

## APPLES TO APPLES

By Douglas Martin

Nothing scares an entrepreneur more than the phrase, “Hi, I’m from the Government and I’m here to help you”. Well, nothing except, “Hi, I’m from the Government and I’m here to buy from you”.

What would normally be an empowering moment for a business owner turns into a deflation of near epic proportions. Now, to some in the outside world, who read annual news reports of how a random government department paid two thousand dollars for a hammer, believe anyone with government contracts is hauling dough to the bank by truckloads. Those of us who have actually sold to these agencies wonder why the hammer guy only got two thousand a piece, given the extraordinary process, paperwork, compliance specifics and countless other hoops which surround what should be a simple transaction. All told, the hammer company only lost thirty dollars per unit. But these reports are the very rare exceptions; in many cases, dealing with institutions is a hard bargain.

Vegetation management companies rely heavily on building in-roads with various levels of government, crown corps and multi-nationals where the purchase process can be a frustrating exercise rendered down to cold statistics and hard dollars; forcing all competitors to become metaphoric apples for easy comparison and selection. The problem is, you aren’t an apple...you are a fruit basket. No offense intended, but in truth, you offer both vastness and uniqueness that transcend a mere apple. The challenge you face is creating an opportunity to build an understanding whereby your full pallet of differentiations is taken into consideration. And ultimately, translated into the details of an RFP.

An excellent way to begin this process is to re-establish the level of expectation a buyer should have regarding the vegetation management service packages available in their market. In other words, increase their “need” awareness beyond a commodity solution. I’m referring to needs that are genuine, but some needs, through time and repetitive motions, have been lost in the process and others are simply unknown, as advancements and change haven’t filtered up through the bureaucracy.

An example might be, “Endangered Species Recognition and Protection”. This exact topic arose at the Univar/Dow AgroSciences shindig, oops I mean business meeting, held earlier this year with vegetation management experts like yourself. At the time, we talked specifically about National Parklands, but the topic applies across a broad range of institutional clients. The question to customers is, “How important is it to you that on-land applicators are trained and able to identify and deal with endangered plant

species growing on your land tracts”? The nervous answer from the customer will be, “Um...very”.

Great, then that should be specified in your “requests for service” documents as a mandatory necessity; demonstrating your (customer) commitment to appropriate and progressive land stewardship. No? The need to fulfill a part of an unwritten public promise is now identified and forged into the procurement analysis.

Navigating the customer through an honest and broad needs conversation creates an opportunity to wedge differentiation into the documentation of their “call for fulfillment”. And as an expert in your business, you’ve got a bagful of unique solutions. So a purposeful strategy on your end is to shape the general customer “ask” into an answer that limits your competitor response and elevates your response to preferred supplier status. But wait, there’s more.

Delivering solutions to broader needs, is in fact, delivering greater value into the proposition. Greater value deserves greater transactional recognition. On balance, customers who understand the full “needs” scope and are satisfied that those needs will be met, assign a fairer value equation.

This begins to move the apple from the tree to the fruit stand and is an early step in de-commoditizing the complex and intricate products and services the vegetation management industry provides. And this is an important distinction. Don’t get me started, but “commoditizing” all manner of industry sectors has been going on for eons in an effort to base-line pricing and de-value brand differentiations, and we all need to step up and bring our full stories forward.

This is a tough business segment but integral to your customer mix. Although each of your individual experiences will vary, most whom I’ve spoken with feel this market is monetarily skinny and nearly void of appreciation of value. Making a strategic decision to infiltrate the customer process with a barrage of well-thought-through knowledge-based “need satisfiers” can only help bridge the value gaps that exist, and most likely will side-line a few competitors along the way.

An apple a day...



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## Industry News

### [‘Evil crab grass on steroids’ moves into Alberta: Phragmites australis can gr...](#)

A towering invasive plant that has wreaked havoc in eastern Canada and the United States is now being tracked in Alberta. Officials here say it's unclear how long Phragmites australis has...

### [County not concerned by insecticides](#)

Strathcona County is standing by its decision to allow pesticides to be sprayed by the City of Edmonton in local ditches. Controversy has arisen surrounding...

### [Ag service resolutions aim to improve industry](#)

Resolutions passed at the recent Alberta Agricultural Service Board (ASB) conference should help improve the agriculture industry in this region and across the province, say officials. In all, 12...

### [B.C. VIEWS: Polluted logic plagues pesticide bylaws](#)

Chances are your community has a bylaw that restricts the use of "chemical pesticides" on public and private lands, including your lawn and garden. I'll use the District of Saanich bylaw as an...

### [City seeks ‘professional shepherds’ to manage weed-munching goat herd](#)

Goats, sheep and other four-legged plant-eaters could be coming to a green space near you this year, as Calgary looks to hire professional municipal shepherds. While other city job...

## Industry Events

- [PVMA 2018 Spring Meeting](#), March 7, 2018: Red Deer, AB
- [Ontario Invasive Species Forum](#), March 21 & 22, 2018: Alliston, ON
- [AISC 2018](#), April 24 & 25, 2108: Lacombe, AB
- [2018 EKISC AGM](#), May 17, 2018: Cranbrook, AB

## Upcoming Univar ProTraining Events

**CLICK TO REGISTER:**

[March 28, 2018](#): Tillsonburg, ON

[April 11, 2018](#): Nisku, AB

[April 12, 2018](#): Calgary, AB





# LOOKING AHEAD TO AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY.

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**With glyphosate- and Group 2-resistant weeds increasing across Canada, it's now more important than ever for land management professionals to develop effective strategies for managing resistant weeds. And a good management plan starts with choosing the proper herbicide tools.**

## Where did we get these resistant weeds?

Resistance develops when a chemistry is used repeatedly to manage the same weed—and that's exactly what happened with glyphosate and Group 2 herbicides. Originally, they came as much-needed chemistries used to control major weeds, including grassy weeds such as green foxtail and wild oats as well as broadleaf weeds such as cleavers, kochia, redroot pigweed and Russian thistle.<sup>1</sup> Now these herbicides are some of the most highly used chemistries, which explains why many of the weeds they previously controlled have developed resistance.

## For example, kochia.

Often resistance occurs in weeds where the resistant biotypes are able to survive and reproduce even after a proper dose of herbicide. This results in resistant weeds passing their genes to the next generation, demonstrated by the chief problem weed kochia, resistant to glyphosate and Group 2 herbicides.

## Finding the proper herbicide tools.

That's why it's important to ensure there are multiple modes of action in your toolbox. A tank mix with multiple modes of effective action not only provides season-long control of weed

species whether they are resistant or not, but it also ensures that resistance is not perpetuated by leaving some weeds alive.

Two such tools are Arsenal® Powerline herbicide (Group 2) and glyphosate (Group 9), which can be used separately or together to perform exceptionally in a bareground situation. That said, these two chemistries don't control glyphosate- and Group 2-resistant weeds, such as kochia.

Now with new Detail™ herbicide (Group 14), there's yet another mode of action to use in addition to Arsenal Powerline and/or glyphosate, providing a quick, complete burndown with residual control of Group 2-, 4- and glyphosate-resistant kochia as well as broad-spectrum control of grasses and other tough-to-control broadleaf weeds.

For more information on Detail and Arsenal Powerline herbicides, please visit [www.BetterVM.ca](http://www.BetterVM.ca).

## References

<sup>1</sup> Group 2 herbicides: where do they fit? November 28, 2007. Retrieved from <https://www.topcropmanager.com/herbicides/group-2-herbicides-where-do-they-fit-1160>.

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# PESTS ADDRESSED

## PHRAGMITES

Commonly known as common reed grass; originated in Eurasia. Invasive Phragmites are moving west from Eastern Canada; they've been identified as far as Alberta.



Photo: BASF Canada

Phragmites grow in aquatic or subaquatic habitats as a perennial grass with an extensive rhizome system. New infestations result from seed or rhizome fragments, but expansion of an established stand is through rhizomes. Invasive Phragmites are extremely competitive due to their ability to form dense stands and survive anaerobic conditions while other native species struggle to survive. The species' competitive ability can create a negative impact on wetland's ecosystems. Invasive Phragmites grow very tall and dense, creating a potential fire hazard as

the vegetation matures.

Dense stands make recreational aquatic activities like swimming, fishing, and boating nearly impossible.

The identification of invasive Phragmites can be mistaken for a closely related native subspecies, native Phragmites, which does not grow as tall or display the same competitive nature.

### IDENTIFICATION

**Roots:** Rigid with many nodes and up to 2.5 cm in diameter. Rhizomes can spread vertically over 1 m every year from the established stand, supporting its invasive and competitive nature.

**Leaves:** Can be 25 to 50 cm in length and 1 to 5 cm wide. Leaves are alternate, hairless, and tapered to a spiny point. Leaves also have membranous ligules.

**Stem:** Hollow between internodes. Plant heights can be up to 5 m. in height.

**Flowers:** The large showy inflorescence is a feather-like plume and tan in color.

**Seeds:** Phragmites can produce large quantities of wind-dispersed brown seeds, however germination rates are poor due to limited favorable habitats.



FIG 1: A dense and feathery seed head. Photo: Alberta Agriculture & Forestry

## Arsenal® Powerline

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