FIRE *continued from page 16*

type of landscape design and maintenance plan is largely an untapped resource that only sparks attention when fire strikes. Sadly, the people most likely to be hit by fire are those who can afford to spend a little extra money ahead of time.

"It tends to be the large lots out on the fringes," explains Susan Van Atta of Van Atta & Black Landscape Architects in Santa Barbara. "These are the 'view' properties, so it's in the high-end developments where the fires occur," she adds.

"There's a marketing opportunity here, but you have to know what you're doing," Van Atta adds. "There's a lot of opportunity for maintenance work and there's a lot of labor to be sold with the proper application of expertise."

Where there's smoke—Expertise is the key word. "There are a lot of wrong ways but no one right way," Van Atta warns. "You need to educate yourself a lot because it's still evolving. There's tremendous variability, so the solutions each time won't be the same."

Landscape managers must always be alert for changes in the conventional wisdom of fire prevention.

After each fire, authorities investigate and try to offer measures that will water down the chances of a repeat disaster, and thus landscape managers must always be alert for changes in the conventional wisdom of fire prevention.

Wind, humidity and temperature combine with topography, water flow and just plain old bad luck in determining who gets burned and who doesn't. "In the old days they used to just keep things cut low and remove all the existing vegetation," Van Atta recalls. "But that creates a tremendous scar on the hillside. Without the trees and vegetation, you don't have wind protection or erosion protection."

A landscape manager can provide a valuable service to customers in fire-prone areas by helping to prevent more serious losses. "Maybe it's not something that you can make a living from, but you can sure earn a lot of credit by educating people," Norton notes.

"You really have to educate people," Van Atta stresses. "After a while, people seem to forget, but your biggest sales pitch is what people see in the newspaper and on the news."

—The author is a freelance writer based in South Euclid, Ohio. He specializes in the green industry.

PLANTS WITH SOME FIRE RESISTANCE*

**A partial list. Growing conditions in yards and maintenance techniques and timing affect the relative fire-resistance and drought tolerance of plants. Those which generally have some fire-resistance are noted, as well as those which may suffer freeze damage inland. Spp. indicates more than one species is commonly grown.*

R = Some fire-resistance **F** = May freeze inland

TREES

	Genus/species	Common name
R	*Arbutus unedo*	Strawberry tree
R	*Ceratonia siliqua*	Carob tree
R	*Cercis occidentalis*	Western redbud
R	*Cercocarpus betuloides*	Mt. Mahogany
R	*Quercus agrifolia*	Coast live oak
	Pistacia chinensis	Chinese pistach
R	*Rhus lancea*	African sumac

GROUNDCOVERS

	Genus/species	Common name
RF	*Aloe spp.*	Aloe
R	*Arctotheca calendula*	Capeweed
R	*Armeria spp.*	Sea pink
R	*Coprosma kirkii*	Prostrate mirror plant
RF	*Drosanthemum floribundum*	Ice plant
R	*Duchesnea indica*	Mock strawberry
RF	*Dymondia margaretae*	
R	*Festuca rubra 'Creeping'*	Creeping red fescue
R	*Fragaria chiloensis*	Wild strawberry
R	*Liriope giantea*	Giant turf lily
	Mahonia repens	Creeping Oregon grape

SHRUBS

	Genus/species	Common name
	Arctostaphylos spp.	Manzanita
R	*Atriplex spp.*	Saltbush
	Berberis spp.	Barberry
	Ceanothus spp.	California lilac
R	*Cistus spp.*	Rockrose
R	*Cotoneaster spp.*	Cotoneaster
R	*Escallonia spp.*	Escallonia
R	*Feijoa sellowiana*	Pineapple guava
R	*Galvesia speciosa*	Island bush snapdragon
	Garrya elliptica 'Evie'	Garrya
	Gaura lindheimerii	Gaura
R	*Heteromeles arbutifolia*	Toyon
R	*Nerium oleander*	Oleander
R	*Pittosporum spp.*	Mock orange
R	*Prunus illicifolia*	Holly-leaved cherry
R	*Prunus lyonii*	Catalina cherry
R	*Punica granutum 'ãna'*	Dwarf pomegranate
R	*Pyracantha 'Santa Cruz'*	Pyracantha

Staffing a family business: going outside of the nest?

Failure to address work-related issues, like organization, is often overlooked when relatives are involved.

Erven: a good craftsman might not be a good foremean.

By James E. Guyette

■ Owners of family businesses find that it sometimes pays to look outside the family when selecting top staffers. At least according to Dr. Bernard L. Erven, professor of agricultural economics and rural sociology at Ohio State University.

The major reason third-generation businesses fail is because succeeding family members are thrust into roles that they either dislike or are simply unable to perform adequately, Erven points out. This problem also holds true for beginning family enterprises.

"We are choosing managers from too small a pool," he cautions. "They may be great kids, but they may not be landscape managers. They don't line them up at the hospital and say, 'I pick that one—he looks like a landscaper.'"

Owners of family businesses need to match the employee's talents with the job. If a match is not being made, look for alternatives, Erven urges. Don't set your relatives up to fail by putting them in a position that doesn't work.

Even those who are solidly motivated may have certain attributes that don't obviously match the management job at hand. The family business owner needs to get a handle on this and make the appropriate adjustments.

"The best craftsman will often not be the best foreman," Erven observes. A crackerjack craftsman may have little patience with non-craftsmen, and will gain no satisfaction in watching others reach success—and both of these qualities are needed in a manager. If your craftsman lacks these attitudes, have him or her remain a craftsman and hire someone else to do the bossing.

Failure to address these work-related issues can bring strife to family relations, Erven warns: "If my sister didn't marry my brother-in-law, I wouldn't have these problems, so it must be my sister's fault."

Organization is often overlooked when relatives are involved. "When you mix family and business, you bring the family problems and the business problems together and you complicate them," Erven explains, adding that these problems may not even be apparent to outsiders. Yet this can get you into trouble.

A sample family business organizational chart may look like a spider web, with no clear definition of who does what. A long-term employee may still not follow instructions issued by someone who supposedly is in charge. "He still has not accepted the son—who was 12 years old when he started working there," says Erven.

Another common family business organizational chart looks like a sunshine with rays poking out. One person is in the middle: "My way, my business." Erven points out that although the trend in today's business world is to decrease middle management, often there's way too little middle management in a family business. The test? "Do your employees stand around in the morning waiting to be told what to do? That's the 'me' approach."

If your organizational chart looks like soap bubbles, it represents things being done "our way" with nobody being in charge. Chaos reigns. Under such a circular system, employees seeking a favor will keep asking each family member until one says yes. Customers seeking answers are left frustrated and annoyed.

Erven presents five principles for a successful family business:

1) Someone must be in charge. This comes in handy even in the most smoothest operations. "A person higher in the organization handles exceptions to the usual."

2) Decentralization. "We want to push decisions down to the lowest level possible. Do you have *managed workers* or *working managers* in your business?" Erven asks. The top boss's quietest day should be on the busiest day of the business—because that boss's time will have been dedicated to planning—not putting out fires.

Most decisions should be made at lower levels, he says: "You may be saying, 'Wait a minute, Bernie, you don't know the people I have working for me.' Then we get into hiring practices..."

3) Parity principle. Authority should be equal to responsibility: "One of the major frustrations of a small business (employee) is being given responsibility without authority."

Employees need to know who's in charge, what are the rules, and will they be enforced.

4) Span of control. Supervise no more than five people in a given situation.

5) Unity principle. Nobody reports to more than one supervisor. "In family businesses this is very important," Erven stresses. "Many employees in a family business keep asking people until they get what they want."

It can cost you good workers, too, who become annoyed at the frustrations involved. "Always ask yourself, is it fun to have more than one supervisor?" The answer, Erven contends, is a resounding no. "I've had employees (of family businesses) tell me that they worked there for two weeks before they knew who their supervisors were."

A successful family business must be organized, Erven explains. Failure to do so invites strife among the workers and a negative impact to the bottom line. "Management doesn't have its house in order, and then we blame the employees because they don't know what we're thinking."

—James E. Guyette is a freelance writer specializing in the green industry. He is headquartered in South Euclid, Ohio.

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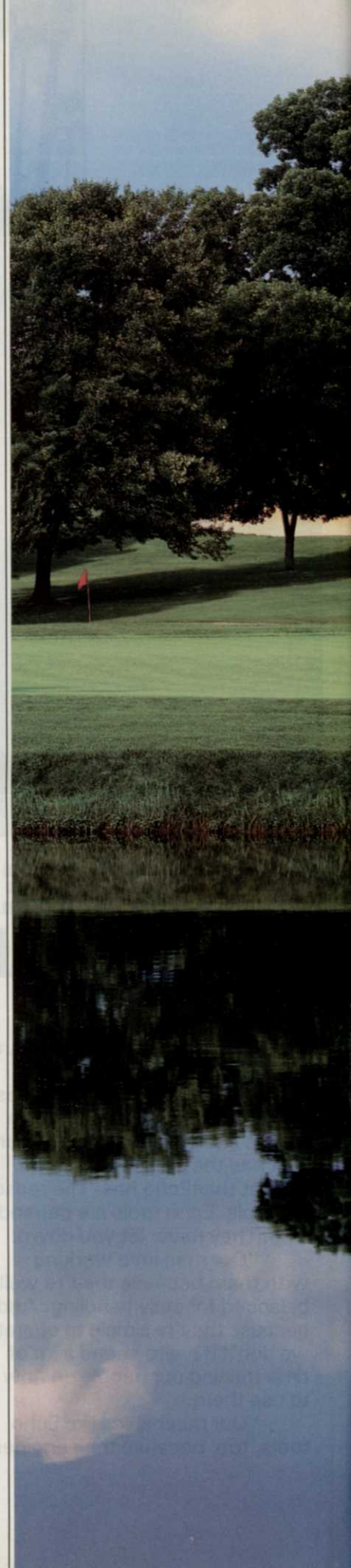

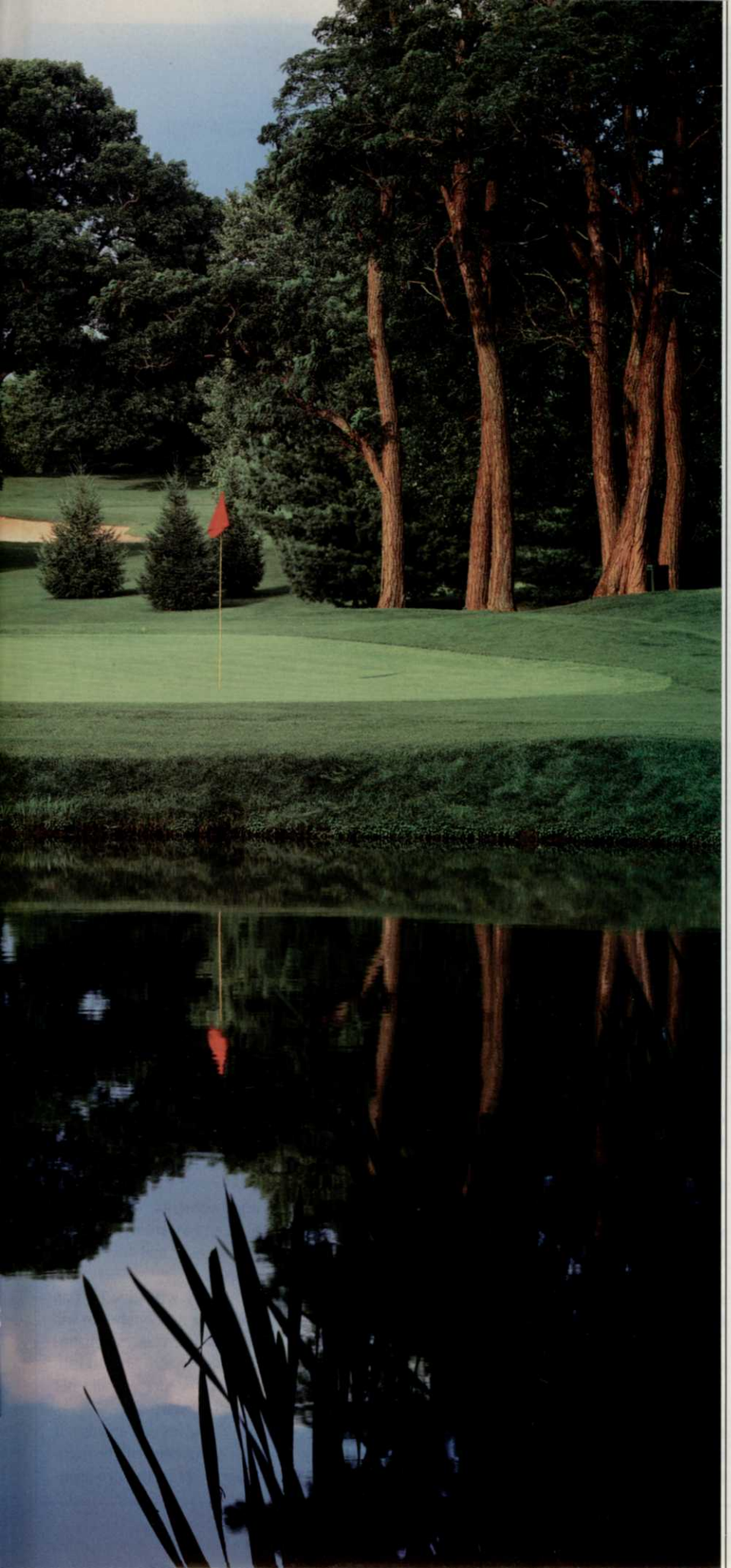

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When should you EXPAND?

CASH FLOW STATEMENT

	Pre-opening	1st mo.	2nd mo.	♦♦♦	12th mo.	Total
Service	-0-	850	1050		3800	31000
Products	-0-	25	75		350	2200
Cash in	-0-	875	1125		4150	33200
Expenses:						
Accounting	-0-	100	100		100	1200
Advertising	250	350	400		250	3600
Bank fees	25	25	25		25	325
Maintenance	-0-	25	35		45	250
Memberships	250	250	25	♦♦♦	0	250
Other	250	250	250		125	2000
Rent	-0-	1000	1000		1000	12000
Supplies	-0-	75	100		100	1300
Telephone	-0-	55	55		60	755
Utilities	-0-	100	100		100	1150
Wages	500	1050	1300		1400	18225
Cash pd.out	1025	3055	3390		3205	41055
Cash from operations	-1025	-2180	-2265		945	-7855
Opening cash	-0-	10,975	8445	♦♦♦	2350	-0-
+/- Cash from operations	-1025	-2180	-2265		945	-7855
Less:						
Equipment buys	15000		1000			17000
Deposits	2000					2000
Supply inventory	2500					2500
Loan payments	-0-	350	350		350	4200
Leasehold improvements	3500					3500
	23,000	350	1350	♦♦♦		29200
Plus:						
Bank loans	10,000					10000
Owner contributions	25,000					30000
	35,000	-0-	-0-		-0-	40000
CLOSING CASH	10975	8445	4830		2945	2945

...When you have the resources, when you see potential, and when you're not needed in one place every day.

by Dan Sautner
Padgett Business Services

■ If you're considering a opening a second office, take stock of your present location first. Answer the following questions:

- Have you developed internal operation systems?
- Do you have a staff person strong enough to replace your every-day contribution?
- Does the company generate more income than you must personally remove from it?
- Does your present location operate in excess of 75 percent of capacity?

If all four answers to the questions are "yes," your house is probably in order. So next examine the basic financial considerations in deciding to expand. Here are some tools you will need:

1) Monthly financial history of your present location from start-up to present.

2) Summary of initial capital required by the first location. Break it into:

- equipment;
- leasehold improvements;
- initial supplies and inventory;
- start-up staffing costs; and
- working capital.

The financial history will give you an excellent idea of how the new operation will develop. You can draw from an established growth pattern and you're also able to estimate costs as they will occur. You did not have this in your original start-up.

The second tool also gives you an edge. It tells you how much equipment will be needed, along with other costs of the pre-open-

ing—how much capital is required to launch your second shop. The working capital amount can be calculated by working out how long the first location took to generate positive cash-flow.

Now you can start developing estimated cash flows for the second shop. Using the historical data you have, along with knowing how not to make the same mistakes the second time around, estimate how much money and time is needed for the second location to stabilize.

To do this, set up a simple work sheet ot create a cash budget for the new operation, as shown on page 26.

You now also have something to give to your banker when you need to borrow the money. Finally, this work sheet provides you a good idea of what your own financial contributions to the new venture will be.

Be sure to consider the cost sharing between the two locations. While inventory, for example, needs to be in both places, the storage may be centralized. Labor costs will not be dramatically reduced, but you will have some flexibility in temporarily transferring some support staff between the two locations. Things like equipment costs and utilities tend to have no overlapping benefits, while areas such as advertising and printing can be easily shared.

On the whole, don't overstate the benefits of two locations. The second location will also cause some costs that a single location does not have, like increased management time. Another will be increased wage costs because you'll need another manager.

Look to yourself as well. Your methods of management will have to change. Decisions will have to be made not based on direct observation, but rather through third-party reporting. Anything casual about your accounting and financial reporting must end. Stricter policies of cash handling and management will have to be enforced.

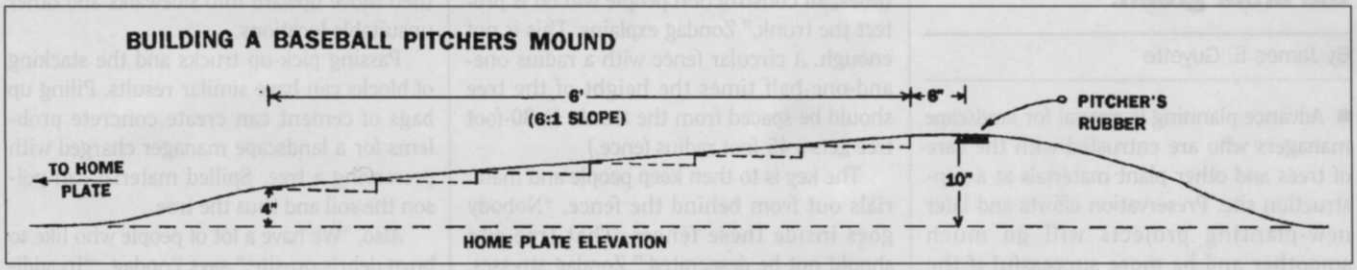
Expansion into a second location is both dangerous and rewarding. Other factors to consider:

- What made your first location great may have been your presence. Consider this carefully.
- Make sure that you have the necessary financial resources. A new location will be cash-flow drain and may take some time to turn positive.
- There is also the outside chance that there may be a downturn in business at your first location. Plan for these contingencies and have enough financial resources to see it through.

The benefits of expansion are increased sales, increased personal equity and a feeling of accomplishment.

—Dan Sautner is chairman of Padgett Business Services, Athens, Ga. For more information, phone (706) 548-1040.

A pitch for safer pitchers mounds



■ The pitchers mound is the focal point of any baseball infield, but most don't get enough maintenance. In fact, says Joseph Motz, mounds on most ball fields, strictly speaking, probably don't even meet specifications. This is particularly true on fields used by recreational or amateur leagues.

Motz, president of the Motz Group and Motz Sports Turf, says baseball rules stipulate that a pitchers mound be 10 inches higher than the home plate area. Usually they're not, more typically erring on the high side. "Sometimes you have to deal with individual coaches as to what height they might like them to be, and they can get quite high," says Motz.

This may not even be apparent to batters because some of the height of the mound is "hidden" in the slope of the infield, says Motz. When the infield is flat—like on artificial turf—the mound is perceived to be higher.

A higher mound, or even the batter's perception of a higher mound, aids the pitcher. But an improperly designed or poorly maintained landing area in front of the mound may handicap a pitcher's performance or even injure him. The landing area is the unturfed area in front of the pitching rubber where the pitcher's feet end up after the delivery of the pitch.

"The landing area is critical for safety," says Motz. "Most landing areas, because the mounds are built higher, tend to be steeper than they should be." How steep should they be: starting six inches in front of the pitcher's rubber there should be a slope of 1 inch per foot for six feet. The landing area, should have the same contour no matter the height of the mound, dropping 6 inches in the 6 ½ feet directly in front of the rubber.

In building, repairing or maintaining the landing area, as well as the batters boxes Motz recommends using a special "virgin" clay which resists kick-out. The remainder of the mound can be built of a special mix consisting of three parts clay and one part sand. Elsewhere on the infield, a ballfield mix of 75 percent sand, 15 percent clay and 10 silt is preferred.

Because most athletic field managers can only dream about their "field of dreams," they must add soil amendments on site to improve play and safety. They don't have budgets allowing them to mix recipe soils off site.

Motz says he doesn't think enough calcined clay is incorporated into most fields. He says when calcined clay is tilled 2 to 3 inches into the infield it provides players with a firm but "corky" footing, and significantly better surface water management.

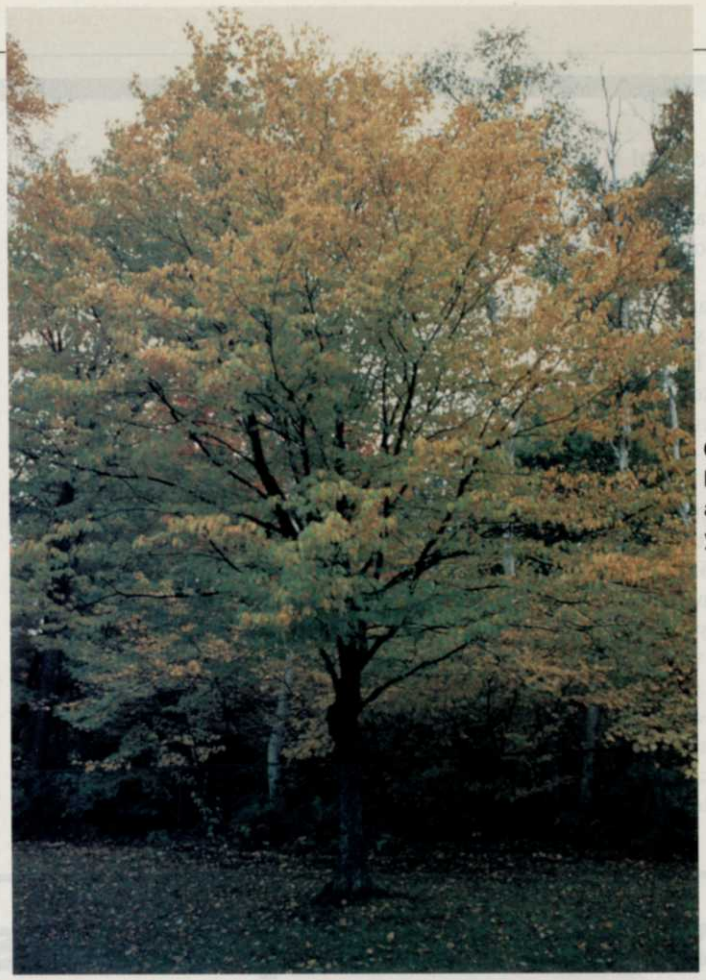
Motz made these and other sports turf suggestions in a presentation at the most recent Ohio Turfgrass Conference.

—Ron Hall

Early arrival at job site prevents damage to trees

Trucks, concrete, soil compaction, collisions. Fencing in trees and advising workers can keep the arbor green.

By James E. Guyette



Older trees are less tolerant of abuse than younger trees.

■ Advance planning is crucial for landscape managers who are entrusted with the care of trees and other plant materials at a construction site. Preservation efforts and later new-planting projects will go much smoother and be more successful if the building crews are enlisted to cooperate with the task from the beginning.

"If you're landscaping a construction site, you'd better get there early enough to lay down the law to the construction workers," says Randy Zondag, extension agent for commercial horticulture/natural resources development in Lake County, Ohio.

Directing construction workers can require some delicate social skills, and it certainly helps to have the developer take an active role, he says. "Take your customers for a walk and show them what happens."

Zondag suggests you point out the trees that are being marked for saving, and note how the roots and other features can be harmed if the proper procedures are not followed. The developer should then notify the crews that you'll be on-site and issuing instructions.

One of the most basic techniques for saving a tree is simply erecting a fence. "Many times, all construction people will do is protect the trunk," Zondag explains. This is not enough. A circular fence with a radius one-and-one-half times the height of the tree should be spaced from the trunk. (A 30-foot tree gets a 45-foot radius fence.)

The key is to then keep people and materials out from behind the fence. "Nobody goes inside these fences. That tree site should not be desecrated," Zondag stresses. In addition to being the first thing up, "the fence should be the last thing taken down when the contractor leaves the site."

Penned in—The fence issue is more important than it might seem because trees hold such an attraction for contractors. A tree can serve as and umbrella for protecting bags of cement or stacked bricks and wood; and it makes a handy garage for parking vehicles. The damage done is usually not obvious at the time. "A tree doesn't die right away—it takes time for a tree to die," says Zondag. While a lot of people think the opposite, "the older the tree is the less it can tolerate."

Soil compaction can be the No. 1 enemy of a tree. According to Zondag, 90 percent of the roots that absorb nutrients are within the top four inches of soil.

Compaction means less air and pore space, less water-holding capacity and increased mechanical resistance. Roots can then move upward into sidewalks and other unsuitable locations.

Passing pick-up trucks and the stacking of blocks can have similar results. Piling up bags of cement can create concrete problems for a landscape manager charged with preserving a tree. Spilled material can poison the soil and thus the tree.

Also, "We have a lot of people who like to burn debris on-site," says Zondag. "In addition to harming the top of the tree the ash will alter the chemistry of the soil." Even burying empty cement bags can shift the pH level and either kill the tree or mandate soil replacement efforts.

Covering up—Debris should be carted off-site if any type of planting program is planned.

"Trash at construction sites is a critical problem down the road for landscapers," says Zondag. Many times plants will refuse to thrive atop a long-forgotten underground trash heap. A favorite burial spot for contractors is right along the structure's foundation—right about where most people want their gardens.

—James E. Guyette is a freelance writer specializing in the green industry. He is based in South Euclid, Ohio.

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TECH CENTER

Drought tolerance of turfgrass

■ Landscapers, lawn care operators and golf course superintendents must often maintain acceptable turf with limited amounts of water. This is especially true in arid and semi-arid regions. Various approaches are used to conserve water, including the use of grasses that need only naturally available water and those that can be managed with reduced irrigation.

Many grasses can be grown in dry areas of the western United States without supplemental water. However, most of these are not well suited for finely-manicured areas because they grow too tall or produce a bunchy and open turf.

In cool areas with good soils and at least 15 inches precipitation per year, drought-tolerant Kentucky bluegrass cultivars, once established, will usually persist, and produce acceptable turf in the spring and fall. Under dry conditions, bunch-type turfgrasses, including perennial ryegrass and hard fescue, often show exceptional short-term drought tolerance. However, with extended drought, these species tend to thin and do not provide acceptable turf quality.

Species selection is the key to healthy, low-water-use, attractive lawns and landscapes.

Among the drought-tolerant grasses that can do well on golf course fairways and roughs are buffalograss and bermudagrass, both low-growing, sod-forming, warm-season species. For roughs and out-of-play areas, several additional grasses—including blue grama and inland saltgrass (warm-season species), and western and fairway wheatgrass, smooth bromegrass and Russian wild ryegrass (cool-season species)—are fairly well adapted to limited supplies of water. Continued research may provide the refinements which will allow these grasses to become more widely used.

Another management approach is to use limited irrigation. Watering in the summer to supply about 70 to 80 percent of potential evapotranspiration (ET) will normally provide acceptable turf from cool-season grasses.

The frequency of irrigaiton is also important. For example, irrigating Merion Kentucky bluegrass at two- and four-day intervals produces better turf than the same amount of water (50 to 75 percent of potential ET) applied at 14-day intervals.

continued on page 32

Pre-conditioning lawns

■ A lawn that is deprived of moisture for 45 days will typically suffer a 20 percent loss, and it will most likely turn a dormant straw color, but it probably isn't dead. After several days of moderate temperature and moisture, re-growth will begin, with visible results about two weeks after the dormancy is broken. It may take three to four weeks for severely drought-stricken lawns to fully recover, but they usually will, in time.

Here is how landscapers, golf course superintendents, lawn care operators and even homeowners can pre-condition their lawns for drought:

- Apply recommended amounts of turf fertilizer in the spring..
- Mow with sharp blades. Dull blades create more stress on the plant and cause it to require more moisture.
- Raise mowing height and reduce mowing frequency. Greater leaf surfaces allow the plant to store more water, and the leaves shade the rootzone from drying heat and evaporation.
- Water infrequently but deeply in the mornings or evenings to establish deeper rooting systems. To determine when to water, probe the soil to four to six inches deep; when the soil is dry or the probe is difficult to insert, it's time to water.
- Avoid excess traffic, which causes more stress.

—American Sod Producers Association

Watering instructions

■ Make sure your clients know how to save water while keeping their lawns looking their best. Here are some suggestions, whether in a hot, dry spell or not:

- Water early in the morning to reduce evaporation.
- Water the lawn separately from trees, shrubs and groundcovers, if possible.
- Have thatch removed in spring if it's more than one-half inch thick. Thatch should not be removed in the heat of the summer.
- Control weeds. They compete for water, light and nutrients.
- Fertilize moderately, applying at the low end of recommended rates.
- Keep your lawn at the right mowing height, a minimum of 1.5 inches for tall fescue, perennial rye and Kentucky bluegrass, a minimum of 0.5 inch for bermudagrass, zoysiagrass and St. Augustinegrass.
- Have the lawn aerated as necessary to prevent compaction and to allow water to move more freely into the soil. Clay soils in particular need regular aeration.

—University of California