

money per se. "It was not at all a site one would choose," Raulston says. "It was flat land with heavy clay soil, and there were ugly views in all directions." But the site was available and had the virtue of being beside a road and therefore easily accessible to the public.

Lean operation

The NCSU arboretum has been a shoestring operation from the beginning—but it is amazing what a talented man can do with a shoestring. With a little money and a lot of creative student labor, Raulston has developed both an active research center and an interesting, attractive community resource.

Today a visitor enters the arboretum through an inviting entrance center, designed and built by Will Hooker when he was a graduate student (he is now teaching at NCSU). The surrounding ugly industrial sites have been screened from view by vines on the chain link fence and plantings of quick growing trees like



J. C. Raulston, admiring *Nandina domestica* cv. *Alba*.

88 tree transplanting machine for large projects, the most exciting of which was the rescue of a 14 foot, 65-year-old, cut-leaf Japanese maple which one class, with Beal's help, dug and successfully transplanted to the arboretum.

The 250-foot perennial bed and the lathhouse are completely managed by volunteers Edith Eddleman and M.K. Ramm. With volunteers, as with students, Raulston gives them a project and then turns them loose, with little supervision, to make that project their own.

Following the original design of the entire arboretum, created by Charlotte landscape architect Fielding Scarborough while he was earning his MLA, student classes have laid out the large curving beds, killed the grass with Roundup, and then planted directly into the clay soil.

Learning by observation

According to Raulston, current research indicates that landscape plantings will do best without any backfill, contrary to traditional practices. He says, "I tell my students the larger the plant is going to become and the more permanent it is, the less useful backfill will be."

All the plantings, like the group of 20 cultivars of nandinas or the collection of 110 magnolia species and hybrids, are heavily mulched and then the beds are kept weed-free with herbicides and occasional hand weeding...the economically feasible way for this garden to operate, since there is only one full-time maintenance person year-round, helped by another worker for the four summer months. Six different pre-emergence herbicides are used for three major applications, in winter, late spring and late summer.

Raulston has created a special environment for the wide variety of plants like rhododendrons and heathers that will not tolerate N.C. native soils, par-

ticularly the heavy clay. It is a large lathhouse with beds with bark—no fancy additives, no complicated soil mixes, just plain bark. He has found that almost all plants thrive in this house.

Among the 1500 species in the lathhouse, *Cornus canadensis*, frequently described as impossible in N.C., is a rampant ground cover. Raulston did note that because the shredded bark drains so quickly, it does require frequent waterings.

Students learn which plants require raised beds for successful Carolina culture. They are also exposed to a number of interesting, rare or unusual plants that are not currently available for landscape use in the Carolinas.

Promoter of new plants

Raulston works closely with the landscape architects and nurserymen of the state. He sees one function of the arboretum as being a testing place for cultivars likely to do well in N.C.

Each year, students propagate and distribute thousands of plants to nurserymen to encourage them to try new cultivars. He also urges nurserymen to come to the arboretum for any cuttings they might want to try. Every time he speaks to landscape designers, he poses them the challenge of using just one new or rare plant in their next designs.

He also encourages them to "think small" and not necessarily always plant large specimens. In his experience, the landscape trade always wants "big" things and usually buys a few very expensive plants. "I'd like to see landscapers use a few of those large plants for a framework, but then add a number of smaller, interesting plants." He points out that you can take a one-quart seedling dogwood and plant it side-by-side with a seven foot balled-and-burlapped one and five years later, the seedling tree will be larger.

Raulston also uses the arboretum to make landscape architects and nurserymen aware of innovations in standard woody plants. Dogwoods are a case in point. The ordinary white dogwood, *Cornus florida*, is a native N.C. plant, the common understory in the deciduous oak and hickory woodlands. It thrives in N.C. Probably every nursery in the state carries *C. florida* and a number of them offer a pink or red variety. However, at the arboretum, Raulston has acquired a number of different cultivars of *C. florida*, including a weeping, a dwarf and a double form—all of which should do very well in N.C. plantings.

continued on page 82

Each year, students propagate and distribute thousands of plants to nurserymen to encourage them to try new cultivars.

'Nellie Stevens' holly, Tjuga 'Emerald', and Leyland cypress.

Eight different sets of attractive benches, designed and built by Doug Bethune for his Masters in Landscape Architecture project, are situated throughout the arboretum. Tracy Traer, instructor in landscape horticulture, works with her class each year to develop a model landscape garden. Three are completed and two are in construction this year. When seven have been completed, this program will recycle. The first garden will be torn out and a new one built in its place.

Raulston is skilled in both recruiting volunteers and donations for the arboretum. He has established a Friends of the Arboretum group which provides about \$2000 support each year. Local arborist Archie Beal frequently donates use of his Big John

More sophisticated business management, more efficient technology, and division of labor take landscaping into a new generation.

Second Generation Landscaping

by Bruce F. Shank, executive editor, and Ron Hall, assistant editor

The landscape business is entering a new generation. Large landscape management corporations have set a pace and level of sophistication which smaller companies are following. This transformation, gradual during the 60's and 70's, has now reached the majority of the market.

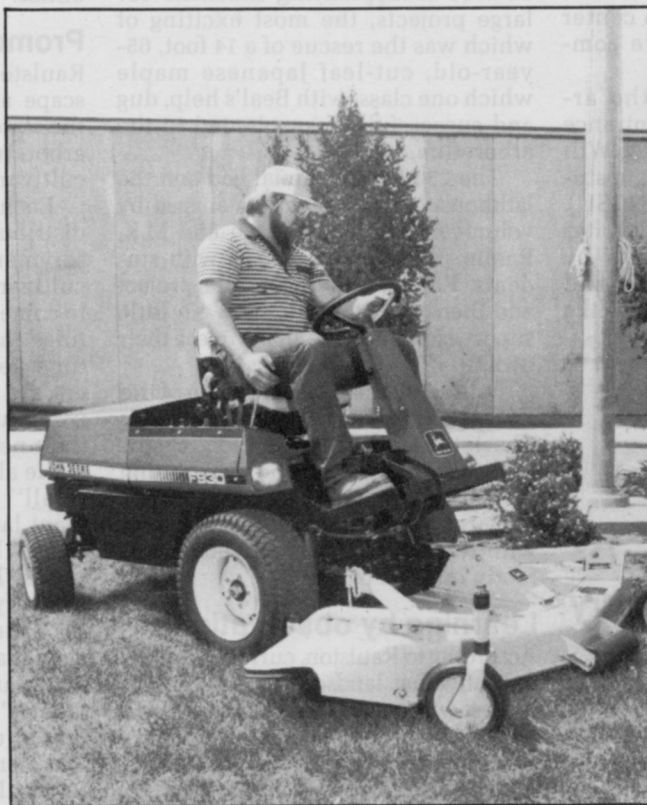
The nursery market, foundation of all landscape markets, is primarily a product market in a business world where service is king. As a result, the landscape market is figuratively being turned on its head, for both exterior and interior landscape markets.

Design, construction, and maintenance services far outvalue the plant material used in a landscape. Furthermore, design and construction are one-time business propositions, whereas maintenance is continuous.

While construction firms expanded into maintenance and design, landscape architects avoided maintenance and construction. The majority of companies labelled design/build today were previously on the construction and maintenance end rather than the design end.

Landscape architects, who often voice concern over the installation of their designs by contractors, are apparently more worried about the responsibilities involved in construction and maintenance than installation by others.

The long-feared fly-by-nighter is less a threat today because his level of



Front-mounted rotary greatly increases productivity of mowing crews. This new Deere F930, and its sister walk-behind mower, were designed by the company specifically for the professional landscape market.

sophistication is noticeably less than leading companies. The groundskeeper is fading into extinction as the landscape manager takes his place.

Division of labor and specialization, both signs of higher level business, are in place in new generation firms. Companies dependent upon one person for both business and technical expertise can't keep up with the volume or efficiency of firms using modern technology and business practices.

Most of the advancement has taken place in the maintenance end of the business. More than half the landscape contractors who were primarily construction in the early 70's now have maintenance divisions. More than 80% also offer design services as well.

Colleges are changing to meet the needs of the modern landscape business, adding business and marketing courses to their horticulture and agronomy programs. Junior colleges find a growing demand for their landscape graduates. Many companies hire graduates of business colleges for business and marketing positions and then educate them to the technical part of the market.

It appears division of labor is resulting in landscape companies hiring graduates of two-year colleges to be technicians and graduates of business schools for upper management.

"We have seen good improvement in educational programs for the industry," says Rod Keppel, Arbor Heights Nursery, Webster, NY. "I think public relations and management are important. The technical knowledge seems to be there."

"I see the two-year schools carrying the ball," says Ray Gustin of Gustin Gardens, Gaithersburg, MD. "The two-year technical colleges seem to be really training more of a technician."

"Landscape contractors will have

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to have a better understanding of money, particularly with interest rates the way they are," says Dave Pinkus, president of North Haven Gardens in Dallas, TX. "They have to have a better understanding of business and business practices."

Contractors like J. C. Patrick of Proscap, Baton Rouge, LA, want to go beyond maintenance to 'total exterior management'. "Once we get an account," Patrick says, "we want to take care of everything having to do with the exterior."

Most of Pro-Scape's growth came from design/build work in 1984. Patrick is optimistic because he expects a new Jack Nicklaus development in Baton Rouge to attract more companies to his area and to raise standards of construction and maintenance.

DiSanto Companies in Cleveland, OH, takes Patrick's thought a step further, offering exterior and interior landscape design, construction, and maintenance. President George DiSanto maintains separate divisions for exterior and interior work, but often finds out about new inte-

Companies dependent upon one person for both business and technical expertise can't keep up.

rior work when bidding exterior landscape projects. The interior landscape market in the U.S. has been estimated to have sales of \$400 million in 1984.

David Burnley, Contra Costa Landscaping Inc., Martinez, CA, said his company has gotten more into maintenance the past four to five years due mainly to a building slump. Today, Burnley sees construction and maintenance of the many business parks being built in his area as his future strength.

Maintenance does have its drawbacks, says Greg Boykin, of Boyko Maintenance in Wilson, NC. "If I'm going to follow the installation contractor or another maintenance company, I want to make sure he's done a good job in the first place. If you don't

look the job over closely at first, all kinds of problems pop up. Boykin says he prefers to design and build a landscape, then put in a proposal for the maintenance.

"The greatest need of the industry is good foremen who take primary responsibility and get the job done."

—Burnley

Bob Doman of Planned Outdoor Living in Ogden, UT, is finding his business shifting from large residential to commercial. "Although our company has concentrated on large residential accounts, we have gained more commercial accounts recently."

"There was a lot more commercial work than a year ago, maybe 50% more," claims Ray Gustin, Gustin Gardens, Gaithersburg, MD. "But you have to remember, our residential work didn't fall off as much as the commercial during the recession, so it didn't have as far to come back."

Part of good business planning is controlling the customer base. Mike McGuinnis, director of business development for Reinhold Landscaping, Flat Rock, MI, helped that company reduce its dependence on auto-related industries. The Michigan company recently landed a Federal Express account in Memphis, 360 miles from Detroit. The good news is the auto market is booming again, but McGuinnis is still seeking a broader account base.

Still needed

"The Industry has two big needs at the present time," says Burnley of Contra Costa. "The greatest need is for good foremen who can take primary job responsibility and get the job done. Many companies feel that's their biggest limiting factor right now.

"Also, we need to educate property managers and other prospective clients to establish a set of pre-qualifications for their mainte-

nance, says Burnley. They need to look past the initial price in determining which company can meet their needs.

"In the past, property managers have looked at maintenance as a very simple operation that almost anyone can do. They eventually find out they come out way ahead in the long run if they work with an established company with well-trained personnel."

Good management skills are needed more than anything else according to Dorman of Planned Outdoor Living. "There a lot of people in the industry who can read a blueprint and do the technical work. But too often they try to do all themselves instead of delegating responsibility and managing people so that the job is done right and on time. Of course, they have to know how to deal with clients too."

Registration is a solution to fly-by-nighters says Boykin of Boyko. "To be recognized as a registered landscaper in North Carolina, you must first take a test. It separated the men from the boys."

A recent survey by *Western Landscaping* magazine pinpointed nine primary problems facing the landscape industry. They include lack of professionalism, low balling/underbidding, the economy, unqualified personnel, consumer ignorance, government regulations, profitability, shortage of supplies, and competition.

At the same time, the magazine cited ten leading opportunities. They are business diversification, drought tolerant planting, maintenance, water management, drip irrigation, renovation, irrigation consulting, automation/computers, public awareness of profession, and hardscaping.

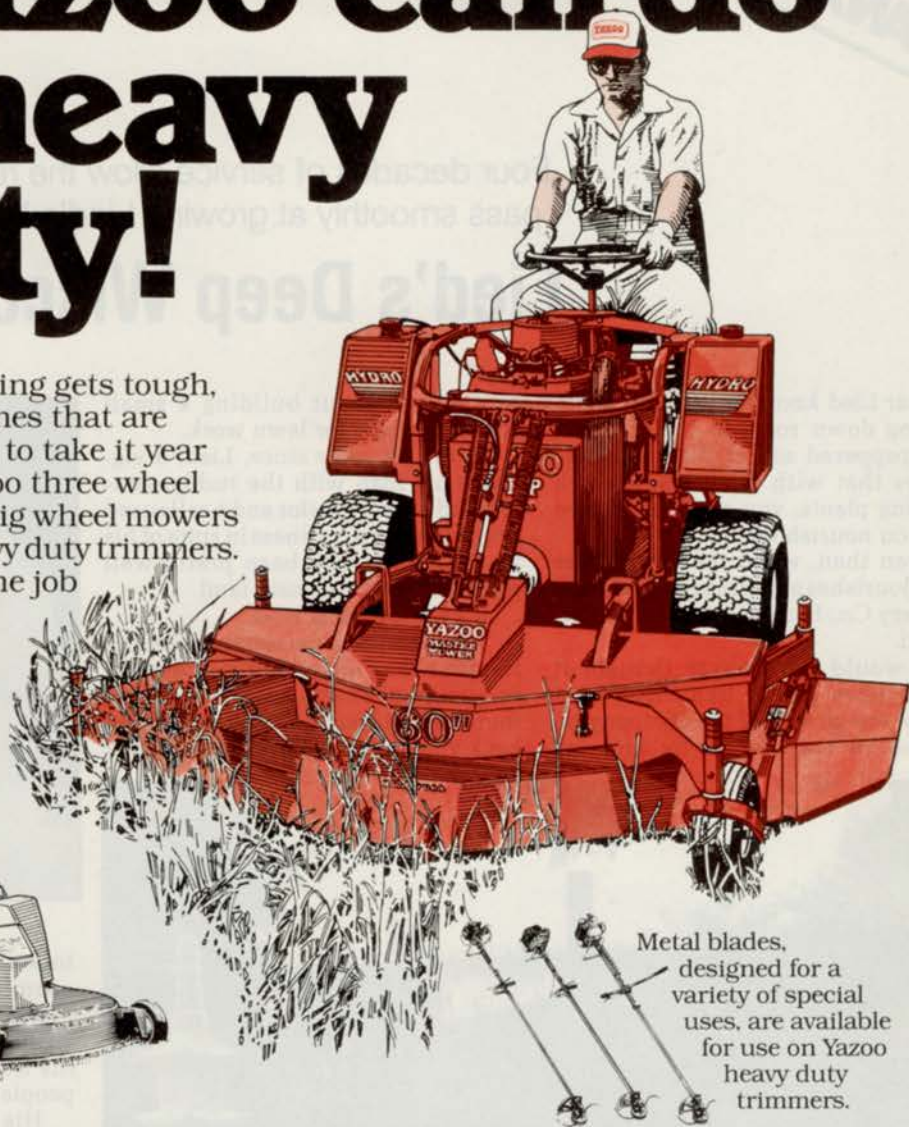
The most dependable service according to the magazine's readers is maintenance, rated nearly twice as dependable as construction (52.8% to 31.8%).

The new generation of landscape management companies has realized that maintenance is a valuable part of a service company. It also is positioned to take on other services since it now has a business core which can handle nearly any service. This flexibility, coupled with division of labor and efficient technology, is the new foundation of the landscape management market.

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Four decades of service allow the reins of management to pass smoothly at growing Lied's Nursery near Milwaukee.

Lied's Deep Wisconsin Roots

by Ron Hall, assistant editor

Delmar Lied knows a little bit about putting down roots in the rich but rock-peppered soil of Wisconsin. He knows that with business, as with growing plants, you sink them deep and you nourish them.

Even then, when the seed of the idea flourishes as it has with his Lied's Nursery Co., Inc., you can still be surprised.

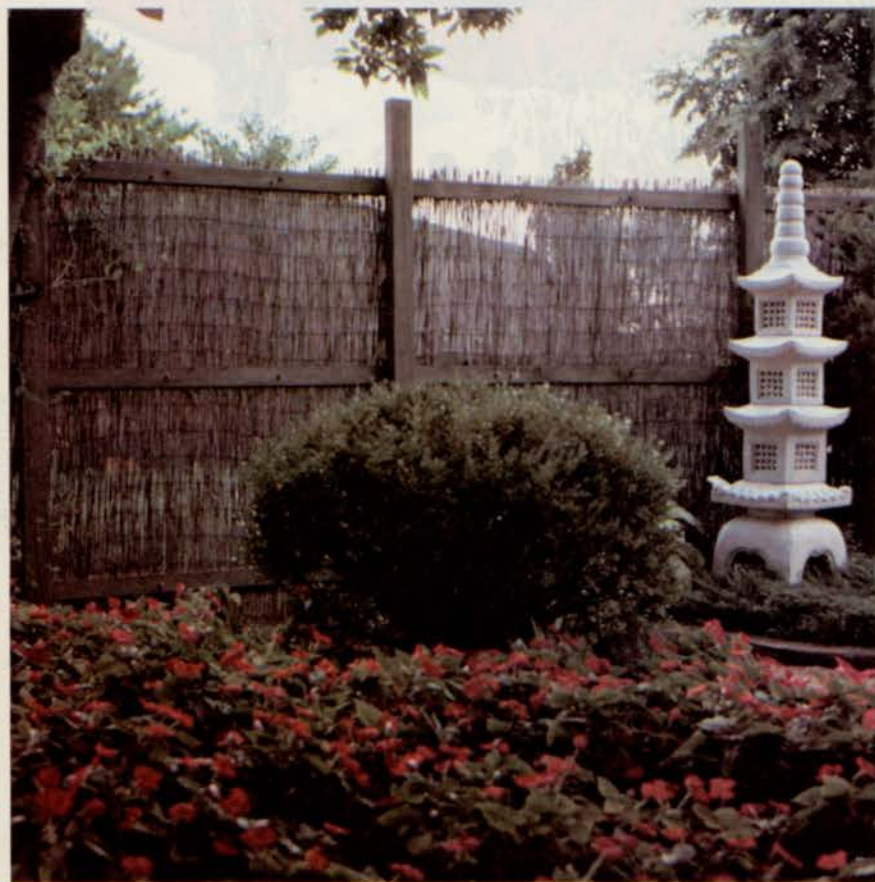
"I would have never thought it would have grown like this," Lied says of the growth of the company he started in 1946 when he and his

brother set about building a small wooden wagon for lawn work.

In the 39 years since, Lied, a vigorous big man with the ruddy, suncreased face of a sailor and a calloused grip that means business in spite of his 70-plus years, has been pretty well rooted to the Wisconsin land.

It's a fascinating land.

When the glaciers retreated for the last time they left a jumble of a mess, scraping away earth here and piling it there so that you don't know what the heck you've got just under the skin of



Japanese garden adjoining Lied's office shows the company believes in what it sells to others.

topsoil; except Lied knows he's got a crumbled mountain of big, round rocks that pop up like mushrooms with each spring thaw. And he knows his trees and shrubs. He also knows people and business.

His one-time, tiny maintenance company can now put 20 work crews on various landscape projects during the growing season.

Sprouting branches

Lied's Nursery is a well known concern in Wisconsin. Based in Sussex, a short drive from Milwaukee, it continues to spread and branch, providing landscape construction and maintenance services in addition to a nursery and a brisk retail store business. Although Delmar Lied is still actively involved in the business, the company has long since passed the point where one man can manage it.

Many of the decisions are now handled by a management team headed by his son, Tom, grandson, Robb, and Rich Skelton, an experienced landscape contractor originally from Youngstown, OH.



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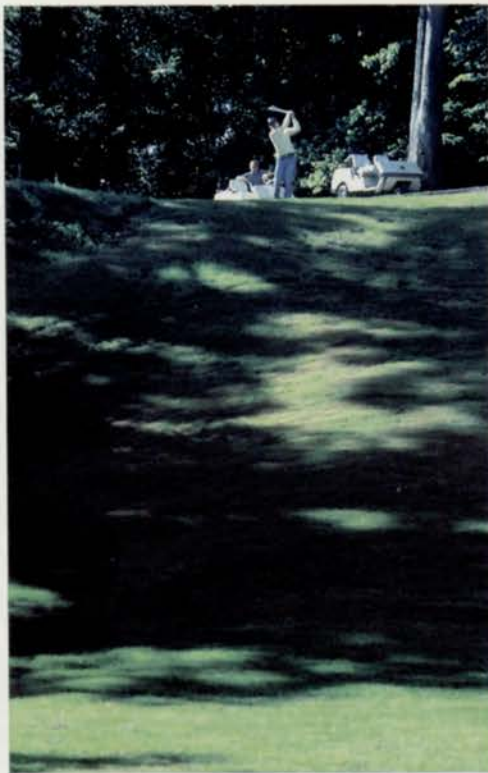
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One of the Lied's crews completes a major landscape project at a fashionable Wisconsin home.



Rich Skelton, left, confers with Bob Koca in the Lied's Sussex, Wisconsin office.

Tom, with a formal education in horticulture and landscape architecture at Michigan State University and experience gained as a lifelong part of the family business, is the driving force behind the operation now. His son, Robb, 26, gave up a promising career as a public accountant in Dallas to come home as the company's secretary-treasurer. Skelton is the administrative vice president.

"We're beefing up the top management," Tom Lied explains. "We'll be responsible for monitoring the progress of our various divisions and teaching in some areas. Dad wants to slow down and be more of a teacher. He still works a full schedule and has more enthusiasm than most men half his age."

Best not biggest

Although the business has been expanding, the company's management does not pursue growth for growth's sake.

"We had to decide what our market was and we came to the conclusion that we couldn't do

everything for everybody," Tom Lied says. "We decided we would spend all of our efforts to be known as the best and none of our efforts to be known as the biggest. The philosophy is great and the ideas are sound, but there are always the tune-ups and moves to keep everything in place. We know we don't have all the answers, but we have capitalized on a number of opportunities and we have grown to a reasonable size."

During the growing season Lied's

Lied's provides landscape construction and management in addition to doing a brisk retail store business.

employs as many as 125 employees (the number drops to about 40 in the winter), filling more than 20 landscape construction and management crews in addition to the personnel needed in the retail store, Leid's Garden Valley, and a handful of man-

agers and other experts such as landscape architects and draftsmen.

The business—which includes the retail store, landscape construction and landscape management divisions, and the nursery—has been so well received it has practically outgrown its Sussex facilities. A second story for office space was added above the retail store a few years back. Design and drafting is done in offices in the remodeled basement. Almost two years ago Lied's purchased a similar business 80 miles to the north in the rural community of Neenah in the Fox Valley.

Lumping all divisions of the company together, Tom Lied says the company did slightly more than \$4 million in business in 1984 with \$1 million from the retail section, \$1 million from landscape management, and about \$2 million from construction.

The company's landscape workload includes a hefty amount of "fussy, custom residential work," Lied says, in addition to simple residential projects and commercial jobs. Lied's handles few blockbuster accounts with the largest this past year being about \$100,000. The smallest jobs tackled by the company cost \$25 and, surprisingly, Tom points out, they get calls for these as well.

"I guess the significance of all the figures is not a great deal, except it involved a whole lot of work," Tom says.

Esthetics important

Lied's approaches both residential and commercial customers with the idea of being "both technically sound as well as esthetically pleasing," Tom Lied explains. "If we favor one over the other we may lean a little to the esthetically pleasing. We believe the plants are there to serve the client and they should be organized and maintained to serve that purpose."

That's the reason a Lied's consultant will never say to a client: "If I lived here I would do it this way," Tom says. "First, it's terribly unimportant how you would want it done. You don't live there. We have to find out how the client wants it done, how the client wants to feel in his garden. We have to know the things that please him."

Selling landscaping to commercial accounts calls for a slightly different approach.

"If we can dramatize to them what a well maintained landscape can do for them in terms of image, if we can

focus the competitive edge they can gain, then we've done them a service," Lied stresses.

Experienced and capable landscaping firms are entitled to the fees they charge, Lied maintains. "We are in an extraordinarily high service industry and we should have a dollar sign attached to this service. We're in a market where we have to generate 12 months income out of an 8½ month time frame. Our clients owe us the 12 months income for assembling the experts and specialized knowledge we've assembled."

What does Tom Lied enjoy most about his role in the Green Industry?

"I enjoy weaving the talent of people together to make things happen, using my talent to please people and to create and accomplish. Of course I like to get the compliment too," he reflects.

It's no secret what the company founder, Delmar, enjoys most either—his nursery stock, chosen and bred for Wisconsin's sometimes harsh weather. A product of Wisconsin and the farm, Delmar is a Thoreau-like mother hen to his 200 acres of

plantlife with species from as far away as Siberia and Korea.

In a sense, Delmar considers the nursery an experiment in living and he relishes the opportunity to get his hands dirty. His convictions are still as hard as the boulders that emerge

"Clients owe us the 12 months of income for assembling the experts and the specialized knowledge we've assembled."

—Tom Lied

each spring and are often used in sculpting a customer's garden.

He doesn't use chemicals in his nursery. He prefers to keep his fields weed free with regular cultivation, a practice, he admits, that creates a tre-

mendous amount of labor but, he believes, results in heartier stock.

"I'm not interested in doing it easier, just doing it right," he says. "By keeping this cultivated we eliminate the weeds and if we don't have weeds we don't have a place for the insects to stay."

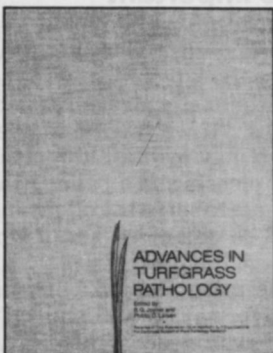
Delmar Lied's hard-won experience is aided by an amazing curiosity in the genetic makeup of plantlife; and the work he has done (and continues to do) with clones and grafting has added significantly to the practical knowledge of plants and their adaptability to conditions in the Midwest.

"My mom and dad taught me soil and a love of soil and I guess I never lost it," he says. Delmar remains the soul of the company and, in some respects, its inspiration, because after 40 years he's about as down-to-earth as that weekend so long ago when he and his brother built a small wagon and went into business on their own.

"My brother had an axle and some hinges off some gates. We started the wagon on a Friday, worked on it that Saturday, and Monday we were in business." **WT&T**

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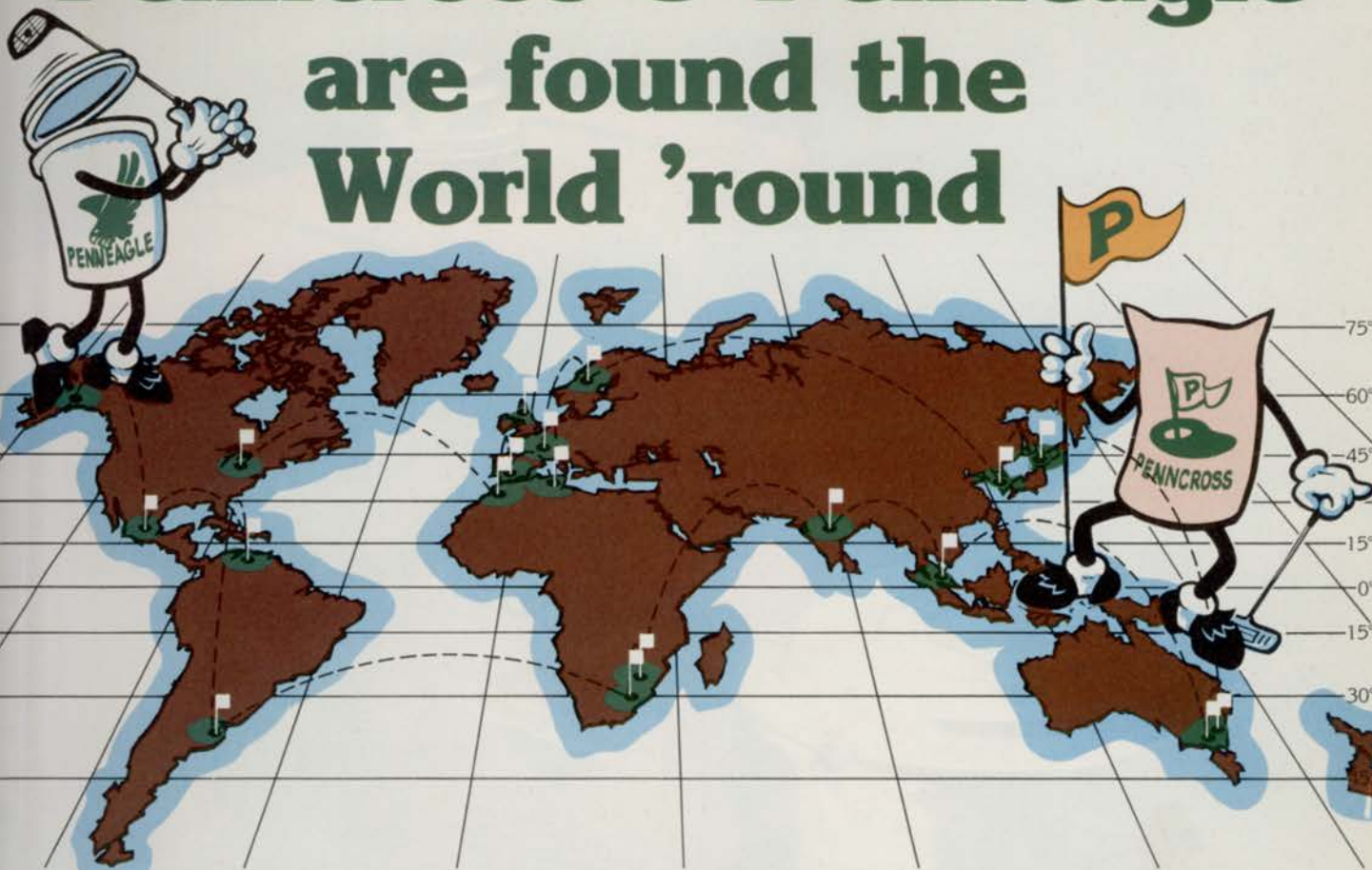
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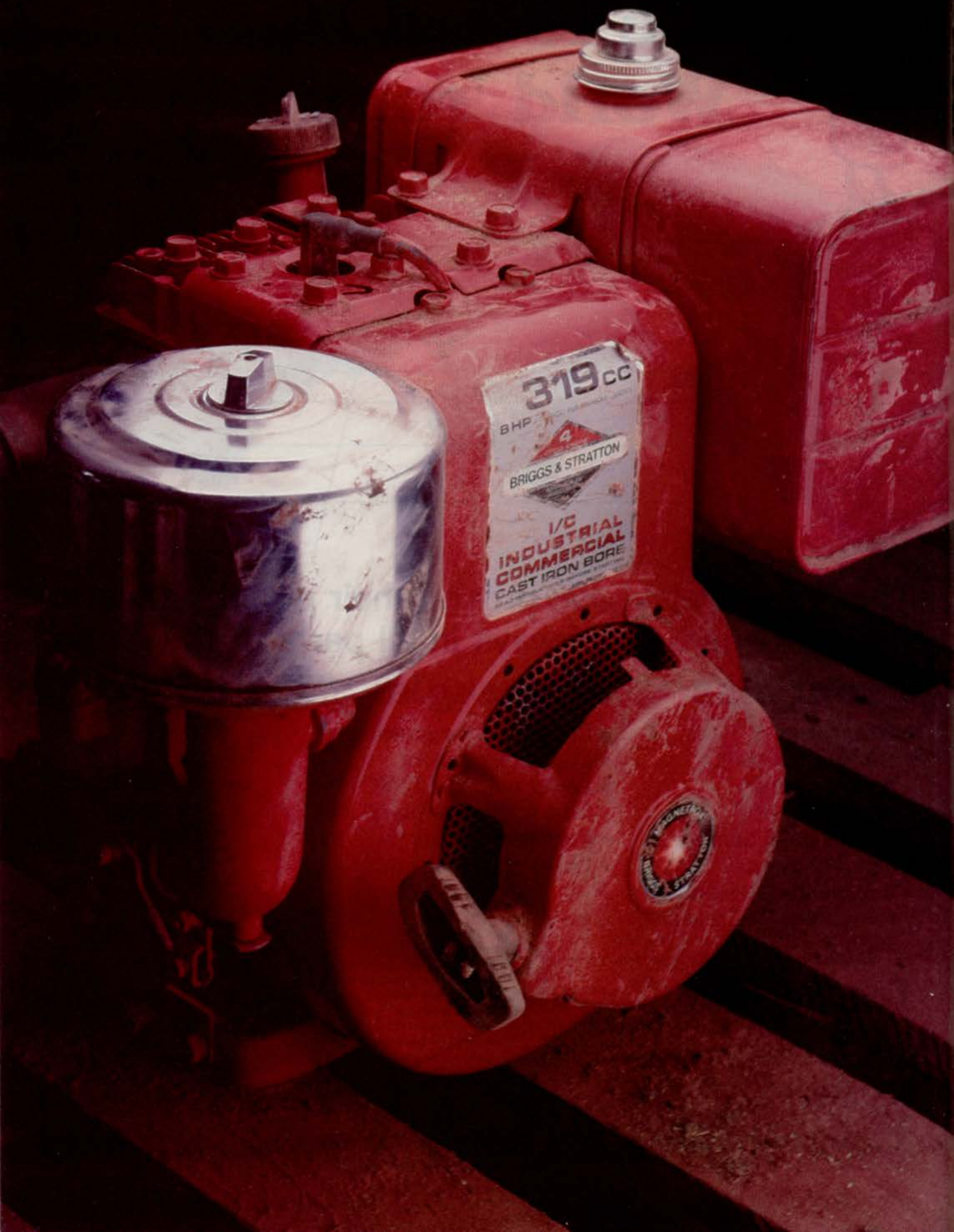
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