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# GETTING THE CHECK IN THE MAIL

Collecting late accounts involves tact and perseverance.  
And if that fails, there are always collection agencies.

by Ed Wandtke

**M**any companies are not too concerned with their accounts receivable at this time of year, except companies that want to keep cash flowing consistently and avoid having to "write off" sizable balances.

In other words, now is the time to develop a collection system that insures payment for your services soon after they are performed—or even earlier!

Billing as services are performed remains the most popular collection system in the green industry. Yet many companies do not have an effective system for collecting these invoices once they have been left at the customer's property.

## Customer contact

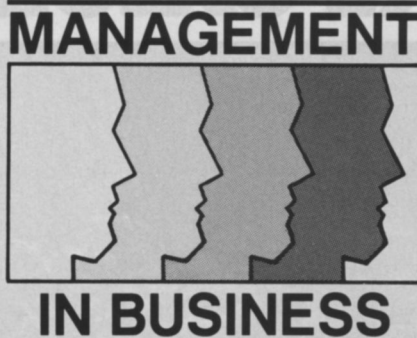
Because landscapers often lack personal contact with their customers, instructing the customer about the acceptable payment method for your invoice is sometimes difficult. Many companies mail customers a confirming invoice once services have been performed. Others wait up to 15 days for payment. If it doesn't come, a statement mailing process begins that repeats every 30 days until the account is paid.

This customer training continues with telephone contact and letters, all of which lead to improved, timely collections of accounts and the avoidance of having to write off or turn accounts over to collection agencies.

At this time of year, many new customers have been brought into the fold. Get them in the habit of making timely payments by calling them about 25 days after services were delivered. Ask them if they were satisfied with your work, and remind them that payment is expected according to the terms agreed upon.

In addition to reducing late payments, this extra effort will give you important feedback on your company's performance.

Monthly maintenance companies can benefit from several new techniques that have helped improve collections.



One such innovative approach used widely today is the early payment plan, which offers customers the option of pre-paying for your services.

Many pre-payment plans include a discount of five to seven percent. A more effective plan rewards customers with a five to 10 percent discount, thereby inducing them to save more money by paying earlier.

Companies are finding that many customers prefer to be billed in even, monthly installments. While this technique diverges from the idea of billing after service delivery, it does offer the customer the convenience and predictability of consistent monthly payment terms.

There is an additional side benefit from having your customers on this payment system: you can pre-bill all your customers on the first of each month, *before* you deliver services. Hence, services can be withheld from problem customers.

If you are in the landscape construction or installation business, a desirable plan would be to collect 33 to 40 percent of the contract when it is signed.

These practices will enable you to maintain a steady billing and collection system that should avoid collection problems later in the year.

Dissatisfied customers often refuse to pay an invoice, yet many choose not to communicate their dissatisfaction to you. Instead, they withhold payment and wait for you to contact them. Therefore, your collection

plans should include a review system that identifies past due customers.

Whether you have a manual or computer-based accounts receivable system, human effort is needed to review past due and slow-paying accounts.

There will always be people in this world who believe that delaying their payment will enable them to make a deal with you later in the year to settle their balance at a lesser payment. These customers demonstrate the need for assessing penalties for late payments.

## Assessing late fees

Interest charges added to a customer's past due balance rarely cause people to pay earlier. However, assessing a monthly administrative fee of \$10 to \$50 for maintaining a past due balance often will get their attention.

Letters to a customer indicating their past due status don't always work. But when you combine letters with a telephone call you often get the balance paid.

If you have been using only one method to collect past due accounts, consider the benefit of two. You'll find the results will be worth the additional effort.

Calling on the services of a collection agency should be the last course of action when dealing with late-paying customers. A collection agency determines its willingness to pursue an account by the size of the outstanding balance.

Collection agencies may create more ill will for your company than the monies they collect for services rendered. Still, collection agencies often remain the only course of action that will result in payment.

Once an account is turned over to a collection agency, you should expect that customer to terminate his relationship with your company. **LM**

Ed Wandtke is a senior consultant with All-Green Management Associates in Columbus, Ohio. He focuses on operations and financial questions.



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## Residents flocking to golf communities, a good place to sell landscape services

Because two-income families are so busy, even traveling to and from leisure activities can be regarded as a waste of time. Perhaps that's why there's such high demand for homes in private golf course communities.

"Developers can't build golf course communities fast enough," says Mary Ann Wands, director of marketing and management for Macom Corp., Naperville, Ill., developers of the new White Eagle Club in Illinois. The 754-acre recreational-residential community will have some 800 custom-built, single-family homes and about 700 townhouses surrounding an 18-hole, Arnold Palmer-signature golf course.

### Pleasure-seekers

According to Wands, the primary attraction of private golf course communities are ambiance, lifestyle, and prestige. The association with an elite and elegant community linked to an exclusively country club gives homeowners an image of success and achievement.

"There's also the assurance that

---

*Teamwork between the developer, designer, merchandiser and the landscape architect is vital to creating the community's image.*

---

residents will have beautifully landscaped open space to look at for many years," Wands adds.

Landscaping is critical to the image of these communities, says Dean MacMorris of the Brickman Group Ltd., Long Grove, Ill. "The entries and perimeters along the major roads were landscaped well before amenities like the clubhouse and recreation center, so that buyers immediately can see the high-quality image that the whole community will have when it's finished. A good first impression conveys the message that the homes are high-quality too."

### Landscaping sells

"It's important that the landscaping



Golf course communities such as Four Seasons, in Lakewood, New Jersey, convey a sense of stature and ambiance with intensely-manicured landscapes.

not only accent the exteriors of the homes, but also convey a feeling of 'greenness' while maintaining continuity with the naturalistic setting of the rolling site and trees," says developer Don Meyer, executive vice president and chief operating officer of McIntosh Ltd.

Wands adds that teamwork between the developer, designer, interior designer/merchandiser and

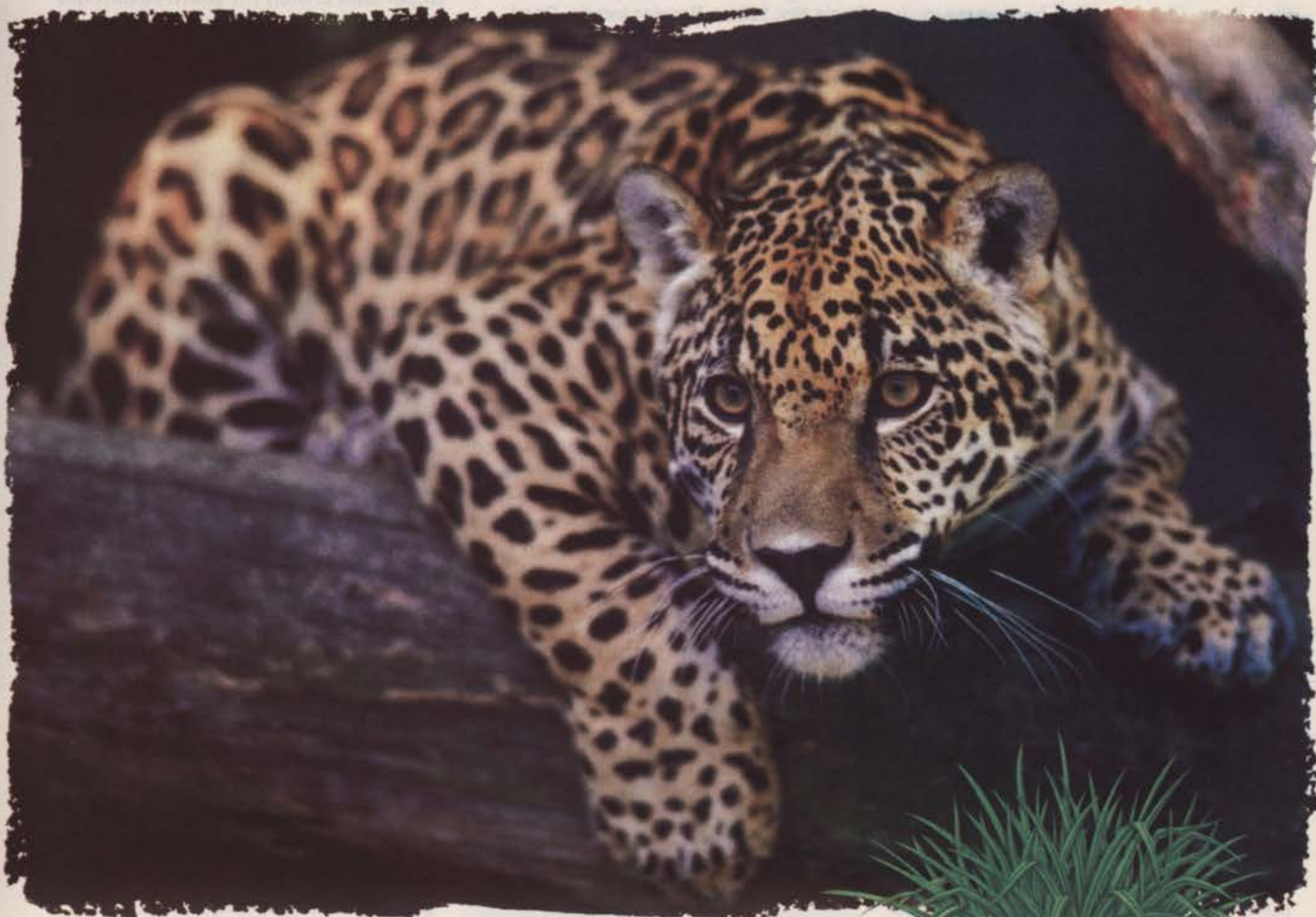
landscape architect is vital to creating the community's image.

"You must be sure that all the pieces fit together, that everyone's on the same wavelength," she said.

According to Wands, landscaped grounds, including the golf course, are a key part of the amenities that attract home buyers to a golfing community. "And you can't have enough amenities," she adds. **LM**



# Some Things in Nature Were Meant to Have Spots. Your Turf Just Wasn't One of Them.



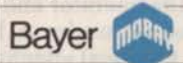
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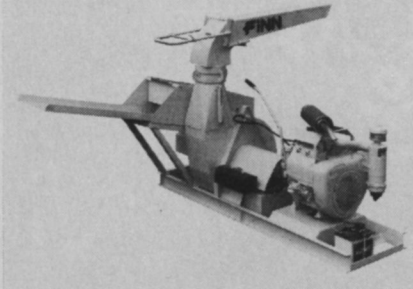
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Circle No. 136 on Reader Inquiry Card

# PRODUCTS

## Spreader is compact; more room for mulch

The Finn Corporation has come out with the B-70 side entry straw/hay mulch spreader. The side entry model is designed to require a minimum amount of truck space, allowing for greater mulch storage. The B-70 skid has an over center clutch as standard equipment and an overall rugged design for many years of dependable, trouble free performance. It can handle as much as 6-7 tons of material per hour, with a discharge distance of up to 60 feet. It is available with either an air cooled gasoline or water cooled diesel engine.



Circle No. 191 on Reader Inquiry Card

## Sand trap rake now available in diesel

Smithco, of Wayne, PA now offers its Super Rake sand trap rake in a diesel powered unit as well as the earlier gas model.

The diesel model utilizes a water-cooled Kubota 12.5 hp engine and, according to Smithco, is the most powerful trap rake available.

The gasoline engine is a 16 hp Kohler, also the largest in the industry. Both models have ground speeds up to 9 mph.

A front-mounted 40-inch plow is



standard equipment, to quickly handle wet and washed out sand.

The plow controls are manual or hydraulic. The rake and cultivator both have hydraulic power. The rear-mounted engine directs heat away from the operator and is immediately accessible under a hinged pop-up hood. Optional attachments include a

fan rake, scarifier, drag mats, disc edger, grader box and spiker.

Circle No. 192 on Reader Inquiry Card

## Seeder provides greater germination, emergence

The Solid Stand Seeder from Land Pride is designed for accurate interseeding and new seeding of grasses.

The company says the three-way soil-to-seed contact system provides greater germination and emergence with the solid advantages of a full width seeding pattern.

First, the PTO driven knives slice into the ground creating slots to receive the seed. The proven fluted seed cups then precisely meter the desired amount of seed in a broadcast pattern.

Easily adjustable double torsion tickler tines agitate the seeding surface to help promote soil-to-seed contact. Solid cast iron packer wheels finish the job by pressing and firmly packing the seed, eliminating air pockets for proper germination.



Being able to incorporate an aerating procedure into an interseeding program helps eliminate the need for a separate pass, while promoting a more accurate renovation of established turf.

Circle No. 193 on Reader Inquiry Card

## Slicing attachment for power thatching unit

Encore Manufacturing now offers a slicing attachment for the Pro Power-Thatch, its heavy duty commercial dethatcher.

Cutting blades of the new slicing attachment adjust to a depth of 3 1/2 inches and width of 1 1/2-3 inches. The blades are .060 high carbon tempered steel.

The company says the Power-Thatch is tough on thatch, yet operator friendly. It features a single action height adjustment, 28 self-cleaning, flail-type fingers, and minimal vibration. A 5-hp Briggs and Stratton engine provides the power.

Additional features include a dead-man clutch for positive belt disengagement, collapsible handles for



easy transporting, heavy duty wheels with sealed ball bearings and semi-pneumatic tires.

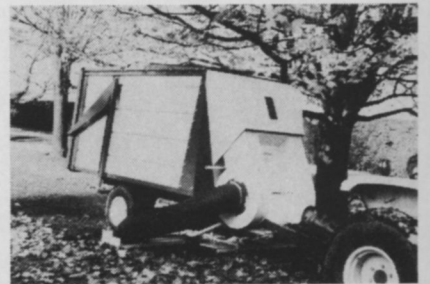
Circle No. 194 on Reader Inquiry Card

## New vacuum unit is light, contains many options

Brouwer Turf Equipment, Limited introduces the new Brouwer Vac 138, a light, compact and maneuverable unit, with a "small tractor" requirement.

The vacuum is designed for fast clean up of leaves, grass clippings and litter. It is ideal for golf courses, parks, recreation areas, sod farms, airfields and grassed highway verges and medians.

Some outstanding features include full floating pick-up nozzles with



height adjusters; high output dual blowers; hydraulic hopper tilt; 5.1 cubic yard capacity; light weight for low compaction; corrosion resistant aluminum sides and quick detach blower hose connections.

An optional, 15 ft. extension hose is available for added versatility.

Circle No. 195 on Reader Inquiry Card

continued on page 88





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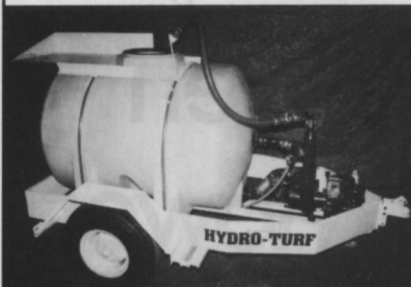
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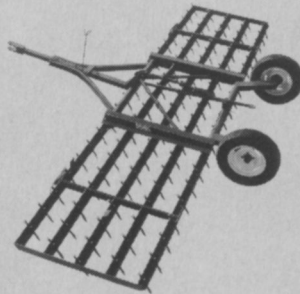
Circle No. 124 on Reader Inquiry Card

## PRODUCTS from page 86

### Tillage tool levels, mulches, agitates soil

The Harogator spike tooth tillage tool is new from Unverferth Manufacturing, Kalida, OH.

The Harogator levels, mulches and agitates soil and distributes rougher textured soil and trash. A versatile



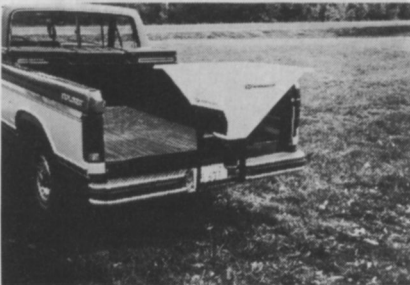
implement, the Harogator can be used for all types of landscaping and maintenance jobs such as seedbed preparation, leveling, resodding, preparing golf courses for seeding and for smoothing ball diamonds, parking lots and horse exercise yards and to incorporate herbicides or fertilizer.

The Harogator is wheel-shaped and engineered with five angle iron crossbars which push soil ahead, leveling the field or seedbed while its angle iron edges help break up trash and surface chunks. The dragging action of the crossbars distribute this rougher textured material. The unit's spiked teeth mulch and agitate soil at planting depth and break up large clumps of earth.

Circle No. 196 on Reader Inquiry Card

### Seeder/spreader uses variety of products

A new 3-bushel capacity Poly Hopper seeder/spreader from Worksaver, Inc. is ideal for year-round use to spread various materials such as dry sodium chloride for ice control and



fertilizer and seed.

The Poly Hopper is translucent to allow quick checking of content level, is rust, corrosion and puncture resistant and does not crack or lose its shape in extreme temperature changes.

Engineered with adjustable brace rods that provide quick rigid mounting, the Poly Hopper can be attached to pick-ups, tractor draw bars and a variety of other vehicles. The unit features a heavy-duty, 12-volt electric motor with hopper agitator and a positive seed gate control with adjustable lock scale plate.

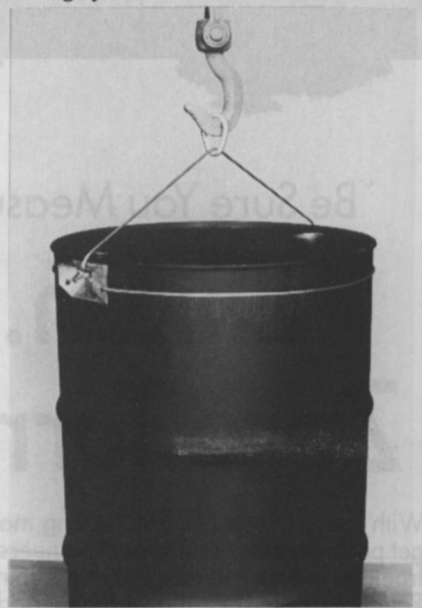
The seeder/spreader comes complete with wiring harness. An optional extension that increases the Poly Hopper's capacity to six bushels is available.

Circle No. 197 on Reader Inquiry Card

### Barrel harness eliminates heavy lifting, injury

The patented Bold Eagle Barrel Harness is now available in a heavy-duty model from Free Enterprise Systems, Inc.

Galvanized aircraft cable grips the circumference of the barrel under the lip, and stainless steel brackets prevent any slippage. It has a galvanized lifting eye to accommodate a hoist hook.



The harness fits all drums, 55 gallons and smaller. It lifts steel, plastic, fiber and open-top drums, according to Free Enterprise Systems.

The company says the harness weighs three pounds, and has a rated capacity of 1100 pounds.

Circle No. 198 on Reader Inquiry Card

### Latest technology used in new lawn seeders

BlueBird International has introduced a lawn seeder available in two models, the F-20 and the F-20B BlueBird Lawn Comber.

Seed is dropped, then cut into the



soil by the Delta blades of the patented Delta Reel. Delta Reels are standard equipment and the Delta blades do not tear up the turf due to their swept-back, beveled, leading edges.

Use of the Delta Reel during the



growing season will open the soil for water and nutrients to penetrate down to the roots of the grass, according to BlueBird.

Circle No. 199 on Reader Inquiry Card

### Hand-held computer designed for reliability

The TMDR is an economical, hand-held data computer designed for reliable field use even in hostile environments.

Features include simple operation, environmental packaging, PC pro-

grammability, applications flexibility, and lightweight, compact design.

LCD display with graphics capability allows viewing of complete screens of data. A full alphanumeric keyboard, color coded by function, permits easy data entry.

Ten programmable function keys eliminate time consuming, repetitive operations. The sealed keypad and display overlays provide trouble free



operation under varying conditions at an operating temperature range of -20°C to 60°C.

Circle No. 200 on Reader Inquiry Card

### Pick-up sweeper cleans debris from golf courses

Star City Fabrication offers Mars Suburban Pick-Up sweepers to simplify everyday outdoor cleaning tasks.

These sweepers are ideal for golf courses and other large grass areas



where aeration plugs, leaves, twigs, and other debris need to be picked up on a regular basis.

The same Mars Pick-Up sweepers can also be taken to the street to clean driveways and parking areas. An optional side broom is available for cleaning close to curbs.

With a sweeping swath of 48 inches, the units will sweep from 1½ to 3 acres per hour at speeds from 3-7 mph. The hoppers come in two sizes: seven and 20 cubic feet.

Star City says the sweepers have their own power source, and require



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Circle No. 201 on Reader Inquiry Card

## "Revolutionary" preseeders tills, levels and rakes

ATI Corporation has released the Model 600 Preseeder to its line of landscaping equipment.

Like the larger Model 686, the Model 600 features the design which



the company says "revolutionized lawn seeding." The Model 600 tills, levels and rakes to transform a rough-grade into a professionally-finished turf seedbed.

Rocks and debris are swept into a windrow for easy pickup and removal. The 600 is well-built for long service and low maintenance. It is designed to operate with 16-30 hp tractors and is available with hydraulic or manual depth control.

Circle No. 202 on Reader Inquiry Card

## New power unit solves thatch control problem

Easy Rake, of Lebanon, IN says the benefits of power thatching are numerous, including elimination of surface accumulations of clippings and thatch, thinning of matted growth, which is pulled to the top of the grass for easy removal and improved color and general appearance of the lawn as brown material is removed.

Modern engineering, based on findings of research such as that conducted by Easy Rake researchers has led to the development of highly efficient mechanized thatching equipment for both residential and commercial use.

Typical design elements of Easy Rake power thatchers include a series of spring tines placed 2 1/4 inches apart in rows which are 3/4 inches apart. With every revolution of the rake shaft, two tines touch the ground every 3/4 inch, allowing the thatch to be lifted to the top of the grass for easy removal in fairly large pieces.

Circle No. 101 on Reader Inquiry Card