

Modified truck a work and money saver

Out of necessity came an invention.

One of Wes Hadsell's borrowed ideas is a pickup truck he modified with a fold down hydraulic tail gate.

"While at a trade show several years ago, I saw a truck bed which really appealed to me," Hadsell recalls. "It sat on a truck frame and looked like a trailer, but the back five feet sloped down close to the ground, which would create a problem dragging in driveways. Hadsell modified the idea, and enlisted the help of a welder he knew. He realized the design would eliminate problems that can occur when pulling and backing trailers: jack knifing, broken lights, bent axles, flat tires, vehicle license fees.

He and the crew modified a 1991 Isuzu overhead cab truck to come close to the



Modifications to this Isuzu truck make it easy to reach equipment and load cargo. Built-in fuel tanks for equipment eliminate gas can clutter.

"The best feature about this bed is the fold down hydraulic tail. This allows us to load comfortably and safely, but to ride level while in transit."

original. They now have two.

"We were tremendously happy with the finished product," says Hadsell. This past winter he modified another truck, with an added design change, to allow for easy crew access.

"We use these trucks for landscaping, and need the ability to put pallets of mulch, peat moss, trees over the side," Hadsell explains. "We therefore designed the fold down side boards. The best feature about this bed is the fold down hydraulic tail. This allows us to load comfortably and safely, but to ride level while in transit."

The trailers hydraulic cams are from a Jacobsen fairway mower. Smaller, hand-held equipment, like blowers and trimmers, is stored up front, within easy reach. Built-in fuel tanks for equipment eliminate the need for extra gas cans. Diesel fuel and gasoline are in separate tanks equipped with filters and clear viewers to check fuel level.

"The real value (of the trucks) is that they make our crews more efficient," Hadsell says.

—Terry McIver

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Tips for a killer company newsletter

The biggest failing for company newsletters is poor presentation, not the content.

■ If you're going to give your lawn/landscape customers a newsletter, give them a dynamite newsletter.

If you do, you'll accomplish something that even the nation's biggest and best service companies don't often do so well, says Flint Whitlock, who has both produced and judged award-winning newsletters.

In fact, size has little to do with grabbing your customers' attention with newsletters. But, just like the service you provide, your printed material must project an image of quality and be appropriate.

"If your newsletter is well produced in all its aspects, then people will assume your company does quality work. If it's poorly written, designed and printed, people are going to have a negative impression of your firm," says Whitlock, owner of Flint Whitlock Creative, Denver, Colo.

One of Whitlock's clients is The Swingle Tree Co. in Denver whose six-page newsletters are considered among the best in the green industry.

Suggests Whitlock:

✓ Find an appropriate name for your newsletter. Display it in the masthead which fills up about 1/3 of the cover page.

✓ Initially you can start with a single sheet of 8 1/2 X 11" paper, printed on both sides, or 11 X 17" which, when folded, makes four pages.

✓ There is space on each page for at least two or three short articles.

✓ Vary the size of headlines.

✓ Design at least one photograph, illustration, chart, graph, etc. onto each page. It should clarify or amplify information on that page.

✓ Determine how much space you want to devote to selling, special offers, coupons, etc.; how much space to customer information and education.

✓ Write in an easy-to-understand, conversational style. Don't be too technical.

✓ Don't forget to put your company name, address and phone number in each issue.

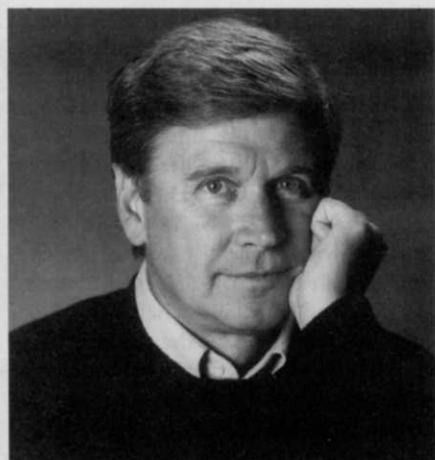
Material for your newsletter might

include: a question-and-answer column, success stories (some of your own if you can do it tastefully), how-to stories, even cartoons if they're appropriate. Keep asking your field and office staffs for suggestions.

The biggest failing of industry newsletters is poor presentation, says Whitlock, even when the information they contain is first rate.

"All the hard work in putting your newsletter together can go down the drain if the appearance of the newsletter turns people off," says Whitlock, who suggests the help of a someone who knows page layout and design.

—Ron Hall



Whitlock: 'Don't dazzle customers with your technical knowledge.'

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HOT TOPICS

Miami's zoo benefits from 'SWAT' attack

MIAMI—In one of the most intense busts of the season, a "SWAT" (Spontaneous Weed Attack Team) launched an attack on weeds in the Miami Metrozoo. More than 100 volunteers joined the team to help eliminate weeds over 500,000 sq.ft. of the zoo and its parking areas.

The effort was sponsored by Roundup grass and weed killer.

"With the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew, the Roundup SWAT team couldn't have come at a better time," says Ron Magill, assistant curator of the zoo. Since the hurricane, zoo staff has focused on restoring animal habitats and creating support systems for the thousands of trees that were uprooted.

The SWAT visit to Miami's Metrozoo was the final stop on a 10-city, four-month tour that included San Antonio, Houston, Dallas, St. Louis, Salt Lake City, Chicago, New Orleans, Denver and Minneapolis. The team partnered with local community beautification groups in each of the cities to maximize local involvement.

"The purpose of the SWAT team tour was to promote community efforts for safer, cleaner and more livable neighborhoods," says Danna McKay, Roundup brand manager for Monsanto. Volunteers attacked weeds, participated in graffiti paint-outs, planted trees and flowers, painted homes and began landscaping projects.

Although the Roundup SWAT team has completed its attacks for 1993, the team will again tour parts of the country in 1994, beginning in March. For more information on future site visits, send a postcard to Deborah Schulte, SWAT Team, One City Centre, Suite 1600, St. Louis, MO 63101, or call (314) 436-5477.



A SWAT volunteer at Miami Metrozoo squirts weed-infested pathways.

Indyk responds to critic's points about LM article

To the editor:

It is encouraging that the article entitled "Athletic Field Renovation or Reconstruction" which I had authored and was published in the April issue has attracted the interest of at least one reader (Stephen McWilliams). Furthermore, it has motivated him to write a Letter to the Editor which appeared in the June issue. However, his seeming lack of understanding of the article as written prompts my response.

First of all, I am compelled to strongly challenge his statement that the decision-making process for determining whether to renovate or reconstruct is a "guessing game." I firmly disagree with him that we are "bankrupt for data" to properly address this question. The technical knowledge

and know-how is available; it's a matter of putting it into practice.

In my own situation, as turfgrass consultant for Turfcon of the Greenway Group, decisions on athletic field construction, reconstruction, renovation and/or maintenance are based on 30+ years of experience. (My) academic training coupled with long-term experience form the basis of site-specific decisions based on sound scientific and agronomic principles. This is not a "guessing game."

Mr. McWilliams concurs that drainage is the single most important factor in the failure of athletic fields. Yet he quickly questions the value of investing in a drainage system. He doesn't seem to understand that the physical characteristics of a "native soil" vary from pure sand to pure clay. Very few, if any, "native soils" possess natural physical characteristics for proper and effective drainage unless they are modified.

His statement, "We continue to put ban-

continued on page 46

ELSEWHERE

Getting certified: does it pay off?, page 46

GIE show is bigger than ever, page 46

List of state turf field days, page 48




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MILES 

Indyk from page 44

bandages on a problem which is rapidly heading toward resolution in the courtroom" adds to the confusion. It is contradictory to his questioning of the value of soil drainage. Furthermore, it is precisely what I had emphasized in my article: renovation is a short-lived procedure unless drainage problems are corrected through reconstruction.

I wish to offer the following sugges-

tions to Mr. McWilliams: (1) thoroughly read the article again with an open mind; (2) become active in the STMA rather than expending energy and talents performing as a sideline quarterback; and (3) seek clarification from the author of an article before criticizing it.

*Dr. Henry W. Indyk
Turfgrass Consultant
Horsham, Pa.*

Landscape certification: it pays, says this California contractor

Open letter to landscapers:

You contractors are probably like me: started out as a laborer, got promoted to foreman, then to supervisor, and finally went on to get your landscape license. It probably took five to 10 years going up the ranks, doing, learning, practicing the craft.

Then what do we do? Get a license and start a business. A business—not a trade. We are still in the landscape trade, but we go from craftsman to businessperson and we have to learn our job all over again.

In the beginning, we still do most of the work ourselves, but...pretty soon, we are spending time in the office instead of the field. And by this time, we start to realize there is a lot to know about business

that doesn't have anything to do with planting trees or gluing pipe. So we sign up for business seminars, go to night school, and buy books on accounting and marketing.

(Now) we are getting an education, but do any of us learn how to teach? And we start hiring skilled and unskilled people to do the work and represent us, and build our reputation. Maybe we check the crews daily and try to show the employees fine grading and proper pruning, but are we getting our point across? We are trying to do something we know very little about: teaching.

I know this to be true because I see the percentages of people who pass the

Certification Test, and they are consistently low—not just in Oregon or Colorado or Washington, but in California, north and south.

If you are doing a good job of teaching, why are so few people passing this test? We ask all basic stuff, nothing tricky—yet just 25 percent pass.

So I want to offer a solution, and it is basic. I challenge you contractors to take the Certification Test yourselves. Set the example, like a real leader would. If you can pass this test, you can expect anyone who represents you to be able to pass it.

Certification has been around for 10 years now, and it is not going away. Companies with certified employees have an edge on the companies that don't. Sooner or later, you have to certify your employees.

This is an education process, so get on board. Education is not always in the format of yelling from the truck to do it this way or that way. Get involved in a process that has gained recognition all across the country. You'll be glad you did, and your employees will have something they can be proud of, certification.

Get certified; it pays.

*Henry Buder
Buder Landscape Restoration
San Rafael, Calif.*

HOT STUFF

A show you don't want to miss

MARIETTA, Ga.—Management for the Green Industry Expo (GIE) has revised the trade show's floor plan this year to accommodate exhibitors requesting more booth space.

"Because of the success of last year's show, many of our exhibitors are asking for more space," says Ann E. McClure, GIE show manager. "So we've re-drawn our floor plan to include wider island exhibits. Attendees should expect to see more exciting products and imaginative displays."

The show, scheduled for Nov. 15-18 at the Baltimore Convention Center, is again being held in conjunction with three educational conferences put on by the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA), the Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA) and the Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS).

The show will open with a special keynote presentation by one of America's most dynamic speakers, Ty Boyd. His keynote address is "Change...Meeting the Challenge!" that focuses on not compromising your personal sense of ethics and values.

For information on attending, call the PLCAA at (404) 977-5222, ALCA at (703) 620-6363 or PGMS at (410) 584-9754. For information on exhibiting, phone (404) 973-2019.

MSU begins new turf program

EAST LANSING, Mich.—Michigan State University announces a two-year program in Lawn Care and Athletic Turf Management.

Coordinator David Gilstrap said the program takes 18 months to complete and includes a 22-week off-campus internship. For information, contact Gilstrap at (517) 355-0207 or Ron Collins at (517) 355-2281.

Watch out for pine shoot beetles

WASHINGTON—The Horticultural Research Institute (HRI) is coordinating an effort to fund research into the pine shoot beetle.

The insect was first discovered last July on a Scots pine in Lorain County, Ohio. It has now been found in 51 counties in six states bordering the Great Lakes. All nursery pines and their lateral terminals must be inspected before they are certified as beetle-free and shipped outside infested counties.

Dr. David Nielsen of Ohio State University is volunteering his time to research the pest. However, financial support of \$20,500 is needed to hire a technician for the first phase of Nielsen's project.

You may send donations to HRI, c/o Pine Shoot Beetle Research, 1250 I St., NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20005.



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GREEN INDUSTRY EVENTS

AUGUST

13: Turf-Seed/Pure Seed Testing Field Day/Two, Rolesville, N.C. Contact: Dr. Melodee Fraser, (919) 556-0146.

17: Ohio Turfgrass and Landscape Horticulture Research Field Day, Ohio State University, Columbus. Contact: Phyllis Selby, (612) 292-2601 or Dr. Karl Danneberger, (614)

292-8491.

17: Golf Course Design/Construction and Golf Day, SUNY, Delhi, N.Y. Contact: New York State Turfgrass Association, (800) 873-8873 or (518) 783-1229.

17: Wisconsin Turfgrass Field Day, O.J. Noer Research Center, Madison, Wis. Contact: Dr. Frank Rossi, (608) 262-1490.

17: South Florida Chapter/STMA meeting, University of Miami. Contact: John Mascaro, (305) 938-7477 or Ed Birch, (305) 938-0217.

17: Professional Bedding Plant Workshop/Annuals, Norfolk (Va.) Botanical Garden. Contact: Sybil Kane, (804) 441-5830.

18: University of Rhode Island Turfgrass Field Day, Kingston, R.I. Contact: Bridget Ruemmele, (401) 792-2481.

18-19: Pennsylvania Landscape & Nursery Trade Show & Conference, ExpoMart, Monroeville, Pa. Contact: (717) 238-1673.

19: Michigan Turfgrass Field Day, Hancock Research Center, East Lansing, Mich. Contact: Kay Patrick, (517) 321-1660.

19: Massachusetts Association of Lawn Care Professionals annual golf tournament, Easton (Mass.) Country Club. Contact: Dick Ficco, (508) 238-8550 or Karen Connelly, (508) 287-0127.

19-20: Practical Rigging for Arborists, Pittsburgh. Contact: Michael Masiuk, (412) 392-8540.

21-29: British Columbia Nursery Tour (sponsored by Florida Nurserymen & Growers Assn.) Contact: Tops 'N Travel, (800) 872-8077.

24-26: Pacific Northwest Vegetation Management Conference, Tacoma (Wash.) Sheraton Hotel. Contact: Ken Maurer, (509) 547-5538.

24-Sept. 9: Hort Tour of England. Contact: Professional Plant Growers Association, (517) 694-7700.

25-26: Pac Hort Expo, San Diego Convention Center. Contact: California Association of Nurserymen, (800) 748-6214.

31: "Fine Tuning Your Turf and Grounds Skill", SUNY, Alfred, N.Y. Contact: New York State Turfgrass Association, (800) 873-8873 or (518) 783-1229.

31: Ohio Lawn Care Association Swap Meet, O.M. Scotts facility, Marysville, Ohio. Contact: Julie Guenther, (614) 261-1242.

SEPTEMBER

1-3: Pan Pacific Green Industry Conference & Trade Show, Waikiki (Hawaii) Sheraton. Contact: Karen Bento, (808) 545-1533.

8-11: International Plant Propagators' Society/Western Region annual meeting, Red Lion Inn, Bellevue, Wash. Contact: Steven McCulloch, (206) 352-5442 or Wilbur Bluhm, (503) 393-2934.

9-10: Southwest Horticultural Trade Show, Phoenix Civic Plaza. Contact: Arizona Nursery Association, (602) 966-1610.

17: Composting Symposium, Holiday Inn/Center of New Hampshire. Contact: Nancy Adams, (603) 679-5616.

17-19: Florida Nurserymen and Allied Trades Show, Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Fla. Contact: FNGA, (407) 351-2610.

18: Turf & Ornamental Open House, University of Nebraska's Anderson Research Facility, Mead, Neb. Contact: Amy Greiving or Don Steinegger, (402) 472-2854.

21-23: Virginia Tech Turf and Landscape Field Days, Blacksburg, Va. Contact: Dr. J.R.



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JOB TALK

Client demands, site challenges not for the timid contractor

Large maintenance accounts like Smith Ranch Homes separate the great landscaping firms from the average companies. Redwood's a great one.

■ Smith Ranch Homes is an exclusive condominium project for senior citizens, located near Terra Linda in Marin County, Calif.

The 25-acre site includes 10.4 acres of landscaping maintained by Redwood Landscaping, which is headquartered in Santa Rosa.

It's easy to see why the Smith Ranch Homes contract offers plenty to keep the Redwood crew, company President Lebo Newman, and Operations Manager Dave Penry alert and well-practiced in the arts of preventive maintenance, planning, and communication with the customer.

The Smith Ranch Homes landscape features two putting greens of 10,000 sq. ft.; a lawn bowling surface of 2500 sq. ft.; several large water treatments; a greenhouse/garden area; and hiking trails through existing natural areas.

Smith Ranch Homes managers expect their own high standards to be followed by all service personnel who visit the property. Redwood therefore designed a measurement system to quantify those high expectations, and a management system to provide consistent quality. But it doesn't end there.

"We are continually redefining what quality is to the client," says Newman.

Total satisfaction—Redwood's area manager for Smith Ranch Homes is Denis Pelley, who is in regular contact with the property manager, four homeowner committees (for landscape, putting greens, garden and bowling greens); the developer; development sales staff; a horticultural consultant; and/or building maintenance staff.

Pelley visits the site daily. He walks the grounds with the property manager or committee representatives, and strives to satisfy their varied landscape expectations.

Newman believes Redwood plays the role of facilitator as it works in cooperation with each of the Smith Ranch interest groups.

Water, plants, geography—Smith Ranch Homes is irrigated with reclaimed water. Plant selection is therefore limited to those varieties which tolerate high concentrations of nitrates and chlorides, and low soil pH.

Originally, the Smith Ranch Homes landscape was to contain exotic tropical plants, such as papyrus to bird of paradise. The site's Zone 14-15 dry oak pasture has made that largely unattainable. Redwood is therefore trying to find more compatible plants to add to the property.

A plant inventory determined which species could best tolerate existing soil and water quality. Plants are replaced incrementally, as the tropics gradually become stressed out.

"Smith Ranch Homes wanted a program they could use to anticipate landscaping needs," says operations manager David Penry, "rather than just reacting to what happened. It's not the kind of place that you can allow to deteriorate then make better again. You have to maintain it at a high level all the time, and that means monitoring very carefully."

The water budget is tight; Marin County is one of the nation's most regulated water districts, with weekly monitoring and a multi-tiered payment schedule that encourages wise water conservation. Water use is monitored weekly.

"We have to stay within the budget allotment, or the client will have to pay much more," says Penry. In fact, Redwood saved the ranch quite a bit of money after it corrected some previously hidden problems in the water management hardware.

Colorful changes—The annual color program is planned at least three months in advance with input from the homeowners' garden committee. Redwood has a contract with a grower to assure the plants they need are available at the peak of color.

Rae-ellen Robertson, Redwood's annual color expert, visits every week. A special challenge has been to find a way to choose colorful plants without appealing to hungry deer.

Redwood Landscaping has realized the importance of being able to anticipate client needs rather than waiting for something to happen. Newman and his managers identify a problem area—such as the water's nitrate and chloride content—and solve it before it becomes unmanageable.



Newman: Meet client quality standards.



Two putting greens at Smith Ranch—a feature unique to condominiums—pose added challenges. Plant selection must be compatible with soil conditions and water quality.