



Season Review

New Salesman "Andy"

"Lisa" Customer Service

DIY Spray Rigs

Disease Diagnosis

New "YARD CAST"

REVIEW AGAIN!

Ken Mays

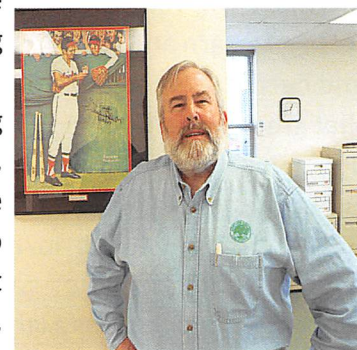
It seems every year when I start this task the phrase to start it off is "well last year was a tough one"! Sorry, I can't mix it up, "last year was one of the more difficult in my forty (40) years in this business"!

The Winter of 2014 brought us one of our busiest in snow removal service with record breaking cold. Our crews responded to over 20 events over 35 days. The winter weather started right around Thanksgiving and really never quit until very late in March. At my residence north of Westminster, I measured right around 96" of accumulated snow. We had very little time to convert our fleet of service trucks from snow and salt mode back to tree and lawn care mode when spring came. Kudos to our fleet mechanic, Dennis Radcliffe, for keeping us up and running last winter and back to "business-as-usual", in April.

The difficult winter brought problems to our landscape as well. Coming out of winter we really weren't sure of it's affect on plants. The fact that we had a pretty constant snow cover, root systems were insulated, saving a lot of shrubs. We encountered wide-spread damage on hollies and azaleas from dessication (drying out). The most fatal damage found was on "Leyland Cypress". Many of them lost 50% or more of their foliage leading to total removal. Then came the ice storm just after the SuperBowl that caused extensive loss of conifers as well as deciduous trees in the northern tier of Baltimore, Harford and Carroll counties. Some of us are still cleaning up from that!

Saving Grace? The cold, late spring meant crabgrass was a month late germinating, Mid-May. This allowed us to get your crabgrass controls on and still be effective. Otherwise, we would have only had two weeks to get six weeks of work done. By mid-May our schedule starting to level out and things got back to normal.

In mid-June one of our sales representatives who was suffering from lung congestion was admitted to the hospital with symptoms of pneumonia. On July 3rd, Damian Varga suddenly, passed away. This was a devastating blow to our entire company. Damian had been with us for fourteen years and was dedicated not only to Scientific Plant Service and it's customers, but, to our industry as a whole! We were left with the difficult task of filling his shoes. Then life delivered another blow, on July 5th, a dear friend and colleague, Brian Akehurst, suddenly passed from a massive heart attack. Brian was president of Akehurst Landscape Service, a fifth generation company in Harford County, which has had a working relationship with Scientific Plant Service for over fifty years. A young man (47), Brian and I worked together as he grew and excelled in this industry. He too, will be greatly missed!



The balance of the year things seemed to get back to normal. Temperatures were moderate and rains came at frequent intervals, so our lawns avoided that typical summer drought and die back.



The fall was rather moderate with significant rains to maintain our fall seeding projects. Thus far, the 2015 winter has been kind to us, compared to 2014! So, things are turning around, actually, the turn around started for SPS back in August.

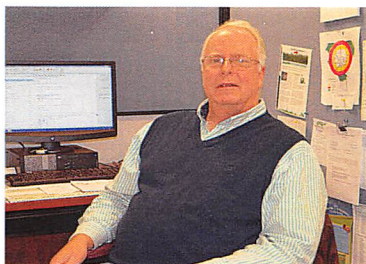
With the loss of Damian Varga, our other sales representative (Stephen Griner) did double duty and covered customer concerns for his area as well as Damian's. Relief came in early August when we hired a new sales representative, Andy Sheehan ("Meet Andy" below). Andy has spent the past six months learning our systems and services and will hit the ground running this spring!

Over the years Scientific Plant Service has assembled a dedicated team (family) both in the field or office to provide the finest services available for your landscape. We lost a member of our family last year! He is greatly missed. ***This newsletter is dedicated to the memory Damian Varga, SPS 2000-2014.***

New Sales Representative

ANDY SHEEHAN

Faced with the task of recruiting a new sales representative, we knew we needed to find an individual with sound industry experience, good educational background and customer dedication. With great confidence we feel we have found that in Andy Sheehan!



Andy's formal education started at Anne Arundel Community College. He then went on to the University of Maryland, College Park to earn his Bachelors degree in Business Management. With a thirst for more, he moved on to Rutgers University, in New Jersey, to earn an Associates degree in Turf Management and became a Certified Golf Course Manager. With all of that great education Andy struck out to the workforce to begin his career at Crofton Country Club as Course Superintendent. His next career stop was the Kenwood Golf and County Club in Bethesda, Md. During this twelve year stop he gained extensive knowledge renovation procedures as the course was brought back to original construction specifications. This included tees, greens and bunkers (sand traps) and establishing bent grass fairways. In 2000 Andy's challenge became Renditions Golf Course in Davidsonville. This being a course being built, Andy oversaw the original construction and grow-in of this unique venue and had the responsibility to staff and keep it growing! After 10-

12 hour days seven a week it was time to change trains. An opportunity arose for Andy to join a mid-Atlantic based golf supply company, Davisson Golf, Inc. For seven years Andy called on and consulted with superintendents in the Mid-Atlantic region for supplying products for amending soils, fertilizing and bunker, tee and green reconstruction.

So, now the train has come to it's final stop. We hope Andy finishes out his career here at SPS to become part of our family. However, to get there he has been working hard at learning us and you. Over the past months he has learned our various computer systems, the service products we offer and your properties. He is trying to take advantage of the slow period to review properties and get acquainted with your programs. Stephen Griner, has been assisting him with these reviews and helping formulate any changes if needed. We do our best to stay current with industry practices and have all of our personnel attend several days of seminars throughout the winter. Andy, well we've thrown the gauntlet at him, by the time spring arrives he'll have close to two weeks of additional classroom under his belt.

A long time resident of Anne Arundel County, he currently lives in the Annapolis area. Since his time on your properties is limited, don't get him talking about fishing. Andy is an avid sportsman who loves fresh and salt water fishing. I guess it kind of goes with the Southern Maryland lifestyle.

Welcome Andy!



Welcome aboard! LISA

Customer Service

In April 2014 we had an opportunity to hire a new customer service representative. It was a tough decision replacing Suzanne, but, we feel we made the right choice. The new voice you have been hearing is that of Lisa Gutin-Hayes. Lisa came to SPS with 28 years of customer service under her belt. Although her prior experience was in the printing industry (an industry that is going through massive change) and she has fit right in. Wow, she fits in so well it seems as though she's been here for years! Lisa's toughest job is being Brian Haga's assistant and keeping him organized. If you have questions concerning jobs, scheduling or pre-application notifications, please give her a call. She's always glad to help.



Welcome Lisa!

D.I.Y. SPRAY RIGS

Our goal at SPS is to always try to stay on top of all phases of our industry. We are constantly up-dating our computer systems and keeping on top of industry standards for applications. In 2013 we knew we needed to change some of our application equipment for efficiency reasons. After reviewing the available equipment nationally, we weren't satisfied that what was currently being manufactured would fit our needs. It was decided that our knowledge of application equipment was as good as any company out there, so, we built our own multi-use sprayer that conforms specifically to our needs. It was well received by our techs with great success. That meant only one thing, do it again. So we did. We studied the original, made some changes and made it bigger. This unit turned out even better than the first and we plan to do it again this year. Our current units are operated by Ed Smith and Gary Wisniewski. They love the versatility and convenience of our exclusive design. Each unit we build in house saves the company approximately \$30,000.00 and they do exactly what we need them to do!



A LITTLE ABOUT ACCOUNTING



We are slowly converting our residential clients to credit card payment rather than check writing. If you are not currently paying your account via a charge card and wish to do so, call our office and ask for Carolyn to get set-up. Here's how it works: you give us your information for either Visa, MasterCard or Discover. AFTER a service call we will process that invoice amount on your charge account and when it is confirmed email your receipt. We review our records and call you when your card expires for an up-date. Our computer system is "Fire Walled" and is tested monthly by our the bank for security purposes. Your account information is safe and never gets printed on invoices!

Accolades to STEPHEN GRINER

Throughout the year (but mostly in the winter) our people attend educational sessions to stay on top of what's happening in our industry. Over the past couple of years we've been hearing reports of a new disease that primarily affects English Boxwood. Boxwood in general have been struggling over the decade. We have seen cankering, boxwood decline, *volutella*, and numerous insect problems. Right now, they really aren't a good choice for our landscape. So, here's the final "nail", that new disease, **BOXWOOD BLIGHT!**

It takes a professional eye to detect the symptoms with confirmation only made via lab cultures by a trained *plant pathologist*. Last summer our sales rep. Stephen Griner was performing a general review of a property in the Phoenix area when he became suspicious of symptoms on some boxwood. He carefully removed tissue samples and shipped them to the U of MD for culturing and diagnosis. Boxwood Blight was confirmed. This was the first confirmation on the western shore and only the second in the state. This set a lot of wheels in motion. U of MD sent personnel to confirm and document the infestation and the Dept of Agriculture placed a quarantine on the property, removed the plants and sanitized the property. Stephen received the above commendation for his professional services and observations. Read more about this developing concern in our "**Yard Cast**" emails this spring.



Stay informed with our "YARD CAST" emails.

Normally our winter newsletter is an educational tool for you! This year's theme strays from our tradition. After last summer's events, we felt you need to know Scientific Plant Service. There aren't many service companies that say their employees average tenure is 10½ years! That means accountability. You count on having your services performed by a familiar face, a professional, someone who cares. We're still going to bring you informative articles throughout the year, however, it will be via "Email" and "Facebook". You will be receiving 1-2 emails per month and weekly facebook updates to keep you up-to-date with current happenings. So, if we don't have your email address give our office a call (410-321-0970) or better yet, an email: carolynp@sponline.com to get on our "**YARD CAST**".