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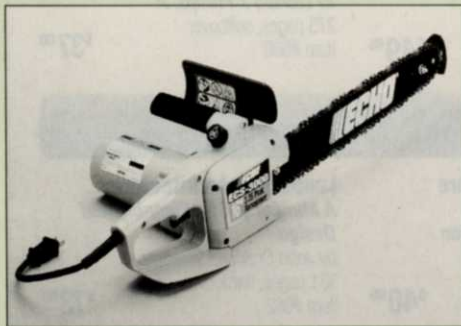
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cont. on page 45

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SOURCE: LM mail survey, Dec. 1995-Jan. 1996



**W**e landscape professionals are chipping away at the tip of the iceberg armed only with ice picks.

That iceberg is the residential landscape market, and while some of us flake off bigger and bigger slivers, the huge unrealized market for installations and maintenance bobs just below the surface.

Not a one of us knows just how huge it can become. But, judging by the quality of landscapes already in place, the need is immense.

Drive through any neighborhood in any community and critique the landscapes. Look hard. It doesn't matter if the neighborhood is affluent, middle class—whatever. Compare the landscapes against what they could or should be.

Incredible: that's the only word to describe what most of the public (and some of us, too, apparently) thinks is a landscape.

That's the biggest challenge we face: the public doesn't know what it doesn't know, when it comes to landscapes and—to a lesser degree—landscape maintenance.

It's no surprise, then, that most of the public carries this fuzzy picture of who we are and what we can do for it.

You don't believe this? Ask anyone what they think a landscape is, and one of the first words out of their mouths will be "plants." Try it. It's amazing. It's amazing because my *American Heritage Dictionary* doesn't mention the word "plants" at all. There are several definitions but not a one of them specifically says "plants".

**landscape, n.** 1. A view or vista of scenery on land. 2. A picture depicting a landscape. 3. The branch of art dealing with the representation of natural

# It's not 'just' the plants



*Ron Hall*

RON HALL  
Senior Editor

[LAWN/LANDSCAPE]

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How to trap moles

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The necessary art of delegation

scenery.—*v.* -scaped, -scaping, -scapes.—

To adorn or improve (a section of ground) by contouring the land and planting flowers, shrubs, or trees.—*intro.* To arrange grounds artistically as a profession.

The important words and/or phrases in these definitions are: *view, vista, natural scenery, adorn, contouring* and *artistically*.

This is the language we should be talking.

Instead, too many of us have been offering, selling, installing and, in some cases, maintaining plants—just plants.

No wonder the public doesn't get more excited about our services.

The residential market will grow only in proportion to our success in opening the public's eye to the full range of our products and services. **LM**









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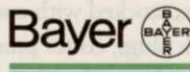
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Because the only thing that belongs on your customers' lawns in high concentrations are their children.



**M**ost of us have a period of down time during the winter, or at some other slow point during the year. Given the "steady beat" of our production season, these down periods are often the only times we can get serious about equipment maintenance.

Here are some tips from the pros on how to reduce your "in-season" maintenance costs:

**1) Inspect each piece of critical equipment** with key staff members. Make a list of the standard maintenance practices which must be performed as well as a list of special repairs required.

Have more than one knowledgeable person inspect the equipment, since one person may find a problem overlooked by another.

**2) Put each list into a "to-do" format** which is left on that piece of equipment. As the needed repairs are completed, they should be checked off, dated and initialed by whomever performs the work.

**3) Keep a file for** each piece of equipment. All of these files should be kept in the same place. The files should contain important manuals (operators and parts), warranty information, copies of all previous maintenance records, and repair bills. One person should be in charge of keeping these files up to date and in good order.

**4) Replace parts that regularly wear out** or otherwise fail. Virtually every piece of equipment I have ever owned has one or more of these parts. Don't take the chance of not being able to quickly obtain a part in season, when you can easily find one in down periods.

**5) Each of your trucks** should have a small tool box stocked with commonly-used parts such as spark plugs, cotter pins and fuses. There's no reason to lose valuable production time because

an employee must return to the shop for an easily replaceable part.

**6) Talk with industry colleagues** before buying a totally new piece of equipment. Usually, they're more than willing to share this information with you. From the school of hard knocks, I have learned that certain brands or types of equipment tend to have more than their fair share of maintenance problems. Also, listen to your employees. They'll tell you a lot about the equipment's strengths and weaknesses. Remember, they have to use this equipment. Also, take advantage of Field Days for some "tire kicking."

**7) Recognize your maintenance limitations.** This is especially important when it comes to serious engine repairs. Develop a good working relationship with a mechanic (if you don't have one) or your dealer. This brings up an additional point that can save you a lot of headaches. When buying a new piece of equipment, make sure that the dealer can service it. Does the dealer carry an inventory of commonly-used parts? What is the manufacturer's policy for supplying quickly needed parts? Get answers up front.

**8) You or a responsible manager should re-view** the winter maintenance when it's done. Equipment that's wearing out should be scheduled for replacement. This:

- ▶ allows you to budget for needed equipment rather than having to quickly locate emergency cash for new purchases,

- ▶ creates a gradual "aging" of your equipment inventory so that you always have something new coming on line.

An old farmer in eastern Indiana once told me, "A tractor don't break down when it's parked in the barn." True enough, but maintaining that tractor while it's parked in the barn may well keep it from breaking down once you take it to the field! **LM**

## A winter maintenance checklist



**BOB ANDREWS**  
Contributing Editor





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Stop by your New Holland dealer today and put the toughest skid-steer loader on the market to work for you. Working together, we'll help you give Mother Nature a lift.





# Theme park crews serious about safety

by TERRY McIVER / Managing Editor



**Joe Parr: 'Everyone is eager, enthusiastic and fairly aggressive, so it's wonderful. There's a great spirit of optimism.'**

**A**mid the fun that comes with working the grounds at Busch Gardens is an incredible attention to safe work habits.

A variety of topics are covered in bi-weekly safety meetings. One week they might review equipment safety; two weeks later it's first aid or protection against sunburn and heat stroke. Heat stress is avoided by proper diet (diluted Gatorade and fruits), clothing (big hats and sunscreen lotions) and rest.

A month free of any workmen's comp claims earns the entire crew breakfast on the company.

On the other hand, safety violations bring stiff penalties, says Joe Parr of ISS Landscape Management Services. Parr oversees the Busch Gardens crew, which tends the grounds at the huge theme park located just outside of Tampa, Florida.

"If they're spraying without safety glasses, we send them home," says Parr. Repeat offenses could result in termination.

"People are pretty good about [following safety regulations]," says Parr, "and they expect [to be disciplined]. If we're not enforcing it, they ask why not."

To get the big work done before guests arrive, work schedules must be exact, and the people who do the work must be courteous, quick and accomplished. In any month, a half-million guests storm the gates.

Parr says his best leaders "have a quality we can't instill in them. It's that work ethic. They want to get the job done right. We know the landscape industry doesn't pay as well as it should, so they've got to take pleasure in their work; they've got to take pride in what they do.

"We have a lot of people who put in extra hours just because they want to make sure it's done right. We know the client expects that," says Parr.

There's quite a "college crowd" on the ISS/Busch Gardens staff, many of whom came to the park trained in turf & ornamental horticulture. Parr says some of his best workers have come to the company from Auburn University—including vice president Dale Elkins—and from the University of Florida and Florida's Lake City Community College. Parr is a Virginia Tech grad who owned his own business for a time, and later worked for the Disney Co.

## Training hits all bases

Each ISS landscape employee is trained in all maintenance duties, so anyone can pitch in at a moment's notice. As employees gain expertise in a certain duty, their progress is updated on a training board in the shop.

"The supervisors might need to pull a few of them to get a project done," explains Parr, "so they take a quick look [at the training board] as a reference to see what any one person is trained in."

The staff is divided into three crews: a "support crew," an "area crew" and a "turf crew." The turf crew works only on turfed landscape areas. The area crew works on detailing, with each area crewperson responsible for 10 areas around the park. The specialty crew handles the tree and hedge pruning, fertilizing and special projects.

According to Parr, Busch Gardens management has plenty of confidence in the ISS crew, which gives ISS some freedom to make long-term decisions. The management services company has handled the Busch account since 1974.

ISS people must of necessity get along well with theme park employees—those people who sell the



tickets and check the seatbelts—since they often work close to one another. Crowds and hot days can make anyone ornery, so cooperation is almost a motto.

"We don't have too many problems," says Parr. "You can take care of everything with a handshake and a little diplomacy."

### Watching water

The landscape crews arrive early, which gives them first dibs on the oft-rationed water supply. In a warm-weather climate such as Florida, water use is closely-monitored. "You can take only so much water from the aquifer each day. We come in early so [other park personnel] can use the water the rest of the day for sidewalks and rides.

"We've got to have all our stuff done and out of the way before the park opens at 9 a.m. That's another reason why we come in at 5 a.m. We're still doing some stuff in the background after 9."

Chemical applications are either made very early in the morning, or certain areas will be closed for two or three days during applications.

Parr says he and his supervisors are looking ahead to staffing needs and budgets for 1996, as well as general troubleshooting.

"We think about what we could have done better from the year before as far as turf or shrub selection and maintenance."

Plans include a completely automated irrigation system within the next two years. An "Egypt" theme park is also going up soon.

"We've added one supervisor, and will add a second supervisor late this winter or early next spring. Right now we have about 47 to 50 people at Busch Gardens," Parr says.

Most of the turf around the Gardens is St. Augustinegrass. Zoysiagrass was recently added as a groundcover. The least visual areas are seeded with bahiagrass.

ISS is an international multi-service company based



Trees are planted a good distance from visitor paths and protected from any nearby construction.

in Denmark. It employs 115,000 people in a variety of facilities maintenance activities, including landscaping, security, custodial services and catering.

The ISS Florida landscape division recently won nine National Environmental Awards from ALCA for its work at Walt Disney World, the Orlando International Airport, the Busch Gardens "Land of the Dragons" exhibit, and six other properties. □



Pretty—but pesky—flamingoes are tough on the Busch landscape. 'They stand in one spot and shift from foot to foot to soften up the ground beneath them,' explains Parr.

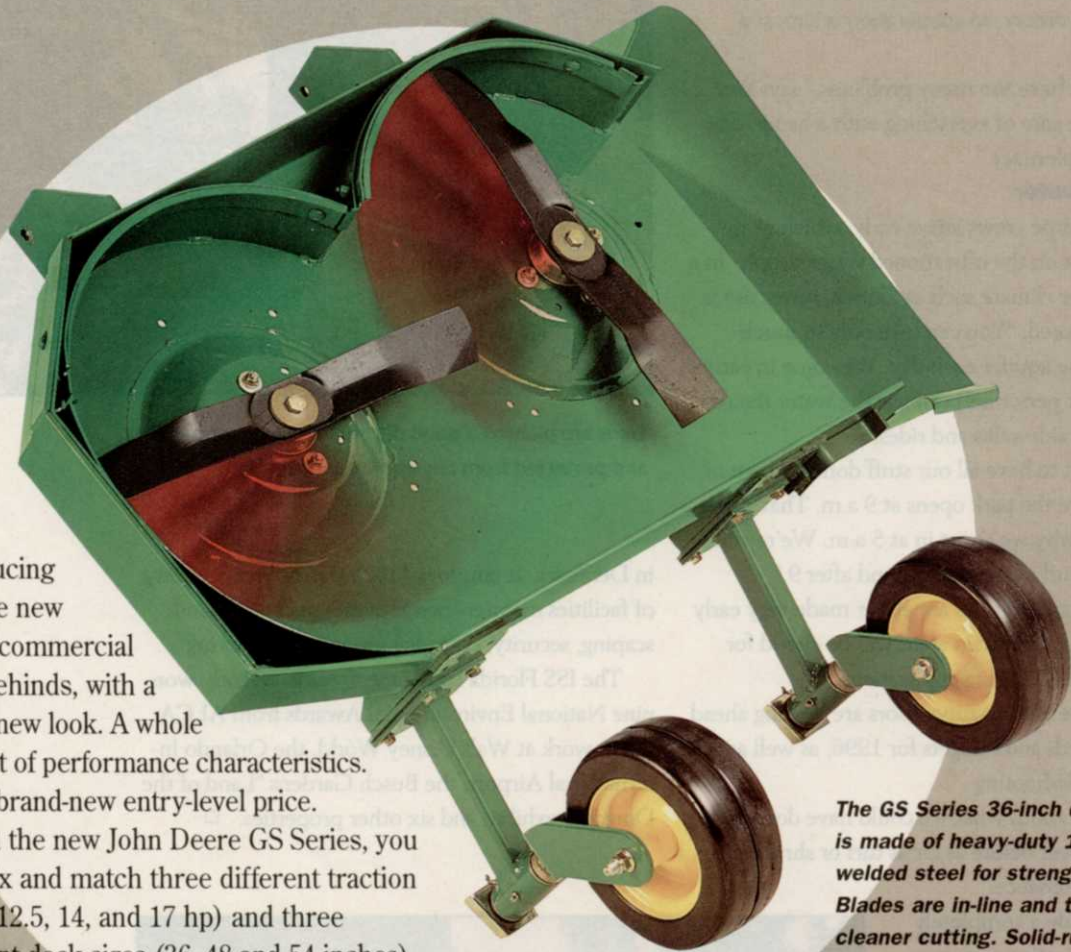


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# Building loyalty, even in adversity

by RON HALL / Senior Editor

All your painstaking efforts to cultivate a responsible and caring image for your company repay you when calamity strikes.

Lawn care operators Terry Kurth and Steve Hyland shares how to build customer loyalty—even in the face of adversity.

Kurth, president of Lawn Care of Wisconsin, knows the technical side of turf. Yet he claims that successful companies must develop two other equally important attributes: "a caring attitude" and "communication skills."

A mishap put Kurth's belief to the test.

In 1993, his company—through no fault of its own—treated customers' lawns in the Green Bay/Fox Valley market with a product contaminated with atrazine, which kills cool-season grasses. The problem came to light when a customer called to say that her lawn was dying.

An initial investigation suggested a chemical burn. Kurth sought the advice of a friend who was also a plant pathologist. The friend suggested atrazine damage.

Kurth turned to his supplier for help. The manufacturer was cooperative and flew in an expert a few days later. After conducting lot checks and a short investigation, the supplier discovered that atrazine had unknowingly accumulated in its con-

veyor system. Some had fallen into the bags of fertilizer that Kurth's company had used.

"We realized we had a problem even before most of our customers knew what had happened," says Kurth. "We immediately started communicating to those who had been affected."

Kurth and his managers emphasized that both their company and its customers were victims. But more vital (from the customers' standpoint, anyway): his company was going to restore the lawns.



Steve Hyland kept his customers informed.

## Review your recovery plan

Successful companies have recovery plans that include:

- ▶ An awareness of high-risk areas with training in crisis simulations.
- ▶ A crisis team of trained, knowledgeable and empowered personnel.
- ▶ A company spokesperson of high rank.
- ▶ An external communications mechanism to inform and reassure its customers.
- ▶ A system for internal communications that keeps employees onboard and moving in the right direction.
- ▶ A regular update of the plan as the company grows and the variety of its services increases.

—R.H.

"You're going to work with us. It (remediation) is going to come through us, and we're going to monitor it," Kurth says his firm stressed to clients.

Kurth's company acquired a large tank truck and employees sprayed each damaged lawn with an activated charcoal slurry to neutralize the atrazine. It did whatever



Terry Kurth insisted that his company take care of all customer concerns caused by the accident.

else required to bring the turf back.

At season's end, after the lawns had been repaired, his company hand-delivered a 10-pound box of steaks (paid for by the manufacturer of the tainted product) to each of the customers. "I hope this leaves you with a good taste in your mouth," a note with the box said.

Only five customers cancelled service because of the mishap.

Hyland Brothers Lawn & Tree Care of Ft. Collins, Colo., used a similar strategy in the spring of 1991, says President Steve Hyland.

For four straight days, an employee over-applied pre-emergence herbicides to 136 lawns. Within several days, the lawns started to look stunted.

"Right away we began spraying activated charcoal, aerating, seeding, sodding—anything we could do to get these lawns to grow again," recalls Hyland.

Meanwhile, in its newsletter, the company explained to all its customers what had happened. "We were hearing rumors about us that weren't necessarily true," says Hyland.

While employees increased their efforts, management took special efforts to keep customers informed.

"The public image and the good reputation that we'd developed helped us get through this," says Steve. "We responded in a way that our customers perceived to be professional and proactive."

Hyland says he lost just two customers. □



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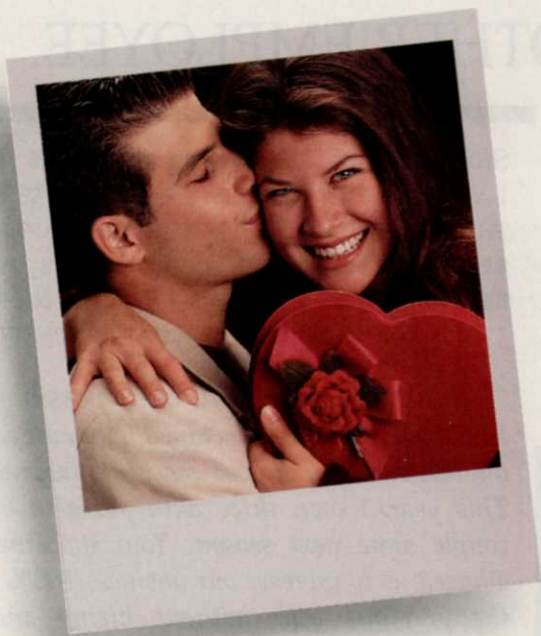


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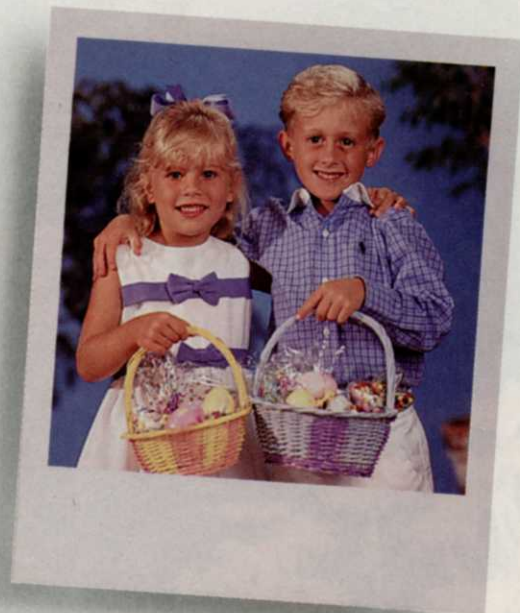
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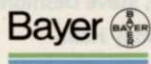
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# Tough season tests N.Y. firm's faith in IPM

by RON HALL / Senior Editor

**T**his past season tested Laurie Broccolo's faith in IPM. But, as the 1996 season approaches, she's even more committed to the treatment program that balances control product applications with cultural controls and pest monitoring.

"By the third round we had doubled our labor," says the owner of Broccolo Tree & Lawn Care, Rochester, N.Y. "We used two persons per truck be-



Broccolo's staff (l. to r.): Mark Gemmill, Albert Broccolo, Amy Lidie, Steve Desmond, Mida Bristol, Jason Rumsey, Laurie Broccolo, Louis Dannenberg, Cindy Halm

cause we were finding so many problems.

"While our seasonal employees applied granular fertilizer, our IPM specialists spot treated for crabgrass, scouted and treated for insects. They also left a lot of notes telling homeowners how to water and mow."

Broccolo altered her firm's 1995 mid-season program because of the freaky weather in lakefront Rochester. Instead of cool Lake Ontario breezes, a stubborn drought and weeks of stifling 90° F heat

stressed people and plants alike.

Crabgrass thrived in the heat, while grubs burrowed even deeper into the soil only to migrate closer to the growing zone and begin feeding on stunted turfgrass roots several weeks later than usual.

"It was a frustrating season. The weather conditions were terrible. We were miserable," says Broccolo.

Moreover, almost 25 percent of her customers had requested service calls. This was too high, both she and her staff felt.

By August when Ed Wandtke, a green industry consultant from Columbus, Ohio, visited her company, Broccolo admits everyone needed a pep talk.

"We took a day off. It was hard to because we were not quite done with the third round. But I wanted Ed Wandtke to talk to us about service and service calls," says Broccolo.

And what she and her staff learned was encouraging: they were actually doing a good job in light of conditions. In fact, they were experiencing significantly fewer service calls than companies using traditional calendar blanket applications of pesticides.

"By the time we got to the fourth round, our customers had a good understanding about their problems and about the weather," says Broccolo. "They were prepared to do some seeding. We did an excellent seeding business."

Broccolo formed many of her ideas about IPM from her days at Finger Lakes Community College, and while working 13 years for a large lawn/landscape company. In fact, she helped implement some IPM principles into that company's program.

When she started her own company five years ago, she built it with IPM at its center. But still she needed equipment to make her ideas work. Fortunately, she says, Tom Jessen at Perma-Green in Crown Point, Ind., provided molded, fiberglass tanks with compartments that fit neatly into the back of one-ton, dual-wheel Chevy pickups.

The separate tanks and pump/injection system allows IPM specialists to apply liquid fertilizer and pull a second trigger and spot treat for weeds at the same time. The specialist can also use the setup to treat trees while on a property.

"I try to dispel the myth that pesticides are a problem," explains Broccolo. "We don't want that myth out there, but I also want customers to feel comfortable that we're not going to treat if it's not

*continued on page 16L*



**Question**  
***What preemergence herbicide costs the most?***

**Answer**  
***The one that quit in tough weather.***

**Solution**  
***Our preemergence herbicide offers the toughest control for up to 26 weeks.***



## Getting started with IPM

- ▶ Include spot-treating weed control in your program, not blanket treatments, unless necessary.
- ▶ Pick a route with fewer insect problems. Do not treat unless the pests are visible and active.
- ▶ Keep a history of lawn problems by mapping regions for inspection.
- ▶ Implement computerized tracking with IPM software such as Practical Solutions to help in training and decision-making in the field.

—Laurie Broccolo

needed.

My company focuses on selling our expertise."

Broccolo points to her employees—and low employee turnover—as crucial to her company's continuing success.

"Everybody in our company is committed to an IPM philosophy whether it's our field staff or our office personnel," she says.

But, beyond that, they must also be technically knowledgeable, and confident enough about their diagnostic abilities to make on-site decisions based on a property's weed, insect or disease history.

"They can't wait for me to run to a property,

take a look at it and talk to their customer," explains Broccolo. "If we've got something critical going on, they have to make those decisions and talk to their customers."

Of course, there's a lot of communication within the company too, she adds. All

company trucks are equipped with two-way radios. She and her staff meet for an hour each week to discuss what they're seeing on their routes.

This insistence on tracking and communication allows field specialists to meet problems as they arise.

For instance, 1995 was the most troublesome grub season that her company has experienced to date. Even so, her specialists, after scouting and finding out where grubs were a problem, treated about 25 percent of customers' property. She estimates her company saved \$19,000 in 1995 by not making a blanket application of grub control products.

"If we scout and find one or two grubs per square feet, we don't treat. We only treat areas that need to be treated, areas that will be stressed. For instance, we usually won't treat areas in shade because they probably won't be stressed," she says. Routes with heavy clay soils often don't experience grub problems, either.

The insistence on scouting and keeping detailed records of each property creates added expense, admits Laurie. Also, specialists at her company don't do as much production as companies that make calendar blanket applications. But she feels the IPM approach is appreciated by most of her customers. It also has boosted her company's status with other local landscape and tree companies that routinely refer work to her company.

Broccolo Tree & Lawn Company has grown steadily, if not spectacularly, and now numbers 10 full-time plus seasonal employees.

Equally satisfying to Laurie and her staff—its customer cancellation rate is below 10 percent.

"In my market, we can charge about 10 percent more for a typical five-visit lawn care program," she says. "All the customer really wants is service and results."

Broccolo's advice to any other lawn care business converting its program to integrated pest management (IPM) is simple—do it one step at a time. □



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### Question

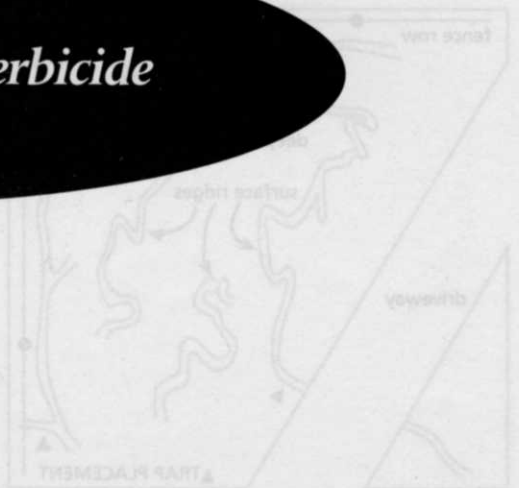
*What preemergence herbicide costs the most?*

### Answer

*The one that stained the white picket fence.*

### Solution

*Our preemergence herbicide doesn't stain.*





# How to trap moles

by RON HALL / Senior Editor

**T**rapping controls moles the best, says Dr. Robert M. Corrigan, animal control specialist at Purdue University.

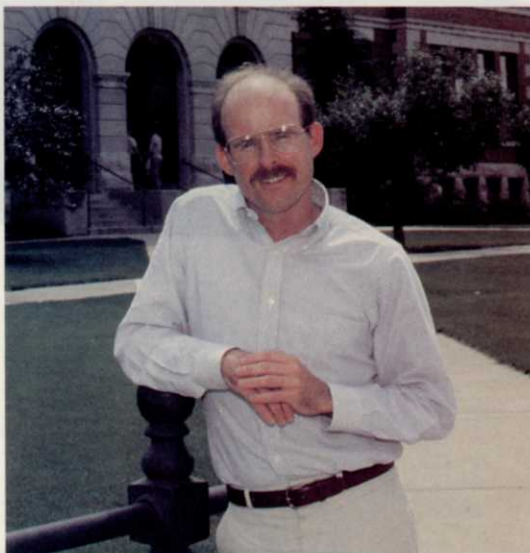
Follow the three "P's:" patience, practice and persistence.

"Moles have an uncanny ability to detect and spring improperly set traps," says Corrigan. "So place traps carefully, and keep trying until experience leads to success."

For successful trapping, first locate the main runways. To identify main runways in a yard or on a golf course, look for runways which:

- ▶ follow more or less a straight course for some distance;
- ▶ appear to connect two mounds or two runway systems;
- ▶ follow fence rows, concrete paths or other manmade borders, or;
- ▶ follow a woody perimeter of a field or yard.

Surface runways are commonly seen as the raised ridges running through turf areas. They may be used daily, revisited at irregular intervals or only once and then abandoned. They connect with the deep runways which are located between 3 and



**Purdue's Bobby Corrigan says moles aren't that hard to trap, but don't be surprised if another one moves in.**

12 inches below the surface.

Also, because nests (4 to 16 inches below ground) are commonly located at protected spots along the edge of areas such as hedgerows or fence rows, border trapping at the places where runways enter the yard, field or garden often provides good results.

Corrigan recommends the harpoon trap (available from most hardware and garden shops), particularly for novices. Use three to five per acre. You can place plastic pails over the traps to prevent animals and children from tampering with them.

If a trap fails to produce a mole within four or five days, move it to another portion of the main runway system.

Corrigan says trapping is most effective during the spring and fall when mole activity rises. Also, trapping in the early spring can eliminate pregnant females.

In the East, moles mate during February and March with a single litter of three to five born later in the spring. Young moles grow rapidly and leave the nest by summer or fall.

Moles are insectivores. They feed primarily on earthworms, beetle grubs and other animals which live in the soil. They aren't rodents, so rodent baits do not control them.

Nor do they usually eat bulbs or the roots of garden plants. (Several species of mice also use runways and may be responsible for the occasional damage to roots and tubers in flower or vegetable gardens.)

Corrigan doesn't recommend using any baits, pesticides, gas cartridges or electronic noise makers to control moles. And he doesn't believe the claim that killing all the grubs in a lawn will cause moles to leave, since moles' main food is earthworms.

Trapping is the most efficient mole control, but they're not that difficult to capture live either, says Corrigan.

To capture a mole when it's observed tunneling, sneak up behind the mole and insert the blade of a shove or spade behind it so it cannot retreat back into the completed tunnel. Scoop it out of the ground with a shovel. The mole can be released into the woods where it's best suited anyway.

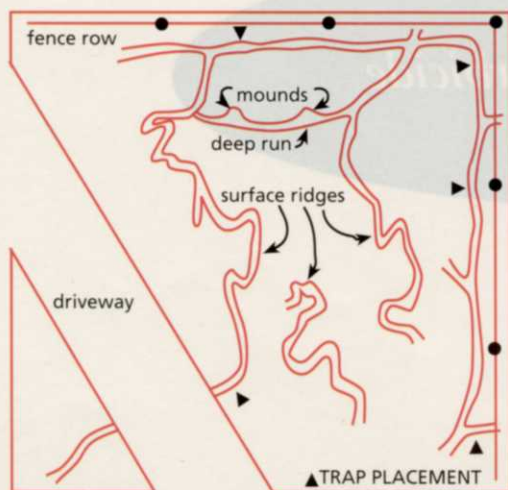
But even if you're successful in trapping or capturing all the moles on a property, your triumph might be short-lived. An opportunistic neighboring mole may just move into the suddenly vacated tunnels.

Corrigan says he knows of one  $\frac{3}{4}$ -acre lawn, surrounded by woods, that yielded 68 moles over eight months.

"Probably the only solution there would be to put in a mole barrier," says Corrigan, a smooth barrier 16 to 18 inches into the soil and about eight inches above it surrounding the property.

Several species of moles can be found in the United States, but the most common one found in turfgrass in Midwest is the Eastern mole.

Corrigan spoke at the Ohio Turfgrass Conference this past December. □





Question

*What preemergence herbicide costs the most?*

1.

You want cheap stuff.

Answer

*The one that just lost the Davidson account.*

1.

You want to forget about stains.

2.

You want it to last longer and work better.

Solution

*Our preemergence herbicide satisfies customers and builds profits.*



*The thinking behind their  
preemergence herbicides.*

**1.**

You want cheap stuff.

*The thinking behind ours.*

**1.**

You want to forget about stains.

**2.**

You want it to last longer and work better.

**3.**

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where somebody comes by regularly  
to weed the roof.



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# The necessary art of delegation

by JOHNNY CULLISON

**W**hen your workload expands beyond your physical and time limitations and employees are added, delegation, however informal, *must* take place. It's needed in all but the smallest of organizations.

Delegation is more art than science.

When I think of science, I think of formulas and gear ratios and levers; things that I can measure and quantify. Successful delegation, however, depends on variables such as individual moods, and job and family relationships.

Even so, delegation can be charted. For instance, most of us are familiar with an "organization" chart. It shows the president at the top, then the executive vice president below that, followed by the assistant vice president, then it branches out to the various department heads or managers.

But instead of looking at it as an organization chart, look at it as a "delegation" chart, and focus on these benefits of delegation:

▶ It allows us, as managers, to extend our influence beyond the boundaries of time and space.

▶ It optimizes resources, allowing us to combine human resources in ways to minimize the weaknesses and maximize the strengths of the entire group.

▶ It allows completion of a task at the lowest cost, although this isn't absolute. Sometimes the least expensive resources aren't available. Sometimes the need to complete a task overrides economic considerations. Sometimes it's desirable to use more expensive resources to build a spirit of cohesion within a group.

▶ It's probably the best way to develop the leadership skills of subordinates. Most of us learn better by practice. A manager can strengthen the confidence and the ability of a team to take on greater responsibilities.

While we realize that we have to delegate responsibility, we must also delegate an equal proportion of authority. Otherwise it's like asking someone to mow grass

## Four keys to proper delegation

**1. Evaluate**—Completing any task requires both the investment of human and, usually, mechanical resources. Both of these resources translate directly into financial requirements. Any attempt to delegate tasks will be futile unless adequate resources can be allocated.

**2. Educate**—All the resources in the world are useless unless they can be properly applied. Employees must be trained in basic job skills as well as in safe work practices. Certain types of training are now required by law and must be documented for review by regulatory officials. Leadership development is also essential to the growth and longevity of every organization. Individuals with leadership potential should be identified and encouraged.

**3. Communicate**—Management philosophies and expectations must be clearly communicated before they can be applied. Employees are not mind readers, yet we often act as if they are. We expect them to act on what we mean regardless of what we say. Beyond philosophies and expectations, we must also communicate basic task information. It is important to communicate the task—not the procedure. If employees are told every move to make, they soon become mental cripples, dependent entirely on someone else to do all the thinking.

**4. Validate**—Inspect completed work to see that it is completed properly and in a reasonable amount of time. Talk with employees to get suggested changes or improvements and to determine whether or not they are satisfied with the finished product. Provide feedback to employees. Give praise for jobs well done and correction where needed. □



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without a blade.

Establishing boundaries or limits of authority is also necessary. Some of the more common limits include:

**Authority to hire and fire employees.** Most first-line supervisors aren't given sole authority to add additional or fire present employees. They must, however, be directly involved in the process.

**Authority to acquire and dispose of assets.** Few operations have the type and quality of equipment to do the best job possible. Authority to add or replace equipment is almost always limited. Limits may be based on types of equipment or on dollar values.

**Expenditure limits.** I know of no manager at any level who has a blank check. Limits may be determined by dollar amount, capital equipment threshold, or as needed for routine operations. Managers must maintain good communication lines about financial matters.

Rarely, however, is the "art" of delegation a straight-forward proposition.

A manager's ego, guilt (feeling uneasy about asking others to perform unpleasant tasks), and fear of losing control complicate the process.

It's scary to let others have such a significant role in controlling your destiny. It is, however, very rewarding to share the credit for collective successes.

As one of my former employees once said (and he surely wasn't the first to say it): "You can do anything there is to do in this department, but you can't do everything." **LM**

—The author is assistant vice president for physical plant at Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, Oklahoma. Cullison presented these remarks at the 1995 Institute of Parks and Grounds Management in Toledo, Ohio, this past winter.

## ALCA technician exam readied

The National Landscape Technician Council, chaired by Gary Thornton, CCLP, Thornton Gardens, Maineville, Ohio, finalized the certification exam for exterior landscape technicians. ALCA purchased the exam in 1994 from the California Landscape Contractors Association.

The test, standardized for national distribution and also modified to reflect regional variations, will be offered for the first time this spring. The test is designed to assess an exterior technician's knowledge and skills.

So far, 13 states and two Canadian provinces had signed on with ALCA to become licensees of the program. They are California, District of Columbia, Illinois, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin. Also British Columbia and Ontario.

For more information on this program, contact Vicki Buswell at (800) 395-2522.

### New Certified Landscape Pros

In a separate ALCA program, the following people passed the Certified Landscape Professional (exterior) examination: Dennis Barriball, Hemlock Landscapes, Inc., Chagrin Falls, Ohio; Colleen Cotten, Gardener's Guild, San Rafael, Calif.; Thomas Heaviland, Heaviland Enterprises, Vista, Calif.; Patrick DeZeeuw, Botanical Technologies, Dallas, Tex.; Scott Hall, Classic Landscaping, Woodsboro, Md. All now get to use the "CLP" designation with their names.

### Bertotti honored

Bertotti Landscaping, Novato, Calif., earned a Judge's Award in the 1995 ALCA Exterior Environmental Improvement Awards program. The project was a private residence and highlighted a natural swimming pool and spa with waterfalls. Bertotti Landscaping placed more than 600 tons of boulders in and around the pool. The pool structure was engineered to withstand an earthquake of 8.0 on the Richter scale.

### Record turnout

ALCA says its conference this past November in Fort Worth drew a record 662 landscape professionals, the most ever. Judging by attendance, the most popular session was Dr. Gerry Faust's "Building a Successful Management Team" which played to standing-room-only for three hours.

The 1996 conference is set for Nov. 17-21 at the Omni Netherland Plaza in Cincinnati, Ohio.

### NY conference cooks

The New York State Turfgrass Association reports its 1995 show was the most successful in the association's history. More than 1800 attended, and 347 companies exhibited. Among the highlights, Dr. Norman Hummel, ex-turf program director at Cornell University, received the NYSTA Citation of Merit for his contributions to the turfgrass industry.

The 1996 show will be held November 12-15 in Rochester.

## 1995 Operating ratio study

If you're curious about how your lawn care company stacks up with others in the industry, get PLCAA's 1995 *Operating Efficiency Study for the Lawn Care Industry*.

PLCAA executive vice president Ann E. McClure describes the study as a "snapshot of how resources are allocated and priorities lie."

The "snapshot" shows that the industry is widely divergent in both operating methods and key financial results. According to the study, "size alone is a significant factor

in operating results. The data suggest that higher profitability is earned, not through sheer size, but rather by achieving operating economies within a tightly defined and managed market."

Prepared by Wall-Bruning Associates, Inc., Columbia, S.C., the study contains geographical, sales statistics and major business emphasis sections.

To order a copy, contact PLCAA at (800) 458-3466. Fax is (770) 578-6071.



## Good crew, busy members help manage small budgets



*Terry McIver*

TERRY MCIVER  
Managing Editor

**R**emember those ads that promised you Europe on \$5 a day? That's almost an extravagance for some of our best superintendents, who often have very little cash to maintain their golf courses.

When faced with a small budget, you have two choices. You can throw up your hands and quit, or you can decide to make it work the best you can and have fun in the process.

Dave Pulley, superintendent of Pine Valley Country Club is having fun. He's worked at two courses now—Pine Valley and before that, Topsail Greens, both in North Carolina—with minimal budgets.

His budget at Pine Valley—a semi-private course—is a mere \$200,000, half of which goes for salaries. (Our February 1995 survey of golf course maintenance found the national average for public course budgets to be \$325,000, so it would be hard to blame Pulley if he did quit!)

On top of that, he arrived at Pine Valley to find a course suffering from years of neglect.

The fertilizer storage area was a rusty old trailer with no door. (Correction, there *was* a door; it was leaning against the trailer!)

The maintenance building was a 20 x 40-foot shed with no running water or restroom. Equipment was left where it was parked. The fairways were weed-infested.

"It's hard to believe the members put up with it," said Pulley. Now, members are some of Pulley's best "workers."

One member who owns a construction company builds free bridges for the course. Another, with a machine shop, donates equipment repairs. A third provides office equipment and turf equipment rentals at very low cost. A fourth helped to

**GOLF/GROUNDS**

PAGE 4 G ▶

Heat, water stress big news in '95

PAGE 6 G ▶

Tommy Witt crunches numbers

PAGE 10 G ▶

Winter projects cover shop, shows

PAGE 12 G ▶

Electric greensmowers earn looks

rebuild a green for a reduced membership fee.

Out on the course, Pulley removed all hazard and yard markers, to reduce mower operator dismounts. Colored paint now serves as a suitable marking method.

Growth regulators are used on greens, tees, fairways, and along the edges of sand traps and cart paths. Less clippings mean less disposal, which means faster mowing and a neater course.

"Growth regulators are essential for a low-budget course," insists Pulley.

Wildflowers save time in out-of-play areas.

The only employee benefit for Pine Valley workers is free golf. So Pulley went and found good workers who also liked to play golf. Overtime's prohibited, so the guys on the weekend shift have to finish early during the week. Then they play a free round together, which Pulley says is good for team morale.

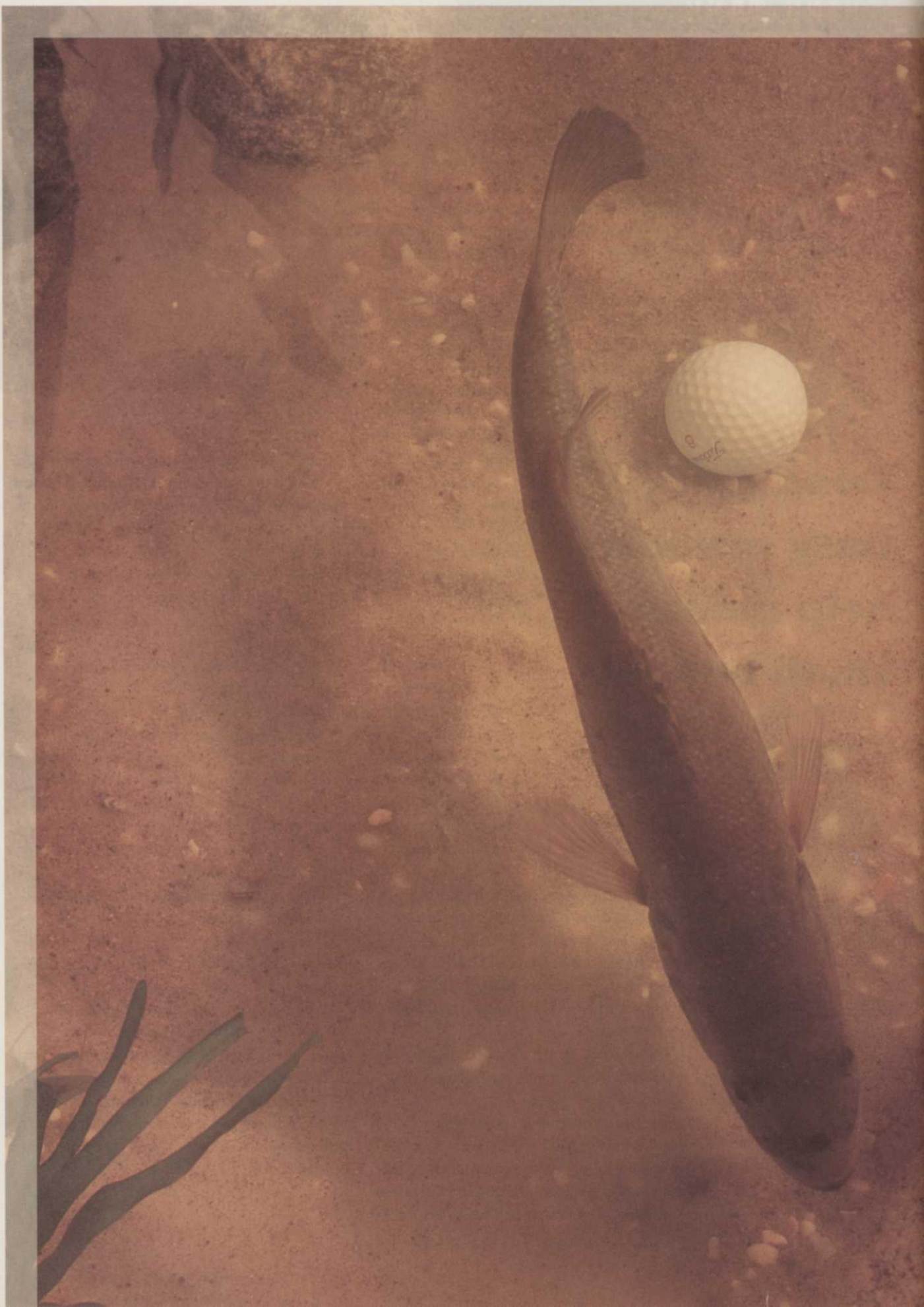
Pulley wants people who will take pride in the course, whether the budget is low or high.

"I can get more work done with three people who care than I can with six who don't care," he says.

After hearing Dave Pulley's story, I wanted to write an editorial slamming stingy owners. I'm glad I didn't. They know who they are, and this little column isn't going to change them.

I'd much rather praise Pulley's positive approach. He gets A's for attitude, initiative and ingenuity, and that's a great way to approach the new year. **LM**







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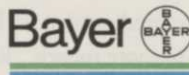
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# 1995 in retrospect:

## Wet, blistering summertime pushed golf turf to limit

by TOM JOHNSON / Contributing Editor

**W**hen LM asked golf course superintendents what kind of year 1995 was, they had plenty to say about what the weather did to turf. There was extreme heat in the North, and plenty of rain in the South and East. Here's what supers tell us about the summer of 1995:

### Northern Illinois

In suburban Chicago, the searing heat that killed 700 in July led Les Rutan of the Beverly Country Club to call it "the most miserable growing season I can remember."

The club, however, sees just 17,000 to 20,000 rounds over a seven-month season, so "we're not in the same predicament with a course putting down 40,000 or more rounds," Rutan says. The grass survived, but *Poa annua* took hold of the fairways.

"Theoretically, you want to remove as much of it as you can, using growth regulators and trying not to pamper it," he says.

Rutan credits the course's survival to the benefits of a five-year growth regulator program on the greens plus aggressive irrigation. "Even so, we took a hit on the fairways. We couldn't keep up with it, especially where old trees inhaled what moisture there was available."

### Michigan

Stephen C. Rose, who manages 45,000-rounds-a-year Flint Elks Country Club, agrees. His course isn't trying to root out the poa. "It's not a bad grass," he says. "When it's your predominant grass, 80 percent, you better try to grow it. It melts out in the heat, but it comes back fast," he says. "We're not a high budget club. We hope for the best, fertilize and water and hope Mother Nature can make it back."

At the height of the heat wave and drought, Rose and his crew went to deep-aeration drilling once a month on the greens. "We went down eight to ten inches to get down through our hard soil layer. I firmly believe that if we hadn't done that, we would have lost the good half of our front nine greens. If you couldn't get the water off the course, it would have started to bake."

### Wisconsin

"We were dry all summer, then in August we got the rain, heat and humidity," remembers Steve Schmidt, superintendent of the Butte Des Mortes Country Club in Appleton, Wis. The result was turf disease. "Guys got their chemical budgets blown out of the water, because they didn't have much choice.

"We had a day here on July 13 that sent the temperature to 103° F., the dew point to 89 and the heat index to 145," he recalls.

Schmidt's fairways are a combination of poa and bent, and the poa isn't entirely welcome. "I try to control it, but because it's on the golf course I have to try to maintain it." He uses turfgrass growth regulators, and keeps compaction down with light-weight mowing.

He Hydrojects his greens three to five times a year, and core aerates once in the fall to relieve compaction and allow better air and water movement. The practice allows him to interface his top dressing program with his original push-up greens.

### Southern Illinois

Superintendent Jim Van Ravenswaay manages the grounds at the private, 20,000-round Illini

Country Club in Springfield. He calls 1995 weather "miserable. We lost some low areas and fairways the second week of August, but we kept the greens and tees."

The weather prevented serious problems for Van Ravenswaay when chemical controls began to break down fast, ahead of time.

The night before the Illinois State Amateur tournament, disaster struck. "We had a three-inch rain followed by 115 degree temperatures the day of the competition. That's when the turf went," he recounts, drily.

#### **Kentucky**

Larry Hantle of The Country Club of Paducah, though, came up aces. "We had a very beautiful spring, but it got a little wet in May." He's not complaining. In southern Indiana and Illinois, just 60 to 70 miles away, it was common for courses to record 12 to 15 inches in May. One southern Illinois course had 20 inches that month.

#### **Carolinas**

Dr. Bruce Williams, an agronomist with the North Carolina State Cooperative Extension Service, had a precise fix on what kind of a summer it had been for the grounds crews. "Dry spring, rains in May, coolish June," he says. "A lot of the [perennial ryegrass] overseeded into bermuda persisted, and folks who had overseeded golf greens had a difficult time with that."

The trouble started in earnest in October. "Some courses had more than 20 inches of rain, and their seed washed away," he relates. Poa, which he described as "a real problem down here," flourished in the October deluge. Then came November, with an earlier-than-normal frost. Temperatures didn't cooperate. "People seeding bent are finding poor root development," he observes. In December, he says, bermuda was dormant three weeks early.

#### **Maryland**

From July 3 to September 1, rainfall totaled  $\frac{1}{10}$ th of an inch, and the temperature hovered in the mid-90s at Turf Valley Resort and Conference Center in Lutherville, Md.

Michael J. Gilmore's crews struggled with gray leaf spot disease. In the end, 40 acres of rye were gone, fairways and tees. "We were struggling to stop it," he says. "We overseeded our fairways three times last fall and got eaten up." They quit in October.

Gilmore controls his poa problem with a turf growth regulator program, which he says does a good job of helping the bentgrass push through. In a normal year's program, they Hydroject greens once every three weeks and aerate three times a year, in April, August and November.

#### **South Florida**

September and October storms drenched the state after a tranquil summer. Carlos McKeon, superintendent of The Links at Key Biscayne, notes that "it was very difficult, rainwise."

Damp conditions forced McKeon to deal with fungus problems. "We raised the height of the cut on the

mowers, and we stayed with pesticide application on a preventive basis. We don't use it unless we have to." The crew used liquid fungicides to attack the pythium and rhizochtonia, his main problems, along with algae. For algae: "We try to keep the grass growing, because the algae grows when there's space," McKeon explains.

#### **Nevada**

Maybe the place to go is Nevada, where Collier Miller, superintendent of the Tournament Players Club at Summerlin, Las Vegas, observes, "It's tough to keep moisture in the ground." With his caliche rock base, "you need a pick to take a soil sample out of the fairway," he says, adding, "Plays firm, putts fast." □

*Jim Van Ravenswaay:*  
*'You just have to hope and pray and do everything agronomically that you can think of.'*

## Dealing with boards and greens chairmen

In a disastrous weather year like 1995, how do golf course superintendents deal successfully with country club boards and greens chairmen unhappy over less-than-ideal course conditions? Tell them the truth:

*Rutan* — "Be honest with them. Try to give them the best playing conditions that you can—and don't turn your backs on the greens for a minute."

*Rose* — "We try to take care of problems as soon as we can. They understand we have a low budget. If we had an unlimited budget it might be different."

*Schmidt* — "The only way I have found is: (1) always remember it belongs to them; and (2) make sure your communications are always there, no matter how small the problem, so that they don't get any surprises."

*Hantle* — "The easiest way to keep them happy is to do a good job. Present the course as if you owned it yourself. Make yourself happy with it, and usually everyone else is happy."

*McKeon* — "Do the best job you can, and let the ball fall where it falls. In this business, you can only do so much and you run into problems with nature, or with budget.

"[Members] try to hear you, but they're simply not communicating—it's even hard to get the concept of seeding over to them."

*Gilmore* — "Always tell them the truth. Be prepared to answer questions, and know where to go to look for answers if you don't know." □



# Using financials to sell yourself

by JERRY ROCHE / Editor-in-Chief

**S**top selling yourself short. You, as a golf course superintendent, are not just a grower of grass. You're a maker of money—and you'd better make sure that your employer knows it.

"In my 16 years as a professional golf course superintendent, the only figures I ever heard about were the expenses," says Tommy Witt of Wynstone Golf Club, North Barrington, Ill. "Then I realized that every negative side of the accounting equation has an opposite side. And when I tried to start selling myself to my employers, who had the financials, they could never understand that I wasn't just spending their money."

Witt, lounging—for a change—in the comfortable confines of a breakroom on a rainy September afternoon, can recite Wynstone's financials without ever opening a ledger. And the rapidity of his verbal calculations leaves no doubt that he's committed them to memory.

"Last year, we had about 25 new members. They paid \$60,000 to \$70,000 each to become members—there's \$1.5 million. We have 275 members paying \$475 a month, times 12 months a year—there's another \$1.5 million. We'll do \$300,000 in guest fees, \$150,000 in cart rentals...it goes on and on and on.

"As a businessman, would you trade my maintenance budget of \$800,000 for \$4 million profits? I would. Other club professionals use profits as a selling tool to improve their compensation packages and their value as employees. But superintendents, typically, don't."

He's asked if the superintendent really makes an impact on how much the club rakes in.

"Look at any golf course in Chicago last year. A lot of them were trashed because of the weather. Compare their 1994 income with last year's income. That doesn't answer your question, but there is a correlation.

"In Minneapolis, normal building sites go for \$25,000 to \$30,000 an acre. Put a golf course in, and the property goes way up. So what does that golf superintendent mean to that developer? There's prob-

ably no one person more important to a piece of property than an experienced, qualified golf course superintendent."

The bottom line is that people become members of country clubs largely to play golf. Research says so, and Witt says so.

"I don't need the research: I know why people join Wynstone," Witt says. "A resident member pays \$60,000 to join. A social member pays \$3,000. Do they come to buy a golf shirt? I don't think so.

"In 1994, our revenues increased by \$500,000. Was it because they started serving a different kind of hamburger? No. Because the pro was offering shirts in the golf shop for \$90 apiece? I think not. It was because of the golf course. If it's maintained to its maximum quality, people come to play golf."

## Experience counts

Anybody can shoot a round of golf. But not everybody can shoot 72. Likewise, not every superintendent can maintain a course to optimize profits.

"There's no question that a more experienced super will get more for the dollar," Witt emphasizes, "whether the budget is \$300,000 or \$1 million."

Practically in mid-sentence, he coyly checks the reactions of the dozen-or-so college turfgrass students who are sitting in on the interview as part of Witt's on-going public relations duties. He hopes they are learning something.

"The best superintendent in the world is not necessarily the guy with the highest budgeted golf course, it's the guy who can make what he's got go the farthest. There are some tremendously talented people who do a whole lot with a little bit."

*continued on page 8G*



Tommy Witt has made financial ledgers part of his daily routine.



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GOLF COURSE PHOTO BY JOHN R. JOHNSON

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Circle No. 136 on Reader Inquiry Card





The best superintendents are the ones who can do the most with the money they're given to work with, says Tommy Witt. And then, he proves it.



'There's probably no one person more important to a piece of [golf development] property than an experienced, qualified golf course superintendent,' says Witt.

Commitment to quality—and, thus, profits—does not come without its own price. It takes a willingness to work up to 80 hours a week, and a competent staff with the same commitment to quality.

"I've got the most wonderful family in the world, and they like to see me, too, but eight hours a day is unheard-of. It just doesn't happen," Witt says. "My time ranges from 60 to 80 hours a week for nine months of the year to 50 to 60 hours the other three months—and that includes delegating a lot of work to my assistants.

"I've got an excellent staff. I try to hire the best people on the continent. But I delegate so much that some of my assistants end up not being able to handle it. When I get squeezed for perfection from the people I work for, I've got to pass that down to my assistants. And they'll tell you that what is acceptable in Dallas, Texas, or Lex-

ington, Kentucky, is not necessarily even close to being acceptable here in Chicago."

#### The pleasures

The dreary weather, the long afternoon and his third media interview of the week have taken something from Witt. As the sun sets through the window behind him, he says he still values the opportunities he's been given.

"If I could be somewhat biased, gee, I think we're very lucky," he says. "And I thank the good Lord every night for the job I have and the product that's delivered.

"The real pleasure is when you go out at the end of the day and look back at the property, and you know that you and your staff may be the only people who really understand what it's taken to achieve that product. Certainly, 99.9 percent of the golfing public has little or no idea what the golf course superintendent does." □

## QUOTABLE QUOTES

### from TOMMY WITT

Wynstone Golf Club  
North Barrington, Ill.

#### ► More on profits:

*"There are very few country club settings where food and beverage is a profit center. I have a friend in Georgia who was budgeted to lose \$1.2 million in food and beverage."*

#### ► On great golf courses:

*"Great golf courses don't happen by accident. It's a tri-fold effort. One, a qualified staff to manage it. Two, a governing body that's willing to fund the effort. Three, a membership that is proud and willing to take care of it."*

#### ► On job interviews:

*"The only reason I moved to Wynstone was because all 10 of the people who interviewed me said that they wanted Wynstone to move into the top 50 courses in the United States, and they would make that commitment at all costs. The members must care about the course."*

#### ► On ambience:

*"When you talk about the Medinahs, the Bobolinks, Atlanta Golf Club, you're talking about upper echelon golf courses with not only the design but the ambience of a club. When you walk onto that course, you know it's special, that people take care of it."*

#### ► On satisfaction:

*"I started playing golf when I was five, so it's a big part of my life. Plus, it's a challenge that very, very few professions have to offer. You're trying to derive personal satisfaction under extremely difficult circumstances. That's why a vast majority of our people are 28 to 35 years old and the average tenure for a superintendent on a course is just four years." □*

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We also hold editorial meetings with media decision-makers. And respond to negative articles or broadcasts that are incorrect. We've been very successful so far. Not surprising considering what

our most powerful weapon is. The truth.

Of course, there's still a lot more work to do. But rest assured, RISE is up to the task.

Because we know if we eliminate air pollution, the pesticide industry can breathe a lot easier.



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# Winter a time to plan ahead, hit the books

by STEVE & SUZ TRUSTY

Carefully planned and executed winter projects help lay the groundwork for success in the coming season. And they don't necessarily have to be outdoor projects, either.

Begin with a review of last year's programs, and how you got things done. Evaluate how efficient and effective your current programs are, and formulate a game plan for the coming year.

Divide projects into indoor and outdoor categories. Determine which projects, or segments of projects, must be handled by management and which can be assigned to specific crew members.

## Educate and train

1) Establish in-house training programs. Review standard safety policies and procedures. Designate a part of the shop area as a demonstration area, a place where crew persons can practice and perfect routing procedures. Involve the crew each step of the way, and consider their comments and suggestions.

A demonstration area will let them time specific procedures using different steps or when performed by one-, two- or three-person crews.

2) Develop an accurate labor tracking method for certain tasks. If data is available, analyze labor efficiency over the past few years.

3) Analyze the past year's information, and compare results on specific sites with the amount of equipment, labor and materials invested. Would an upgrade of tools

or equipment, or the addition of some equipment, reduce, although not necessarily eliminate, labor time? At what point would such purchases be cost ef-

**PRIORITY LEVEL:**     Urgent     Essential  
                               Before use     Aesthetic fix

Facility name: .....

Location: .....

Area to repair: .....

Action required: .....

Vehicles required: .....

Tools required: .....

Other materials: .....

Labor required: .....

Time to complete: .....

Other needs: .....

Special notes: .....

Assigned to: .....

Date assigned: .....

Date completed: .....

Materials used: .....

Time expended: .....

▲ The job starts with the work order. Make it specific, including estimated time required to get the job done.

effective? Decide where service levels can remain where they are, and where they must be cut or increased.

## Job descriptions accurate?

1) Learn where you can improve indi-

vidual initiative and employee commitment to their careers.

During the course of employment, people can take on or neglect duties through no fault of their own. Are employees making the desired personal advances in skill and responsibility? Meet with managers and crew leaders to discuss problems, strategy and ways to improve. Meet with all members of your team during the off-season as you plan for the new year.

2) Attend winter meetings and seminars when possible. If your budget prohibits full staff attendance at a seminar, make sure you or another company representative attends, and brings back plenty of helpful information.

Your trade show plan should allow ample time for personnel to visit both the show floor and seminars.

3) Networking is often overlooked by green industry professionals. Discuss common problems with your peers to reduce your adventures in "trial and error" management.

## General projects important

1) Walk through all facilities, and make note of areas that need cleaning and repair. Assign priorities to these tasks.

2) Take advantage of mild winter days to clean up grounds and facilities; repair fences; maintain parking lots, walkways and cart paths; work on building exteriors; and prune or remove trees and shrubs.

In bad weather, clean up and otherwise organize indoor areas. Wash or paint those dingy walls. Clean that floor. Get rid of all trash, including those faded notes hanging on the walls that you have not referred to in months, or even years.

3) Post all important information in a conspicuous, common area. Beyond all required safety notices, include weekly and daily crew assignments, vacation schedules, upcoming events that affect staff levels or workloads. Devise a workable method of getting individual messages to crew mem-

bers, such as a file or box each person, or a message rack with a slot for each person.

4) **Tackle** the small details. Repair a shaky tool handle. Repaint chipped or damaged mower decks. Lubricate all moving parts, and sharpen those mower blades.

#### Track tools & inventory

1) **Implement or develop** a computer system. Are you using your computers to their full advantage? Use a business analysis program such as Power Point to plan budgets and keep records. How closely do actual spending and use patterns match projections and budgets?

2) **Compare** ending inventories to last year's ending inventory and ordering frequency. Note any discrepancies and unusually heavy use. Find a way to monitor use and reduce waste.

3) **Refine** your equipment and tool tracking system. Small hand tools can be checked out to each crew member for the season, or assigned to specific crews and kept with that crew's equipment and supplies.

4) **Upgrade** systems of equipment allocation and supply usage. Track material

used for all accounts, areas or athletic fields.

#### Prioritize materials

1) **Analyze** material use patterns over the last several years and explore cost saving alternatives. If storage space is available, would larger initial orders earn discounts? If space is limited, is can any time or costs be saved by placing a series of orders for delivery at specific future dates?

Have certain items been hard to find or in limited supply during the rush of the season? (Turf seed might fall into this category in 1996.)

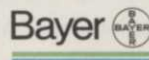
Would it be cost effective to keep these items on hand for use as required? Would it be beneficial to establish set "order points" on some frequently-used items? □

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## Storage strategy

- ▶ Clean and organize storage areas.
- ▶ Allow room for incoming supplies.
- ▶ Think about how, why and when materials are used.
- ▶ Allocate prime space to items used most often.
- ▶ Put lesser-used items on higher or lower shelves, or "in the back."
- ▶ Don't disregard the importance of labels.
- ▶ Set up pegboard racks for shared hand tools—draw an outline of tools on the pegboard. It's simple, but effective!
- ▶ Dry-applied materials must be off the ground. Put seed or smaller bagged materials in bins or sealed cans.
- ▶ Clean and organize the shop and equipment repair areas. If equipment is always parked or stored in a specific place, mark the floor to designate that area.

Circle 104



# Electric greensmower eliminates noise and pollution complaints

by JAMES E. GUYETTE / Contributing Editor

**G**olf course superintendents who are using electric greens mowers say the mowers have greatly reduced mower noise and eliminated complaints from homeowners who live alongside golf courses. Exhaust emissions have also been eliminated with the electric-powered units.

"Any type of pollution is not going to be tolerated in the future—and I'm including noise pollution," reports Ben McBrien, superintendent at the Sea Cliff Country Club in Huntington Beach, Calif.

Loud noises emitting from routine maintenance tasks have become an increasing problem as more new, exclusive housing developments are built around the links to take advantage of the amenities offered by the game of golf. But people have limits: "The golfers want to start as early as possible, and the residents want to sleep in on weekends," explains Ron Parker, superintendent at the Calabassas Golf and Country Club in Calabassas, Calif.

The industry needs to get turned on to the concept and start making the switch, he observes: "It's going to be essential to have an electric mower to start mowing in the morning."

The shift to an electric greens mower has already become a requirement at Calabassas after the long arm of the law threatened to make a collar. "We got a call from the sheriff," Parker relates.

It was a similar situation at Sea Cliff, where early morning mowing was a key part of the dawn. "I've had the police come out here and stop me," McBrien recounts. "The complaints were pretty bad." Switching over to an electric commercial grade

greensmower made by Ransomes created an atmosphere now free of any sparks. "We're no longer having any problems with homeowners complaining about noise."

Weekday teetimes at Sea Cliff begin at 7 a.m. On weekends a golfer can start playing at 6 a.m. The greens are trimmed every day. "Noise and early starts are a real problem," McBrien notes.

## COMPARING THE ELECTRICS: RUNNING TIME, IN MINUTES, BETWEEN RECHARGES

|                           | Max. | Min. |
|---------------------------|------|------|
| Black & Decker (consumer) | 67   | 48   |
| Ransomes (reel)*          | 360  | 240  |
| Ryobi (consumer)          | 100  | 47   |
| Toro 24-volt (rotary)     | 114  | 79   |
| Toro 36-volt (rotary)     | 206  | 125  |

\*greensmower

"Now on weekends—when we start really early—everything is electric." The carts carrying equipment and crew are electric, and so is the mower. "We've been very successful with the electric greensmower, it's sure worth the money to us, and we're going to buy a second one."

The pricing is competitive when compared to fossil fuel machines, and the positive impact on the course activities is definitely up to par. "The quality of cut is as good, if not better than, gas," says McBrien.

"It originally was my concern that electric mowers could not mow an entire course," McBrien recalls. "If you can only mow nine holes at a time you need two machines, and that costs twice as much," he points out. "We're able to mow an 18-

hole golf course with one charge."

During the week, the greens are tended by a standard walk-behind mower. "On the weekends there's no way a walk-behind mower can get the course ready in time, so that's when we use the electric riding mower," McBrien explains.

The battery power provides enough juice to get the job done. "You just plug it in (when the day is over) and leave it, and when you come back the next morning it's ready to go."

At Calabassas, the electric model is used daily, and Parker appreciates that the mower comes with lights to enable cutting during the dark, pre-dawn hours. It's also quiet. "You can talk in almost a normal tone of voice, and that's important because we're sort of down in a canyon so the noise echoes around."

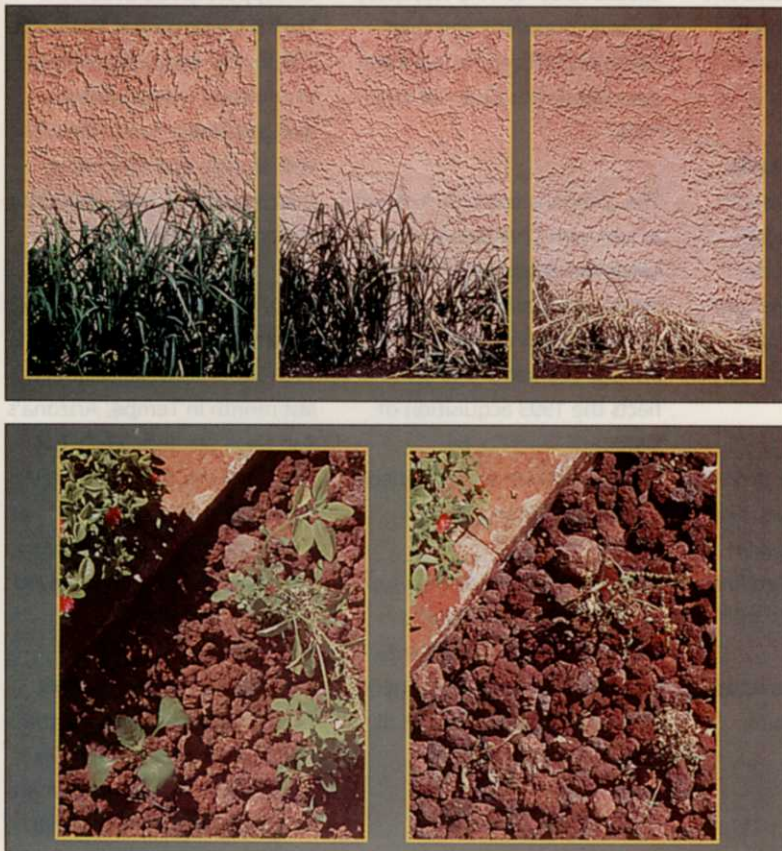
"It's just like a golf cart," reports McBrien. "It's quiet. It's like a whisper going from green to green. It's got enough power to light the lights, run to the green, and then mow the green when you get there."

Superintendents who are pondering an electric mower need to take into account several factors, such as the terrain and the distance between holes. Hills and long distances can eat up battery power. Get your dealer to lend you a test model. "I tried it out for a couple of days and then I bought it," McBrien notes.

The reels turn faster on an electric, and McBrien and Parker say they adjust the knives differently than they would with a standard mower. That's the type of things you learn during the tryout period.

"Sea Cliff is not a flat course, it's not a hilly course—and that mower does a nice job here," McBrien says, adding that he's charged up over the concept of electric mowers being put to work—quietly and cleanly—by industry professionals faced with a demanding environment: "And I wasn't really aware of this until the homeowners got after me." **LM**





## Fast results keep lawn customers happy

When lawn care customers face an intense weed or insect problem in their residential or commercial turf, they usually have no trouble communicating what they want. They want it gone. And it's likely to your benefit to take on that same sense of urgency, lest they embark on an urgent search for a new service provider.

Empathy for customer concerns is most evident in the way you respond to a problem; in your company philosophy; and maybe even in the products you use.

Jeff Mattiola, owner of Blue Tree Landscaping in Norristown, Pa., likes to prove to his customers that he not only cares about solving their turf care problems, but that he also gives them value for their money.

"It's the attention to detail and establishing rapport that's key to keeping customers happy," says Mattiola.

Joe Loyet, owner of Loyet Landscape & Maintenance in St. Louis, sets stringent response-time

goals: he believes in "doing everything we can to resolve any problem for a customer within 48 hours. Being responsive in our service call operations is really important."

The two men share an interest in new control products. They've started to use Scythe, a relatively new non-selective contact herbicide from Mycogen Corp.

Scythe reportedly burns down weeds in a few hours, thanks to its active ingredient: a naturally-occurring fatty acid that disrupts the weed cell membranes on contact. When applied properly and carefully, the lawn care operator can cut razor sharp lines between desirable and unwanted turf.

According to Mycogen, there is no soil residual activity at normal rates, so areas treated with Scythe can be planted almost immediately.

Application can be made by boom, hand-held or high-volume equipment, but over-the-top spraying is not recommended. It's most effective when applied on warm, sunny days.

"We are always looking to separate ourselves from the competition," says Mattiola. "Our customers always want to see an instant response, something you don't get from any of the other products on the market."

Mattiola and Loyet frequently tank-mix Scythe with glyphosate, to achieve long-term systemic activity. It sounds like these guys have found the best of three worlds.

"Now," says Loyet, "we have proven pre-emergents, a systemic, and an immediate burndown. It helps position us for creating and maintaining satisfied customers."

Loyet says Scythe has reduced callbacks. "Usually, if there is a weed problem in the beds or on curbs, the property manager wants it gone 'yesterday,'" he explains.

"Now, we can tell the customer to walk out the morning after our service call and see the results for himself." **LM**



## SUPPLIERS CORNER

Farmers Marketing and Cactus Seed have merged into a new company, **Seeds West**. The new company will be the largest bermudagrass seed company in the world, according to president Sheldon Richardson and vice president Ernie Millner. Corporate headquarters: 4445 N. 24th St., Phoenix, AZ 85016.

**Sandoz** has released a new reference for planning preventive control of tough golf course diseases, its "1996 Recommended Programs for Sentinel" turf fungicide. Details can be obtained by calling (800) 248-7763.

Don Woodall has joined **Burlingham Seed** as vice president. Since the mid-1980s, Woodall worked for AgriTurf

Co. in Massachusetts, building one of the country's premier golf course seed programs and pioneered the marketing of endophyte-enhanced turf-grasses.

**Zajac Performance Seeds'** new warehouse supervisor in Albany, Ore. is Michael Billman. The soon-to-be-completed facility will be the consolidation point for Zajac's common and proprietary turf-grasses and mixtures.

**Briggs & Stratton** has promoted Floyd Bretzman to vice president of its Industrial Engine Division and William Reitman to vice president of marketing. Bretzman was previously director of sales administration; Reitman was marketing director.

A. Montague Miller is **Club Car's** president and new chief executive officer. He was most recently president and chief operating officer. He has been associated with Club Car since 1978.

The company formerly known as Lebanon Chemical is now **Lebanon Seaboard**, according to vice president and chief operating officer Katherine Bishop. The name change reflects the 1993 acquisition of Seaboard Seed Co. by Lebanon, which was founded in 1948 by Vernon Bishop.

**Kubota Tractor** will be a supplier for the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta. It will provide agricultural tractors, generators and pumps for use at various Olympic venues.

Dr. Dennis P. Shepard of Overland Park, Kans., is new technical support specialist at **Ciba Turf & Ornamental Products**. The former assistant professor at Louisiana State University and golf course superintendent will develop and monitor research protocols with university researchers in the West.

Ph.D. perennial ryegrass from **International Seeds** made its 11th Super Bowl appearance last month in Tempe, Arizona's Sun Devil Stadium. Ph.D. has also been the choice for most Super Bowl team practice fields since 1980, even in years when the game itself is played on artificial turf.

Steve Lendvay of the **Garick Corp.** has been named to the Board of Directors of the Ohio Landscapers Association, where he will sit until January, 1998.

**Husqvarna Forest & Garden** donated a battery-charged trimmer and battery-run mower to the Sierra Club's fifth annual auction last October. The auction helped raise money for conserving natural resources, open space and wildlife habitat in California.

The **Ditch Witch** division of the Charles Machine Works has received ISO 9001 registration for its quality management system by Det Norske Veritas (DNV). The three-year ISO 9001 certification is the most comprehensive of the ISO 9000 conformance standards, because it touches on design, development, installation and servicing not addressed in other ISO standards. **LM**

# Info center

VIDEOS AND LITERATURE FOR THE GREEN INDUSTRY

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# Events

## FEBRUARY

**25-27: Wisconsin Landscape Federation Winter Convention**, Appleton, Wisc. Phone: (414) 529-4705.

**27-28: "Current Concepts in Turfgrass Disease Management" symposium**, Rutgers Cooperative Extension Advanced Turf Management Symposium, Milltown, N.J. Phone: (908) 932-9271.

**27-29: Western Pennsylvania Turf Conference & Trade Show**, Pittsburgh Expo Mart. Phone: (412) 796-5692.

**28-29: Southern Illinois Grounds Maintenance School**, Collinsville, Ill. Phone: (618) 692-9434.

## MARCH

**1: Landscape and Facilities Seminar**, Lincoln, Neb. Phone: (414) 733-2301.

**1-2: ALCA Masters in Management seminar**, Chicago. Phone: (800) 395-2522.

**2: Midwest Chapter STMA Awards Luncheon**, Schaumburg (Ill.) Golf Club. Phone: (708) 439-4727.

**4-5: Nevada Landscape Association Trade Show and Conference**, Reno-Sparks Convention Center. Phone: (702) 356-0909.

**4-5: Winter Meeting of the Michigan Forestry and Park Assn.**, Lansing Holiday Inn South. Phone: Ann Ashby, (517) 482-5530.

**6-7 Storms Over the Urban Forest Conference**, Nashville, Tenn. Phone: (402) 474-5655.

**6-8: Massachusetts Turf Conference**, Springfield. Phone: Mary Owen, (508) 892-0382.

**7-18: Florissimo 96**, Parc des Expositions, Dijon, France. Phone: (+33) 80 77 3900.

**8-9: ALCA Masters in Management seminar**, Denver. Phone: (800) 395-2522.

**9-10: State Garden Show of Texas**, Waco Convention Center. Phone: Gloria Gonzales, (817) 772-1270.

**11-12: Estimating**, by Vander Kooi & Assoc., in Baltimore and Denver. Phone: (803) 971-1724.

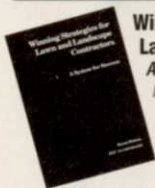
**13: Shigo on Trees seminar**, Milwaukee. Phone: (402) 474-5655.

**14: Tree Health Management**, Phoenix. Phone: Bob Bohlman, (602) 263-8889.

**21-24: ALCA Student Career Days**, Calif. Polytechnic, San Luis Obispo, Calif. Phone: (703) 620-6363.

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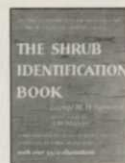
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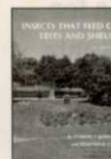
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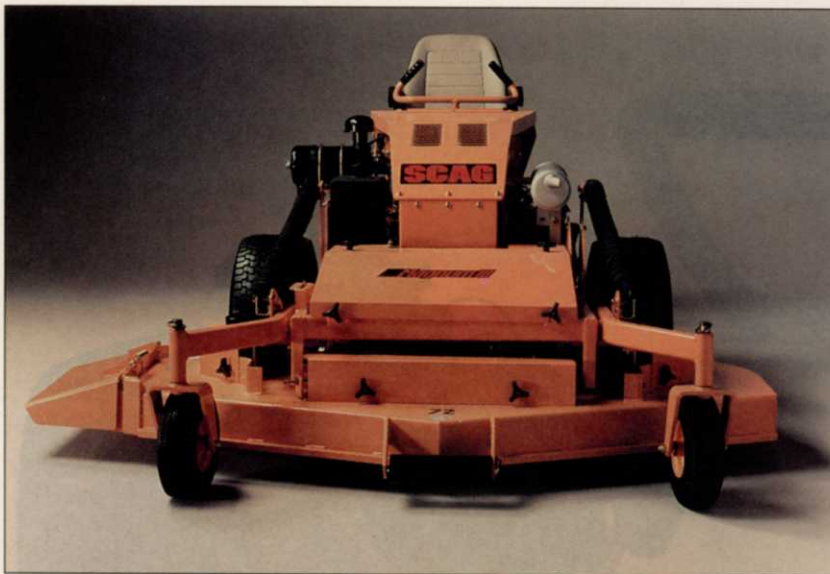
the SRM-3110 with dedicated U-handle ready for blade use right out of the box.

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### Mower reportedly can stay on the job longer

The new Magnum III diesel-powered mid-size mower has a 28 hp Kubota three-cylinder engine and a 7.5-gallon fuel capacity, allowing it to "stay out on the job longer than any gas-powered mower its size," Scag Power Equipment contends.

Although the Magnum III is built for maximum cutting performance, operators will find its convenient single-pedal foot control and well-balanced design make it handle like a much smaller rider, Scag says. Its heavy-duty pump and wheel motor drive system deliver continuous, even power to the drive wheels.

Circle No. 300



### Deere GS series of walk-behind mowers offers range of features

John Deere's GS series of commercial walk-behind mowers are all equipped with five-speed gear transmission.

The line includes traction units with 12.5, 14 or 17 hp Kawasaki engines. They can be paired with a 48-, 54- or new 36-inch mower deck. The latter features two-spindle, timed blades, a larger discharge opening and new discharge chute, 1- to 5-inch

cutting range; and fixed and fabricated deep deck design.

All feature an operator presence system, electric power take-off, separate choke and spring-loaded automatic thumb latch release. Several attachments are optional, including fixed or steerable sulkies.

Circle No. 301



### Hustler Hillsider takes mowing on slopes to a new level of safety

The Hustler Model 6400 Hillsider features six-wheel drive for incredible traction and safety on slopes, Excel contends. It also has a wide stance and self-leveling cab with a certified roll-over protection system.

The Hillsider's unique "turning mode" allows it to make a true zero-degree turn without scuffing the turf.

The machine comes with a 72-inch rotary deck and options like a 72-inch dozer blade, a 60-inch v-blade or a 60-inch two-stage snowthrower.

Circle No. 302



## Mower cuts to 126 inches wide

Howard Price Turf Equipment has introduced the new Hydro-Power 1280 that has either a 52 or 61-hp diesel engine.

The Hydro-Power 1280 has a 126-inch full floating triplex cutting deck, anti-scalp protection, reduced operating noise levels, and a work station that's ergonomically engineered for comfort and ease of operation.

Circle No. 303



## Snapper enlarges its commercial mower offerings with 'Great Dane'

Snapper introduced a commercial line of mowers at last summer's Louisville Expo '95.

Besides the redesigned Pro Series, Snapper unveiled the Great Dane Series, named after Dane Scag, an innovator in commercial mowers. The walk-behinds have 14 to 18-hp engines and floating decks. They are available in 36- to 61-inch cutting widths. The hydro rider (pictured) features a 33 or 40 hp engine with a cutting width of either 61 or 72 inches.

Circle No. 304

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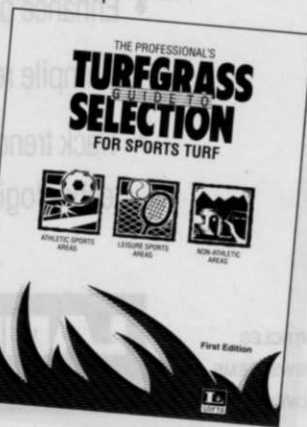
Circle 124

# FREE GUIDE TO SPORTS TURF

This free guide to the selection and use of turfgrass is a handy reference for anyone involved in sports turf.

The booklet addresses every area of sports turf... from the fine, dense turf required for precision sports like tennis and croquet to the tough turf needed for rugged sports like football or racetracks.

Geographically arranged, it suggests the appropriate turfgrass species, where to use them and even proposes proper cutting heights and seeding rates. A separate section covers Southern Winter Overseeding. And this new guide is yours for the asking.



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## > PRODUCT REVIEW

### Zero-turn mower boosts Byers Gold line to more than 50 models



Byers Gold has introduced a new zero-turn riding mower that expands its line of commercial lawn and turf equipment to more than 50 models.

The new rider's standard features:

- infinitely forward ground speed up to 8.5 mph,
- dual hydraulic reservoir system,
- cold start feature allows starting of only engine and not entire hydraulic system,
- 48-, 52- and 61-inch widths of cut, and
- 18 hp Briggs & Stratton Twin Vanguard or 18 hp Kohler Command engine.

Circle No. 305

### 'Mow'n Machines' have zero turn radiuses

Woods Equipment's new 6000 Series Mow'n Machines include seven models ranging from 14 to 24.5 hp with seven engine options including diesel. Versatile attachments such as snow thrower, sweeper and dozer blade enable the Mow'n Machine to be a year-round workhorse.

Models 6140 and 6160 are specially designed to serve the residential and light commercial markets. Models 6180, 6182, 6200, 6215 and 6250 are engineered for large residential areas and commercial mowing.

Mowing decks available are 44, 48 (offset), 52 and 61 inches and include options such as mulching kit or floating deck kit. All models feature four-gallon fuel tanks, larger headlights with halogen bulbs, puncture-proof caster tires, spring-loaded attachment pins and idlers.

Circle No. 306