

### N.J. Turf Assn. elects first lawn board member

Joseph P. DeSantis, a former Lawn King franchisee and now owner of Royal Lawns, Pine Brook, N.J., became the first lawn care businessmen ever elected to the board of directors of the New Jersey Turfgrass Association at its annual meeting last month.

John Wittpenn, president of Rockland Chemical Co., West Caldwell, N.J., a supplier to the lawn care industry, was elected president of the organization at the New Jersey Turf Expo in Cherry Hill.

There were almost 900 turf managers in attendance at the conference, and 59 exhibitors. Almost 200 lawn care businessmen attended a special lawn

to page 16

## Ohio draws 1,500; lawn care sessions packed

Between 400 and 500 lawn care businessmen packed educational session rooms for three days to hear talks directly related to their business at last month's Ohio Turfgrass Conference in Columbus.

The show drew 1,510 turf managers from around the country. The exhibits were sold out, with 124 booths filled.

Show officials and exhibitors estimated that much of the activity on the exhibit floor was generated by lawn care businessmen. Also, it was estimated that 30 percent of the lawn care businessmen at the show were from states other than Ohio.

William Hill, of George W.

Hill & Co., Inc., Florence, Kentucky, was elected president of the Ohio Turfgrass Foundation for 1979. Paul Duke, of Chem-Lawn Corp., Columbus, was chosen the Foundation's "Man of the Year."

One of the highlights of the lawn care educational sessions was a talk by Tom Brune, owner of Atwood Lawn Spray Service, Sterling Heights, Mich. He spoke on "Computer Assistance Beneficial for 1,000 Accounts."

"As our business became bigger, I dreaded the thought of our drivers having to do any more paperwork than they were already doing on the job," he told the standing-room-only

audience. "Our money is made when lawns are being sprayed. The more time our driver spends spraying, and the less time doing paperwork, the more money we make."

He said that it took about two or three years to get his computer system operational. He had 800 accounts when he started with it. He has more than tripled his business since then.

"We were looking for something that could help our business to grow efficiently," Brune said. "I am by no means a computer expert, but the system we fed into the computer was an outgrowth of the manual system we were already using."

He said that the justification for the money spent on the computer system was the money his company would save by not having to hire a second clerk. His initial cost was \$10,000, which he financed, and he also pays \$1,300 a year for a service contract. He said any company with 1,000 accounts or about \$100,000 worth of business should consider using a computer.

Another highlight of the lawn to page 16

CHAMPAIGN

### Illinois' first turf show a huge success

The more than 600 turf managers and exhibitors who attended last month's Illinois Turfgrass Conference in Champaign agreed that the event's first-ever turf exhibit program was a huge success.

The Conference has been held since the late 1950's. There were 79 exhibit booths.

More than 200 lawn care businessmen jammed a special lawn care educational session to hear Dr. Robert Miller and Dr. James Wilkinson of ChemLawn Corp., Columbus, Ohio; Marty Erbaugh of Erbaugh Corp., Hudson, Ohio; Bob Earley, editor of *LAWN CARE INDUSTRY* and Dr. Al Turgeon of the University of Illinois.

Rick White, Village Green Lawn Spraying, Glen Ellyn, Ill., joined Charles McGinty, McGinty Brothers, Long Grove, Ill., giving the Illinois Turfgrass Foundation two lawn care industry members on its board.

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COLLEGE STATION

### No place in industry for soluble fertilizers, Texas businessmen told

Although they give a quick green-up and are cheapest, soluble fertilizers have no place in the lawn care industry, Texas turf researcher Dr. Richard Dubble told lawn care businessmen at the Texas Turfgrass Conference last month.

The conference, held Dec. 11-13 at Texas A & M University in

College Station, drew more than 600 turf managers and almost 40 exhibitors. A special lawn care educational session drew a standing-room-only crowd of about 200 lawn care businessmen.

"Slow-release fertilizers fit with a lawn care program," Dr. Dubble told those at the lawn care session. "As lawn care businessmen, you are after a uniform response that will last until you can get on the lawn again. You should only use soluble fertilizer in early spring, if at all."

SAN JOSE

### 200 at ALCA Maintenance Symposium hear Franklin

The 200 landscape maintenance businessmen who attended the Associated Landscape Contractors of America Maintenance Symposium early last month in San Jose, Calif. peppered the keynote speaker with questions about getting into the chemical lawn care business — and many of the businessmen in attendance might do just that.

Floyd Franklin, division operations manager for Rollins Lawn Care, Atlanta, was the speaker. Other management speakers in-

LCI SURVEY

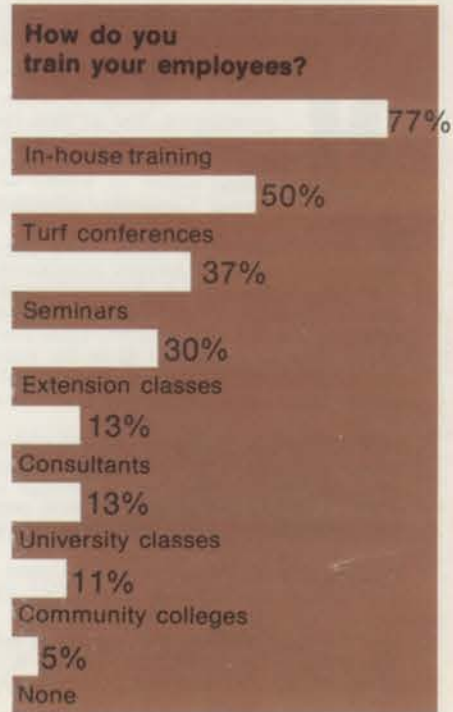
### Most lawn companies train employees in-house

More than three-fourths of lawn care companies utilize in-house training programs for their employees, a recent survey conducted by *LAWN CARE INDUSTRY* shows.

Half of the respondents said they send their employees to state turf conferences, many of which were held last month and early this year.

Other training sources and percentages of respondents include: seminars, 37 percent; extension classes, 30 percent; consultants, 13 percent; university classes, 13 percent; and community colleges, 11 percent.

Only five percent of the lawn care companies that responded said they had no training program at all for their employees.



## QUICK STARTS

- March spray tank rush ..... page 2
- Getty Oil into lawn care ..... page 2
- Producers, government meet on seed stats ..... page 2
- Jacobsen unveils products to distributors ..... page 2
- Tex Gifford: Pacific Northwest lawn businessman ..... page 5
- You buy the fertilizer, the tank comes free ..... page 16
- MEMOS ..... 2
- TOOLS, TIPS & TECHNIQUES ..... 5
- MEETING DATES ..... 6
- NEWSMAKERS ..... 10
- COST CUTTINGS ..... 16
- MONEYWISE ..... 20
- PRODUCTS ..... 20
- MARKETING IDEA FILE ..... 21

industry in Miami, see continuing series of indepth lawn care business thrives. ia lawn care customers, how they go about getting

## Producers, government meet on seed stats

A major effort is being made by the grass seed industry in cooperation with the federal government to get statistics that are meaningful instead of numbers which more often than not are inaccurate.

Duane Jacklin, chairman of the Statistics Committee of the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA), headed a workshop in Portland, Oregon, recently that included trade association members as well as representatives of the Economics Statistics and Cooperative Service (ESCS), a branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"The purpose of the workshop was not to blame anyone, but to access where the shortcomings are in the program and to take positive action in all areas to correct them," Jacklin said.

"One segment, and very key to the whole program, is the completion of forms sent to seed producers. If the statistics are not there, the industry has no way of gauging where it's at and where to go from there," he said.

John Kirkbride, director of the Estimates Division of the ESCS, and several members of his Washington, D.C. staff and staff members from Washington, Oregon and Idaho attended and presented the morning program. They outlined the problems they were facing in attempting to provide a comprehensive and accurate annual report for 41

kinds of seed including acreages and yields per acre.

Accurate information on seed production can also be valuable to lawn care businessmen and other turf managers who purchase seed, particularly in the areas of pricing and availability information.

Impetus for the workshop was generated at the ASTA annual meeting earlier this year in Kansas City, Mo. Copies of the workshop discussions can be obtained by writing Duane Jacklin, Jacklin Seed Co., Route 2, Box 402, Post Falls, Idaho 83854.

## MAINTENANCE

### Jake unveils products, programs to distributors

Almost 300 representatives of major turf distributors across the country attended the recent Jacobsen Turf Products national sales meeting and were introduced to top management of Textron, Inc. as well as to new products and plans for the coming year.

Distributors heard Jacobsen executives explain that the company will increase its position in non-golf markets such as lawn care, landscape contracting, cemeteries, resorts, industrial parks and roadways.

An example of this expansion was the introduction of the new Jacobsen Turfcat riding rotary mower, designed around a

typical lawn care maintenance operator with more than 8,000 hours of testing around the nation.

The meeting was held at The Abbey resort in Fontana, Wis. Jacobsen is based in Racine, Wis.

Robert P. Straetz, president of Textron, Inc., which recently acquired Jacobsen from Allegheny Ludlum Industries, told how his firm discussed a merger with Jacobsen in the mid-1960's.

He said the established Jacobsen name, product quality and leadership in turf maintenance equipment more than met Textron's criteria for association. He added that the Jacobsen strength in research and development, new product development and manufacturing facilities blended well with Textron's lean and decentralized corporate philosophy.

According to Straetz, the Jacobsen Division is expected to play an important role in surpassing Textron's goal of \$3.5 billion sales volume by 1982.

Reviewing the progress of the Jacobsen five-year business plan, company president Frank Depew said sales have nearly doubled during the past four years and have been running about 30 percent ahead for the current fiscal year. He said the company's central parts supply

operation has been completely reorganized and computerized, reducing many repair parts deliveries to within 48 hours. Jack Krug is vice president and general manager of the central parts operation.

In the new product area, Howard Cooper, manager of product planning and research, reported that new guidelines and procedures have been developed to assure equipment is tailored to user needs.

He said the company's new Turfcat is an example of tight design control. Human-engineered around a typical operator, this riding rotary mower has an articulated front cutter deck for mowing 50- or 60-inch swaths over uneven ground, full-size tires for easy curb climbing and less wear on turf, a hydrostatic transmission for simplified operation, maneuverable rear-wheel steering and many other features. Other new products in the Jacobsen line were also introduced.

Ned Brinkman, manager of distributor sales, detailed new programs of support for distributors in the field, including manuals and caravan and field day assistance in demonstrating equipment, a point many lawn care businessmen have said is important to them.

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## MEMOS

**Housing starts.** Housing construction should remain relatively strong this year, declining only 16 to 18 percent from last year's high levels, a panel of housing experts predicted recently.

They expect about 1,711,000 housing starts this year, compared to 1.98 million last year. However, some have predicted a drop this year to as low as 1.5 million starts.

**A franchising hub with spokes:** L & M Lawncare, based in Cleveland, has sold a number of its liquid-application based franchises already for next lawn care season with a fairly unique concept.

The company has already built up a strong customer list in Cuyahoga County, which includes Cleveland and many of its closer suburbs. They are selling franchises for outlying counties, and offering the strong name and suburban customer lists they have built up to its franchisees.

**March spray tank rush:** You know the situation. You ordered a spray tank truck a few months ago, but it still hasn't been delivered, and you are supposed to start spraying next week. Or you have signed up more customers with your first mailing than you thought you would.

That is why lawn care spray tank manufacturers tell LAWN CARE INDUSTRY they are planning to have units in stock when the big rush hits in late February or early March. So if you think it's too late to order, go ahead and give your supplier a call anyway — he might just have planned on it.

**Getty Oil into lawn care:** Getty Oil is anticipating supplying lawn care businessmen and other turf managers with fertilizer through its oil distributorship outlets across the country. It is a perfect complement to their existing supply pattern — they can sell oil in the winter, and fertilizer in the summer. They are working out plans through their subsidiary Hawkeye Chemical Co., Clinton, Iowa.

What's more, businessmen like Bill Wampler, owner of Wampler Service Co., — a heating oil distributor for many years in La Porte, Ind. — is studying the possibility of doing lawn care spraying in his off season as an accessory line to his heating oil distributorship for Phillips Petroleum Co.

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# Maximizing efficiency ups maintenance profits

Lawn care methods can always be improved. Each time they are the results are added profits.

This is the philosophy of Tex Gifford, owner of Gifford Gardeners, Inc., Olympia, Wash. He builds his lawn care business by maximizing his company's efficiency in five main areas — fertilizing, watering, crew management, modern equipment and cost accounting.

**Fertilizer.** Unlike many companies, Gifford fertilizes monthly from March through October. He explains: "We found, many years back, when



Tex Gifford with the automatic sprinkler system he tries to convince his customers to install. The result is "increased efficiency for them, and better profits for me," he says. (Photo and story by Mike Major)

we used to fertilize four times a year, that there were big spurts of growth which were hard to cut. And in-between there was nothing to cut at all because the lawns were going yellow."

Another factor was that "like a lot of other people, we tried to save by getting the cheapest fertilizer possible. There was a fast release, but there were no trace minerals and the result was not long-lasting."

It was the combination of monthly fertilizing with a good fertilizer which has resulted in his present consistent, smooth, dark green colorations on his lawns, without embarrassing ups and downs.

The question of the good fertilizer became a search for the very best fertilizer for his area of northwest Washington. Gifford eventually created his own personal, registered mix. He did this by going to one of the foremost experts in the Northwest, Dr. Roy Goss, of the Western Washington Research and Extension Centre, Puyallup.

Dr. Goss helped, and Gifford then went on, working with university extension services, as well as his local supplier, Lily-Miller, until he achieved just the right mix for his geographical area. One third of his nitrogen is slow release. The total nitrogen is 15 percent of the total, and of this 12 percent comes from hynate leafmeal, 20 percent from

ureaformaldehyde, 13 percent from ammonium phosphate, 26 percent from urea, and 29 percent from ammonium sulphate. Other key variables include 5 percent of available phosphoric acid, 10 percent soluble potash, sulphur at 10 percent, iron from 4 percent to 6 percent depending upon the time of year — this being to control moss — and .1 percent zinc and .1 percent manganese.

Gifford says that the cost of this special mix, designed to yield the very best results, does not involve a significant cost difference from conventional brands. In addition, having this quality fertilizer has allowed him to build up a secondary retail trade. Since he buys by the ton, and sells in commercial 80 pound bags, as opposed to 40 pound retail bags, he's able to offer a top product at a price more competitive even than the mass merchandisers. He says the only time he is undersold is when one of the latter takes their cheapest fertilizer, and then puts it on sale. In the first two quarters of this year, Gifford has sold 30 tons.

**Watering.** Another somewhat unorthodox but extremely effective technique is the fact that Gifford waters not several times a week, not even daily, but only once a week.

On the other hand, when he does water, using an impact sprinkler manufactured by Rainbird Sprinkler Manufacturing Co., Glendora, Calif., he waters six to 10 hours at a time, a deep watering that "goes down to the roots."

Gifford explains: "Many companies water too short a time and too often. I've found if I watered long and less, that the lawns stay

to page 10

## TOOLS, TIPS & TECHNIQUES

### Eight employe mowing reminders

Here is a checklist of reminders Vern Brown gives to his lawn employes who handle lawn mowing duties. He is the owner of Vern Brown Landscape, Overland Park, Kansas.

- Pick up all paper and cans or any trash that should not be on the lawn before mowing.
- Be sure that all wheels on the mowers are set at the same height.
- Never fill the gas tank of the mower on a lawn; put the mower on the driveway, sidewalk, street or on the truck while putting gas into its tank.



Finding dependable labor is the problem many lawn care businessmen face across the country. If Vern Brown decides new recruits have potential, he exercises care and patience in training them.

- Trim by hand around all objects, trees and shrubs that cannot be trimmed with lawn mowers; do not leave any tall grass.
- When finished cutting your section of the lawn, go to the next section to be cut or go help your partner or begin hand trimming.
- Clean grass clippings off sidewalks and driveways by sweeping or with mower.
- Clean grass from under mower after cutting each lawn and at the end of the day before putting your mower away. Do this on or close to the truck so that the cut grass can be thrown on the truck with the rest of the clippings.
- If the customer should ask a question you cannot answer, tell him you will refer it to me. If you know that I will be there later in the day, tell the customer this so he can talk to me about any problems.



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								Safe Quant. To Apply Per Acre Per Appli.	Mat. Cost Per Appli. Per Acre		Safe Quant. To Apply Per Acre Per Appli.	Mat. Cost Per Appli. Per Acre
Total Exc. Cap.												
pH of Soil												
Organic Matter %												
Nitrogen No./Acre												
Sulfates No./Acre												
Phosphates No./Acre (P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> )												
Calcium No./Acre												
Magnesium No./Acre												
Potassium No./Acre												
Sodium No./Acre												
Base Saturation %												
Calcium (60-70%)												
Magnesium (10-20%)												
Potassium (2-5%)												
Sodium (.5-3%)												
Other Bases (Variable)												
Exc. Hydr. (10-15%)												
Salt Conc.												
Chlorides												
Boron												
Iron												
Manganese												
Copper												
Zinc												
TOTAL COST FOR MATERIAL PER ACRE												

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- 1 each—Suction & Bi-pass hose
- 1—Root feeder

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This basic spray rig is designed to fit in a pick-up truck, the tank situated between the rear wheel well and cab of truck. The motor, pump and hose reel on the right side leaving the remainder of the truck bed for other equipment and supplies.



Van pictured shows the basic spray unit in the van, leaving the entire rear area for storage of products.

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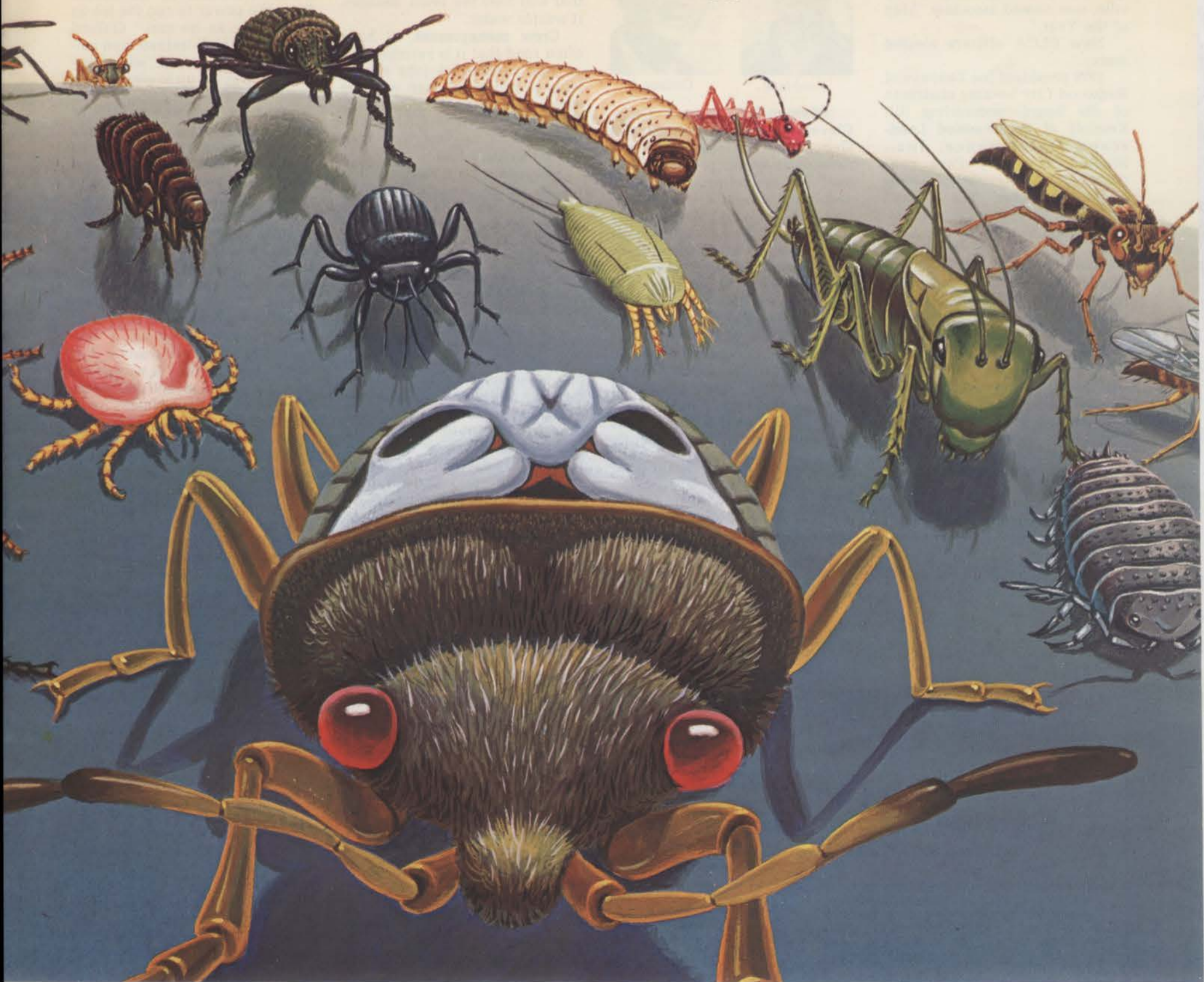
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## NEWSMAKERS

Mike Horgan, national sales manager for **Greenview Lawn and Garden Products**, marketed by **The Bishop Co., Division of Lebanon Chemical Corp.**, Lebanon, Pa., announces the following appointments of account managers:

Allison Fahnestock for markets in Connecticut, reporting to district manager Craig Crouse.

Robert Shroeder in southern Ohio and Sam Wagner in northwestern Ohio, both reporting to district manager Ed Leva.

Peter Wisniewski in southern Wisconsin reporting to district manager Bert Sampson.

Don Napolitano, a principal in the firm of **Associate Industries, Inc.**, Montebello, has been named "Man of the Year" by the **California Landscape Contractors Association (CLCA)**. Werner Gramckow, president of **Southland Sod Farms**, Camarillo, was named associate "Man of the Year."

New CLCA officers elected were:

1978 president Joe Tanouye of Redwood City became chairman of the board, succeeding Bill Kessloff of **Programmed Landscape Maintenance, Inc.**, Stanton. Newbury Park contractor James Keener of **Landscape Associates**, was elected president. Re-elected vice presidents were Napolitano and Clifton Christmas of **C. Christmas Nursery**, Compton. Mickey Strauss of **American Landscape, Inc.**, Van Nuys, was named vice president, moving up from treasurer.

Newcomers to CLCA leadership are Martin Rippens, **Hydro Dig, Inc.**, Anaheim, vice president; Tim Nord, **T.F. Nord & Associates**, Bakersfield, treasurer; and Efraim Donitz, **L.C. Landscape Consultants**, North Hollywood, secretary.

Jack Knoblock, owner of **Lawn-A-Mat of Garden City**, N.Y., is one of three Lawn-A-Mat franchisees on Long Island, N.Y. who recently observed their 15th anniversaries as Lawn-A-Mat licensees.

Others are Alan Maged, owner of **Lawn-A-Mat of New Hyde Park/Manhasset**, and the partnership of Leo Gelfond and Sheldon Ofshe, owners of **Lawn-A-Mat of North Bellmore/Levittown**.

These three dealers serviced an estimated 4,500 customers with an annual gross of more than \$750,000. There are 40 other licensed Lawn-A-Mat dealerships on Long Island.



Knoblock

Carlson

**Diamond Shamrock Crop.** Cleveland, has announced that Dennis L. Carlson has been named assistant product manager for agricultural chemicals and other products in its International Division. He formerly was a sales specialist in the company's South Carolina and Eastern Georgia territory.

**Toro Co.**, Minneapolis, has sold its three distributorships in Los Angeles, San Francisco and White Plains, N.Y., completing divestiture of company-owned distributorships. Four former Toro employees are associated with the three companies.

**Boynton Pump & Supply Co.**, Boynton Beach, Fla., recently was named a full-line franchised turf distributor for **Rain**

**Bird Sprinkler Mfg. Corp.**, Glendora, Calif. The new distributor services the east coasts of Florida, including the West Palm Beach, Fort Lauderdale and Miami market areas. Owners are Hal Kirkpatrick and Bob Jarvis.

The **National Lawn & Garden Distributors Association** has elected J. Warren Landwermer, president of **Magnolia Hardware and Implement Co.**, Dallas, as its new president. Elected vice president was James L. Beckmann, **Turf Products Co.**, St. Louis; secretary-treasurer,

Franklin C. Diekman, **M.G.R. Feed Co., Inc.**, Hammond, Inc. New board members are: Steve Byrum, **Byrum Seed Co.**, Charlotte, N.C., George Jaramillo, **Las Vegas Fertilizer Co., Inc.**, Nevada; and William E. Page of **Page Seed Co.**, Greene, N.Y.

Edwin L. Stenzel, has been named president of **BASF Wyandotte Corp.**, New York.

**H.J. Baker Co.**, New York, will handle national sales for sulfur-coated urea fertilizers manufactured by **Lakeshore Equipment & Supply Corp.**, Elyria, Ohio.

GIFFORD<sup>from page 5</sup>

green, even in hot weather. This was true even in the drought last year that parched much of the Northwest. If you water once a week, and water long, the roots will go down deep into the ground. But, if you water every day, the roots stay on the top for the water. Comes a very hot day, the roots will be scorched and that will hurt the lawn. Besides, it wastes water."

**Crew management.** "I have often read that it is recommended that residential jobs should have two or three men working together, but I disagree," Gifford told **LAWN CARE INDUSTRY**. "I use only one man for the smaller jobs."

He points out a recent example in which he talked with a competitor who said it took only 15 minutes for his crew to do the same job it took Gifford's man an hour. But Gifford points out, "this is true as far as it goes. But that crew consisted of a man and three teenagers. The dollar amount may have been the same on the job, but where he's getting killed is between jobs. For he's using the travel time for four men, the additional taxes, as well as the added machinery and fuel. Besides, the set-up time is the same for one man or four men. Usually you see one man setting up and the other two or three standing around waiting to get

started." Gifford does add that some men work better alone than others and that it's important to know your employees in this regard.

On his larger commercial jobs, like the U.S. Navy base at nearby Bremerton, he'll use a crew up to seven. He gives his foreman the authority to hire and fire. "He's the one closest to the actual situation, so he should have the power to run the job as effectively as he can." Gifford keeps five, well-trained men employed year around, with part-time help going up to eleven during the summer.

**Modern equipment.** Gifford says: I believe you always have to be weighing the cost between manpower and equipment, and as much as possible, get equipment large enough to do the job."

Purchasing up-to-date equipment is important, Gifford maintains, not only for increasing efficiency, but for inspiring employee morale and impressing the public. "You've got to be continually ready to try new ideas," he says. "For instance, a few years ago when Weedeaters first came out, I thought it was just a toy, and forced myself to try just one. But now I have eleven, and I wouldn't be without them."

In addition Gifford has a Hustler mower for rough work and two John Deere 400 tractor mowers for regular big cuttings. He utilizes five Sensation mowers, favoring rotary, as opposed to reel mowers, since they can be run effectively even in the rain in the inclement Northwest. He has five power edgers and three backpack blowers effective for leaf pick-up and debris. Nine trucks and five trailers of different sizes are in operation. And his father has created and patented a blower that Tex has improvised on. Basically, the blower picks up grass at the chute and puts it in a trailer behind the mower in a way more efficient than most.

**Cost accounting.** "To make it in this business it is absolutely essential to have an efficient cost accounting system," Gifford says. He has a full-time secretary/bookkeeper that keeps a close watch on many different areas of income and cost.

Cost control begins with a complete bid list on which is noted the square footage of lawns and shrub beds. Also, fertilizer, amount of time for mowing and hedging, whether the company is responsible for watering and leaf control — with the costs estimated — as well as

to page 20

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# LAWN CARE INDUSTRY Marketplace

by Bob Earley  
Editor

## Miami

R.P. Tomasello is 70 years old, and has been in the pest control business in south Florida for 50 years. When you ask him about the status of the lawn care industry in the region along the Atlantic coast from Miami north to West Palm Beach, where he is located, he says:

"There are more companies than insects down here. There are so many companies, about the biggest danger an insect faces down here is being run over by a pest control truck."

To begin to understand the lawn care industry in the Miami and south Florida area, it is important to note that he talks about "insects" and not "fertilizer." Because that is what the whole lawn care industry is based upon — insects and their control. Not fertilizer, as is the case with the growth of the industry in the Northeast and the Midwest. Lawn mowing and maintenance is also a big part of the industry.

The lawn care season is of course 12 months long, and many companies offer a spray program that guarantees insect control with at least a spray every two months, or six times a year usually at a cost of between \$20 and \$30 a spray. Many companies also dry fertilize twice a year, usually in March or April and October. The typical cost for each fertilization is about \$25 for the typical 75-foot by 100-foot residential lot. Many companies also offer liquid fertilizer. Weed control and disease control on the St. Augustinegrass, bahiagrass and centipedegrass lawns are usually included too, sometimes on an add-on basis, and often in the cost of the year-round contract.

Because much of the basis for lawn work is insect control, many of the companies that have gotten into lawn care also are involved in structural pest control. Once a company is providing pest control inside, it is a logical step to offer pest control services outside.

**Orkin Exterminating** is the best example of a pest control company that is now offering lawn care in a big way from

about 10 of its branches sprinkled throughout the area.

Other big companies operating in the Miami/south Florida area would include **Petri's Pest Control**, with offices in Miami, Pompano Beach and West Palm Beach; **Foulton Pest Control**, in Miami and Fort Lauderdale; **Mighty National National Exterminating**.

Also, **Bob's Spray Service; Spray Rite; "Dead Bug" Edwards**, based in Fort Lauderdale; **B.D. Collins, Inc.**, Boca Raton; and **Stewart Pest Control**. Although there are many other companies, these companies alone probably are operating between 75 and 100 lawn spray trucks, in addition to any structural pest control trucks.

"The lawn care market is big here because it is a sub-tropical

enough training. And they don't take care of their equipment either. If they wash their trucks once a year, it's a miracle."

But for the most part, the industry is solid, due to a large extent because of the very strict regulations the state of Florida has on chemicals and their use.

Why haven't some of the bigger companies in the Northeast and Midwest tried to move into the Miami/south Florida area?

"It is just a different market down here," one lawn care businessman told **LAWN CARE INDUSTRY**. "It is pest control-based rather than fertilizer-based. And there are already too many companies operating down here for an outside company to come in and really make a dent in the market."

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*"There are so many companies, about the biggest danger an insect faces down here is being run over by a pest control truck. . . ."***R.P. Tomasello, Tomasello, Inc., W. Palm Beach**

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area with so many insects," says Skip Strong, of Strong Enterprises, Inc., Miami, who supplies many companies in the area with lawn spray trucks. Most of his units — and those of other companies — offer a large tank for holding water, and a smaller "drop" tank for mixing and application.

He also says that there is a major trend by many companies going to a metering system that allows a lawn care company to spray five or more chemicals on one job with the same equipment. Orkin is the largest company that has gone to this closed-mixing system.

There is a lot of business, and a lot of companies, but all is not roses.

"I don't think people down here are as professional down here as they are up north, for the most part," says one lawn care businessman who has done business in both areas. "They expect to hire good people at low wages, and they don't give them

only use about two to four gallons of gas a day," he says.

The two problems that Tomasello says the lawn care industry faces are undercharging and lack of good chemicals to work with.

"Too many people want to give their work away," he says. "They don't charge what they are worth." Also, there is now no registered nematicide for Florida, and Tomasello says "we are losing lawns to nematodes, the customers are very upset."

Hank Wolfman, 40, has owned the 19-year-old **American Power Spraying**, Fort Lauderdale, for the last seven years. His \$175,000 gross a year on lawn spraying is about half of his business, the other half is structural pest control. About 75 percent of his business is residential, the remainder commercial/industrial and condominiums.

His minimum charge for lawn spraying is about \$16 for the typical 5,000-square-foot lawn, and the cost goes up about \$1.50 per 1,000 square feet after that. But charges can go up if the yard has elaborate fencing, or shrubs and gardens to work around. He sprays lawns six times a year on his residential accounts, and usually four times a year for his commercial/industrial and condominium work as an economy measure for the client.

He fertilizes twice a year, usually in March or April and September or October. His charge is \$9 per bag of dry fertilizer applied, and it usually takes about two bags per lawn. He has about 2,000 year-round customers on contract, and about 500 single-spray accounts. He runs four spray trucks.

"The lawn care industry is here to stay in Florida," Wolfman said. "With all of the pesticide scares, the homeowner is more apt to let companies like us take care of his lawn. And our business is getting more and more sophisticated too, and more professional. There are still fly-by-nighters, but state testing programs are beginning to cut down on that."

In the 30 years Ed Wing has been in business — the last 20 of them strictly spray — two things have contributed greatly to building to his present \$110,000 gross a year.

In short, those two things are: Keep it close to home, and bill in advance.

The 55-year-old owner of **Ed Wing Power Spraying**, Hollywood, takes no accounts that are outside about a five-mile radius from his offices. If he gets calls from other areas, he recommends one of the other businesses in the area. And he in turn gets referrals from other companies.

"The overhead gets too high once you start having to drive too far away," he told **LAWN CARE INDUSTRY** recently. "I would rather spray two lawns close

the severity of the problem, every seven to 10 days.

For insect control on trees and for his nursery work, he uses Cygon and Malathion, manufactured and marketed by American Cyanamid Co., Princeton, N.J., and Sevin, manufactured and marketed by Union Carbide Corp., Jacksonville, Fla.

Wing said he uses about 20 tons of fertilizer on customer lawns in the course of a year, mostly a 10-4-8 dry formulation including iron, magnesium and other micronutrients, manufactured by the Ortho Division of Chevron Chemical Co., San Francisco. The product also includes a herbicide in the combination, and it controls most of the weeds he is faced with on customer lawns. He purchases other fertilizer from Woodbury

*"I would rather spray two lawns close to home rather than have to drive 15 miles to spray one. . ."*

**Ed Wing, Ed Wing Power Spraying, Hollywood**

than have to drive 15 miles to spray one."

Also, he says he has only been stuck for about \$50 in bad debts in the last 10 years. One of the reasons — he bills his contract customers on a quarterly basis three months in advance for each billing.

"We have had no problem collecting, and no problems with people deciding they do not want the service after we have already done an application at their home," he said.

For his first 10 years in the lawn care business, Wing was involved in strictly lawn maintenance work. Now, in addition to spraying lawns, he also sprays trees, fruit trees, shrubs and quite a few nurseries. He has five full-time employees in the summer months, with four tank trucks outfitted with fiberglass tanks manufactured by Tuflex Mfg. Co., Fort Lauderdale, Fla. The sizes of his tanks are 200 gallons, 600 gallons and two 1,200-gallon tanks. He uses pumps manufactured by F.E. Myers Co., Ashland, Ohio.

Wing has about 500 contract customers on the books and also services about 800 "one-shot" customers who want just one application. His contract customers are checked by a technician once every month to see if any insect, disease or weed problems are developing. They are sprayed immediately if there are problems, and at least once every four months if there are no specific problems.

His contract customers are charged between \$8 and \$15 monthly, depending on size of lawn. His charge is about \$8 for a 5,000-square-foot lawn, and about \$15 for a 10,000-square-foot lawn. His contract program includes control for chinch bugs, armyworms, sod webworms, grubs and nematodes. His main insecticide is Diazinon, manufactured and marketed by Ciba-Geigy Corp., Greensboro, N.C.

One of the most troublesome diseases Wing faces on his customer lawns is brown patch. When this problem develops, the lawns are sprayed between one and three times, depending on

Chemical Co., Miami, and W. R. Grace Co., Fort Pierce Fla., usually the same 10-4-8 formulation.

He fertilizes in October and March at a cost of about \$25 per 5,000 square feet. He applies the fertilizers with a spreader manufactured by Cyclone Seeder Co., Inc., Urbana, Ind.

His average customer has a lawn of about 5,000 square feet, in most cases St. Augustinegrass. His average annual billing per customer is about \$120.

Wing's employees start at about \$160 a week, and work their way up to over \$200 a week, depending on experience and longevity with the company. The average salary is about \$200 a week. He admits there are some problems with employee turnover, but is happy with the people he has working with him now. The men work five days a week.

"This is a tremendous market area, and one of the reasons is there are not too many fly-by-nighters working in the region," he said. He said Florida is strict in its licensing requirements for certified pesticide applicators, noting that only about 40 percent of persons taking the state test passed last year. Also, before a person can become qualified, he must have at between two and three years of actual experience with a trained applicator, in most cases, Wing said. Applicators that are not certified are required to carry identification cards, in addition to other requirements.

As in other areas of the country, Wing claims that "service is main thing that customers want. If they call in today, we are out on their lawns tomorrow, while larger companies might not be able to make it until next week."

Ken Hermann, 38, owner of **Johnny's Lawn and Spray Service**, Miami is still looking for a walk-behind mower that he and his 12 employees can rely on.

"We have always had problems with push mowers," he told **LAWN CARE INDUSTRY**. "We can't keep one that doesn't start to break down in three months. And parts are a problem too. He

is thinking about purchasing a supply of high-wheel Snappers soon in hopes of overcoming his problems.

Hermann bought the 18-year-old company three years ago and has 150 contract lawn maintenance clients that he services on a twice-a-month basis, about 400 spray customers, and also does some landscape installation work. But lawn maintenance is the bulk of his almost \$250,000 gross a year.

His work breaks down to about 70 percent commercial and 30 percent residential. Southern Bell, 12 Security Federal banks and the Coral Reef Yacht Club are among his top commercial accounts.

He characterizes the Miami market potential as excellent for those companies doing quality work.

"There is more work than companies with stable crews can handle," he said. "We are now at a point where we can get selective about the kinds of jobs we are taking.

"There are still a lot of fly-by-nighters," he said, "people who don't know what their worth is and are ultimately working for below minimum wage. Bidding against these kind of people is ridiculous. But the state is beginning to crack down on unlicensed operators."

His basic maintenance program includes mowing, edging, trimming, hedge work and whatever else the customer wants twice a month. Most of his lawns are St. Augustinegrass, centipedegrass or zoysiagrass, and even some bahiagrass. He

For fertilization, he has gone to use of some sulfur-coated urea this past year. He says it gives his lawns more even growth and makes them less susceptible to disease problems such as brown patch.

He stresses to his foremen that a neat appearance is the most important thing when finishing a lawn maintenance job.

"We might put in 10 hours of good work but it can all be lost if we leave leaves, or give a bad edging job, or leave grass up in fence lines," he said. "My foremen walk the area after the job is completed, and check for things like this. If we skip routine work once or twice, it is twice as hard to do the job the next time we are out on that lawn. What might take two people four hours the first time can take up to four people all day if you leave it go."

As he says, "The future is good for companies that do quality work with consistent crews. In the last two to three years, the family operations have been phased out, they are finding they can't do the work anymore for \$2 an hour because of higher equipment costs."

For his spray operation, his average cost is \$18 an application for the minimum 75-foot by 100-foot lot.

"The key to any success we have had is due to the fact that we are set up to answer any complaints we get usually the same day with fast and efficient service," says George Moore, manager of **Nozzle Nolen, Inc.**, West Palm Beach, Fla.

"It usually happens that when

*"If we can't get a regular lawn truck over, we send one of our pest control men . . ."*

**George Moore, Nozzle Nolen, Inc., West Palm Beach**

shoots for about between \$12-15 an hour per man plus equipment for maintenance work done.

He bills his contract accounts monthly, and his billings per account run anywhere from residential accounts with a charge of \$50 a month to commercial or condominium accounts with billings monthly of \$1,500 or \$1,600. Some of his larger residential accounts bill out at almost \$400 a month.

He gets his best mowing results with Hesston units with a 48-inch width-of-cut and a vacuum grass-catcher.

"A four-foot cut gives us versatility with our equipment," he said. "If you go to 60 or 80 inches, you start to get into uneven cut problems unless you are working on very flat ground. But the 48-inch unit gives us the capability of doing work around bushes, plantings, and other areas close-to-home." He said the Hesston unit with the vacuum cut has cut his work requirements about 1½ to two men a day in the summer months. This is because raking is no longer necessary as in the past.

He also uses Simplicity and Ariens tractors, Kawasaki string trimmers and vacuums manufactured by Billy Goat Industries, Lee's Summit, Mo.

we get one call, we get 50 more just like it," he told **LAWN CARE INDUSTRY**. "The people have paid their money, and they want service, it is as simple as that."

The company has four lawn spray trucks and six lawn technicians handling more than 2,000 lawn customers. But it also has 68 trained pest control operators who handle mostly structural pest control work.

"These men all call in three times a day, and if we can't get a regular lawn truck over to check out a problem, then we send one of our pest control men," Moore said. "They are usually able to diagnose the problem, and certainly appease the customer and take the heat off the situation. Then the work is scheduled for the next day."

Lawn spraying makes up about \$120,000 of Nozzle Nolen's annual \$1.8 million gross. The company has 10,000 pest control accounts, and the majority of its spray accounts comes from these ranks.

The typical lawn the company services is between 8,000 and 9,000 square feet of St. Augustinegrass. The customer is billed \$13 a month for six applications a year. But the work is guaranteed. For example, when chinch bug resistance was found with use of Dursban, many of the lawns had to be resprayed at about double the usual cost for the company.

Two of these six sprays are 45-0-0 ureformaldehyde fertilizer, and the other four sprays include controls for chinch bug, armyworms and sod webworms. The company also offers dry fertilization twice a year in the winter months. They use a 16-4-8 formulation, including necessary micronutrients, manufactured by USS Agri-Chemicals, with some offices in Atlanta. Just about half of Moore's regular customers take the fertilizer applications, and also many of the pest control accounts. Basic cost is about \$38 for the typical 8,000 to 9,000 square foot yard. The company uses spreaders manufactured by Cyclone Seeder Co., Urbana, Ind.

There are not too many to troublesome weed problems, but the company has experienced some problems with grey leaf spot, brown patch and dollar spot in some of its customer lawns. The company has found success with either Daconil, manufactured by Diamond Shamrock Corp., Cleveland, Ohio or TTC (a mixture of Thiram, Terraclor and Captan) marketed by Southern Mill Creek Products. They usually spray twice, 10 days apart, when disease problems occur.

Moore characterizes the south Florida lawn care market as "very lucrative, because we have a year-round growing season. Companies with enough capital and foresight can make money. Companies like this can enter the market and almost be an immediate success." However, he mentions that some fertilizer franchise operations recently went out of business in his area, mostly because they were utilizing the wrong types of fertilizer and the wrong types of programs for the Florida market.

Much of the company's advertising budget is spent on television spots for the structural pest control services, with lawn care mentioned at appropriate times of the year.

The company's lawn spray trucks utilize 1,000 gallon rounded fiberglass tanks, manufactured by Tuflex Mfg. Co., Fort Lauderdale. They also use 250-gallon "drop" tanks for mixing and application.

"We used to run our pumps off of PTO's, but we stopped that

it in late afternoon or early evening, rather than in the morning, and the water just sits there. Then disease problems are more apt to develop.

"We feel that the market will grow tremendously within the next few years," Moore said. "There is still a building boom going on here, the so-called recession has not hit yet."

Vic Nocera doesn't sound boastful — just confident — when he tells you that he and his father and his uncle have the best landscape maintenance company in his area. And he also will tell you one of the main reasons why.

"We pay our foremen well," he told LAWN CARE INDUSTRY, "our top men can make up to \$350 a week," although he adds that that is the high end of the pay scale for his most experienced foremen.

Vic, 22, his father, who is president of the company, Vincent, 44, and his uncle, David DeOreo, 38, run **Leisure Landscape of South Florida**, Delray Beach. One of the reasons that they pay well probably is because they can't be everywhere, they now have nine crews on the road after recently taking on the prime condominium account nearby — Boca Largo.

Most of their \$1.1 million annual gross comes from condominium work, one of their accounts is more than 600 acres. They employ between 70 to 75 persons during most of the year, and have been in business since 1971, after moving the business down from the competitive Cleveland landscape maintenance market. Other condominium/housing developments they handle maintenance for include Boca West, Boca Lakes and Delray Lakes.

Another thing Nocera said his company stresses is buying good equipment — and maintaining it properly. They own three Front Runner rotaries, manufactured by Toro Co., Minneapolis, with two more on order. They also run 22 48-inch and 60-inch units manufactured by Yazoo Mfg. Co., Inc., Jackson, Miss.

For close-in work they use 14 string trimmers, manufactured by Weed Eaters, Inc., Houston, Texas. They also have 20 push

utilize spreaders manufactured by Cyclone Seeder Co., Urbana, Ind.

To keep things running smoothly they have two full-time mechanics on the payroll — one in the shop and one on the road. The mechanic on the road also has a hook-up to their radio communications center, as do all of the crew foremen and the company principals.

They have a \$6,000 base unit manufactured by RCA, and truck units manufactured by RCA and

*"One of our biggest problems is chinch bug resistance to Dursban . . ."*

**David Turner, Taylor & Turner, Fort Lauderdale**

Motorola. The base unit cost them \$6,000 and each truck unit runs about \$1,000. But Nocera says the cost is well worth it.

"If we get a complaint or another call, we can be there in five to 10 minutes, and that is impressive to our accounts," he said.

In addition to mowing (sometimes once a week during the summer months) their service usually calls for shrub trimming once a month, seeding three times a year, pesticide spraying on an as-needed basis, and sometimes on a preventative basis if it is called for. To compute charges, they try to get \$1,200 a month for a man and equipment.

"We are in a boom period down here right now in landscaping work," he said. "We feel that it is going to keep going for a while, particularly in the Palm Beach County area." He also said there is a shortage of landscape materials at present, and they have recently opened their own 10-acre nursery in Lantana, Fla.

One of the biggest problems facing south Florida lawn care companies, according to David Turner, 50, president of **Taylor & Turner, Inc.**, Fort Lauderdale, is this:

"Probably 90 percent of our customers are transplanted northerners, who are used to bluegrass lawns," he told LAWN CARE INDUSTRY. "To them, our St. Augustinegrass lawns are crabgrass, and it takes a lot talking and explaining of the problems we face and what they have to do to keep their lawns in shape."

Turner started his company in 1952 handling only lawns and shrubs with custom fertilization and pesticide spraying. In 1961, he expanded his business to include structural pest control. His business is now about 50 percent lawns and 50 percent pest control. His lawn gross is more than \$160,000 yearly. He has about 1,200 contract customers and about 1,000 special customers who ask for services "on demand," and some just through the summer.

His basic contract program includes four insecticide sprays and two dry fertilizer applications with a slow-release fertilizer in the winter months. His charge for a typical minimum 100-foot-by-100-foot lot is between \$20 and \$25. He uses some insecticide/fertilizer combinations with usually a 10-3-6 formulation, and also does weed control and disease spraying on a demand basis.

"One of the biggest problems

we are facing here is chinch bug resistance to Dursban," he said. The insecticide is manufactured by Dow Chemical Co., Midland, Mich. The problem has been building for the past two years, and Turner mails out information sheets to his customers explaining the problem. He tries to time his mailings with announcements in local newspapers made by the local county extension agent.

He has switched to either Baygon, manufactured by

Chemagro Agricultural Div., Mobay Chemical Corp., Kansas City, Mo., or Diazinon, manufactured by Ciba-Geigy Corp., Greensboro, N.C. for chinch bug control.

"But this has caused us to just about double our prices for our insect sprays, but we tell our customers it is still cheaper than replacing a damaged lawn with sod," he said. His average charge for an insecticide spray is about \$20; with Baygon, it jumps to about \$44 because of the higher cost of the insecticide.

He has about 12 employees during peak months of the year, and about nine year-round. He will only take on St. Augustinegrass lawns, but will advise customers on how to care for zoysiagrass and centipedegrass lawns.

Because he has been in business so long, most of his new business comes via word-of-mouth referrals. He also does some advertising in local church bulletins, local television listings that are distributed in supermarkets, and promotion in a "Welcome Wagon" type of booklet that goes to new homeowners in his target areas, most of them no more than five miles from his office.

His spray equipment is manufactured by F. E. Myers Co., Ashland, Ohio, consisting of 600-gallon tanks with 25-30 gallon-per-minute pumps. He is now taking bids for larger tanks, probably 800 to 1,000 gallons with a 200-gallon "drop" tank for mixing and application.

"The future of the industry down here is going to evolve to a situation where all companies will be paying higher wages to get technicians who can explain to the customers what they are doing and why they are doing in addition to handling the actual work itself," Turner said. He also said that he sees more of an "inspection" type of service in the future, where a company might make monthly visits for a fee, and note lawn care work that needs to be done. Then the work would be carried out on a separate basis.

One of the most troublesome problems many lawn care businessmen in the Miami area have is that of dealing with an unstable, often transient work force.

Denis P. Sobiewski, president of **Omni Service of Miami, Inc.**, says:

"We ran an ad in the *Miami Herald* for 2½ weeks for lawn workers starting at \$3.50 an

*"If the engine goes down, it's cheaper to replace the whole mower rather than try to repair the engine. . ."*

**Vic Nocera, Leisure Landscape, Delray Beach**

Moore said. They now use 10-horsepower engines manufactured by Teledyne-Wisconsin Motors, Milwaukee.

As many other lawn care businessmen, Moore stresses that customer education is a big part of his job. After each application, the customer is given a sheet that rates each lawn "diplomatically" Moore said.

"Most common problems include cutting with a dull rotary mower, or improper watering," he said. "Probably 70 percent of our customers are from up north, and they are used to letting the rainfall do all of the watering. And when they do water they do

ment the fact that no mower on the market can give them more than three months service.

"I think the mowers would last longer if they used cast iron motors with oil pumps in them to save the motor," he said. "If the motors go down, it is cheaper to replace the whole mower rather than just try to repair the engine."

For fertilization of large areas they use tractors manufactured by Ford Tractor Operations, Troy, Mich., and Satoh Agricultural Machine Mfg. Co., imported into New York. The tractors are outfitted with buckets that can hold up to 600 pounds of fertilizer. For small work they

hour," he said. "All total, we got three phone calls and not one of them showed up for work. You can get warm bodies if you want to go down to the local unemployment office, but that is all you are going to get — warm bodies. We definitely have a rough time getting help, even though we are offering \$3.50 to start and \$5 at the top of the scale. Most companies start at \$3 and top out at \$4. And it can't be any easier for them."

Sobiewski runs what he calls a full-service maintenance and repair company, including services such as carpet cleaning, janitorial work, window washing, plumbing, painting and electrical work. He estimates that lawn maintenance is about 65 percent of his \$150,000 annual gross. He has about 80 residential customers and works closely with seven property management companies that handle condominiums and apartment complexes.

He characterizes the market as consisting of "a lot of little guys with a beat-up pickup truck and a broom and an edger hanging out the back, and these are the kind of guys that keep prices depressed." He budgets jobs on getting \$12 an hour per man with equipment, and says that the smaller companies work closer to an \$8 to \$10 range. Some of the larger companies that also have nurseries charge up to \$15 an hour. He charges between \$90-100/acre for mowing, "but this is close-mowing, not tractor cutting."

His average account nets about \$50 a visit, which is about twice a month for lawn maintenance, mowing, edging, trimming and cleanup. He fertilizes and applies pesticides on a periodic, as-needed basis. His supervisor, a trained horticulturalist, makes follow-up visits to his accounts and notes whether these applications are needed,

and a note is sent to the account informing them of it.

He is converting all of his customers over to year-round service contracts rather than verbal contracts as he has in the past. The reason: "We have been burned too many times on bad debts."

He has signed on an ad agency for limited work for his advertising and promotion, and it apparently has paid off. He worked with them to produce a

**"We ran an ad for 2½ weeks . . . all total, we got three phone calls . . ."**

**Denis Sobiewski, Omni Service of Miami, Inc.**

circular that is distributed door-to-door by high school students.

The circular is six-inch-by-nine-inch page that is folded over. It depicts a little "elf" — Sobiewski's company logo — doing yard jobs on home lawns, condominium and commercial/industrial grounds (the elf is also on his trucks). He mailed about 2,000 of these out, and is getting a return rate of five percent calls, and is converting 60 percent of these to a contract. Very good rates indeed.

He utilizes 16-horsepower Simplicity and Wheelhorse tractors, and also sings the praises of his string trimmers manufactured by Echo. "We have used the trimmers a whole year with only minor repairs," he said.

He says that in the future, for his company and other others like him, labor will continue to be a problem, and other decisions will have to be made as costs continue to rise.

"We have already made a decision to limit our accounts to a minimum of \$30 a trip," he said, "and that eliminates the small residential job right from the start. I think you are going to see more professional lawn service companies too. And they will be getting the more expensive residential accounts where people have a \$100,000-plus home, with \$5,000-10,000 worth of landscaping investment to protect."

He says that he also hopes to begin franchising, or at least hire business managers to expand his company in other Florida growth areas.

A large part of the Miami-area lawn care market is serviced by pest control operators, as is the case in many cities across the country. Irving Eichembaum, 57, president of 18-year-old **Rid-All Pest Control**, North Miami, says that about \$35,000 of his annual \$175,000

gross comes from his lawn work, which he started 12 years ago. The bulk of his work is structural pest control.

"The pest control operator who services the inside of a home has a much greater entree' into lawn care because he is in contact with the house wife or homeowner more often," he said. "It gives him a chance to sell the lawn care service in person."

Eichembaum has about 400 customers on a six-spray program for insects and other pests at a minimum cost of \$18 for the standard 75-foot by 100-foot lot. For some larger areas, he also employs a four-spray program. Some of his four-spray jobs net him up to \$350 per application, usually for condominiums.

He applies dry fertilizer to his customer lawns on demand.

"We stamp our spray customer bills with something like 'now is the time to fertilize' and take requests," he said. He charges eight dollars per bag of fertilizer, and it takes about three bags for the average lawn, or about \$25.

He uses dry fertilizer for his applications in October and March. He says that a dry fertilizer does not make his customer lawns grow too lushly, making them susceptible to chinch bug damage.

For spraying he utilizes a truck outfitted with an 800-gallon top tank and 200-gallon "drop" tank. All material is mixed and agitated in the drop tank — the larger tank is simply a water carrier.

He uses Dursban, manufactured by Dow Chemical Co., Midland, Mich. for control of chinch bugs, one of the worst problems in his area. He also says that some incidences of resistance to Dursban has been detected in areas north of Miami, and in these cases, lawn care businessmen have gone to either Diazinon, manufactured by Ciba-Geigy Corp., Greensboro, N.C., or Baygon, manufactured by Chemagro Agricultural Div. of Mobay Chemical Corp., Kansas City, Mo.

"We have found more grubs this year than in the past," he said. "And in checking lawns, we have also found more disease incidence, mostly because people water their lawns at night, and the sun does not evaporate the excess water. They need to be taught by lawn care businessmen when to water properly."

"One of the things we feel has helped us in customer relations

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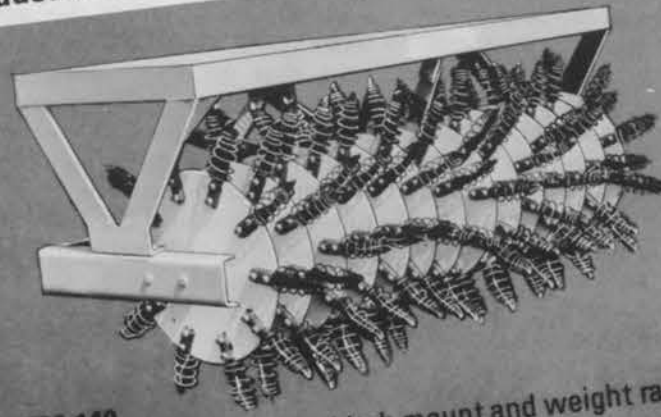
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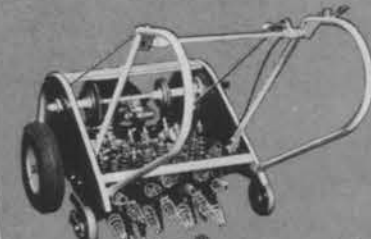
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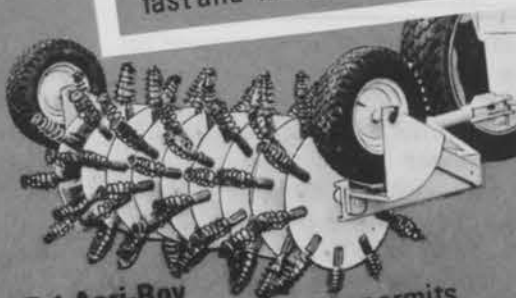
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is that we stress that if anything is wrong in any way, when they call up, they are speaking to me — the boss," he said. "They don't have to wade through five other people with excuses. People seem to like this, and we feel it has helped our business."

As for the future, Eichenbaum sees more companies going into structural pest control and then into lawn service. The reason for this, he says, is that it takes a smaller initial investment to do extermination work, but then the contacts are built up to expand into lawn work.

He also laments the fact that costs of such items as workmen's compensation are going to continue to rise, making it tough on the small businessman. He says his workmen's compensation premiums went up \$450 this year — even though he has never had a claim.

"They call our business an assigned risk because we deal with chemicals, and we have to pay," he said. "But it is impossible for us to raise our prices to the home owner and still remain competitive. It hurts."

Although it is not a major part of his billings, Richard J. Trudeau, 46, of **Trudo Exterminating Co.**, Pompano Beach, still manages to keep one 600-gallon lawn tank truck busy with lawn spray.

He is not pushing lawn spray work at this time, but is looking at expanding further into it in the near future. His present business represents about \$1,500 billed a month, or about 10 percent of his total gross. He is like many pest control operators who have expanded into lawn care in the past few years, particularly in Florida.

Most of the lawns he

application is completed, or put it in the door.

"We will be doing more lawn work in the future, we feel there is great potential in this area," he said.

John Zannis, 38, owner of **Windy Pines Lawn Service**, Miami, grosses about \$40,000 a year on his 20 commercial maintenance accounts. His services include mowing, trimming, fertilization, tree and shrub trimming, and just about anything else his customers want.

To price jobs out, he estimates his costs at about \$15 per man with equipment. His charges are all the way from \$50 a month for two trips to local McDonald's hamburger outlets, to almost \$800 a month for a condominium.

He advertises only in the Yellow Pages, a two-inch square listing that costs him about \$70 a month. For his large jobs, including land clearing, he utilizes a 65 horsepower Massey-Ferguson diesel tractor, and also a five-foot Bush Hog. For smaller jobs, he utilizes three Ariens 10 horsepower tractors with a 30-inch cut. He is not in favor of tractors with hydrostatic drives, because he does not feel it is worth the additional cost.

For close work, he uses ten 22-inch Lawn Boy mowers, and also three Snappers. He also uses Green Machine string trimmers.

Edward Weidlich, 53, has owned **Domestic Power Spray**, Hollywood, for the last 17 years. His business is almost exclusively residential, spraying and fertilizing lawns, and also tree spraying.

He guarantees his accounts at least four sprays a year, with monthly visits. Many of his accounts receive more than four

*"Our workmen's comp premiums went up \$450 this year — even though we have never had a claim . . ."*

**Irving Eichenbaum, Rid-All Pest Control**

maintains are St. Augustine-grass, with a few centipedegrass lawns. He says there are not too many weed problems, most of them can be handled by proper mowing. There are problems with chinch bugs, sod webworms, and armyworms, for which he uses Dursban, manufactured by Dow Chemical Co., Midland, Mich., for control. Some of his customer lawns also have disease problems with grey leaf spot and other diseases, for which Daconil, manufactured by Diamond Shamrock Corp., Cleveland, has proven useful.

There are also many problems with nematodes in his area, for which he says there are no labeled products for control since Nemagon, manufactured by Shell Chemical Co., Houston, was taken off the market (*There might be good news here for lawn care businessmen, because Shell is working on labeling for a new nematicide to be on the market soon — Editor*).

Most of his contract lawn customers are charged about \$17 a month for six sprays a year on the typical 5,000-square-foot lawn. His applicators hand the bill to the homeowner after each

sprays a year, depending on the severity of problems their lawns have. His charges are \$20 for a single spray, or \$8 a month for his accounts that are on a yearly contract. Some of his condominium jobs bring in close to \$300 a year.

He characterizes the south Florida lawn care market as a "gold mine, because this is the land of bugs."

He utilizes a 1,000-gallon tank unit with a smaller drop tank for mixing and application, and driven by the truck PTO. He applies Ortho dry fertilizers twice a year — in March and October. His average charge for dry fertilization is about \$25 per job.

"The thing that I stress with my customers is the once-a-month checks, so I can see if any problems are developing," he told **LAWN CARE INDUSTRY**. "Since I am on the lawn so often, I also pick up extra business if I see problems with shrubs or trees."

He sees the future of the lawn care industry as "continuing to grow. The only problems we have is the government continually taking chemicals away from us. I would pay double to get some of the chemicals we formerly used back."

## COMING ISSUES

**Next month:** A report on the lawn care market in Houston; weed identification and control; herbicides available to the lawn care businessmen.

**March:** A report on the lawn care market in Atlanta; insect identification and control; insecticides available to the lawn care businessman.

**April:** A report on the lawn care industry in San Francisco; disease identification and control; fungicides available to the lawn care businessman.



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**White:** "To make room for yourself in this expanding market, you need to understand the concept of positioning. This means establishing a place for yourself that no other service has."



**Weaver:** "For the longest time, our industry has had to depend on buying equipment and adapting it to our own business. This situation is changing."



**Brune:** "Our money is made when our men are out spraying. The more time the driver spends spraying, and the less time he spends doing paperwork, the more money we make. That is why we went to a computer."



**Zwiebel:** "You don't have to put on one big training session in the beginning of the season for your technicians. Whenever we get a rainy day, we jump into the classroom. And usually we have some beer around, too."



**Erbaugh:** "We automatically subtract the 10 percent that will never take a lawn care service, 10 percent that will always be do-it-yourselfers, and five percent that are affluent enough to afford a gardener."



**DiSanto:** "We use the K.I.S.S. system of advertising on our trucks, mailers and in newspapers — Keep It Simple, Stupid."



care educational sessions was a four-person panel consisting of lawn care businessmen. Richard White, president of Village Green Lawn Spraying, Glen Ellyn, Ill., spoke on "Selection of the Program and Scheduling." Gary Weaver, president of Turf Gard, Troy, Ohio, spoke on "Choosing Proper Equipment for Services Offered." George DiSanto, president of American Green Corp., Cleveland, spoke on "Advertising and Promotion." Ron Zwiebel, president of Chem Care Lawn Service, Birmingham, Ala. spoke on "Hiring, Training, and Motivating Applicators."



Ohio Turfgrass Foundation "Man of the Year" Paul Duke of ChemLawn Corp. (left), and 1979 president Bill Hill.

"Lawn care companies differentiate themselves by employe image, materials used, unique insight into turf care, cost, extent of services offered, and more," White told the audience.

The following is the data needed to determine a lawn care program for an area, White said:

- Identify the prominent turfgrasses being used
- Examine soil test results for nutrient levels and pH
- Identify the most common disease and insect pests and time of occurrence
- Determine high-incidence broadleaf weeds
- Identify perennial and annual grassy weeds.

J. Martin Erbaugh, president of Erbaugh Corp., Hudson, Ohio, spoke on "Cash Management and Planning in the Context of Growth."

## COST CUTTINGS

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As liquid fertilizers — not granulars in suspension, but liquid — gain more acceptance in the lawn care industry, the day might not be that far off when your fertilizer supplier installs a tank on your office grounds and fills it up with liquid fertilizer on a regular basis.

Two liquid fertilizer companies negotiating with lawn care companies are Ashland Chemical Co. and Allied Chemical Co. One of the built-in problems with liquid fertilizers is the problem of shipping volumes of liquid long distances.

Peter D. Shoemaker, Jr., of The Valley Fertilizer and Chemical Co., Inc., Mount Jackson, Va. says that he sees the very real possibility of companies such as his providing a 5,000 or 6,000 gallon tank, or tanks, for their customers, and keeping them filled. All the lawn care businessman will have to worry about is explaining the formulation he wants, filling his spray tank trucks and spraying lawns.

ALCA from page 1

cluded Roger Harris and Grey Payne.



**Harris:** "65 percent of your dollars will come from 15 percent of your customers; 15 percent of your dollars from 20 percent of your customers; and 20 percent of your dollars from 65 percent of your customers."



New Jersey Turfgrass Association president Jack Wittpen (left) and first-ever lawn care board member Joe DeSantis.

**Franklin:** "There is a tendency in the lawn care industry to undercharge. Do not be reluctant to charge what your service is worth."



**Payne:** "In your accounting systems, keep track of the amount of work you have done but have not been paid for, and also the amount of work you have been paid for, but have not yet done."

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NEW JERSEY from page 1

care educational session on the second day of the show.

Speakers at the session included: Dr. Ralph Engel, of Rutgers, speaking on winter fertilization of lawns; Dr. Spencer Davis of Rutgers, speaking on lawn disease problems; Al Lombardi of A. Lombardi Landscaping, Montclair, N.J., speaking on problems on the lawn care industry; and Bob Brewster, a consultant for Lawn-A-Mat, Mineola, N.Y.

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those for chemical weed killer, insect spray, pruning, weeding and cleaning of beds, debris control on walks, drives, and parking lots. Also, whether gravel drives need sterilization, bark mulch and thatching of lawns, travel time, irrigation systems, maintenance and repair, as well as that for his equipment, and specialty items such as annual flowers and bulbs, swimming pools and fish ponds.

Strict estimates are evolved for the time it should take for each man to complete a particular job, and each man's schedule is written out. These are analyzed monthly. "Sometimes we find the man has not been doing the job he should," Gifford says, "or, sometimes, we've made a mistake and underestimated the difficulty of the work. Either way we make an adjustment, and try to zero in that much more accurately the

next month."

A clear recording of all of the various factors involved in a job allows Gifford to bid effectively. He says he prefers to bid, for this allows him the biggest chance for profit. The one exception to this is sprinkler systems. "Here we charge by the hour, for these can be so complex that you never know what you're getting into."

Gifford has approximately 80 regular accounts, and the same number of irregulars. He prefers the former. He figures out the cost for an entire year, and then receives payment on a monthly basis. This allows for a steady income during the slower winter months and also is more likely to encourage habitual, rather than strictly seasonal — and sometimes erratic — customer payments.

Other money-saving procedures include turning off motors when they're not being used, the careful routing of jobs to cut down on travel time and expense, and keeping an inventory of basic parts such as ignitions, spark plugs, and various nuts and bolts, again to minimize extra trips to town. One of Gifford's most effective ideas along these lines, though it first involved an additional expense, is the use of radios in each of his nine vehicles, as well as the base microphone in his office. These cost about \$1000 apiece, on a five

year lease-and-buy program, at the end of which time he owns them. "I've figured out that they pay for themselves if they save me just fifteen minutes a day," Gifford says.

This communication network saves a great amount of time if a customer wants something extra done and the worker has to check first, or if there's a minor breakdown, or a piece of equipment forgotten. The 10-way communication system minimizes the time lost in solving the problem. A final money saver is he's trained his full time men to service their own equipment. This cuts costs and allows them to be more familiar with the needs of the various machinery than if they were shipped out to a commercial shop.

The Gifford Gardeners was founded in 1954 by Oscar Gifford. Tex and his brothers took over the business in 1971, and Tex bought out his brothers in 1977. Tex's son, Danny, age 12, is starting to mow lawns in the business, as Tex did, when he was 12, for his dad. The firm grossed \$243,000 last year. So, with Gifford's efficiency-increasing techniques, and the third generation now on the scene, it looks like the Gifford Gardeners, or, as their promotions read, "The Gardening Angels," will be around for a long time to come.

## PRODUCTS

### Lawn care tank farm

Storage tanks from 25 to 5,600 gallons — perfect for the lawn care tank farm — are available from Poly Processing Co. The



company rotationally molds tanks in cylindrical, horizontal, spherical and conical shapes for storage and application. The company said that molded, seamless, polyolefin containers are the answer to many tough chemical storage problems.

Circle 207 on free information card

### Big wheel mowers

Kee Mfg. Co., Inc. has published a four-page brochure available for free on its line of mowers. Pictured is its model



GC-25 commercial mower, which features a cast iron, eight-horsepower Kohler engine, a 24½-inch width-of-cut, height adjustable from 2 to 3¼ inches. The large rear wheels take the work out of pushing the mower and the swivel front wheels make turning easy.

Circle 204 on free information card

### Soil fungicide

When *Pythium* fungi infect turf, diseases such as cottony blight, grease spot and damping-off spread rapidly. Terrazole soil fungicide, manufactured by Olin Corp., controls *Pythium*-related diseases, then it continues to protect turf for from five to seven days. In a newly seeded area, Terrazole controls damping-off, seedling diseases, and root and stem rot caused by *Pythium*.

Circle 202 on free information card

### Ryan power rake

Ryan has published a free data sheet on its five-horsepower power rake. The unit features 28 flails, spaced at ¾-inch intervals to dethatch a 20-inch swath. Front wheel height adjustment has 10 positions for cutting up to one-inch above the ground. It weighs 123 pounds.

Circle 211 on free information card



**WHEN  
THERE'S NO  
SUBSTITUTE  
FOR THE BEST!**



Model #PC 1200 fiberglass tank equipped with fiberglass pump cover, Model #D 200 gallon mixing tank shown mounted on a custom truck body by Strong Enterprises.



Bottom view of the Model #PC 1200 tank showing to best advantage the integral molded mounting base and steel hold-down lugs designed for ease in mounting on your truck and eliminating costly installation.

**THE Tuflex Manufacturing process allows a five year warranty on all tanks.**

Tuflex is the only manufacturer to specialize in *seamless* fiberglass spray tanks specifically for the pest control and lawn care industry. Remember when craftsmanship was an art... at Tuflex it still is! The exclusive Tuflex process carries a full five year warranty on all handcrafted seamless fiberglass tanks.

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Circle 115 on free information card

## MONEYWISE

### A ready-made lawn care computer program



If your lawn care business is large enough to begin thinking about bringing a computer into your operation, Larry Shipow may be just the man you need to talk to.

He is the president of Sears Lawn & Leaf, Chicago, and his company has spent time and money developing a computer system that he says would cost somebody else between \$200,000 and \$300,000 to develop today. Sears uses its computer to work up Monday morning

management reports for its supervisors, for routing, billing and many other facets of their operation.

The company hopes to begin marketing the computer system and program to a number of service industries — bakeries, laundries, any company with a route system — including lawn care companies.



A terminal of the Sears computer.

The price is still not solid, but Shipow says that a company would have to have at least 5,000 customers to consider it. He also says it would take about \$20,000 a year to operate the equipment — or the cost of about three clerks.

For further information, contact Shipow at: Sears Lawn & Leaf, 701 N. Wolf Rd., Wheeling, Ill. 60090, 312-459-1400.



## WE RECOMMEND LESCOSAN

In two seasons, we reduced the crabgrass population from 90%-plus to less than 10%. And this is on big lawns of almost an acre. Lescosan is the mainstay of our crabgrass control program.

—JOHN R. LINKHART  
Perf-A-Lawn Vice-President (Sales)

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"Nashville is the premier area for crabgrass. And Lescosan is the main-stay of our crabgrass control program. It works better on crabgrass and foxtail than any other product."

The Perf-A-Lawn professional chemical lawn maintenance company specializes in liquid spray applications and they're building more than turf. They're building a reputation.

"Since we are constantly expanding our franchise

market, we must be sure a product works. So we recommend Lescosan to our franchisees."

Lescosan (Betasan\*), available in 4E emulsion or 12.5 granules, provides full-season effectiveness on all grasses, as well as on a number of ornamentals and ground covers. When Perf-A-Lawn buys Lescosan from Lakeshore, they buy from the formulator. And for Perf-A-Lawn, that means quality and savings!

If quality, savings and performance are selling Lescosan to you, take advantage of our toll-free information service and call Barb

today. Those east of the Mississippi can reach her by dialing 1-800-321-5951. (In Ohio, dial 1-800-362-7413.) If you're west of the Mississippi, call Barb collect at 216-323-7544.

She'll have our representative contact you so you'll know why Perf-A-Lawn recommends Lescosan and how our other fine LESCO Products (including LESCO 36 Sulfur Coated Urea) are selling themselves every day!

Our LESCO Quality Products and Friendly Service are always as close as your phone.

\*(Betasan—Registered TM of Stauffer Chemical Company.)

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New Year, new picture. And if you look closely at the picture, you'll notice bloodshot eyes with bags under them.

We just got back from a series of turf conferences around the country, and are still sky-high with enthusiasm.

First, the New Jersey Turf Expo in Cherry Hill. Then the Associated Landscape Contractors of America Maintenance Symposium in San Jose. Then the Ohio Turfgrass Conference in Columbus. Then the Texas Turfgrass Conference in College Station. And finally, the Illinois Turfgrass Conference in Champaign.

Totally, these conferences drew more than 4,000 participants — and probably 35 to 40 percent of them were lawn care businessmen. These shows were proof that the universities, the manufacturers and the turf industry as a whole is giving more than lip service to the growing lawn care industry — your industry.

The educational sessions were great, and we solved most of the problems of the lawn care industry at night after the exhibits closed. That's where the bags came from. But as I said, it was worth it.

*Bob Carley*

## TANKS FOR THE MEMORY!



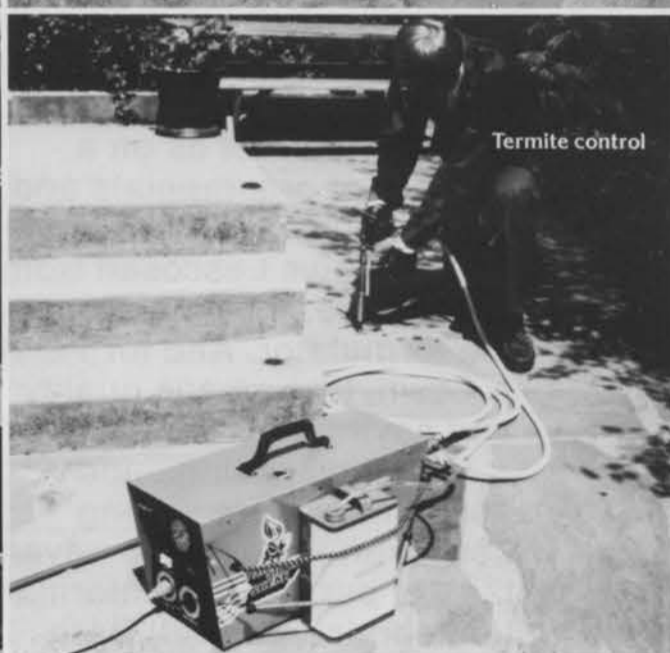
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## ADVERTISERS

Agro-Chem.....	6
American Pelletizing Corp. ....	16
Aquatrols Corp. of America .....	10
Broyhill Co. ....	14
Ciba-Geigy Corp. ....	8-9
Diamond Shamrock Corp. ....	7
Hahn, Inc. ....	14
Hopkins Agricultural Chemical Co. ....	15
International Seed .....	4
Jacklin Seed Co. ....	3, 17
Jacobsen Mfg. Co. ....	18-19
Lakeshore Equipment & Supply Co. ....	21
Lifetime Career Schools .....	16
Lofts Pedigreed Seed, Inc. ....	Cover IV
Perf-A-Lawn Corp. ....	16
Power Spray Technology, Inc. ....	22
Rain Bird Sprinkler Mfg. Corp. ....	5
Rockland Chemical Co. ....	15
O. M. Scott & Sons .....	23
Tuflex Mfg. Co. ....	20

## CLASSIFIED

When answering ads where box number only is given, please address as follows: Box number, c/o LAWN CARE INDUSTRY, Dorothy Lowe, Box 6951, Cleveland, Ohio 44101.  
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**CHEMICAL LAWN CARE and tree company** needs service manager for 3,000 customers. Start January. Salary open. Send resume to Lawn Doctor, Box 30121, Dallas, Texas 75230. 214 690-1900.

### FOR SALE

**PRACTICE RANGE GOLF BALLS** from \$1.50 per dozen. Solid yellow balls \$2.50. Free brochure. Raven Golf, 6148 Thornycroft, Utica, MI 48087. 313 731-3469.

### WANTED TO BUY

**LANDSCAPE EQUIPMENT:** Jacobsen power seeder, aerator, York rakes, pulverizers, trailers, loaders, sprayers, etc. Must be reasonable. Send description to: Kurt, 968 Mentor Avenue, Painesville, OH 44077.

### USED EQUIPMENT

**FOR SALE:** 1978 Bean 10-10 stainless 300 gallon sprayer. Hose on 500' Hannay reel with gun. Skid mounted, canvas cover. Excellent condition, \$2,700.00. Perma-Green, Inc., 216 729-8873.

**LAWN SPRAY TANKER.** 1—1977 excellent condition 1500 gallon Loadstar International, completely equipped with hose reels and 300 ft. of delivery hose. Phone 313 549-1912.



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