

NEWS BRIEFS

NRVMA AWARD WINNERS...The National Roadside Vegetation Management Association presented its 1990 awards during its annual meeting in Albuquerque, N.M. The awards are given annually for exceptional performance by state, city and county highway departments. Accepting the awards for their respective departments were:

- **Roy L. Smith**, Texas State Department of Highways and Public Transportation;
- **James Mathews**, Orange County (Fla.) Highway Maintenance Department;
- **Dempsey Benton Jr.**, Raleigh, N.C.;
- **David Spatcher** of Dupont received the "Roadside Support from Industry" award.

NEW CHEMLAWN PRESIDENT...David Siegfried has been named president of Chem-Lawn. Prior to joining the Columbus, Ohio-based company, Siegfried was president of Burlington Airline Express in Irvine, Calif.

HARDER AND HARDER...It is getting more difficult to register a pesticide for use on turf, according to statistics from the Mobay Corporation, a division of Bayer USA. Speaking at the Kentucky Turfgrass Conference, Mobay's **Sue-Ann Sietz** noted that just one or two of 20,000 chemicals screened each year actually makes it to the market. "It costs a minimum of \$28 million to bring one compound to market," she noted. Sietz says that it takes eight to 18 years for a chemical to go from synthesis to sales. That includes 10 to 12 months to get federal approval on a new product. "And individual state registration is becoming a major concern," she said, noting especially tough state laws in California, New York and Massachusetts.

A CHANGE AT AAN...Larry Scovotto is no longer executive vice president of the American Association of Nurserymen, reports association president **Rick Henkel**. A successor will be named soon by the board of directors.

OAK TREE JUSTICE...The venerable Treaty Oak in Austin, Texas, received judicial standing in the courts earlier this year when Paul Stedman Cullen was sentenced to nine years in jail. Cullen was convicted of maliciously poisoning the historical tree, valued at \$46,000, last summer (see LM, Sept. 1989). According to a report in *Urban Forests*, only 20 percent of the tree's crown came to leaf this season. Some of the dead wood is being slated to become artwork and more than 80 seedlings have been propagated to ultimately replace the oak, according to city forester **John Gedraitis**.

PLCAA from page 8

"This program," says Andrews, "will focus attention on the need for smaller lawn care companies across the country to actively support the national association."

Andrews is excited about PLCAA's new-member incentive programs, which he describes as "more relevant to the smaller operator." To boost membership, Andrews says

companies which join PLCAA during the Nashville show will receive a special incentive package worth hundreds of dollars. Additionally, Andrews says the association has strongly committed itself "to developing a program of member services that will bring all members true value for their membership dollar."

To register for the conference, call the PLCAA at (404) 977-5222. □

NEXT MONTH:

Our annual "State of the Green Industry" report mixes the good news with the bad news. Also:

- **Community and worker right-to-know laws and how they affect your business**
 - **Should you buy or lease large equipment?**
 - **Complete Green Industry Expo report from Nashville, Tennessee**
- (P.S. — Look for our gala January, 1991 GCSAA golf show issue.)

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Overseeding should be thought about 12 months of the year, Bruneau says

RALEIGH, N.C. — Winter overseeding is an annual event we should be thinking about all the time, says Art Bruneau, Ph.D., of North Carolina State University.

"Overseeding bermudagrass ought to be in the back of our minds 12 months out of the year because we need healthy, dense turf in order for it to endure the physical abuse it takes during the actual overseeding process," says Bruneau.

Year-round proper mowing frequency and height, fertilization, and manageable thatch levels are essential to successful overseeding, says Bruneau.

Speaking at the North Carolina Turfgrass and Landscape Field Day, Bruneau adds that the best time to overseed is when soil

temperatures are between 76 and 78 degrees, or about 30 days before the first frost.

"The rationale is that if the seedlings start coming up (hopefully within 30 days) the bermudagrass will start going off color, slowing in growth and then the overseeding will kick in and no one will be the wiser for what you've done out there."

Bruneau suggests we aerify four weeks and verticut two weeks in advance of overseeding in order to give the bermudagrass time to heal. Two to three days prior, stop mowing. The taller turf will slow down potential washing of seed.

As for seed selection, Bruneau suggests we use certified, blue tag seed. Ryegrass is the most common, alone or with fine fescue or *Poa trivialis* (rough

bluegrass). Seed treated for disease prevention is desired. "We need that treatment to prevent the loss of grasses when we reach the higher summer temperatures," he notes.

Bruneau prefers higher rates: 30/lb. per 1,000 sq. ft. for greens; 200 to 225 for fairways; 5 to 15/lb. per 1,000 sq. ft. for home lawns. (Note: ryegrasses won't have great density at lower rates. Use 10 to 15/lb. per 1,000 sq. ft. if density is a major concern.)

"If you go with the higher rates you'll hopefully end up with plants

that will stay in the juvenile state throughout the fall and into early spring. If you plant too early, the plants mature, persist longer and probably won't go out when you want them to."

Also, don't fertilize two to three weeks after seeding, says Bruneau. After three weeks, use ½ lb. of quick-release N per 1,000 sq. ft. every 3-4 weeks.

During the transition period, adds Bruneau, verticut weekly, lower the mowing height to put stress on cool-season grasses, aerify and lightly verticut. □

RIGHTS-OF-WAY

Plant research seeking to alleviate three 'syndromes'

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Harlow Landphair of the Texas Transportation Institute believes that three "syndromes" as related to perception of highway maintenance need to be corrected:

- In "The Green Scrap Syndrome," the highway and its rights-of-way areas are considered to be "left-overs."

- "The Green Fantasy Syndrome" causes the highway corridor to be viewed as similar to, or an extension of, the surrounding landscape.

- In "The Green Belligerence Syndrome," roadside plants are viewed as "little green things" that defy permanent solutions.

In a new research program at Texas A&M University, Landphair works in cooperation with the state highway department to clearly define the purpose and importance of roadside vegetation.

A "field laboratory" consisting of sections of roadside area near the Texas A&M campus in College Station is being used for the research.

"The initial research in-

cludes four areas of inquiry," explains Landphair: slope stability and erosion control; plant dynamics; moisture and plant hydraulics; and drought and pollution tolerance.

"The specific objective of this program," he continues, "is to better understand the engineering properties of plant materials so they can be used more effectively and reduce the cost of roadside maintenance."

The basic functions of the roadside, says Landphair, make it more deserving of special attention.

"The immediate shoulder provides information, lighting, emergency stopping areas, and runoff recovery. The middle zone is usually occupied by drainage channels. The back slope generally provides space for large information standards and lighting, as well as access to and screening from adjacent property."

According to Landphair, environmental conditions surrounding the roadside also make it worthy of more care.

—Terry McIver □



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EVENTS

NOVEMBER

10-14: Landscape and Grounds Management Conference co-sponsored by ALCA and the PGMS, Nashville, Tenn. Contact: (404) 977-5222, (703) 241-4004 or (301) 667-1833.

12-15: Nashville '90 sponsored by The Professional Lawn Care Association of America. Contact: PLCAA, 1000 Johnson Ferry Rd. NE, Suite C-135 Marietta, GA 30068-2112, (404) 977-5222.

27-28: Professional Landscape Management School and Trade Show. Contact: Larry Caplan, Purdue University Cooperative Extension Agent, Room 202, City-County Bldg. Evansville, IN 47708; (812) 426-5287.

27-29: National Fertilizer Solutions Association annual meeting, Cervantes Convention Center, St. Louis. Contact: Sarah Houser, NFSA, 339 Consort Dr., Manchester, MO 63011; (314) 256-4900.

29-30: The Great '90s Equipment Show and Conference, Sabal Park Hotel, Tampa, Fla. Contact: Charles E. Bingaman, P.O. Box 728, Largo, FL 34649; (813) 584-2312.

DECEMBER

3-6: New Jersey Turfgrass Expo '90, Trump Taj Mahal, Atlantic City, N.J. Contact: Dr. Henry W. Indyk, Crop Science Dept., P.O. Box 231, Cook College, New Brunswick, NJ 08930; (201) 932-9453.

4: North Central Turfgrass Exposition, Springfield, Ill. Contact: Illinois Turfgrass Foundation, (312) 644-0828.

4-5: Rocky Mountain Turf Conference, Denver. Contact: Rocky Mountain Regional Turfgrass Association, P.O. Box 903, Parker, CO 80134; (303) 688-3440.

4-5: Southern Grounds and Turf Maintenance Exposition and Conference, Myrtle Beach, S.C. Contact: Special Events, State Tech, 111 Executive Center Dr. Columbia, SC 29210; (803) 737-9356.

4-6: Illinois Turfgrass Foundation trade show, Springfield, Ill. Contact: Illinois Turfgrass Foundation, (312) 644-0828.

4-6: South Carolina Annual Grounds Maintenance Conference and Trade Show, Greenville-Spartanburg Airport Marriott. Contact: P.O. Box 325, Clemson, SC 29633.

4-6: Professional Lawn Care Association of Mid-America convention, Market Center and Park Place Hotel, Kansas City, Mo. Contact: Olivia Golden, PLCAMA, P.O. Box 35184, Kansas City, MO 64134; (816) 765-7616.

10-12: Missouri Lawn and Turf Conference and Trade Show, Clarion Hotel, St. Louis. Contact: Missouri Valley Turfgrass Association, Conference Office, 344 Hearnes Center, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211; (314) 882-4087.

11: Roadside and Right-of-Way Vegetation Management, Rutgers University. Contact: Office of Continuing Professional Education, Cook College; P.O. Box 231, New Brunswick, NJ 08903; (908) 932-9271.

11-13: Alabama Grounds Managers Certificate Program, Bessemer State Technical College. Contact: Frances Hannah, (205) 428-6391.

12-14: Desert Turfgrass/Landscape Conference and Show, Bally's Casino Resort, Las Vegas. Contact: Desert Turfgrass Show, P.O. Box 94857, Las Vegas, NV 89193-4857; (702) 739-8500. **LM**



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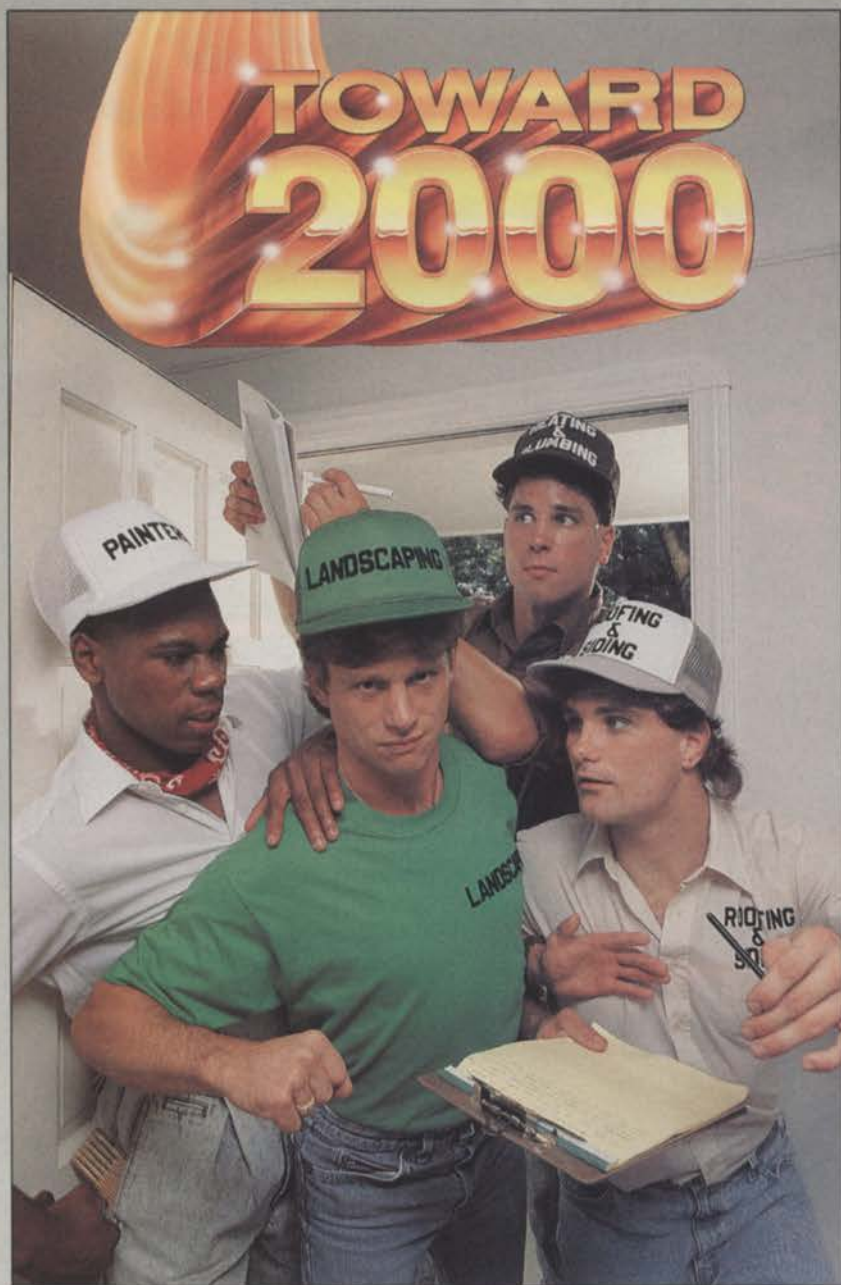
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SERVICES IN THE
'90s

by Rudd McGary, Ph.D.
Senior consultant, AGMA Inc., Columbus, Ohio

America wants more and better service in the 1990's. If landscapers are going to compete, they must meet the needs of tomorrow's older, more sophisticated consumer.

Over the past twenty years, America has changed from a product market to a service market. More than 50 percent of the money spent in the U.S. now goes to services.

The good news for the consumer is that there will be a wide variety of services from which to choose. The question to be asked by the green industry is whether or not the coming competition for the consumer's dollar is something to celebrate or to worry about. Certainly there are many changes in life patterns which make the future promising for a variety of services.

Quality, though, will still count. A series of articles appeared in various publications during the late '80s which dealt with service—more specifically, with the lack of service. One oft-quoted article in *Time*

The unknown quantity seems to be the consumers and the way they will act or react.

magazine dealt with the airline industry and the type of service it was offering—horrible. Planes were late, overcrowded, and airports were battlegrounds for frequent travelers. It was a mess. But with consumers insistently demanding improved service, they finally got help. Current traveling conditions indicate that the consumer was heard.

Consumer demographics discussed are predictions based on current information. The regulatory aspects of the green industry are here and likely to remain. The unknown quantity seems to be the consumers and how they will act or react to the changes predicted. Actually, there is a lot we know about what consumers want, as we'll see later.

Can the green industry take advantage of these new patterns or will it become the railroad industry of the future? □

'90S

DEMOGRAPHIC ISSUES

For some time now, the "graying" of society has been discussed. In various papers, the Rand Corporation Population Research Center has come up with several other important trends which will be seen in the next decade, many of which will significantly affect the green industry.

Two-worker families

The wife/mother of the family is going into the workplace, often to increase the ability of the family to buy a better home or buy certain types of major consumer goods or products (see chart). These families are likely to buy more services, and also are interested in "quality of life" time with the family. This means that many families are looking for services which create more time with the family. Outdoor maintenance work around the house is certainly in this category, as is lawn care. With two-worker families becoming more the norm, continued demand for home outdoor services is more likely.

Dominant age group by 2000: 35-54

A large group of people are at the peak of their income potential. This large group of people, the original "baby boom" generation, will most likely be buying expensive first homes or trading up to more expensive homes. There will probably be a group of people who are older, have more resources to spend on service, and are most likely without the time to do many of the maintenance jobs necessary around a home. This is obviously an opportunity for the entire industry, but before we get too excited consider:

Larger inside space, smaller outside

A trend for the future will probably include larger interior spaces for homeowners but less space outside the actual structure itself. Some of this thinking is already shown by the use of more common spaces in condominium living, rather than individual outdoor spaces.

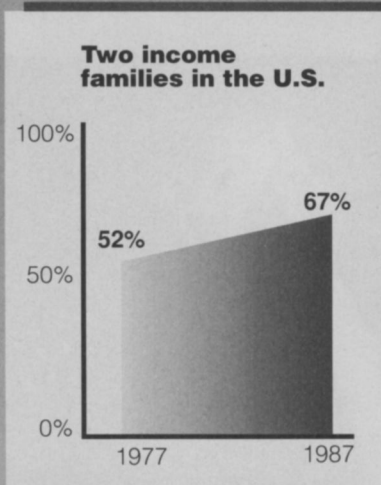
The green industry needs to look at more services than simply lawn care since the space to care for will probably be smaller. And it also needs to focus on new marketing opportunities which occur because of collective buying or multiple service buying patterns.

Based on current trends, according to Rand, younger workers will become harder to find, thus a severe shortage of entry level workers.

Companies that aren't capable of training their own people are going to be in big trouble. The shortage of entry level people will mean that finding qualified people will be difficult, so the burden of training will fall on the company that is hiring.

In addition, keeping the employees will become a greater issue than it is today. This will mean that people management will be much more important and that company benefits will be extremely important. Once somebody is employed and trained, the companies will have to work harder to keep him or her than in the past.

The older people in the workforce will have more places to work. Generally, the type of work will be more in administrative positions. But you should also look to the older generation for help in the sales area where retired sales people could be used during peak sales times. In addition, your training department could be run by people with previous industry experience but don't want to work on a day-to-day basis. □



'90S

GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT

There is government in your future. This should come as no surprise to anyone who has been involved with the green industry, but certainly the government regulations are likely to become more pervasive than ever before. Some trends have already shown themselves.

State governments will dominate regulation. Throughout the Reagan presidency, the burden of power was generally shifted to the state level. This is seen clearly in the state legislation which has been passed in states such as Massachusetts and Ohio. The state governments are the ones which are likely to make changes in restrictive use of various materials, specifically herbicides and pesticides.

In addition, it is likely that licensing for handling and usage of materials will become much more strict in the future. In many cases the general public is not the force behind governmental regulations, rather various interest groups are spearheading the movement. This isn't going to abate in the near future, and more restrictions are likely.

Some companies might wring their hands and talk about the good old days, some are so good that they welcome the need to be more effective and professional. Certainly there have been proposed legislative actions that were not well conceived because they were too restrictive. (Most of them were defeated in state legislatures.)

There is a trend toward more environmental concern, as can be seen by coverage in the mass media. This trend is almost certainly irreversible.

If you want to cope in the future, you must be prepared to do so in a more restrictive atmosphere. While many people worried about the imposition of new regulations, for the most part the new regulations already imposed have not had the impact that many predicted—either for good or bad. They are a way of life, and are likely to remain an important part of the future. □

WHAT THE CONSUMER WANTS

The consumer has been telling us what he or she wants for years now. Sooner or later the green industry will listen.

How do consumers feel about services in general? "Not very good" is the answer. From being ignored in a retail store, to having someone who is incompetent trying to perform a service for which they haven't been correctly trained, to dealing with a service department that thinks repair calls are the lowest form of work—everyone seems to have a horror story dealing with service.

Though service is an intangible, customers are concerned about certain issues that all good service companies will focus on in order to prosper. Here is what consumers want.

When dealing with any type of regulated materials—in the green industry's case, herbicides and pesticides—consumers are concerned about what is being used. This is certainly changing as the mass media report on ecological issues. Every oil spill causes fallout for the green industry based simply on the ecological issues. All the press given to these issues creates consumers who want safety.

In a market survey for one of our clients, consumers were asked if they were concerned about using safer products and techniques. More than 80 percent responded they were "very concerned" or "extremely concerned." This is a pattern we see around the U.S.

However, a second question on this questionnaire asked if the respondents would be willing to take a 50 percent increase in price in order to achieve safety. Only 11 percent of the respondents said that they would.

So the green industry isn't going to be able to charge a great deal more to deliver a safer service. This means training in safety and product use must play a major role in the efforts of any successful green industry company. It also means a certain kind of advertising and marketing is going to be needed in order to attract customers.

The consumer is always interested in results. But more, he or she wants some understanding of what is being done to the property. It is no longer acceptable to simply do a good job; you must let the consumer know what is happening when—and even before—it happens.

The consumer also wants to be comfortable with how the job is done. The time when you could simply do your job and know that you could retain the customer is gone.

Results are one thing, but if you don't even have a chance to get the results because of poor selling and marketing, you can't do much to grow your company. And if you aren't communicating with the customer



How to spend my service dollars? A "dilemma" facing the aging, prosperous baby-boomer generation.

while performing the job, the customer of the '90s is going to get nervous and switch services.

Finally, customers of today worry about what's going to happen if something goes wrong. Many companies offer a guarantee, often built around the individual customer. But if other companies begin to offer this, it becomes an accepted part of the industry and not a way to differentiate between companies.

What consumers want is not only the guarantee but also the type of communication that makes them comfortable calling the company.

- Polite, informed people have to answer the phone;
- Re-service calls must be as speedy as possible (and always professional); and
- The people who work on the property must try to contact the owners to inform them about how, when, and why the repair or re-treat is going to be done.

For most, consumer communication after the service means a rash of first-time service calls, but it also means longer customer retention.

When a consumer wants a kitchen remodeled, he or she doesn't want to contract 20 different services from plumbers to painters to carpenters. The consumer wants a general contractor to handle it all.

This is also becoming more true in the home services area. And if a company does a good job of one service, it is likely to have the inside track on getting the customer to buy another.

Certain types of services such as plumbing are one-time, generally emergency services where speed of delivery is important but building a long-term relationship isn't. Clearly, that type of service is not competing with lawn/landscaping services. Just as clearly, if a customer has a specific important need, such as having electricity or the furnace functioning, then any non-essential services will be second in line to purchase.

Companies which realize this competitive nature will best serve the consumer.

Competition for the consumer's dollar takes place not among companies but in the consumer's mind. And the quicker your marketing people note this, the better off the company will be.

No one wants to buy something that isn't going to work. And when the economy tightens up, you can be sure that consumers will become better buyers.

So the growth company in the next decade will help consumers make intelligent choices, and it will be the prime source of services the consumers want. □