

## SOME RECENT LAWN CARE TRANSACTIONS

- ChemLawn (Worthington, Ohio) purchased Shur Lawn (Lincoln, Neb.)
- ChemLawn purchased Lawnrite (Long Island, N.Y.)
- Ecolab (St. Paul, Minn.) purchased ChemLawn
- New England Green (Springfield, Mass.) purchased Mister Lawn Care (Grand Island, N.Y.)
- New England Green merged with Turf Pro (Plymouth, Mich.)
- Rollins (Atlanta, Ga.) purchased New England Green
- Barefoot Grass (Worthington,

- Ohio) purchased Tempo 21 (Chicago, Ill.)
- Tru-Green (Atlanta, Ga.) purchased R.W. Collins (Satellite Beach, Fla.)
- Tru-Green purchased Lawn Groomer (Normal, Ill.)
- Tru-Green merged with Excellence (Louisville, Ky.)
- Waste Management (Oak Brook, Ill.) purchased Tru-Green
- All-American Turf Beauty (Van

Meter, Ia.) purchased Shur Lawn (Omaha, Neb.)

- Ever-Green (St. Louis, Mo.) merged with Superior Lawn (Louisville, Ky.)

● Lawnmark (Peninsula, Ohio) purchased Spray-A-Lawn (Orrville, Ohio)

● Thoma Brothers (Erie, Pa.) purchased Fox Valley Professional Lawns (Appleton, Wisc.)

● Laidlaw Transportation (Canada) purchased Monroe Tree and Lawn-tender (Rochester, N.Y.)

## LANDSCAPE PROFILE

### ONCE A HERO

In the old days, lawn care companies were heroes with homeowners. Today, negative media has changed that. But through education and custom-designed programs, McGinty Brothers Professional Lawn and Tree Care is winning again.

by Heide Aungst, managing editor

**C**harlie McGinty remembers the good ol' days in lawn care. Those were the days before the EPA, before the big operations like ChemLawn, before sign-posting and before media exposés.

"Back in those days it was more fun," says McGinty, president of McGinty Brothers lawn and tree care of Chicago. "Taking on a new lawn, you were a hero overnight when you turned a weed patch into a weed-free lawn. A lawn taken care of by us really stood out. Nowadays, there are not as many super-weedy lawns."

And, nowadays, homeowners are more likely to interrogate a company than praise them. That wasn't true in the '60s. "At that time, the issue was educating the public that there was lawn care," McGinty says. "It was quite a project until ChemLawn came along."

McGinty's father started spraying lawns in the late 1950s with a two-wheel cart. McGinty took over in 1960, and ran the business part-time

while he worked in the Chicago forestry department. In 1963, the business became full-time. In '65 he incorporated. This year, projected gross sales are \$1.4 million.

Although Charlie maintained the name, McGinty Brothers, his brother

never joined the company. The name fits the company today, since several of Charlie's sons are involved in the business. Chuck McGinty Jr. is involved in many aspects of the company, including his position as maintenance manager of the fleet of 26 vehicles. Tim and Brian are spray technicians.

#### Other changes

Through the '60s, McGinty Brothers continued to grow, but changed little. Then came the early '70s and the formation of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The chemicals used by McGinty Brothers changed along with the lawn care industry. McGinty remembers using calcium arsonite and Zintron to control annual grassy weeds. McGinty used DDT for elm tree spraying.

Insurance problems have changed for McGinty Brothers, as they have for many lawn care companies. "We



Charlie McGinty discusses his successful business with lawn manager Charlie Meersman.

used to have a difficult time because of our tree work, but now carriers are more concerned about pesticides," McGinty says.

Things also changed drastically when ChemLawn started in the early '70s. Suddenly, family-run companies like McGinty Brothers had competition. And they had to find ways to compete.

Sales manager Pat McEntree and lawn manager Charles Meersman have designed and presented a company seminar/general training program. Management, office and production personnel are brought together for presentations on professionalism, safety, customer relations and possible problems in the field. "These seminars have had a positive impact in all phases of the operation," says McEntree.

"We used to rely on word-of-mouth and a little advertising in local papers," McGinty explains. "In the '70s we used direct mail. But the '80s demand new marketing strategies, some of which are winter telemarketing, trade magazine ads and—still most important—word-of-mouth."

#### Customer communication

Communicating with customers is perhaps what's kept McGinty Brothers in business. "We have an excellent reputation in this area among customers, universities and people in the industry. If that's success, I guess we're successful.

"But what I really attribute the success of our company to is the dedication of our people, especially our managers and office personnel."

JoAnne Hedrick and her office staff, Geraldine Opland and Jeanne Heinrich provide professional and personable first-time contact with prospective customers and handle any current customer questions. The company has 25 full-time employees and about 10 college workers in the summer. Last year, it laid off only one employee in the winter. The rest keep busy pruning trees. (The company has a full-service tree department that includes spraying, feeding, trimming, removal and land clearing.)

McGinty has expanded his training program so most workers are familiar with both the lawn and tree care businesses. Meersman observes that, "over the years, client awareness has increased appreciably, requiring more knowledge and professional field personnel."

#### The program

Meersman explains that the

company's full lawn care program includes five applications, but that there are variations because clientele range from 1000-sq. ft. lots to the whole Illinois tollway system.

McGinty Brothers uses both dry fertilizer from Lesco and Classens and liquid fertilizer from Nice 'N' Green and Tyler Enterprises. The company blends its own fertilizer for each application by time of year and current weather conditions. Lescosan is used for crabgrass control. UAP herbicides are also used, as is Dursban for insect control.

#### Seeding

Another growth area for McGinty Brothers has been in slit-seeding and overseeding lawns in the spring and fall. Slit-seeding is done in two directions in a diamond-shaped pattern with a blend of bluegrasses and ryegrass. Core aeration and dethatching are done if needed.

Hydroseeding are the fastest-growing area in the company.

McGinty Brothers is active in the year-old ANVIL (Association for the use of Native Vegetation In Landscapes). McGinty vice-president Jim Safron works closely with Chicago's Lafayette Home Nurseries in doing golf courses, commercial properties and residences with native plants.

Some of the material is drilled into the ground with a Rangeland Drill, others are hydroseeded with a mulch. "The key is using enough seed and enough mulch," Safron says. "We use wood fiber mulch with a tackifier from Conwed or Weyerhaeuser."

McGinty Brothers has worked with prairie plantings for more than three years and plans to continue that addition to the lawn and tree care operation. Expansion, customer communication and employee dedication could lead Charlie McGinty to even more success down the road.

Maybe someday, 1987 will look like the good ol' days. **LM**

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## LANDSCAPE PROFILE

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# THE BEST POLICY

Honesty with customers is vital to effectively communicate with them. And communication is vital to a healthy business, as The Davey Company's Milwaukee regional manager knows too well.

by Jerry Roche, editor

**S**ome people don't realize that lawns, like people, get tired and need rejuvenation."

Bill Whitmire, white shirt spotless, tie knotted neatly at the neck, is giving you his softsell.

"We get a lot of residual customers who don't buy the hardsell," he says. "Here in Milwaukee, you have to try to build a relationship with lawn care customers. The lawn business has become so competitive that the lawn care customer is looking for expediency. It's service more than price."



Bill Whitmire

*continued on page 44*



**“You can't cut grass with headaches.  
That's why I switched to Buntton.”**

*Bill Wright, President  
Lawn-Wright, Inc., Gaithersburg, Maryland*

“When I started my lawn service business seven years ago I had a push mower and riding tractor. It only took a year to realize I could cut a lot more grass in the same amount of time with one commercial walk-behind mower,” says Bill Wright, president of Lawn-Wright, Inc. “Four years later I discovered Buntton. Now I can cut even more grass with the same number of mowers.”

The reduction in maintenance headaches compared to his other mowers was so significant that two years ago Bill Wright replaced his eleven mower fleet with Bunttons. Here's why he just bought seven more:

**Welded steel deck construction**

“With Buntton, the deck is reinforced and welded into a single piece, not bolted together like other mowers. With no bolts to fall out, the problem of sagging decks and misaligned belts and blades was eliminated. Our maintenance went down and quality of cut went up.”

**Stronger parts/better engineering**

“Other manufacturers make caster supports, bell cranks and other parts from aluminum, which breaks easily. Buntton makes them from steel, so they're more durable. And, Buntton has fittings at all critical wear points so parts can be greased to make them last longer.”

**Better belt system**

“Because the belts are wrapped in straight lines without twists or back-bends, our belt life increased by at least five times when we switched to Buntton.”

**Variable speed drive system**

“Buntton's pulleys are larger so we get better belt contact and less slippage, even when they're wet and going up hills. We also get a larger range of speeds with Buntton than with other mowers.”

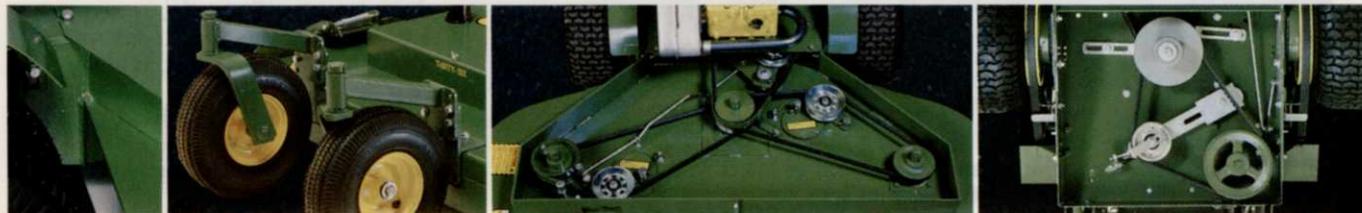
**Savings of time and money**

“There are many other features on Bunttons that lower my maintenance costs. Overall, I have saved at least \$6,000 in the two years since switching to Buntton, not including the added profit from increased productivity.”

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Whitmire, from his suburban Milwaukee office of The Davey Company, has come a long way from his spraying days in Akron, Ohio. He's done it by knowing the customer.

"Even though people here are service-oriented, they're also extremely price-conscious. They like to buy a programmed service rather than a full annual service. A lot of them take only two or three applications a year."

Whitmire *should* know the customer. He spends 70 percent of his time selling Davey tree and lawn care services. That means talking to about 150 customers and prospective customers a month.

### Different sales

"Lawn care is a different type of sale than tree care," he continues. "Usually, tree care sales are in more affluent economic areas—where people can afford to pay hundreds or even thousands of dollars for a major service."

When it comes to dealing with customers, Whitmire says those on the lawn care side are the more critical.

"Tree care is not as great a swing in the looks of the property as in

lawn care," he observes. "The (lawn care) consumer is oftentimes harder on our company. People have totally different expectations of what we can give them. Some want a total turnaround in environmental problems, and we can't do that.

"The problem is with the industry in general. The marketing approach has been too strong." Lawn care companies historically promise more than they can deliver just to make a sale, Whitmire contends.

"Davey's marketing thrust is to expound on the virtues of plant health care," he reveals. "That is, taking care of the property as a whole with a customized program." And, with both tree and lawn care services, Davey can do just that.

"We try to cover as many bases as we can with a client. Davey is one of the few companies in the country that can say 'we are an expert in both tree and lawn care' with conviction."

### The best policy

Whitmire says that, in dealing with clients, honesty is the best policy.

"Most of the people that we're approaching now have been with other services. So most have come down the same road, especially in

the lawn care field. If we need to do seeding, or if a lawn needs to be replaced, we tell them. And we are realistic."

Getting customers isn't the only problem in the Milwaukee area. Coping with anti-pesticide activity is another very real problem.

Two years ago, the city banned the use of the herbicide glyphosate (Roundup) in its park system. More recently, the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District came under fire as the media searched for a relationship between Milorganite (which MMSD manufactures) and Lou Gehrig's Disease.

"The Roundup thing was union-based. But the Milorganite thing really scared me," relates Whitmire, a distraught look washing over him. "I know how far-fetched a correlation that was, but I also know how reactionary the public is."

Indeed. When 2,4-D was under indictment for possibly causing cancer, The Davey Company was one of the lawn care businesses that decided to ban it from the program. Not because of any evidence of its toxicity, more as a public relations move. All Davey branches have substituted Trimec 900.

"Control seems to take a little longer with Trimec," says Whitmire. "But you seem to get good control in two or two-and-a-half weeks. You just have to let the customer know."

### Doing it right

The company slogan, expounded by company founder John Davey almost 100 years ago, is "do it right, or not at all." Reflecting that philosophy, Davey wires its branches—including the one in Milwaukee—into its national programs, one of which is employee training. "We're a seasonal business, but we don't like to hire seasonal employees," says Whitmire. That places a premium on training.

"Historically, all the Davey lawn people went to a technical institute in Kent, Ohio," he adds. "Now we've gone to sending people to horticultural-type training to give them a more broad-based background." People employed by Davey for two years are sent to the one-month-long Davey Institute of Tree Science. Also, the company's Research and Development department will supply, on request, a training videotape that covers the areas of safety, sales and lawn or tree care technology.

As Whitmire so succinctly states: "Basically, all Davey has is equipment and people, and we take care of them." **LM**



**Bill Whitmire (center), who spends 70 percent of his time in sales, believes that honesty with customers is the best policy.**

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NOVEMBER 1987/LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT 47

On Design

# FOUNTAINS! SPOUTIN'

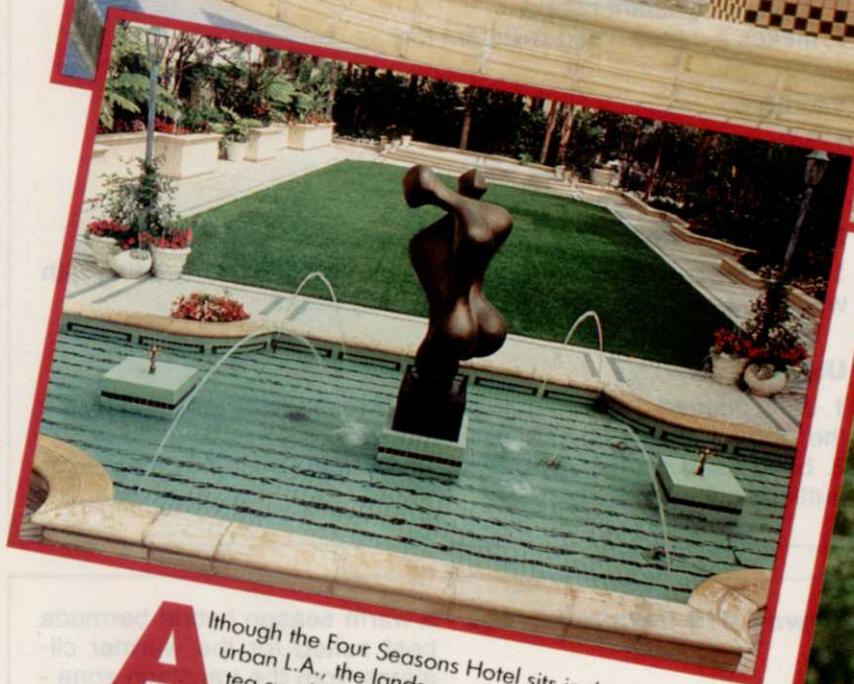
by Heide Aungst, managing editor



Looking northeast from this fountain in Lake Oswego, Ore., you can see Mt. Hood (left). The fountain highlights the recreation center at One Jefferson Place, an 168-unit apartment complex. Architect Tom Hamann of OTAK designed the fountain which was manufactured by Cascade Pools. The fountain uses 15 hp pumps which circulate the water from the top reservoir to the bottom. The 13 steps between the top and bottom pools go 1½ feet out and 1 foot down, creating the "white water" effect.

Rainbow Irrigation and Landscaping developed the 10 acres surrounding the complex. Another 10 acres is set for future development. Rainbow sodded the area around the fountain with a fescue, ryegrass and bluegrass mix from Oregon Turf Farms. It's mowed once a week at about two inches and irrigated as needed. The irrigation unit is Rainbow's new remote-controlled Rainmaster, which allows the landscape manager to turn on sprinklers while walking through the property. Flowers next to the fountain include red celosia, blue ageratums and white alyssum. Sergeant cherry trees line the sidewalks beside the fountain (left), while maples grow near the rec building (above). Completed in July 1987, the fountain cost about \$34,000.

OTAK: Circle Number 191 on Reader Inquiry Card.  
Rainbow Irrigation: Circle Number 192 on Reader Inquiry Card.  
Cascade Pools: Circle Number 193 on Reader Inquiry Card.



**A**lthough the Four Seasons Hotel sits in the midst of urban L.A., the landscaping reflects a proper English tea garden. This garden ambiance was the vision of hotel developers Robert and Joseph Cohen. Lifescapes, Inc. of Newport Beach, worked with a \$2.1 million budget to create the landscape. Lifescapes also developed the hardscaping, including the 400 square foot central fountain in the Wetherly gardens (above). The sculpture (right) in the fountain, designed by Irv Binder, adds a modern twist to the traditional gardens. Custom designed lamps and paving go with the gardens' classic flavor.

Lifescapes faced a challenge in choosing plant materials for the area. A parking garage runs under the entire site, reducing soil depth in gardens and making it difficult to use mature trees. To deal with these limitations, the company used raised planters where soil depth wasn't available. Trees adjacent to the fountain area is Marathon tall fescue. Trees in the Wetherly garden include Mediterranean fan palms, queen palms, saucer magnolias and weeping Chinese banyan. Pink seasonal plants, including impatiens, begonias and roses, color the base of the trees. The hotel's porte cochere (top), or entranceway, displays a garden of queen palms, parlour palms and lilies. Lifescapes designed this smaller fountain following the same garden theme. The Four Seasons Hotel cost \$110 million to complete and opened on April 16, 1987.

Lifescapes: Circle Number 194 on Reader Inquiry Card.

## Bermudagrass: which variety is best?

by Tommy Nalls,  
Southern Turf Nurseries

Bermudagrass is a popular turfgrass for a number of uses in the transition zone and points south. But which variety is best suited for use on fairways: Tifgreen 328 or Tifway 419?

The general consensus probably is that Tifway 419 is better for fairways than Tifgreen 328. In comparing characteristics—texture, mowing height and general uses—it is quite evident that Tifway 419 would be a logical choice for use on fairways.

Today, golf courses that have Tifgreen 328 fairways are quite successful, with very satisfied management. Tifgreen 328 will tolerate a closer cut than Tifway 419, therefore allowing a tighter lie of the ball.

Low handicappers would realize a challenge, where a high handicapper would experience total frustration.

One of the biggest advantages for having Tifgreen 328 from tee to green would be less chance for contamination of greens by trafficking of clippings from the fairways onto the greens.

Sod inventory would exist from the fairways and instant repairs could be made on tee tops when necessary. It is possible that areas on greens could, with all probability, be repaired with sod from the fairways, but it's highly unlikely that this might occur since the superintendent would want a greens-quality maintained sod.

Most of today's new golf courses are using Tifway 419 or the more improved Tifway 419 II for fairways. Again, in comparing the characteristics—texture, mowing height and uses—it is understandable why the choice for fairways is Tifway 419.

The possibility of contamination exists, but is probably unlikely because of the use of a buffer zone surrounding greens that allows for the cleaning of golf spikes before actually walking on the greens.

Tifway 419 and Tifgreen 328 have excellent regrowth and recovery from divots. However, Tifway 419 has a greater tolerance to traffic, therefore making Tifway 419 a more desirable choice for use on the fairway.

Actually, it boils down to one thing, and that is personal choice.

**Tifgreen 328 bermudagrass** - a warm season hybrid bermuda best suited for the warmer climates from the transition zone - South

### Characteristics

1. low growing
2. rapidly spreading
3. disease-resistant hybrid
4. makes a dense weed-resistant turf

### Texture

1. fine
2. makes excellent putting surface

### Mowing Height

1. tolerates daily mowing at a height of  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch and overseeding with winter grass better than most bermudagrasses

### Uses

1. been planted on more golf greens across the South and around the world than any other bermudagrass
2. been used on fairways, tees, and lawns; best considered for putting surfaces

**Tifway 419 bermudagrass** - a warm season hybrid bermuda best suited for the warmer climates from the transition zone - South.

### Characteristics

1. darker green
2. requires less nitrogen to attain any degree of greenness.
3. makes a good dense weed-free sod
4. tolerates frost a little better and greens up early spring
5. tolerates golf cart traffic
6. more resistant to sod webworm and mole cricket attack than Tifgreen

### Texture

1. possess stiffer leaves than Tifgreen
2. inferior to Tifgreen for use on putting surfaces

### Mowing Height

1. mow weekly at a height of  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 inch for fairways

### Uses

1. widely used on golf courses for fairways and tees; superior to other bermudagrasses
2. also well adapted and widely used on football fields, soccer fields and polo fields