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TO-160

2/96

Are biologicals smart mole cricket control?

by HOWARD FRANK / University of Florida



Most turf managers try to control mole cricket pests with a bait, or granules or liquid containing something that kills them. That "something" may be chemical materials (a chemical pesticide) or living biological materials (a biopesticide).

Some of the newer chemical materials, called "biorationals," are synthetic chemicals that, for example, mimic the action of insects' growth hormones to interfere with development.

The biological materials may be insect-killing nematodes (now available commercially) or fungal or bacterial pathogens (being tested experimentally).

These products can be placed exactly where they are needed. In general, the chemical pesticides work

faster than the biopesticides, but the biopesticides affect a narrower range of non-target organisms and are more environmentally acceptable. The "biorational" chemicals are somewhere in between, because they tend to work more slowly than the traditional chemicals, and to have less effect on animals other than insects.

Natives not pests

The 10 mole cricket species in the U.S. and its territories (including Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands) differ in appearance, distribution, behavior and pest status.

In fact, the native mole crickets are not pests. Our pest mole crickets are immigrant species.

The three species that arouse the ire of turf man-

agers in the southeastern states all belong to the genus *Scapteriscus*. They came from South America, arriving at the turn of the century in ships' ballast. They are the short-winged mole cricket (*Scapteriscus abbreviatus*), the southern mole cricket (*Scapteriscus borellii*), and the tawny mole cricket (*Scapteriscus vicinus*).

The southern mole cricket lives in lowland areas of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and eastern Texas.

Recently it turned up on a golf course near the Arizona/California border.

The tawny mole cricket has a similar but narrower range and may not yet have spread west of the Louisiana/Texas border. The short-winged mole cricket in the contiguous states is almost entirely in coastal areas of peninsular Florida.

When they got to the U.S., these pest species began to spread, and they continue to spread today. One reason they have been successful here is that the natural predators that control them remained in South America.

Natural enemies

Introducing the specialist natural enemies from South America to the southeastern states is a possible solution. This kind of activity, called classical biological control, has been partially accomplished in Florida.

First, the biological control agents were observed in South America and identified. Then some of them were brought under federal permit to a quarantine facility in Florida for study.

It had to be learned how to culture them, and also how to culture mole crickets as year-round food for them. Only agents shown to be harmless to non-target organisms were cleared for release. These had to be produced in large numbers for release in Florida, then releases were made.

Populations of them became established at various places, then spread to nearby counties. The spread of populations had to be tracked, and the effect on mole cricket populations had to be evaluated. The details differ widely from species to species. For example, a parasitoid fly was



The life cycle of the short-winged mole cricket. This pest is found in coastal regions of the Florida peninsula.

released by the thousands, at multiple sites, and quickly spread throughout south and central Florida. A predatory beetle has not yet been released.

Encouraging results

Mole cricket populations have been monitored for over 15 years at three trapping stations in Florida. Mole crickets trapped at the southwestern station over the last three years number on average less than an eighth of what they averaged in the years before releases were made. The same two biological control agents are established near the two stations in north Florida, where mole crickets trapped over the last three years number on average about a third of what they were before releases were made.

In north Florida, one of the two biological control agents occurs only in small numbers and probably has little effect; however, a third agent has just become established and its effect should increase.

These biological control agents are achieving area-wide biological control of pest mole crickets. There are more kinds of biological control agents yet to be researched and released.

The big questions to ask are: how low can we suppress mole cricket populations with classical biological control agents, and to what degree can we reduce the use of pesticides? □

Call up 'Mcricket' for answers

How can you tell the 10 species of mole crickets in the United States apart?

It's much easier to identify the adults than the young (nymphs) to the species level.

One way to identify them is to use a computerized knowledge base called *Mcricket*.

This knowledge base not only has graphics that let you identify the mole crickets, but it also has information about their life cycles and behavior. It also has information about control methods, including tutorials.

Mcricket was developed by University of Florida entomologists Tom Fasulo, Howard Frank and Don Short with extension agents Harold Jones and LaRue Robinson. Other than that, any IBM-compatible PC with 3.3 MB of hard disk space, 640 KB of RAM, and one floppy drive will do.

Mcricket: Alternative Methods of Mole Cricket Control including the software (three diskettes, Program 089) and manual (Circular SW-089) can be purchased as a package from: University of Florida, IFAS Software Support, P.O. Box 110340, Gainesville, FL 32611-0340. Phone: (352) 392-7853. *Mcricket* costs \$30 for Florida residents (add sales tax) and educational institutions, \$40 for all others. Prepayment by check or Visa/MasterCard is required. Checks should be made out to the University of Florida.

However, if you know how to surf the World Wide Web from your computer, you can access *Mcricket* free at:

<http://gmv.ifas.ufl.edu/~ent1/mcricket/index.html>



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The foundation of good disease management.



Heat stress 'solutions' can hurt

by TERRY McIVER / Managing Editor

Bentgrass—regardless of the variety—is naturally prone to heat stress. Well-intentioned management that is performed to defend the turf against the heat can often get in the way of healthy turf.

Speaking at the North Carolina Turf Conference in January, Dr. Milt Engelke of Texas A&M reminded superintendents that different species of turfgrasses have biological strengths and weaknesses that influence how they survive in the golf course setting.

"Natural environmental conditions we are concerned with include temperature extremes, moisture extremes, disease and traffic," says Engelke, "and to help the turf withstand those conditions, we manipulate the environment to compensate for the biological deficiencies of the cultivar.

Mowing heights are tricky. If they're too high, stressed roots have more turf to support. ▼

Large fans help circulate air around greens surrounded by many trees. ▼



Engelke's heat-stress tips:

1. Use adapted, heat-resistant cultivars.
2. Maintain good soil/water ratio.
3. Promote deep, extensive rooting.
4. Provide adequate drainage.
5. Avoid excessively saturated soil.
6. Maintain proper mowing height.
7. Pull soil profiles often to view rootzone depth.
8. Flush greens periodically.
9. Use Toro Hydroject on dry greens, NOT on wet greens.
10. Try using star tines on your aerator. They give turf about 30% more surface area in which to lose moisture. With 3/8-inch diameter tines, you can actually dry a green out in 24 to 36 hours, Engelke says.

—T.M.

"The attitude has developed that there is a specific way we have to manage bentgrasses. We have to get off of that a little bit. Syringing is an example. That process cools the plant but it's just one of many cultural practices.

"Your management scheme should be to manage to the weakness of the grass, and take advantage of the strengths," says Engelke.

"Turf variety is important, but management is the key."

Syringing in high temperatures, for example, creates humidity in the turf crown. The high temperature, high humidity and fertilizer combine to create a perfect environment for disease, Engelke explains.

"Water management can be a wonderful tool," agrees Engelke. "We just tend to use 'a little bit of water' a lot!"

There are ways to help the plant to *cool itself*, and thereby cut back on the "environmental manipulation." One solution is to aerify rather than syringe.

Summer aerification creates large pores for water and oxygen circulation in the rootzone, the most important area of the turf.

Lost any greens collars lately? Was it after you raised the mowing height? That's because as soil temperature rises in hot weather, root growth stops.

"So if you raise the height of cut in the summer, you're taxing roots that are already weakened by heat." □

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Part-time personnel, full-time headaches

by PHILIP M. PERRY

Motivating full-time employees is hard enough. But part-time and temporary workers pose a special challenge.

How do you light fires under people who are often saddled with low-level work, blocked from climbing the career ladder, and treated like "outsiders" by the full-time staff?

"Contingency" workers now account for 20 percent of America's workforce. That number is expected to rise to 30 percent within a decade.

"Part-time and temporary employees have become vital tools for keeping labor costs under control," says Carl Johnson, president of Princeton Employee Relations, Princeton, N.J.

Unmotivated contingency workers, however, are dangerous. Feeling demoralized, they perform listlessly and neglect customers. That threatens your profits. Worse, disenchanted part-time workers are apt to quit for greener pastures. That saddles your business with the costly task of training replacements.

Here's some good news. You *can* motivate these employees. The secret is to avoid common errors that "turn off" temporary help:

TIP #1

► **Don't give them the cold shoulder.**

Give them a warm welcome and introduce them to the staff. Make them feel a part of the family.

Bonus tip: Avoid confusion and hurt feelings by clearly identifying the chain of command to the new employee. Who is authorized to give orders?

TIP #2

► **Don't turn them loose without orientation.** "Cover the basic things: what are the policies of the firm? What are overtime policies?," says Bruce Steinberg, spokesperson for the National Association of Temporary and Staffing Services, Alexandria, Va.

Bonus tip: Plan ahead. "Don't just assume that when people show up, you will get everything ready," says Steinberg. "Prepare their tools and anything else."

TIP #3

► **Assign a mentor.** "A mentor is a tremendous motivational tool," says Don Schackne, president of Personnel Management and Administration Associates, Delaware, Ohio. "Select someone who is willing to teach and is patient. You can also assign a few permanent people as roving mentors."

Bonus tip: The mentor will feel good about the added responsibility.

TIP #4

► **Don't exert too much control.** You'll never find out if there is "a better way" if you don't give the new worker the freedom to use creative problem-solving.

"When contingency workers believe they are making a difference in an organization, they feel better about being there," says Ian Jacobsen, a Sunnyvale, Calif.-based consultant.

Bonus tip: Encourage everyone to think creatively by recognizing new ideas publicly.

TIP #5

► **Don't load down part-timers with "grunt" tasks,** those jobs no one else wants to do. Remember that everyone feels good about improving skills. What challenging tasks can you assign to the new employees? Ask them what skills they would like to acquire. There's nothing wrong with assigning low-level tasks. But make sure to *add* some specialized jobs to spark loyalty and enthusiasm.

Bonus tip: Rotate the mundane tasks among all employees to keep boredom to a minimum.

TIP #6

► **Don't overlook work well done.** That's devastating. "The recognition of a job well done is even more important for contingent workers," says Dr. Peter Spevak of the Center for Applied Motivation, Rockville, Md. "Their own identity with the company is not as strong, and they need to be reinforced."

Bonus tip: Consider giving a plaque to the part-time "Worker of the Month."

QUOTABLE QUOTES

Positioning ourselves

▶ "[The environmental debate] is a very robust discussion now. We've come out from all the bashing and we've started to posture ourselves as environmentalists in our own right."

—Dr. Frank Rossi,
University of Wisconsin-Madison

TIP #7 ▶ Do not allow conflicts with full-time employees, who may feel threatened by part-timers, fearing for their own jobs. So explain to current workers why you are bringing in outsiders; communicate that the new people do not represent a threat to the jobs of full-time staffers.

Bonus tip: Reward successful referrals with cash bonuses.

TIP #8 ▶ Do not omit temporary workers from business activities. Invite them to workshops and seminars, employee lunches, parties, and any other normal activities.

Bonus tip: Hold a party for every temp's birthday.

TIP #9 ▶ Don't overlook financial incentives. Times are changing: bonuses are not reserved for permanent staffers any more. "Develop some kind of a bonus plan," says Schackne. Perhaps insurance coverage or vacation time after a certain number of successful work hours.

Bonus tip: Pay contingent workers a little more per hour than competing businesses. This will keep competitors from raiding your workers after you have invested in their training.

TIP #10 ▶ Don't insist on rigid hours. Many part-time and temporary workers do not want to be tied down to 8-to-4 hours. Capitalize on that. If you allow for flexible hours, you will encourage employees to stay with you.

Bonus tip: Avoid panic situations by encouraging employees to let you know in advance of any anticipated scheduling conflicts.

"In the past...temporary workers came, performed menial functions and left with little interaction," notes Marc Silbert of Robert Half International, Menlo Park, Calif. "Now, they serve virtually all aspects of the workplace. They should be recognized as the professionals they are."

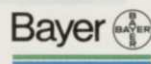
—The author is a freelance business writer based in New York City.

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and other diseases. And you can apply BAYLETON over your entire course to keep golfers from tracking disease from your fairways to your greens and tees.

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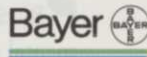
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SHOWCASE

that outfield fence!

by RON HALL / Senior Editor

Jeff Moser turns the outfield fence at the College of Wooster varsity baseball field into something special each summer.

By ringing an outfield fence with flowers, ornamental grasses and small trees, other schools and communities can showcase their top ballfields, too. The effort provides a functional and pleasing backdrop against which to highlight baseball or softball.

Moser is one of nine crew members on the staff of grounds superintendent Phil Williams. He and co-worker Leroy Boulton maintain the college's athletic fields. Other crew members maintain the school's golf course and campus.

The College of Wooster is a private college of 1578 students located in the heart of Amish country in north central Ohio. The campus is as neat and pretty as a picture postcard.

Here's how Moser, basically on a shoestring, perks up the outfield fence:

Each spring, he and Boulton run a string one-foot inside and outside of the outfield fence, and apply Roundup non-selective herbicide.

Then, when the college grounds crew picks up its 60 to 100 flats of annuals for the golf course and

campus, Moser sets aside 6 to 8 flats for the 5-foot-wide, 120-foot-long curve just outside of the baseball fence.

He began the project when he joined the staff almost seven years.

"Every year, I make it a little bit longer and add more plants," says Moser.

Because the ornamental grasses (a variegated miscanthus) that he planted around the fence grow so prolifically, he splits them often. This provides new plants as he expands the beds.

Moser says he and Boulton are so busy mowing and fertilizing the college's athletic fields in the spring, that they often have to wait weeks before rejuvenating the outfield fence, a project they do, basically, on their own.

It takes them about a day to pop out the grasses, rototill the beds, plant the grasses and flowers, and spread about two inches of shredded bark mulch. He says his most pleasing combination of flowers, to date, has been blue salvias massed with white sweet alyssum.

Although the spring baseball season is over by the time the garden looks its best, golfers—particularly senior citizen league golfers—really appreciate the view. The outfield fence is adjacent to the clubhouse and golf carts.

"Phil Williams has done wonders for the campus grounds for years. He's the one that deserves the credit for the things we do," says Moser. "He gives us some freedom to do these things as long as we get our daily tasks done." **LM**

Flowers make the outfield fence at the College of Wooster's varsity baseball field something special.



Gradually, our message is heard in Washington



Ron Hall

RON HALL
Senior Editor

Washington D.C. is the most powerful city containing the most powerful people that the world has ever known. . .so, where were you January 28th and 29th?

Those were the dates for the annual Day on the Hill put on by PLCAA and sponsored by top industry suppliers.

About 80 or 90 of us were there. But we know that there are thousands of others of you just like us. You use fertilizers and other chemical products responsibly. And because you do, you make our landscapes a lot better places to live, play and work in.

The relatively tiny number of us told our respective legislators and their aides just that. We also informed them about the number of people we employ. And about the taxes we pay.

We emphasized the public's overwhelming acceptance and support for our services. We also provided supporting data, and told them that they can contact us should they need any other information about our businesses, or our industry.

All of this we crammed into about 10 to 15 minutes a visit.

This is the same information that we've been offering to our respective legislators year after year after year. This is the seventh year in a row that some of us have been there.

We're starting to see the results of our work. It's a continuing educational process that's working.

During our legislative visits a couple of weeks ago, there were no controversies to address.

Lawmakers weren't considering any legislation that could be considered industry threatening, not like the anti-lawn care legislation that Sen. Joseph

[LAWN/LANDSCAPE]

PAGE 4 L ▶
Optimum scheduling

PAGE 6 L ▶
Who are your customers?

PAGE 10 L ▶
Ten lighting tips

PAGE 12 L ▶
The problem with part-timers

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An operating efficiency survey

PAGE 20 L ▶
'Pushing' motivation

Leiberman (D-Conn.) proposed six years ago, anyway.

The weight of our previous visits is partly responsible, although the governmental impasse over the U.S. budget and the fact that 1996 is an election year overshadowed everything else in Washington D.C. late in January.

Even so, legislators and their staffs received us cordially. More and more of them, or their staff members, know us from previous visits. That's encouraging.

Next year make plans to attend the Day on the Hill. You won't find yourself alone. There will be a small, but experienced group of colleagues that will show you the ropes in short order.

After making your visits, you'll probably agree with them that it's the single most important industry event of the year. You'll see for yourself how much difference you can make. **LM**

Comments? Phone Ron at (216) 891-2636 or e-mail him at 75553.502@compuserve.com





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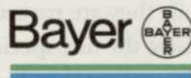
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Scheduling for optimum effectiveness



BOB ANDREWS
Contributing Editor

Since we must go to customers, rather than they to us, your time management is essential. Visits must be scheduled so that customers are serviced in an organized and efficient manner. Here are some hints:

1) **Clearly designate** routes or service zones. Except in very special cases, begin each year by treating all lawns in each zone in some type of order. Before the route is run for the first time, put these addresses in sequence by neighborhood, street, and number. Insist that they be treated in

that order the first time out.

2) **Include clear directions** to the site on each invoice. It may not always be possible to have the same person treat the lawn each round. Make sure a substitute has clear directions to the property.

3) **Take time** to acquaint new employees with the routes. Simply giving them a street map doesn't help much. Drive the routes with them and

provide written instructions on locations of specific subdivisions and new developments. Providing each truck with a Graphic Street Guide is also very helpful and quickly pays for itself in time saved.

4) **Clearly note** special customer requests on the invoice. Is this a "call-ahead" customer? Is there a locked gate? How about outdoor pets? Is the numerical address clearly shown on the house? If not, how do we identify it? Does the property have odd boundaries we need to remember?

All such information should be reviewed by the turf specialist before they leave your office, not while they are parked in front of the lawn.

5) **Give the turf specialist** a few more invoices than they are expected to treat. Despite our best

planning, there are often occasions when we simply cannot treat a scheduled lawn. By giving the specialist back-up invoices, you will save the time of having them return to the shop for additional work.

6) **Track invoices** and invoice scheduling. You should be able to tell, at any given time, the status of any given invoice. By keeping track of invoices, you will service customers according to the schedule you have set.

7) **Follow up** on a as scheduled route the day it is treated. This does not mean you distrust your employees. It is "quality control."

8) **Service new customers** as soon as possible. Later adjustments in schedules can be made after the lawn has been treated for the first time.

9) **Put customer needs** before your schedule. Most LCOs require their turf specialists to also respond to service calls in their respective routes. Whatever your service policy, be it one day, two or three, respond in that time frame by scheduling the service call in with the turf specialist's production route.

These are ways to efficiently service customers and avoid wasteful "windshield time." We understand the need for production sales goals, but we must also understand the need for quality work. Proper routing and scheduling of your service calls, and thus your employee's work day, will allow you to be more successful in meeting both objectives. **LM**

We must understand the need for both sales goals and quality work, too.

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Who are your customers...really?

You've got to get into their heads to effectively increase sales to both existing and potential clients, say these two experts.

Do you know enough about your customers or competitors to remain profitable? Or to grow your company?

That's the challenge every landscape contractor must meet, say Judith Guido and Edmond Laflamme of Laflamme Services, Bridgeport, Conn.

If you can't provide an accurate profile of your best customers, it's time to start asking lots of questions, says Guido.

Adds Laflamme: "Market research is gathering relevant information about current or potential customers to allow you to specifically focus on cus-

Judith Guido and Edmond Laflamme of Laflamme Services in Bridgeport, Conn., pinpoint their customers so that they can focus their marketing.



tomers who will most likely buy your service. Find out as much as possible about their mindset."

Begin with current customers. Find out who the decision-makers are. When do they budget? How do they buy? What's important to them?

In fact, you can't learn too much about either customers or potential customers, says Guido who, for example, joined a corporate purchasing agents' association.

She says she wanted to find out what made purchasing agents tick. She wanted to understand why they buy (or don't buy) landscape services. She wanted to discover how they budget for these purchases.

"I learned what they need," she explains. "I'm creating services to help them."

While you're profiling your customers, study your competitors too, says Laflamme, who started his own landscape company in 1970 with a pair of mowers. Laflamme Services now does more than \$5 million annually.

Can you name your top three competitors? Their top three accounts? Why your competitors have those accounts instead of you?

Other information you should know: Is your competitors' personnel more qualified than yours? What are their market areas? Their pricing strategies? How do they advertise?

Don't be afraid to ask customers and potential customers what they think of your competitors.

"Many times they will tell you," says Laflamme. "Ask them, where are they strong? Where are they weak?"

"Tell them why you want to know, because you want to improve your company. Nine times out of 10, they will tell you the truth."

Guido says you should match your company's strengths to your competitors' weaknesses. "In areas where you're weak against the competitors' strengths, you have two choices: get up to a competitive level or not compete."

Major domestic trends that could affect your sales

- ▶ More home-based computers, allowing the workforce to spend more time at home.
- ▶ Widespread availability of information systems (like the Internet and the World Wide Web) and computers.
- ▶ Environmentalism and the "green movement."
- ▶ Globalism and international business.
- ▶ "Networking," "partnering" and "outsourcing."
- ▶ Increasing business ethics and values; "honesty is a big part of business today," Edmond Laflamme notes.
- ▶ Not just satisfied customers, but satisfied-*plus* customers.
- ▶ Downsizing.

Guido offers these seven marketing tips:

1) **Define your product and service.** Write it down. Develop a "menu" of services. "How else do your employees know what you're doing? How does the public know what you're doing?" asks Guido.

2) **Identify your target market.** "You can't be everything to everybody," says Guido, who claims that "20 percent of your customers provide 80 percent of your revenues." Find more customers just like that 20 percent.

3) **Identify your pricing strategy.** "Can all of your employees answer the question: Why are you more expensive? Or, why are you less expensive?" asks Guido.

4) **Make your service accessible.** Is it easy for your customers to get in touch with you?

5) **Create customer awareness by get-**

ting your name into the marketplace.

Write articles for local newspapers. Speak at local clubs.

6) **Transfer ownership.** Is it easy for your company to get your services to your customers?

7) **Follow up and get feedback.** Don't let seven business days go by before following up a direct mail promotion. Either contact the potential client with a call or letter. Tailor your follow-ups on a case-by-case basis, but don't stop until you get feedback.

In addition to offering landscape services, Laflamme and Guido are partners in Grassroots Marketing, a consulting firm for small to mid-size companies. □

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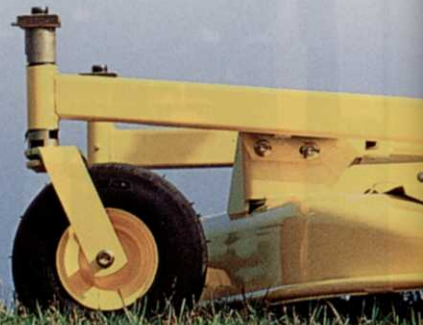
Unitized, welded steel frame

KEPT IT.

Hydraulic weight transfer

KEPT IT.

Dual hydraulic-lift cylinders for attachments



Change is good. Sometimes. But when you've got a front mower with as many outstanding features as the F900 Series, it's often best not to mess.

To give you an idea of how much we

still have to offer, just take a gander at the "kept it" column above.

Every item shown is either a John Deere exclusive. Or a feature that gives you a big advantage over most of the competition.

KNOWN FOR CHANGES IT DIDN'T MAKE

CHANGED IT.

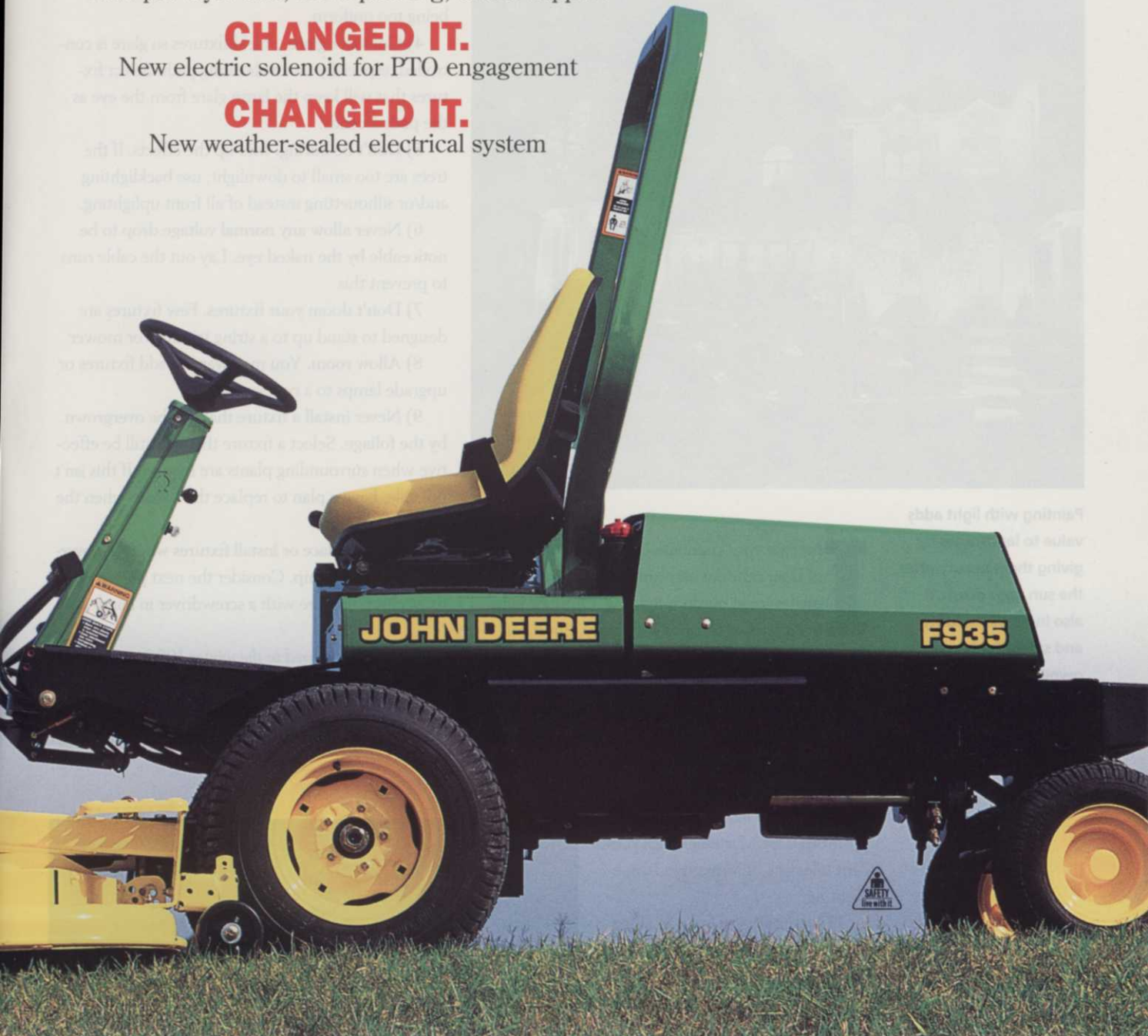
New pro-style seat; more padding, better support

CHANGED IT.

New electric solenoid for PTO engagement

CHANGED IT.

New weather-sealed electrical system



Not a bad list of goodies from a machine born and bred in the 80s.

But these 22- and 28-hp gas or diesel mowers have been updated in certain areas to make them even more reliable

and comfortable. (See "changed it" above.)

Rediscover the John Deere F900 Series for yourself. For more information or the dealer nearest you, call 1-800-537-8233.



NOTHING RUNS LIKE A DEERE®

10 BRIGHT lighting tips



Painting with light adds value to landscapes by giving them beauty after the sun goes down. It also increases security and safety for homeowners.

Increase your residential customers' enjoyment of their outdoor surroundings by providing professional outdoor lighting. Outdoor lighting increases security and safety. But it can also add beauty and mystery to gardens, pools, decks and patios—in all seasons.

Some contractors refer to this as landscape lighting and, indeed, they do illuminate trees and shrubs. But they also light driveways, steps, entrances and other parts of properties.

Here are 10 landscape lighting tips from Clay Martenies, vice president sales of California Landscape Lighting:

1) Never allow a lamp to shine directly into the eyes. If the effect you select will produce this, use another angle. If this is not possible, use another way to light.

2) Don't over-light. Allow the dark areas to accent what you light by varying amount of light, or not lighting everything.

3) Let the airports have the "runway" lights. Place your path-

lights where they are the most effective without being too uniform.

4) Consider glare. Shield fixtures so glare is controlled, especially on an elevating path. Select fixtures that will keep the lamp glare from the eye as the path ascends.

5) Don't be boring. Mix up the effects. If the trees are too small to downlight, use backlighting and/or silhouetting instead of all front uplighting.

6) Never allow any normal voltage drop to be noticeable by the naked eye. Lay out the cable runs to prevent this.

7) Don't doom your fixtures. Few fixtures are designed to stand up to a string trimmer or mower.

8) Allow room. You may want to add fixtures or upgrade lamps to a new system.

9) Never install a fixture that will be overgrown by the foliage. Select a fixture that will still be effective when surrounding plants are mature. If this isn't possible, have a plan to replace the fixture when the plants are mature.

10) Don't place or install fixtures where it's overly difficult to relamp. Consider the next person who must climb the tree with a screwdriver in hand. □

—These tips appeared in the winter 1996 issue of California Landscape Lighting's newsletter, Lite Tips. For more information, write: California Landscape Lighting, 31260 Cedar Valley Drive, Westlake Village, CA 91362.





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System keeps you informed of all major functions. And, if it ever needs major repairs, the entire boom and cab tilt forward for the best engine and transmission access anywhere.

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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 the earth a facelift.



NEW HOLLAND

Part-time personnel, full-time headaches

by PHILIP M. PERRY

Motivating full-time employees is hard enough. But part-time and temporary workers pose a special challenge.

How do you light fires under people who are often saddled with low-level work, blocked from climbing the career ladder, and treated like "outsiders" by the full-time staff?

"Contingency" workers now account for 20 percent of America's workforce. That number is expected to rise to 30 percent within a decade.

"Part-time and temporary employees have become vital tools for keeping labor costs under control," says Carl Johnson, president of Princeton Employee Relations, Princeton, N.J.

Unmotivated contingency workers, however, are dangerous. Feeling demoralized, they perform listlessly and neglect customers. That threatens your profits. Worse, disenchanted part-time workers are apt to quit for greener pastures. That saddles your business with the costly task of training replacements.

Here's some good news. You *can* motivate these employees. The secret is to avoid common errors that "turn off" temporary help:

TIP #1 ▶ **Don't give them the cold shoulder.** Give them a warm welcome and introduce them to the staff. Make them feel a part of the family.

Bonus tip: Avoid confusion and hurt feelings by clearly identifying the chain of command to the new employee. Who is authorized to give orders?

TIP #2 ▶ **Don't turn them loose without orientation.** "Cover the basic things: what are the policies of the firm? What are overtime policies?," says Bruce Steinberg, spokesperson for the National Association of Temporary and Staffing Services, Alexandria, Va.

Bonus tip: Plan ahead. "Don't just assume that when people show up, you will get everything ready," says Steinberg. "Prepare their tools and anything else."

TIP #3 ▶ **Assign a mentor.** "A mentor is a tremendous motivational tool," says Don Schackne, president of Personnel Management and Administration Associates, Delaware, Ohio. "Select someone who is willing to teach and is patient. You can also assign a few permanent people as roving mentors."

Bonus tip: The mentor will feel good about the added responsibility.

TIP #4 ▶ **Don't exert too much control.** You'll never find out if there is "a better way" if you don't give the new worker the freedom to use creative problem-solving.

"When contingency workers believe they are making a difference in an organization, they feel better about being there," says Ian Jacobsen, a Sunnyvale, Calif.-based consultant.

Bonus tip: Encourage everyone to think creatively by recognizing new ideas publicly.

TIP #5 ▶ **Don't load down part-timers with "grunt" tasks,** those jobs no one else wants to do. Remember that everyone feels good about improving skills. What challenging tasks can you assign to the new employees? Ask them what skills they would like to acquire. There's nothing wrong with assigning low-level tasks. But make sure to *add* some specialized jobs to spark loyalty and enthusiasm.

Bonus tip: Rotate the mundane tasks among all employees to keep boredom to a minimum.

TIP #6 ▶ **Don't overlook work well done.** That's devastating. "The recognition of a job well done is even more important for contingent workers," says Dr. Peter Spevak of

cont. on page 14L

INTRODUCING THE NEW SCAG TURF RUNNER

■ **Easy-dump**, 7.14 bushel (67 gallon) grass bagger

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■ **Hydro-Gear** pump/motor/axle delivers smooth and predictable control

■ **20" x 10"-8** drive tires provide superior traction and ride, while enhancing climbing ability

■ **12" diameter blower** is capable of moving higher volume of grass into bagger for more efficient collection of grass

■ **5-gallon** fuel capacity

■ **Padded** high back seat

■ **Powered by 20 hp or 22 hp** Kohler Command V-Twin, horizontal shaft engine

■ **Automatically** converts to side discharge with single lever control

■ **Rubber shock** mounted footplate for increased operator comfort

■ **4" deep** cutting deck is constructed of 10 gauge top with reinforced skirt

■ **9" diameter** heavy-duty caster wheels

■ **Height-of-cut** ranges from 1" to 4.5" to handle a variety of cutting conditions

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To provide greater versatility to the commercial cutter, the Turf Runner can convert from a rear bagger to a side discharge mower with the flip of a lever. There's no need to remove the bagging deck to install a costly side discharge deck. This

innovative design (patent pending) allows more cutting time by allowing the operator to respond to changing conditions without downtime.

In addition, the Turf Runner's heavy-duty 12" diameter blower cleanly transfers the grass cuttings from the extra-deep deck to the bagger, for a manicured cut every time.

See the new Turf Runner at your Scag dealer today.



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cont. from page 12L

the Center for Applied Motivation, Rockville, Md. "Their own identity with the company is not as strong, and they need to be reinforced."

Bonus tip: Consider giving a plaque to the part-time "Worker of the Month."

TIP #7 ► Do not allow conflicts with full-time employees, who may feel threatened by part-timers, fearing for their own jobs. So explain to current workers why you are bringing in outsiders; communicate that the new people do not represent a threat to the jobs of full-time staffers.

Bonus tip: Reward successful referrals with cash bonuses.

TIP #8 ► Do not omit temporary workers from business activities. Invite them to workshops and seminars, employee lunches, parties, and any other normal activities.

Bonus tip: Hold a party for every

temp's birthday.

TIP #9 ► Don't overlook financial incentives. Times are changing: bonuses are not reserved for permanent staffers any more. "Develop some kind of a bonus plan," says Schackne. Perhaps insurance coverage or vacation time after a certain number of successful work hours.

Bonus tip: Pay contingent workers a little more per hour than competing businesses. This will keep competitors from raiding your workers after you have invested in their training.

TIP #10 ► Don't insist on rigid hours. Many part-time and temporary workers do not want to be tied down to 8-to-4 hours. Capitalize on that. If you allow for flexible hours, you will encourage employees to stay with you.

Bonus tip: Avoid panic situations by encouraging employees to let you know in

advance of any anticipated scheduling conflicts.

"In the past...temporary workers came, performed menial functions and left with little interaction," notes Marc Silbert of Robert Half International, Menlo Park, Calif. "Now, they serve virtually all aspects of the workplace. They should be recognized as the professionals they are." □

—The author is a freelance business writer based in New York City.

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PLCAA's 1995 Operating Efficiency Study allows LCOs to compare their operations against others across the nation. This is the first PLCAA study of its kind in 10 years. It was prepared by Wall-Bruning, Columbia, S.C. Its author was Lewis Browning.

We talked with owners of two companies participating in the PLCAA study. Both said it showed them areas they could improve in their operations.

(The names of the companies and owners are fictional, but the details—as far as the owners are comfortable sharing them—are true.)

Ken Careful runs a 10-year-old franchise of Lawn & Order, Inc. The franchisor has multiple locations, mostly in the East, but is moving into the Midwest, too. Ken owns an office, warehouse and 11 trucks with 22 to 24 employees including the office and telemarketing staff.

L&O Inc. is split 90/10 turf/tree respectively, with about 70 percent of \$1.1 million in gross sales from commercial accounts.

Ken's a nuts-and-bolts operator, serious and quiet. He

works out daily, eats healthy, and gives his three veteran managers freedom to run most operations.

Ken studied accounting in college, then started entry level at the then-fledgling L&O. The new company set its sights on overtaking older and more settled competitors through aggressive telemarketing.

It didn't take Ken to recognize the importance of numbers, and he quickly rose to branch manager for one of L&O's largest branches. Both he and the branch profited. Now he runs his own franchise.

Grate Funn, by contrast, is flamboyant, free

wheeling and, on occasion, free spending. Because he sometimes spends more than he should, his company's growth has been erratic, occasionally plateauing while he paid back debt.

His Superior Lawn Care, Inc., targets high-end residential and is known for high-quality service. Gross sales are split almost evenly between turf and tree/shrub with an emphasis on consulting.

Grate's company isn't as large as he'd hoped when he started it almost 20 years ago. Nor is it as profitable. Even so, by most standards it's successful, and it still retains its friendly, small-company culture.

Also, unlike Ken—who has little debt and whose company has grown steadily—Grate runs most day-to-day operations himself, including purchasing, promotions and sales.

He counts on a highly-paid commission system to motivate his four, sometimes five, technicians.

Another notable difference between the two companies is that Ken's strong telemarketing presence keeps sales strong, but its 45 percent cancellation rate (20 percent unhappy), more than doubles both of Superior's rates.

The PLCAA study is divided into categories analogous to those found in a standard General Accounting report. All companies were ranked by profits. The most profitable were called "upper quartile" and the second and third quartiles were averaged to arrive at the "typical" company.

Browning, the study's author, says this provides a usable set of averages from which can be derived comparative information which will balance financially as opposed to "median" data which can be thrown off by abnormally high or low performances.

The study reinforced Ken's belief that bigger is better. Companies with more than 4,000 accounts and \$1 million in sales fared better than smaller companies like Grate's.

It also pointed out some advantages of a franchise since almost 30 percent of the participants were part of a larger parent company. This affiliation brings with it an established name, and training to help licensees avoid pitfalls.

Also, the franchise did better in the cost of materials. The larger companies in the upper quartile reported spending 10.7 percent while typical companies spent 15.7 percent. The larger size helped, but perhaps the buying power of the parent company

A tale of 2 LCOs

Here's how two lawn care companies in similar-sized markets stack up in PLCAA's first Operating Efficiency Study in 10 years.

by DICK BARE / Arbor-Nomics Lawn Inc.

Breaking through business barriers

Dr. Nate Booth, head corporate trainer at Robbins Research International Inc., San Diego, told members of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America that all they need to break through their barriers is "confidence and competence."

Booth, speaking to about 200 landscapers at ALCA's Executive Forum, urged them to "transform changes into challenges" by using these four keys:

- ▶ have an empowering belief system;
- ▶ put yourself in a peak state;
- ▶ use the right strategy; and
- ▶ be on a team that supports you.

Also speaking at the Forum was Will Phillips, a trainer with Faust Management Corp., San Diego, who led participants through the steps of team building.

ALCA's 1996 officers are: President David Minor, Minor's Landscape Services; President-Elect Judson Griggs, Lied's Landscape Design & Development; Vice-President Cynthia Peterson, CCLP, McCaren Designs; and Secretary, Steve Glover, CLP, L&L Landscape Services. □

PLCAA recognizes substance abuse

PLCAA offers "Working Partners," a video training program dealing with substance abuse in the workplace.

Developed by the U.S. Department of Labor, the program includes a video, a trainer's manual and a participant's manual. Different types of substances including marijuana, inhalants, alcohol, steroids, crack, cocaine, ice and hallucinogens are discussed. The video "America in Jeopardy" and interactive group sessions are key parts of the program.

"Working Partners" is \$50 for PLCAA members and \$75 for non-members. Contact PLCAA at (800) 458-3466.

Comparing Companies

"Lawn & Order, Inc."		"Superior Lawn Care, Inc."
franchise	..... type of company	individually owned
serious and quiet	..... owner's demeanor	flamboyant free-spender
commercial	..... target market	high-end residential
90% turf, 10% tree	..... type of accounts	50% turf, 50% tree/shrub
three managers	..... key employees	four or five technicians
aggressive telemarketing	..... sales ploys	commission system
loose routes	..... productivity	high dollars per stop
low	..... debt	high
45%	..... cancellation rate	20%
10.7% of revenues	..... cost of materials	15.7% of revenues
31% of revenues	..... payroll costs	18% of revenues
15.2%	..... owner's salary	28.2%
18%	..... bottom-line profit	7%

helped, too.

But Grate Funn's independent operation won on other points, the study showed. In the Direct Payroll category, he was a clear winner, for instance.

The upper quartile and typical companies averaged 31 percent while his, due mainly to the commission system, was just 18 percent.

Grate's productivity led significantly. Although he didn't say so, it's likely his trucks command a greater dollar amount per stop, and his routes are tighter.

All companies were relatively the same in production vehicles and equipment, although Grate topped out a tad on the high side due to his "company" BMW.

Grate's big salary shot him into space, in this category, 13 percent higher than Ken's more sober 15.2 percent. (Grate justified his pay by pointing out that his beautiful second wife's favorite book is "Dun & Bradstreet.")

Ken's operating profit matched those of other upper quartile companies, almost 18 percent. Grate's was about 7 percent, equivalent to the typical company.

On the balance sheet, Ken and the typical companies were similar in assets and liabilities, while Grate had enough debt to send the SBA running.

Both men said the study revealed areas that they needed to strengthen.

Ken vowed to improve his hiring process and start a technician training program. He's also experimenting with new ideas to inject excitement and enthusiasm into his workers.

Grate decided to cut his salary and pay himself what he would pay a manager, then bonus himself at the end of the year according to the company's performance. He's also implementing a plan to get his company out of debt.

Lewis Browning, the study's author, said that neither man was right or wrong, but both had differing personal styles that made their companies very different. □

—Dick Bare is owner and operator of Arbor-Nomics Turf Inc., Norcross, Ga. To order a copy of the study, contact PLCAA, 1000 Johnson Ferry Road, Suite C-135, Marietta, GA 30068-2112. Telephone: (800) 458-3466. Cost is \$150 for PLCAA members; \$395 non-members.



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