

MANAGEMENT LETTER

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Consumers benefit...from the OPEC countries' oil price fight. Unleaded gas reportedly will be less than one dollar by Memorial Day.

Economy looking up! Winter boat shows report excellent sales and well attended. Private aircraft purchases are picking up. This represents available, spendable money and indicate the economy is starting to bend. Car sales picking up with special low-interest deals (in Hastings, for example, 6½%) on new car purchases.

If you miss your airline flight...and you can make another connection fairly soon, airline authorities advise you to go direct to the other airline departure gate and not to its main ticket counter! If there is an empty seat, the second airline will usually honor the ticket from your missed flight.

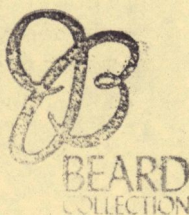
Indicators are up as to prospects for a continued improvement in the economic situation. We review a number of financial advisories each week and there seems to be a pretty much unanimous feeling that housing starts, decreased unemployment, increased productivity, and other than normal factors used in forecasting the future give support to the feeling that improvement is at hand. Amount is not sensational, but slow and orderly.

Sod market...looks much better, according to reports from some of the members we have contacted. Those who have planned for this improvement undoubtedly have organized their advertising and promotion, letting people know the availability of the product. Some are also looking at their current sod inventory and making plans for an increased acreage for next year. These are individual management decisions, but need to be studied and analyzed.

Controlling costs...continues to be a significant way of increasing profits. "Service" continues to be of critical importance in what will be an effort to build sales and future referrals.

Promotional materials were shown at the State Representative's exhibit table at the ASPA Midwinter Conference in San Antonio, with the exhibit being manned by State Rep Chairman Dave Payne and his lovely wife. Several longtime members commented they had forgotten about the materials that are available and the slide/cassette presentation "Why Sod?" received renewed support. These materials are designed for your use so contact the ASPA office and order your supply for the coming marketing season.

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A delightful visit was experienced when Chris and Janet Watmore of Cheshire, England visited Hastings and spent sometime at the ASPA office. The Watmores are longtime ASPA members who have attended a number of ASPA events and are looking forward to taking part in the International Meeting in New Jersey in July. They are very enthusiastic in their appreciation for what they say ASPA has done in assisting them in developing their business in England. They expressed their appreciation to the staff and the volunteer leadership for the response to their requests and ability to gather information from their colleagues at the various meetings. The Watmores spent the week-end as guests of Executive Director Bob Garey and his wife, Marge, before returning to England.

A new brochure on "Working With Your Banker" is "in the process" at the ASPA office. Based on material provided by Business Management Committee Chairman Al Gardner, the brochure will make suggestions on dealing with your banker before you need him and helping your banker understand sod production and what is involved.

Ruling on use of ASPA Legal Counsel...at the February meeting of the ASPA Board of Trustees, the following procedure was established on the use of Legal Counsel Bill Harding by Association members:

Request for legal services by ASPA members is to be made directly to Executive Director Bob Garey at the ASPA office in Hastings, Nebraska for review and response using information already legally established and available. Any calls requiring direct contact on the part of members with Legal Counsel Bill Harding will be made at the expense of the calling member.

This establishes a clear procedure for members on any legal inquiries they make and will enable members to receive answers to information requests with less chance of duplication of information and expense.

Note: This monthly newsletter is compiled and published under the auspices of the ASPA Business Management Committee to serve as a helpful business update for all ASPA members. We invite your comments and recommendations.

AL GARDNER, Chairman
Business Management Committee