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Act now for labor in 2000

If you need more good employees, you're going to have to seek them out and recruit them. In fact, you may have to find these employees in Mexico.

Don't wait until winter to start rebuilding your crews for next spring. Start now, particularly if you plan to use the government's H-2B program to hire Hispanic laborers (most come from Mexico) for the 2000 season. A lot of U.S. landscape companies use H-2B to fill out their seasonal workforce each year. The program is specifically for seasonal, nonagricultural work. Landscape laborer — mowing, pruning, construction — qualifies.

Getting legal seasonal help from Mexico isn't an easy task, but it's doable despite the expense and time involved. If all goes well, it will take about 100 days from the start of the process until the alien workers arrive at your business. Give yourself more time than that. Start the process 120 days prior to needing workers at your doorstep.

Getting workers through H-2B involves two big steps: 1) finding and recruiting the workers and 2) completing the paperwork to allow them to come to the United States and work for you. You'll likely need professional help for both, but here's an outline of process you'll need to follow.

Apply to the State Employment Security Agency (SESA) in your area for a "labor certification" for the job description that you need filled. The application must include evidence that you tried to recruit U.S. workers for the job, but couldn't. You'll also be required to advertise the job to U.S. workers in your area.

The SESA will forward the application and your

documentation to the regional office of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) which will review the application. After the DOL determines that the Mexican workers won't be taking jobs away from U.S. workers, then you may petition the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) for admission of foreign workers. There is no limit on the number of workers you recruit for a occupation. You must be specific about defining the occupation.

Then it's up to you to recruit the workers. The workers, in turn, must apply for visas to enter the United States at a consulate in their country. Once they get the visas, they go to a port of entry for admission into the United States and, finally, to your business where they must work for the job description that you provided the INS — and only for you.

You probably have more questions about H-2B and how to use it to get workers. Here are some services that help U.S. landscape employers recruit Hispanic workers and complete the necessary paperwork:

▶ Angelo H. Miño, Summit Professional Network for Your Hispanic Workforce Needs, Olathe, KS; 913/438-3364.

▶ Jeff West, GTO International, Rochester, MI; 248/608-1827; fax 248/608-1829.

▶ Robert Wingfield, Amigos Labor Solutions, Dallas; 214/634-0500; fax 214/634-1001; www.amigos-inc.com.

rhall@advanstar.com

Start gathering your manpower now, particularly if you plan to use the H-2B program to hire Mexican laborers for the 2000 season —RH





"I received two substantial checks for failure of product performance. Also, three manufacturers have allowed dollar-for-dollar allowances on equipment..." —LI

Work trade shows to the max

As you know, the PGMS, ALCA and PLCAA annual conferences (and the Green Industry Expo) are fast approaching, as are many other conferences and shows. The GIE Show is aging like a fine bottle of wine. It is amazing when attendees mention that they did not benefit from a seminar. My reaction is disbelief. Their problem is the inability or failure to allow the time to prepare. With that in mind, let me share my actual experience and benefits in working a conference and trade show to the max. Simply put, you must prepare.

1. Take notes before you go. Keep a notepad within arms' reach of your desk. When a product, piece of equipment or service you have purchased fails to live up to your expectations, make yourself a note. Also, when horticultural questions or procedural questions arise, add them to the list. Jot down your business questions, personnel concerns or general ideas too.

2. Plan early. Three months before I go to a show or conference, I send in my check to take advantage of the "early bird" discount. Then, I request the agenda from the associations so I can manage my time. Before the conference, I pull out the list I've been putting together and I make sure that I pack it.

3. Kill two birds: Get recertified there. The conference is a convenient time to receive recertification credits for your pesticide license. Highlight the talks that you attended in the show summary book. When you arrive home, forward proof of registration to your department of agriculture contact. In return, a block of credits will be added to your record.

4. Get action on faulty products. This is a time to recover costs or receive future purchase allowances for

equipment or products that didn't live up to the manufacturers' promises. I seek out the specific company's booth with the salesman's name or my local contact. Then, I address the complaint right there, in an organized format along with my business credentials. I explain my years of loyalty to their company, if applicable. To date, I have received two substantial checks from separate entities for failure of product performance. Also, three manufacturers have allowed dollar-for-dollar allowances on equipment. Finally, one firm provided free prototype equipment to use in the field to give feedback for their engineers.

5. Get instant discounts. Take advantage of exhibitors who offer show discounts and/or free shipping. During a show, I procure or set up a large percentage of next year's supplies or equipment. In addition, I take advantage of a tax deduction for that calendar year.

6. Bring a trailer. Some exhibitors will offer a larger discount than usual on equipment or tools at their booth, if you can haul them away when the trade show closes. If it is a local or regional show, bring your truck and trailer and have it ready.

7. Break new ground. Exhibitors may want to break into your territory with new, innovative or established equipment or product lines. If you purchase their products, heavy discounts may be available. Also, if you act as a reference or provide a demo in the area, you can be financially compensated for each contact. Start the discussions at a show.

8. Meet new people. Networking is the key to a successful conference. I pull out my prepared list from home and scout out old contacts while making new friends during the stay. This may sound ridiculous, but I take a specific question and ask at least five individu-

als. At the end of the conference, I now have a "practical, hands-on" base of information to digest. Let's face it — if four out of five people offer the same advice, it is the starting point for an educated decision. For example, last year I wondered what type of truck to buy. Should it be a traditional style dump or a front-over cab? Should the engine be gasoline or diesel? After several conversations with knowledgeable users of both types of trucks, I knew the right truck for my needs. One year later, my purchase has worked out just fine.

9. **Share experiences.** Remember that conference

Larry's trade show guide

HOW TO WORK A TRADE SHOW TO THE MAX

Preparation is Job 1. Make a plan before you go, and don't forget these steps either:

1. Note products, questions, concerns in a notebook so you can refer to them at the show.
2. Get 'early bird' discounts and plan your show.
3. Take recertification classes there.
4. Meet with product vendors in person to address faulty products or problems.
5. Save money on orders from exhibitors giving show discounts or free shipping.
6. Be prepared to take purchases with you — bring a trailer/setup to the show. You might save significant money.
7. Talk to exhibitors about trying out their new products or providing a local demo.
8. Network like there's no tomorrow. Make a point of meeting new people.
9. Ask colleagues about their experiences with management, products and issues covered at the show. Most will be open and candid.
10. Give yourself time to try the equipment.
11. Bring along associates or buy session tapes if you can't attend every one you want.
12. Have fun. Save time to explore the local high spots.

attendees will readily share personal and valuable information with you. Networking in these situations is of no threat to their job or business because you are separated geographically. Through the years, I have implemented many new ideas from informal conversations. Remember to exchange business cards for future follow-up. The associations' roundtable breakfast meetings are the easiest and most comfortable means to network and establish long-term relationships.

10. **Demo the equipment.** Outdoor equipment demos allow us to actually use equipment we're considering. In one afternoon, you can feel like a kid in a candy shop and try endless products. There are new prototypes, modified equipment, new inventions and established lines for your review. Don't forget to ask questions of other viewers standing by you at exhibits. Generally, their past experiences and present concerns will mutually relate. This one day of active participation will save you time when you go home and you will be steps ahead in the decision process.

11. **Be in two places at once.** Since there are nine educational speakers at any given time at the GIE conference, you may have time conflicts. If this occurs, buy the taped sessions or split up attendance with an associate and compare notes.

12. **Have some fun.** Pick up a local guidebook before leaving home and experience the host city. Remember, a little fun should be part of the mix.

I think a conference and trade show should always pay for itself, plus provide future dividends. It will also refresh your mind and body, and your clients, employees and family will enjoy the fruits of your efforts.

—The author owns Down to Earth Inc., a full-service landscape contracting firm in Wilmington, DE. He is on Landscape Management's Editorial Advisory Board and also serves as a consultant to homeowners, corporate clients and industry firms. He can be reached at 302/654-8113.

Weed Man launches move into U.S.

MISSISSAUGA, ONTARIO — Weed Man, Canada's largest lawn care company, is making a concerted effort to enter the U.S. market as part of its five-year expansion goals. Key markets include both northern and southern turf areas, especially markets with populations of 100,000 people or less.

In an exclusive interview with *LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT*, Des Rice, Weed Man's owner and founder; Roger Mongeon, Weed Man U.S.A.'s president; Michael Kernaghan, Weed Man International's vice president; and Terry Kurth, Lawn Care of Wisconsin, Inc. discussed the company's expansion plans.

The plans include adding as many as 100 new territories in the United States as part of a five-year strategic plan.

"We're celebrating our 30th year in business in 2000," says Rice. "We were holding back but now we're psychologically ready, have the people in place and have the systems in place to make the push into the United States. We now have the opportunities."

Turf Management Systems Inc., Mississauga, Ontario, owns Weed Man.

Although there are Weed Man franchises in Rochester, NY, Denver and the Seattle area, this push is more substantive. According to Mongeon, the expansion will grow three ways: Weed Man corporate stores; Weed Man U.S.A. licenses to submaster franchisors in key turf zones; and Weed Man U.S.A. individual unit franchises to third parties. Terry Kurth will work as liaison with Weed Man U.S.A. during the expansion into U.S. markets.

What will this mean to the lawn care industry? Weed Man's strong presence in Canadian markets, customer loyalty (75% to 85% retention rate), proprietary business management and computer sys-



Weed Man's key management team: Roger Mongeon, President (Weed Man U.S.A.); Des Rice, President (Weed Man International); Dennis Blair, Branch Manager; Michael Kernaghan, Vice President (Weed Man International)

tems and success with franchisors (1/2 of 1% turnover) will make it an interesting alternative in the market.

"If an established lawn care company wants to expand, this is perfect for them," notes Kurth. "If you're a landscape maintenance contractor who wants to offer a one-stop shop to compete with consolidating firms, this is good for you."

Look for a strong campaign to brand Weed Man in the United States, says Kernaghan. "Our trademark is very strong in Canada — we're synonymous with lawn care here."

Weed Man currently serves around 350,000 residential homes throughout Canada through 135 franchises from Newfoundland to British Columbia.

—Sue Gibson

Husqvarna, Yazoo/Kees seal deal

CHARLOTTE, NC— Ending months of speculation on a rumored acquisition, Husqvarna Forest & Garden announced it has purchased the turf care assets of Yazoo/Kees, Beatrice, NE. According to Dave Zerfoss, Husqvarna's President, "This acquisition creates a complete line of offerings, making Husqvarna a total source for all lawn and garden and commercial needs."

Zerfoss explained the acquisition was a logical move in today's market: "The green industry is in a powerful growth phase and we intend to be the leading source for all outdoor power equipment needs. We already have a premium line-up of commercial hand-held products in place for the year 2000."

While Yazoo/Kees' business will begin immediate integration into Husqvarna's U.S. operations, its products will be marketed as the Yazoo/Kees brand through Husqvarna's dealer/distributor network until at least June 30, 2000.

N.C. landscapers regroup after Floyd destruction

RALEIGH, NC — Hurricane Floyd pounded eastern North Carolina with record-breaking rains this past September, resulting in nearly \$6 billion in damage, 30,000 destroyed homes and 35 deaths. Most of the damage resulted from flooding.

Landscaping businesses also felt the sting of the hurricane, and now deal with the aftermath. The damage varies from devastated properties to minor tree damage to severe employee cutbacks due to lost production days.

Tree damage was incredible. "The biggest thing is the trees," said Carol West, Creative Gardens landscape contractor in Winterville, NC. "We had to go through all of the trees that had been put in since last fall. Many of the young trees had over a 30° lift. We had to stake all of the trees due to the wind and extra water."

Erosion was also widespread. "Most of the erosion occurred on areas that were presently under construction for landscaping, where we had soil mounded and we hadn't put out the sod yet," said West.

Another major complication was lost production days as employees battled to save their own properties, or where unable to work due to the weather.

Matthew Erwin of North State Gardens in Hampstead, NC, told of lost production days: "We've had some employees effected by the floods and they're just now getting back to work. Everyone who can make it to work has been to work since the hurricane, but some folks are just coming back today (Sept. 28)."

Turfenders Landscape Services in Raleigh experienced similar difficulties. Steve Hill explained, "Some roads are closed due to flooding, and bridges are out. We've had to reroute crews and go around the damage, which has effected us from getting people to work."

West also admitted that "some jobs are put on hold because we cannot get any topsoil right now. We're in the position our company cannot continue to

pay people when we're not earning money. Everyone is touched in some way." For more on severe weather's effects, turn to page 22.

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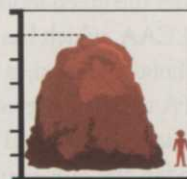
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Be the 'lips' of RISE

WASHINGTON — Local pesticide regulation initiatives are cropping up around the country, reported several attendees of the annual meeting for RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment). While the organization responds rapidly to state and federal level initiatives, it's much harder to respond quickly at the local level before decisions are made, said Fred Langley, manager of state government relations.

Quick response program

The key to dealing effectively with local initiatives is to respond quickly, inform state and national groups like RISE of the initiatives and become involved in your own local politics, Langley said "Recently, 25 states have taken up the issue of school use of pesticides in various forms."

Other local issues to watch include pesticide use reporting requirements,

water quality issues, challenges to pre-emption, separation of "urban" vs. "ag" chemical use and continued pressure to manage nutrient loads in the environment.

'Eyes and ears' alert

In response, RISE announced it has started a two-step reporting and response process. In the "eyes and ears" campaign, any industry insider can report on any local pesticide regulation initiative using a simple fax, telephone or email system. Step two involves becoming the "lips" of RISE as a spokesperson within your own school district or municipality.

RISE plans to make this easy through the use of its "Local Issues Plan of Action" kit, which includes:

- ▶ quick-response fax forms,
- ▶ sheets describing key issues and the Top 10 cities for anti-pesticide activities,
- ▶ RISE's question and answer booklet
- ▶ "talking points" to use in local

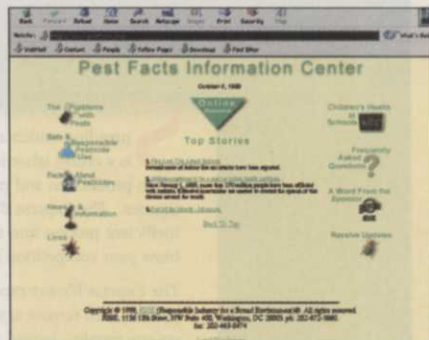
FFA studies green industry careers

LOUISVILLE, KY — This month's 72nd National Future Farmers of America Convention in Louisville will have a new twist — active participation by landscape industry suppliers, contractor firms and associations with the hopes of encouraging many of the 40,000 attendees to consider the green industry for a career. PLCAA, which has established a scholarship fund, is also working with FFA to develop green industry instructional material for FFA teachers. So far, the FFA Foundation has raised over \$250,000 in pledges from the industry toward this effort. Look for convention coverage in future issues.

meetings

- ▶ an article reprint from *LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT* ("Take Action on Local Issues"), explaining simple ways to organize local support for pesticide use

For more information on how to get the LIPA kit, contact RISE at 202/872-3860; email: lawder@acpa.org; Web site: www.pestfacts.org.



PLCAA adds new GIE position

Green Industry Expo show manager, the Professional Lawn Care Association of America, has added Sims Moore as the new sales & marketing manager to actively market the event. Eleanor Ellison will continue as trade show manager, handling logistics and planning.

Woods buys parts, component firms

In a move to expand its replacement parts business, Woods Equipment Co., Oregon, IL, purchased Tru-Part Mfg. (TISCO), a replacement parts distributor based in St. Paul, MN. Woods also acquired Central Fabricators, an excavator bucket maker in Schofield, WI; as well as Alitec Corp., a Brownsburg, IN firm making skid-steer attachments.

Design Imaging acquires an Edge

Two industry software firms have merged with the acquisition of Edge Software by Design Imaging Group, Holtsville, NY. It will marry DIG's design/build software programs with Edge's management and marketing systems.

New RISE Web site debuts

Looking for good, basic information on pests and their control for your customer newsletters? Try the new Web site for RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment) at: www.pestfacts.org. The site features information on problem pests, pesticide handling and use, related information links, news updates and more.

[CLIPPINGS]



Dodge  Different.

Expo 99 happy with numbers

The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute reported that attendance soared at Expo '99 in Louisville, KY, this past July. The number of landscapers/commercial mowers increased by 20% from 1998, equipment rental dealers grew by 11% and dealers/retailers by 3%. OPEI said that 22,982 people (not including exhibitors) attended the 1999 Expo, a 9% increase over attendance in 1998.

Toro & Maruyama extend pact

A new agreement by Toro Co., Bloomington, MN, and Maruyama Mfg. Co., of Tokyo, Japan, extends a 1996 pact for Toro to distribute Maruyama hand-held power equipment in the United States and Canada through 2003.

[CLIPPINGS]

EPA questions Dursban's safety

WASHINGTON — Despite years of use in the landscape industry, the insecticide Dursban (active ingredient: chlorpyrifos) has received low grades from the United States Environmental Protection Agency. The product's reassessment, part of EPA's first round of product reviews in its implementation of the Food Quality Protection Act, makes its reregistration vulnerable unless user groups speak up, warns Tim Maniscalco, government relations manager for Down AgroSciences, based in Indianapolis.

The 60-day public comment period for the risks and benefits of chlorpyrifos began in late September, and it is during this period that Dow Agro is encouraging grounds managers, lawn care operators and landscape contractors to speak out on the product's benefits.

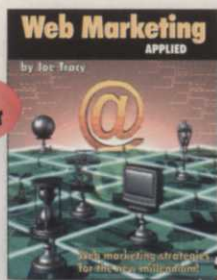
A seat at the table

According to Maniscalco, the EPA's reassessment of Dursban "categorized the risks but didn't have input on the benefits" of the product. "That's why satisfied users need to tell the agency about the benefits for the record."

He explained "stakeholder groups" must identify themselves early in each product's reassessment process to have a place at the negotiating table when EPA moves through the process.

Maniscalco noted that chlorpyrifos has not been "singled out," but that its class — organophosphates — are perceived as "risky." "When users speak out for the benefits, they're saying, 'We're important and need to be considered too,'" he added, saying that users can get information from their Dow representatives.

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