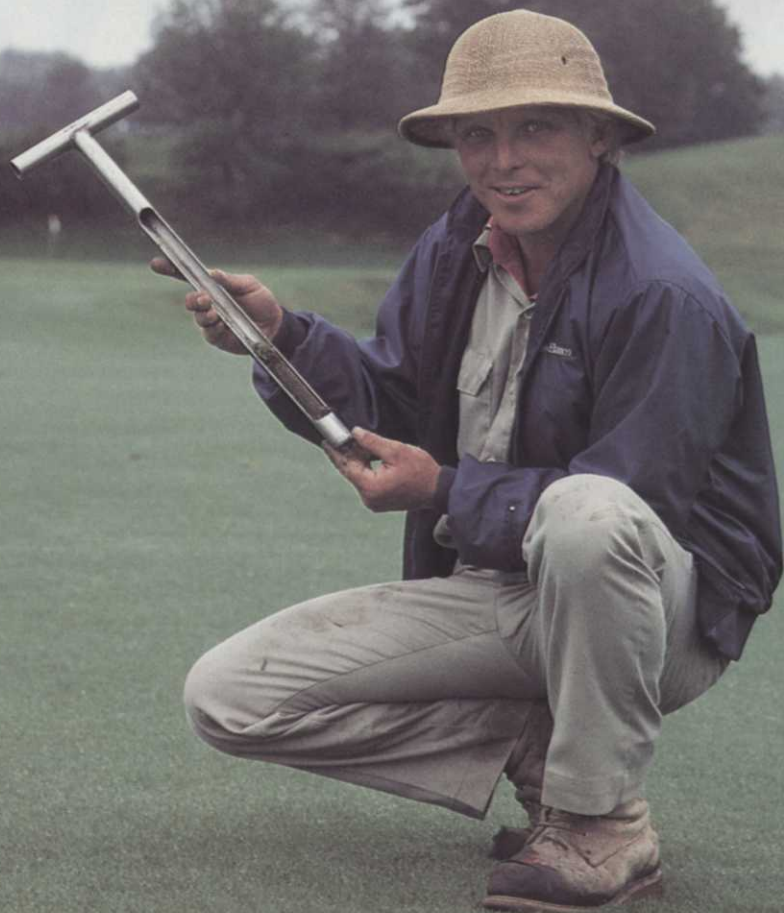


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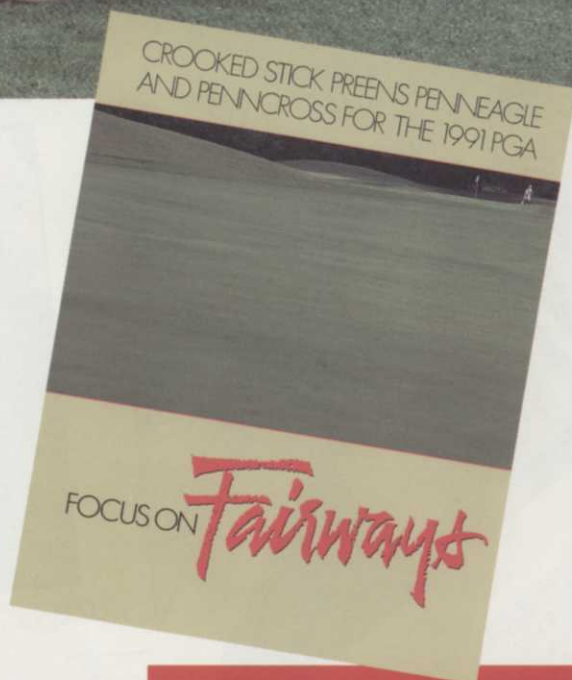


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20 COVER STORY: STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

On the cover: Playing your cards right in the green industry, as illustrated by Larry Kassell.

by the Landscape Management staff. Green industry professionals are dealing with five burdensome issues today: dwindling labor pools, high insurance costs, regulations, marketing and maintaining a professional image.

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A holiday word to the apocalyptics

'Tis the season to be jolly, so news this month from this corner might help brighten your holiday season.

Would you believe it if I told you that the landscape/golf industry is still alive and well, and not experiencing the wholesale "recession" predicted by the many apocalyptics—many of whom consider themselves to be economic whizzes?

Sure, there has been a minimal downturn in business. Very minimal. And yes, there are more business concerns bugging landscapers and golf course superintendents (see this month's "State of the Industry" report). But friends, by and large the green industry is effectively coping with the most recent roadblocks—including those imposed by certain Middle Eastern oil-producing countries.

It is a curious thing about this country's economy that when the apocalyptics speak, their vast minions from coast to coast—many of them leaders of *Fortune* 500 companies—listen. Thus, when political problems arose earlier this year in the Mideast, the oil companies immediately jacked up their pump prices by 30 to 40 percent. Which led to increased predictions of a crumbling economy by the surly apocalyptics. And we have the beginnings of the self-fulfilling prophecy.

Not surprisingly, then, it is a real delight to talk to the movers and shakers in the green industry and hear that their businesses remained healthy through this most recent economic escapade.

"Business in 1990 has been more a function of weather and not the recession here," notes Gary Thornton of Thornton Landscaping, Maineville, Ohio.

"All the other media are making it look bad," says Terry Stout of R.B. Stout, Akron, Ohio. "We see no effect, no problems, here."

"The last four to five years have been a record-breaker, says Arnie Sieg of the Bruce Co., Racine, Wisc. "And nobody is ready yet to say it won't be great again next year. Sure, we're going to keep alert to trends, but we're certainly not panicking."

Some parts of the country, most notably the Northeast, are experiencing a noticeable decrease in business because of the economy. But the big factor affecting green industry profits—as it always has been and always will be—is weather. Rain in the Midwest and lack of rain in the Southwest have been responsible for decreased profits, not the economy.

Our holiday message, then, is this: enjoy this special season. Spend more time away from the desk with your family and friends. Sing a few carols. Hang plenty of mistletoe. Because despite what the apocalyptics say, if you work in the green industry, you can afford it.

Happy holidays from the staff and management of LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT!

Jerry Roche, editor

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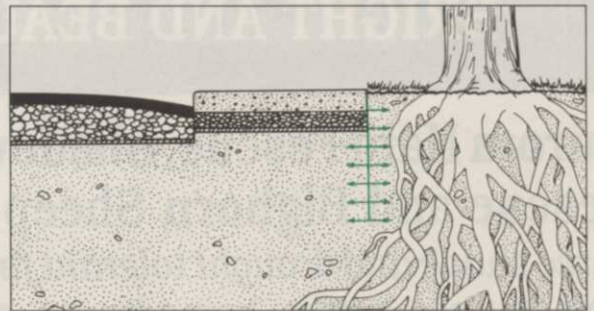
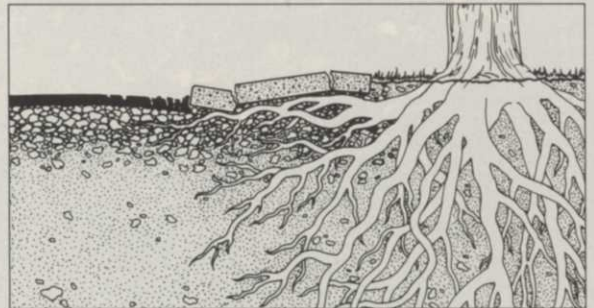
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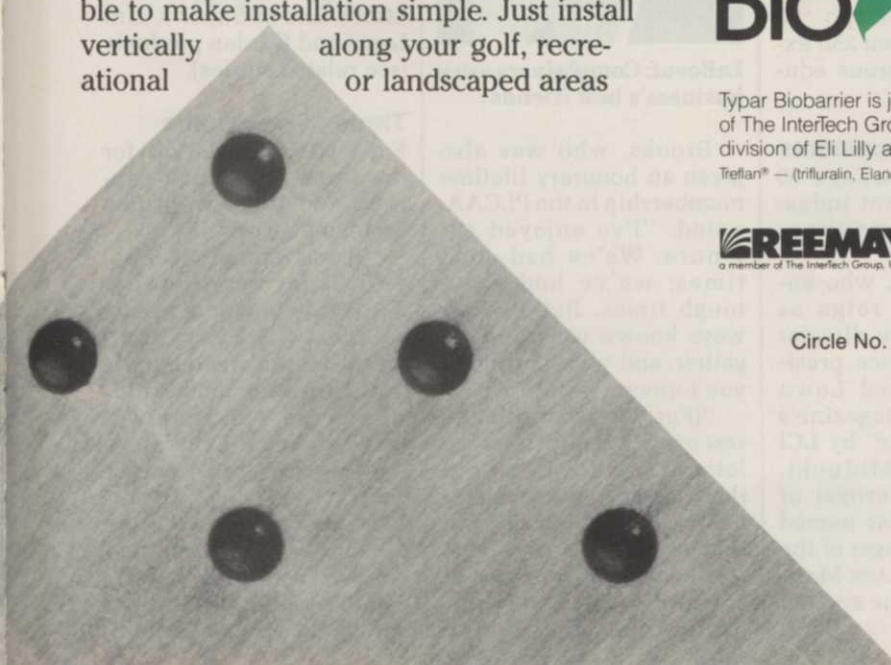
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GREEN INDUSTRY NEWS

DECEMBER 1990, VOLUME 29, NUMBER 12

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

CONFERENCES

Service the customer, and profits necessarily follow

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — In dealing with your customers, you should heed the advice of twisted-tongued baseball sage Yogi Berra: "If people don't want to come out to the ballpark, nobody'll stop 'em."

Best-selling author Michael LeBoeuf provided that and other wisdom as keynote speaker at Green Industry Expo '90 here last month.

He told a full house at the Nashville Convention Center the five best ways to keep customers coming back:

- by far, the most important is to **be reliable**;
- people pay dearly for peace of mind, so **be credible**;
- use tangibles to **be attractive**;
- when customers want service, they want it now, so **be responsive**; and
- **be empathetic**: treat customers the way they want to be treated.

"A typical business hears from only four percent of its dissatisfied customers, (but) a customer who complains is your best friend," LeBoeuf noted. He added that complainers

point out areas of needed improvement, give you a second chance, and offer you a wonderful opportunity to earn their loyalty.

Next year's Expo will have a tough act to follow, judging by comments from some of the more than 3,000 participants.

A sell-out for the Professional Lawn Care Association, Associated Landscape Contractors, and Professional Grounds Management Society, Expo '90 featured more than 250 exhibits and numerous educational sessions.

Special announcements

On the news front, Expo '90 featured important industry-related announcements.

James Brooks, who ended a 7½-year reign as PLCAA executive director and executive vice president, was named *Lawn Care Industry* magazine's "Man of the Year" by LCI publisher Jon Miducki. And Vince Patterozzi of ServiceMaster was named "Landscape Manager of the Year" by LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT magazine and the PGMS.



LeBoeuf: Complainers are a business's best friends.

Brooks, who was also given an honorary lifetime membership in the PLCAA, noted: "I've enjoyed my tenure. We've had good times; we've had some tough times. But I've always known we'd pull together, and we did. I thank you forever.

"(For now), I'm going to rest up a little bit. There are lots of opportunities out there, some in the green industry. I'll turn up again in this industry."

The manufacturers of specialty pesticides announced the formation of

Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE), to address issues facing the green industry on the regulatory and safety fronts.

The PLCAA announced it has entered into a labeling agreement with K-Mart. K-Mart stores will support the association's new "Grasscycling" campaign by incorporating the program's logo, slogan and environmental message on package labeling for K-Mart's line of Super K-Gro Lawn and Garden products (see related stories).

Three-in-one works

Expo '90 was a trial run for the three-association concept, and there were few problems reported.

"It was a huge success," said Sandy Marting, the PLCAA's director of public relations. "Everybody loved the show and educational programs, and exhibitors were very happy," said Marting. "Everyone's looking forward to next year."

Debra Dennis, executive director of ALCA, reported an ALCA/PGMS attendance of 528, "more than double the attendance at