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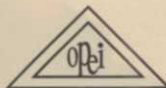
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The Pro Performance Team™

Bill Clutter says that all he really expected to do in lawn care was make a living. And, for 25 years, he did. In fact, he made a darn good living as he built his business, Turfguard, into one of the best lawn application companies in Ohio.

You pay the price

But the effort took its toll. Bill's a hearty, robust man with a booming voice, and he's as quick with a firm handshake as he is with a laugh. But, his ticker can't stand the strain of 60 and 70 hour work weeks anymore. What's the good of having

friends, if you don't have time to go fishing with them, he recently told me. Hey, that makes sense to me.

Bill put himself on the sidelines in March, at least for the next couple of months for some extended fishing with his buddies. He called me in March to tell me he'd sold his operation in Dayton, OH, to TruGreen-ChemLawn (TGCL).

Who are those guys?

Uh oh, there they go again. Those folks at

TGCL in Memphis, TN, seem to be intent on breaking up that old gang of mine, making it harder and harder for me to snag a free lunch with every passing industry event.

Not only did TGCL pick up Clutter's company this spring, but they also bought the lawn application business of Gene Pool, another long-time acquaintance here in Ohio. Bill and Gene were among the small group of business owners that got the Ohio Lawn Care Association off to such a fine start a decade ago. They've both been excellent ambassadors for the lawn care industry, and I'll never forget trekking along with Gene to the office of our congressman, Rep. Paul Gillmor (R-OH), at PLCAA's annual Day on the Hill. Rep. Gillmor even seemed to enjoy our visits.

I learned about Bill and Gene's decision to sell

their lawn application businesses about the same time that I heard that TGCL had also acquired Idaho-based Perma Green. That was another independent lawn care company with a lot of good memories behind it and a fine reputation.

Say what you want about the folks in Memphis, TGCL's headquarters, but they're one busy group. And, it doesn't look like they're going to slow down anytime soon either.

Shop until you drop

Some of my remaining independent lawn care buddies keep telling me that they think that TGCL is going to run out of cash. I remember having similar conversations in 1992—just after TruGreen gobbled up ChemLawn. And then again a few years ago at the Ohio Turfgrass Conference when we found out that TGCL had acquired Barefoot. Is TGCL through? As the late, great Jackie Gleason would say: "Hardy, har, har."

This past year, ServiceMaster (NYSE: SVM), parent company of TGCL, recorded sales of \$4.7 billion, its 28th consecutive year of growth. Revenue of ServiceMaster's Consumer Services, of which TGCL is a part, increased 23% and exceeded \$2 billion for the first time. After-tax profits for the Consumer Services group were up 27% to \$157 million, representing 3/4 of all SM profits for the year.

While I'm glad my friends were in a position to trade in their years of hard work for some of that ServiceMaster cash, I'm beginning to wonder who's going to be around to talk about how TGCL is going to run out of money at the next GIE. **LM**

Agree? Disagree? What's on your mind? Give Ron the business at 440/891-2636; fax, 440-891-2683; e-mail, rhall@advanstar.com

Adios to that old gang of mine



Ron Hall

RON HALL
Managing Editor

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Out, darn hosta spots!

What causes spots on hosta? These spots are whitish gray with brown borders. As the problem increases, it destroys the leaves and the plants look ugly.

— NORTH CAROLINA

The problem appears to be related to a fungal leaf spot disease caused by *Colletotricum* spp. This fungus produces large white or grayish spots with brown borders. As the disease progresses, the leaves and petioles can be disfigured.

An application of a copper-containing product such as Bordeaux mixture should help. Repeat the application as needed.

Another possible culprit is foliar nematodes. These tiny microscopic worm-like pests can cause extensive damage to foliage. Contact your local county extension agent or send a sample to our laboratory for diagnosis and management recommendations.

London plane pain

Some of the London planetrees in our area have severe lacebug problems each year. Not only do these plants look bad, but they drip a black substance on the cars parked beneath them. How can we manage these lacebugs without spraying? Because of drift, we don't want to spray these trees.

—MICHIGAN

Lacebugs can become a serious, ugly pest on a number of ornamental plants. The infested leaves will show a bronze color with stippling. They can infest relatively healthy trees. These

sucking insects can weaken the plant, as well, and their black excrement can cause aesthetic problems. The damage is most severe during the summer.

Injecting with products such as Inject-A-Cide®, Abacide® or Imicide® from Mauget Co. will help manage the lacebug problem. Studies on London planetrees in Europe have shown effective control for two years with only one treatment of Imicide. Abacide and Inject-A-Cide B® also reportedly work well but do not last as long as Imicide.

Trunk injecting using these tools can be effective, if it is done correctly. Treat the trees in spring for best results.

Extensive feeding by lacebugs can weaken the plants. Therefore, consider providing proper mulching, watering and fertilizing, as needed, to help improve plant health.

St. Louis jumping beans?

Many white oaks in and around St. Louis are dropping leaves prematurely. The leaves show small pinhead-size, yellow-brown, gall-like structures on the lower side and brown spots on the upper side. What are they? What can be done to protect the trees?

—MISSOURI

Your comments suggest a problem known as jumping oak gall. It is caused by a tiny gall wasp. A severe infestation can cause defoliation. The affected leaves will have tiny pinhead-size galls ranging from yellow-

brown spheres on the underside of leaves and many small brown spots on the upper and lower surfaces.

The tiny galls contain a single wasp larva, which eventually drops from the leaves. Larval activity causes the fallen gall to "jump" or bounce around, similar to jumping beans. This activity helps the gall to fall deeper into the turfgrass or on leaves lying on the ground. The wasp overwinters inside the gall and emerges as an adult the following spring.

The damage from jumping oak gall is primarily an aesthetic concern. Although the damage looks severe, generally trees will survive. Insecticide management is difficult and not practical because the pest is hidden.

These sprouts must go

How to we manage sprouts growing from the base of tree at ground level?

—MICHIGAN

These sprouts are often called "root suckers." Depending on the size and stage of development, they can be hand-pruned or mowed off carefully. After removal, the area can be mulched to inhibit or slow-down further growth. However, this may not work well in every situation.

Tree collar devices made out of biodegradable materials, similar to the product made from biodegradable planting containers, can also be useful in managing sprouts. Once installed, they can last for one to two years.

LM



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