



BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

AMERICAN SOD PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

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APRIL / MAY, 1992

July 23-25
ASPA'S SUMMER CONVENTION &
25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Unlike any of ASPA's previous Summer Conventions this year's will feature a unique combination of an international theme, with the organization's 25th anniversary along with field demonstrations and farm tours. Because of Chicago's proximity to so many of its members who will want to join in this historic event, a record-shattering attendance is anticipated.

Highlights of this year's convention will include:

Thursday, July 23: Fairmont Hotel, downtown Chicago -- Committee meetings, educational session, annual business meeting and induction of two new Honorary ASPA members. A special reception will precede an even more spectacular banquet celebrating ASPA's first 25 years. With some of the gentlemen choosing to wear tuxedos, everyone will have an opportunity to enjoy a night of fine dining, special entertainment, recognition of ASPA's history and even dancing.

Friday, July 24: Central Sod Farms, Naperville -- While the bus rides will take over an hour, trip-shortening ideas are being developed to make the trip enjoyable and entertaining. At the farm, there will be displays of old and new equipment, plus the services of many long-time industry suppliers. A first-time feature will be the ASPA seed test plots. The evening will be free for individual plans and a chance to enjoy the city's many sights.

Saturday, July 25: H & E Sod Nursery, Markham and Momence, IL
Evergreen Sod Nursery, Peotone, IL
Huber Ranch Sod Nursery, Schneider, IN
Heading south of the city, the tour day will include stops at four sod operations, each presenting a special feature. Lunch will be served at Huber Ranch Sod Nursery before the buses begin their return to Chicago.

Complete information and registration forms will be mailed to all ASPA members in the next few days.

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is provided with the understanding that this publisher is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting or other professional service. If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought. Published bi-monthly for members of the American Sod Producers Association, under the auspices of the ASPA Business Management Committee. We invite your comments and recommendations.

FARM SAFETY

Prepared by Chris Hope, Manderley Sod, North Gower, Ontario, Canada

In these tough economic times, it is important to be aware of the importance of safety on our farms. Many of us will continue to use older equipment because of business conditions. However, when conducting overhaul or maintenance procedures on this equipment, pay special attention to the safety components. Machinery should be in good operating condition to work both efficiently and safely. It is rather inexpensive to restore equipment to proper operating condition, when you consider the consequences of a tragic accident.

Proper staff training is another important factor to consider, especially in our specialized business. Many new employees are unfamiliar with the equipment they will operate. Even the most simple things must be pointed out to them, i.e., don't get off the tractor with the PTO still engaged. They must be trained and continually reminded that many accidents occur when the operator tries to "investigate" a malfunction. Employees should be encouraged to take the responsibility to work safely. Don't put up with sloppiness or employees taking shortcuts. Establish basic safety rules and enforce them. Your farm's safety rules should be included in your employee manual or at very least, spelled-out on a page that is read and signed by the employee. This can be a benefit if future Workers' Compensations problems arise.

Increasing the safety consciousness of your business is not expensive. Informing employees, keeping work areas clean and neat, and equipment in good operating condition is good business which can contribute to your continued success.

MEMBER MARKETING TIP -- MAKE ALL SEVEN ATTEMPTS TO CLOSE A SALE

Prepared by Herb Hadley, Warren's Turf Nursery, Inc., Crystal Lake, IL

The seven calls necessary to get a new account are rarely made by any salesman. Research shows that the average salesman gives up after hearing "no" or "maybe" from an account three times. Less than five percent of all sales people make that seventh and decisive call!

Roughly speaking, the sales calls can be divided as follows:

1. Information gathering and qualification of the customer.
2. Presentation of products/ services appropriate to customer's needs.
3. Follow-up to determine customer reaction and potential purchase.
4. Presentation of additional information specific to the account, i.e. potential profitability of new supplier or the hidden benefits to do business with your firm.
5. If the customer has not taken a trial order, this call is to answer the customer's objections by asking opening-ended questions such as, "Are there any reasons why we can't do business?"
6. This call is personality related rather than product oriented. By this time, the potential customer knows the salesman well and may make the purchase decision on the basis of trust rather than price.
7. Here is where the smart salesman puts it all together by summarizing all that has happened in the first six calls, presenting a verbal, or written statement of the benefits that will be derived from this new business relationship and forcefully asking for an immediate decision rather than accepting any further delaying tactics.

KNOW WHERE THE CANDIDATES STAND
BEFORE YOU CAST YOUR VOTE

Your mailbox is overflowing with campaign literature, and you can bet there will be plenty more before the general election. But, before you cast your ballot, shouldn't you know where the candidates stand on issues that are important to you?

On the reverse side of this page is a "Candidate Questionnaire" that you can use, or personalize to your own needs. With a cover letter from your firm, send it to all serious candidates, asking that they give you an indication of their positions before election day. Your cover letter might look something like this:

Inside address

Dear Candidate (personalized):

As the owner of a XXX acre turfgrass sod farm with XX employees in your area, I'm very interested in who represents me as list office the candidate is running for. While I've become more familiar with your general qualifications for this office, I'm also interested in your position on issues that are of vital importance to this operation and industry.

Would you be so kind as to take a few moments to complete and return the enclosed "Candidate Questionnaire."

I will share your responses with members of my family, firm and national trade association so that we can support and vote for those candidates who fully understand and appreciate the needs of this specialized farming operation.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely
Signature of farm owner

It would be very helpful to ASPA's operations if you would share copies of your responses from candidates for national offices.

1992 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete and return this brief form so we might better understand your position on issues that are of vital importance to us.

Simply indicate whether you "Agree" or "Disagree" with the following statements. If your time permits, we would welcome any additional detail you might choose to enclose that relates to any of these items and your candidacy.

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>AGREE</u>	<u>DISAGREE</u>
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Lawns are an important environmental component of landscapes in this area. Similar to trees, lawns, provide many benefits to the environment. Encouraging expanded uses of turfgrasses will further improve our environment.

Because it is man and not plants that waste water, landscape water conservation can best be achieved through education rather than laws that may restrict the use of turfgrass.

Many small businesses, including turfgrass sod farms, are suffering financially as a result of current state and federal policies, regulations and/or laws in these areas:

- a. Workers' Compensation Insurance
- b. Limited deductibility of health insurance premiums
- c. Wetlands definitions and enforcement
- d. Capital gains taxation
- e. Local vs. state or federal pesticide use ordinances

Other areas of importance:

If elected, I pledge to you my support for those items where we agree and would welcome the opportunity to become more informed about the areas where we do not yet agree.

Signature of Candidate

Office

Date