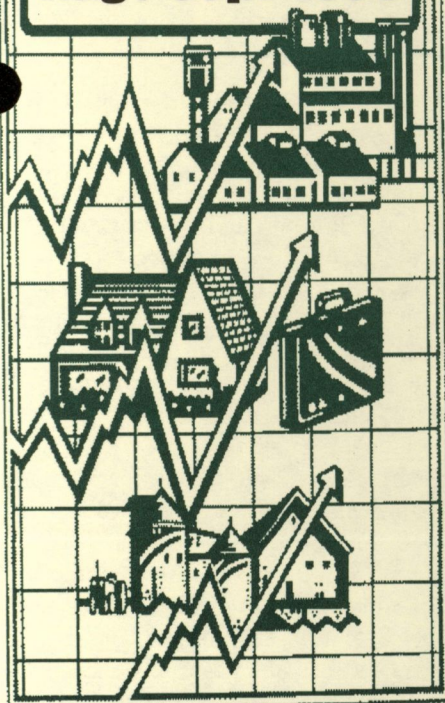


**Aug / Sept 1999**



## **ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS**

**Auction Results (ITPF)** Page 1  
*Research Efforts Boosted by Auction.*

**Computer Crash** Page 3  
*Preparation Serves TPI Office Well in Recent Computer Failure.*

**Computer News Briefs** Page 3  
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**Financial Business Briefs** Page 2  
*Big Ideas in these Short Articles.*

**Jest for the Fun of It** Page 4  
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**Marketing Tips** Page 1  
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**Safety Resource Center** Page 3  
*Free Ag Safety Information is Just a Phone Call (or email) Away.*

**Taking Care of Business** Page 2  
*Use Your Government, You're Paying for It!.*

**TPI Action** Page 4  
*TPI "Leaders of the Millennium" Nominations Sought; U.S. Governmental Issue Update (FQPA); 2000 TPI Study Tour...and More.*

# **BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**

## **Turfgrass Producers International**

### **Market-Building Tips & Techniques**

Every turfgrass sod producer has a list of successes and failures when it comes to marketing, here are some that you may not have tried...you decide if they will work for you:

**Ask your customers why they don't buy all of their turf from you?**

The answers may surprise you. It may relate to service, variety, location, etc., But, if you listen and react positively, the answer may result in your getting more business from many more of your existing customers.

**Send your company sales literature by the highest form of postal service, at least one a year.**

Bulk, mass mailings usually are not returned to the sender if undeliverable, so mailing address changes may never be known. Using a postal service level that give you an address-correction will cut-down on undelivered mail and increase overall sales returns.

### **ITPF Silent Auction Raises \$41,335 For Turf Research**

Final bids on 28 items at this summer's ITPF Silent Auction ranged from \$75 for a 1998 World Cup soccer t-shirt, to a high of \$7,000 for a 1994 Spyder forklift. All totaled, the Foundation's ability to fund sod-specific research increased by \$41,335 because of the generosity of contributors (members and suppliers), and bidders.

### **Winter Contributors Welcome**

Plans for a silent auction in San Antonio at TPI's Feb. 10-12 conference are already underway. Members and suppliers who want to support sod research by donating items to the auction can contact the TPI office (800/405-8873) for complete details deadlines.

A complete list of donors, items, successful bidders and amounts will be in the next issue of "Turf News" magazine.

**Postcards can be an inexpensive and effective direct-marketing tool.** Cheaper than most other printed pieces, postcards are fast and easy to read, so they can have an impact. Laser printers can be used to print on large label stock, so you could even personalize the message to your customers, by name or client-type.

**Design your website to teach and involve your customers rather than overwhelm them with information.** Think about what you want site visitors to look at first and how you want them to react. Get their participation in your page by asking questions that may take them to a different part of the site. Give them a way to respond to you with ideas, needs, etc.

**Voice-mail messages should be updated daily and provide an easy way to connect to a real person.**

While surveys show voice mail is returned faster than e-mail, too many voice systems and messages result in hang-ups/disconnections. Listen to yours and then stream-line it to make it fast, friendly and efficient.

**Have an idea on marketing? Send it to TPI so it can be shared with others.**

### **"Business Management" Newsletter Changing**

Starting with this issue, TPI's "Business Management" newsletter will offer a broader array of information, in a more reader-friendly format. The emphasis will focus on tips, ideas and techniques intended to improve a turf farm's business operations.

**All members are encouraged to send ideas, articles, reprints, etc., for possible use in the newsletter.**

**U.S.-specific items** will be featured inside the newsletter or in the "TPI In Action" column on page four.



## Taking Care of Business: Use Your Government, You're Paying For It

Mark Huggett, Huggett Sod Farms,  
Marlette, Michigan

Over the past twelve months, I've been to Washington, D.C. three times to visit with U.S. governmental officials to talk about issues relevant to the turfgrass sod industry. These visits have convinced me that we all should strive to take a more active role in our government's affairs. The following is an overview of my experiences on Capitol Hill.

In July, 1998, I was part of a TPI Capitol Hill Legislative Group, which consisted of TPI's Board of Trustees, representatives from TPI's Legal and Taxation and State Representatives Committees, and other interested TPI members. We had a large group of approximately 90 members visiting U.S. Representatives and Senators from our own states, as well as key Representatives/Senators from other states. Our group met prior to our Hill visits where we were briefed on the issues in which TPI has interest, to aid us in getting our points across in an organized manner.

At this informational briefing, we learned which members of Congress sat on what Congressional Committees and where TPI-related issues stood, at

present, in the various Committees. With this information in hand, we met with the Legislators (or their key staffers) to discuss the following topics: Turfgrass Sod Farming as an Agricultural Activity; Wetlands Law and Regulations; Need for Crop Protection Materials; Worker Protection Standards (WPS); Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA); Shortage of Reliable Work Force; Department of Labor & Immigration and Naturalization Service enforcement practices; and Foreign Guest Worker Program (H2A.)

The second time I visited Washington was in March, 1999, with the Michigan Farm Bureau and Michigan Young Farmers groups. The issues we were addressing were slightly different, but the approach used was essentially the same. Some of the Congressional staff actually remembered me from my previous visit with TPI. As I met with these staffers on this occasion, they listened politely...and it wasn't until I mentioned that TPI's Board of Trustees was coming back in April for a follow-up visit that their interest sky-rocketed. The staffers asked more questions so

they could give me a progress update on the issues we discussed upon my return.

My third trip to the Capitol was again as part of a TPI Board of Trustees visit that allowed us to follow-up on issues we discussed in July of 1998. Our emphasis on this trip was on FQPA and H2A (guest worker) reform. We were also updated on progress being made on crop insurance and wetlands laws/regulations.

What I learned from these experiences is that our legislators want and need to hear from real people on the real issues that affect us. If we don't give them our side of the story, all they will hear is the voices of lobbyists for special interest groups (whose agendas often conflict with our best interests.) Congressmen don't mind taking favors from lobbyists, but rarely can lobbyists get the Congressman reelected.

So contact your Congressman, by letter, phone or personal visit. Occasionally, you'll be surprised when they call asking for your point of view on a particular issue. Remember...use your government...you're paying for it!

## Financial Business Briefs + Business Resource 'Freebees'

### \* Little known source of funds:

Borrowing against life insurance. If you have cash-value personal life insurance, it can become a valuable business asset. Interest rates from borrowing on your policy will be lower than bank rates - and the application process can be much quicker. Another life-insurance benefit: Even if you don't borrow against it, simply having a policy will make it easier to get credit if you are a sole proprietor. Reason: Creditors want to be sure your debts will be repaid if something happens to you.

### \* Double deduction for casualty damage to business property:

When business property is damaged by a casualty, such as fire or flood, the IRS says the business can claim both a casualty loss deduction for the decline in the property's value and a business

expense deduction for the cost of repairing the property to its previous condition. Limits: The amount of the casualty loss deduction is limited to the business's tax basis in the property - basically, the property's cost minus depreciation deductions. The expense deduction for repairs is available only if the repairs do not improve the property relative to its pre-casualty condition.

### \* Don't pay down your mortgage...

at least not until you have other investments and a contingency fund. Paying extra principal ties up more money in your house - and your home is not a liquid investment. If you hit bad economic times, you may need access to money quickly. You can use a contingency fund, or sell stocks or mutual funds, more easily than you can get cash out of your house. Also, paying down a

mortgage reduces the amount of tax-deductible interest you pay - and you may want to keep the deduction. Paying extra principal can save you thousands...but it may not make sense in every situation.

### \* 3 Resources - Free for the asking...

#### International Investing

Benefits, risks & costs. The Vanguard Group, 800/523-7731.

#### When your broker calls, Take Notes!

Fill-in-the-blank form prompts you to ask (and record) why the broker thinks you should buy/sell...risks involved, etc. Investors Take Note, NASAA, 10 G Street NE, Suite 710, Washington, DC 20002. Include self-addressed, stamped envelope.

**Financial Planner Interviewing Guide**  
NAPFA, 888/333-6659.



## Safety Resource Center

### Free Video on Minimizing Spray Drift

The National Coalition on Drift Minimization has produced a video entitled "Straight Talk About Minimizing Spray Drift - A Guide for Applicators." The video is designed for use in pesticide applicator training and other educational settings (customer workshop idea???) To receive free copies of the video from the coalition and Stewart Agricultural Research Services, contact Andrew Hewitt at 660/762-4240 or, via email: [ahewitt@marktwain.net](mailto:ahewitt@marktwain.net)

### Visit NIFS Website

Looking for worker safety and training

ideas and information? The National Institute for Farm Safety may be a useful source. The NIFS website includes papers on a variety of safety-related topics, as well as links to other safety-related organizations and key federal agencies. Access the site at: [www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~agsafety/NIFS/nifs.htm](http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~agsafety/NIFS/nifs.htm)

### First Aid Health & Wellness Direct:

Free catalog of first-aid supplies... biosafety training and kits...eyewear/hearing protection and more. Lab Safety Supply, Inc., Box 1368, Janesville, Wisconsin, 53547. Or call: 800/356-0783.

## Computer Crash...A Lesson in the Basics

Upon returning to the office after TPI's Summer Convention, we discovered that one of our four networked computers would not start, due to 'bad clusters' on the "C" drive. This is about the worst news a computer user can get (with the possible exception of a computer that won't turn-on at all.) Our main priority from the outset was data-retrieval.

While our small network does use a centralized server for our large databases, each machine holds hundreds of files created by each user, so our backup system for all machines is essential. The tape drive backup system runs three levels of backups: 1) New and changed files are backed-up daily along with our databases, 2) "Primary" files (where we keep most of our files, spreadsheets, etc. for each machine) are backed-up in their entirety once a week, and 3) Once a month, system settings are backed-up to capture new or changed settings, software, etc.

We immediately called our computer manufacturer to discuss our problem and got a good news/bad news report. The good news was that we still had six weeks left on our warranty. The bad news was that based on our conversation, and tests we conducted with the technician's help, we learned that the primary disk drive was probably in need of replacement. We were given phone numbers for data-recovery firms in the event that our backup system had failed, and we made an appointment

to call the technician back after we assessed the backup situation.

While checking the backup systems' status, we were able to bypass a lengthy scanning procedure to restart Windows (for how long we didn't know.) During this period, we dumped everything from the ailing systems' primary drive onto another machine. This was a great relief because rebuilding from backup tapes can be time consuming, but we now had all files and data (the most recent versions!) saved in one place for easy retrieval.

Having copied the files, we called our manufacturer's technician and he walked us through the process of emptying the primary drive to see if it happened to be salvageable. Part of this process involved making floppy-disk copies of our sound and video drivers, and a Windows set-up disk. We had already done this when we first installed the system, but we've been through upgrades and changes that may have made these original disks obsolete.

As it turned out, the drive is dead but we have all our files and the necessary disks and drivers to install in the machine once the new drive arrives. Several lessons were made clear once again: 1) Backup your data and files regularly, 2) Make system disks and copies of driver information, 3) Extended warranties saved TPI far more than their cost with just this single episode, 4) Prepare for the worst!

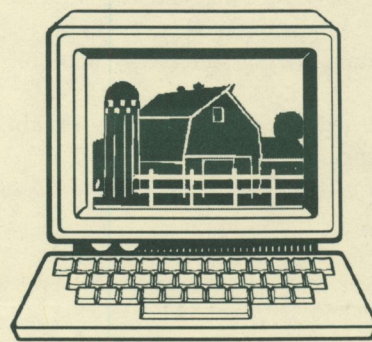
## Shrewder Computing

### TPI Website Expansion Plans

Members of the TPI Technology Resources Committee met in Lansing, Michigan in July and recommended several updates and modifications to the TPI and Turf Resource Center (TRC) websites.

The TPI site is primarily for member / professional use, while the TRC site is geared toward consumers. The following items are in the development 'pipeline' and due to be uploaded in the coming weeks:

- \* Online member dues renewal, conference registration and product ordering
- \* Frequently Asked Question / Answer section
- \* Expanded links (recommend a link to Tom, 800/405-8873)
- \* Downloadable clipart and turfgrass business resources



The TPI and TRC sites are 'works in progress.' Both sites are modified on an ongoing basis to maintain interest, and promote return user traffic. With this in mind...please pass along suggestions, links or even sites that you find to be well-designed or especially useful, and we'll work to make the TPI & TRC sites better.

Visit TPI online today:

[www.TurfGrassSod.org](http://www.TurfGrassSod.org)



# TPI Action

**"Leaders Of The Millennium" nominees sought for TPI recognition.** Who has had long-term and significant impact on the turfgrass sod industry in the last 1,000 years? By name alone...without a long (boring) introductory background... who would you nominate for recognition by TPI at its 2001 Midwinter Conference in San Antonio? Send your nominated names to TPI by mail, e-mail, fax or phone.

**U.S. "Food Quality Protection Act" enforcement legislation advances** in both Houses of Congress with the Senate's introduction of S. 1464, a companion to the House's H.R. 1592. *TPI members should call their federal officials* to encourage their becoming a co-sponsor of this legislation designed to force the USEPA to use scientific data when registering pesticides.

**TPI Study Tour of South Africa**, set for November, 2000, is now in its final planning stages. Because of its business-relevance, members from around the world may be eligible for a tax deductible expense as the tour visits member farms across S. Africa. Details about the 2-week tour will be mailed presently. While it is available to all TPI members, reservations will be limited to the first 75 people on a first-come, first-served basis.

**To Receive Additional Information On Any of These Items**

**Contact the TPI Office**

**Phone: 800/405-8873 or 847/705-9898**

**Fax: 847/705-8347 or E-mail to [Turf-Grass@MSN.COM](mailto:Turf-Grass@MSN.COM)**

## Preparing For Y2K

"Just in case," the Y2K bug presents problems after January 1, 2001, everyone should be encouraged to obtain printouts of all important financial records such as insurance policy statements, bank records and investments.

**In the U.S., Social Security earnings and payment histories** can be obtained by calling Social Security at 1/800-772-1213 and requesting Form SSA-7004 *"Request for Personal Earnings and Benefits Statements."*

## Jest For The Fun Of It

### Wacky Facts from Around the World:

\* Dueling is legal in Paraguay, as long as both parties are registered blood donors.

\* More people are killed each year by donkeys than are killed in plane crashes.

\* Americans eat 18 acres of pizza a day.

\* Our eyes stay the same size from birth, but our ears and noses never stop growing.

\* You share your birthday with at least 9 million other people on the planet.

\* American Airlines saved \$40,000 in 1987 simply by eliminating one olive from each salad served in first class.

\* You are more likely to be killed by a champagne cork than by a poisonous spider.

\* Termites destroy more property in a year than earthquakes.

\* If all the people in China walked past you in single file, the line would never end because of their rate of reproduction. By the way, there are more English speakers in China than in the U.S.



## BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

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