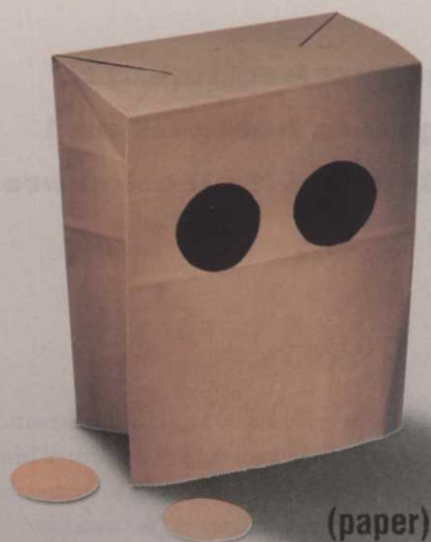
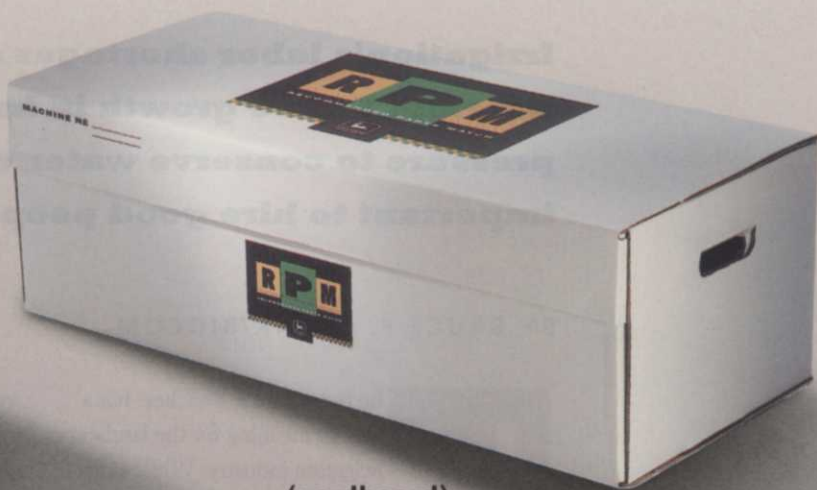


If you've been shamefully lax about servicing your equipment, there are two ways to save face.



(paper)



(cardboard)



Your equipment and the condition you keep it in say a lot about you. That could be good. Or not so good, if you've been a little behind with scheduled maintenance. Or, if you've been using second-rate parts. Now there's a better way to save face. The John Deere RPM Parts Kit has everything you need for 500 hours of scheduled maintenance. Oil, filters, belts, blades, fluids

and plugs. And the best part is, everything in the box is genuine John Deere. So it's easy to maintain your equipment's original quality and reliability.

Unless you've got a real thing for paper, let us suggest something in cardboard. Pick up an RPM Kit today. There's one tailored to every piece of John

Deere commercial equipment you own. Call 1-800-537-8233 for the dealer nearest you. Or visit us online at www.deere.com.



NOTHING RUNS LIKE A DEERE®

Circle No. 129 on Reader Inquiry Card





THE LABOR CRUNCH

Irrigation:

Looking to fill the 'trenches'

Irrigation's labor shortages are just beginning to develop. Future growth in irrigation business and pressure to conserve water will make it all the more important to hire good people

BY BRUCE F. SHANK/BIOCOM

The term "in the trenches" has a special meaning for the landscape irrigation industry. While irrigation seems simple, it is more complex than most occupations. Finding individuals who thrive on hydraulics and specific plant water needs and who aren't repulsed by getting down on their hands and knees in mud is a potential restriction on the growth of the industry.

Business growth, labor shortage

Irrigation contracting is growing at a double-digit pace and employees are needed to meet the demand. Conservation will play a major role in landscape management as population exceeds water supply. The price of water will take a quantum leap very soon, forcing us to choose between no landscape or efficient ones. The irrigation contractor will be the professional resolving the dispute.

The problem is not limited to the South and West. Labor shortages may be worse in the North and Northeast, especially in metropolitan areas where unemployment is low and the cost of living is high. These areas do not have equal access to the

valuable labor provided by Mexican immigrants.

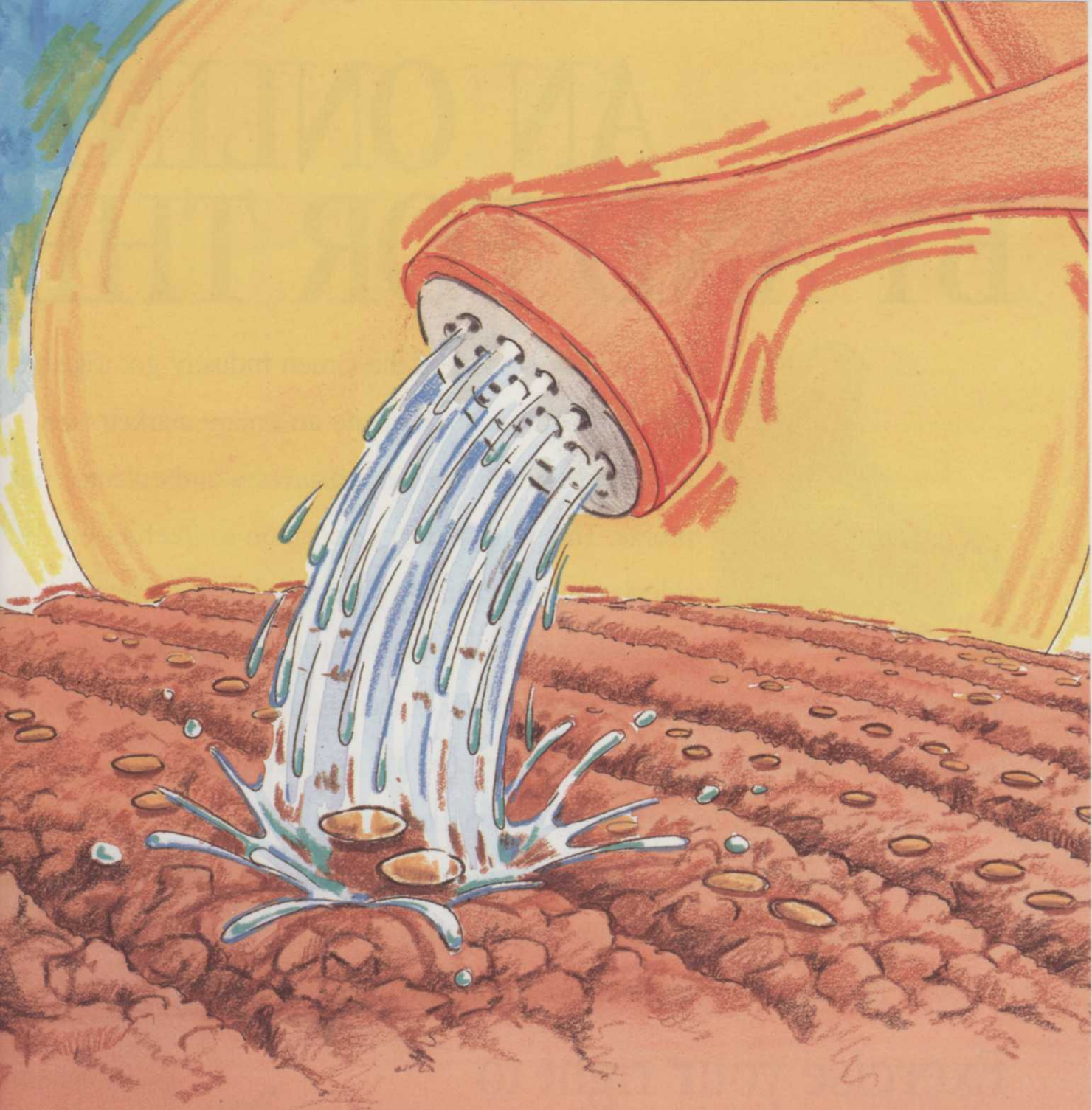
These immigrants are not just a source of labor; they have the potential to rise to foremen and designers and are most tolerant of "the trenches."

The Irrigation Association (IA) has estimated there are approximately 8,000 dedicated irrigation contractors in the U.S., along with nearly 30,000 landscape contractors installing irrigation. These contractors are performing more than \$2 billion dollars in irrigation installation every year. This doesn't include golf courses, highways or parks.

Altogether, they employ roughly 150,000 installers and 40,000 construction foremen. The number of irrigation consultant/designers is approximately 6,000.

Put them altogether and you have 200,000 people depending on the landscape irrigation industry. At a market growth rate approaching 20%, another 40,000 irrigation specialists are needed every year without a loss of current workers.

Irrigation is, at the very minimum, a two-tiered occupation. While irrigation contractors often start out as one-person operations performing smaller residential jobs, they quickly evolve to handle design and installation. As the company enters com-



**THE SEEDS
OF A REVOLUTION
ARE BEING SOWN.**

AN ONLINE BY AND FOR THE



In late 1998, leaders of the Green Industry got together with the GrowZone to create an online marketplace that would help grow our businesses and enhance our profits. This was in clear opposition to Internet outsiders who had plans to go around existing retail channels, reducing total profit margins and threatening

the very way we do business. To accomplish our goals, a team of experts was put together from both the Green Industry and the Internet community. The results of these efforts have paid off in two exciting new world class e-business solutions: GreenBuyer.com, a wholesale buying service and YourNursery.com, your own online retail garden center. Together, they form a total solution for the entire Green Industry.

Exercise your right to extraordinary growth with GreenBuyer.com

This service was specifically created to expand the marketing power of growers of plants and producers of garden accessories and supplies. Suddenly, growth and profit potential are not limited by geography or current contacts.



MARKETPLACE GREEN INDUSTRY.

They're as big as the world itself. At the same time, retail buyers and landscape contractors can use GreenBuyer.com to comparison shop and find the best prices, as well as expand their inventories to attract more sales. And the

best part is, it's all done with security, privacy, and at the same profit margins you're accustomed to.



**Enjoy the freedom
of your own website with
YourNursery.com**

With more and more garden related sites selling direct to the consumer, you need an Internet presence to compete. With YourNursery.com, you can have your own customized website without spending many months and thousands of dollars to build it. And, if you already have a website, YourNursery.com can enhance and expand its potential by providing consumers with online shopping and access to your entire inventory. In addition, with our unique new "landscape design tool", your customers can actually scan in a photo of their own house and create their own personalized landscape design. When they see more, they buy more. And that's the whole idea behind YourNursery.com.

To grow your business and protect your profits.



Declare your independence. Get started today.

We invite you to make a smart investment in your own future. Working together, we can create exciting new opportunities while controlling our own destiny. We can achieve extraordinary growth while protecting our privacy and enhancing our profits. Help us shape the future of the Green Industry from the ground up.

Green Industry Bill of Rights

- You have the right to earn your full profit margin.*
- You have the right to control your own website.*
- You have the right to private and secure transactions.*
- You have the right to reach more customers.*
- You have the right to dramatically grow your business.*



GROWZONE[™]
The Online Marketplace for the Green Industry

©2000 GrowZone

I want to join the online revolution!

Please send me more information. Please have a representative call. Please send me a FREE demonstration CD-ROM

Name/Title _____ Company _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____ e-mail _____

Toll Free: 877-GROWZONE (476-9966)

Call: 303-858-8797

Fax: 303-858-8507

e-mail: sales@growzone.com



Send to: 58 Inverness Drive East

Englewood, CO 80112

Or Fax this page to us.

Visit our website: www.growzone.com

mercial installation, a third tier opens up with the construction foreman. Large firms create a fourth category differentiating between experienced installers and laborers.

The critical core of the market is the designer and the construction foreman. Both of these roles require education and experience. However, the bulk of the work is done by the installer and laborer.

The current labor shortage in pure numbers is primarily at the installer level. However, without trained and experienced construction foremen, the market is in gridlock. A construction foreman often serves as the designer on smaller jobs. He is the one who allows the owner or manager to concentrate on marketing.

It's more than an image problem

There is tremendous opportunity in irrigation, but not without solving major personnel problems. Some contractors report that they have a harder time keeping irrigation installers than landscape installers. They do special things for their irrigation crews to keep them on board.

When contractors need to hire irrigation foremen and installers, they often poach other companies' trained employees. One firm with a three-year training program for foremen discovered that competitors were paying double to steal their trained employees! Attempts to draw irrigation specialists through classified ads turn up disenchanted workers or people with no experience. There simply aren't enough trained installers available.

The problem is so severe that The Brickman Group, one of the top companies in the industry, now subcontracts its irrigation installation. Illinois laws view irrigation as plumbing, and public health officials and state legislators in Illinois have linked irrigation to public health, placing licensed (call them union) plumbers in charge of the state's public water supply. Union wages make the labor shortage in ir-



'When the labor source is insufficient, does licensing and certification really help, or does it complicate matters further?'

rigation a virtually unsolvable problem.

DiSanto Co., one of the oldest landscape companies in northern Ohio, is looking outside of its region because local classified ads have stopped producing qualified candidates. Matthew Matisko, a DiSanto landscape architect, says turnover is far worse than landscape installation. Winter layoffs continue to present problems.

Water Works Irrigation, a successful installer of residential irrigation systems in Cape Cod, MA, finds other work during the winter for its loyal crew members.

"The demand for our services is strong because Cape Cod has become a destination for vacationing and retirees," adds Paul Merlesena, owner. "The only thing that keeps me from growing is the lack of qualified help. My guys know how much they

mean to me. They are going with us to the Caribbean on a supplier reward trip because they made it happen!"

Are certification & licensing all wet?

When the labor source is insufficient, does licensing and certification really help, or complicate matters further? In fact, licensing and certification identify the industry's more career-oriented people. They require a commitment to learning and reveal those who are unskilled and only in irrigation for the short term. They provide a rationale to increase wages because they insure value.

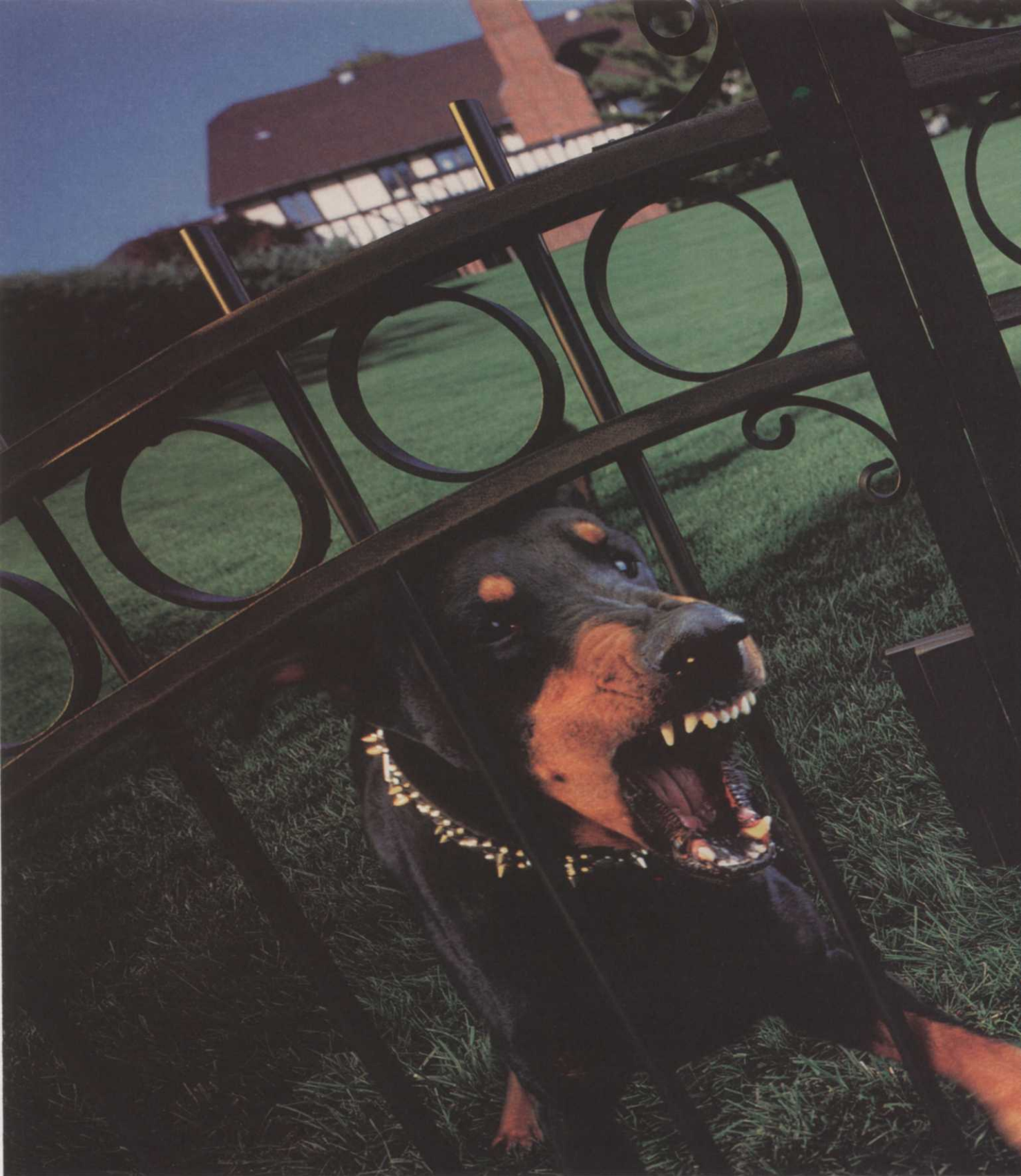
While only a handful of states have licensing programs, any irrigation contractor can use IA programs to groom foremen and designers. IA's 20+ different classes can be presented to groups across the country for training and certification. More than 700 people took advantage of training sessions at the recent IA Show in Orlando.

Community colleges are waking up to the need. The first IA student chapter was formed in November by the students of Lake City Community College in Lake City, FL. Cuyamaca College in San Diego recently opened a \$5 million water conservation garden to complement its landscape irrigation efforts.

Does this tell you there is a respect for irrigation knowledge?

The growth of irrigation will be huge. The population will go in one direction only and water consumption will go with it. Water rationing, whether by price or quantity, is just around the corner for much of the world. Irrigation must be part of the solution, not the problem. But that can only happen if we have knowledgeable professionals in the trenches. **LMI**

— The author owns BioCOM horticultural communications company in Palmdale, CA. For more information on irrigation and training programs, contact the IA at (703) 573-3551 or www.irrigation.org.



If you really want to keep something

It takes two fierce herbicides acting side by side to keep crabgrass, goosegrass, spurge, oxalis and other weeds from breaking into your customers' property. Team[®] Pro preemergence herbicide combines Balan[®] and Treflan[®] herbicides into the most consistent, fast-acting, long-lasting crabgrass preventer available. Team Pro protects lawns better than pendimethalin without severe staining of spreaders, shoes or landscaping.



out of a yard, unleash the Power of Two.

And Team Pro won't harm established ornamentals, turfgrass or your reputation for a good value. For information on fertilizers formulated with Team Pro, talk to your supplier. Or call us at 1-800-255-3726 or visit our web site, www.dowagro.com. Then stand back, and unleash the Power of Two. Always read and follow label directions.

 Dow AgroSciences
Team* Pro

*Trademark of Dow AgroSciences LLC

Property at a glance

Location: Leisure World, Silver Spring, MD

Staff: The Brickman Group, Ltd.

Category: Condominium, Apartment Complex or Planned Community

Total budget: Not provided

Year site built: 1966

Acres of turf: 160

**Acres of woody
ornamentals:** 8

Acres of display beds: 1

Total paved area: 50 acres

Total man-hours/week: Not provided

Maintenance challenges

- ▶ Entire site snow removal
- ▶ Care of all native and ornamental trees
- ▶ 24-hour responsibility on site

Project checklist

(Completed in last two years):

- ▶ Design and installation of Cascade sunken garden
- ▶ Design and installation of wildlife nature garden

On the job

- ▶ 7 full-time staff, 15 to 20 seasonal employees, 1 licensed pesticide operator

Leisure World

The 1999 Grand Award Winner of the Professional Grounds Management Society for Planned Community

Visitors to Leisure World of Maryland know they aren't in Kansas any more when they're greeted by a steel cage replica of the Earth tilted on its axis at the entranceway. But the empty steel ball pales in comparison to the 800 acres of landscape heaven inside this community of more than 8,000 senior citizens.

One of the original, planned senior citizen towns developed on the East Coast in the mid-1960s, its 22 separate communities provide a challenge to the on-site contractor, The Brickman Group, Ltd. Project director Brad Johns and his crew have to respect the tastes and priorities of each member of the Board of Directors regarding horticultural practices and indi-

vidualized landscape installations.

The grounds maintenance crew handles turf management, four flower rotations, shrubbery and tree care, and 24-hour responsibility for snow removal and emergency tree removal. In addition to more than 20 crew members and three graduate horticulturists, the community has a contract administrator who acts as a liaison between the property owners and contractor.

After determining schedules for more than 150 acres of turf mowing, months of leaf removal, composting of a densely wooded site and snow removal for more than 55 miles of streets, curbs and walkways, this is one tired crew.

▶ (top left) High rise portions of the community vie for recognition for the showiest seasonal color.

▶ (top right) A newly installed nature garden offers an attraction to butterflies and any visiting grandchildren.

▶ The famous globe at Leisure World marks the main highway entrance to the community and is expected to be dramatic in its floral arrangement.

Editors' note: *Landscape Management* is the exclusive sponsor of the Green Star Professional Grounds Management Awards for outstanding management of residential, commercial and institutional landscapes. The 2000 winners will be named at the annual meeting of the Professional Grounds Management Society in November. For more information on the 2000 Awards, contact PGMS at 120 Cockeysville Road, Suite 104, Hunt Valley, MD; 410/584-9754. Web-site: www.pgms.org

Landscape **PGMS**
MANAGEMENT