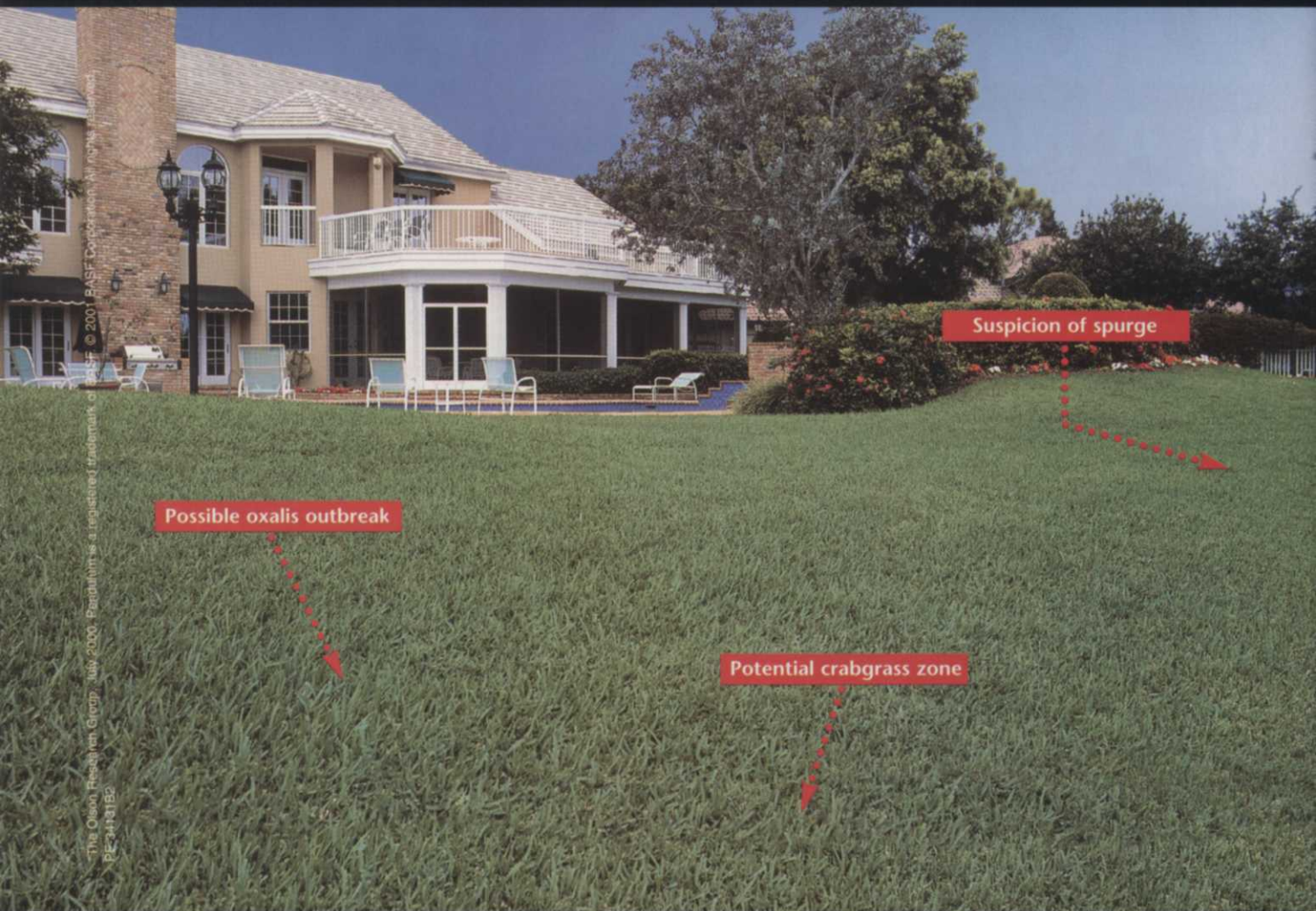


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# Landscape MANAGEMENT

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# events

WHAT, WHEN & WHERE

## May 2001

**4-7 Western Chapter-  
International Society of  
Arboriculture Annual  
Conference** / Modesto, CA;  
530/892-1118

**5-7 TOCA 12th Annual  
Meeting** / Phoenix, AZ; 952/758-  
6340

**7-8 55th Annual  
Southeastern Turfgrass  
Conference** / Tifton, GA;  
229/386-3416

**7-18 Basic Tree Climbing  
School/Course** / Middletown,  
NJ; Sponsored by the Committee  
for Advancement of Arboriculture;  
732/431-7903

**19-23 ASIC National  
Conference** / Savannah, GA;  
816/472-6100

## June

**7-9 Snow & Ice Symposium**  
Denver, CO; Sponsored by the  
Snow & Ice Management  
Association; 814/835-3577

**15 Turf-Seed/Pure Seed  
Testing Field Day** / Rolesville,  
NC; 919/556-0146

**21-23 OPEI Annual Meeting**  
Ponte Vedra, FL; 512/442-1788

## July

**12-15 ANLA Convention &  
Executive Learning Retreat** /  
Cleveland, OH; 202/789-5980, ext.  
3010

**16-17 PLCAA's Legislative  
Day on the Hill & Arlington  
Renewal Project** / Washington,  
D.C.; 800/458-3466

**19-21 Turfgrass Producers  
International Summer  
Convention and Field Day** /  
Toronto, Canada; 800/405-8873

**20-22 EXPO 2001** / Louisville,  
KY; 800/558-8767

**31 Midwest Regional Turf  
Field Day** / West Lafayette, IN;  
765/494-8039

## August

**4-8 Soil and Water  
Conservation Society  
Annual Meeting** / Myrtle  
Beach, SC; 515/289-2331

**17-19 ALCA Design/Build  
Workshop** / Atlanta, GA;  
800/395-2522

**19-25 International Garden  
Centre Tour** / New York /  
Baltimore; 202/789-5980, ext.  
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**21 Cornell University Field  
Day** / Ithaca, NY; 800/873-8873

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Circle No. 106 on Reader Inquiry Card

BY SUE GIBSON / EXECUTIVE EDITOR

## Institutional blindness

**R**unning "lean and mean" has a different meaning for each of you, but the one thing you have in common is a unique way of operating. In fact, some of your systems might even qualify as "crazy" to outsiders, but they work for you, right? Or do they? Maybe it's time to look at your system from the outside.

That's what Toyota does. *The Wall Street Journal* recently profiled a Toyota efficiency expert who makes sure American parts manufacturers' systems can produce parts meeting Toyota's high quality standards. Inevitably, this expert solves quality problems by correcting inefficient, costly production systems. Sometimes, his solutions are remarkably simple.

One firm he visited claimed to have a "state-of-the-art" process. The managers and workers in this company probably congratulated themselves many times over on their high-tech equipment and streamlined methods.

But what the expert saw was a system functioning well midweek and faltering on Monday and Friday. It encouraged waste and allowed costly inventory to clog the plant. Managers thought their system worked because they met their weekly numbers, but Toyota's expert wanted consistent, daily high levels of quality.

### A real eye-opener

His simple suggestions opened the Americans' eyes and they were able to see that their "streamlined" system was actually uneven, wasteful and costly.

In another example, the expert showed managers of a highly mechanized painting line that a simple consumer hairdryer dried paint more quickly than their million-dollar robotic masterpiece. The company eventually dumbed down the system, scrapping robots for hand-

held sprayers, while saving money and increasing quality.

Would a fresh look at your operating systems help you improve your bottom line? How would your system look to an outsider — too complicated, too labor intensive, too inefficient?

Are you seeing any danger signs that your systems are failing, such as:

- ▶ a rise in customer complaints,
- ▶ an increase in employee resignations,
- ▶ too much new business and customer contact backlog,
- ▶ unfinished or substandard work done on site, or
- ▶ confusion finding any documents or people.

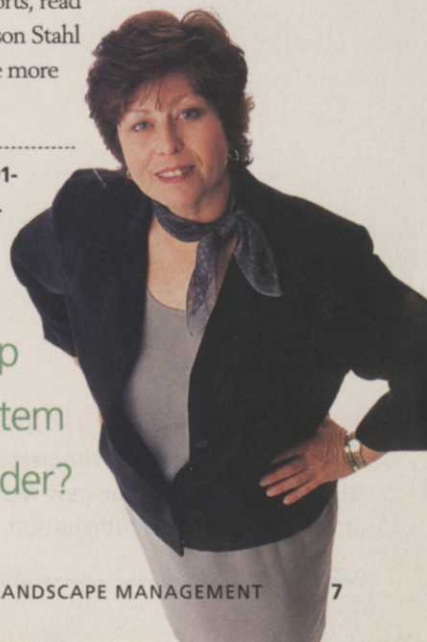
These are the obvious indicators. An eventual drop in long-time customers or employees, lower margins or profits or a rash of mistakes, breakdowns or man-made calamities are long-term indicators of trouble.

Even though you're well into the busiest time of the year, take time to look at your systems with an unbiased attitude. It will be hard to get honest answers from employees, so look for a qualified outsider who is knowledgeable about systems in general, service businesses or landscape operations. Encourage them to challenge your reasons for doing things and don't be defensive. There's probably gold in those questions because you'll uncover organizational weaknesses sooner, rather than later.

For more ideas on how to add a little productivity or efficiency to your efforts, read our cover story by Jason Stahl on page 26, "Squeeze more out of your time."

Contact Sue at 440/891-2729 or e-mail at [sgibson@advanstar.com](mailto:sgibson@advanstar.com)

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## Telemarketing: It's alive!

**W**ant to know how to make a quick \$500? Squeal on a telemarketer, that's how. Entice a phone solicitor to call you and, in the process, break one of the many anti-telemarketing laws that are popping up, and — WHAM!!! — hit 'em with a lawsuit and collect your blood money.

A company in Utah will tell you how to do it. It will provide you with step-by-step instructions — just send a check or money order for \$14.95.

There are snares aplenty for today's telemarketers, including the increasing number of state laws restricting phone sales. Those state laws, combined with a federal law requiring companies to maintain a list of "no-call" consumers, might make you wonder if telemarketing is dying. Is it yesterday's way to make a sale? Tired? On its way out?

### It really works

Telephone solicitation — as much as some of us don't like it — is thriving and remains a vital tool for the Green Industry, especially for professional lawn care companies. In fact, I'd bet that the telephone has been responsible for more lawn care sales than all other sales tools combined. And it's still being used effectively.

For example, Joe Campanella and his partner, Tom Kelly, have had great success with telemarketing in building up Lawn Dawg, their four-year-old lawn care company based in Nashua, NH. They saw telemarketing as an excellent way to build their customer base, and they were right. They now have operations in Albany, NY, Woburn, MA, and Portland, ME.

For telemarketing to succeed, says Campanella, you need to plan and organize a campaign way ahead of time. He starts putting together Lawn Dawg's marketing plan months before the winter selling season begins.

As Joe sees it (and not everyone's going to agree), it's not the phone calls that give telemarketing a bad

rap, it's telemarketers. Most are too aggressive, and when they try to sell on the first call, the person on the other end of the phone starts looking for a way out.

"The soft sell approach works best," says Campanella. "You have to make that first contact quick and friendly. The person is not expecting your call and it may be an inconvenience. The homeowner is generally relieved if you get to the point right away."

### Not for everyone

Is that to say that telemarketing is for everybody who wants to grow their business in a big hurry? No way.

"Telemarketing is not fun," admits Campanella.

And there are other valid reasons that phone solicitation may not be for you, the most obvious being that many of you get all the business you want without telemarketing. That's great. You've developed systems to keep a large percentage of your customers, and you can attract enough new customers to continue growing without telephone canvassing.

But have you considered calling a customer and offering an add-on service like a grub treatment or a renovation? You may call it "upselling," but it is telemarketing.

-----  
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