

Waste Management buys Tru Green

By **ELLIOT MARAS**
EDITOR

SPECIAL REPORT—Waste Management, Inc., the nation's largest waste disposal company, has purchased Tru Green Corp., the second largest lawn care company. Purchase price was not revealed.

Oakbrook, Ill.-based Waste Management made headlines earlier this year in its failed takeover bid for ChemLawn Services Corp. ChemLawn felt Waste Management's price was too low and was eventually bought by Ecolab, Inc. for a higher price.

Tru Green will now operate as a wholly owned sub-

siary of Waste Management, which is publicly held. Officials from both companies confirmed there will be no management changes at Tru Green.

Tru Green has bought several other lawn care companies this year. Company president Howard Evers estimates total 1987 revenues at

\$73 million.

The acquisition means Tru Green's growth activities will continue at a quicker pace, Evers said.

"We're extremely excited," he said. "It's going to strengthen our position in the industry. It gives us the opportunity to grow—in-

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Evers: We're excited!

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Side or rear bag? Preferences vary



A bagging question: Using a side or rear bagger is largely a matter of personal preference.

By **JAMES E. GUYETTE**
Managing Editor

NATIONAL REPORT—In the market for a new mower? One question that often comes to mind is whether a side-bagger or rear-bagger is easier to work with.

A random survey of contractors yielded no consensus.

"I think it's a matter of leg length more than anything," says Art Wick, vice president of research and development, LESCO, Inc., Rocky River, Ohio. "Short-legged (operators) will like rear-baggers—long-legged (operators) will complain."

Wick adds that "the more important part is the lift of the

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INSIDE SNOWPLOWS

Special section looks at how trucks are converted to snow plows.

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TREE CARE

Second in a series on branching out into tree care.

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CLASSIFIED

See what's for sale, miscellaneous items.

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NEXT MONTH

- An independent researcher summarizes test performances of some new herbicides.
- Special PLCAA show issue.

Jump seen in mower sales!

LOUISVILLE—Members of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute predict improved turf equipment sales for 1987. Growth is predicted for walk-behind rotary mowers, riding rotary turf mowers and riding reel mowers.

"Landscape and lawn care" was identified as the fastest growing segment of the commercial turf market, comprising 33.5 percent of the market at present, OPEI reported. **LCI**

A creeping pest?



Bluegrass Billbug larvae are sometimes mistaken for white grubs. Infestations have been reported in North Central states.

Timing holds key to billbug control

KANSAS CITY—The billbug presents a formidable foe to LCOs and lawn management contractors in many parts of the North Central region. Infestations have struck in the last few years and the insect's biology isn't yet fully understood. Control has proven difficult.

Mild winters tend to increase overwintering survival, which results in larger numbers the following season, noted Frederick P. Baxendale, Ph.D., extension entomologist at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. "I think that's why we've been seeing increased numbers in the last two to three years," he said.

Baxendale spoke on controlling billbugs at the Professional Lawn Care Association of Mid-America seminar in Kansas City.

The most common billbug species, the Bluegrass Billbug, primarily afflicts Kentucky bluegrass.

The Hunting Billbug, which is slightly larger, prefers warm season grasses. "In this area, it is probably one of the most important pests on zoysiagrass," Baxendale said.

There is also the Denver Billbug, common in Colorado,

western Kansas and western Nebraska. This species differs in that it overwinters as a larva, meaning two insecticide applications instead of one may be needed to control the pest.

Whatever the species, billbug feeding results in yellowing and thinning of turf. However, the same symptoms can be caused by drought

See **BILLBUG** Page 18

Posting coming to New York

ALBANY, N.Y.—A series of public hearings are being planned throughout New York as state officials finalize a posting law.

The measure already has been passed and signed into law by the legislature and governor, and now it's up to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Bureau of Pesticides to fine-tune the regulations.

A series of eight hearings will be held in five locations. Details were not set at press-time.

Currently the law calls for one sign every 12 feet on a property, but Diana Krantz, executive director of the New York State Pesticide Users Council, thinks that will change during negotiations. "Once the hearings go through I think they'll compromise." **LCI**

LATE NEWS

3PF discontinues Dietz's contract

BOSTON—The Pesticide Public Policy Foundation's board of directors has discontinued David Dietz's contract as the organization's program director.

Dietz has been unable to work as a result of an automobile accident Memorial Day weekend. He is recovering in a rehabilitation facility after spending several months in a hospital in a coma.

"The directors of 3PF had to, because of the most unfortunate automobile accident, make a painful decision to discontinue the relationship," said Erik Haupt, board chairman. "This probably would be the way Dave Dietz would want it."

The board has established a search committee and has interviewed candidates for the position. The job was offered to one candidate during an interview in Boston. A decision will be announced in the "very near future," Haupt said.

The group lobbies for pesticide interests. **LCI**

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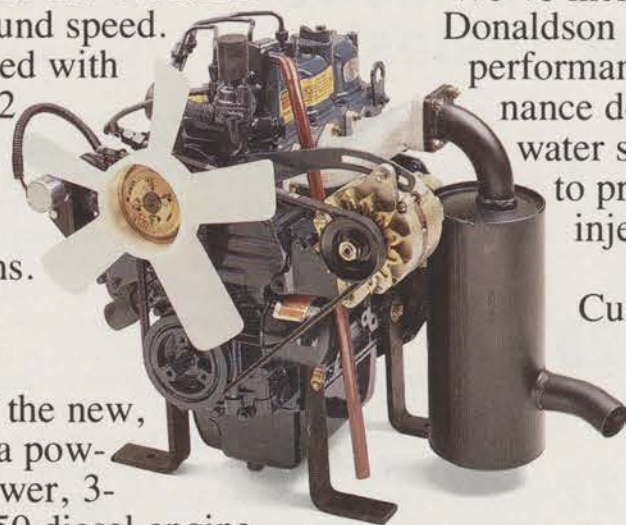
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Expanded PLCAA show moves west

SAN ANTONIO—The eighth annual conference and show of the Professional Lawn Care Association of America moves west for the first time Thursday, Nov. 12 through Sunday, Nov. 15 in San Antonio, Tex. The conference includes a three-track educational format and the trade show will have longer viewing hours.

There will be a total of 16 hours floor time for the trade show, with 12 hours exclusively for exhibit viewing. More than 150 exhibitors are expected to participate.

The Outdoor Power Equipment Demonstration will be held Sunday morning on Nov. 15.

Roger Staubach, the winningest quarterback in the National Football League, will give the keynote talk.

The three-track educational format will offer sessions on business, landscape and agronomy topics. The program will include 37 1/2 hours of instruction.

Topics will include customer retention, hiring and firing,

regulations, cost estimating, business expansion opportunities, leadership, liability of equipment managers, turf soil biology, basic agronomy, avoiding legal problems, and others.

Early bird workshops on Thursday will include "The Total Lawn Care Organization," "Estimating Landscape Maintenance Costs," and "Developing an Effective Training Program."

There will also be a three-day small engine clinic, events for new members and the PLCAA annual meeting.

A free spouse orientation presentation is scheduled at the beginning of the show to acquaint guests with places to visit in San Antonio.

An extended, all-day spouse program on Saturday will sample the city's highlights.

Members and spouses are invited to the Texas-style "Early bird" reception Thursday evening. LCI

Green Team to offer wealth of info!

FALLS CHURCH, VA.—The Green Team Conference, titled "A Commitment to Success," Nov. 7-11, includes an array of speakers addressing both business and technical aspects of lawn management.

The conference, to be held at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City, Arlington, Va., is co-sponsored by the Associated Landscape Contractors of America's Landscape Management Division and the Professional Grounds Management Society.

The conference program is as follows. Times for the



Robert Menzer

presentations will be announced in the program guide.

Sunday, Nov. 8—Jim Perrone, Perrone-Ambrose Associates, will speak on leadership skills and developing a corporate vision.

Monday, Nov. 9—Jeffrey

O'Connell, co-author of the work which proposed no-fault auto insurance and a professor of law at the University of Virginia, will give the keynote address.

Richard Jack, a lawyer in Athens, Ga., will speak on liability in lawn management.

Gary Thornton, Thornton Landscape, Inc., will lead a panel discussion on safety.

Robert Menzer, Ph.D., director of the Maryland Water Resources Center at the University of Maryland, will talk on "Pesticides: Past, Present and Future."

John Davidson, an entomology professor at the University of Maryland, will discuss summer oils. Later that day, PGMS will hold a business meeting and ALCA will have buzz sessions. LCI

NE Green revenue was incorrect!

DETROIT—New England Green, Inc.'s lawn care earnings for 1986 were incorrectly listed in LAWN CARE INDUSTRY'S 1987 Million Dollar Lawn Care List. The earnings were \$8.67 million, not \$4.5 million.

The correct earnings would have placed the company number 11 on the list. Growth over the previous year was over 90 percent. LCI



MEMOS

Elanco Products Co. is establishing a specialist to deal with exclusive needs of LCOs. The new lawn care specialist is Lonnie M. Pell. He will assist LCOs in developing programs, gathering information and testing products of the formulators who currently serve this market.

"Elanco recognizes the importance of the lawn care industry," says William H. Culpepper, Elanco's director of specialty products, "and we intend to serve this growing industry not only with superior products, but also with superior service."

Despite several federal court decisions holding that only the federal and state governments have the authority to regulate pesticides, Sen. John Chafee, R-R.I., has introduced a bill to grant local jurisdictions the same authority. Green industry trade associations have testified before the House Agriculture Committee that such attempts undermine the authority of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act.

The Sierra Chemical Co. has acquired the specialty agricultural products division of Mallinckrodt, Inc. The acquisition adds a full-line of pesticides to Sierra's line of

controlled-release fertilizers.

Acquisition of the St. Louis-based pesticide division marks the first for Milipitas, Calif.-based Sierra.

Mallinckrodt plans to focus more on core medical, specialty chemical, flavor and fragrance businesses.

Ohio green industry representatives are petitioning the state legislature for more funds to fight the gypsy moth. The foliage-destroying pest has been sighted in the northeastern part of the state.

The legislature appropriated funds to fight the pest this year, but the Ohio Pesticide Applicators for Responsible Regulation and the Ohio Nurserymen's Association say more is needed. Otherwise, the pest will become entrenched and the state will have no choice but to allocate even greater sums.

The State of Pennsylvania spent more than \$4 million in 1986 to suppress the moth after it decimated tens of thousands of acres in that state.

Indiana LCOs and lawn management contractors are racing toward a viable organization. Officials of the Indianapolis Lawn Care Association and Purdue University were thrilled over the

large turnout for the Sept. 1 trade show and conference.

Anticipated attendance was about 200 people representing some 80 companies and 35 exhibitors. Instead, more than 275 green industry representatives attended the outdoor event in Carmel, Ind.

The city of Hinsdale, Ill. has vetoed professional lawn care for public grounds. An

"uproar" raised by the Lake County Defenders, an anti-pesticide group, resulted in Hinsdale's dumping of plans to hire a lawn care firm to treat the community's parks.

ChemLawn sent a representative to pitch lawn care's case, but city council members balked at a dispute with the Defenders, a group from nearby Crystal Lake. "It's been going on up there for some time," says a ChemLawn spokesman. "Everybody from Crystal Lake came down and raised hell."

Lawn Boy Product Group of Outboard Marine Corp. will buy Gilson Brothers Co. Gilson is a Plymouth, Wis.-based manufacturer of lawn and garden tractors, tillers, walk-behind mowers and rear-engine rider mowers.

Lawn Boy manufactures walk-behind mowers. LCI

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Industry suffers for abusive sales tactics

By **ELLIOT MARAS**
Editor

It only takes one patch of pythium blight to ruin a lawn. And it only takes a few unscrupulous operators to tarnish an entire industry.

When I called LCOs at random to ask about their competitors' sales tactics, almost half said their competitors badmouth them on occasion. Competitors sometimes cast aspersions on the quality—and sometimes the safety—of their products and practices to lure away their customers.

Badmouthers are a liability the industry cannot afford at a time when its practices are under close scrutiny by the media and environmental groups.

Dave Murphy, president of Green Valley Co., piqued my interest in the issue with his rousing speech before the Professional Lawn Care Association of Mid-America Seminar in Kansas City.

He told how he tested the ethics of the physician who has, for a number of years, tested his employees' blood for cholinesterase. Murphy announced one day that he was switching to another physician who had just set up practice and was offering the service for a lower price.

The physician told Murphy he was sad to see him go; he enjoyed working with him and his employees. Murphy said he was sad too, but he had to do what made the best financial sense.

Bidding Murphy goodbye, the physician said he hoped all goes well with the new physician. Murphy had one last word: he wasn't changing physicians after all!

He explained that he simply wanted to see how a professional talks about a competitor when a customer's business is at stake. He got his answer.

Physicians can't afford to badmouth one another. With malpractice suits flying and the insurance getting more expensive, the medical profession has learned it can't afford backbiting within its ranks.

For physicians to defame other physicians would fuel public doubts about the overall quality of medical care, and the whole profession would suffer.

Murphy's doctor told him he wouldn't criticize another doctor even if he *did* doubt his competence.

The time has come, Murphy implored his colleagues in Kansas City, for the lawn care industry to realize that it too is a profession.

He tearfully related instances where competitors

have told his customers his products were unsafe or ineffective, and that his workers were poorly trained.

Murphy said he heard no less than 100 such stories this past spring. He estimates 10 percent of the companies in the Kansas City area have stooped to such tactics.

My random check would indicate the percentage of offenders is actually much smaller.

But it's still too high. The bad apples are doing more to fuel the current public furor

over pesticide risks than the organized opposition is—simply by questioning LCOs' competence.

Any LCO that gives quotes for a competitor's customers should make it clear he isn't casting doubts on his competitor.

If you know of a competitor that plays dirty, find out if it's the company's standard practice or just an overzealous salesperson.

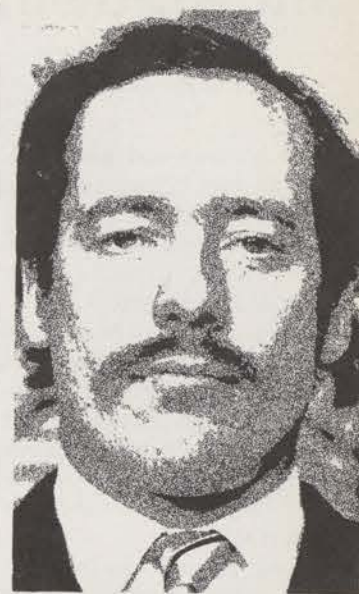
Then get together with your reputable competitors and share notes. If you agree

who the bums are, start blackballing them. Make a joint complaint to the local Better Business Bureau.

See if they belong to business and trade associations. If they do, get them kicked out.

The lawn care industry should take a cue from the medical profession and upgrade its salesmanship ethics.

Elliot Maras



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Snowplowing—the off-season option

By ELLIOT MARAS
Editor

Lawn care and lawn management companies can supplement their incomes in the off-season shoveling snow, usually with minimal investment.

Companies with four-wheel drive trucks already have most of the equipment needed to plow snow—all that's further required is the plow, heavy duty battery, heavy duty alternator, adjustable headlights and a strobe light.

They payoff can be big. Aside from increased profitability, snow removal enables a company to keep employees year-round, improves the company's cash flow, and fosters stronger customer loyalty.

But to be successful in snow removal, the contractor must take on only those jobs he is equipped to handle.

Ron Kujawa, president of KEI Enterprises, Cudahy, Wis., says it is imperative that contractors be careful not to sign up more customers than they have the equipment and manpower to handle.

Also, Kujawa says, make sure the properties are easily accessible.

"Selectivity and refrain from over commitment—these are two real key things," he says.

Snow removal customers are more concerned with a contractor's reliability than his price, Kujawa says.

And don't assume everyone on your lawn management crew is suited for snow removal. "Not everybody has the temperament to work under a snow situation," Kujawa says. The hours are long, the work is hard, and customers are often under stress and can be highly irate.

"I would be very wary about getting into this business without prior experience," says Bill Davids, vice president of operations for Clarence Davids & Sons, Inc., Blue Island, Ill.

Davids does not see snow removal as a major profit generator for the company: It accounts for less than 3 percent of the company's \$3.5 million annual revenue.

But he considers it an important service for a full-service firm to offer its customers, particularly commercial customers. It also enables the company to keep its foremen employed year-round.

A big investment

About 12 of Davids workers are involved in snow removal.

Two large trucks are fitted with front-end loaders and salt spreaders while four pickup trucks are equipped with plows. There are also 30 hand-shovels and five snowblowers involved.

Todd Meyer, maintenance production manager, advises the crew to get to bed early on nights when heavy snow is forecasted. All are assigned to specific trucks; the same ones they work with in the summer.

The trucks are gassed early in the evening. "It's real hard finding a gas station at 1 a.m.," Meyer says. Trucks are also equipped with two-way radios in case of emergencies.

Insurance is important, Davids points out, because of the liabilities involved. Problems can be caused by a person who falls on ice after it has

been salted, or by a person who has an accident because the plower was late getting to a site.

Contracts must clearly state when plows will come out, Davids says.

His contract stipulates the plows clear parking lots and driveway entrances as soon as two inches of snow has accumulated. Customers are billed monthly.

Contracts in the past allowed fees for heavy snowfalls to be negotiated on a per-job basis. Davids says this didn't work well.

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T-bar steering also improves maneuverability. Now

How to write a snow removal service contract

By Tom Garber

A snow service contract is like life insurance—it's really important to have it, but you hope you'll never have to use it!

Contracts provide the necessary structure of a service-oriented business relationship. But quality service and satisfied customers are the heart and soul of a good contractual relationship. The best contract document will not preserve the relationship between dissatisfied customers who perceive their inter-

ests are not being served by the contractor.

But assuming that quality services are being given to satisfied customers, let us look at the areas that should be addressed in a snow service contract.

Payment structures vary

At least three payment structures are possible in a snow service contract. The first is the popular "time and materials" method in which the contractor charges by the hour as services are rendered, plus materials costs.

When the hourly rates charged are sufficient, this is a great way to make money...if it snows! But for the company that depends on snow removal income to cover overhead and profit, there may be great trouble ahead if it doesn't snow.

Even a mild winter with light snowfall can mean a financially bitter season for the contractor who operates solely on the time and material basis.

The second method of payment structure is the "fixed" or "flat rate" contract. Using this method, the contractor exchanges the potential for big

money in the time and materials contract for the security of guaranteed cash flow during the winter months. The contractor using this method is well-advised to look back historically at the revenues garnered from a particular site for several years and to correlate this data with climatic norms in the area.

The first objective in structuring a "flat rate" contract is to determine what the average annual revenue would be and then convince the customer to pay that amount each year. This type of payment struc-

ture is not for gamblers (either contractor or customer), but is best suited to those of us who dislike extreme variations between budget projections and actual income.

When used with a select few customers who see their contractor as a valuable team member, the flat contract can be an effective method to promote a company's financial health during the winter.

The third method of payment is the "retainer" contract. This method can represent a true "win/win" contractual structure. The contractor's "win" is steady monthly income each month of the winter whether it snows or not. The customer's "win" is reduced rates for snow removal throughout the winter.

The customer agrees to pay the contractor a certain amount each month whether it snows or not in exchange for certain concessions in the hourly rates charged.

One way for the contractor to structure the retainer program is to bill a winter monthly retainer equal to one-half of the property's average monthly snow bill. For example, on a property that normally spends \$10,000 per year for snow removal, the average monthly cost (November through March) would be \$2,000. Billed at half that rate, the monthly retainer would be \$1,000 per month.

The contract would specify that the customer would be billed this amount the first of the month, November through March.

Each month, the contractor provides snow removal service at the normal time and materials rates until the amount of the retainer is used up. At that point, the hourly rates drop by 10 to 20 percent for all additional work during that month.

When the retainer is not used up in a month, the unused portion is credited toward snow services in the next month. Unused retainer hours at the end of March are credited to April for spring snow storms or for landscape services.

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TORO

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About the Author

Tom Garber is president of Colorado Landscape Enterprises, Inc., a Denver landscape management and snow removal contracting firm.

program because they save money on their total winter snow removal bill. Contractors like it because they are paid "up front" regardless of snowfall in a given month.

Each of the three payment structures will appeal to different clients based on their own budget needs and their willingness to take risks. By working with his customers, the snow removal contractor can end up with a combination of different customers using the payment package they feel is best for them.

A payment mix, for example, of 50 percent time and materials, 25 percent flat fee and 25 percent retainer contracts



provides solid monthly cash-flow. The end result for the snow contracting firm is an overall cashflow/payment plan that maximizes financial health during the winter months and minimizes the risks that come in either heavy or light snowfall years.

As the service professional, the contractor must take the

initiative in determining and defining in the contract what good snow service looks like. Unfortunately some customers believe if they are inconvenienced in any way, you haven't done your job.

These misconceptions arise from unrealistic expectations which must be addressed directly with the customer and in the contract with careful and specific language. One way to do this is to define different types of snow storms in the contract.

One contractor, for example, distinguishes between "normal" and "severe" storms in his legal documents.

A "normal" storm by defi-

nition is eight inches or less accumulation during a 24-hour period. A storm becomes "severe" when there are more than eight inches of snowfall within a 24-hour period and when one or more of the following conditions exist: 1) high winds, drifting conditions; 2) metro traffic system is partially shut down; 3) sub-zero temperatures and/or hazardous wind chill conditions are in effect.

The contract should also include detailed information on what the contractor will do when these conditions exist. For example, in the event of a "normal snow storm," the company shall provide direct

access from a residence or office to personal vehicles by clearing steps, walks and drives of snow in such a way as to allow reasonable vehicular traffic on and off the property within 12 hours of dispatching walk crews to a designated geographical area.

Non-essential work (e.g., clearing perimeter walks) may be completed after the 12-hour period just described.

For the annual blizzard the contract might read: "During a severe snow storm the company agrees to proceed with services as soon as it reasonably can and will continue services until the conditions of this contract have been achieved."

The main objective in the contract is to define clearly what will be done given the fact that no one can control a snow storm. As long as the definitions are reasonable and customers are reasonable, there should not be a problem.

Customer responsibilities

The snow services contract should also clearly set forth the responsibilities of the customer. First on this list would be the obligation of the customer to pay for services rendered within a reasonable period of time.

If the customer has specifications about where to pile snow, time requirements, etc., these details should also be stated. A standard clause in the contract might read: "Customer is obligated to specify in writing regarding any special expectations having to do with the work performed by the contractor and such modifications shall be executed by both the customer and the contractor and attached hereto as Exhibit A."

The attachment (Exhibit A) would then outline the customer's particular specifications.

Another advisable clause is: "Change orders must be in writing and verbal orders have no standing."

Liability and insurance

The issue of liability used to be largely confined to property damage by the snow removal contractor. But in recent years, "slip and falls" have become an item of growing concern. When drafting or rewriting a snow services contract, it is critical to involve both the company's attorney and insurance company. They will have to live with the wording of your contract regarding liability claims and they should be involved.

Snow service contractors must also beware that even if their contract says they will not be liable, they still may be held liable. In essence, the contract does not determine the extent to which a company is liable.

The insurance companies first and the courts second determine liability for any and



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all claims. If your contract says you are not liable for "slip and falls" and your insurance company pays a claim, then you are liable regardless of contractual language.

Nevertheless, it is still important to work hard at wording such as: "The contractor assumes no liability for any damage to persons or property unless gross negligence by it or its agents is clearly involved."

The customer's attorneys will often ask that the word "gross" be eliminated from this statement. They will sometimes ask you to add a "hold harmless" clause to your contract in an attempt to limit liability exposure for "slip and falls" to the contractor.

In most cases it is impossible to avoid this maneuver when an important contract is at stake. In these days of ever-increasing lawsuits, the wise contractor will be vigilant in the area of liability. Get a good attorney and find a good insurance carrier who understands your business and our industry as a whole. Contractors should not hesitate to blame contractual language on their insurance company!

Many contractors tell their customers the truth: "We are 'in bed' with our insurance company and they have a direct say in the language of our contract." Customers generally understand this fact and realize insurance companies have an increasingly strong say in how many businesses are run.

Just make sure your insurance company does have a say in how you run your business. According to a leading Denver area broker, the majority of landscape companies never inform their insurance carrier they are doing snow removal. In this age of litigation, the prudent contractor should make sure his insurance certificate is valid for both landscape work and for snow services.

Here are some additional items to consider in the contract:

- A clause stating walk crews can be pulled from a site when the wind chill factor is severe enough to impair employees' health.

- A statement about the contractor's right to remove employees from the property if on-site personnel become verbally or physically abusive.

- A clause indicating the contractor will be paid extra when snow must be hauled away from the property to make room for more snow.

- A statement to the effect that the contractor will not be held responsible for removing snow in areas where cars are parked either legally or illegally.

- A statement indicating the contractor is responsible for numerous properties and that order of priority is established by resource allocation and geographical factors. **LCI**

Deicer alternatives slipping into market

By JAMES E. GUYETTE
Managing Editor

Salt has long been used for ice control on streets, sidewalks, parking lots and driveways—but concerns over salt's corrosiveness have led to increased use of alternative deicing materials.

"There's tremendous interest all over the country," says Glen Holt. "The lawn care and landscape people are who we are selling to a lot right now."

Holt is national marketing manager for potash and mag-



nesium chemicals at the Great Salt Lake Minerals and Chemicals Corp., Ogden, Utah.

The company makes Freezgard with PCI and Qwiksalt plus PCI.

Freezgard with PCI pro-

vides effective ice control yet reduces the amount of corrosion to automobiles, bridges and other metal objects, according to Holt.

"As a natural product, Freezgard with PCI is biodegradable and environmentally safe. Obtained through solar evaporation of brine from the Great Salt Lake, the magnesium chloride used in the product is often used to correct magnesium deficiencies in crops," Holt reports.

"Freezgard with PCI is also helping the lawn care industry

come out of its traditional winter hibernation since equipment can be kept busy spraying ice-laden parking lots and private drives," he adds.

Holt maintains that Freezgard with PCI is better than salt because it causes less corrosion and it melts ice at lower temperatures than salt.

Salt loses effectiveness at temperatures below 20 degrees Fahrenheit, while Freezgard with PCI works down to 30 below zero, he says.

It is particularly effective when plowing snow that has a



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layer of ice under it. With salt, "If you get a snowfall at low temperatures the blade can come along and sweep off the snow, but you still have that two inches of ice," Holt points out.

Freezgard with PCI works by separating the ice from the ground so it can be plowed or swept away. "Our program is directed at disbonding ice," he explains.

The application rate is two gallons for every 1,000 square feet, and it is designed to be applied in strips along the ground.

Slip sliding away

A 10-pound bag of Ice Vise



with Tracton covers 300 square feet. Made by The Anderson's, Maumee, Ohio, the product contains potash.

"It's beneficial to grass and plants," says Doug Sites, mid-west regional manager. "You're adding potash to the soil, which is good for roots."

The Tracton in Ice Vise "gives you instant traction"

while the potash does its work. The material works down to zero degrees and costs \$1.80 to \$2.40 per 10-pound bag, depending on the dealer.

The Dow Chemical Co., Midland, Mich., makes Peladow calcium chloride pellets. The company says the product can maintain a longer melting time because it is a liquid in its original form, and the liquid is what does the actual melting.

"When it reacts with water it gives off a tremendous amount of heat," says Dow's Bob VanFleteren. He adds that the calcium chloride pellets remain effective even as they become diluted by the snow and ice they have melted.

Another plus, according to Dow, is that calcium chloride pellets do not leave a residue when tracked onto carpets and other indoor areas.

The most popular deicer sold at LESCO, Inc., Rocky River, Ohio, is urea. "Urea's the No. 1 seller simply because of the clientele we serve," says the landscape supply firm's Art Wick.

"It's the same urea your readers would be buying for lawn applications," Wick adds. Urea will not harm turf unless it is misapplied by spilling the bag or a similar mishap.

Chevron markets Ice-B-Gon with CMA, which is a cal-

cium magnesium acetate in pellet form. "It will not damage vegetation," reports Dan Walters, Chevron's manager of deicing chemicals.

However, he points out that the product is basically geared toward use by institutions such as government road departments.

It sells for \$500 a ton.

White Christmas

A rare snowfall last year in Newport News, Va. generated an interesting opportunity for Southern Lawn, Inc. About 50 customers were sold bags of Ice Melt, a potassium chloride compound made by LaRoche Industries, Inc., Atlanta, Ga.

"It was the biggest rebate offer that ever came in," says Donald S. Conkey, LaRoche's director of advertising and communications. (The bags were bought at a retail store.)

"In addition, LaRoche has a large commercial market where we serve the lawn care and sanitary supply industries in 40-pound bags and 100-pound drums," Conkey says.

"The product is a dry granular material easily handled by power equipment, flows easily for easy bag filling, stores well, and, as the package states, is safe, clean, economical and fast-acting," he adds. The company also sells a plastic hand-held Ice Melt applicator.

Randustrial Corp., Cleveland, Ohio, markets a larger spreader for \$84.50 for use with its P-242 Randustrial Ice Melter. The calcium chloride product works faster and at lower temperatures than its competitors, says the company's Mike Meek.

The substance attracts moisture, which causes it to become a liquid faster—making it better for ice control, according to Meek. "You don't need to use a lot of it because it stays hot." It sells for about 52 cents a pound, cheaper if larger amounts are purchased.

Then, of course, there's sand. "It doesn't melt ice, unfortunately, but it supplies an immediate grit to a surface," reports Tom Rose of the Best Sand Corp., Chardon, Ohio.

LCI

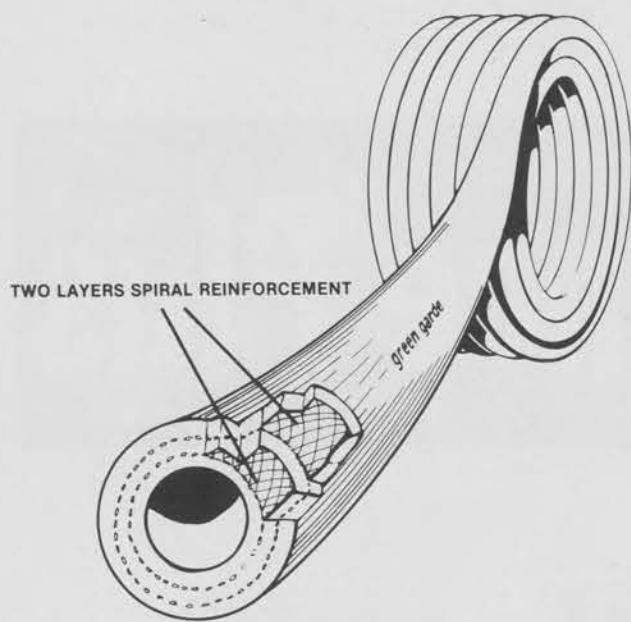


Holt: Shake the salt habit.



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Leave room for snow piles in planning landscapes

By JAMES E. GUYETTE
Managing Editor

Keeping the ravages of winter in mind when designing landscapes can help eliminate trouble when the snow flies.

Leaving a place to pile snow is an important detail that's often overlooked when plans are being made during the heat of summer, according to Joseph Hudak, a landscape architect in Westwood, Mass., just outside of Boston.

When dealing with yards in winter climates, "It can't just look pretty—it has to hold up," Hudak explains.

"Part of what we're talking about here is *design*, which means you have to think ahead," he adds. "The logic is to leave some kind of a space to pile the snow."

There is little motivation for careful snow piling when the howling wind is blasting biting ice crystals into your face. "When you have no place to put it you just throw it anywhere."

And that can mean trouble when the snow flies and the landscape is not up to par.

"You don't want brittle plants, that's the first thing you learn. You want to avoid a plant that becomes brittle in the winter," he says.

There are a number of plants available that will stand up to winter's icy breath. "Juniper in all its forms is good for that," Hudak adds, though, that people tend to walk through hedges composed of juniper plants.

Therefore, he recommends pines because they are taller and "prickly." A hardy favorite is mugo pine. "Mugo pine will accept snow piling and snow with salt in it. I found it very successful."

Day lilies are another winter winner. "They will accept anything and come back. That's an excellent plant."

At Hudak's house he's piled up to seven feet of snow on top of his barberries. "Plain ol' Japanese barberries take a helluva lot of abuse."

Trees planted near a driveway need careful attention when making plans for snow removal. Avoid too many horizontal branches because "the more snow they have the lower they will hang down," he says. "If you have branches that will

not clear the cab you won't have branches."

Another thing to look out for is a low-hanging fruit tree. "You can catch an early snow with fruit on it and then you're in trouble."

Hedges planted next to a driveway may look nice in the summer, but come winter they can bring you a face full of snow and irritation. "You've got that barrier staring you and your snowblower right in the kisser."

Make room for the piles. "I would leave an open space."

Some of the tougher ferns

can be utilized in landscape plans, but customers and contractors often need extra education because "a lot of people don't understand ferns."

For turf Hudak recommends assorted fescues and perennial ryegrasses, noting that "for the most part the playing field fescue is a tough old bird" when it comes to snow and salt.

Driveways, too, need attention when planning winter-proof landscapes. "A smooth surface like asphalt or concrete is the best."

A snowplow can spread a



gravel driveway all over the place, as Hudak found out at his house: "Every spring we were out there with rakes."

Gravel can be a drawback when using a snowblower, as Hudak also found out. "I almost blew every window out of

our house," he laughs.

New Englanders are big on granite, but don't use uneven granite blocks on a driveway—granite and snowplows don't mix. "Anyone who has that charmer is in for trouble."

Bricks, too, can create problems. It is important that brick driveways and walkways be laid atop a hard, smooth surface such as concrete. "You can't just throw it together."

When making a landscape design keep in mind that snow will slide off the edges of most roofs, particularly when the roof is made of slate. **LCI**

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Hudak: Think ahead for winter.

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NEW PRODUCTS



Yamaha snowblowers clear on any surface

More than 50 tons of heavy snow per hour can be cleared with the new Yamaha YS828 Snow Blower.

In addition to the 8-hp snowblower, Yamaha has also upgraded its YS624 (6-hp) model to include many features of the 8-hp.

Designed for use on many surfaces including asphalt, cobblestone and gravel, the machines are available in wheel and track models. The extra wide rubber tracks enable the operator to maneuver through volume snowfalls and open up a two-foot, four-inch wide path with each pass.

The auger and drive systems stop immediately if the operator's hand leaves the drive clutch, yet the engine continues to run. **LCI**

Circle No. 201 on service card.



Clamp-on plow blades attach to loader buckets

Guest Industries, Inc., Torrington, Conn., has a line of snow plow blades that manually clamp onto the lip of loader buckets.

Mounting time is about two minutes and no tools are required.

The plows, which come in sizes of 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 12 feet, can be angled 30 degrees to either side.

The eight-foot and larger plows have a spring loaded tripping edge for operation at moderate speeds.

The seven-foot and smaller plows have a rigid moldboard, and many have been sold for use as backfillers and grading tools. **LCI**

Circle No. 202 on service card.



Honda marketing 8-hp OHV snowthrowers

Honda's HS80TAS snowthrower has an 8-hp GX240 overhead valve (OHV) engine.

The efficient OHV design

helps reduce fuel and oil consumption compared to side valve engines, according to the company.

The HS80TAS is lightweight and easier to handle than some of the other 8-hp snowthrowers on the market, according to Honda.

The machine also has a two-stage plowing system, and the drive clutch and auger clutch are interconnected with large control levers.

Another feature is track drive, which has a one-touch auger height adjustment.

A high-traction wheel model also is available. **LCI**
Circle No. 203 on service card.



Cushman offering line for snow removal jobs

Several snow removal accessories are now available for the Cushman Front Line tractor, manufactured by OMC Lincoln.

The newest addition is a Ber-Vac two-stage commercial snowblower, which features hydraulic lift, hydraulic chute rotation up to 200 degrees, and replaceable cutting edge and skid shoes.

The snowblower clears a path 51 inches wide, with an auger height of 23 inches.

Also available for the Front Line tractor is a 48-inch single stage snowthrower, a 60-inch angled sweeping brush for clearing light snow from sidewalks, driveways and parking lots, and a 54-inch blade that can be angled 30 degrees in either direction. **LCI**

Circle No. 204 on service card.



Panther expanding tools include snowthrowers

The Green Machine is introducing the Model 2800 Panther Series Expand-It tool



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system.

Five tools attach to the 24.1cc power source. The attachments include a commercial-duty snowthrower, string-trimmer-brush cutter, weeder-cultivator, edger and blower.

The Model 2381 Snowthrower tool, when attached to the 1.3-hp Model 2810 Panther

engine, provides a throwing volume of 330 pounds per minute or 370 cubic feet per hour—with a clearing width of 12 inches and a depth of eight inches.

The machine throws snow up and away from the operator and it won't clog, according to the company. It said the product is particularly suited for clearing hard-to-reach places, such as steps and overhangs. Circle No. 205 on service card.

Kubota expanding its line of snowblowers

Kubota Tractor Corp., Compton, Calif., has expanded its



line of snowblowers to include the G2500, the G2505, the B2551 and the B/L2563.

The tractor-mounted models are built for clearing snow from roads, parking lots and driveways.

The G2500 and G2505 front-mount snowblowers for Kubota's G-series tractors are available in 38-inch and 48-inch widths, with manual and

hydraulic lift.

The front- or rear-mount B2551 snowblower has a 51-inch cutting width. It features a 14-inch diameter auger and high speed blower. From the seat the operator can manually rotate the discharge chute to a 200-degree angle and, with the adjustable deflector, put the snow where it's desired.

The blower comes with replaceable heavy duty skid shoes that help control cutting depth over irregular surfaces such as gravel. LCI

Circle No. 206 on service card.



Aircap introducing six new Snow Champs

Aircap Industries Corp., Tupelo, Miss., is introducing six new Snow Champ snowthrower models. Making their debut are three single-stage snowthrowers propelled by a self-pulling auger, and three two-stage self-propelled models.

The two-stage self-propelled snowthrowers include 20- and 24-inch models, both with 5-hp Tecumseh Snow King engines. There also is an 8-hp 26-inch model.

The two-stage snowthrowers all have rewind starters, with an electric starter available as an option.

In addition, Aircap has a lightweight paddle-type snowthrower, the Model 8430, which uses a 3-hp engine and clears a 20-inch path. LCI

Circle No. 207 on service card.



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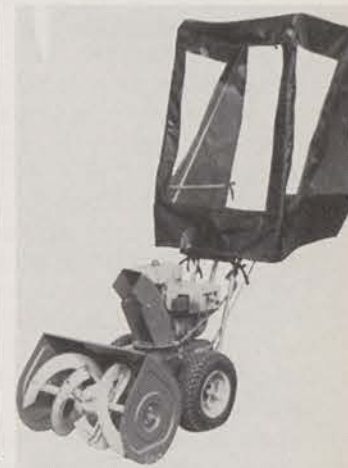
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Keep snow off face with Weather Brake

Hinson-Femco, McPherson, Kan., is introducing the Weather Brake.

Designed for walk-behind snowblowers, it protects operators from blowing snow. LCI

Circle No. 208 on service card.

Winter attachments for Hustler mowers

Hustler out-front mowers, made by Excel Industries, Inc., Hesston, Kan., offer a wide range of winter attachments, including a cab heater, snowthrower, utility scoop, dozer blade and V-blade.

The two-stage snowthrower is PTO driven and hydraulically controlled.

An open-center auger feeds snow to the hydraulically controlled spout. Other features are available, too. LCI

Circle No. 209 on service card.

BILLBUG

from Page 1

stress, chemical burn or turf diseases, so the LCO must monitor the turf area for billbug activity.

When to treat

What level of infestation justifies treatment? Generally, an infestation of one or more adults per square foot in late April or early May, Baxendale said.

How can billbug adults be monitored?

One way is through the use of pitfall traps. A container such as a coffee can containing alcohol with its rim level placed even with the soil surface will trap the insects as they stumble into the container. The container should be checked twice a week for presence of billbug adults. Monitoring should begin in mid-March and continued throughout the billbug activity period (April through mid-July.)

Direct observation is also possible, Baxendale said, but this method is more difficult and less reliable.

One sign of a billbug infestation is increased activity by the insect's natural predators—raccoons, skunks, starlings and other vertebrates. "That ought to be a flag for you folks that there's some sort of insect activity occurring," he said.

Infestations often begin in turf areas adjacent to sheltered areas where the billbugs have overwintered. In the spring, adults feed for a brief period on grassblades, then deposit their eggs in the plant stems.

Bluegrass Billbug larvae hatch in seven to 15 days and feed initially within stems. This produces a tan sawdust-like material. The larvae then move down through the thatch to the root zone, where they feed on roots.

Larvae pupate then transform into the adult stage during mid to late summer. Adults feed for a brief period on grass blades before leaving for overwintering sites.

Controlling the pest

Insecticides should be applied when adult activity is first detected. Baxendale advised LCOs not to water-in the insecticide when treating for adults. This is because adults are on the turf surface and watering moves the insecticide into the soil. Longer residual insecticides are more likely to provide satisfactory control.

LCOs and lawn management contractors can also choose to control the insect in its larval stage, Baxendale said, though this is more difficult since larvae are harder to detect.

A one-foot square section of the turf should be cut up and the thatch zone and top two to four inches of soil examined to



Baxendale: Timing important.

determine if larvae are feeding. If more than 10 to 15 larvae are found per square foot, an insecticide application is usually justified.

This threshold will vary, depending on the value of the turf area, level of billbug, resis-

tance of the turf variety, weather conditions and other factors.

When treating for larvae, the turf should be watered before and after the insecticide has been applied.

Aerification is helpful in moving the insecticide into the root zone where the billbug larvae are feeding.

Baxendale noted the following insecticides are registered for billbug control: Oftanol (Möbay Chemical Co.), Diazinon (Ciba-Geigy Corp.), Turcam (Nor-Am Chemical Co.), Dursban (Dow Chemical Co.) Sevin (Union Carbide Agricultural Products, Inc.) and Mocap (Möbay

Chemical Co.). Triumph, recently released by Ciba-Geigy Corp., is not currently labeled for billbug control, but is expected to be in the near future.

Baxendale emphasized that in many cases, timing of application is probably more important than the particular insecticide used. "Billbugs are tough to kill and timing is critical," he said. **LCI**

If you are interested in obtaining any available or additional editorial research or reference materials published in this or previous issues, direct your inquiries to Kathleen Maciuszko at (216) 826-2839, ext 839.

Attorney's series delayed

EDITOR'S NOTE—Attorney Gary L. Conner's three-part series on evaluating your company's assets for sale will continue in the November issue of *LAWN CARE INDUSTRY*. The final installment of the series, which addresses discovering cash flow, was originally scheduled to run in the October issue. The installment was postponed for editorial considerations. **LCI**

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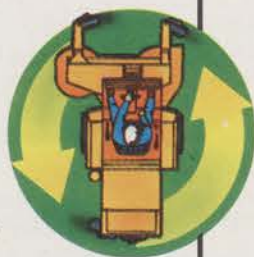




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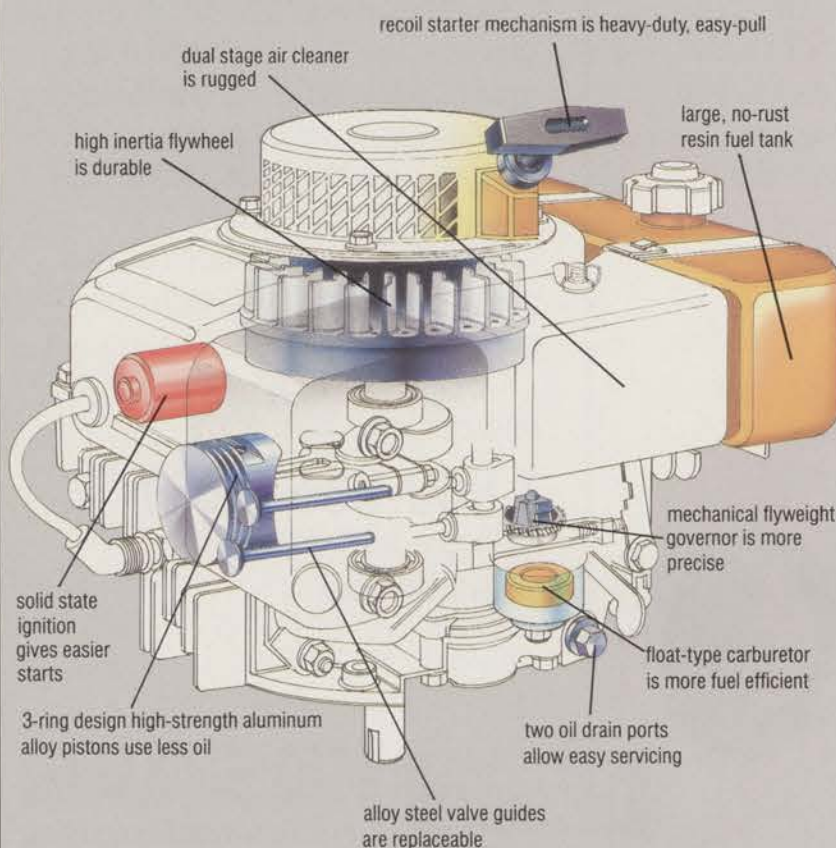
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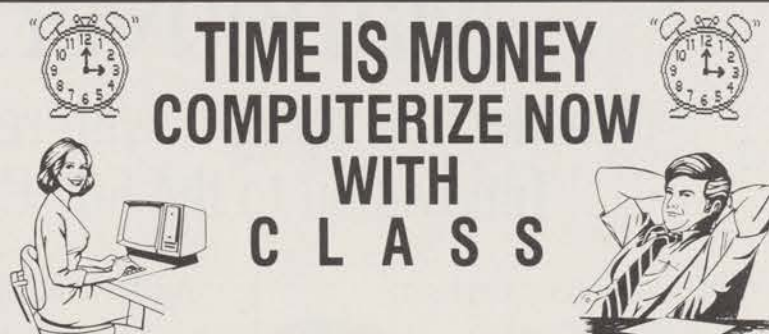


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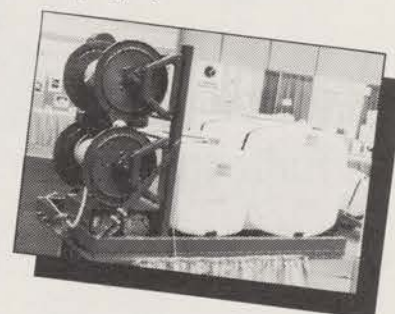
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COMPUTER SOFTWARE AND COMPUTERS: Call to find out why we are the choice of people who compare computer systems for lawn and tree care. Real Green Computer, 2775 Haggerty Rd., Walled Lake, MI 48088, 313-669-1118; 800-247-3128 (outside Michigan). TF

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BUY

from Page 1

ternal unit growth and acquisitions."

He said Tru Green will continue to open new branches, add personnel at existing branches and buy other companies.

Tru Green presently operates in all regions except the Southwest and Northwest, but he expects the company to eventually expand to these areas.

Wall Street analysts said earlier in the year that Waste Management was looking for new residential services to expand into, their waste disposal customers being a captive market. LCI

BAGGERS

from Page 1

blade."

It was generally agreed that a blade encased in a round shroud will have better pick-up power than a mower deck with nooks and crannies.

Some mowers, particularly riders, feature vacuum systems. "We offer two units that pick up grass," reports John Harrison, marketing manager, Excel Industries, Inc., Hesston, Kan.

The company's Hustler mowers have vacuum units that can be emptied with no sweat. "The operator does not have to leave the tractor to dump it," Harrison points out.

Most of the larger walk-behind mowers are side-baggers only, notes George Schaefer, Sr., of the F.D. Kees Manufacturing Co., Beatrice, Neb. (The firm was recently purchased by Snapper Power Equipment, McDonough, Ga.)

When it comes to smaller mowers, "The rear catchers hold more than the side units," says Schaefer. "You can naturally put a larger bag on a rear-discharge mower."

Snapper's new Pac-N-Sac polyethylene rear catcher holds three bushels of clippings, while side-bagging Lawn-Boy mowers, made by the Lawn-Boy Product Group, Memphis, Tenn. can catch 2.1 bushels, according to the company. (Snapper's catcher can hold a plastic trash bag, so bagging can be done as you mow.)

Staffers at *Consumer Reports* magazine said they prefer the traditional cloth grass bags because they provide a better air flow that leads to better filling. (The publication ranked homeowner mowers in its June issue.)

Consumer Reports favored the more expensive rear-baggers, citing larger capacities and easier maneuverability. LCI

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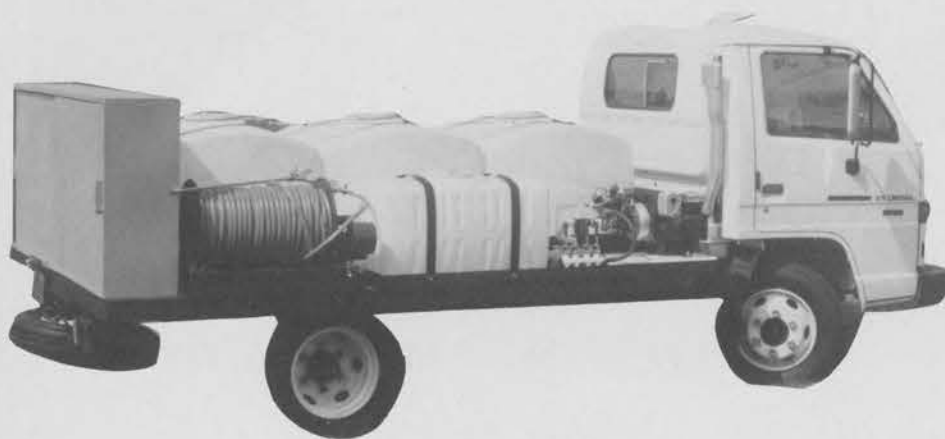
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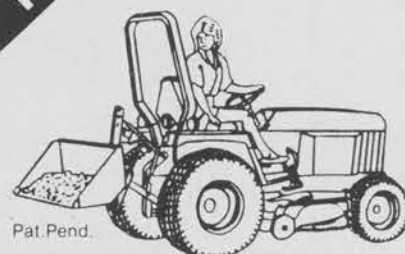


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Circle No. 122 on Reader Inquiry Card

Learn tree biology from pros when entering tree biz

By JAMES E. GUYETTE
Managing Editor

Before entering the tree care business, you should first learn about trees.

This sounds like obvious advice, but professionals in the industry say a thorough knowledge of tree biology is essential before getting into the business.

"Learn how a tree works before you work on it," says Alex L. Shigo of Shigo and Trees, Associates, Durham, N.H.

"We have too many people in our business who are strong-backed, know the business, but they don't know how a tree works," Shigo maintains.

"The tree industry started as a hard-working profession; that was very good, but now it's not enough.

The new tree biology demands your mind as well as your muscles. We must do more to help trees help themselves by staying healthy.

PART II

High health will resist disease and decay," says Shigo, a world renowned tree expert.

(His latest book is a cooperative effort from tree care people in Europe and the United States. *Tree Biology and Tree Care* is a photo guide written in five languages.)

He also conducts numerous seminars, as do a number of other tree care professionals. Shigo says contractors should make use of them: "It is imperative that if someone is going from lawn care to tree care that they should attend one, two, three or four of these sessions."

Additional training is recommended even if a contractor merely wishes to cut away ground-level branches that are in the way. "Absolutely," says Shigo, "If you make an improper pruning cut you can hurt the tree and injure the tree worker. I've seen too many branches fall in a way that has not been anticipated."

Each tree and each treatment program is different. "You can't apply a broad spectrum approach to tree care," says Robert Felix, executive vice president of the National Arborist Association, Inc. (He'll be speaking on tree care at the November Professional Lawn Care Association of America convention in San Antonio.)

"The person who visits the scene has to diagnose the problem and recommend a treatment," Felix explains.

"There are no quick fixes in tree care," agrees Steven J. Day, manager of sales and special services at the B.D. Wilhelm Co., Denver, Colo.

"Lawns, in a sense, can be instant gratification. To de-

NO QUICK FIXES, BUT CUSTOMERS ARE MORE LOYAL

velop beautiful shade trees it sometimes takes decades," says Day, who also is president of the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture.

"You don't want to go in with quick fixes," Day states, adding that such an approach will serve only to harm the tree and irritate the customers.

Day reports that in Denver his company's tree care customers tend to be more loyal than the lawn care customers. "There's much more of a long

term relationship that should be established."

That's true, says Shigo, noting that a thorough tree education should enable a worker to explain trees "to housewives or politicians."

"Communication is a major problem," agrees Gary Davey of Davey Lawn Service, Duluth, Minn.

"You have to talk to the customers and let them know what you're going to do."

He adds that "if you know what the customer wants and

the customer knows what you're going to do you can avoid those nasty callbacks."

Itemizing all prices and offering complete explanations can put customers at ease, according to Davey.

"They don't understand that if they have a tree that's 20-years-old and it dies that they're not going to get a new one for \$10."

Davey's company is a full service landscaping firm that does lawn, tree and shrub care. Most of the tree work is done

from ladders. Bigger jobs and takedowns are referred to another contractor except when a long-time customer is aided as a favor.

A lawn company seeking to enter the tree business would be wise to begin modestly, according to Davey and Day. "Start with the small trees and shrubs that can be reached from the ground or a 10-foot ladder," says Day.

(Day cautions that before any tree work is done business owners should be acutely aware of all governmental insurance, permit and license re-

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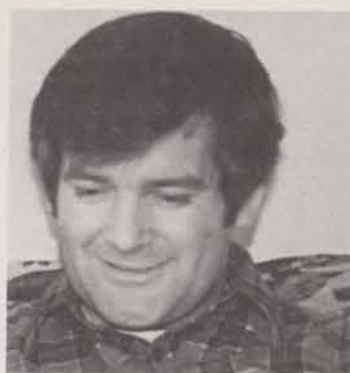


quirements. "You can't over-emphasize that there are a lot of regulations.")

Tree care and lawn care "both go hand-in-hand," states Laurie R. Broccoli, plant health department supervisor at Ted Collins Associates, Ltd., Victor, N.Y. The firm serves the Rochester area.

"When you're on a homeowner's lawn it makes sense to look at their trees, too. Customers will ask the lawn care crews about their trees," she says.

"Go for a full-care picture," says Davey in Duluth. "You already are established with the customers. It's steady work—there's always some-



Davey: Don't buy junk!

thing to be done with shrubs and trees."

It can result in increased business as clients realize that "if you have a good lawn and a ratty shrub it doesn't work,



Broccoli: Look up to the trees!

and vice-versa," Davey explains. "We can spot problems before the customers even notice."

Davey's company uses mostly hand tools, avoiding

chain saws, charging about \$15 to \$17 an hour for the work.

"To go to somebody's house just to prune they're going to pay a lot more just to get the crew there than if there's a whole day's worth of work," Davey points out. And don't forget to itemize all the tasks. "If you break down the prices you have a much better rate of acceptance."

Davey stresses the importance of buying good tools. "Don't buy junk from a hardware store or discount store. You definitely get what you pay for. We do a lot of work with LESCO (located in Rocky River, Ohio). We ask them a lot of questions and if

our rep doesn't know they can find out for us—they're our major supplier."

Everyone interviewed for this story says that finding a place to dispose of branches is an important factor to consider when thinking about tree work.

Some community trash departments will pick up brush, while in other places you'll have to charge the customer extra to tote the branches to the local dump and pay a fee.

And what do you carry them in? "You can't haul around brush in a trailer that's hooked up to a lawn care truck," notes Day. That means that a stake bed or dump truck will have to be purchased.

Also, a chipper may be desired—which can cost big bucks. The lowest-priced model sold by Asplundh



Shigo: Hit the books!

Manufacturing Division, Chalfont, Penn., goes for \$8,000.

Asplundh's Adam R. Stefanowicz, Jr. says a chipper is a necessity if a business owner has big plans. "If they want to get into being a competitive tree care company they'd need one."

If a chipper is used, the danger factor increases, Day observes. "There's horror stories about chipper injuries." He adds that the required tools for tree work are more costly than lawn care gear. "Some of the tree removal equipment is double or triple that of spray trucks."

Roger Funk, Ph.D., of the Davey Tree Expert Co., Kent, Ohio, (not connected with the Duluth firm) recommends that synthetic rope be purchased to ensure that it doesn't break, and that periodic inspections be conducted on all tools and equipment.

On a marketing note, Felix at the National Arborist Association says most U.S. climates will permit year-round work (avoid snow and ice-covered branches), but customers won't be buying during the colder months. "Pruning and removals can continue all winter, but selling has to be done before Nov. 15 and after St. Patrick's Day." **LCI**

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Production ratios facilitate lawn care operations

Profitability has been the traditional indicator of a company's degree of success. However, it is not always possible in the chemical lawn care industry to rely on profitability alone since the business is very cyclical—profits can vary from one year to the next.

What if you are interested in knowing how you are performing profit-wise at the end of April or May? What other options does a company have to determine its efficiency and future profitability prior to the end of the year?

Cash flow is one indicator many companies have been using. But this can be very misleading if you receive large quantities of prepayment funds early in the year.

Just because you have a positive balance in your checking account does not mean that you have been operating profitably. Delays in paying open accounts payable invoices can create the same false sense of profitability.

Production ratios often can be the best support that an owner can look at to determine the efficiency of the company. These ratios are as follows:

● **Production per day per technician/truck**—This can serve two purposes. It reveals the productivity of each vehicle/technician, and it also tells the owner what areas are possibly going to need additional help to get their route completed during a round.

● **Service calls per route**—This reveals possible problems with either equipment or an individual operator in servicing a specific route's accounts.

Interpreting this report and comparing all employees will help to indicate a company-wide problem or individual technician problems before they become irreversible.

Light product treatment, poor technician application technique, or a bad mixing formula all can be potential causes of this problem. This information is not available from a monthly profit and loss statement.

● **Material usage per acre**—This ratio, when determined daily or monthly for each employee, will serve to identify those routes that are being treated too heavily or

lightly with product. In addition, this ratio will serve as a check on your inventory system.

Problems identified by some lawn care firms doing this analysis include unreported customers being serviced, mismeasured properties, and miscalibrated delivery systems.

If you are seeing your material costs appearing too high in your monthly profit and loss statement, you could have any one of the above problems.

● **Sales per route and**

closing ratio—This analysis will identify by route who has made the most sales presentations, their effectiveness (what is their closing rate?), and areas where they are considerably below the company average in sales leads.

This analysis can provide you insight about your best sales person, areas where additional advertising may not be worthwhile, and employees who may need additional training to improve their sales-closing skills.

● **Out of service days by**

vehicle/employee—This analysis can provide insight as to a poor preventive maintenance plan, ineffective work by your outside maintenance company, or employees missing too many days.

When a company is constantly without the services of one or more vehicles, it becomes almost impossible to complete the work on straight time. Thus tracking both out-of-service vehicle incidence and absenteeism will assist in planning your operations more efficiently rather than

letting the problems identified adversely impact your profit and loss statement in the future.

In summary, while compiling the data daily needed to prepare these analyses is time consuming, the insight as to the effectiveness of the operation of the company is not available from any other source in as efficient a manner. Take the time to start monitoring some of these ratios, and see the insight they provide you about your company. LCI

Business is good.



The ServiceMaster system is terrific for someone entering business. As an accounting and business major I can tell they did a good job developing the program.

Training at the Academy was exceptional. Other lawn care systems aren't so thorough. We really studied hard and learned a lot. Rick White is extremely concerned about professionalism and quality. He says we reflect on him.

ServiceMaster has a great business review. It helps you set your goals, understand percentages and estimates, and figure out how you're going to break even.

Whatever it is, you do the footwork, and ServiceMaster helps when you need it. For instance ServiceMaster has a marvelous system of telemarketing. The scripts are all set up.

And I don't meet as much resistance as other lawn care operators. The people we call are real hesitant because there have been a lot of fly-by-night operations in lawn care. But ServiceMaster has a really **good name**...always been honest. We have that quality behind the name. People are comfortable with ServiceMaster.

Another guy in Rochester went broke last year because he couldn't get customers. Now he's looking into buying a ServiceMaster license.

Business is good. I've been getting a lot of calls.

Janice Piechowski

Janice Piechowski
ServiceMaster LawnCare Operator
Rochester, Minnesota

All kinds of people with every sort of background show up at the LawnCare Academy. Doctors, teachers, housewives, truckers, pipefitters, green (excuse the pun) kids not long out of high school. They arrive with one idea: to become independent professionals in their own business.

At the Academy I take my mission to train them seriously. I see a great future for lawn maintenance as homeowners realize the extent to which it protects and maintains property investment. I see a great future for ServiceMaster LawnCare because ServiceMaster pioneered franchising and established the standard for excellence in service.

As Jan Piechowski says, students study hard and learn a lot at the Academy. Why? Because your grasp of our technical and business principles make all the difference in the "real world".

If you have a vision for your life and work, you need a plan of action to fulfill it. ServiceMaster provides that plan...then helps people carry it through.

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McGary Wandtke
About the Authors
Rudd McGary and Ed Wandtke are senior partners with All-Green Management Associates, Columbus, Ohio.

MEETING DATES

OCT.

■ **Florida Turfgrass Association Annual Conference and Show,** Oct. 11-14, Hyatt Regency Hotel and Curtis Hixon Convention Center, Tampa, Fla. Contact: FTGA, 302 S. Graham Ave., Orlando, Fla. 32803-6332; (305) 898-6721.

■ **Alex Shigo Tree Biology Workshop,** Oct. 13-16, Portsmouth, N.H. Contact: National Arborist Association, 174 Rt. 101, Bedford, N.H. 03102; (603) 472-2255.

■ **American Society of Consulting Arborists Annual Meeting,** Oct. 14-17, Fess Parker Red Lion Inn, Santa Barbara, Calif. Contact: Jack Siebenthaler, ASCA, 700 Canterbury Road, Clearwater, Fla. 33546; (813) 446-3356.

■ **Idea Bank Landscape Maintenance Seminar,** Oct. 15, Lexington Hotel, Ontario, Calif.; Oct. 16, Holiday Inn, Tempe, Ariz. Contact: Richard Lambert, (800) 621-1136; in Arizona call (602) 829-1233.

■ **ASIC National Convention,** Oct. 15-18, Concord Hilton, Concord, Calif. Contact: American Society of Irrigation Consultants, Jim Eddy, 1666 Oakland Blvd., Walnut Creek, Calif. 94596; (415) 939-3985.

■ **ALCA Interior Plantscape Division Conference (and trade show),** Oct. 24-29, Hyatt Regency Crystal City Hotel, Arlington, Va. Contact: Rebecca Crocker, Associated Landscape Contractors of America, 405 N. Washington St., Falls Church, Va. 22046; (703) 241-4004.

■ **1987 International Irrigation Exposition & Technical Conference,** Oct. 25-28, Orlando, Fla. Contact: Mark Williams, Irrigation Association, 1911 N. Fort Myer Dr., Suite 1009, Arlington, Va. 22209; (703) 524-1200.

■ **Annual Atlantic Seedmen's Association Convention,** Oct. 28-30, Summit Hotel, Hartford, Conn. Contact: John Baylor, Atlantic Seedsmen's Association, 298 E. McCormick Ave., State College, Pa. 16801; (814) 237-0330.

■ **Southwest Turfgrass Conference,** Oct. 28-30, Holiday Inn Pyramid, Albuquerque, N.

Mex. Contact: Charles L. Glover, Southwest Turfgrass Association, New Mexico State University, PO Box 3-Q, Las Cruces, N. Mex. 88003.

NOV.

■ **New York State Turf and Grounds Exposition,** Nov. 4-5, Rochester Riverside Convention Center. Contact: Elizabeth Seme, New York State Turfgrass Association, Inc., PO Box 612, Latham, N.Y. 12110; (518) 783-1229.

■ **ALCA Landscape**

Management Division Conference, Nov. 7-11, Hyatt Regency Crystal City Hotel, Arlington, Va. Contact: Rebecca Crocker, Associated Landscape Contractors of America, 405 N. Washington St., Falls Church, Va. 22046; (703) 241-4004.

■ **National Institute on Park and Grounds Management Educational Conference,** Nov. 8-12, Excelsior Hotel, Tulsa, Okla. Contact: National Institute, Box 1936, Appleton, Wisc. 54913; (414)

733-2301.

■ **Missouri Lawn and Turf Conference,** Nov. 9-11, Chase-Park Plaza Hotel, St. Louis, Mo. Contact: Greg Martin, UMC Conference and Specialized Services, 344 Hearn Building, University of Missouri, Columbia, Mo. 65211; (314) 882-4087.

■ **Penn State Golf Conference,** Nov. 9-11, Keller Conference Center, University Park, Pa. Contact: Joseph Duich, Ph.D., Dept. of Agronomy, 21 Tyson Building, University

Park, Pa. 16802; (814) 865-9853.

■ **Professional Lawn Care Association of America 8th Annual Conference and Show,** Nov. 12-15, San Antonio Convention Center, San Antonio, Texas. Contact: Doug Moody, PLCAA, 1225 Johnson Ferry Road, NE, Suite B-220, Marietta, Ga. 30068; (404) 977-5222.



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THE LAST WORD

Contributions welcome from LCI readers



By JAMES E. GUYETTE
Managing Editor

Contributions, comments and questions are welcomed from the readers of LAWN CARE INDUSTRY.

All the readers of this magazine can benefit from a free exchange of ideas, and we know that our readers have plenty to offer each other.

If you have a brilliant idea about how to perform a task or solve a particular problem, give us a call or drop us a

note. (Please include your phone number.)

Or, you might have a problem yourself that has you stumped. Perhaps we here at LAWN CARE INDUSTRY can help you, or maybe our readers can!

It could be that there's a subject you'd like to see written about in LCI. Or maybe you just have a gripe.

Some of you out there in readerland may be wondering why we haven't done an article on a particular topic that is near and dear to your

heart. Most likely the answer to your puzzlement is the fact that *we don't know about it yet.*

We think we do a good job of keeping tabs on the industry, but we can always use your help.

Give myself or Elliot a call at (216) 243-8100 or drop us a line at 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, Ohio 44130.

If we're on deadline we won't be able to talk too long, but most of the time we'd be delighted to discuss your ideas and concerns.

The reason I brought this up is that I recently got a call from an LCO who wanted to know why the larger lawn care firms seem to get more ink.

He also wondered why these big companies are buying out the smaller ones.

To answer the first question: We try to cover the entire industry, and that includes both the larger and smaller firms. The larger companies tend to generate a little more news because, uh, they are larger.

To answer the second question: I tend to view the acquisitions as a natural progression of our capitalist system. Look at the auto industry of years gone by. As certain car makers became bigger and bigger they bought out their smaller counterparts, which is why we no longer drive Stutz Bearcats or REO Speedwagons—although I'm sure they were nice cars driven by nice people.

But that phone call from the reader made an impression on me because, although he was good-natured about it, he was almost to the point of fury over his aggravation about the above two issues.

The caller could have saved himself a lot of anguish if he would have given us a jingle a long time ago.

He almost gave us a scoop, too, in return. He wanted to know why we didn't report the merger of one of his competitors. Was he getting special treatment?

Merger? What merger? I called around to check out the rumor, only to discover that the companies involved had simply had discussions—but they were supposedly *Top Secret!* How on earth did we know about it? To say the least, they were surprised to find out that their big secret was out all over town.

No story resulted from that tip, but it points out how we have to depend on our readers to let us know what's happening.

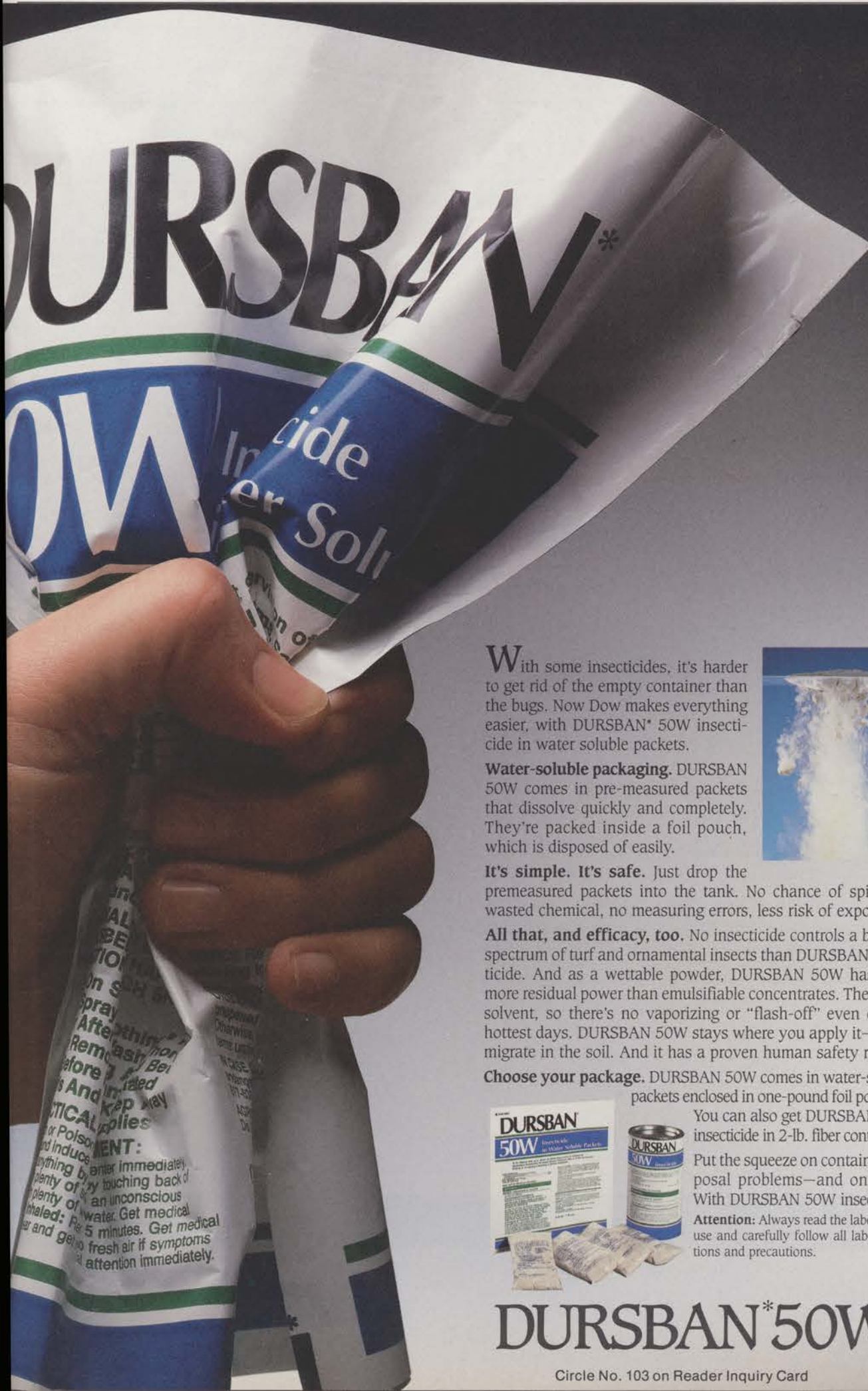
And we're really interested in setting up some sort of reader exchange where we can offer our readers short little tips on how their colleagues have solved a particular problem or handled a certain situation.

Let's share your brilliant ideas with the world!

And please don't forget to include your phone number on your note so additional information can be sought.

Remember, too, that your questions and comments are welcome. No need to get indigestion fuming over something we're probably not even aware of.

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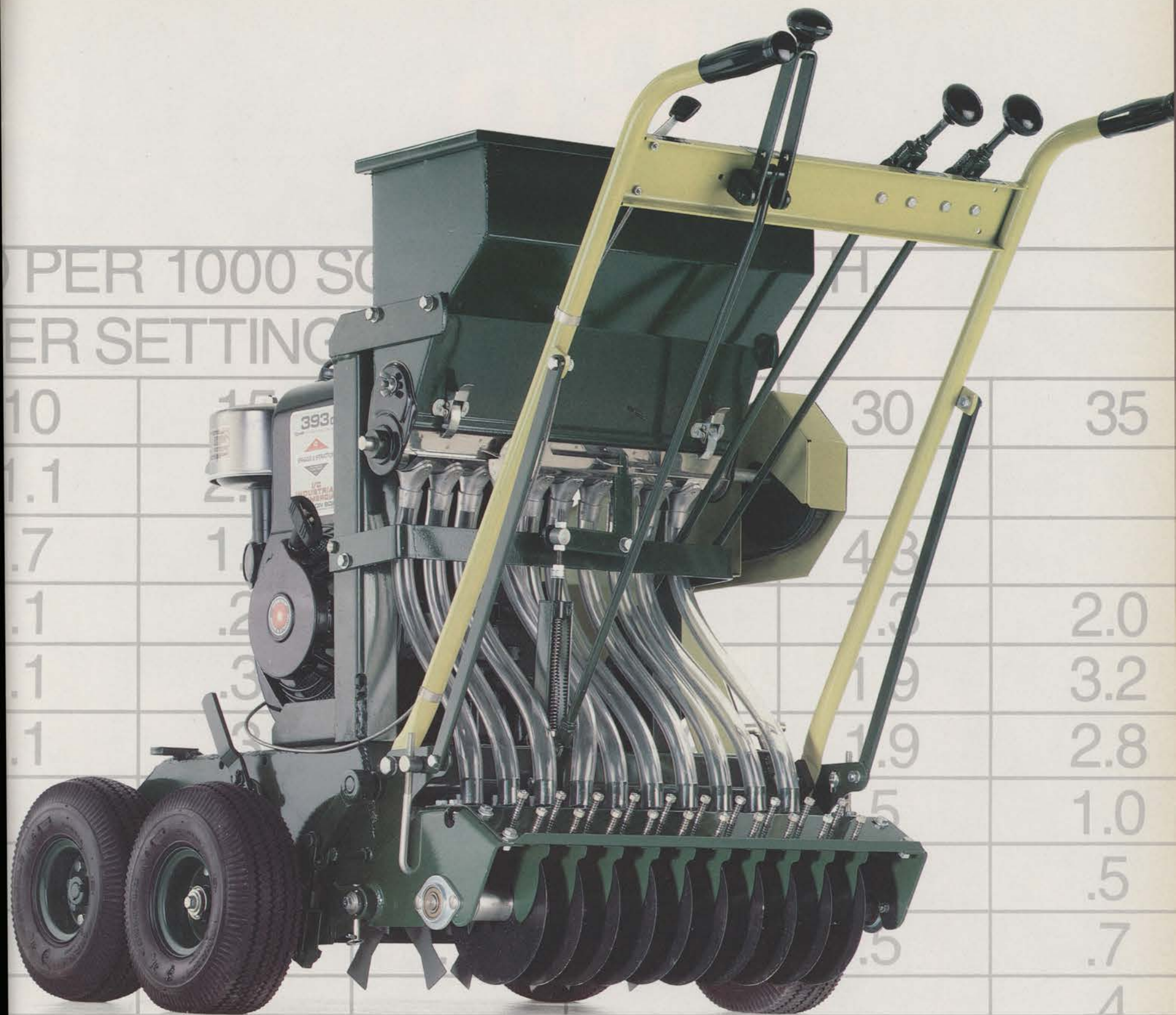
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