

Best trimming time varies

Problem: *What time is the best for trimming trees February, March or in the winter? (Michigan)*

Solution: With the exception of trees which "bleed" readily, trimming and especially the removal of small, dead or dying branches can be done nearly any time.

Maples, birches, and elms are bleeders and should not be trimmed during the period of bud break and leaf development. Bleeding seems to be less of a problem when the tree is trimmed in the fall and early winter rather than in late winter or early spring. In fact, it is best for most kinds of trees to prune them after the spring flush because when the cambium is active, the bark is loose and can be easily torn.

Broad-leafed (deciduous) species in general can be trimmed without harmful results after leaf fall but before bud break. Needle-bearing trees (conifers) are set back the least when pruned just prior to bud break. From a disease standpoint, specifically Dutch elm disease and oak wilt, elms and oaks should be trimmed in late fall or early winter.

Trees infected with or susceptible to fire blight should never be pruned when the plant is wet. Doing so spreads the bacteria which cause fire blight. Fresh wounds caused by trimmings can attract insects,mostly beetles, some of which carry disease from tree to tree.Thus pruning when the adult insects are active increases the chances of spreading certain diseases and should be avoided.