

## Market Watch



As most of us wrap up the fall season, (except for our friends down south who still have at least a month to go!), we are hearing that in general sales this fall were "OK" - not fantastic, but by no means terrible. Many of you had and are still having extended seasons. Indeed, there was some carryover - especially at the retail level - from spring. But now that fall is behind us, we are hearing that many are pretty pleased with their inventory levels, entering winter with very little excess inventory. That's pretty encouraging looking into Spring, isn't it? .....and here's more good news:

## Housing Starts Remain Strong, Permits Up

"Housing markets remained strong through September, still propelled by record low interest rates. Total starts reached nearly 2 million units, the highest pace since late last year. Major builders continue to have a large backlog for homes that are under contract but not yet started. Single-unit starts are rising relative to multi-family due to low rates and the perception of housing as an investment. New demands has also been propelled by the increase in the percentage of households that own their own homes, especially in households under 30 years of age." - *Home Channel News Vol 30 No 20, Oct 25, 2004 and the US Dept of Commerce*



Building permits, which are seen as an indication of builders' view of the strength of the market, came in at an annual rate of 2.01 million, compared with 1.97 million pace in August. That was better than economists' consensus forecast for permits to slip to 1.95 million pace. "What was surprising to us was the strength of permit issuance. Parul Jain, deputy chief economist for Nomura Securities, told Reuters. "That suggests to us that housing activity is not going to fade away anytime soon. It will continue on a robust path, at least in the near term." - *CNNMoney - Oct 19th, 2004* ....and if that doesn't make you feel good, check this out:

## Research Shows Lawns Improve Physical & Mental Health

"For the Illinois study, the doctors were trying to learn about the impact of lawn care on homeowners - how would people take it? How would neighbors respond?" Grewal explains. A study by the Illinois School of Medicine in Peoria, IL paid participants to NOT mow their lawns. The results were intriguing, to say the least. "For the Illinois study, the doctors were trying to learn about the impact of lawn care on homeowners - how would people take it?" Parwinder Grewal, associate professor in the urban ecology program at The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio explains. "Many participants actually quit the study as the unmowed lawns were having a psychological impact, and in many cases the homeowners' neighbors ended up mowing the lawns themselves or called the police to complain...homeowners suffered psychological abnormalities such as depression, suicidal tendencies, child abuse, anorexia, bulimia, societal withdrawal, increased ulcer formation, high blood pressure, and increased susceptibility to cancer."



Grewal, noting famed scientist E.O. Wilson's "biophilia hypothesis" that says humans are innately attracted to other living organisms, suggests that there should be a health benefit in landscapes. "Taking this theory, the medical community has done research and confirmed that this is the case. In addition to health benefits of engaging in landscaping - getting some exercise behind a mower or weeding a garden - but also just looking at well managed landscapes improves mental health." - *Lawn & Landscape Sept 2004*

## Covenant Tall Fescue Is Now Available



Smith Seed is pleased to offer yet another very attractive tall fescue. As you will find on the attached Technical Report, **Covenant** is a great addition to your tall fescue line-up for both straight sales and as a component of your mixes. Three points to remember about **Covenant** tall fescue are: 1.)Covenant has 'bluegrass-like' density 2) Covenant has superior fall and winter color, and 3. Covenant has reduced mowing requirements.

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