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\*Pendimethalin Great Rebate Program dates August 1, 1994, to July 31, 1995.



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Specialty Products Department  
Wayne, NJ 07470

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Circle No. 105 on Reader Inquiry Card



PRIVATE from page 10

## Buying power can mean significant breaks on prices

■ John Fik is grounds and landscape manager for Hobart and William Smith Colleges, and at 10 other accounts of Marriott Corporation's Educational Services Division.

The division services the physical plant, landscaping, housekeeping, and other duties for schools (K-12) and more than 60 U.S. colleges and universities. Its substantial growth has been tied to two factors: excellent customer service and the fact that "colleges and universities want to get back to the business of teaching," according to Fik.

Marriott has a solid legal network to handle issues related to running a physical plant. University presidents, for example, are relieved of union negotiations and other management responsibilities.

The district manager and salesperson survey prospective accounts and make suggestions on how Marriott can improve

bottom line profitability and customer service. It's emphasis on customer service, says Fik, that makes the difference.

"When prospective accounts meet with us, they may not have a budget drawn out, so we cost out the entire program."

The goal is the best possible "curb appeal," which is what Fik believes is one reason students and families choose one college over another.

The savings Marriott is able to pass along varies with the client. It can be tied to energy savings, labor and equipment modifications.

Pricing for materials is competitive due to the Marriott's nationwide buying power.

**No threat**—The perceived threat that a service like Marriott's causes people to lose their jobs is usually unfounded, says Fik. "We're not there to cut the payroll."

Fik sees one common fault with uni-



**Fik: It's in the details.**

versity grounds everywhere he goes: no attention to details in the "priority areas,"

especially the tour routes taken by prospective students and their families.

Maybe all that's needed is a consultation, and Fik is happy to help out, but the advice, he says, "is only as good as the manager implementing the plan."

Fik has been certified by the Professional Grounds Management Society one of only about 35 such certifications in the U.S. at this time.

—Terry McIver

## Paperwork, suppliers a challenge to municipal contracting rookies

■ At a time when many California landscape contractors are being pressured by recession, Gali Landscaping & Maintenance boosted its business by 400 to 500 percent, and stayed profitable while doing it, thanks to more municipal contracting work.

The company, which broke even on its first two municipal jobs back in 1991, has made at least some profit ever since.

Manager Micky Levy says Gali faced a number of challenges, including mountains of paperwork, disappearing suppliers and the need to reduce the high cost of manual weed control in site preparation.

Gali, established 10 years ago, swiftly built a client base of about 500 small accounts. Then the recession hit California and the economy started to slow down.

"People started to limit service requests, cancel accounts or became past due on bills," says Levy.

To turn the situation around, company founder Tom Rotholz looked into the possibility of landscaping business parks and industrial facilities. He learned of municipal jobs that were up for bid through a private source, and began bidding on those jobs.

**New lessons**—After losing many initial bids, the company landed its first municipal account when it bid \$67,000,

prompting a city official to claim that the job couldn't be done for that amount.

"We said, 'We know what we're doing. That's our bid and we're sticking with it,'" says Levy. "It turned out we were \$15,000 below [anyone else]."

Fortunately, the project had a separate maintenance component. Gali's bid ended



**Levy: Company earned trust of other players in munny arena.**

up being high enough here to cover the loss on construction.

The second municipal job was also a break-even proposition. Succeeding projects have all been profitable.

**Know your suppliers**—Levy makes certain suppliers are legitimate. In one instance, a supplier gave "an unbelievably good" price on a large quantity of trees. "We went to pick them up and found that the company had gone out of business," says Levy. "As if that wasn't bad enough, we were quoted liquidation pricing, and the next nearest bid was \$40,000 higher."

Now, Levy is careful to call with specific confirmations before turning in the final bid, and she's extra careful if the price sounds too good to be true.

Levy says agreements with suppliers tend to become much more clear when prices and details are confirmed in writing.

As supplier relationships were ironed out and the municipal workload increased, Gali soon found the need for a different approach with other basic details it had been taking for granted in the residential business.

Faced with the need to control weeds cost-effectively with minimal labor, the company began to use Roundup herbicide for site preparation in place of hand weeding.

"Less than one day spent applying herbicide can save a week of work for one or more people," says Levy, who says the herbicide is a more effective, less expensive method of weed control. **LM**



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## LM REPORTS

## PGRs offer a variety of options

■ Turfgrass plant growth regulators are becoming more popular everywhere in the green industry, in just about every variety of settings.

Not too many years ago, early generations of PGRs were only used on low-maintenance turf, like roadsides. In the past decade, however, new products have been targeted at medium- and even high-maintenance turf like home lawns and golf courses.

All growth regulators are designed to grow turf that is shorter and denser—turf that looks better, requires less mowing, and results in fewer clippings. Some of the newer products even improve the color of the leaves, since the same amount of chlorophyll is available to what is actually less leaf area.

Most PGRs require multiple applications over the course of a growing season, but you should be careful not to exceed the label limit for accumulative product use in one season.

If you are planning to try a PGR for the first time, make sure to follow label directions carefully, because different rates result in different results that, in some cases, can include phytotoxicity and yellowing of plant leaves.

For more information on the products listed to the right, circle the following Reader Inquiry Numbers on LM's Reader Service Card:

**Limit (The Andersons) . . . #311**

**Cutless (Lesco) . . . . . #312**

**Slo-Gro (Uniroyal) . . . . . #313**

**Embark (PBI-Gordon) . . . #314**

**TGR (Scott's) . . . . . #315**

**Primo (Ciba T&O) . . . . . #316**

## SIX COMMON PLANT GROWTH REGULATORS

<b>COMMON NAME</b>	amidochlor	flurprimidol	maleic hydrazide
<b>TRADE NAME</b>	Limit	Cutless	Slo-Gro
<b>TYPE</b>	I	II	I
<b>MFG./DIST.</b>	The Andersons	Lesco	Uniroyal
<b><sup>1</sup>GRASSES CONTROLLED</b>	FF, KB, RY, TF	AB, BM, BN, KB, RY	AB, BH, BM, FF, KB, RY, TF
<b>TOXICITY<sup>1</sup></b>	3,100 mg/kg	709 mg/kg	6,950 mg/kg
<b>PRIMARY USES</b>	turf growth reduction, medium maintenance areas	poa suppression, turf growth reduction, perennial grass conversion	temporary growth reduction of grasses, trees and shrubs
<b>LENGTH OF CONTROL</b>	up to 6 weeks	2-4 weeks	n/a
<b>COMMON NAME</b>	mefluidide	paclobutrazol	trinexapac
<b>TRADE NAME</b>	Embark	TGR	Primo
<b>TYPE</b>	I	II	II
<b>MFG./DIST.</b>	PBI-Gordon	Scott's	Ciba T&O
<b><sup>1</sup>GRASSES CONTROLLED</b>	AB, BM, CN, FF, KB, RY, TF, ST	BN, BM, KB, RY, ST, ZY	BH, ZY, CT, ST, BM, TF, KB, AR, RY, BN, AB
<b>TOXICITY<sup>2</sup></b>	25 mg/kg	5,346 mg/kg	4,460 mg/kg
<b>PRIMARY USES</b>	poa suppression, growth reduction of turf, shrub and groundcovers	on fertilizer carrier for poa control, grass growth regulation	turf growth reduction, seed-head suppression, golf overseeding
<b>LENGTH OF CONTROL</b>	up to 8 weeks	up to 8 weeks	4-8 weeks

<sup>1</sup>TYPES OF GRASSES: AB=annual bluegrass; BH=bahiagrass; BM=bermudagrass; BN=bentgrass; CT=centipedegrass; FF=fine fescue; KB=Kentucky bluegrass; RY=ryegrass; TF=tall fescue; ST=St. Augustinegrass; ZY=zoysiagrass

<sup>2</sup>TOXICITY: LD<sub>50</sub>, rat, oral

Sources: North Carolina Turfgrass Council newsletter, fall, 1992 (Dr. Joe DiPaola); product labels; Farm Chemicals Handbook '94





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It's easy to see why all roads lead to Primo.



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# Getting and keeping the very best employees... without going broke

by Tom Langer, Jr.

■ Attracting and keeping the very best employees is harder than ever, especially if you hire part-time, seasonal and temporary employees.

A continued national labor shortage doesn't help. Statistics also tell us that the aging of the American workforce will result in a smaller group of people available to work in golf and landscaping. So employers—yourself and your competitors—are looking for the little extras, like employee benefits, that ease the problem without breaking the bank.

**Teen labor**—For many businesses, high schoolers make up a big share of summer help. They are generally covered by a parent's health care plan and, as such, don't really require health coverage.

Numerous interviews with teens have shown that the number one benefit is flexibility, not money. The ability to leave for social activities is paramount.

The second benefit that attracts teens is the ability to socialize with other teens. Schedule a few minutes before and after work with some sodas and snacks to attract and keep the best high schoolers.

When you hire a teen, you hire his or her family. The more flexible you can be regarding rides, hours and locations, the better.

**Collegians**—College students, like teens, are often covered by their parent's health insurance. But they, unlike teens, seem to have one primary motivator: money, because they often must pay for a large share of their schooling.

## One company pays a 'tuition bonus' if the student stays on all summer.

Some college students think in terms of more dollars per hour, but a little creativity will minimize your expense. One of our clients pays a fair wage, based on the area's average, or a little less. But, assuming a

GROUP	#1 CONCERN
TEENS	flexibility
COLLEGIANS	money
ADULTS	retirement

student stays all summer, the company pays a "tuition bonus." This amount is higher for each summer they return. Using this method, the company keeps people year after year at a manageable cost.

**Adults**—With adults who are able to assume a high level of responsibility, benefits take on a new importance. Many will come to you in need of health care coverage. You have several options.

You may purchase a group policy; most types are available to groups as small as two. Depending on your state laws, most policies can be written to assume your full-time permanent employees. Part-time, seasonal and temporary employees will generally be exempt.

To hold down expense, consider using a health plan that involves some type of provider network. These providers offer the insurer discounts which translate into lower premiums or better benefits for you.

Many businesses expect employees to pay a portion of their health care cost. Be sure to talk to your insurance professional about a *Section 125, Premium-Only Plan* (any premiums paid by the employee are considered pre-tax, and thus save taxes for both you and the employee).

Or, compensate your key employees so that they can purchase their own coverage. A number of good insurers offer comprehensive, individual policies. One key advantage to you is that the employee owns the policy, and takes it upon leaving the company. There are no continuation issues or paperwork for you, and, since the coverage is written for the individual, there are no minimum participation requirements.

This option is particularly attractive if you or a large percentage of your group is covered under a spouse's plan. Again, many of these plans mimic group plans.

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Some offer prescription drug coverage, life insurance and other benefits.

**Retirement concerns**—According to pollsters, the second benefit prized by most employees is a retirement plan. Today, with plans like 401(k)s and IRAs, most employees fund a large portion (if not all) of their own retirement.

As an employer, funding retirement plans is optional, yet studies show these plans increase employee retention.

If company finances prohibit plopping a large amount of money into a retirement plan, consider using a list-bill, IRA-type arrangement in which each employee owns his or her IRA with little or no cost to your company. Employee contributions are deducted from payroll and a single check is submitted by the employer. Because of the payroll deduction, many who haven't saved for retirement may appreciate the discipline.

**Disability coverage**—Another benefit that frequently costs little but has a huge perceived value is long term disability coverage. This is an especially big concern for younger workers or those who don't earn a great deal of money, since they have likely not had an opportunity to save money themselves.

Long term disability can be arranged with a variety of benefits and benefit periods. Costs can be one percent of payroll or less. While your company out-of-pocket expense is minimal, employees recognize the benefit of having their income protected in case of injury or illness.

Owners often recognize that a key

*continued on page 18*



# GOLF & ATHLETIC TURF

## Sodding vs. seeding: the pros and cons

**Seeding and sodding are both viable alternatives to repair damaged turf and establish new turf. Here's how to choose.**

■ To choose whether to seed or sod new or replacement turf areas, weigh the pros and cons of each within the framework of existing seasonal conditions, site considerations, use demands, and labor and budget constraints.

Paul Zwaska, head groundskeeper for the Baltimore Orioles, usually leans toward seeding.

"Seeding entails low labor and low material costs," he notes. "Variety selection is broad. Seeds sprout directly into the soil, developing their entire root mass in the existing 'virgin' soil. There's no initial thatch layer. Seed can be used to thicken and strengthen existing turf.

"Timing affects seeding success. Early spring seeding on bare ground may expose young plants to summer's heat before they mature enough to handle that stress. Overseeding in the spring may be more successful because existing turf helps protect tender seedlings. Fall bare-ground seeding benefits from more moderate temperatures and humidity levels.

"Because seeded turf is embedded in the soil, it can adapt its growth rate to conditions, unless young seedlings are one-half inch or smaller, or have just broken germination.



**Though seeding is less expensive, you have a larger installation window if you choose sod.**



"Weed competition is greatest with bare-ground seeding. A few scattered weeds can be pulled by hand. Control product applications for severe weed infestations must be postponed until after the seedlings have matured.

"Patience is needed to establish turf from seed. The period from seeding to usability will depend on the type of seed, the degree of cooperation from weather conditions, and the level and frequency of turf use.

"Site conditions may limit choices. Seeding isn't the best option for slopes, though seeding is possible by using stabilizing products."

If 40 to 50 percent of the existing turf is still in good shape and time is sufficient, Zwaska prefers seeding to sodding. He feels the grass plants are stronger due to superior root development into the on-site soil.

"Sodding provides instant gratification, and the installation window is longer," Zwaska says. "Initial material costs are higher with sod, and sod installation is

*continued on page 4G*

### ELSEWHERE

**Telling golf's  
'good story,'  
page 6G**

**Installing a new  
football field,  
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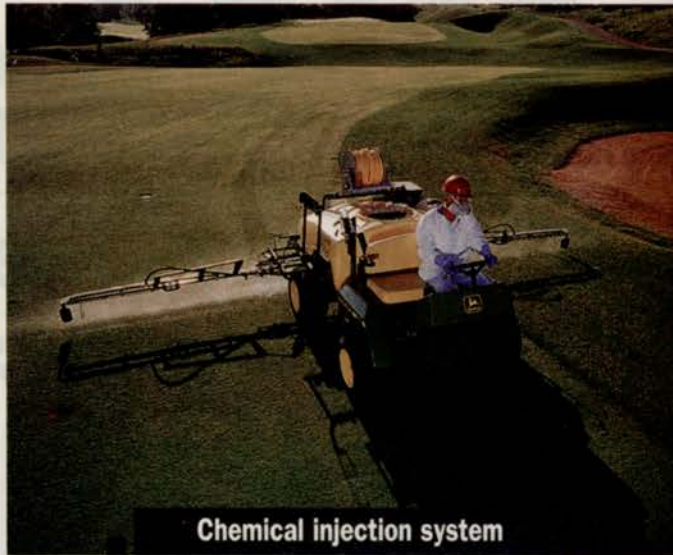
**Interviewing for  
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**GCSAA show  
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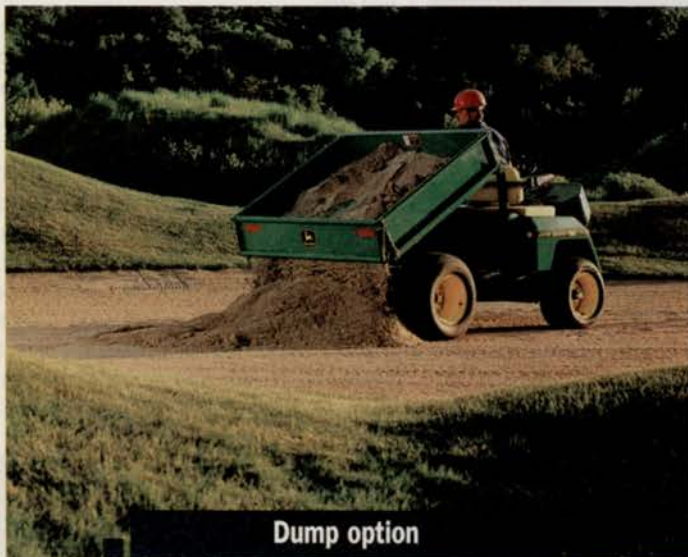




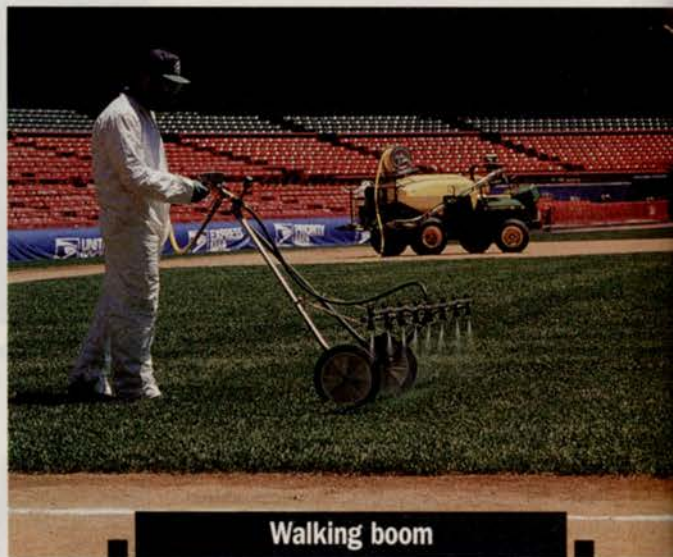
Pendulum spreader



Chemical injection system



Dump option



Walking boom

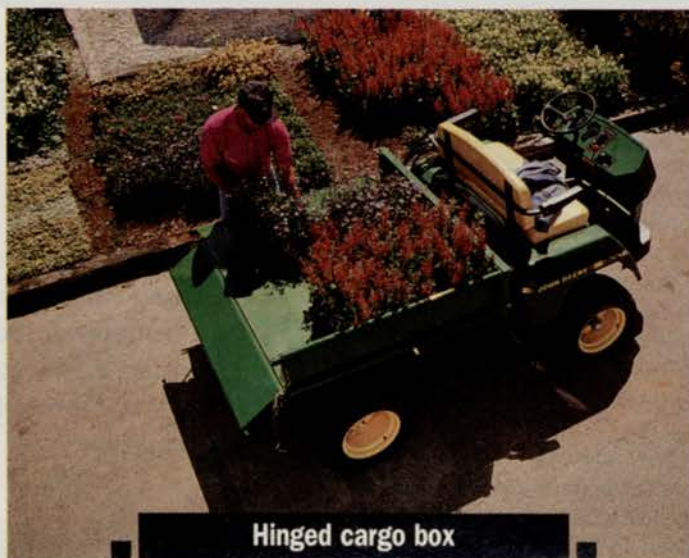
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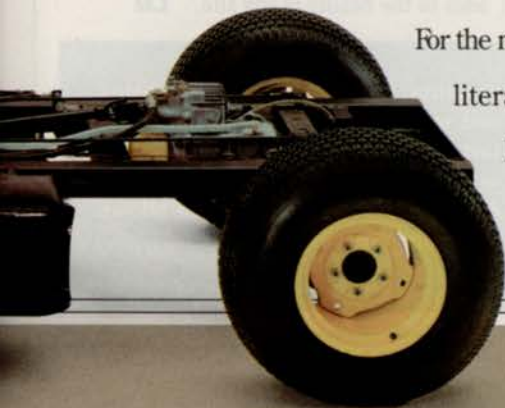
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**SODDING** from page 1G

more labor-intensive. Sod, with a larger top mass, may have a higher evapotranspiration than roots can handle. Diligent watering will be needed until turf roots leave the 'comfort zone' of the sod's soil and extend into the soil below."

If you're sodding, the soil of the sod needs to match the soil profile of the site, Zwaska continues. "An interface layer can form between two different soil types, restricting root growth and water infiltration.

"(But) sod may be the only viable option for certain conditions such as a sports field with heavy wear or exposed soil surfaces. In these cases, existing vegetation should be stripped and sod installed."

**The other side of the coin**—John Huber, president of Huber Ranch Sod Nursery in Schneider, Ind., naturally leans toward sodding.

"Sod can be installed any time of year as long as the sod grower can harvest it," Huber says. "With seeding, germination is limited to the grass growth cycle.

"Sod offers uniformity of coverage and fast usability. Low traffic sodded turf sites may be usable after two or three weeks. High-use areas with bare ground seeding may take up to a year for sufficient turf establishment."

Huber's alternatives to standard sod:

"For high-use situations, such as sports turf, washed sod provides faster rooting into the soil profile and thus faster usability. Washed sod also keeps the soil type 'pure,' avoiding interface formation.

"Where erosion is a special concern, washed sod also will root in more quickly. On a steep slope, both standard and washed sod should be staked to ensure stabilization during the rooting process.

"Big roll sod—42 inches wide and up to 129 feet long—can reduce labor installation costs. Three-person crews using a three-point hitch attachment or walk-behind installation equipment can install big roll sod at the same rate as a 10-person crew with standard rolls. Obviously, there are fewer seams with big roll sod, produc-

**THE PROS:****SEEDING**

- less installation labor
- broad variety selection
- low material (seed) costs
- adapts easily to conditions
- no interface soil layer formation

**SODDING**

- uniform coverage
- instant fix
- good for slopes
- larger installation window
- less weed competition



For high-use areas, washed sod provides faster rooting into the soil profile.

ing a 'finished' appearance faster."

Turf variety selection needn't be limited with sod, according to Huber. "Sod producers," he points out, "may be willing to grow on contract, producing specific cultivars of certain varieties grown on a precisely-developed soil profile and following a precise maintenance program. Costs for this service will be higher and payment generally is made 'up front' to ensure a home for the finished product."

Both Zwaska and Huber agree that

selecting seed or sod depends on a project's priorities. If use requirements are slower, seeding is a viable alternative. If costs are a major factor, seeding is a viable option. The more immediate the demand, the more likely sod should be used.

"Whether seeding or sodding," Huber concludes, "turf provides multiple benefits. It removes pollutants from the air, cleans the rain water to keep impurities from the groundwater, limits run-off and adds to the beauty of any site." **LM**

## The SquAyers alternative:

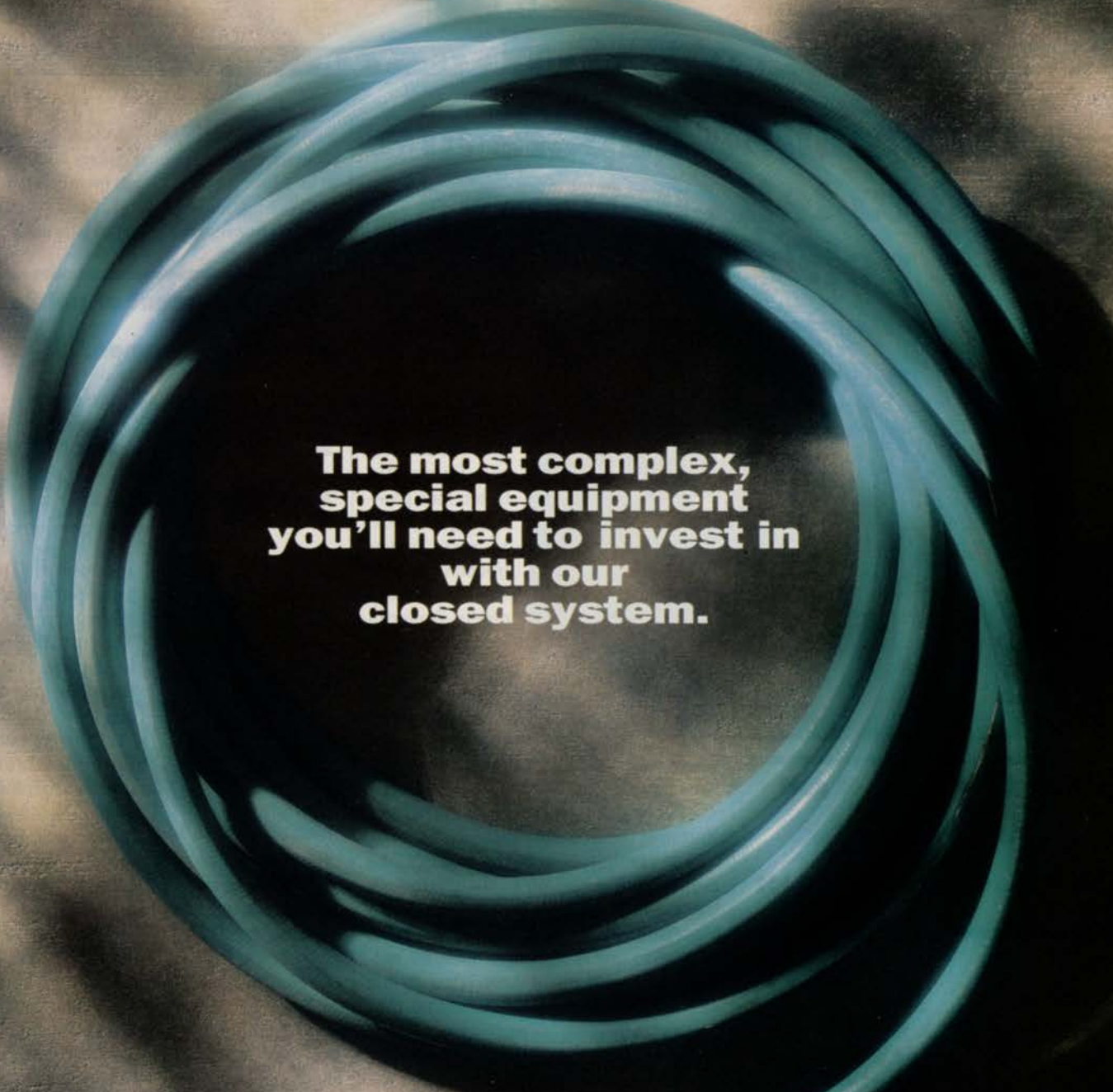
■ "Thick cut sod offers greater stability when quick use is needed in high-traffic areas," notes John Huber.

"A new alternative is SquAyers. These are four-by-four-foot squares of mature turf, rooted into a four-inch-deep sand rootzone reinforced with Netlon mesh elements.

"They provide the fully-turfed surface of sod with immediate surface

stability and load-bearing qualities and instant usability. The blocks of turf can be used to replace damaged or worn areas on high-use locations. A lift-and-place 'grab' system allows quick and easy installation."





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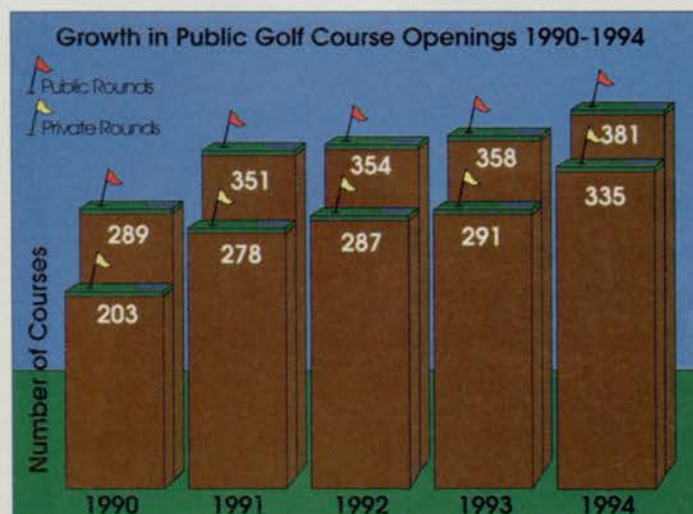
spend on a measuring and metering device for something more useful.

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# Public course supers are urged to tell customers about golf's 'good' story



**While the number of golf courses keeps growing, the public—including a lot of golfers—still has concerns.**

■ The number of U.S. golf courses continues to grow, but the number of golfers and the number of rounds they played the past five years remained flat.

Golf course superintendents can spark golf's renewed growth by being more proactive in their communities, by inviting school groups to their courses and by speaking to local civic groups and clubs, said an official with the National Golf Foundation, Jupiter, Fla.

Richard Norton, the foundation's vice president of operations, told about 300 superintendents here

this past February that the aging of baby boomers favors golf's continued popularity into the foreseeable future. But to continue growing, golf must address issues troubling some of the American public. Superintendents can help in this education program, particularly at public courses. That's

where golf shows its greatest future growth potential.

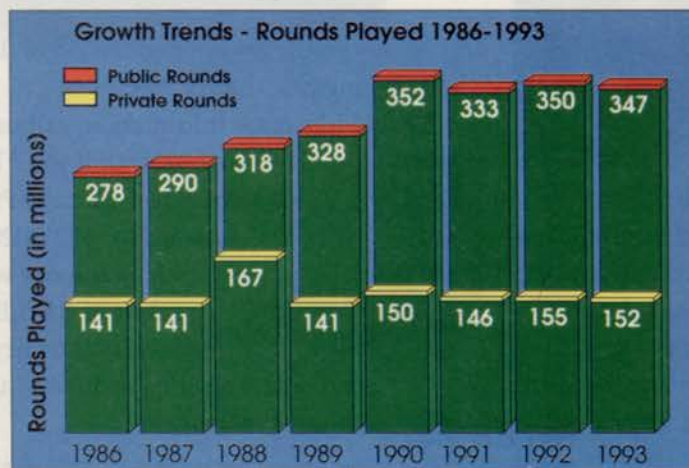
"Public golf is where the action is," said Norton at the GCSSA Conference.

For example, 80% of the nation's 24.5 million golfers play on public courses. Of the 381 new courses (or courses undergoing expansions) in 1994, 335 were public.

"Public golf is the entry point for millions and millions of Americans to the game of golf," said Norton, adding that even here, there are some glitches.

For instance, only 21% of public golfers are women compared to 33% at private clubs.

"We in the golf industry must do a better job of welcoming and developing female golfers at our public courses," said Norton.



Also, 54% of public golfers describe themselves as occasional golfers compared to just 10% for private club members.

"We must also look again at existing players, the large number of people who come in

**Only 21 percent of public golfers are women, compared to 33 percent at private clubs, according to NGF research.**



**Richard Norton:**  
**'We tend to be perceived as exclusive.'**

and out of the game over a period of years," said Norton. "We have to find ways to get these people to play more rounds."

Although public golfers outnumber private golfers by almost four to one, they spend far less per golfer to play the game.

This is evidence that golf is

not exclusive, said Norton.

The NGF estimates that public golfers spent \$530 each, generating \$10.4 billion this past season. Private golfers spent about \$2,610 and totalled \$4.7 billion.

Another misconception that superintendents can help correct is the view that golf is "environmentally insensitive." This could be tougher.

NGF surveys show a surprisingly large number of golfers aren't convinced that golf courses are, themselves, "good for the environment." In fact, 41% of public golfers and 22% of private golfers described themselves as neutral to the issue. And, 23% of both categories feel that golf courses use too much water, while 34% of public golfers and 23% of private golfers feel that fertilizers and chemicals used on golf courses pollute lakes and streams.

Again Norton called on superintendents at public courses to reach out to golfers and non-golfers alike in the communities in which they work, and help deliver golf's positive message.

—Ron Hall



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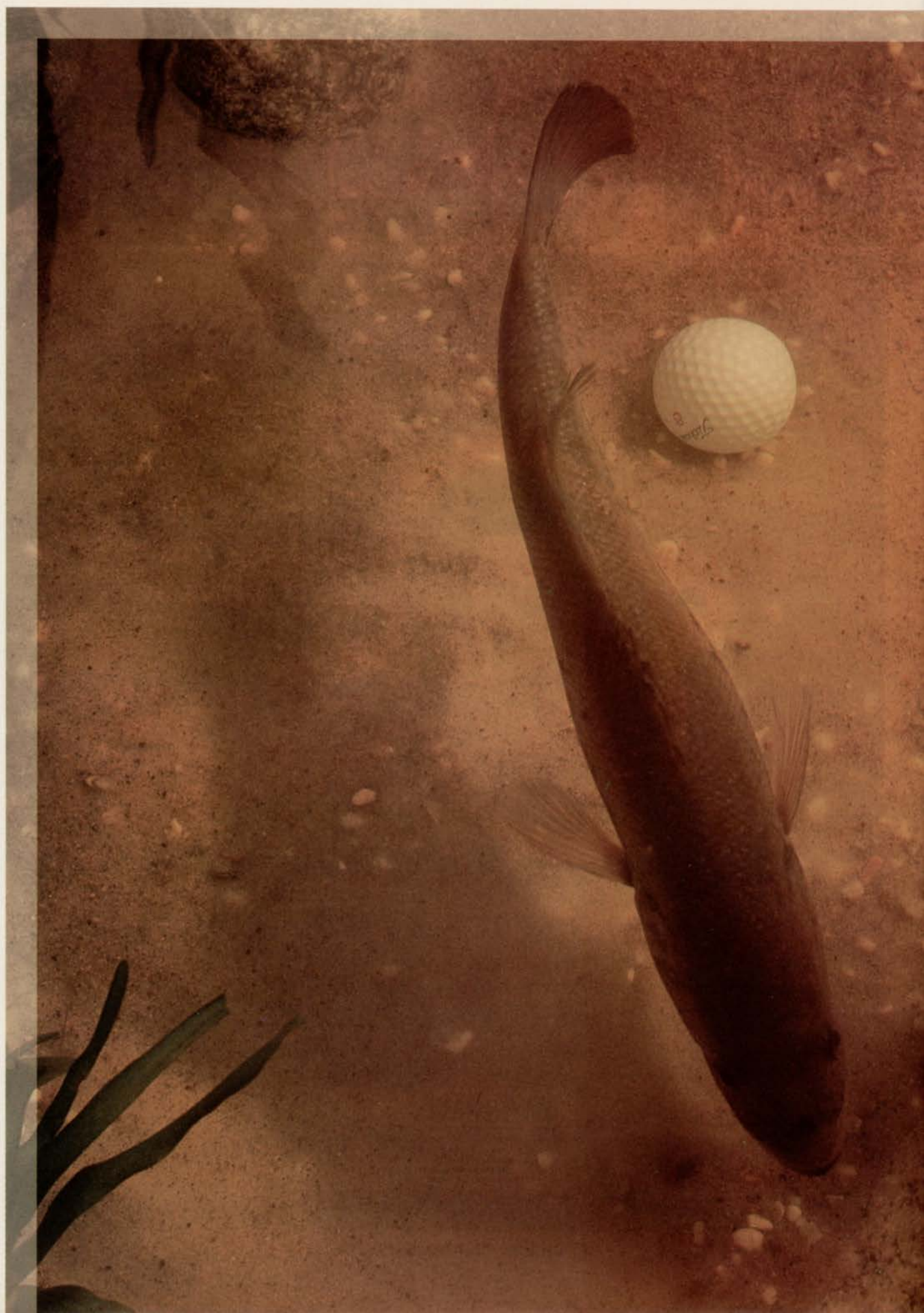
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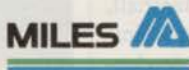
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Do it for those in golf who actually like landing in trees and  
splashing in water hazards.





# Sand-based field holds up to heavy play all season



Memorial Stadium's final game of the season, and traffic stress is hard to find. Note synthetic turf over a padded asphalt base for the sidelines.

## Forty-eight years of play and a high-sodium clay soil lead to installation of a sand-based field.

by Ken Walter

■ The City of Fremont (Neb.) Parks Department tried aeration, top dressing and soil conditioners on the compacted soil at Memorial Football Stadium in the 1980s and early 1990s, but nothing would soften the soil. A complete soil replacement in 1993 was the solution.

The city developed Memorial Football Stadium in 1947 for two high schools and a Division II college team. Very limited field improvements had been made since the original construction, and a high sodium silt clay crown caused serious problems in the 1970s.

By the '80s, the field's root system could not penetrate beyond two inches, and poor footing endangered the players. On rainy weekends, the center of the field and bench areas would become bogs.

**Complete overhaul**—Mark Altman of Altman & Altman Consulting, Marshall, Minn., was hired to examine field specifications and manage seeding and turf development. Bids were let for the installation of a sand-based field and conversion of the old

cinder track to a new polyurethane track. The total project price was \$587,000, with the sand-based field development costing \$187,000. Dollars to fund the project were generated by revenues from keno gambling.

The field was demolished and excavated to a depth of 12 inches. The old irrigation system was replaced with a new system using Toro 644 heads. It was installed in the top 12 inches, to avoid contaminating the growth media with soil. Goal posts were moved to a practice field, and new, narrower-spaced posts were installed.

The sub-base was graded to approximate the final field grade, and conduits were installed for the various communication and utility lines. Four-inch perforated drain tiles were laid in 12-inch-deep trenches and back-filled with gravel. They were spaced in a herringbone pattern 25 feet apart. These



Four-inch perforated drain tiles were laid in 12-inch deep trenches.

collector drain tiles were connected to the storm sewer main around the field's perimeter. Inlets were then placed to pick up track run-off. A hardboard form at the field's perimeter separates the track's rock base and the playing surface's growth media.

The next step: 3,034 cubic yards of "G" sand, a mix of 10 percent reed sedge peat and 90 percent screened sand. The sand mix was graded to a depth of 12 inches. Again, special care was taken to keep soil out of the growth media.

**Quick germination**—Altman directed the fertilization and seeding. Fertilizer was incorporated into the top three inches of the growth media and watered in. On June 3, pre-germinated bluegrass seed was broadcast, followed by a seeding of perennial ryegrass drilled in four directions.

Drill and tire marks were smoothed over with a drag mat. The field was then hydromulched and watered frequently during the daylight hours.

The results were amazing. The seed was up in four days and mowed 15 days later.

The first game was played on September 3, 91 days after seeding, when the roots reached a depth of seven inches.

The turf continued to improve as the season progressed, in spite of a heavy early schedule. On occasion, three weekend games were played.

We held our first national NAIOA playoff game on November 19. The young field came through the season with no damage and very little wear from game traffic. We played 17 games on the new field in the first season; two of them were played during rainfall, and the largest area of damage was no bigger than a dinner plate.

The turf will continue to improve over the next three to four years, as more organic matter builds from the maturing root system. Problems can arise quickly, but control treatments react well, which requires a plan that is similar to managing hydroponics:

- Soil and tissue tests taken frequently during the first and/or second year.
- Small amounts of fertilizer every 10-14 days until holding capacities improve.

After seeing how well the fields played during the season, two other colleges in the conference are considering building similar fields.

—The author is superintendent of parks and recreation for the City of Fremont, Neb.



# Problem solving on turfgrass fields

■ The successful management of turf subjected to high traffic requires the application of certain fundamental cultural practices. As the demand for facility quality goes up, the respective demand for turf quality also increases. At these times, cultural practices and resource input go beyond the basics.

**Traffic**—Turfgrass consists of three traffic components. They are compaction, wear and shear. **Wear** is the tissue injury from pressure, tearing and scuffing. **Shear** causes soil and root displacement and the dislodging of the verdure.

**Compaction** is a subtle effect of traffic. Traffic causes an increase in soil bulk density, soil lateral strength, total water holding capacity and lateral rooting. It causes a decrease in soil aeration, infiltration, soil temperature (compacted soils are cold and wet), root depth, and total turf roots.

**Playability**—Sports traffic reduces turf cover. Once this happens, playability is reduced, with a decrease in traction or footing. Traffic also causes erratic ball bounce and roll, and poor uniformity of playing characteristics.

**Field safety**—In the effect of reducing turf cover, sports traffic decreases impact absorption and footing, while creating a non-uniform surface. In 1984, there were more than 98,000 football injuries reported by hospital emergency rooms. No one knows how many could have been prevented by a good playing field, but their certainly were many that could be blamed on a poor one.

**Species selection**—Traffic tolerance of turfgrass species varies a great deal, including an often wide variability within species. Where they have been adapted, the new perennial ryegrasses have superior durability and the Kentucky bluegrasses have good ability to recover from injury. The elite tall fescues are still considered to have a coarse texture, but have proved to be the more durable species in selected climates.

**Fertilizers**—Traffic, durability, playability, aesthetics, recovery, ability and field safety require high vigor in turf. To get that vigor, plant nutrient requirements are high. A common recommendation for nitrogen in one pound of actual N per



**Aeration can make all the difference in the world—like at Camden Yards.**

1000 sq. ft. per each month of growing season. This is probably the highest practical rate for most fine turfs. The other nutrients most needed on turf are phosphorous, potassium and iron. Potassium is an important ingredient, particularly on sand and modified rootzones. Potassium applications equal to the rate and frequency of N are usually recommended.

On well-drained (eg., sandy) soils, the sports turf will require as much potassium as nitrogen.

When the soil temperature is high enough for root and rhizome growth, the total nutrition available to the plant should be high. The recommended soil pH for high traffic turf is about 6.5. At that pH level, most nutrients present in the soil will be available to the turf. If pH is too high or too low, the appropriate adjustments would be made to the soil.

**Irrigation**—As "quality demands" of high traffic turf increase, more attention is given to irrigation. Water stress from

drought, summer heat, or wind can be devastating to this kind of turf. Even in areas where irrigation is not common, an irrigation system will be necessary to produce a sports field capable of supporting high traffic.

**Aeration**—High traffic turf soils are subject to severe compaction. Hollow tine coring is the most effective technique for compaction relief of sports fields. Solid tine aeration and water jetting are used.

Because core aeration is slow, labor intensive and messy, there are practical limits as to the frequency. On loams or heavier soil, coring should be done after every fourth or fifth football game, or eight baseball or soccer games.

In youth soccer, where there may be eight games per day, it may only be practical to aerate once each month. Sandy soils need aeration to keep the surface from sealing.

**Topdressing**—If the field is to be topdressed, it is usually done after aerating, with hollow tines, to add a loose soil to the effective rootzone, and to help maintain a true playing surface.

**Mowing**—Mowing is the most common practice and must be done on nearly all turf installations. The frequency of mowing is determined by removing less than one-third of the blade length at any one time.

For example, if the mower is set to 1.0 inches, the grass would be mowed before it is 1.5 inches tall. If that takes a week, that is the proper frequency. Mower height should be measured from a hard level surface to the top of the bedknife on a reel mower and to the bottom of the blade of a rotary.

Patterns of lines, squares, and cross-hatching can be made with a skillful use of the mower. When done well, patterns leave a good impression with players and spectators, and help instill pride in the facility.

**Thatch**—Thatch is a layer of undecomposed organic matter. Thatch can prevent water and fertilizer from going into the soil and may also stop oxygen exchange in the rootzone, which would result in shallow roots and weak turf.

Thatch on high traffic turf is a valuable impact absorbing safety pad, and mass for wear resistance. Undesirable on most turf, thatch is an asset on high traffic turf. The players do a more than adequate job of preventing the thatch from becoming excessive.

—Steve Cockerham, Ph.D., University of California, Riverside, in "Turfgrass Topics."  
(Photo by Erik Kvalsvik)



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## Interviewing for an 'upper crust' job:

# YOU are the product

**Better jobs go beyond the usual turf-related duties, and require a more methodical search and top-notch interview skills.**

■ If you're about to begin a search for a new career opportunity in the private or resort golf course market, make sure you "look" before you look, advises David Stefan, president of Chase America, an executive search firm based in Jupiter, Fla.

In other words, consider your options. Opportunities in golf now go beyond the usual "superintendent" classification, and include positions with golf course developers, construction firms and design/architectural firms. You might even want to consider a job with a supplier, in product development or sales.

"These groups [often] hire people with backgrounds such as golf course superintendents," says Stefan. "The superintendents serve as project managers, construction superintendents, design coordinators, golf course designers, independent consultants or property managers."

Salaries in any of these positions will

vary according to the location and overall job prestige and description.

More and more, a golf course superintendent's knowledge has to go beyond turfgrass science.

"A private club has a greens chairman and someone who reports to the general manager or greens chairman," says Stefan.

"At a resort, you report to the vice president of operations, who might not know you or understand what you do [as far as turf is concerned]. But he's looking for the skills that he's most interested in: your business skills.

"He doesn't ask whether you can grow grass," says Stefan. "He assumes you can do that. He wants to know if you can do zero-based budgets, and capital equipment appreciation and evaluation."

"Property manager" is another job title that needs a variety of responsibilities, depending on the property to be managed. If you manage the property for a homeowner's association, you consult with the association members and are responsible for their lawns, trees, streets, sewer maintenance and the landscaping. If there's a golf course as part of the development, throw that in as well. Stefan suggests a qualified property manager/superintendent can earn between \$90,000 and \$120,000.

**Product, packaging & value**—At this point, you're not talking about a pallet of

**Stefan: Some jobs require business smarts.**



fungicide or a new greens mower. *You* are the product. And you have to dress well and be well-spoken. Leave the casual wear at home, and dress in a suit and tie.

What do you bring to the table? How do you maintain the facility? Talk about your crew.

You're going to need two resumés:

**1)** The short version is sent before you arrive in person. It's one page in length, and lists your career objectives, significant accomplishments and experiences, and education.

*(Do not list marital status, religion, birthdate, the year you graduated or any other date which can place your age. This is not required information.)*

Include a cover letter of introduction.

**2)** The long version includes references, specific dates of employment, with no lengthy gaps in your work record. Mark it "Confidential," and leave it with the company representative before you leave—only if you think you'd like to work there.

If you'd rather they didn't contact your present employer right away, ask them not to do so until after they decide to hire you.

You might include a letter of recommendation with the longer resumé, as well as copies of training certificates and awards you've earned.

**At the interview**—"Image supersedes reality," says employment consultant Jack Kaine. He believes that anyone looking for new opportunity should perfect:

- how you look,
- what you say,
- what you present to a prospective employer (resumés; letters), and
- how you prepare.

**Be positive, enthusiastic and confident.** A recent "USA Today" survey found that attitude carries more weight with a prospective employer than your work experience and a personal recommendation.

A positive attitude, says Kaine, starts

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-Source: David Stefan, Chase America

continued on page 16G



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**INTERVIEWING** from page 14G immediately with your thought process.

"Just think about the person you most like to work with. Do you think about their strengths or their weaknesses; your similarities or your differences?"

The way you present yourself, and your perception of the employer will ideally lead to what Kaine calls, "an agreement of the minds." Call it empathy, or hitting it off or clicking. "If it's a successful meeting, it'll work for everyone."

**Take control.** Don't just walk in, shake hands, sit down and wait for the interrogation to commence, says Kaine. Better to take charge, but in a positive, assertive way. Don't be aggressive, demanding or obnoxious. At the very least, you must make a good first impression.

### Kaine: Listen more than



### you talk.

The person who speaks first "sets the tone of the meeting." But don't comment about the weather or how long it took you to find the place.

Say something that helps you get control.

The more questions you ask, the more you will be able to control information, time and climate; and steer the direction and content of the information exchange.

**Listen.** The person who listens the most and best will always have the greatest effect, because they have information. "If you listen more than you talk," promises Kaine, "you increase the probability of getting the job."

Never argue, but ask questions to further your understanding. Ask "what?" questions, not "why?" questions, and let the interviewer know what you're trying to learn before you ask a question. And get permission to ask questions. (For example, "Can you share that information with me?")

**Practice** with a friend. Role play.

"You know you've done well," says Kaine, "when you can state their case better than they can."

Kaine and Stefan lectured during the recent GCSAA trade show and conference in San Francisco.

—Terry McIver

# GCSAA

## convention wrap-up

SAN FRANCISCO, FEB. 20-27

### New officers

Gary T. Grigg of the Royal Poinciana Golf Club in Naples, Fla., was elected president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America during its annual meeting.

Grigg told the GCSAA membership that his goals this year would be in five areas: the environment, membership growth, image, government relations and growth of the annual conference and show.

Immediate past president Joe Baidy of Acacia Country Club, Lyndhurst, Ohio, will continue to serve on the board of directors.

Other new officers: Bruce Williams of Bob O'Link Golf Club, Highland Park, Ill. (vice president); Paul McGinnis of Union Hills Country Club, Sun City, Ariz. (secretary/treasurer); and directors Dave Fearis of Blue Hills Country Club, Kansas City, George Renault III of Burning Tree Club, Bethesda, Md., Tommy Witt of Wynstone Golf Club, North Barrington, Ill., and Michael Wallace of Hop Meadow Country Club, Simsbury, Conn.

### Golf tourney winners

Todd Barker of Fore Lakes Golf Course, Taylorsville, Utah, shot an even-par two-day total of 144 to win the Division A flight of the GCSAA Golf Championship. Barker, son of the 1977 GCSAA champ, is a top amateur golfer in Utah. The 45th annual event was held at five courses in Monterey, Calif. Other individual winners:

Division B: Greg Hall of Renton, Wash. (gross) and Dennis Vogt of Cherry Hills, Colo. (net); 1st Flight: Scott Wagner of Silver Springs, Md. (gross) and Fritz McMullen of West Bloomfield, Mich. (net); 2nd Flight: Sean Remington of Chevy Chase, Md. (gross) and Ed Cimoch Jr. of Mount Cobb, Pa. (net);

3rd Flight: Paul Jamrog of Blechertown, Mass. (gross) and Ivy Latham of Allen Texas (net); 4th flight: Dennis Flynn of Katonah, N.Y. (gross) and Tim Powers of Pound Ridge, N.Y. (net); 5th Flight: Ron Garrison of Center Valley, Pa. (gross) and Scott Woodhead of Belgrade, Mont. (net); 6th Flight: Roger Stewart Jr. (gross) and Trevor Oxtoby of Vienna, Austria (net);

Senior I: Alan Andreasen of Mission Viejo, Calif. (gross) and Mike Bavier of Palatine, Ill. (net); Senior II: William Johnson of Plymouth, Minn. (gross) and Ken Goodman of Wheeling, Ill. (net); Super Senior: Clete Idoux of Granite City, Ill. (gross) and John Grant of San Rafael, Calif. (net); Affiliates: Dave Bingham of Fresno, Calif. (gross) and Jim Davis of San Diego, Calif. (net).

### On the international scene

Leaders of the world's golf course management and greenkeeping organizations met during the annual show. The "summit" focused on three subjects: golf and the environment, the education of superintendents and the status of the superintendents' profession.

During the meeting, the GCSAA received specific requests from several countries:

- Argentina requested permission to reprint GCSAA technical articles;
- Australia requested that all information traveling over international borders be sent through national governing bodies;
- Sweden asked for copies of all turf and equipment research;
- The U.K. asked the GCSAA for information on certification, and to consider common standards for certification; and
- Uruguay asked the GCSAA to continue its educational visits.



# LAWN & LANDSCAPE INDUSTRY

## Extended warranties on plants can be another profit center



**Most contractors offer season-long or one-year free replacement, but this idea is raising interest.**

■ The practiced eyes of Wally SaBell, 47 years in the landscape business, tell him that the hollies will die.

Even before summer arrives, they'll die along with much of the other plant material at the newly-opened chain restaurant on the busy Denver street. An out-of-state crew—the restaurant managers says it's an in-house operation—didn't match design and plant selection with Denver's high and dry climate. The cost in both labor and materials to replace the plants with more appropriate selections will be great.

Who will pay these costs?, asks SaBell rhetorically.

This case, admittedly extreme, illustrates the importance of landscape warranties. They're not to be taken lightly, SaBell believes.

Landscape contractors don't subscribe to a single philosophy in guaranteeing their plantings or their work. How can they? The variety of services they offer, and the uniqueness and size of the projects they tackle make this impossible.

For instance, a few years back SaBell's firm landscaped a 13-block-long mall project in Denver. One element of the project was planting 270 six-inch-caliper trees (among other things). As the specs required, SaBell had costed 27 extra trees into the bid. He kept these trees readily available. As it turned out, he lost just a single tree, and that was prior to installation.

More fortunately, SaBell says, just after the final tree went into the ground, his firm, in a separate contract, began maintaining the site.

"Many times, a contract will go out without a provision for the maintenance to be done by the contractor who installed it," says SaBell, now in his mid-60s and very active as a landscape consultant. "That's unfair to the contractor. It can also be unfair

*continued on page 4L*

**Warranties protect a property owner's investment.**

*Courtesy Post Properties, Atlanta*





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To see firsthand why a Gator Utility Vehicle rises above the rest, visit your local John Deere dealer.



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**WARRANTIES** from page 1  
to the eventual owner of that property."

But some landscape pros have neither the expertise nor the resources to bid such ambitious projects. Also, some contractors don't offer maintenance services.

It's no wonder that they can feel caught in the middle—sometimes implementing a design that isn't their own, then relying upon the property owner, or another contractor, to maintain the integrity of their installation, at least through the warranty period.

Even so, landscape warranties, whatever their particulars, are almost as common as landscape companies.

Warranties offer protection for property owners. They may also indicate that the contractor is confident of his/her service. But, most importantly, they allow the contractor to compete in the marketplace.

There are complications though, although few probably as clear-cut as these examples:

- The new landscape that isn't watered for three weeks because the property owner went on vacation.
- The freshly planted evergreens that turn brown because the family collie finds it a convenient place to urinate.
- The young tree girdled by the dog chain wrapped around it.

Typical is the warranty offered by Patrick McGrady's Pro Green of New Castle, Ind.: one year on plant material. A longer warranty can be arranged if Pro Green maintains the property, too.

**Environmental Design's Joel Lerner: Why shouldn't the customer have the option of buying an extended warranty?**



"We have to use some judgement," cautions McGrady. "We have to look at the job itself. For instance, if it's a nice-sized job and it's a valuable client, we don't ask a lot of questions. We just take care of it."

Deanna Walker of Turf Tenders, Bellingham, Wash., says her firm guarantees their plantings for one growing season. "We will give an added warranty if we maintain it for a full year," she says, adding that seasonal, or one-year free replacement is "pretty typical" in her marketplace.

**A new idea**—But Joel Lerner, president of Environmental Design, Chevy Chase, Md., wonders why a warranty can't also become an additional profit center for a contractor.

He says he's considering developing "an extended warranty" plan similar, in purpose anyway, to those offered by auto or appliance dealers.

The landscape contractor, most simply explained, calculates the cost of the "extended warranty" into the original cost of the project, and presents it to the potential client as an option.

"What if we offer an extended warranty and on the warranty we stipulate that we'll do site inspections on a scheduled basis. And we'll provide the customer with plant condition reports," says Lerner. "Maybe on this warranty we can write in a plant replacement clause to."

Clients buying an extended warranty afford the contractor the opportunity to stay in touch with them.

"I think it would indicate to the client that we want to see this property as much as we can to make sure everything is right," adds Lerner.

"Why not?," says Greg Carlson of Carlson Landscaping, Duluth, Minn. "Extended warranties are done for just about everything else."

Even so, his warranty remains similar to most others in his northern Minnesota market, one year on plants and related services.

"You have to say that you'll stand behind your work, then honor that. Otherwise you'll never get a job," Carlson says.

Most contractors, in fact, agree that a long-term warranty program will work—as long as they're getting paid for it.

—Ron Hall

## Fighting weeds...and fires, too?

**Lawn care technicians find that volunteering for the local fire department is a rewarding avocation.**

■ What does Curb Appeal, a professional lawn care company, and the Stafford, Va., volunteer fire department have in common?

They're staffed by some of the same people, including Curb Appeal owner Charlie Robertson, a 20-year fire department veteran.

This spring marks the fourth year in  
*continued on page 6L*



'We work our jobs on a contractual basis,' says Charlie Robertson.



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Marietta, GA 30068-2112; FAX (404) 578-6071;  
or call (800) 458-3466.



**CURB APPEAL** from page 4L

business for Robertson and his lawn care company. In addition to Robertson, Curb Appeal consists of 7 to 10 part-time employees. All, with just two exceptions, are also volunteer fire fighters.

One of the exceptions is a county deputy sheriff. The other is a local high school senior that Robertson selects each season to learn the business. Last year's student employee is in college and now a volunteer fire fighter also.

Curb Appeal provides mowing, pruning, mulching and light installation and other maintenance services in central and northern

Stafford County, a county of about 75,000 people. It's located on the north side of the Rappahannock River from Fredericksburg, and about 30 miles south of Washington D.C.

The area is rich in history. George Washington's boyhood home is nearby, along with sites of important Civil War battles. But, it's not too rich to live in. In fact, Stafford has become one of the communities of choice for career firefighters from larger communities in the northern Virginia/Washington metropolitan area.

**The need is there**—Robertson says as the community grew and became more prosperous, so did its need for a top-notch lawn care provider.

"There is an abundance of gypsy mowers and individuals out here with a pickup truck, weedeater, and blower. They have little or no background in the business,"

says Robertson.

The unique schedules of career fire fighters allows Curb Appeal to fill this growing demand for reliable lawn care services.

"The fire fighters and law enforcement personnel make excellent employees," says

Robertson. The unique schedules of career fire fighters allows Curb Appeal to fill this growing demand for reliable lawn care services. "The fire fighters and law enforcement personnel make excellent employees," says Robertson. The fire burned eight acres of woods and two storage sheds but was contained before it reached three large homes. Fire fighters were at the site for three hours. There were no injuries.



Fire fighters and law enforcement personnel already know how to deal with clients.

Robertson. "They're highly responsible. They know how to deal especially well with clients. They know how to work with and, in many instances, repair the equipment on the job site.

"They take pride in their appearance and project an exceptional image for the company."

What happens when Curb Appeal technicians get an emergency call that they must answer?

They secure the equipment, head for the fire station, get on the apparatus and respond, explains Robertson. When they're finished with the emergency, they put the fire fighting equipment back in service, then return to finish the lawn maintenance task.

**Ready for action**—For example, last fall Robertson and three other technicians were pruning trees at the county government

reached three large homes. Fire fighters were at the site for three hours. There were no injuries. The technicians don't respond to every call. Some calls, by their nature, are routine and handled by other volunteers, says Robertson.

But, when they're needed, they respond to emergencies whether it's an infant locked in a car or the freeing of a trapped accident victim.

"Our clients are understanding," says Robertson. "We work our jobs on a contractual basis, not by hourly rates."

It's not uncommon on a work day to see Curb Appeal respond to an emergency still dressed in their Curb Appeal shirts and baseball caps, says Robertson.

—Ron Hall

## New, bright colors for a new season

**With so many ornamental varieties on the market, it's easy to give commercial properties a completely new look every season.**

■ Seasonal color displays can make a commercial development stand apart from all others.

Perimeter Center, a 400-acre suburban office and retail complex in north central Atlanta, demonstrates how color can be changed each season for a new look. Vibrant color combinations in mass plantings and the use of a central color theme give the Perimeter Center landscape its vitality and eye appeal.

Each year new varieties renew interest

in the landscape.

The fall flower varieties are more limited, primarily, pansies, violas, parsley; thyme; mustard; kale; snapdragons and bulbs.

**In plain view**—Since flower color draws attention, the location of the beds on the property is also important.

Most of the beds at Perimeter Center are located in prominent areas along the main drive, at the base of pylons that mark

*continued on page 10L*



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50" Cut/20-hp Kohler Magnum

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in high concentrations are their children.





**COLORS** from page 6L

the entrances into the park and at building entryways.

During installation, there are three crews of four employees assigned to flower work. In May, about 48,000 summer flowers are installed in more than 60,000 square feet of bed space.

In October, about 66,000 fall flowers and 62,000 bulbs are installed in the same beds after they have been thoroughly prepared. Flower bed sizes range from 50 to 4000 ft. Additionally, there are 85 flower containers located strategically at building fronts which are also changed out seasonally.

In the past few years several select areas have been chosen for perennial flower displays, such as in courtyards, roadsides and at signs.

Varieties such as *peony*, *dianthus*, *iberis*, *rudbeckia*, *helianthus*, *iris* and *coreopsis* are used as perennials, as are ornamental grasses and ferns.

A floriculturist is employed year-round for flower maintenance: weed and pest control, irrigation, fertilization and dead-heading.

In the summer of 1994, Perimeter



**Favorite varieties around Perimeter Center include *helichrysum*; *balcon geraniums*; *amaranthus* and *eucalyptus*.**

Center tenants were given a special tour through the park. A shuttle bus was used

to transport the group during the lunch hour to various flower beds. At each stop the varieties were identified and maintenance and use was discussed.

**Something new each year**—Every year brings something new in the way of color and design. New varieties of woody ornamentals are introduced as are new flower varieties. In the past few years the following plants have been incorporated in planting designs: *buddleia*; *cphalotaxus*; *chionanthus*; *chitalpa*; *fothergilla*; *raphiolepis*; *itea*; *loropetalum*; *stewartia*; *styrax*.

Installation is done by local landscaping firms.

Once the plant material and irrigation system are in place, the Taylor & Mathis landscape staff assumes the maintenance responsibility.

Ornamental plant maintenance includes seasonal pruning, deep-root fertilization, pest monitoring, irrigation until establishment and remulching twice a year.

Perimeter Center was developed by Taylor & Mathis, a real estate development and brokerage firm with offices in Atlanta; Birmingham, Ala.; and Miami. **LM**

## 'Eco' rose finally arrives

**Nationwide retail marketing is already under way for the rose, described by its suppliers as 'the environmental rose' because of its resistance to black spot and mildew.**

■ The August release of the patented ground cover rose, Flower Carpet, var. *Noastraum*, will give landscape pros another colorful tool.

Nationwide retail marketing is already under way for the rose, described by its suppliers as "the environmental rose" because of its resistance to black spot and mildew.

Werner Noack, a German rose breeder, spent 25 years developing the rose. It received a gold medal in the All Deutschland Rose trials in Germany in

1990. It was introduced in Europe, New Zealand and Australia in 1991-1994.

The Flower Carpet is an iridescent, rose-pink groundcover rose which, say suppliers:

✓ will grow in U.S.D.A. climate zones

2b-11 (Calgary, Canada to Miami, Fla.).

✓ can be planted anytime during spring, summer and fall.

✓ is a low, dense, compact bush, measuring, when mature, 24 to 36 inches tall and about three feet across.

✓ produces flower clusters 6-8 inches in diameter (with about 18 flowers per cluster).

*continued on page 11L*





✓ will, if well fed and properly watered, produce 2,000-4,000 flowers per season in full sun.

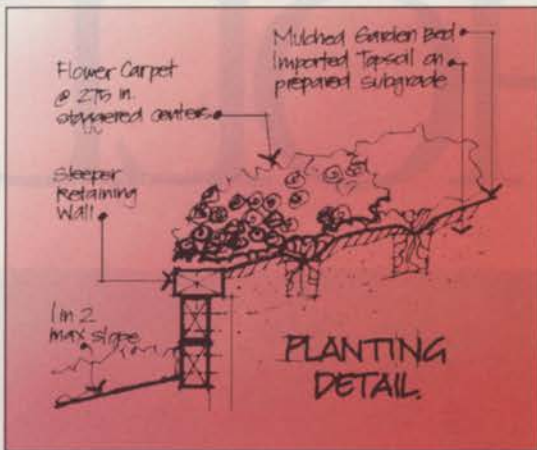
✓ blooms in shade, though in reduced numbers,

✓ requires no fancy pruning, just one good hard cut per year during winter.

✓ can be planted 2-3 per square yard for ground cover, or 32 inches apart to establish boundaries.

For more information contact members of the The Flower Carpet Growers of America:

- Angelica Nurseries, Inc., Ken-



nedville, Md., (410) 928-3111.

- Bailey Nurseries, Inc., St. Paul, Minn., (612) 459-9744.

- Clinton Nurseries, Inc., Clinton, Conn., (203) 669-8611.

- El Modeno Gardens, Inc., Irvine, Calif., (714) 559-1234.

- Flowerwood Nursery Inc., Mobile, Ala., (205) 964-5122.

- Midwest Groundcovers, St. Charles, Ill., (708) 742-1790.

- Monrovia Nursery Company, Azusa, Calif., (818) 334-9321.

- Zelenka Nursery, Inc., Grand Haven, Mich., (616) 842-1367. **LM**

## How your employees can help you keep your old reliable customers

by Bess Ritter May

Like most alert landscape management business people, you know how hard it can be to attract new customers. But do you also train your workers to do all they can to help you keep your old reliable "steadies?"

It's often thought that those who comprise this important backbone trade will always be loyal unless some actual damage is done by your workers to an owner's lawns and grounds. However, it has been proved that unless such mishaps are really drastic, they will be forgiven when they're corrected. But what is rarely taken lightly by most "old" customers—and will often lose them—is the inability of employees to observe some simple, considerate and very easy common sense business practices.

To be sure they are careful concerning such matters, your answers to these questions should be "yes:"

**1) Do your employees wear neat and appropriate uniforms** with their names and your company name embroidered on a pocket or on the backs of shirts? If they look like skid row characters rather than competent and reliable landscape maintenance workers—unwashed, unkempt hair and ragged and dirty clothes—you've got a problem.

**2) Do employees cooperate with each other and work together in harmony**, efficiently and quietly? If they are quarrelsome, forever arguing about who does

what, and where and how, and other details—you've got a problem.

**But what is rarely taken lightly by most 'old' customers—and will often lose them—is the inability of employees to observe some simple, considerate and very easy common sense business practices.**

**3) Are your employees considerate of your customers?** Workers can be a real benefit if they offer these "extras:"

- carry empty trash cans from the curb to the garage (or some other place designated by the customer) on collection days;

- bag lawn clippings, pulled weeds and other trash and dispose of it properly and neatly, as directed by the customer;

**4) Do you train your workers to be considerate and responsible to customers** in other ways, including:

- moving garden furniture, croquet and other games; children's toys and similar items on lawns before mowing them,

and—if appropriate—replacing them?

- carefully covering all such items which cannot be moved before spraying the lawn with fertilizers and pesticides?

- neatly coiling and storing hoses near a faucet or some other practical place designated by the customer after watering?

**5) Do you train your employees so that they are able to offer your customers more than the usual services**, such as sodding, seeding, liming, irrigation and landscape installation? This is one important strategy in which many companies hold their important steady customers and keep them loyal. It also generates considerably more business and profit. You might also put together a complete but cookie-cutter-type lawn care program which employees can offer customers on the spot.

You may feel that angling for, and obtaining such, additional business isn't worth the trouble. But by neglecting to do so, you run the risk of losing many "steadies" to the competition, especially when cut-rate rates are being offered.

*—The author is a freelance writer based in Philadelphia, and a frequent contributor to LM.*



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# Front-page article in 'USA Today' causes concern

## Study suggests links between cancers in children and exposures to pesticides in and around home.

■ A study linking pesticide exposure to childhood cancer got front-page coverage on Monday, Feb. 27, in the "USA Today" national newspaper.

Lawn care professionals report varying levels of customer concern.

"A few people called to say that they read the article, and they cancelled because of their concern with chemicals," says Mrs. Richard Ritenour of Ritenour's Custom Lawn Care, Butler, Pa.

"Maybe a half dozen people have mentioned it (the article)," she adds. "Not that many, really. But it does make it tougher for us." Ritenour works with her husband and two sons in the 20-year-old family business.

Gene D. Pool of Emerald Green Lawn Care, Van Wert, Ohio, says he learned about the article as he gathered with about 70 other lawn pros in Washington D.C. on February 27. They were preparing to meet their respective legislators when they learned of it.

"I've got a few calls when I got back home, so I immediately called the 2,4-D Hotline," says Pool. "They sent me lots of information." (2,4-D was one of about six chemicals specifically mentioned in the article.)

Pool says he hand-delivered some of this literature to a concerned female client. So far, though, he doesn't think he's lost any customers because of the article. Even so, he cautions against dismissing it as unimportant.

"If you get four people concerned enough to call you, that might represent 50 other people who are concerned but just don't call," he explains.

Andy Hines of Shrub & Turf, Athens, Ga., says he didn't get a single call that he could trace to the article.

"I think people are so desensitized to the constant publicity about what causes cancer that the perception is that everything causes cancer," he says. "I don't think there's any shock value for it anymore."

But "shock value" describes the "USA Today" headline:

### Home pesticide linked to some cancer in kids

Though the writers managed to weave three hot buttons ("pesticide," "cancer"

and "kids") into an eight-word headline, the article itself was brief—little more than a printed sound bite—and to the point. It cited a study published in the American Journal of Public Health by researchers from the University of North Carolina.

They reported that they interviewed the parents

of 252 children diagnosed with cancer between 1976-1983.

They found, according to "USA Today":

- Children whose yards were treated with chemicals were four times as likely to be diagnosed later with soft-tissue sarcomas, malignant tumors of muscle and connective tissue.

- Children whose homes contained pest strips faced 2 1/2-3 times the risk of leukemia.

- Children whose homes had been exterminated for fleas, termites or other bugs faced a slightly elevated risk of lymph cancer.

At the end of the article, the study's lead researcher, Dr. Jack K. Leiss, acknowledged limitations in the published

*continued on page 16L*

## Home pesticide linked to some cancer in kids

By Anita Manning  
USA TODAY

Lawn treatments and home pest extermination are associated with an increased risk of cancer in children, says a study in the current American Journal of Public Health. Researchers from the University of North Carolina inter-

dering EPA review because of "concerns about the risks of cancer and neurotoxicity."  
Kids whose homes had been exterminated for fleas, termites or other bugs faced a slightly elevated risk of lymph cancer. Most likely chemicals: Dieldrin, heptachlor, Dursban and chlorpyrifos (Dursban). Chlordane is no longer in

## EPA wants more info

### Lawn pesticides appear to be small problem compared with toxic chemicals stored in unsafe locations within the nation's homes.

■ The U.S. EPA said it has insufficient information to begin regulatory action against pesticides in spite of a study claiming to link childhood cancers to exposures. These claims were made in the study entitled "Home Pesticide Use and Childhood Cancer." It was published in the American Journal of Public Health.

The EPA response four days later in a "Desk Statement" said the specific methods to measure actual exposure in the study "were crude," and that the study did not look at specific chemicals.

"A single epidemiological study only rarely can establish a causative relationship between an exposure and an effect," said the EPA. Even so, the EPA said, "It just makes sense to take reasonable steps to avoid undue exposure."

The EPA added that it has "several activities under way" that will provide a better understanding of the potential risks to children from household pesticide exposures. It also said that it has begun identifying and eliminating a number of carcinogens from the market.

A more obvious problem, the EPA admitted, is the 80,000 children involved in common household pesticide-related poisonings or exposures in 1993 alone.

A survey by the EPA found that:

Almost half—47 percent—of all households with children under the age of five had at least one pesticide stored in an unlocked cabinet, less than four feet off the ground.

About 75 percent of households without children under the age of five also stored pesticides in an unlocked cabinet less than four feet off the ground. This is significant, said the EPA, because 13 percent of all pesticide poisonings occur in homes other than the child's home.



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**CANCER** from page 14L

research. "You cannot infer cause and effect at all....Further research needs to be done to elucidate that," he was quoted as saying.

Although it's small comfort to LCOs, the timing of the article—coming at the height of selling season—could have been worse yet. "USA Today," the most widely read newspaper in the country, boasts a circulation of 1.9 million on Mondays. It jumps to 2.4 million on Fridays.

—Ron Hall

## Hurray for complaints!

by Robert Andrews

■ It is hard to argue with the statement that "the primary purpose of business is to create a satisfied customer." If we can accomplish that, most all else will follow.

Hard evidence suggests that companies known for exceptional service can regularly charge higher prices than their competitors. And while outstanding customer service must start at the top, it must also be pervasive throughout the business. It must be consistent, monitored for defects, fine tuned, and constantly updated. It must involve everyone from the owner to

## Why people buy

■ Remember that customers tend to consistently buy based on the following reasons:

- ✓ Constant presence of the product or service.
- ✓ Ease of use or installation.
- ✓ Ease of payment for the good or service.
- ✓ Packaging.
- ✓ Timeliness of delivery.
- ✓ Willingness of the vendor to respond to complaints.
- ✓ Information provided on the good or service.

Looking at our own businesses, what can we do to improve the quality of any of the above?

—B.A.

the technician, and to the customer, too.

A recent survey concluded the following reasons why businesses lose customers:

- 9% lured away by lower prices.
- 5% influenced by others to trade elsewhere.
- 3% moved away or left the market place.
- 1% died.
- 68% quit because of perceived discourtesy, poor service, or indifference on

the supplier's part.

• 14% quit because complaints weren't addressed satisfactorily.

While we cannot do much about those who die or move away, we can do a great deal about the 82 percent who stop shopping for reasons directly influenced by ourselves or our employees.

The average business in the United States does not ever hear from 96 percent of its unhappy customers. Most marketing studies claim that for every actual complaint a business receives, another 24 to 26 are not being spoken out loud. Of these silent complaints, six are serious and threaten the firm's relationship with the customer.

Of even greater influence is what certain unhappy customers can do to our company by telling their neighbors or business associates. In other words, the business that we lose may be small compared to the business we will never get.

How can we structure our business so that these non-complainers become complainers?

- 1) Get them to complain.
- 2) Solve those complaints quickly.
- 3) Keep records as to why customers complain.
- 4) Make operational changes based on these records.

—The author is owner of Andrews and Associates, Carmel, Ind. Andrews and wife Jennifer operate two lawn care companies in Indiana.

## Marketing: the only way to win

**You need more than a 'me too' approach. Learn what makes your customers tick, and offer a 'valuable difference.'**

■ If you're not practicing accurate marketing techniques, you'd better start, says Lewis Browning, because there's very little a good marketing plan can't do:

- It defines who your customer is and what services they'll buy from you.
- it determines your location; it is what

attracts customers to your business.

• most importantly, marketing sells products, and Browning is dead serious when he says marketing absolutely determines the success of your business.

It starts with how well you know your customers or prospects. What's their lifestyle, their habits, their income? When are they at home?

"In other words," says Browning, "which customer base is profitable for you? Target a particular market segment and specify the services you'll provide; then, determine what kind of people those services might attract.

"The customer becomes the focus of everything you do."

Browning is the founder of Wall-

Bruning Associates, a management consulting firm in South Carolina.

When it comes to a customer's "economic needs," you've got to find a way to sell a product they want and are willing to pay for, otherwise, predicts Browning, you'll waste time and money pursuing the wrong customers with the wrong service.

**Be different!**—And don't become a "me too" marketer. "If you're (offering the same services)," warns Browning, "don't copy! If you're doing exactly the same thing as your competitor, you're forced into price competition, and the only thing you can say is 'I can do it cheaper.'"

You've got to find a *valuable difference*.

You can be different in a variety of  
*continued on page 17L*



ways:

- in the services you provide;
- in the way you perform those services;
- in the way you bill or collect payment.

**The future is now**—If your marketing plan is in order for now, don't rest on your laurels. "Are you preparing for the things that will change your business in five years?" asks Browning.

Time flies when you're having fun. Don't become lazy.

Why would you ever want to know your customer better? Here's a few of Browning's reasons:

- so you can serve them better;
- so you can find more customers like them;
- you can learn how they view you;
- if you do a good job for them, they will help you grow.

**Focus groups work**—To serve customers better, try surveys, focus groups and obtain referrals if at all possible.

The customers you invite for a focus group will have more time to tell you exactly what they think of your company,

**Don't chase the wrong customers with the wrong service.**

your staff, or your methods.

But be prepared. They might say some things you didn't expect.

All of this serves two purposes: It grows the business, and eliminates the call from the "lost customer," which, says Browning, is probably the most painful conversation you can have with a customer, but which, in hindsight, can be your best source of feedback.

Browning spoke to green industry professionals during the November, 1994 Green Industry Expo in St. Louis.

—Terry McIver



**Browning: What are customers willing to pay for?**

*Tested by Lawn Care Professionals and Homeowners*

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# Sodding vs. seeding: the pros and cons

**Seeding and sodding are both viable alternatives to repair damaged turf and establish new turf. Here's how to choose.**

■ To choose whether to seed or sod new or replacement turf areas, weigh the pros and cons of each within the framework of existing seasonal conditions, site considerations, use demands, and labor and budget constraints.

Paul Zwaska, head groundskeeper for the Baltimore Orioles, usually leans toward seeding.

"Seeding entails low labor and low material costs," he notes. "Variety selection is broad. Seeds sprout directly into the soil, developing their entire root mass in the existing 'virgin' soil. There's no initial thatch layer. Seed can be used to thicken and strengthen existing turf.

"Timing affects seeding success. Early spring seeding on bare ground may expose young plants to summer's heat before they mature enough to handle that stress. Overseeding in the spring may be more successful because existing turf helps protect tender seedlings. Fall bare-ground seeding benefits from more moderate temperatures and humidity levels."

"Because seeded turf is embedded in the soil, it can adapt its growth rate to conditions, unless young seedlings are one-half inch or smaller, or have just broken germination.

"Weed competition is greatest with bare-ground seeding. A few scattered weeds can be pulled by hand. Control product applications for severe weed infestations must be postponed until after the seedlings have matured.

"Patience is needed to establish turf from seed. Site conditions may limit choices. Seeding isn't the best option for slopes, though seeding is possible by using stabilizing products."

If 40 to 50 percent of the existing turf is still in good shape and time is sufficient,



**Though seeding is less expensive, you have a larger installation window if you choose sod.**

Zwaska prefers seeding to sodding. He feels the grass plants are stronger due to superior root development into the on-site soil.

"Sodding provides instant gratification, and the installation window is longer," Zwaska says. "Initial material costs are higher with sod, and sod installation is more labor-intensive. Sod, with a larger top mass, may have a higher evapotranspiration than roots can handle. Diligent watering will be needed until turf roots leave the 'comfort zone' of the sod's soil and extend into the soil below."

The soil of the sod needs to match the soil profile of the site, Zwaska continues. "An interface layer can form between two different soil types, restricting root growth

and water infiltration.

"(But) sod may be the only viable option for certain conditions such as a sports field with heavy wear or exposed soil surfaces. In these cases, existing vegetation should be stripped and sod installed."

**The other side of the coin**—John Huber, president of Huber Ranch Sod Nursery in Schneider, Ind., naturally leans toward sodding.

"Sod can be installed any time of year as long as the sod grower can harvest it," Huber says. "With seeding, germination is limited to the grass growth cycle.

"Sod offers uniformity of coverage and fast usability. Low traffic sodded turf sites may be usable after two or three weeks. High-use areas with bare ground seeding may take up to a year for sufficient turf establishment."

"For high-use situations, washed sod provides faster rooting into the soil profile and thus faster usability," says Huber. "Washed sod also keeps the soil type 'pure,' avoiding interface formation.

"Where erosion is a special concern, washed sod also will root in more quickly. On a steep slope, both standard and washed sod should be staked to ensure stabilization during the rooting process.

"Big roll sod—42 inches wide and up to 129 feet long—can reduce labor installation costs. Three-person crews using a three-point hitch attachment or walk-behind installation equipment can install big roll sod at the same rate as a 10-person crew with standard rolls. Obviously, there are fewer seams with big roll sod, producing a 'finished' appearance faster."

Turf variety selection needn't be limited with sod, according to Huber. "Sod producers," he points out, "may be willing to grow on contract, producing specific cultivars of certain varieties grown on a precisely-developed soil profile and following a precise maintenance program. **LM**

## THE PROS:

### SEEDING

- less installation labor
- broad variety selection
- low material (seed) costs
- adapts easily to conditions
- no interface soil layer formation

### SODDING

- uniform coverage
- instant fix
- good for slopes
- larger installation window
- less weed competition



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## EMPLOYEES from page 16

employee may be a potential buyer when retirement time comes. One of the greatest benefits you can bestow upon this individual is to recognize their key status within your business and work together to plan for the eventual sale of the business to that person.

The most successful benefit programs are designed to "benefit" the needs of everyone. However, before undertaking any change in your benefits structure, be sure to consult a broker or agent who is familiar with the industry. Moreover, bring in your tax and legal professionals as required to be

certain you are complying with the appropriate federal and state regulations.

—The author is a principle with Mortensen, Winkelhake, Langer & Associates, 2323 N. Mayfair Rd., Suite 506, Milwaukee, WI 53226. He can be reached at (414) 771-8844.

# Learning from natural disasters

## Disaster factoids

- **Dollar value of weather-related damages, 1993:**  
\$13.8 billion
- **Deaths directly attributed to weather events, 1993:**  
350
- **No.1 weather killer:**  
flash floods, 140 deaths annually over last 20 years
- **Number of deaths from lightning on golf courses, 1993:** 1
- **Number of U.S. states with more than \$1 billion weather-related damage, 1993:**  
4 - Iowa \$5.9B,  
Illinois \$2.7B,  
California \$1.1B,  
Missouri \$1.0B
- **Number of U.S. states with no weather-related damage, 1993:**  
3 - Delaware, Maine,  
Rhode Island
- **State with fewest tornados, 1961-1990:** Hawaii (0)
- **State with most tornados, 1961-1990:** Texas (137)
- **Average annual number of tornado-related deaths, 1961-1990:** 82

Source: National Weather Service



by John B. Calsin, Jr.

■ Drastic or immediate changes in the weather, beyond normal climatic conditions, can mean lost work, lost wages, a poor bottom line, even bankruptcy to the golf course or landscape company. Or, it could mean a bonanza.

In eastern Pennsylvania last summer, a late-evening tornado moving in a north-easterly direction took several lives and devastated numerous properties. The tornado meant lots of work for tree companies and landscapers with tree divisions. Bids for tree removal often ranged in the multiple thousands of dollars.

But there is a downside for golf courses and there can be one for landscapers: biting off more work than employees are able to cope with. In the rush to clean up, at least one landscape company reacting to the Pennsylvania tornado underbid. As the work progressed, it became evident that there were too many trees for the company's manpower and equipment to handle cost-effectively.

The work lagged and the property owner felt the need to resort to an attorney.

Here are some points to keep in mind when dealing with a situation that might bring windfall profits:

1) If it is a natural disaster, be sensitive to the needs and feelings of the customer, especially if the customer is the owner and has suffered a major or devastating loss. Your understanding and genuine sympathy could lead to future referrals after the disaster.

2) Is insurance money involved? What restrictions, if any, might the insurance company require? Is it really possible for your company to meet those stipulations?

3) In spite of the potential financial dividends, is your company really able to handle the job? Do you have enough men and equipment? Can additional equipment be rented cost-effectively? Is it, indeed, available for rent? Is the work such that additional personnel could be hired through a temporary placement agency such as Manpower Inc.? (It may be beneficial to investigate temporary employment agencies before you need one, as applications must be filled out and your credit may have to be checked.)

4) If you have to rent extra equipment or hire temporary help, will you make enough profit to justify the extras?

5) Do you really want these jobs? Will your regular customers' service suffer in exchange for what turn out to be only a

*continued on page 20*





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## DISASTERS from page 18

few extra dollars after all the expenses are figured in?

6) What might be the hidden or unknown drawbacks to the extra work you might get? If in the winter, is the ground frozen, or might your equipment bog down? What about underground utility lines?

Natural disasters can either be a finan-

cial boon or bust. Quick action may be necessary to capitalize on an unusual weather event. But moving too quickly or not considering all the ramifications of getting the work may cost you money in the long run.

—The author is a freelance writer based in eastern Pennsylvania, and a frequent contributor to LM.

# 'Working' a disaster: don't be a casualty!

**Consider if you can make money by travelling out of state for extra work, and remember that different regulations may apply.**

by Ed and Aaron Wandtke

■ Natural disasters may actually be rare opportunities for your company, if you are in the design/build, renovation, tree removal, pruning, maintenance or lawn care business.

How you deal with these occurrences can have a significant impact on your current and future business relationship with a customer. What issues should you consider: travel to a disaster-stricken area to help clean-up or rebuild? And how do you prioritize this opportunity?

Natural disasters—such as ice, floods and snow storms—in a single market or regionally, bring many opportunities for a green industry company to earn extraordinary income from special services. Your

decision to seek work in a disaster area may also affect the level of service you provide to your current customers. Establish a priority list, using the following criteria:

**Priority 1:** Work you can complete with existing staff, resources and equipment, for *existing* customers.

**Priority 2:** Work you can complete for new customers in the current market, with established personnel and equipment; this work does not affect service to existing customers.

**Priority 3:** Work that's available in the established market, for municipalities or state agencies, by current personnel and equipment, that will not affect the ability to service present or new customers.

**Priority 4:** Work you can perform in the main market for current customers using personnel or rental equipment you do not employ and own.

**Priority 5:** Work in other markets, for municipalities or state agencies, completed with current personnel and equipment that will not affect the ability to service present or existing customers.

*continued on page 22*

## Preparation is the key to getting through a crisis

■ According to the American Red Cross, businesses should treat the following areas in their business plans. All involve crisis management:

**1) Offsite relocation:** Identify alternative sites for critical business functions. You should also determine which units or departments could relocate. Agreements can be made with real estate agents and others for back-up sites.

**2) Management information systems:** Know how to identify and secure key records, software and equipment. Key personnel should know how to access vital data, too.

**3) Telecommunications:** Identify back-up communication systems with employees, customers, vendors and shareholders. Then, talk to your communication system agent about getting back-up systems in place.

**4) Utilities:** Be prepared to handle temporary utility loss, including establishing procedures for shutting down the facility and releasing employees early.

**5) Crisis communication:** Establish a solid crisis communication plan. Designate an organization spokesperson, and identify the most effective ways to communicate with the media, the local community and government officials.

**6) Human issues:** Dealing with the emotional stress that accompanies a crisis is as important as physical recovery. Have a program in place.

For more information on how to cope with crises in your community, contact your local American Red Cross, a business management consultant and/or any national trade organizations to which your business belongs.



Your crews must be aware of the types of clean-up or replacement work they may encounter in a disaster area.