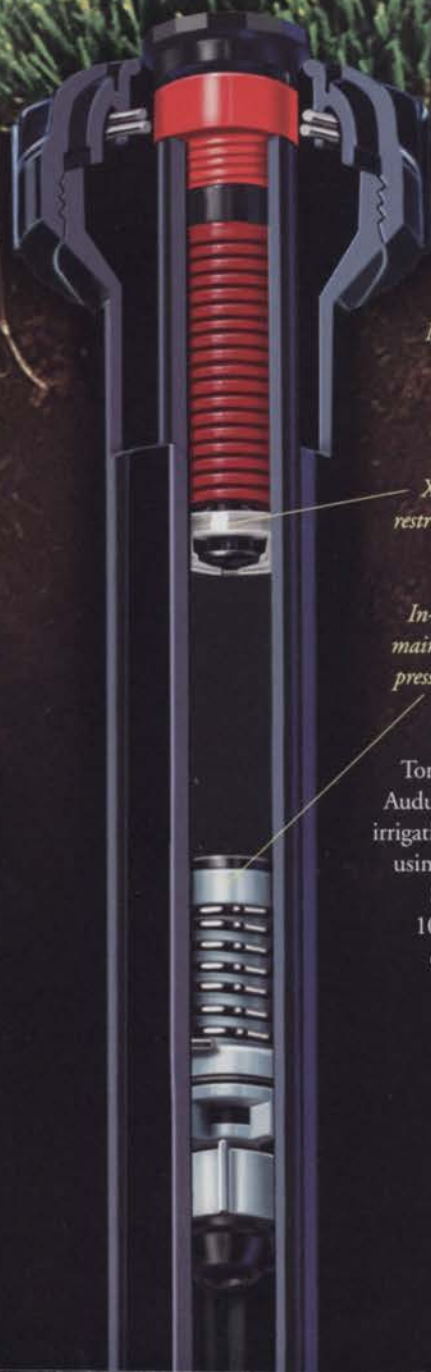






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**July 2000**

Cover photo:  
Louie Borth,  
Columbus, Ohio



## Cover Story Business First

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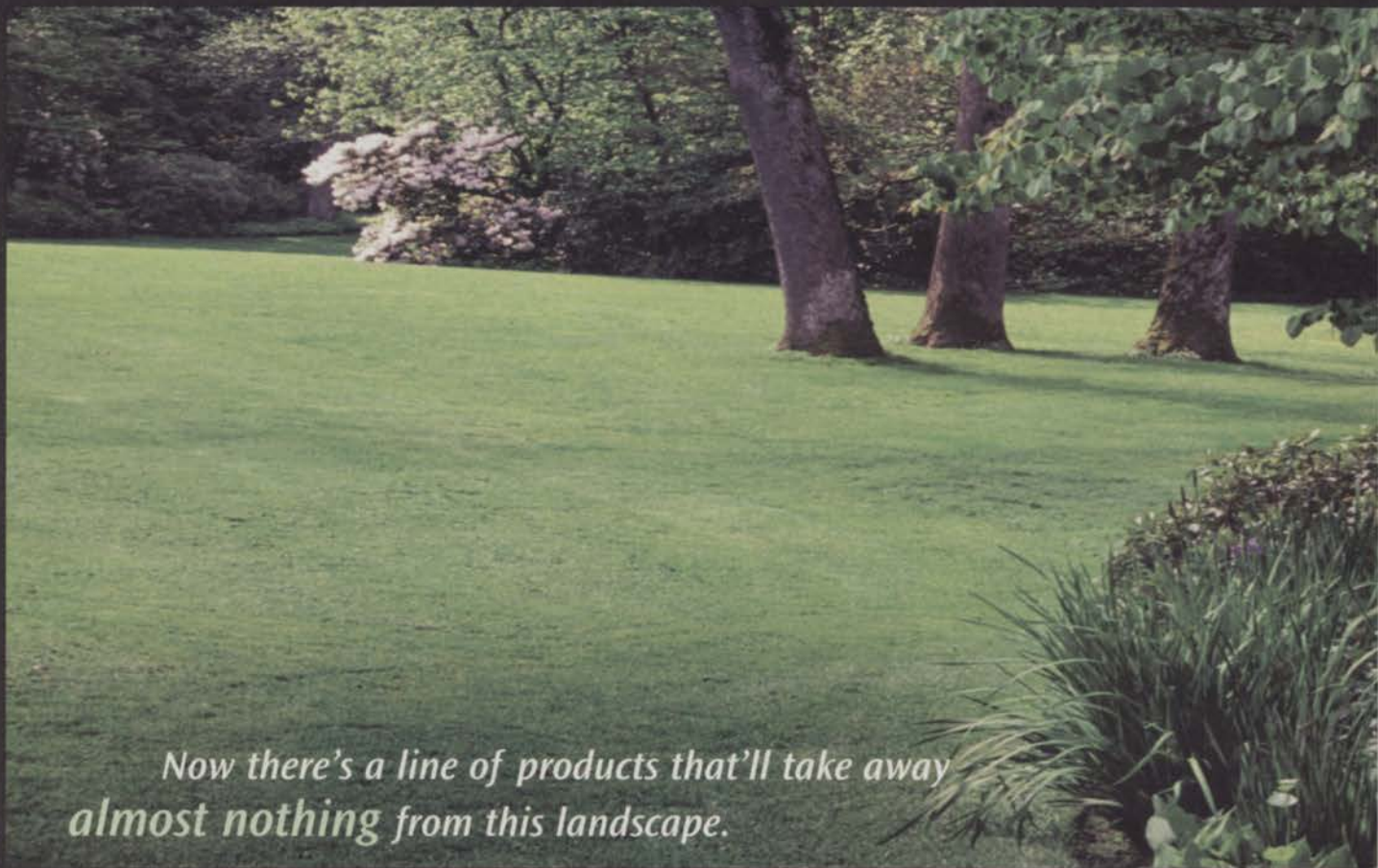
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**USE READER SERVICE #88**



## Practicing What We Preach

"The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said." – Peter Drucker

# I

I have a confession to make, and this isn't easy for me to admit. But the truth is that the landscape in front of our building has been somewhat lacking over the past


few years. Unless, that is, you give us credit for the foot-tall dandelions and wide-spread oxalis that took up residence there.

Now, admittedly, we're not exactly working with a potential-rich palette here. Our offices are two century homes that have been built together as our company has grown over the last two decades in a residential neighborhood. Our "yard," if you will, consists primarily of two 5-foot by 15-foot areas on each side of the walkway into the building, and that's about it.

Well, this year we decided to get serious. After all, and as my grandmother likes to regularly point out whenever she sees our building, we do publish a landscape magazine. A logical assumption would be that we would at least have a landscape that we're not embarrassed by.

We've got that landscape now, thanks to a team of industry professionals: Chris Meltzer, Yard Smart; Phil Fogarty, JP Horizons and Crowley Lawn Care; Rod Tyler, Grafton Nurseries; and Kurtz Brothers.

The experience even gave me a greater appreciation for the importance of customer communication, based on the number of co-workers who inquired why we didn't install "nice big plants" instead of "those little tiny ones that don't even take up all of the space."

In particular, this experience reinforced the importance of communicating ahead of time. Not doing so creates the opportunity for customers to get concerned about what they see going on. So tell them, "Yes, landscapes need time to grow and develop." As we've proven here, some may even need 20 years just to get planted. 

*Bob West*



GIE Media landscape crew for a day

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# Market Trends

## BUSINESS TRENDS

### Avoiding the Killer Curve

Despite rising sales figures, impressive bottom line results and promising prospects, businesses do stall and stagnate.

This happens to businesses large and small. At first, an owner thinks there is a "minor glitch" when the numbers appear on the computer screen. When the downward slide continues, owners tend to get more frightened.

This predictable phenomenon is called The Killer Curve (see graphic below). In most cases, it appears to be a bell curve with a period of growth that is sometimes slow (A) but many times quite rapid and generally driven by "goodwill capital." This is followed by slower growth (B) that is often explained by changes in the market and/or the entrance of new competitors.

The next phase is sales stagnation (C), a time when business plateaus. This leveling off is often viewed with some concern but is generally seen as a temporary situation.

Finally, the curve turns downward (D) in terms of sales or profitability. Once decline sets in, it is hard for companies to solve problems, mainly because they have difficulty identifying them.

(continued on page 23)

Landscape contractors who are trying to improve or maintain their companies' reliable reputations will be pleased to learn that 67.4 percent of consumers choose landscape, lawn or tree care professionals based solely on a good reputation.

Slightly less than 40 percent of consumers choose a contractor who provides guaranteed satisfaction, and 33.8 percent search for one who provides free estimates. The number of years a contractor has been in business also scored high at 32.9 percent, just .5 percentage points above the importance of a company being locally owned and operated.

Unfortunately, winning many design and maintenance awards alone isn't enough to score points with homeowners – only 3 percent choose a landscape contractor solely based on honors it has received.

## Customers CALLING

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| <b>Good reference and reputation</b>              | <b>67.4%</b> |
| Satisfaction guaranteed                           | 39.5%        |
| <b>Provides free estimates</b>                    | <b>33.8%</b> |
| In business for a number of years                 | 32.9%        |
| <b>Locally owned and operated company</b>         | <b>32.4%</b> |
| Insured and bonded                                | 27.9%        |
| <b>Member of a professional trade association</b> | <b>13.3%</b> |
| Certification of professional training            | 12.4%        |
| <b>Licensed by government</b>                     | <b>7.4%</b>  |
| Local representative of a national company        | 5.7%         |
| <b>Other</b>                                      | <b>4.6%</b>  |
| Award-winning company                             | 3.0%         |

Source: The Gallup Organization and the American Nursery & Landscape Association

## INDUSTRY NEWS

### Erosion Control Defined

The International Erosion Control Association (IECA) recently released the results of a market research study defining economic aspects of the erosion control industry.

The initial survey involved 50 U.S. manufacturers of erosion control products. Among the study's findings:

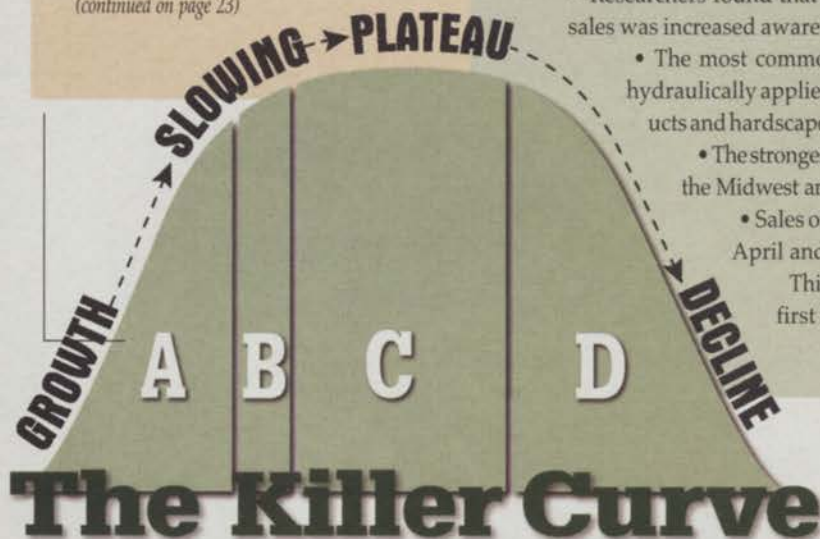
- Researchers found that the most common factor for increased sales was increased awareness about the need for erosion control;
- The most commonly sold erosion control products are hydraulically applied materials, rolled erosion control products and hardscape materials, such as retaining wall blocks;
- The strongest markets for erosion control products are the Midwest and Southeast U.S. regions; and
- Sales of erosion control products are highest in April and May.

This IECA study is intended to be just the first in a series of periodic economic surveys

(continued on page 13)



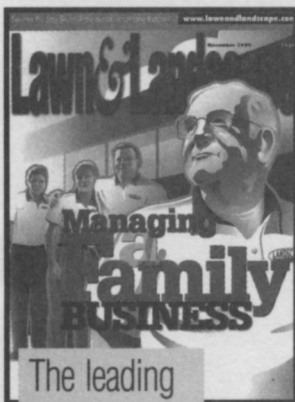
The most common reason for increased sales of erosion control products was increased awareness of the need for erosion control.





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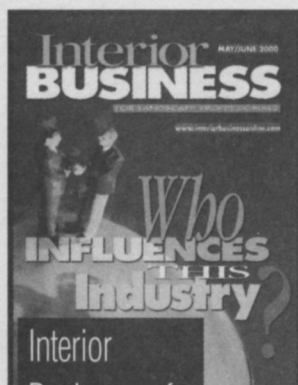
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(continued from page 10)

defining the erosion control industry.

According to IECA director Gayle Mitchell, this continued research can benefit the erosion control industry in many ways. "This information can provide public policy makers with the information needed to improve erosion control efforts, increase public awareness of the importance of the erosion control industry and lead to improved erosion control products and services," Mitchell said. "All of which can mean improved quality of land and water resources."

## INDUSTRY NEWS

### A Growth Year for Hand-held Power Equipment

The hand-held power equipment industry can thank the strong U.S. economy and continued growth in home sales and ownership for another year of solid growth.

(continued on page 16)

# Calendar of Events

**JULY 13-16** American Nursery & Landscape Association Annual Convention, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Contact: 202/789-5980.

**JULY 13-16** Associated Landscape Contractors of America Summer Leadership Meeting, San Diego, Calif. Contact: 800/395-2522.

**JULY 14 & 18, AUG. 11 & 25** Massachusetts Pesticide Exam, Waltham, Mass. Contact: 617/626-1786.

**JULY 18-21** Turfgrass Producers International Summer Convention & Field Days, Spokane, Wash. Contact: 800/405-8873.

**JULY 19** Metropolitan Detroit Landscape Association Mid-Summer Outdoor Expo, Novi, Mich. Contact: 248/646-4992.

**JULY 22-24** International Lawn, Garden & Power Equipment Expo, Louisville, Ky. Contact: 800/558-8767.

**JULY 24-25** Professional Lawn Care Association of America Legislative Day on the Hill, Washington, D.C. Contact: 800/458-3466.

**JULY 25** Midwest Regional Turf Field Day, West Lafayette, Ind. Contact: 765/494-8039.

**JULY 25-27** Pennsylvania Allied Nursery Trade Show, Fort Washington, Pa. Contact: 610/544-5775.

**JULY 27** Green Industry Professional Field Day and Trade Show, Washington, D.C. Contact: 703/250-1368.

**JULY 30-AUG. 1** Kansas/Missouri Nursery & Landscape Associations Trade Show, Kansas City, Mo. Contact: 816/233-1481.

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2

Every John Deere Front Mower (except for 1600 Wide-Area Mower) is designed with a unique geometry that ensures the rear of the machine stays within the cutting arc when turning. This permits these machines to trim closely but never run over flowerbeds, for instance.

Don't be surprised if the F735's performance blows you away.

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Best of all, a full-length welded C-channel side rail frame ensures it can survive any elements.

Interested in the affordable diesel F735 (or its gas-powered counterpart, the 20-hp F725)? Stop by your local John Deere dealer (call 1-800-537-8233 for one near you). You'll be on cloud nine.

5

Twin Touch® two-pedal control (found on all John Deere front mowers) works with the natural motion of your foot, and allows instantaneous direction changes.

USE READER SERVICE #46



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# Market Trends

(continued from page 13)

In 1999, industry shipments of gasoline-powered chain saws increased by 10 percent to more than 2 million units, and shipments of trimmers and brushcutters increased by 9 percent to more than 4 million units.

Gasoline-powered backpack blower and

edger shipments each increased by 15 percent in 1999, while hand-held blowers increased by only 2 percent. Shipments of cut-off saws and hedge trimmers also grew by 19 percent and 8 percent respectively.

Industry shipments for the year 2000 are also expected to increase, but at a lesser per-

centage than in 1999. Backpack blowers are forecasted to enjoy the greatest shipment growth – 10 percent – in the year 2000. Cut-off saws are next in line at an 8 percent increase in shipments; then edgers at 6 percent; hand-held blowers at 5 percent; brushcutters at 3 percent and chain saw shipments at only 1 percent.

## On the WEB

University of Illinois Turfgrass Program – [www.turf.uiuc.edu](http://www.turf.uiuc.edu)

Growth Products – [www.growthproducts.com](http://www.growthproducts.com)

Eagle Point – [www.eaglepoint.com](http://www.eaglepoint.com)

Atlanta Lawn – [www.atlantalawn.com](http://www.atlantalawn.com)

Dow AgroSciences – [www.dowagro.com/turf](http://www.dowagro.com/turf)

PBI/Gordon Corp/weed control – [www.weedalert.com](http://www.weedalert.com)

Environmental Protection Agency – [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)

Easy Lawn – [www.easylawn.com](http://www.easylawn.com)

To announce a new Web site, e-mail [nwisniewski@lawnandlandscape.com](mailto:nwisniewski@lawnandlandscape.com).

### INDUSTRY NEWS

## Bruce Wilson Leaves ECI

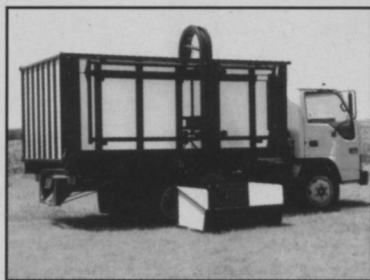
CALABASAS, CALIF. – Environmental Industries Inc. (EII) made key management transitions while the company is experiencing its most significant growth to date.

EII appointed its Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Richard Sperber, to president of Environmental Care Inc. (ECI), EII's landscape maintenance company. Sperber replaces Bruce Wilson, who will continue to assume a leadership role with an e-commerce company in which EII has an eq-

(continued on page 18)

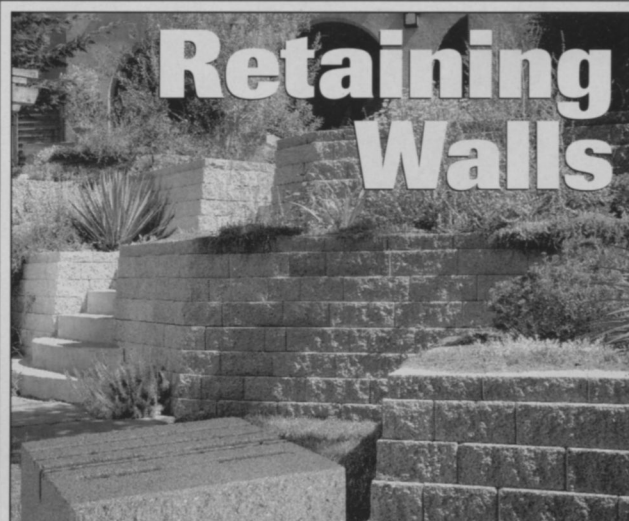
## Hughes Trailer Saves Time & Labor

The Dump&Go Trailer from Hughes Manufacturing is a time saver and a labor reducer. Back up to the side basket, dump the material and either push the swing out button or the optional remote hand-held transmitter. This activates the Dump&Go System. As you drive away, the basket dumps automatically into the trailer and returns to the ground. The live bottom floor of the box is a moving floor chain hydraulically operated by a gas engine in the trailer. Unloading normally takes less than a minute when full. Plastic lining in the grass container keeps grass clippings from corroding the box.



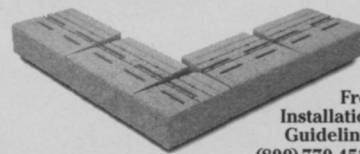
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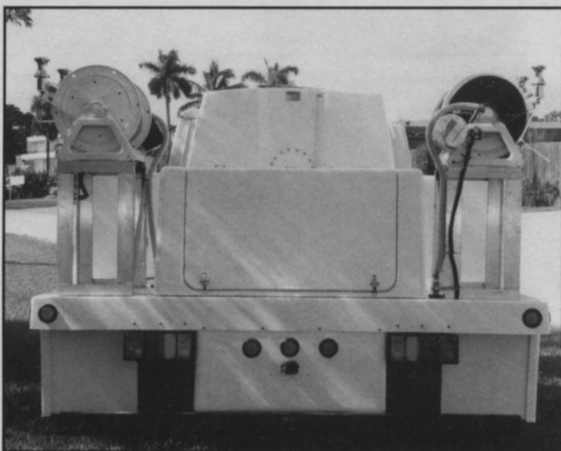
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**USE READER SERVICE #47**



# Market Trends

(continued from page 16)

uity interest. Sperber will also retain his responsibilities as president of EII's Valley Crest division.

## INDUSTRY NEWS

### Novartis Required to Sell Off New Fungicide

BASEL, Switzerland—The merger of Novartis Agribusiness' and AstraZeneca PLC's agricultural chemical businesses cost Novartis one of its more exciting new technologies.

The United States Federal Trade Commission (FTC) ruled that the company must sell its FLINT® business, which is the line of fungicide products sold in the golf, landscape and ornamental markets worldwide, including the new turf product Compass™.

To move the merger forward, Novartis announced that it has initiated the divestment of its FLINT business. However, this

(continued on page 20)

## People

**Greg Pieschala** joined Environmental Industries Inc. as executive vice president.

**David Hanson** left Environmental Care Inc. as senior technical officer and senior vice president to pursue other opportunities closer to his Northern California home.

Sweepster promoted **Patrick Robertson** to vice president of manufacturing.

Mitsubishi Fuso Truck of America promoted **John Mackey** to director of fleet sales.

The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute named **William Harley** president and chief executive officer and successor to **Dennis Dix**.

**Rick Keup** was appointed president and chief executive officer of L.R. Nelson Corp.

**Peter Luchsinger** was promoted to president of The Drip Store.

Boss named **Rick Klann** sales manager of construction equipment products.

The Dow Chemical Co. appointed **Elin Miller** to head of the Global Urban Pest Business Unit for Dow AgroSciences.

Bri-Mar Manufacturing appointed **Dawn Palmer** to designer and manufacturer of hydraulic dump trailers and **Kim Wilson** to human resource manager.



Robertson(top), Pieschala



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**USE READER SERVICE #15**

# Market Trends

*(continued from page 18)*

divestment will not take place until the shareholders of Novartis and AstraZeneca, and antitrust authorities, approve the Syngenta merger.

The FLINT products are second-generation strobilurin with a broad spectrum of applications, and the FTC has apparently balked at allowing the merged companies to own this technology as well as the strobilurin products owned by AstraZeneca.

The planned sale includes the entire FLINT business, including all property rights – patents and trademarks – as well as the production facilities in Muttentz, Switzerland. Novartis expects the buyer to employ all of the approximately 90 employees at the Muttentz facility.

Announced Dec. 2, 1999, the proposed merger to create Syngenta AG involves combining Novartis' Crop Protection and Seeds businesses and AstraZeneca's Zeneca Agrochemicals business. The companies are still awaiting final merger approval from the U.S. and European antitrust authorities. A shareholder vote on the deal has been scheduled for Oct. 11. □

## Association NEWS

The **Mid-American Horticultural Trade Show** board of directors held elections for its new officers. Bliss Nicholson was elected president, Larry Thalmann III was elected vice president, Richard Worth was elected secretary and John Hendricksen was elected treasurer. Two new directors were also appointed: Kurt Meyer and Greg Oltman.

The **Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE)** launched a program to attract new members from pesticide formulation and distribution companies. Part of this program includes the distribution of a new brochure, which outlines RISE membership opportunities and includes testimonials from specialty pesticide industry leaders. To receive a copy of the brochure or to become a member, call RISE at 202/872-3860 or visit [www.pestfacts.org](http://www.pestfacts.org).

The **American Horticultural Society** announced its 2000 annual award winners. Some of the winners include: Frank Cabot, who received the Liberty Hyde Bailey Award for making a significant contribution in horticulture education; William Carlson, who received the H. Marc Cathey Award for horticultural research; and Pierre Bennerup, who received the Commercial Award for outstanding individual service in commercial horticulture. For information on additional award recipients, please call 703/768-5700 or visit [www.ahs.org](http://www.ahs.org).

The Las Vegas Chapter of the **Nevada Landscape Association** named its 2000-2001 board members. John Cerul is past president, John Marman is president, Ralph Hollander is president elect, Bruce Royer is secretary-treasurer, and Helen Stone, Don Crawford and Kalyn Foster are directors.



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# DID YOU KNOW

*that the world's first mini skid steer was developed in 1981 from the concept of a motorized wheelbarrow?*

Yes, that's correct! In 1981, shortly after their founding in 1978 on Australia's East Coast, the Jaden Group of Companies developed the world's first "stand on" mini skid steer loader from the concept of a domestic use motorized wheelbarrow. Jaden Group owners and joint managing directors Alan Porter and Doug McIlwraith (who began working together in the design and engineering fields in 1963) used their complimentary talents, skills and wealth of experience to create the mini skid, originally called a "Dingo."

Parent company Jaden Group introduced these units to the North American market through Kanga Loaders USA in 1997 after major upgrades and a name change to "Kanga." Sales to the North American market were immediate, and now Kanga has a rugged 19 year history of use in all manner of industries (including the abusive rental industry) in Australia, North America, South Pacific and Asian countries. The success of the Kanga Loader in North America is due to Jaden's commitment to ongoing development. Alan Porter, President of Kanga Loaders USA, says "We developed the world's first and it is thrilling to see our efforts over the past 20 years go well into the millenium to now have the most superior mini loader on the market in North America. I challenge anyone to compare the Kanga with others on the market."

Kanga - the first and the best from the world leaders in mini loader technology. See comments from REAL everyday end users and judge for yourself!



We purchased a Kanga approximately 18 months ago and it's one of the best investments we've made to our large rental fleet. We rent out four machines basically on a full time basis. It's the ultimate partner! - *Jimmy Lafferty, Knox Equipment Rentals (tel. 610-696-2996)*

We purchased our Kanga in April. I could go on and on about how our Kanga saves us time and money on every job we do. I could write a book on how easily it gets into tight spaces and makes us more competitive in the marketplace by saving labor. Overall, the Kanga is the most productive tool/machine in our inventory! - *Mike Hennessey, Hennessey Landscape Service, NH (tel. 603-382-7715)*

CG Wilkop who has been in the business for over 50 years has never seen production increase so much as when we started using the Kanga Loader. We decided on two different front loaders to "compete" on an actual job. The Kanga's performance on multiple tasks won hands down. - *Jason Tester, CG Wilkop Landscaping Inc., MI, (tel. 248-828-0030)*

David Johnson of the 'The Outsider Landscape Design,' in Ohio purchased a Kanga recently. The Kanga soon proved to not only deliver the advertised expectations, but exceed them as well. The savings for David's first job reduced the labor cost by 29 percent. David reported back to Kanga of his enthusiasm as he found the Kanga's performance to be powerful, versatile and extraordinary. - *David Johnson, The Outsider Landscape Design, OH (tel. 513-899-9753)*



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## Avoiding the Killer Curve (continued from page 10)

There are a number of relevant implications that can be learned from The Killer Curve scenario. Following are several common possibilities:

- *In itself, entrepreneurial drive isn't enough to sustain a business.* It has only been recently that corporate America seems to have discovered the value of entrepreneurship and is now encouraging it. But sometimes the drive, talent and experience required to start an enterprise is not enough to keep it going.

- *There's a tendency to be seduced by growth.* Without an understanding of what is fueling company sales, there's a tendency to believe that a magic sales formula has been discovered. Preoccupation with growth can serve to mask what lies ahead. There is often a failure to recognize what drives initial business growth, whether it's goodwill capital earned by company founders, a relationship with a particular manufacturer or supplier,

or partnering with an organization whose job it is to feed sales.

- *Short-term thinking becomes long-term strategy.* A company can be so focused on making sales that it fails to develop a strategy for integrating the various units. The short term can be so appealing and exciting that management neglects the next phase.

- *There's no marketing strategy.* The entrepreneurial attitude dominating organizations can reach a point where their total emphasis is on making sales. There is no recognition of a need to create a brand identity that differentiates the company and establishes in the customer's mind the benefits of doing business with one particular firm.

- *A failure to factor in change.* A company's ability to deliver extraordinary service gives it a brand identity.


The Killer Curve is a dramatic portrayal of both success and failure. There are many

times when a rising growth curve is the right time to sell.

Start-up companies aren't the only ones that fall victim to The Killer Curve. Companies that have been in business for decades can experience its effects, particularly:

- Companies that have "more business than we can handle." They assume the sales curve will go up forever.

- Companies that rely on acquisitions. The infusion of new business often masks a lack of real sales growth.

Can any business inevitably be cast down by The Killer Curve? Only if marketing is missing from its entrepreneurial plan. Leave marketing out and chances are the killer will strike. — John Graham 

The author is president of Graham Communications, a marketing services and sales consulting firm. He can be reached at 617/328-0069 or [j\\_graham@grahamcomm.com](mailto:j_graham@grahamcomm.com).

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USE READER SERVICE #17



# Market Trends

## Letters TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

In the May issue of *Lawn & Landscape*, a number of questions were raised regarding Turfco's use of direct sales in the lawn and landscape industry. In fact, these questions provide an opportunity to clarify issues surrounding the marketing strategy of Turfco Direct, the distribution arm for Turfco's lawn care products, as well as the general concept of direct sales in the lawn and landscape industry.

An important distinction is often missed or ignored when the topic turns to direct sales of lawn and landscape products. Consider the following questions after reading the last few issues of *Lawn & Landscape*. Is the service level required by a zero-turning radius mower equal to that of an aerator or edger? Does it take a good mechanic two hours to assemble a sod cutter? Do dealers generally have parts for renovation products in stock?

Lumping sod cutters, edgers, aerators or other highly seasonal equipment into the same category as a new zero-turning radius mower does not provide a realistic picture of direct sales in our industry – even if it is convenient to do so. Clearly, Turfco Direct believes direct selling is highly effective for its lawn care renovation equipment, but our use of direct sales cannot be compared to entities such as Amazon.com, or for that matter, suppliers of zero-turning radius mowers. We simply analyzed the benefits of directly selling Turfco products – not zero-turn mowers and definitely not books or cars. If comparisons must be made, keep this distinction in mind. Turfco Direct is not interested in direct sales for the sake of direct sales. In fact, dealers in some areas sell our lawn care products. We believe in direct sales only as an effective method of distribution for our specific products. If this changes, we will change, as well.

Now that proper distinctions have been made, we can turn our attention to the true issue behind direct sales in our industry.

Equipment suppliers should not tell contractors what to value – contractors must decide this for themselves. Instead, manufacturers should simply produce top-quality products that perform effectively, sell them at fair prices, distribute them in an efficient, cost-effective manner and provide easy servicing options.

If value is the true measuring stick by which contractors evaluate their equipment, then it is essential not only to examine new methods of supplying equipment to the marketplace, but existing models, as well. The catch is this: when examining the "status quo," we must be prepared not only to evaluate the results, but to take action.

Here are some factors that make direct sales of Turfco products appealing:

- Contractors benefit from dealing with a Turfco Direct representative who is fully versed in the features and advantages of our aerators, seeders, edgers and sod cutters. Typical two-step

dealers don't sell highly seasonal products on a daily or even weekly basis, and often they have limited knowledge of the products with which to advise contractors.

- Turfco Direct is the factory and the warehouse for everything it builds. Availability of parts is superior to the two-step model. In fact, more than 50,000 parts are an 800-phone call away. What could be better or faster than a direct line to the parts source and the factory service manager?

- Turfco Direct can have parts in a contractor's hands the morning after they are ordered for the price of overnight UPS service. How many dealers carry parts for highly seasonal products such as aerators and seeders? In most cases, dealers need to order parts from a distributor, who, in turn, must order from the manufacturer. This process takes more time than ordering products online, even if the original part is ordered correctly and doesn't need to be reordered.

- Since Turfco products are designed to be easily serviceable by the contractors and with factory service knowledge (not just a factory trained service person) a phone call away, many of these problems can be solved by the contractor. If warranty work is needed, contractors can call Turfco Direct for a factory authorized warranty dealer in the area or take the equipment to a certified servicing dealer.

- Turfco continues to sign up service dealers as revenue shifts from whole goods sales to parts and service work. Even John Deere is beginning to ask its dealers to provide universal service. Mark Rostvold, senior vice president of John Deere's worldwide commercial & consumer equipment division, stated in the March 2000 issue of *Lawn & Landscape* that he believes there will be half as many dealers and the proportion of their revenue will shift from mostly whole goods sales to mostly parts sales and service work.

Turfco Direct's strategy is simple. Direct sales is simply a method to put Turfco products in contractors' hands in an efficient and service-oriented manner. Contractors should decide for themselves if that provides the value they need.

*Bob Brophy, director of lawn products  
Turfco Direct, Minneapolis, Minn.*

*If you would like to express your opinion in a Letter to the Editor, please send your letter along with your name, title, company name and location to Letter to the Editor, Lawn & Landscape, 4012 Bridge Ave., Cleveland, Ohio 44113. Or send your letter via e-mail to [nwisniewski@lawnandlandscape.com](mailto:nwisniewski@lawnandlandscape.com).*





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# THE REST

USE READER SERVICE #48



## Dursban Defeated

The Food Quality Protection Act has claimed its most significant organophosphate victim: chlorpyrifos.

Dow AgroSciences has reached a "memorandum of agreement" with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to voluntarily withdraw chlorpyrifos from most uses in and around residences. The announcement came one day before EPA held a technical briefing stating that all urban pesticide uses of chlorpyrifos exceed the agency's recommended exposure limits.

Dow AgroSciences will begin monitoring a plan to deplete the existing supply of chlorpyrifos and remove it from the distribution chain by the end of 2001.

Chlorpyrifos is the active ingredient in Dursban insecticide and is used in hundreds of products worldwide.

According to Mike Shaw, Dow AgroSciences' global policy leader for chlorpyrifos, all outdoor residential uses, except for fire ant mound and mosquito control, will be eliminated, as well as all outdoor, non-residential uses, except for golf courses and roadside medians. Applications of chlorpyrifos to these areas cannot exceed 1 pound of active ingredient per acre.

All emulsifiable, concentrated formulations will be labeled as restricted-use pesticides.

From Dow AgroSciences' perspective, the only good news to come out of the assessment was that re-entry intervals in nurseries and greenhouses were not substantially changed.

This is the first significant product ban impacting urban applicators since FQPA's enactment in 1996, which charged EPA with reviewing hundreds of pesticides used in agricultural and urban environments. The law is designed to protect children, in particular, from the toxic effects of pesticides.

Essentially, the downfall of chlorpyrifos came as the result of a revised risk assessment implemented by EPA, which includes a 10-fold safety factor for children. EPA rejected all human data studies – a reversal of the agency's long-standing policy – and added an uncertainty factor extrapolated to humans, Shaw said.

Dow AgroSciences officials maintain that the safety factor EPA introduced is not used anywhere else in the world and that the accuracy of the studies is question-

*(continued on page 30)*

### INDUSTRY NEWS

## Q & A With Dow AgroSciences

**Q.** What is the agreement?

**A.** The agreement that Dow AgroSciences announced includes a voluntary cancellation of most in- and around-the-home uses of chlorpyrifos in the United States. Use of products affected by this agreement will be allowed until existing stocks are depleted.

Chlorpyrifos will remain available for various U.S. nonresidential uses, such as golf courses and ornamental nurseries, as well as for all U.S. crop uses, except tomatoes.

**Q.** Why are these uses being phased out?

**A.** In EPA's eyes, the use patterns that came under scrutiny presented the highest potential for exposure to children. Ultimately, that led to the focus on residential uses and uses on fruits and vegetables. Other uses with less potential exposure to children will remain on the label.

**Q.** Do you believe this is just the beginning of more restrictions on other products?

**A.** Yes. This is, by no means, the end of the story for our industry. All of the pesticide products you use today will be evaluated under FQPA in the months and years to come. Your continued involvement is critical.

**Q.** Should I be concerned about potential litigation now that these uses have been discontinued?

**A.** It is possible that there may be an increase in the number of claims allegedly related to the use of chlorpyrifos products. Dow AgroSciences remains convinced of the safety of chlorpyrifos products for all labeled uses and is committed to their legal defense.

**Q.** Should my customers who have had chlorpyrifos applications in and around their homes be concerned?

**A.** No. While the regulatory standards have changed, the safety profile of chlorpyrifos has not.

**Q.** What should I do with chlorpyrifos products I have in stock now? How long can I continue to use these products? If I encounter any problems, whom can I talk to?

**A.** Talk to your Dow AgroSciences representative, or visit [www.chlorpyrifos.com](http://www.chlorpyrifos.com).

## CAMPUS GROUNDS MANAGER MASTERMINDED ESPIONAGE PLOT

“Somehow he knew every-  
thing” says awed crew “it was  
uncanny.”



Keith Macdonald's work crews at Bridgewater State College campus swear he's a master spy, or psychic. "He knows when we've sprayed off an area with Finale<sup>®</sup> Herbicide without us even telling him," said a crew member "sometimes only 24 hours after the job's done." Keith laughs. "When it gets busy and I can't check with everyone, I simply drive around and see the results. It only takes a day or two for Finale to work. A month later, the area's still clear." But it wasn't always so easy. As assistant facilities director on the Massachusetts campus, Keith used to use the leading systemic herbicide. "It took 2 weeks before I knew I had a take," he says, "drove me crazy." Keith also likes Finale's ability to create perfectly clean edges around beds and baseball fields. "It's the no-creep feature," he says, "the one my crews apply to me."

*Pest control everyone can feel good about.*



# Breaking News

(continued from page 28)

able because dose levels are thousands of times higher than actual use.

"Under the preliminary risk assessment, potential risks associated with ready-to-use products, granular turf applications and turf treatments were manageable," Shaw said. "A revised risk assessment results in residual risk of cancer for all users of chlorpyrifos in and around the home."

In a *Lawn & Landscape* survey, 86 percent of contractors said they expect EPA to ban or severely limit other classes of pesticides as part of its ongoing pesticide re-evaluation.

EPA received more than 4,000 letters during the traditional public comment period. Of those, 3,700 (from university experts, user organizations and user groups) supported chlorpyrifos, while 300 opposed its use, most expressing their discontent in form letters.

Disappointed officials from Dow AgroSciences reached these conclusions regarding EPA's risk assessment:

- EPA rejected the scientific community's opinions and recommendations.

- EPA's science policies are inconsistent with regulatory agencies worldwide.

- Many scientific policy choices EPA made have nothing to do with FQPA.

- EPA listens to user opinions and needs only when it's in its own political interests.

Industry organizations have expressed that EPA's move is not likely to enhance the health and safety of Americans.

"A pediatrician in charge of a poison control center in Seattle said that he sees more kids in his center from insect bite allergies because the insects weren't controlled with pesticides than from pesticide poisoning," pointed out Tom Delaney, executive director, Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA), Atlanta, Ga. "Pesticides are an easy thing to blame."

According to PLCAA research, Dursban's cancellation will greatly affect lawn care companies in the East, where there have been recent infestation problems, and in the West, where they are battling crainflies. Still, not one PLCAA member contractor reported customer complaints or questions about the

Dursban cancellation, Delaney reported.

Most contractors who answered the *Lawn & Landscape* survey said that Dursban was an inexpensive product with a broad spectrum of control, and that all contractors will have to spend additional money to find another product or group of products that offer the same level of control.

Other contractors blamed those who use pesticides irresponsibly for Dursban's cancellation and said other products may also be discontinued if safer application measures aren't taken. "Contractors whose priorities are revenue over responsible applications have caused another tool to go by the wayside, and that is unfortunate," lamented Gary Roux, president, Grounds Crew, Monroeville, Pa. "This industry needs to wake up and work together to put the environment first."

Dow AgroSciences, which has invested more than \$100 million in data collection on chlorpyrifos, reported that the chemical's safety has not changed, "but we're dealing with a new set of rules in the United States."

- Cindy Code



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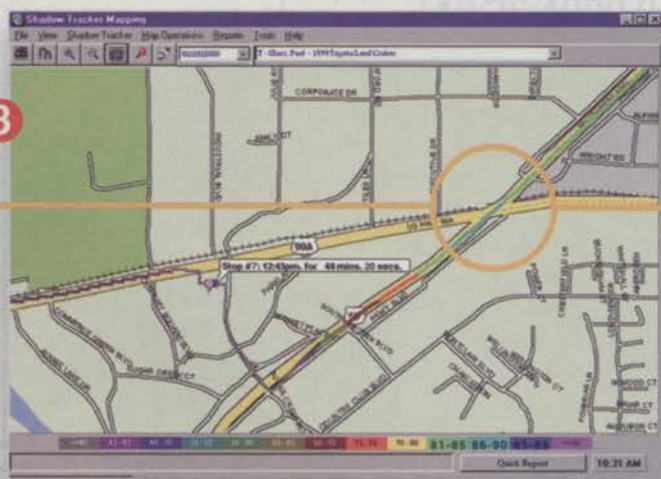
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2000, GMC C1500 Wednesday March 8, 2000

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| 6:28AM     | 11:18AM   | 04:50         | S-Your Company Office     | 0.00    |
| 11:19AM    | 11:22AM   | 00:03         | In Transit                | 1.10    |
| 11:22AM    | 11:27AM   | 00:05         | L-Exxon Gas Station       | 0.00    |
| 11:28AM    | 11:31AM   | 00:03         | In Transit                | 1.10    |
| 11:31AM    | 4:14PM    | 04:43         | S-Your Company Office     | 0.00    |
| 4:14PM     | 4:17PM    | 00:03         | In Transit                | 1.18    |
| 4:17PM     | 4:19PM    | 00:02         | L-Grand & Hwy 90          | 0.00    |
| 4:19PM     | 4:36PM    | 00:17         | In Transit                | 15.01   |
| 4:36PM     | 6:50PM    | 02:14         | B-Home, Employee U.       | 0.00    |
| 6:50PM     | 6:54PM    | 00:04         | In Transit                | 1.61    |
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## Weed Man, Big Names Team Up

Last fall, Canada's largest lawn care operation fired a shot across the bow of the world's largest lawn care company.

"There are a lot of landscape contractors who are re-examining the way they handle their chemical lawn care work either because they've subcontracted the work to TruGreen-ChemLawn and they don't want to do that anymore since TruGreen-ChemLawn has gotten into landscape work, or these contractors have realized how strong the margins are in lawn care," said Terry Kurth in *Lawn & Landscape's* November 1999 issue.

At the time, Weed Man outlined a strategy to expand its franchised lawn care system throughout the United States via a plan that would include a series of master franchisors who would purchase the rights to sell franchises throughout their own territory.

Now, Weed Man has begun moving on its plan to build what it expects to be the second-largest lawn care company in the United States within five years. Company officials are projecting to sell 100 franchises within the next five years and 400 to 500 franchises within 10 years. Some of the industry's biggest names have purchased the first master franchise territories:

- Terry Kurth and Bob Ottley are past presidents of the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA).
- Jon Cundiff is very involved in PLCAA and the Mid-America Green Industry Council.
- Ken Heltemes built one of the largest and most respected Barefoot Grass franchises.
- Steve Russell owns one of Michigan's largest lawn care companies.
- Phil Fogarty owned one of the largest lawn care companies in Cleveland, Ohio, before selling that to Scotts Lawn Service.

These subfranchisors purchased exclusive rights to territories containing approximately 10 to 13 million people, and they will now begin selling anywhere from 65 to 85 franchises within their territories. The subfranchisors will retain a portion of the royalty fees paid by the franchises they sell, with the remaining royalties going to Turf Holdings Inc., the master Weed Man franchise company for the United States. In addition,

the subfranchisors will turn their current lawn care companies, which represent combined annual revenue of nearly \$5 million, into Weed Man operations.

"I think we've really put together an 'A team' here," noted Kurth. "Managing a business is OK, but building a business is where most of us want to be. We're entrepreneurs."

**WHAT THEY'RE THINKING.** One of the most interesting aspects of these announcements has to be the caliber of individuals who have signed on as subfranchisors. These are not people who struggled to achieve profitability or build successful businesses. A logical question, then, is why they are making this investment.

"When my non-compete was done [after selling to TruGreen-ChemLawn], I had a couple of people contact me to talk about developing a new franchise company, but I felt that developing the computer software, the systems and the licensing was a lot of effort I didn't want to take on," noted Kurth, also a Barefoot Grass veteran. "Then I came to Toronto to talk to Weed Man, and I got excited by the infrastructure already in place.

"Also, a lot of us have grown a company to \$750,000 to \$2 million, and we wanted to continue growing, but we decided that growth would create a whole new animal that would be difficult to manage," Kurth continued. "This model gives us the opportunity to parlay our knowledge into growth for others."

"Our company started as a pest control company in 1931, and we added lawn care in 1982," explained Steve Russell president, Eradico, Farmington Hills, Mich. "We went through the rigors of starting the



Some of the key players in Weed Man's plan to expand its franchise network throughout the U.S. (from top to bottom): Ottley, Fogarty, Heltemes, Russell and Cundiff.

(continued on page 34)





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# Special Report

(continued from page 32)

lawn care service, and I'm convinced that we would be between 2 and 2½ times the size we are today had we had the Weed Man system in place back in 1982."

"I don't think our timing could be better in terms of the state of the lawn care industry with Leisure Lawn now being gone (after being acquired by TruGreen-ChemLawn in June)," explained Fogarty. "A lot of people have been gobbled up in mergers, but some people don't want to work for TruGreen-ChemLawn, and this gives them an alternative. At the same time, there are a lot of customers out there who are going to be looking for someone who is going to provide the value that Weed Man has always stood for."

Discussions with other potential subfranchisors continue in the Pacific Northwest, California and Texas markets, and this team is confident of its ability to attract interested lawn care professionals to the program.




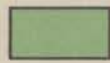
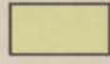


"I predict we will have sold out all the subfranchisor territories within the next year," related Kurth.

There are two fee structures for purchasing a franchise. For areas with populations up to 150,000 people, the fee is \$20,000, and up to 300,000 people, the franchise will cost \$33,000.

Weed Man will supplement growth of franchise sales by opening one corporate store per year. The company has corporate stores in Denver, Minneapolis and Seattle to go along with franchisees in Portland and Albany, Ore., Springfield, Ill., and Rochester, N.Y. The next store will be in Detroit, Mich., and Weed Man will sign a franchise agreement with Russell to operate in that area.

"We used these stores and franchises to learn the differences between the U.S. and Canadian markets, and this taught us that marketing is very similar and our closing rates are fairly consistent in the two areas," noted Roger Mongeon, president of Turf Management and Turf Operations, the two holding companies that own master franchise rights to the United States for Weed Man. "We are very confident we can export our system to the United States." — Bob West

## Weed Man/ Turf Holdings

|   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
|  | Jon Cundiff                 |
|  | Ken Heltemes                |
|  | Bob Ottley and Phil Fogarty |
|  | Steve Russell               |
|  | Terry Kurth                 |
|  | John Sanders                |
|  | To be named                 |

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# Nursery Market Report

## PERENNIALS

# High-Voltage Verbenas

Y2K has been a banner year for verbenas with new series and growth habits. You can find a place for each in the landscape.

Verbenas have come far in recent years. Perennial, vegetatively propagated verbenas, not their annual cousins, are considered staples in mixed flower gardens.

Recently, landscape contractors have been using award-winning varieties like Homestead Purple and Biloxi Blue everywhere. Series like the Tapien have become equally popular and useful because of their ground-hugging growth habit.

The Tapien blue-violet and New Gold lantana is one low-maintenance combination to consider planting. Tapien lavender and pink also perform exceptionally well.

Temari verbenas came out a couple years ago, and my first thought was they would never take the South's heat. Well, they did and have returned from its winters, too.

**PLANTING GUIDELINES.** For success with any of these perennial types, proper soil preparation comes first. Add 3 to 4 inches of organic matter and till it to a depth of 8 to 10 inches. While doing this, spread 2 pounds per 100 square feet of a slow-release fertilizer, like a 12-6-6, 8-8-8 or a similar mix. Make sure plants get full sunlight and plenty of water.

Although verbenas are vigorous plants that bloom for weeks, they will eventually look a little weak. This is the time to cut them back and side dress with a little fertilizer. The plants will send out new runners and produce more blooms.

You may need to do this twice in a long season, but that is how you have verbenas bloom in spring, summer and fall. Leaving those long stems will promote problems and cause the plants to look unsightly.

**NEW VARIETIES.** This season looks great for us verbenas lovers. These new verbenas are perennial in zones seven through 10 under good management, but they are worthy as annual plantings in other zones.

**Babylon Series.** This series came to us via the breeding of Novartis. Proven Winners

There are a number of exciting perennial, vegetatively propagated verbenas to experiment with in the landscape. Try

Tortuga Light Pink (right) or Temari Patio Pink (inset).

Photos: Norman Winter



purchased the Babylons and introduced Light Blue, Lilac, Pink and Neon Rose. Novartis now has the Babylon White and Babylon Purple.

Babylon is an improvement over Tapiens, with more and larger flowers that appear the entire season.

**Tukana Series.** Novartis also bred the Tukana Series. Proven Winners offers Tukana Bright Red, Bright Pink and Violet, while Novartis offers Tukana Denim Blue and Salmon Pink. The Tukana flowers are large, and the plant is vigorous and resists disease.

**Temari Patio Series.** From Proven Winners, these verbenas are more upright, compact and bushy. Colors are electric blue, pink, hot pink and rose.

**Other options.** Ball Flora Plant introduced the Wildfire Series. The series includes Dark Lavender, which is similar to Biloxi Blue, Purple Blush, Lavender Pink and Rose. Also, look for the Aztec Series, which looks a lot like the Tapiens but a little more upright in habit. With seven colors in the series, there is a shade to suit almost every taste. — by Norman Winter

The author is a horticulturist with the Central Mississippi Research & Extension Center in Raymond, Miss. E-mail: normanw@ext.msstate.edu

## For More Information

...on the plant material featured in this article, check out these Web sites:

Novartis (S&G): [www.novartis.com](http://www.novartis.com)

Proven Winners: [www.provenwinners.com](http://www.provenwinners.com)

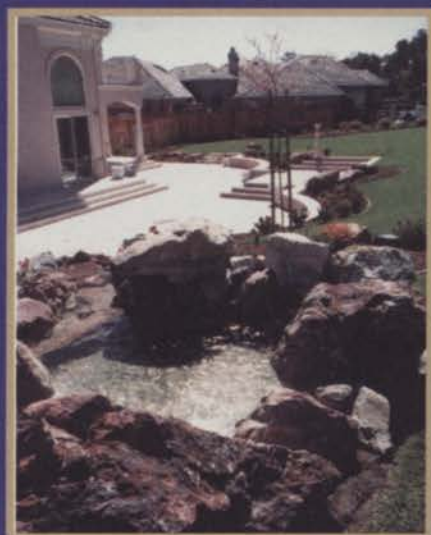
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# In Minor's League

**Q:** I am the owner of a \$1.5 million landscape company. What should my responsibilities be?

**A:** I suspect your question relates as much to how your role transitions in the organization as your company grows as it does to anything else. This is indeed an age-old question in entrepreneurial organizations. Regardless of whether you operate a \$1.5 million company, a \$250,000 company or even a \$3 million company, there are some absolutes when it comes to running your business. Granted, there are unique challenges at all of these levels, but there are some key leadership roles you should be playing.

First and foremost, the most important role you should be focused on in your company is being the visionary. Defining where your company is going and leading your staff in that direction is critical. This may appear to be a trite response, yet I can assure you as I have visited with landscape contractors in past years, I am amazed at what little attention they pay to this all-important area.

## Editor's

## Note



*One of the most popular speakers at the 2000 Lawn & Landscape School of Management was David Minor, founder and former president of Minor's Landscape Services, a \$12 million company in Fort Worth, Texas, that Minor sold to TruGreen-ChemLawn in 1998.*

*In this monthly column, Minor shares his thoughts, ideas and*

*suggestions for managing a lawn and landscape business.*

*In addition to serving the industry as a consultant and speaker, Minor is professor and director of The Entrepreneurship Center at The M.J. Neeley School of Business at Texas Christian University. Readers with questions they would like to ask Minor can e-mail them to [bwest@lawnandlandscape.com](mailto:bwest@lawnandlandscape.com) or fax them to Lawn & Landscape at 216/961-0364.*

Oftentimes, the owner is putting out so many fires and doing so much detail work that the goal of creating a vision and cultivating that vision throughout the company gets put on the back burner as a task to get to later.

You've no doubt heard the phrase: "work *on* the business, not *in* the business." This is easier said than done, especially when you have six angry customers calling, your operations manager just gave two weeks notice and you have four major proposals due in the next two days.

Consider what may have happened if you had defined the vision, created a team with which to make it happen and regularly communicated with your staff about what it would take to achieve your goals. Possibly, someone else would be dealing with the angry customer, or better yet, there wouldn't be six angry customers. Maybe you would have someone "on the grapevine" to replace the operations manager, and possibly there would be someone competent to field those bids.

Sound too simple? The point is, if you spend more time planning than putting out fires, your life would be much easier as the chief executive officer of a company.

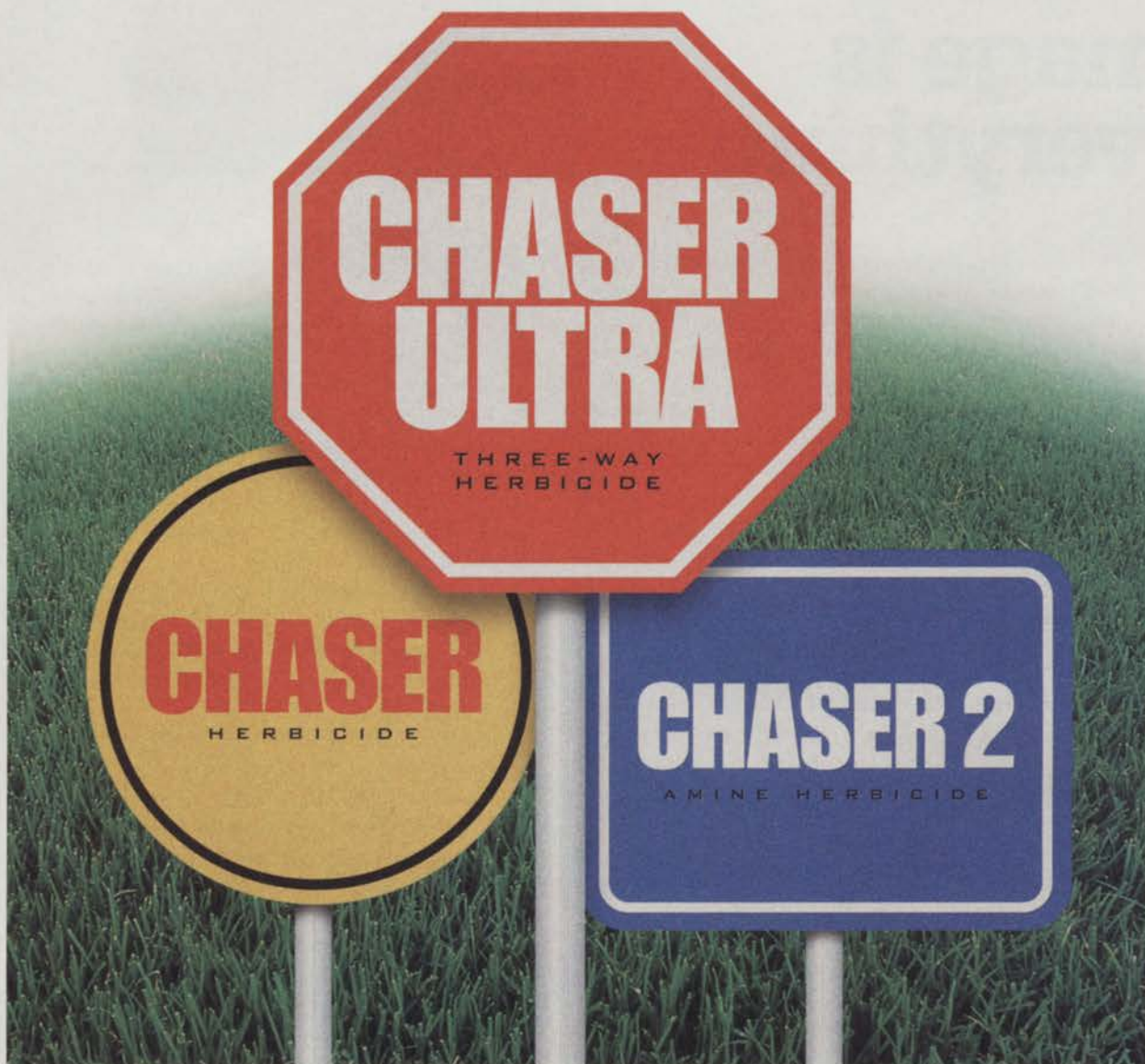
Creating a vision, though, is not enough. You also have to establish a positive culture in your organization. This culture should be focused on serving the customer and making his or her experience a satisfying one. This culture should also be one obsessed with efficiency so products can be delivered in a more cost effective manner. Finally, this culture should be focused on satisfying your staff by providing an environment where your staff feels challenged, appreciated and rewarded.

Your job as the business leader is to foster this environment. If you do, your life as a business leader will become easier and more rewarding. Certainly, you will still have to deal with problems – and there will be problems. But you will be so much farther along than those who don't spend the time envisioning, communicating the vision and creating a first class customer- and employee-centered culture. **LL**

**First and foremost,**  
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in your **company**  
is being the  
**visionary.**



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## Image is Everything

To compete against bigger, better budgeted companies, smaller contractors must convey a professional image. By doing this, clients will view the company as an operation that has the skills, knowledge and values to manage their landscaping needs.

Image is something every company has to continually work on, with set policies and procedures that focus on improving and maintaining a professional image. To start, ask customers for their opinions – they are always willing to offer ideas for service improvement.

Smaller landscape contractors have many opportunities throughout the season to improve their image. The tools they use every day can accomplish this without incurring additional expenses.

**POINTS TO IMPROVE ON.** While they're often taken for granted, a contractor's vehicles are a huge image-enhancement opportunity. Today's larger landscape contractors have realized that their vehicles are the greatest marketing tools they have. If a large landscape contractor in your market sends out 50 trucks a day, how many people do you think will see those vehicles each day? These contractors get a bigger return on their vehicles than advertising on the radio.

Using vehicles to convey a professional image is common throughout many industries. Have you ever seen a dirty UPS or Coca-Cola truck? If your vehicles are dirty and need repair, people will notice, and that will affect their image of your company.

In addition, smaller companies tend to have real difficulties communicating with customers, which can do serious image damage. Larger firms have secretaries, voice-mail systems, cellular phones and middle management to maintain communication with their clients, while smaller companies usually have one person who does everything. Despite this fact, you need to develop procedures to make sure you return phone calls promptly and maintain communication with customers at all times. You must use today's technology to improve your customer service and your image.

Another way to improve your image is through uniforms. Imagine going to see a professional baseball game at Yankee Stadium and when you get there, the players are all wearing cut-off shorts, tank tops and work boots. Your first instinct would be to walk out of the ballpark, since the outfits they were wearing did not make them look like professional baseball players. If you were to stay and watch the game, however, you would see that they have the talent and skill to be professionals, but, without the uniforms, they do not represent professional athletes.

This is how your customers feel when you show up to work on their properties not wearing uniforms or dressed inappropriately. Uniforms represent professionalism and companies can improve their image by wearing them.

Being prepared to do a job can also improve your company's image. How would you feel if you hired a painter to paint your house and he showed up without a paint brush? You would lose a lot of confidence in that painter and would probably question his professionalism. The same holds true for when you show up to do a job without the right equipment or with the wrong plants. Proper planning and organization will help a small company maintain its professional image.


Have you ever thought about how your image affects your efforts to attract skilled people to your company? Professional people want to work for professional organizations. Since most small companies cannot afford to have recruiters on staff, they must rely on their image to attract candidates.

As the old saying goes: "image is everything." In an industry saturated with larger firms, smaller landscape contractors must focus on their own image to maintain their market share. If we all take some time to focus on our image, we will find many inexpensive ways to improve. – Tim Lynott

*The author is a consultant with Landscape Consulting Services, 1357 Splashing Brook Court, Eldersburg, Md. 21784. He can be reached at 410/795-6248.*

We want to know what smaller contractors are thinking. Send your comments and ideas for future "Mind Your Business" topics to [cgreenleaf@lawnandlandscape.com](mailto:cgreenleaf@lawnandlandscape.com)





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### WinnScapes

#### HEADQUARTERS:

Gahanna, Ohio

#### FOUNDED: 1981

**PRIMARY SERVICES:** 60 percent commercial and 40 percent residential. Service mix is 20 percent design/build, 15 percent bid, 40 percent lawn maintenance and mowing and 25 percent snow.

**1999 REVENUE:** \$3.5 million

**2000 PROJECTED REVENUE:** \$3 million (decreasing revenue to better manage current work)

**EMPLOYEES:** 30 year-round, 10 seasonal

#### THE PHILOSOPHY

##### MISSION STATEMENT:

If everyone in the industry is doing something a certain way, let's find a way to do it 10 times better.

##### FUTURE CHALLENGES:

Catching up from a 75 percent growth rate, making operations more consistent by creating a procedures manual and the successful transition of Rick Winnestaffer from president to absentee owner.

#### THE OWNER

##### Rick Winnestaffer

##### BACKGROUND:

Started mowing lawns at age 9 to earn spending money, then used his spending money to buy his first mower at age 12 and tractor at age 13. The full-time mowing service he started at 18 became a full-service landscape contracting company soon after.

by Nicole Wisniewski

*Being in business for the sake of doing business has enabled WinnScapes to expand its services and retain consistent growth.*

# Business FILTER

The entrepreneurial life began early for Rick Winnestaffer.

As a 9-year-old, Winnestaffer, president of WinnScapes, Gahanna, Ohio, began mowing lawns to earn spending money. By age 12, he used this money to buy his first mower, and at age 13, his first tractor. Before he reached driving age, he owned his first truck.

Five years later, after graduating from high school in 1981, Winnestaffer focused on providing a full-time mowing service that soon blossomed into a full-service landscape company.

"I enjoy being in business for the sake of doing business," Winnestaffer enthused. "I knew as a kid that if I made \$2 mowing one lawn, then I could make \$20 mowing 10 lawns - a philosophy that I apply fairly consistently today."

Through simple solutions, the self-described "result-oriented" owner expanded WinnScapes' services to include snow plowing and created a property management division for real estate to turn a seasonal company into a year-round operation, while at the same time sustaining a 20 percent annual growth rate.

**ARE YOU BEING SERVED?** Although WinnScapes started out as a residential maintenance company, commercial accounts soon dominated the company's service mix. Once Winnestaffer had a few employees and the equipment to do the job, larger commercial projects seemed more feasible for the company because they provided more revenue per stop.

"We give the same level of maintenance to our commercial clients that we do to

our residential clients," Winnestaffer said. "By doing that, any contractor can be more than successful with commercial ac-  
(continued on page 44)

#### WinnScapes

6079 Taylor Road  
Gahanna, Ohio 43230  
614/866-9466

At a  
Glance



*Rick Winnestaffer, president of WinnScapes, on growth: "Growth is not always accomplished by what you make - growth is about what you can borrow. You have to be able to borrow money and leverage it in order to grow to a well-compensated size. Growing on a cash-only basis will restrict your true potential." Photo: Louie Borth*

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counts. For example, a 100 percent score can be given to a property that is maintained perfectly. A perfect score isn't going to be achieved every day on every job. If you consistently score 90 to 94 percent on a commercial property, you'll have no complaints. If you score 94 percent on a residential prop-

erty, you will still have complaints. Commercial property managers don't walk around with a martini at the end of the day inspecting every flower bed."

Once commercial maintenance became a comfortable fit for the company, snow plowing seemed like a natural add-on service since all it

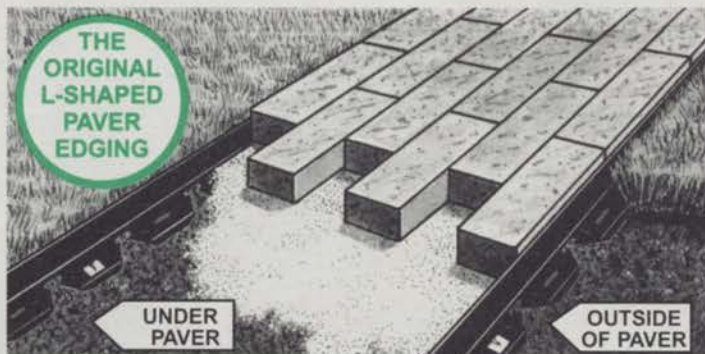
required was the purchase of plowing attachments for the company's fleet of trucks. Overhead from the equipment leases, labor and other costs were already on the books. So, just before the winter of 1983, Winnestaffer bought a pallet of salt and wondered if the company would use it all. Since then, snow plowing has grown into "the single most important service we provide," Winnestaffer said. Today, snow plowing and salting account for 75 percent of the company's profits despite being just 25 percent of its revenue.

"A lot of people view the landscape or snow plow business as seasonal," Winnestaffer said.

(continued on page 46)

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To offset this chance, a WinnScapes' employee who receives a ticket or gets in an accident due to unsafe driving practices must follow the company's driver safety policy and attend a driver training school through the Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

While the program has not been tracked enough to determine if the company's overall driving record has improved, President Rick Winnestaffer said the policy has helped him negotiate insurance rates with his carrier.

"This program is a cost-saving company activity," Winnestaffer said. "By implementing it, I saved 5 percent on my rates. If a company can save just 5 percent on all its payables, it'll win."

WinnScapes' driver safety policy not only benefits the company, but also helps employees. "By attending this remedial driving course, attendees get point deductions on their licenses," Winnestaffer said.

— Nicole Wisniewski

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## Cover Story

(continued from page 44)

"But together they provide the perfect combination. Each season you get an opportunity to start over. Whatever mistakes you made the season before can be corrected and values reprioritized so you get a chance to be better."

WinnScapes currently has 150 snow plow clients, more than its 100 maintenance cli-

ents or 100 design/build and bid clients. "Snow plowing creates an opportunity for us to get in the door that we didn't have before," Winnestaffer said. "The service also gives WinnScapes employees something to do during the winter months."

Snow doesn't fall every day, though, which

is where Winnestaffer's other company, WinnProperties, fills in the gaps.

Winnestaffer formed WinnProperties seven years ago when he bought rental properties as personal investments for tax and estate planning purposes. What started with an initial goal of 10 houses grew to 135 houses, currently nearing Winnestaffer's goal of 200 properties.

"WinnProperties is separate from WinnScapes, but there is some synergy there," he said. "When you are your own customer and you have flexibility in scheduling, you are presented with great opportunities during seasonal lows. On certain rain or slow days, for example, I can put a WinnProperties project, such as a rehabilitation or renovation, on the schedule."

**LESSON NO. 1.** WinnScapes' first employees were seven or eight of Winnestaffer's high school friends.

"Managing employees was easier then because we were competitive with one another," Winnestaffer said. "We were working and playing together. There wasn't a lot of bureaucracy. The hierarchy was simple - them and me. Now, with multiple levels of management, the process is more difficult. I don't just manage the people. I manage the managers who are managing the people, and there are different dynamics associated with that."

One of Winnestaffer's biggest challenges has been staffing and managing change adequately to retain employees. "Going through the consistent growth we've had has been difficult on staffing," Winnestaffer said. "People, by nature, are resistant to change and the business has been changing every year. There's an evolution here - we're in a constant state of change. Everybody wants things to change for the better, on one hand. On the other hand, they are more comfortable with everything remaining the same. This change, and the realignment of responsibilities, caused these staffing problems."

To manage staffing through these changes, Winnestaffer tried to clearly communicate company goals to his employees and inform them of the change required to meet these goals. He also tries to support them on an individual basis. Taking this time to ensure a smooth transition through change has been a challenge for Winnestaffer.

"By nature, I prefer the short version," he

(continued on page 48)

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# Cover Story

(continued from page 46)

said. "Being task-oriented has helped me to achieve many things. But as this organization has grown, I've found that I have to take what I call 'the long way around the barn' instead, and provide employees with not only the goal and the steps we're going to take to get there, but also the thought process that went into developing that directive."

In 1998 and 1999, when WinnScapes' 20 percent annual growth rate skyrocketed to 75 percent as a result of acquiring Columbus, Ohio-based Schmidt Nursery Co., meshing company cultures, goals and values was at peak difficulty, according to Winnestaffer.

"When you hire one person at a time, each person acclimates to the company culture more easily," he said. "When you bring on a group of people who have worked together previously, getting them to change as a group when they have each other to commiserate with is hard. They are not eager to accept inevitable changes. I went into the acquisition with the goal of accommodating

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## Operation Set Up

everyone. But I wasn't able to see some of those accommodations through because they were in conflict with one another, and there was some turnover."

Winnestaffer discovered that he had given these new employees too much choice, and instead of helping them figure out where they belonged within the company, he had confused them with too many decisions.

"I needed to decide what we were going to do, how we were going to do it, who was going to do it and when, and then work more on the execution of the plans rather than on the formulation of them," Winnestaffer explained. "I should have provided stronger leadership with a better vision rather than leaving it open-ended for employee input."

Another challenge was getting production employees to follow procedural and administrative policies. Winnestaffer decided to reward employees for showing up to work on time, adhering to the uniform policy, filling out job documentation in a timely and

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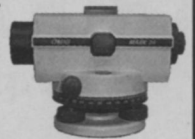
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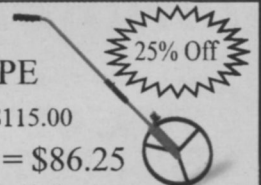


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proper manner and interacting with customers. The program rewarded employees via monthly pay-outs and yearly bonuses – up to \$250 monthly and \$1,500 annually. The program only lasted four months.

“What we found with the program was that the people who were following procedures correctly in the first place were the ones who received the bonuses,” Winnestaffer said. “The others were not given incentive to perform at all. So, we cancelled the program and worked at replacing the people who weren’t performing as opposed to enticing them to perform. This was difficult because they were typically good workers, had some skills and were valuable to the organization from a profit-loss standpoint. But they were detrimental to the larger strategic objectives that we were trying to accomplish.”

Winnestaffer decided instead to go a different route and is implementing the “Leads for Cash” program. Leads for Cash will award \$10 to an employee who recommends a new

or existing customer for a service that turns into a sale. In addition, another \$10 is put into a pot and the employee’s name in a hat. At the end of every quarter, a drawing is made for the pot. There are no limits on the number of leads an employee can contribute.

“The employees are the people who are on these jobs all the time and know if service needs exist,” Winnestaffer said. “This program should entice employees to serve our current clients better and find new clients, as well, becoming a part of our growth.”

**EXPANDING THE WORKFORCE.** As the available workforce shrunk in the Columbus, Ohio, area, and was forecasted to continue to shrink, hiring Hispanic employees became an apparent next step.

“We had a couple Hispanic people stop by here looking for a job and we hired them,” Winnestaffer said. “With their help, we recruited other Hispanic workers, as well.”

Even though Winnestaffer said he prop-

erly documented the new employee I-9 and W-4 forms, when Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) audited WinnScapes last year, it lost all 12 workers because of fraudulent documentation.

“Losing these employees was frustrating and quite a blow to our operation,” Winnestaffer said.

WinnScapes ceased employing these 12 Hispanic workers, but INS elected not to deport them, Winnestaffer said. Those employees went down the street to a warehouse and have been working there ever since.

Instead of risking operations again, Winnestaffer went through the H2B program to hire 10 new Hispanic workers. His goal is to train these employees so they can return next year. “This way, they aren’t going through the learning curve again, and they can be promoted to more responsible and better paying positions,” he said.

Winnestaffer provides his Hispanic employees with a place to live while they’re in

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## Cover Story

Columbus and transportation to and from work. Winnestaffer and another employee pick up these workers on their way to the office. "The route is on my way to work and gives me a chance to talk to my Hispanic employees," Winnestaffer said. "Plus, they are never late to work."

To merge the Hispanic culture with WinnScapes' culture, Winnestaffer brought in a consultant to conduct a two-day training program. The consultant spent one day teaching the Hispanic employees about American culture, and the next day teaching the American employees about Hispanic culture.

Currently, WinnScapes' Hispanic employees perform nontechnical labor functions, such as various installation and maintenance tasks. In the future, Winnestaffer hopes to have them communicate with clients.

### A SHORT BREAK FROM GROWTH.

In 1998, WinnScapes' growth goal was to double in size in the next five years. After the difficulties of dealing with acquisition and experiencing 75 percent growth, Winnestaffer said he plans to either maintain or decrease revenue by approximately 15 percent in the year 2000.

"We are backing down from our sales performance in the year 2000 and are trying to do a better job at the \$3 million level," Winnestaffer said.

"Going through a 75 percent growth year takes more than one year to catch up from. In the year 2000, we want our infrastructure to catch up to our sales volume. Then we plan to go back to a 15 to 20 percent annualized growth rate. By sustaining 20 percent growth each year after recuperating, we can then double in size in five years."

Winnestaffer plans to sustain this growth rate by maintaining the current management structure and increasing frontline personnel in production commensurate with the company's work volume.

While taking time to maintain instead of grow sales, Winnestaffer hopes to offer WinnScapes' clients more consistent services.

"When you have five different foremen who like to do things five different ways and then five salesmen who sell a job five different ways, there are a minimum of 25 variances there," Winnestaffer explained. "I would like to establish a consistency in how things are done and to what level they are done. Currently, we don't do a very good job at this."

To make operations more consistent, WinnScapes is putting together a procedures manual. "Until now, we've communicated procedures verbally," Winnestaffer said. "But by the time a verbal message reaches the 10th person, the message becomes inconsistent and unclear."

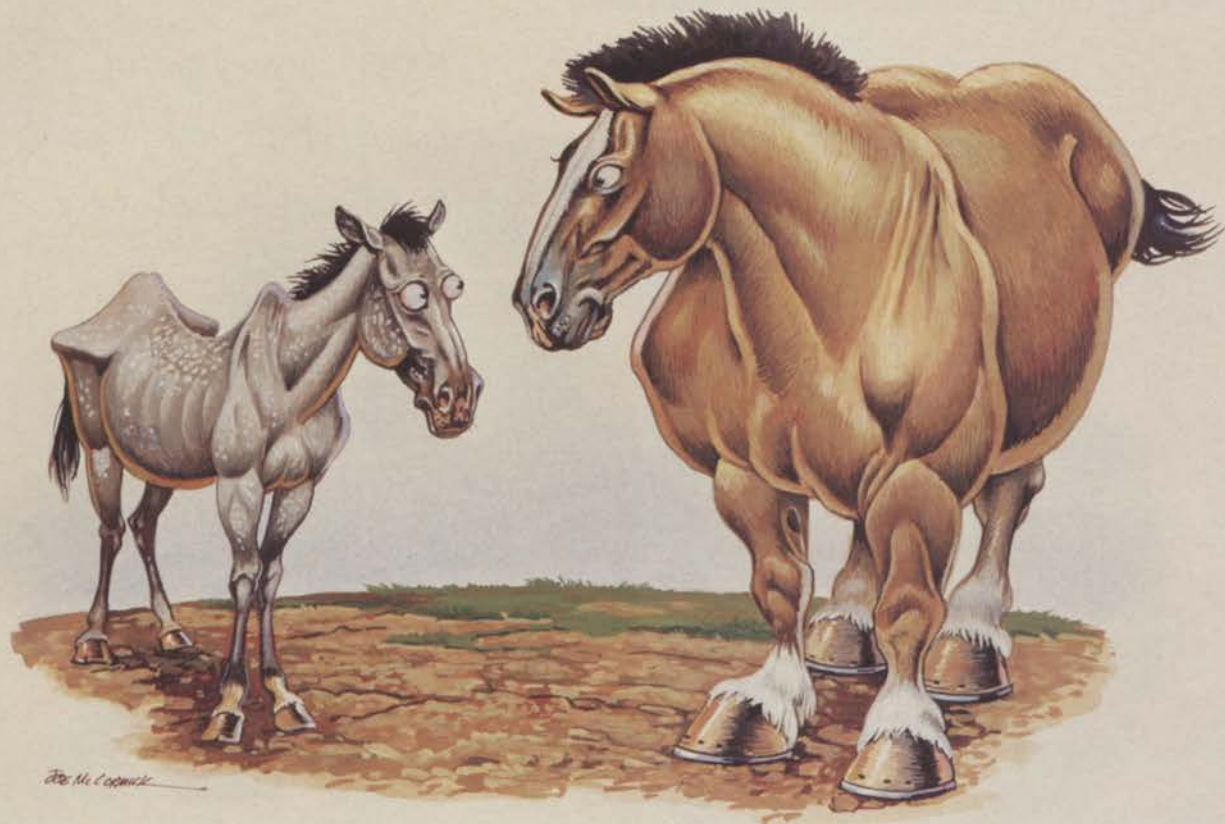
The manual will explain the standards and procedures associated with function-based landscape operations. "There are minimum standards in everything that we do, so I think this will provide more of a

(continued on page 114)

### WINNESTAFFER ON MANAGING EMPLOYEES:

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by Ali Cybulski

*It's never too early to start thinking of new ways to jazz up the fall landscape with color.*

# Fall for

# COLOR

Color in beds, borders and patio containers doesn't have to vanish after the last days of summer. Plant breeders are introducing season-extending plants in traditional autumn lines, like mums, pansies and asters, as well as hybrids of these traditional crops developed specifically for the fall market.

By experimenting with different combinations of traditional crops and identifying nontraditional, hardy plant material for fall, landscape contractors can create one-of-a-kind plantings that hold their color as temperatures plummet.

"The reality is that many plants out there are not new to the industry, but we're using them in new ways," said Peggy Campbell, director of education for Molbak's, a high-end garden center in Woodinville, Wash. "When you're looking at plants for any area of the country, take a look at what plants have ornamental value and which ones are hardy in that climate to extend the season."

In cooler regions across the United States, winter often drains landscapes of their color.

Mums, which have 6- to 8-week bloom periods, and the shifting colors of fall foliage offer some fleeting color to landscapes on the East Coast and in the Midwest, said Campbell.

Conversely, warmer climates, which don't have true seasons, are deprived of the annual spectacle of fall foliage. On the West Coast, for example, landscape contractors rely heavily on pansies for fall color, Campbell noted, adding that mums don't have the same allure in this region. "Landscape contractors don't plant them in the huge quantities they do with pansies," she said. "Pansies give you more bang for the buck. If you really want nonstop color, look at pansies."

Campbell emphasized the importance of "thinking outside the box" when choosing material for fall plantings. "The box,"

*(continued on page 54)*

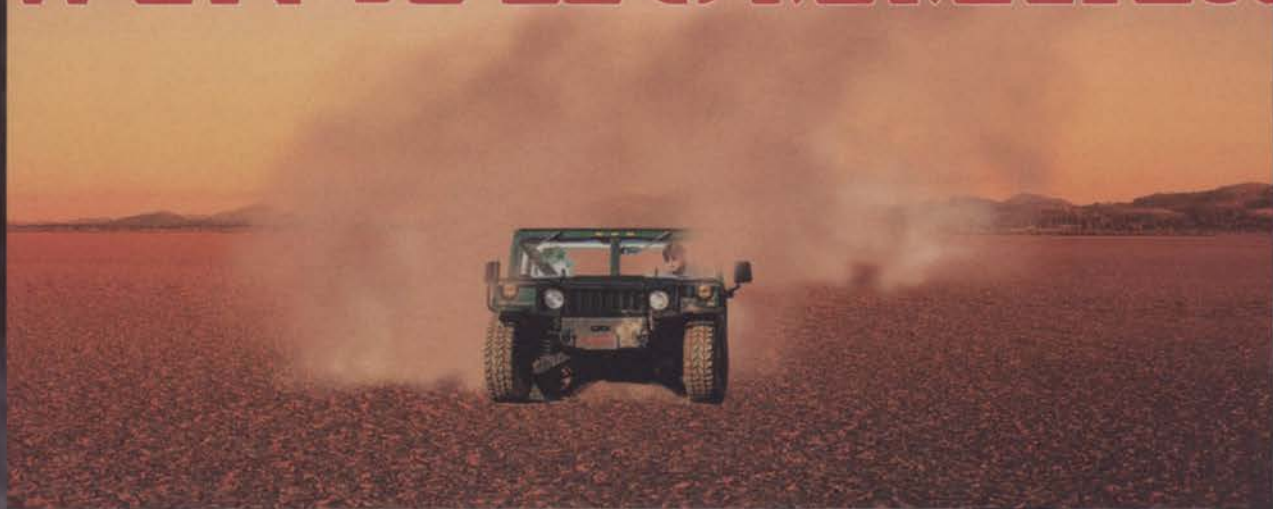
*Lack of product variety for the fall market led some propagators to develop colorful new hardy material.*

*Photos: EuroAmerican Propagators*





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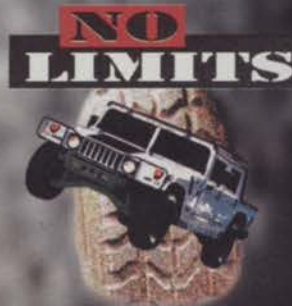


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I certify that the above information, which is subject to verification, is correct.

CONTRACTOR'S SIGNATURE

DATE



## Fall Planting

(continued from page 52)

she said, includes dusty miller, mums, pansies, asters and ornamental cabbage and kale. Her advice: identify hardy plants, play with different combinations in containers and then try successful ones in landscape beds.

**THE FALL PALETTE.** For fall color, Ben Lowell, owner, B/JL Landscape, Denville, N.J., uses asters, goldenrod, burning bush and a variety of shrubs and trees, some with colorful berries. "I try to bring a lot of pictures of jobs we've done (for the client)," Lowell explained. "We try to take pictures of jobs at different times of the year to show what the landscape can look like – not just for the growing season but in fall and winter."

Mums and flowering cabbage and kale are ideal crops for fall plantings, offered Greg Fracker, president and owner, Colorsapes by Design, Newark, Ohio. "Although it has been around for awhile, just recently, we found out flowering cabbage is really neat, and people like it because it's different," he said. Fracker also plants red maples, dogwoods, Hawthorns, Itea and burning bush for brilliant shows of fall color in reds, oranges and yellows.

These traditional selections may suit most tastes, but there are certainly an abundance of options for fall color beyond the basics. In fact, some propagators, like Proven Winners of Bonsall, Calif., are specifically focusing their breeding efforts on the fall market.

While the spring season welcomes a number of bedding plant introductions each year, the fall market, in comparison, has been neglected, according to Kerstin Ouellet, marketing director for Proven Winners. Most people have long depended on a small assortment of traditional, mass market products such as mums, pansies and asters. The lack of product variety led Proven Winners to introduce its now 4-year-old Fall Magic line as a companion to traditional fall blooming plants.

The company works with breeders worldwide to grow its selection of fall material. "We look for plants that perform well in fall and that have a long show of color," Ouellet said. "The varieties we're offering are hardy to zone 5 and some in zone 4. They're pretty much for all climates."

Proven Winners introduced 16 new varieties this year, bringing the total to 34, Ouellet reported. Some introductions are new hybrids of more traditional plants, like mums.

# H

ere are a few plants to consider trying in the fall landscape, keeping in mind your region's climate:

**1. Amsonia hubrichtii.** This mass of delicate, willowy foliage has pale blue to almost white flowers that appear in spring. The plant matures into a large clump, and as the weather gets cooler, the foliage turns golden and assumes the texture and color of tawny straw. This perennial provides interest into winter, when its leaves eventually droop and finally disappear.

**2. Helleborus vesicarius.** Large, shiny, dark green leaves grow to about 5 inches above the ground, followed in January or February by upfacing, green, cup-shaped flowers with burgundy markings inside and out. Depending on species and variety, hellebore blooms begin in November and continue into April. Other green-flowered hellebores that bloom in winter are *H. viridis*, *H. odorus*, *H. cyclophyllus* and *H. multifidus*. Perhaps the best-known hellebore is the Christmas rose, which blooms in late November.

**3. Phloxes.** Phloxes bloom all season, seldom in profusion, but always with a few flowers. The earliest of them to bloom, *Phlox nivalis* 'Camla,' opens its large, bright pink flowers above needlike foliage as early as November.

**4. Winter-blooming irises.** The Algerian iris first flowers around Thanksgiving. Slender, green leaf blades often hide gray or beige buds that open to reveal fragrant, blue-purple flowers.

**5. Harlequin glorybower.** This shrub displays clusters of glittering blue berries accented by bright pinkish-red calyxes. These calyxes encase late summer flowers that resemble large white jasmine blooms. This coarse, open shrub reaches 8 to 12 feet tall, and its foliage, when crushed, smells like peanut butter.

Source: *Fine Gardening*

## Other Plants To Try

One introduction, *Ajuga reptans* 'Caitlin's Giant,' has metallic foliage that changes from olive green to a deep, reddish purple as the temperature drops. In spring, its large leaves are set off with royal blue flowers. Another, *Erysimum linifolium* 'Variegatum,' is a bushy plant with broad, creamy yellow margins along its leaves. The plant maintains its bright hues after a frost, and a full flush of flowers in bright lilac arrives in spring.

Ornamental grasses also offer interest in fall and winter as their plumes change color and sway in the wind. Campbell suggests experimenting with ornamental grasses or sedges for the fall landscape. In her Pacific Northwest location, she has had success with *Carex*, *Acorus* and evergreen groundcovers like *Ajuga*.

Other plants she recommends trying for innovative fall containers, baskets or beds include: *Heuchera*, evergreen thymes, lavender, rosemary, sage, hardy *Cyclamen* and primroses. "Another plant that has been fun

to use is Swiss chard 'Bright Lights,' which can be planted in late summer or early fall," Campbell said. "The leaf petioles and stems are very intensely bright colors, and the plants keep growing through the winter season."

Because the plant palette is fairly limited, Debby Cole, president, Greater Texas Landscapes, Austin, Texas, mixes up different types of plants in different color combinations for a more dramatic fall landscape. For variety, Cole plants allium, dianthus, snapdragons in a variety of sizes and tulips alongside more traditional material, like pansies. "For awhile, we planted just one kind of pansy or snapdragon," she said. "Now we try to mix different flowers and put in bulbs interspersed." (For more plants to try in the fall landscape, see "Other Plants to Try," above.)

**PLANTING IN FALL.** According to most landscape contractors, there's not that much of a difference between planting in fall and planting at any other time of the year. "We



## Fall Planting

follow the same procedures as in spring and summer," said Fracker. "The fall is basically no different for us. It's like we experience two springs in one year."

Contractors plant bulbs well into the winter, and some plant more trees and shrubs in fall than they do in summer. One of the most obvious benefits of fall planting – for both crews and trees – is that neither must battle the scorching hot sun. "The air temperatures are cooling off, and if we get things in early enough, we get root growth without the top being stressed," said Cole.

Cole said she is uncomfortable planting native perennials and smaller plants in fall because they are more likely to be caught by a freeze before they can become firmly established. "We won't plant them unless we absolutely have to for a commercial situation," Cole said. "We try and convince people to wait until spring. We don't want to plant something that looks as though it is dying."

When freezing weather threatens, Lowell also holds off on planting perennials. "There's really no top growth," Lowell said, "so the client can't see what we're planting. Plus, the smaller ones frost heave if they don't root properly."

The most vital consideration for Fracker is not waiting too late in fall to plant material. Fracker, whose business is based in the Midwest, can plant in his climate until December. He said his plant losses are actually fewer in fall than in the summer. "I think it's because the plants have a longer period to adjust (through the winter)," Fracker said.

**PLANTING CHALLENGES.** Planting in fall isn't always simple. For example, Lowell often faces problems with plant availability.

"Suppliers on the East Coast are not shipping out as many plants as in the South," Lowell said. "In my area (New Jersey), we use a lot of native plants for our plantings. We have found in fall and late in the season, they are tough to find."

Fracker said his biggest challenge is educating clients "so they think you're not planting dead plants after the first hard frost." For example, the client must know that perennials start to turn brown and blacken off. "You have to explain that you're planting the root ball," Fracker said. "On deciduous shrubs, you have to explain that they are not dying. (Fall planting) is more of an educational thing because clients are used to you planting material that's nice and green."

Continued warm winters are a source of worry for Campbell. "This year, we had the warmest winter (in the Seattle area) on record," she said.

## Quick TIP

Here are some other landscape plants that can be counted on for good fall color. **Red:** bayberry, bearberry, burning bush, dogwood, nannyberry and highbush cranberry, Virginia creeper, Ohio buckeye, Amur maple and mountain ash **Yellow:** ash, linden, birch, butternut, poplar and larch

Source: University of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan, Canada



**1**

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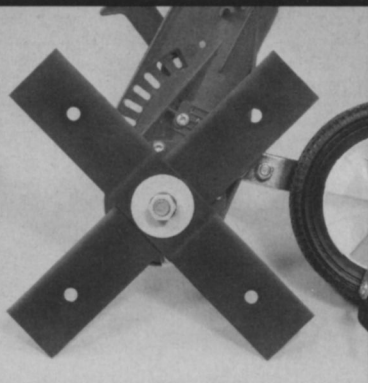
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## Fall Planting

"As a result, some plants never went dormant, or they only went into dormancy for a very short time. The public might be getting used to this. If we have severe weather next year, the plants will take a hit. People tend not to protect their plants if they've gotten used to mild winters."

Another challenge for Campbell is simply keeping up with a constant workload. "We've got three seasons - fall, winter and spring," she said, adding that planting bulbs in fall can be especially labor intensive. "In fall, we have to plant twice. We plant with a bulb and then overplant (with fall material). This is time consuming. I wish there was some type of machine to go through, dig the hole and plop the bulb in."

Despite the hefty workload, Campbell said there isn't much she doesn't like about fall planting. Fall color, she said, offers solace to the weather weary. "In the Seattle area and around western Washington and Oregon, people have to see color," she said. "Last winter, we had 90 days straight of rain. That gets a little tiresome and dreary. People rely on the landscape to pull themselves through that winter season." **LL**

*The author is Associate Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.*

## Quick TIP

**Hummingbirds are active in late fall. Attract them to your client's yard with a feeder or by planting flowers and shrubs they love to feed on, including firebush, hibiscus, salvias and petunias in containers on the patio or deck. Clients can enjoy their fall-flowering plantings until frost, and their flowers will keep these birds fat and happy.**

*Source: Burpee Seeds & Plants*

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# SCHEDULE-AT-A-GLANCE

## Sunday, October 8

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| 8:30 AM        | Business Strategies Golf Tournament<br>(Buses depart hotel) |
| 5:00 – 7:00 PM | Registration Desk   |
| 5:00 – 7:00 PM | Attendee Welcome Center                                     |

## Monday, October 9

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| 7:00 AM               | Registration Desk   |
| 7:30 AM – 9:00 AM     | General Session<br>Jerry Gaeta, Vander Kooi & Associates<br>10 Rules for Financial Success                                    |
| 9:10 AM – 10:30 AM    | General Session<br>George Koziarz, Koziarz & Associates<br>Effective Budgeting Techniques in<br>the Real World                |
| 10:50 AM – 12:00 noon | General Session<br>Robert West, Sr., West & Co.<br>Organizing Your Business to Take<br>Advantage of Tax Savings Opportunities |
| 12:00 – 1:00 PM       | Networking Lunch  |
| 1:15 PM – 2:30 PM     | Speaker Roundtable Session  |
| 2:45 – 5:00 PM        | Sponsor Product Showcase  |
| 5:00 – 6:30 PM        | Welcome Reception   |

## Tuesday, October 10

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 7:00 AM               | Registration Desk  |
| 7:30 AM – 9:00 AM     | General Session<br>Robert West, Sr., West & Co.<br>Planning for the Financial Future –<br>Yours and Your Company's |
| 9:10 – 10:30 AM       | General Session<br>George Koziarz, Koziarz & Associates<br>Structuring Effective Employee<br>Compensation Packages |
| 10:50 AM – 12:00 noon | General Session<br>John McCarty, KeyBank<br>Building Beneficial Banking Relationships                              |
| 12:00 – 1:15 PM       | Lunch On Your Own  |
| 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM     | General Session<br>Pam Jordan, Acquisition Strategies<br>How to Properly Value Your Business                       |
| 3:20 – 4:30 PM        | General Session<br>Tom Dyer, U.S. Lawns<br>Balance Sheet Management:<br>Don't Eat Your Seed Corn                   |

## SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8

### 8:30 AM

Business Strategies Golf Tournament  
Golf Club of Illinois  
(Buses depart hotel promptly at 8:30 AM)  
**Sponsored by Woods Equipment**

### 5:00 – 7:00 PM

Registration Desk

### 5:00 – 7:00 PM

Attendee Welcome Center  
**Sponsored By Hunter Industries**

## MONDAY, OCTOBER 9

### 7:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Registration Desk

### 7:00 – 8:00 AM

Continental Breakfast  
**Sponsored By U.S. Lawns**

**Morning General Session Sponsored By Irritrol**

### 7:30 – 9:00 AM

Opening Session

### 10 Rules for Financial Success

**Jerry Gaeta**  
Vander Kooi & Associates

Every successful business has in place a set of rules for operating at maximum efficiency. These rules allow a company to function consistently and to remain on the right track. These rules are rooted in day-to-day operations and if not properly followed, can have a significant impact on a company's financial well-being. In this valuable session, you'll review 10 valuable rules for financial success. You will learn how to prepare your operations to maximize results and how to manage your company's financial future so it doesn't manage you.

### 9:10 – 10:30 AM

General Session

### Effective Budgeting Techniques In the Real World

**George Koziarz**  
Koziarz & Associates

Effective budgeting is a critical skill for any lawn and landscape contractor looking to keep a company moving forward. An accurate budget helps managers properly forecast labor and material costs, develop realistic sales numbers, determine compensation packages, maintain positive cash flow year round and build a foundation for future growth. In this information packed session, you'll review the steps required to effectively prepare a budget for your company or business division. You'll learn how to identify weak spots on a balance sheet and what steps to take to turn those areas into positives.

### 10:30 – 10:50 AM

Refreshment Break

### 10:50 – 12:00 noon

General Session

### Organizing Your Business to Take Advantage of Tax Savings Opportunities

**Bob West, Sr.**  
West & Company

The success of your business will require you to pay several forms of tax. Three of those taxes – payroll taxes, income taxes, and estate taxes – can be effectively reduced with timely and continual tax planning. The opportunity for such tax planning begins with selecting the best form of organization for your business and exists throughout each year as you continue to decide how to withdraw the income that your business is generating. You have options and effective tax planning requires that you understand those options. Should you be incorporated? What is the difference between a limited liability company and a corporation or a partnership? How can you withdraw earnings from your business so as to minimize your payroll tax and income tax liabilities? This program will discuss questions such as these and will also present some simple ideas for designing a financial reporting system for your business that can provide you with the information you need to make these decisions.

### 12:00 – 1:00 PM

Contractor Networking Lunch  
**Sponsored By Aventis**



**1:15 – 2:30 PM**

## **Speaker Roundtable Session**

Join the speaker faculty of Business Strategies 2000 for a series of informal roundtables designed to answer your important financial management questions. This is a great opportunity to tap into the expertise of our speaker faculty and network with other contractors.

**Sponsored By Century Rain Aid**

**2:45 – 5:00 PM**

## **Sponsor Product Showcase**

Kick the tires, look under the hood and fire up the engine at the Business Strategies Sponsor Product Showcase. Join fellow attendees and take a look at the latest equipment, product and service offerings from the sponsor partners of Business Strategies.

**3:00 – 3:30 PM**

## **Refreshment Break**

**Sponsored By Ewing Irrigation**

**5:00 – 6:30 PM**

## **Welcome Reception**

**Sponsored By John Deere, Aquascape Designs and Lawn & Landscape magazine**

## **TUESDAY, OCTOBER 9**

**7:00 – 4:00 PM**

## **Registration Desk**

**7:00 – 8:00 AM**

## **Continental Breakfast**

**Sponsored By Super Lawn Trucks**

**Morning General Session Sponsored By Shindaiwa**

**7:30 – 9:00 AM**

## **General Session**

### **Planning for the Financial Future – Yours and Your Company's**

**Bob West, Sr.**

West & Company

You will devote much of your adult life to the task of building a business – a source of financial security for your family. But, without effective planning, at your death, much of that financial security may go to the government and not to your family. This program will explain, in simple terms, how the federal estate tax is computed as well as some steps that you might take now to significantly reduce the amount of *your* assets that will pass to the government. You will learn why all of your assets should NOT be owned "jointly" with your spouse, and how you might use trusts to properly structure your estate. This program will discuss "living trusts" and how the relatively simple task of creating a *family limited partnership* might save your family hundreds of thousands of dollars in estate and income taxes.

**9:10 – 10:30 AM**

## **General Session**

### **Structuring Effective Employee Compensation Packages**

**George Koziarz**

Koziarz & Associates

In today's tight labor market, comprehensive and innovative compensation packages are a selling point for retaining current or attracting new employees. Companies in all areas of business are becoming more creative in the compensation packages they offer employees. And while most compensation programs are still geared toward providing employees with additional income, items such as health care benefits, flex time, day care and tuition reimbursement are rapidly appearing as a standard part of employee compensation packages. All of these items carry with them a price tag that employers must fit into the company budget. In this session, learn how to determine the best methods for structuring compensation programs that benefit your employees and stay in line with your budget.

**10:30 – 10:50 AM**

## **Refreshment Break**

**Sponsored By John Deere**

**10:50 – 12:00 noon**

## **General Session**

### **Building Beneficial Banking Relationships**

**John McCarty**

KeyBank

Establishing a strong relationship with a bank is essential for any business hoping to expand its operations and its revenue base. Whether seeking financing to purchase new equipment or build a new company headquarters or looking for capital to acquire another company, you need a banking partner who knows your business. But how do you establish such a relationship? This session will take the mystery out of how to build a beneficial relationship with your banking partner. Learn the steps you need to take before approaching your banking partner to properly position your company's financial status. And discover what services a bank can offer you to help drive your company's growth.

**12:00 – 1:15 PM**

## **Lunch On Your Own**

**Afternoon General Session Sponsored By Echo**

**1:30 – 3:00 PM**

### **How To Properly Value Your Business**

**Pamela Jordan**

Acquisition Strategies

Whether you're in the market to buy or sell, determining the true worth of your business is paramount to your success. In this helpful, hands-on session, you'll be presented with the tools to work through the process of valuing your business. If you're exploring acquisition, discover what resources you bring to the table. If you're selling, learn how to accurately present your business's potential to possible buyers and how to negotiate for the best price. No matter what your business goals, you can't afford to miss this informative and practical session.

**3:00 – 3:20 PM**

## **Refreshment Break**

**3:20 – 4:30 PM**

## **Closing Session**

### **Balance Sheet Management: Don't Eat Your Seed Corn**

**Tom Oyler**

U.S. Lawns

Solid financial management and close control of the balance sheet are at the top of the list of challenges experienced by business owners. In dealing with these elements, owners must make decisions daily which impact both the short-term and long-term growth of a company. For advice on making the right choices for your business, join us as we examine the three phases of business development (the Growth stage, the Maintenance stage, and the Mature stage) and the owner behavior that guarantees a bountiful return.

## **Business Strategies Golf Tournament**

**Sunday, October 8**

**8:30 AM (Buses depart hotel)**

**Sponsored by Woods Equipment**

Test your golf skills at the Lawn & Landscape Business Strategies Golf Tournament at the challenging 6,511 yard, par 71 Golf Club of Illinois – rated as one of Chicago's Top 10 Public Courses by *Chicagoland Golf Magazine*. The tournament format is a scramble with the winning team taking home special prizes. Cost for the outing is \$80 and includes greens fees, cart rental, practice balls, lunch, prizes and transportation to and from the course. **Advance registration and payment is required – no on-site registrations accepted.** Registration deadline is **September 28, 2000.**



# Conference Registration Form

Lawn & Landscape Business Strategies Conference

October 8-10, 2000

Wyndham Northwest

Chicago, Illinois

(Please print or type. Form may be photocopied for additional registrants; one form per person)

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**Please Note:** Registrations **will not** be processed until payment information is received. All faxed and phone registrations **MUST** include credit card information. Check must be drawn in U.S. dollars and drawn from a U.S. Bank. There will be a \$25 fee for returned checks.

## Emergency Contact Information

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Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

## Registration Information

|                                    | Number | Total         |
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| Full Conference Registration ..... | \$195  | _____ = _____ |
| <b>Special Events</b>              |        |               |
| Golf Outing .....                  | \$80   | _____ = _____ |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                       |        | _____         |

**By Mail:** Complete form and mail, with payment, to Lawn & Landscape Business Strategies Conference, 4012 Bridge Ave., Cleveland, OH 44113

**By Fax:** Complete form and fax, with credit card information, to 216/961-0364

**On-Line:** At [www.lawnbusinessstrategies.com](http://www.lawnbusinessstrategies.com)

## Confirmations

All registrations postmarked by September 22, 2000 will be acknowledged by mail.

### For Office Use Only

Date Received \_\_\_\_\_

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## Discount Travel Information

Lawn & Landscape has arranged for special discount airfares for the attendees of the Business Strategies Conference. To take advantage of these discounts please contact AAA Business Travel at 800/999-0038 between the hours of 8:00 AM - 5:30 PM EST.

## Hotel Information

A block of rooms has been reserved for Business Strategies Conference attendees at the Wyndham Northwest Chicago. Attendees should make their reservations directly with the hotel on or before **September 14, 2000** to receive the special conference room rate of **\$118** per night (single/double). Please ask for the Lawn & Landscape Business Strategies conference rate. For reservations call the Wyndham Northwest Chicago at **630/773-4000** or **800/996-3426**.

## Airport Transportation

Shuttle service is available from O'Hare International from My Chauffer Limousine Service. Reservations are required and can be made by calling 800/244-6200. Rates are \$18 per person, each way. Prices are subject to change without notice.

## Cancellation/Substitution/Refund Policy

All cancellations must be made in writing. A full refund will be accepted if postmarked by September 22, 2000. Those received seven to 14 days before the conference are subject to a \$50 cancellation fee. No refund less than seven days before conference. Attendees can notify *Lawn & Landscape* at any time that another individual will attend the conference or social events in their place.

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## Wide-Area Mowing

by Dave Clancy

*Wide-area mowers allow contractors to cut large pieces of property quickly. But contractors must do their homework in order to make wise investments.*

There are two basic ways of using equipment to improve cutting speed – increasing the actual speed of equipment or increasing the size of the mower. Increasing a lawn mower's speed is not particularly feasible because cut quality suffers at high rates of speed. Instead, contractors are finding that increasing the cutting deck's size allows them to increase the amount of grass cut per hour without sacrificing quality and also enables them to pursue new clients that weren't available to them before.

Over the years, standard commercial mowers have reached widths of up to 72 inches, allowing the operator to cut a large piece of property in a reasonable amount of time. Meanwhile, wide-area mowers, some of which are equipped with up to 11 feet of cutting territory – almost double the widest traditional deck – can tremendously increase mowing efficiency and drive revenue growth.

"Wide-deck mowers allow you to save money on equipment purchases and labor while still providing your customers with quality service," said Ken Raney, advertising manager, Excel Industries, Hesston, Kan.

While the term "wide-deck" is used here, in fact, most of these mowers do not have one large wide

deck. Instead, most have two small "wings" that protrude from the mower's sides. These wings provide contractors with the ability to cut vast amounts of grass in a shorter time.

"By putting wings on a mower, a landscape contractor can get the same width of cut as with two 72-inch mowers, yet he or she won't have to pay for a second mower and a second person to operate it," Raney said. "You can get twice as much cutting width for about half the increase in price."

Despite the machine's advantages, the decision to buy a wide-area mower is laden with considerations.

**MONEY CHANGES EVERYTHING.** The first of those considerations is price. Wide-area mowers generally cost \$30,000 or more. Contractors must be sure they have enough property to cut that is accessible with a wide-area mower to justify the purchase. A wide-area mower sitting in the shop because your customers' properties are too small does not make a good investment.

"There is no rule of thumb as to what size property you can cut with wide-area mowers," Raney said.

*A contractor should look at purchasing a wide-area mower as a serious investment, according to mower manufacturers. Photo: Textron Turf Care and Specialty Products*



**When  
SIZE  
Matters**



## Wide-Area Mowing

"You just have to eyeball it and say, 'I am not going to bring that \$30,000 piece of equipment in here for two minutes.' But for a football field, or a group of them, it makes perfect sense. You want to knock those out as quickly as possible."

The contractor needs to look at this purchase as a commitment, said Peter Whurr, vice president of product management, Textron Golf & Turf, Racine, Wis. "The contractor needs to ask him or herself, 'What large areas do I need to cut on a regular basis?' If there are a lot of wide-open spaces – especially flat, wide open areas in his or her service area – then he or she is a good candidate for a wide-area mower."

Whurr said contractors should not be put off by the large initial investment. "Look at productivity and serviceability before price," he said. "Figuring out cost per acre to cut is usually a straightforward calculation. If you look at cost per acre, you will realize that the wide-width rotary mower, while costing

## Where to Use Wide-Area Mowers

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Military Bases

Recreation Facilities

Cemeteries

Metroparks

Large Corporate Sites

Housing development common areas

Athletic Fields

more initially, will provide a better return over the life of the product.

"Once you have a wide mower, you can expand your markets," Whurr continued. "You can pitch more business, such as military

bases or airstrips – sites with great expanses of land. With a wide-width mower, those properties will become lucrative."

For Scott Westhoven, president of Scott Westhoven Services, Village Mills, Texas, wide-area mowing is not just for large properties. "We will do a property as small as 80 by 120 feet with a 12-foot mower," he said. "Using bigger equipment is more cost effective for us, and we don't have to worry about hiring people."

Westhoven and his partner each have a 12-foot mower that they can take onto any property they can access. "If we can access the property and be efficient, we will take the job," he said. "If not, we will pass."

**ON EVEN TERRAIN.** In addition to price and property size, area topography is a concern. A property with a lot of hills and valleys can pose problems for a wide deck be-

*(continued on page 64)*

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## Wide-Area Mowing

cause uneven terrain is prone to scalping. "One of the biggest problems with wide-area mowing is that people will have some severe undulations in the topography and they will try to cut it anyway," said Whurr. "Then they end up with a scalped lawn."

A good rule of thumb is that with decks larger than 72-inches, you must make sure the area you're mowing is relatively flat, Whurr added. "If the topography is too hilly, you might be better served using a 60- or 48-inch deck in those areas," he said.

However, since most mowers have wings that can be raised or lowered independently of each other, mowing hills that are part of a larger, more flat piece of property is not a problem. "Just raise and lower the wings accordingly," Whurr said. "This works for going in between trees and in smaller areas, as well, so you have some flexibility there."

**MAINTENANCE MATTERS.** Wide-area mowers tend to be horsepower hogs. Be-

cause of their size and the number of blades turning, they need a great deal of power to operate properly. Mower manufacturers have discovered that the best way to maintain the necessary power efficiently is to use diesel engines.

"Diesel engines provide a lot of torque," said Gregg Breningmeyer, marketing manager, John Deere Commercial Mowing, Research Triangle Park, N. C. "And they are generally longer lasting, as well, so diesels are naturally suited to these products."

"Contractors typically put 500 to 1,000 hours a year on these mowers and they want them to last," Breningmeyer continued. "With proper maintenance, you can get 3,000 to 5,000 hours of operation out of a good diesel engine."

But owning a wide-area mower with a diesel engine means there is another engine in the shop to maintain. For larger companies with a group of mechanics who are versed in many different engines, maintaining a diesel engine might not be difficult.

However, smaller companies might find adding another engine type a challenge.

Undeniably, maintenance is critical to productivity. If a string trimmer is down, chances are a small landscape maintenance company has a backup. Take down a \$40,000 wide-deck mower for a week and see how productive you are. "Any benefit you get from having the wide deck is lost if the machine is down half the time," Breningmeyer recognized.

Diesels don't need additional maintenance, but they do need maintenance. "They need clean oil and clean filters regularly," Breningmeyer said. "They also need grease occasionally and to be checked daily for wear and tear."

Also, with the increased cutting area comes the need for additional blades. "There are more blades to sharpen on these mowers, but no more blades than if you had several smaller decks," Raney said. "The only difference is that all these blades are on one unit."

Whurr added that in addition to mainte-

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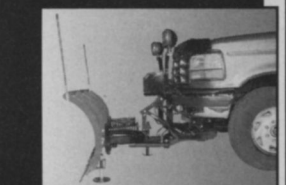
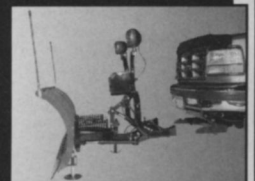
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nance, wide-area mowers need more care in operation. "These units are much larger, so operators are more likely to hit something while cutting," he observed. "Shock absorption is crucial. The tractor and wings need to be stronger and shock absorbers must be able to handle the additional stress put on the units."

**USING WIDE-AREA MOWERS.** Because wide-area mowers are larger, contractors tend to want to use the equipment for more than its list of proper uses. "Because of its size, there are some individuals who will try and use it to trim 2-foot tall grass," Breningmeyer said. "These mowers are not intended for that, nor will they do a good job on that kind of load."

Balancing the efficiencies of width with property needs is essential, said Patsy Penner, marketing coordinator, Grasshopper, Moundridge, Kan. "Our largest deck is 72 inches, and it allows contractors to cut a wide variety of properties, yet still collect trimmings. And if there are trees or other obstacles, this unit is better equipped to work around those."

Because contractors use wide-area mowers on big properties, they are "in the saddle" for long periods of time. "You need the operators to be as comfortable as possible, especially if he or she is in the saddle for eight hours a day," Breningmeyer said.

Breningmeyer observed that the labor shortage makes operator satisfaction even more critical. "With the current labor shortage, employers must do what they can to make the quality of work experience good," he said. "Part of that is making sure the employees are satisfied with the equipment."

With wide-area mowers, Westhoven said his two-man crew can mow a 5-acre site in an hour and smaller homes in 15 to 20 minutes.

Transporting the equipment is also a concern. However, since the side decks flip up, most units can be easily trailered for transport. In addition, some mowers can be driven short distances to a second site.

"We were able to get our first unit on a trailer we already had, but when we added the second mower in 1999 we had to buy a 25-foot trailer because I knew sometimes we would want both mowers at one job site," said Jim Humphries, president, Southern Lawns, Greensboro, N. C.

The trailer's additional length adds an-

other variable - drivers must be able to maneuver this length in traffic.

In the long run, wide-area mowers offer contractors who can use them a good business investment.

"Once you get the mower, you can go out and get more jobs," Raney pointed out. "There

is more money in larger commercial jobs than in residential jobs. And wide-area mowers can help you acquire more of that commercial revenue." **LL**

*The author is a free-lance writer based out of Gahanna, Ohio.*

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USE READER SERVICE #40



by Bob West

# Biological BASICS

*Biological control products may be getting a bad rap from people who don't understand them.*

The very nature of controlling weeds, insects and diseases presents an ironic challenge. The products lawn and landscape professionals use to manage these tasks are complex in nature, yet these professionals often learn how to use them through on-the-job training as opposed to spending years in a classroom. As a result, manufacturers can face difficulties bringing new product categories or classifications to the market since users may not fully understand the new product and how to use it.

Biological control products may be a perfect example of this challenge. Increasing environmental awareness spreading across the United States demands that new control products be as easy on soil and water as possible. But the obvious business challenges associated with caring for someone else's lawn necessitates immediate and thorough control at an affordable price. For many horticulture professionals, synthetic pesticides have clearly demonstrated the ability to deliver on these demands.

Increasing government regulations and even consumer pressure in some markets for more environmentally friendly soil inputs mean lawn and landscape professionals must constantly evaluate their turf management practices and look for opportunities to improve. Understanding many of these newer options, though, requires an open mind and some thorough education.

"Pest management is changing, and it is critical to learn how to adapt to those changes," noted Wendy Gelernter, PACE Consulting, San Diego, Calif. "Unlike the broad-spectrum pesticides of the past, biological control products have narrow host ranges. This once limited their use. Today, the entire pesticide industry, whether it is the biocontrol company or the conventional agrichemical manufacturer,

*(continued on page 68)*

*Microscopic living organisms provide an environmentally safe approach to pest management. Photos: Plant Health Care*





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## Biologicals

(continued from page 66)

has moved rapidly to develop and commercialize very different kinds of products."

**KNOWING THE FACTS.** "It's interesting to note that when you go into the forest, disease is the exception rather than the rule, so I think there is something to be said for a biological approach," pointed out Wayne Wall, president/ chief executive officer, Plant Health Care, Pittsburgh, Pa.

The problem, as Wall sees it, is the false ideas circulating through the landscape marketplace about biological products. "There is a fair amount of confusion about what biological control really is because of the many different categories of product, not unlike the confusion surrounding organic products," he related. "A big part of the confusion is that people hear biological control or biopesticides and they automatically think it relates to integrated pest management (IPM), but they're two very different things.

(continued on page 70)

**P**esticide manufacturers have brought a number of effective products to the market recently. But these products' effectiveness can present a hidden risk.

Some contractors become so enamored with a product that they use it exclusively for a couple of years. As a result, they see performance wane as time goes on, and they don't know why. One possible cause for this drop-off may be that the target pests have developed resistance to this product because of the continued exposure.

"As pesticides get used for many years, eventually pests evolve ways to resist them," acknowledged Wendy Gelernter, PACE Consulting, San Diego, Calif. "You might be spraying a fungicide that five years ago was incredibly effective and find that it is not working anymore. In the past, the only option was to replace that fungicide with another chemical fungicide. But sometimes the fungicides are similar enough to each other that cross-resistance occurs, and even the new fungicide lacks efficacy."

Field research has shown that resistance can be avoided by rotating different pesticides, particularly if they have different modes of action. "One product may target the pest's ability to respire; the next time you apply with a different product, you might be able to interfere with the pest's ability to obtain nutrition," she noted.

Gelernter also recommends contractors consider using biopesticides in a rotation program. "One of the many benefits of biological controls is that they are so different than chemical products," she pointed out. "Therefore, pests that are resistant to chemical pesticides are typically not resistant to biopesticides." — **Bob West**

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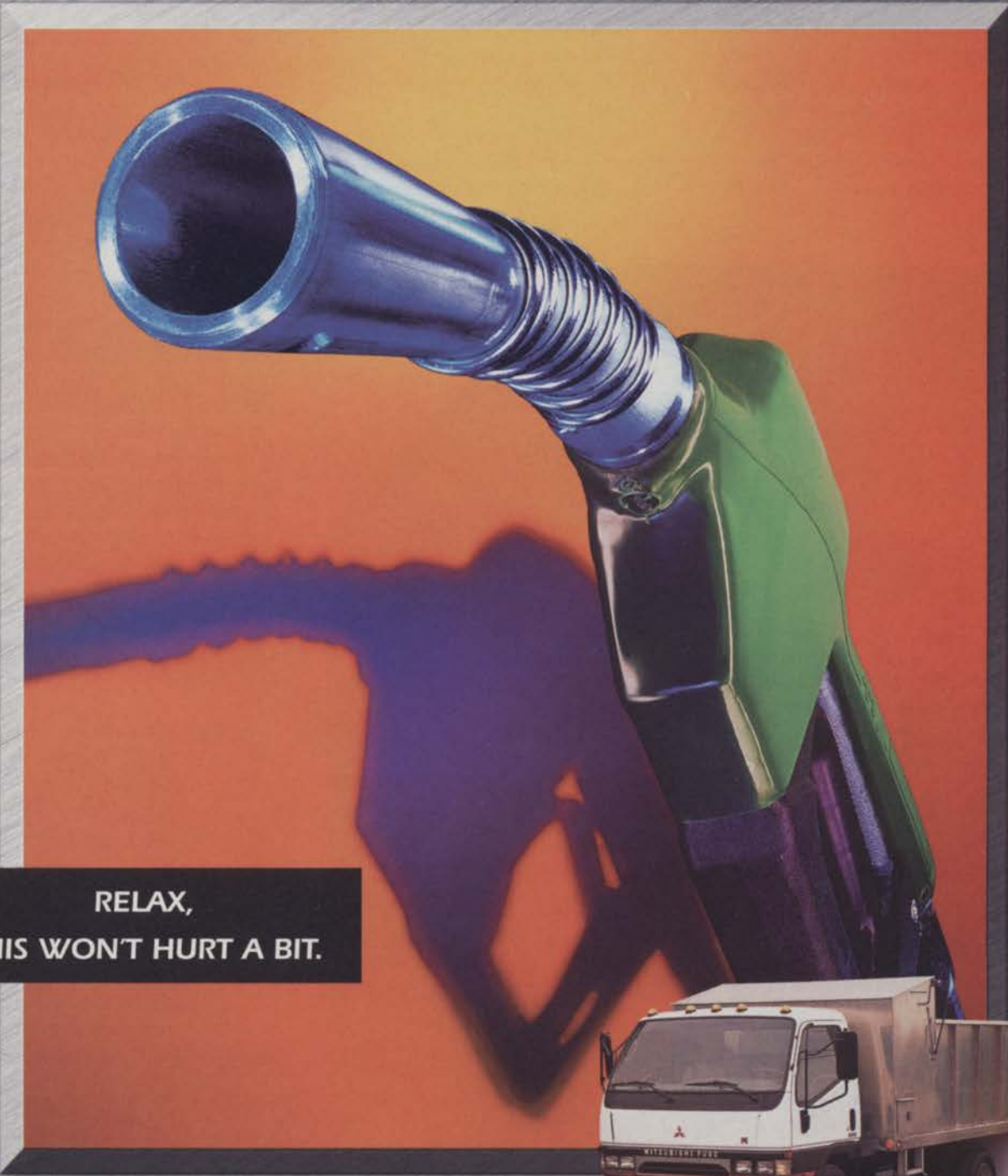
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## Biologicals

(continued from page 68)

"One is outright prevention with naturally derived products and the other is using pesticides more sparingly to control a problem," Wall continued. "Historically, organic or biological management of plants has been looked at in isolation from other treatments. What people are understanding now is that

the combination of biological technology, good plant management practices and IPM ultimately delivers the most cost effective, best results."

One reason for some of this confusion is that biological products – as well as some synthetic pesticides that are more biologi-

cally derived – are relatively new to the landscape industry. As a result, contractors may not understand them entirely, and they may use them improperly, which leads to unacceptable results and their refusal to continue using them.

"These new products that we are seeing, including the chemical pesticides, have much narrower host ranges than their predecessors did," Gelernter explained. "They are much

'As a result, we think there will be a significant shift from chemical technology in terms of fertility and pest control to biological technology.' – Wall

safer, but they may not be as easy to use. This is because some of the new products take longer to kill pests than conventional pesticides. Some target only a few pests rather than the huge number of pests that broad-spectrum materials targeted. Some products will control only one stage of the pest rather than all stages."

The importance of understanding the differences between the types of products comes from the fact that they do have different performance characteristics. There are undoubtedly some instances where synthetic pesticides are more effective than biologicals.

"Biological products are part of a holistic, comprehensive approach, and pesticides are used to attack problems that arise," Wall explained, pointing out a key difference between biopesticides and synthetic insecticides or fungicides. "Biologicals can't be equated to the silver bullet of pesticides because pesticides are used at a point when you've already gone beyond what biologicals can do."

"You have the agrichemical world and organic world both creating a dichotomy that everything is either black or white with these products being chemical or not, organic or

(continued on page 72)

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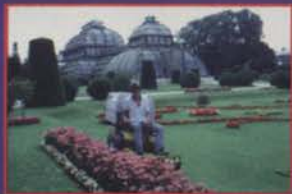
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## Biologicals

(continued from page 70)

not, and the middle ground is where the true value exists," Wall related. "As a result, we think there will be a significant shift from chemical technology in terms of fertility and pest control to biological technology. Today, we're probably looking at 95 percent of the products purchased today being synthetic and 5 percent being biological, and we expect that to shift to 35 to 40 percent biological in the next five years."

Wall said he expects much of this shift to be driven by landscape architects and golf course superintendents – two areas of the green industry that are less price sensitive when specifying or purchasing products. "Some of the landscape maintenance and nursery companies are very cost driven when purchasing products, and they aren't as motivated to change," he added. **LL**

The author is Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

**Biological Control** – Biological control is provided by insects and microorganisms that occur naturally in an environment, and without human intervention. It is estimated that the natural competition of these organisms provides up to 99 percent control of pests that are detrimental to humans and the food, fiber and beautification of plants we produce.

**Applied Biological Controls** – Applied biological controls can be defined as the introduction of natural enemies by humans to improve natural biological control or to combat imported pests that may upset an environmental system. These applied "biocontrols" may include beneficial bacteria, fungi and nematodes.

Applied biological controls are also called biopesticides. Depending on the pest they control, biopesticides may also be called bioinsecticides, biofungicides or bioherbicides.

**Biomeasures** – Biomeasures is a term that can be used for biologically based materials or microorganisms that may offer pest management as a side or indirect benefit. Mycorrhizal fungi and beneficial bacteria are examples of living biomeasures, whereas humic acids, biostimulants and organic matter are some of the material biomeasures. In general, these materials and organisms provide benefits to plant health, allowing plants to use their own natural defense systems to ward off or withstand attacks by pests. Some biomeasures also provide more direct pest control benefits. Certain mycorrhizae, for example, provide plants with added resistance to some soil-borne diseases by producing antibiotics. –

Courtesy of Plant Health Care

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**USE READER SERVICE #126**



by Cynthia Greenleaf

*When using recycled water in an irrigation system, contractors must know exactly what they're doing.*

As drinking water and ground water supplies dwindle, reclaimed water is water that *works* for irrigation. Treated municipal wastewater, reclaimed (or recycled) water is seeing increased use in landscape and turf applications throughout the country with great success.

With water a rapidly diminishing resource, using reclaimed water for nonpotable purposes such as irrigation makes perfect sense. "We've got to use what water we have," pointed out Larry Keesen, a professional irrigation consultant with Keesen Water Management, Denver, Colo. "They're not going to make any more. It's a finite quantity."

Reclaimed water works well for a range of irrigation applications since there is an abundance of this high quality, relatively low cost water available for use, according to David Davis, a professional irrigation consultant based in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif. "Across the country, water treatment plants are producing a tremendous amount of reclaimed water that they can't get rid of," he said.

**RECLAIMED WATER ON THE RISE.** Reclaimed water is most commonly used in large-scale commercial irrigation applications such as golf courses, athletic fields and landscapes. This recycled resource is frequently relied upon in places where the drinking and ground water supply is limited or strained due to heavy demand, such as in the Southwest, Southeast and Western United States. In Southern California, for example, all streetscaping is irrigated with recycled water, according to Davis.

Because of increased liability, since reclaimed water isn't as high quality as drinking water, reclaimed is less commonly used in residential situations, al-

*(continued on page 76)*

# One More TIMES





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## Irrigation

(continued from page 74)

though use is on the increase. This is happening particularly in areas with rapidly expanding populations and, in turn, heightened demand for water. In the Southwest, for example, new housing developments are frequently set up to handle reclaimed water for irrigation purposes, Davis said.

In Florida, as well, reclaimed water use is

*Purple irrigation system components, such as this valve head, are universal indicators that reclaimed water is in use.*

*Photo: Rain Bird*



frequently mandated in residential areas, said Michael Sidlovsky, president, Automatic Irrigation Systems, Naples, Fla. He noted that in Collier County, where his company is based, reclaimed water use has been mandated for at least a decade. In this part of Florida, water can be a scarce commodity, especially during the height of tourist season in the winter months, Sidlovsky said.

As the U.S. population continues to grow and water resources continue to diminish, there's no doubt that reclaimed water use will continue to increase, according to irrigation experts. "As water resources become more scarce, if it's not already, any large metropolitan area will have to consider using reclaimed water," pointed out Terry Little, a professional irrigation consultant based in Dallas, Texas. Given this fact, contractors should plan accordingly and get educated.

**DO YOUR HOMEWORK.** Reclaimed water is a highly regulated resource with a host of rules and regulations. Since there is no federal standard governing its use, these guidelines vary by region and state and meticulously dictate when, where and how much reclaimed water can be used. In some areas, for example, reclaimed water can't be used next to a restaurant or an outside patio area, because of the close proximity to people.

Regulations also commonly dictate the level of quality reclaimed water must be for use in a particular application. "Landscape generally requires the highest quality because there are people around," according to Davis. "If it's just a spray field with no public access, the grass can take poorer quality water."

In addition, a local water authority might specify what kind of plant material reclaimed water can be used on, which can present problems when retrofitting an existing system. "You might not have plants that are the best for this," said Davis, who has seen reclaimed water's extra minerals damage trees and shrubs.

Overall, the best way for contractors to familiarize themselves with all rules and regulations regarding reclaimed water is to talk with their local water authorities and work from there, Davis advised.

While most regulations vary by water district, there are a few standard safety procedures when handling reclaimed water in an irrigation system. Safety is a significant issue since

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## Irrigation

reclaimed water isn't as pristine as regular drinking water. "The big thing is keeping people out of it," Davis said, noting that contractors should be overcautious when using reclaimed water and err on safety's side.

One standard approach to handling reclaimed water safely is using purple system components to signify that this water is in use. Strategically placed signage is also a common safety measure employed with reclaimed water. "On most roadways and medians, when reclaimed water is used for irrigation, we use a lot of signage," Sidlovsky said.

Similarly, on office park projects he's worked on, Keesen has put signs at all the entrances to indicate that reclaimed water is in use on that property. Otherwise, it could be a liability issue if someone tries to drink the water or kids play in it. Once again, however, safety precautions such as signage and purple components fall under the jurisdiction of landscape contractors' local water authorities and should be handled accordingly.

**GETTING STARTED.** Not surprisingly, using reclaimed water requires careful installation. For one, a system must be flawlessly designed so that there is no run-off or overspray, the pressure is consistent and the overall system is as efficient as possible, according to Keesen. "Essentially, it's all the basics of good irrigation design," he pointed out.

On the other hand, if an existing system will be converted to handle reclaimed water, all the components must be changed out, Keesen said, advising contractors or an irrigation consultant to go in and evaluate such aspects as pressurization, flow rate and drainage. To retrofit, Keesen suggested using heads with check valves as much as possible and carefully documenting the existing backflow prevention device's removal. "Once that disconnection is verified, they can come in and connect the system to the reclaimed water supply," he said.

Once a system has been retrofitted to accommodate reclaimed water, there's no going back. "Once a line has recycled water in it, it is contaminated forever," Davis said. "It can't be retrofitted for potable water."

Another key installation issue is figuring out how to store reclaimed water. The type of storage, such as open surface, elevated tank,

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## Irrigation

underground or a direct system connection, largely depends on what application the water will be used for, according to Little. "With a golf course, which needs 1 million gallons of water a night, on-site storage is the way to go," he said. "With an athletic field, however, pressure isn't as much of an issue, so direct piping would be fine."

Davis has seen a trend toward underground storage. Otherwise, "you can't get the water when you need it," he observed.

In addition, Sidlovsky advised using the best filtration system possible at the connection point. "As well as the water is filtered as it comes out from the water treatment plant, there are still some particulates that manage to get through," he said. "If you filter before the water goes into the system, maintenance costs are a lot less."

**POINTS TO PONDER.** There is no shortage of issues to keep in mind when working with reclaimed water. For one, an irrigation

system using reclaimed water requires diligent, ongoing maintenance and must be kept in the best possible working order, Davis said, noting that monitoring this kind of system compared to a more conventional one requires a more sophisticated approach. This includes using such monitoring tools as a weather station, to ensure that there is no drift from wind and that the system doesn't run in the rain. Davis also recommended using a flow-monitoring device, so in case there is excess flow due to a leak, the whole system shuts down as a safety precaution.

If contractors are going to use reclaimed water in an irrigation system, they need to have a good line of communication with their local water authorities, to make sure they're getting proper pressure exactly when they need it, advised John Swindle, landscape national manager, Flowtronex PSI Ltd., Dallas, Texas.

"Request upfront that they supply constant pressure," he said, noting that on many

**Reclaimed water is**

**a highly regulated**

**resource with a host of**

**rules and regulations**

**governing its use.**

jobs he's been involved with, the water authority doesn't always understand how an irrigation system operates and what the specific pressure needs are. "They're under the impression that it runs under the same flow all the time," he said.

Little observed that using reclaimed water with drip irrigation could possibly clog sprinkler heads. With lesser quality reclaimed water, algae problems, for example, can jam emitters and spray heads. On a golf course or in a park, however, this is less of an issue since larger nozzles are used, he said.

*(continued on page 80)*

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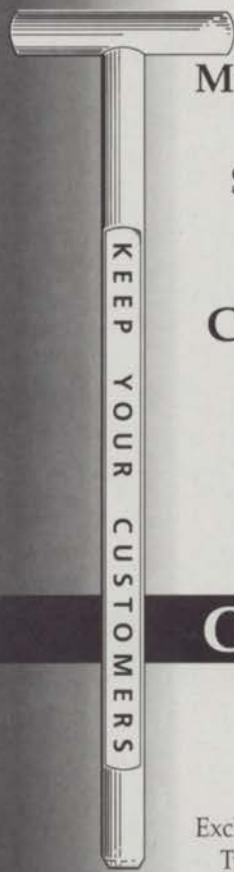
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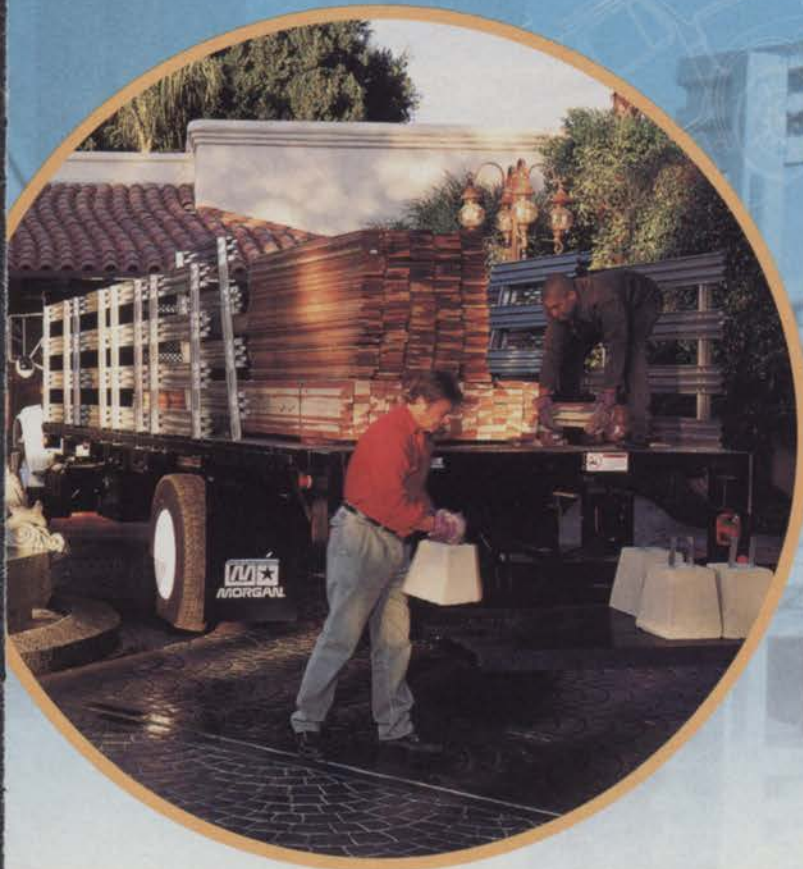
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THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX



## Irrigation

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In addition, depending on where it is used in a landscape, reclaimed water can have a negative impact on particular types of plants that can't handle the water's additional salt and mineral levels. "You just can't go out and spray reclaimed water on everything," Davis said.

Keesen noted that on landscape sites he's worked on, salt levels in reclaimed water have killed certain types of evergreen trees, such as pine and spruce. "Trees that don't drop their needles are more susceptible," he said. "The needles absorb the reclaimed water, and any additives in that kind of water can kill those trees."

Reclaimed water can have a beneficial impact, however, on the landscape. Keesen pointed out that in some cases, reclaimed water actually provides additional nutrients for turf. **LL**

The author is Associate Editor of Lawn and Landscape magazine.

**W**ater conservation is just one benefit to using reclaimed water. The quality and cost of this water is getting better all the time, making it perfect for most any irrigation application, according to industry experts.

Reused water's overall quality has seen massive strides in recent years. "Generally, treatment plants are regulated by the quality they can discharge," pointed out Terry Little, a professional irrigation consultant based in Dallas, Texas. "And the quality is good enough for public exposure."

And oftentimes, using reclaimed water, or non-potable water, can yield substantial savings on water costs, according to Michael Sidlovsky, president, Aqua-Matic Irrigation Systems, Naples, Fla. "The fees are 10 percent of what potable water costs," he said.

In his experience, David Davis, a professional irrigation consultant based in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif, noted that reclaimed water can often be more expensive than potable water because more is needed to effectively irrigate a property. "Many water districts will say that reclaimed water costs 20 to 25 percent less money than potable water," he observed. "The reality is that 10 to 15 percent more water is needed, since it is continually leached through soil. The net savings is not that great, if there is any savings at all."

Whether reclaimed water provides monetary savings or not, using it conserves a natural resource that's quickly diminishing. "We've got to use what water we have," according to Keesen. "They're not going to make any more. It's a finite quantity."

— Cynthia Greenleaf

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by Dave Clancy

*More tools are available  
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# The Inside Edge on EDGERS



Imagine yourself at the local ice cream parlor ordering a banana split. You are handed a delicious-looking concoction with the finest ice cream, bananas, syrup and whipped cream. But the cherry is wrinkled and dry. Is the banana split as appetizing now?

For landscape contractors, edging can be like that cherry. Performed correctly, edging can make the landscape look much more appealing. Edging performed incorrectly or not at all, however, can make the best maintenance job look incomplete.

Many landscape contractors, to their detriment, have resorted to string trimmers for creating an edge. Often, their decision comes down to an edger's cost – they cannot fathom spending a few hundred dollars for a machine they will use no more than one hour each day. But spending that money and using the machine properly is crucial to putting the finishing touches on any landscape.

**EDGER STYLES.** The two basic styles of edgers – stick and walk-behind – both can provide a crisp edge on the lawn where it butts up against a flower bed, curb

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*According to industry manufacturers, walk-behind edgers work well for the first cut of the spring because they get through all the winter growth.*



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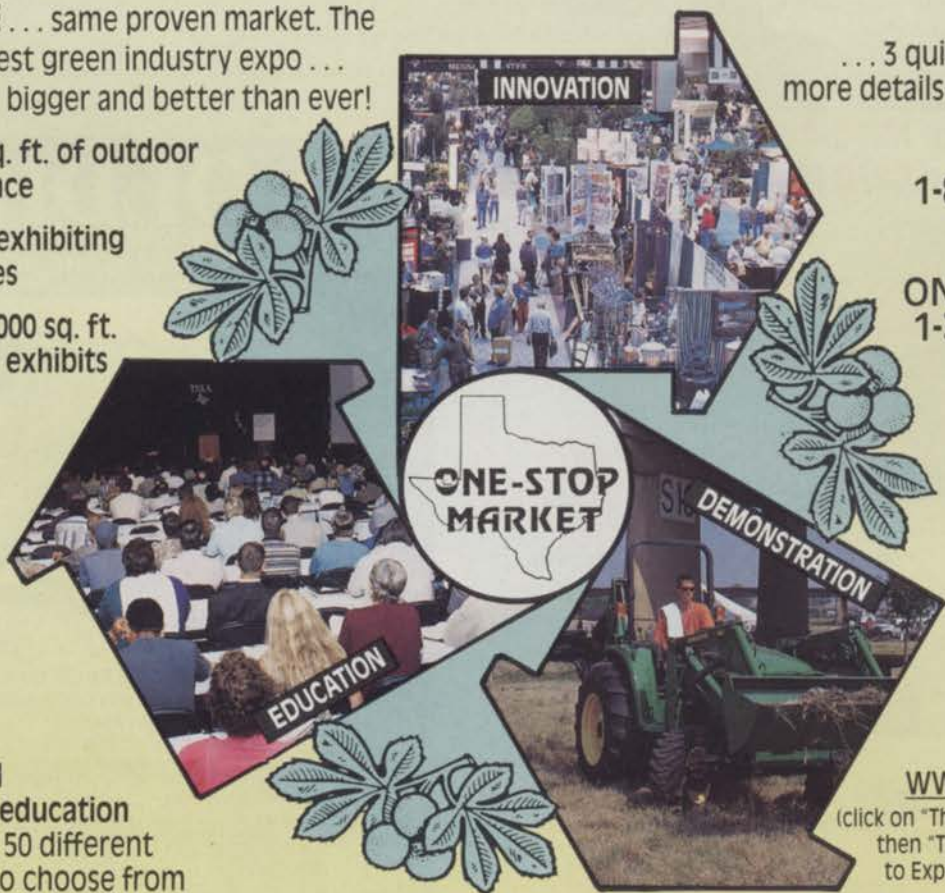
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## Edgers

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or sidewalk. Each type of edger operates differently, however, and has its advantages and disadvantages.

"The trend toward stick edgers is really growing lately," said Pete Fernald, manager of technical services, Shindaiwa, Tualatin, Ore. "Their popularity started in the Southeast and now is moving northward."

Fernald said the stick edger's growing popularity has a lot to do with its portability. "An operator can have the stick down off the truck and the edge done in the time it takes to get the walk-behind unit off a truck.

"The contractor wants the equipment off the truck, the job done, the equipment back on the truck and to be down the block as quickly as possible," Fernald said. "That is how contractors make their money."

That is not to say walk-behind edgers have no place in the industry. "You get a wider edge with the walk-behind unit," Fernald said. "Walk-behind edgers are especially good to use when the edge is over-

grown and nonexistent. In the North, walk-behind edgers work very well for the first cut of the spring because they cut through all the winter growth."

Walk-behind edgers are mainly used to establish the edge of a lawn, said Jim Elmer,

**Edger blades are more durable than string, and do not need replacing as often.**

vice president, marketing, Tanaka Power Equipment, Kent, Wash. "Once the edge is established, it can be cleaned up regularly with the stick unit. The stick units are quick and easy for cleaning up the edge, but they are not really turf cutters."

Walk-behind edgers are also not as easy

to maneuver, said Nick Jiannas, product manager, power tools, Stihl, Virginia Beach, Va. "They do have more power than stick edgers, but I am not sure you need all that power," Jiannas said. "In areas like Ohio, where there is a lot of clay soil, the additional torque is needed. A good edger is also necessary in the Southeast, where St. Augustine grass is prevalent.

"Edgers have always been strong in the Southeast," Jiannas continued. "But we are starting to see more progressive landscape contractors in the Midwest and the North moving toward edgers. They realize they can get jobs done a lot quicker and a lot more efficiently with an edger over a string trimmer. Plus, contractors can burn a lot of string very quickly if they use it to edge."

Edger blades are more durable than string and do not need replaced as often. However, edger blades often rub against a sidewalk or driveway, which can dull them. In addition,

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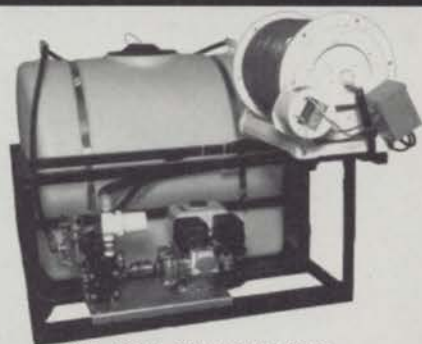
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## Edgers

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since the blade is cutting through earth as well as grass, they will dull somewhat just with regular wear and tear.

"Blades that go through dirt and sand regularly will wear out very quickly," Elmer said. "Florida soil is especially tough on blades."

**EDGER MAINTENANCE.** Many contractors do not consider their edgers investments. Since they are low-ticket items, edger maintenance is often neglected until the machine breaks down. The result is a throwaway item. But with a little care, an edger can last a long time.

"A piece of hand-held equipment is not viewed as strong an investment as a \$40,000 piece of equipment," Jiannas said. "Even the small contractor can properly maintain his equipment so it will run more efficiently."

Edger maintenance includes checking the air filter and greasing the shaft and gear heads. Operators should also inspect the

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**N**atural, bed-defined edges are becoming an alternative to plastic and steel edging as a bed construction method in the eastern United States, and the trend is slowly moving westward.

Defining a bed was often a laborious task involving a shovel to cut the edge, then chop or remove the dirt. Not only was this process time intensive, but it was labor intensive, as well. But that has changed.

Today, bed-defining edgers are available that make quick work of cutting the edge. They allow the contractor to cut edges efficiently with a better edge than a shovel could do. An edger's increased speed also allows the contractor to be more productive.

Because the edger is set to a specific height and angle, the edge will be more precise - 3 to 5 inches deep, with a slope of about 8 inches - throughout the bed.

Unlike driveway edgers, a host of attachments are available for bed-defining edgers to make them more versatile tools. A variety of different blades on the market allows contractors to convert their equipment to trenchers for irrigation or lighting. Some manufacturers sell stump- and rock-grinding blades for applications in demanding environments.

Purchasing a bed edger can be an investment that pays off in labor savings almost immediately. "When you are redefining beds, you do it often when the ground is cold," said Paul Sullivan, president, Mainline of North America, London, Ohio. "You are trying to get as much labor done as possible in less-than-ideal conditions. Since the bed edging is part of the entire package, getting it done as efficiently as possible is important.

"If you are defining a bed edge by hand, you will not make any money," Sullivan continued. "With a bed-defining edge, you can get the entire job done quickly and be more profitable - it just makes good business sense." - **Dave Clancy**

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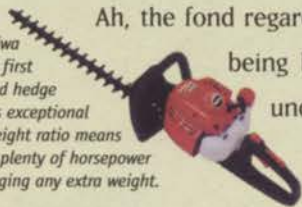
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## Edgers

(continued from page 86)

blade for wear. A blade that is worn will not cut as efficiently, forcing the unit to work harder and putting extra stress on the clutch.

"A flex shaft will probably take up some stress from the resistance of the ground, but there will still be extra wear on a clutch that you won't see in other power equipment," said Elmer in talking about stick edgers. "But we haven't seen any great wear patterns or failures over the years."

Lubricating the blades and keeping them in good working order will enable the unit to last three to five times longer, Fernald pointed out. "Lubricate the cable and clean the dirt and debris out of the housing," he said. "Make sure the guide wheel is free and the blade is in good shape. These are just common sense maintenance practices."

Fernald recommends lubricating the gear case every 50 hours of use. "That really is not that often, considering the edger is in use maybe three to five hours per week," he said.

Also, don't abuse the machine. Many con-

tractors use edgers as mini trenchers, sidewalk cutters and cleaning equipment. This is not recommended by any manufacturer, unless it provides the attachments.

"I have seen someone put an abrasive wheel on an edger to cut concrete, and someone else put a wirewheel on it for cleaning," Elmer said. "We don't recommend these types of improper uses of the equipment."

"And, remember, any time you use a product for something it was not designed for, you are voiding the warranty," he added.

Manufacturers offer some accessories to make edgers easier to use. "We have a drop wheel kit for when you edge along a curb," Elmer said. "This enables the operator to drop a wheel down to street level, so he or she does not have to balance the edger along the curb."

When deciding to buy an edger—regardless of if you want a walk-behind unit or a stick edger—look at the amount of edging you will be doing and when you will be

doing it. Maintaining an edge is much easier than recutting an edge every year, so in warmer climates, the stick edger can be your main tool. Where you must redefine the edge annually, the walk-behind unit provides a good base. After the edge is cut, switching to the stick unit for maintenance is an option.

Ask your dealer what he recommends. Ask a service mechanic what he works on the most and what he works on the least. Ask him what his opinions of a machine are as a mechanic. Also, find out how easy it is to keep the edger maintained in the field.

Ask your employees what they prefer. Some prefer to just pull the stick unit off the truck and cut very quickly. Others prefer the steadiness of the walk behind.

Proper selection and use of the edger can make that property as appealing as that stop at the ice cream parlor after work. ■

The author is a free-lance writer based in Gahanna, Ohio.

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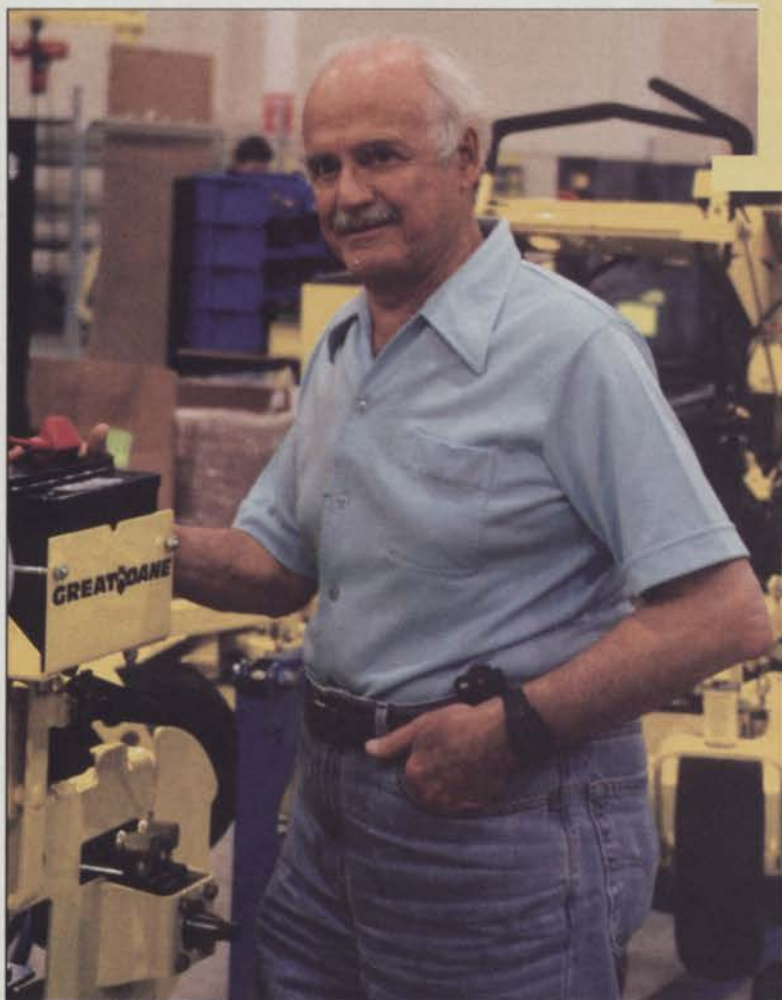
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by Bob West

*He has had as much influence on today's commercial mower as anyone, and now he tells Lawn & Landscape about the mowers of the future.*

# A Conversation WITH Dane SCAG



If you want to learn about commercial lawn mowers, there really is only one place to start, and that's wherever you can catch up with Dane Scag. It is unlikely that any one person has done more to influence the development of mowers to where they are today than he has. But be prepared – Dane takes the complexity of mowers to all-new levels, using phrases like “kinetic energy,” “neutral equilibrium” and “breach mechanism.”

Today, Scag is president of Great Dane Power Equipment, and I was fortunate enough to catch up with the “Great Dane” himself at the company's five-month-old manufacturing plant in Jeffersonville, Ind., for an afternoon of discussion and prototype demonstrations.

**BW:** How did you get started in this industry?

**DS:** I was actually trained to be a physicist and mathematician. So, how did I get into this business? Quite by accident. I left a major corporation as vice president of research and met Bob Gellerman at an airport in Wisconsin. He asked me what I did, and I told him ‘nothing.’ So he told me I should buy his company, and that he made the Bob Cat snow thrower. He was making about \$1 million and had a unique design. I thought this might be a good challenge, so I bought the company

As smart as I thought I was, I almost went broke within two years. You cannot survive making just snow throwers

*(continued from page 92)*



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## Conversation

(continued from page 90)

— it is a very cyclical business. Very quickly I had to develop other products, and a couple of dealers told me to make a high-quality commercial lawn mower.

In 1974, we introduced the very first commercial, self-propelled lawn mower, and it was a belt-drive unit. Sales took off like a rocket, and we sold 9,000 in the first year. We started off with that very simple product,

and all the other mowers on the market were disc- or gear-drive with complex clutch systems. We just ran the belt from the engine to the drive shaft to the rear wheels.

Shortly thereafter, the challenge was to design and improve midsize machines. At that time, the only company making them was the Bunton Company, and it was not too difficult to look at that machine and say, 'I

can do that better.' We opened the discharge chute from 8 to 14 inches to get more air flow and designed a new cutter blade. We got 75 miles per hour of wind flow under the deck instead of 35 miles per hour by changing the configuration of the cutter blades.

Bob Cat grew then as we introduced a lot of different size decks of that mower. I sold the company in 1978 because it had grown quite substantially. We were about \$15 million, and I met the principal of Ransomes, Simms and Jefferies, an English manufacturer interested in having an entrée into this country. I was interested in selling overseas, so we were very compatible and it was a good marriage.

**BW:** Then how did you get back into manufacturing lawn mowers?

**DS:** Well, Bob Cat had a fair impact as a company that had novel ideas in the industry. So, in 1981, some of the dealers I kept in touch with asked me to design a simple riding mower they could sell. I set up a machine shop and built a riding machine with three wheels. It was a walk-behind unit with a sulke behind it and something like a bicycle handle to steer.

I loaded that up in my car, barely made it over the Continental Divide because of a snowstorm, and I showed the machine to distributors in California, Texas and Florida. Each distributor told me they could sell a few hundred of these units, and then they would give me another distributor to go see.

By the time I got home from the three-week tour I had sold 1,600 machines. Now, I had no factory, I had sold the Bob Cat Company, and I wasn't too sure what to do. I did not want to build a factory, but with a handshake agreement with Metalcraft of Mayville we entered an arrangement where they would make a machine and I would design it, market it and sell it. That was the beginning of Scag Power Equipment.

**BW:** Why have you sold your company so many times?

**DS:** The reason I sold each time was a very simple reason and maybe it is a naïve reason, but with my background in science, what I enjoy and do best is research. My ideal has been that after selling the company, I would be kept on as a consultant in that role.

With Ransomes, I sold Bob Cat and then I spent a few years designing equipment and maintaining the relationship with the indus-

(continued on page 94)



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## Conversation

(continued from page 92)

try. I left Scag after we became a leader in the industry and were doing a substantial amount of business with the hope that I would be retained as a consultant and I could continue product development work and acting as a liaison with the industry. But, again, that didn't work out.

**BW:** You're widely recognized as the person who brought the dual hydrostatic mower to the industry. How did that come about?

**DS:** The principal of Green Thumb in Tamarack, Fla., called me up one day in May of 1989. He said there was a fellow who had designed a dynamic machine that would change the industry. Now, I've heard this pronouncement many times before, but I went down to Florida, and this guy shows up with this van. And he's a musician named Joe Berrios who is cutting grass to make extra money, and he thought the equipment was crude, rough, slow and inefficient.

So he gets out of his van, looks around to make sure that no one is around to see what

*The master mower innovator sitting on a Chariot mower in his new manufacturing facility. Photo: L&L Staff*



he's got, and he pulls the rope, starts the engine and starts moving this machine backward and forward and all around by merely moving his fingers. I looked at that and said, 'My gosh, that is going to change that industry.' We made the very first dual hydro walk-behind in 1989.

Up to that point in time, on every other belt-propelled commercial machine you had to shift gears to move forward, then squeeze the levers to go into neutral, and shift the gears to back up. Then you would squeeze the levers to go into neutral and shift the gears to go forward again. Most of the time

the operator would just squeeze the levers to go into neutral and then pull the mower backwards. Going in and out was extremely difficult, and just cleaning up the corner on a prop-

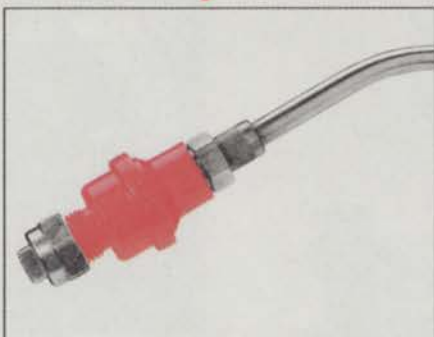
erty took a lot of time.

I negotiated a license to Berrios' patent, and that machine has taken off and become a leader in the industry as the dual-hydro mower. Today there are approximately 14 manufacturers who have that technology, and all are under license to Mr. Berrios.

**BW:** What came next?

**DS:** In about 1994, Snapper wanted to develop a high quality, commercial division, and they called me and asked me if I would come there and help them lay out a new division. Within two or three years we came up with a group of products that had novel

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features which they're still selling.

Then, in 1996, I get a phone call from Joe Berrios. 'Dane, I've got another machine here you've got to see. I think it will revolutionize the industry.' So I made my way down to Florida again and we went through the same routine with the van and checking for spies. Finally, he gets the machine down, flips down a platform and stands on it to mow. I said, 'My gosh, you've done it again.'

**BW:** And this was the start of Great Dane Power Equipment?

**DS:** We negotiated another license agreement with Berrios right away. I thought this would be such a highly efficient machine because of its ability to do the trimming very rapidly because, typically, trimming a lawn takes anywhere from 30 to 50 percent of the time spent on the lawn. Now we could produce a machine to get into those tight areas at the speed of a riding unit.

We first shipped several thousand units in 1997. We were attracting attention, but

obviously only one model of one machine doesn't excite the bottom line of a dealer or distributor. They wanted us to build a more complete line.

I've always had the desire to make machines which aren't "me too" machines. Anybody can go out and buy a product and copy it. In fact, this industry is composed of 90 percent "me too" machines. If you remove all of the paint and decals from all of the mowers you would be very hard pressed to tell them apart. So what could I do with a riding machine that was different? Everyone had throw over arms, and we thought that was kind of crazy, so we changed that and we changed the lift mechanism, and now we're selling several thousand of our Chariots a year. From there, we added the Chariot Jr. because end users wanted something smaller.

But whenever I was in the field, I would hear many times that people wished they had bigger machines to mow backyards that are fenced in. Most gates are 38 inches wide,

so the biggest mower that would fit would be a 36-inch machine. I thought that was kind of silly, so why not make a machine with a batwing design that is 36 inches with the wing up and 52 inches when it's folded out? We're going into production on that machine this summer.

**BW:** What have been some of the most significant changes in the industry overall?

**DS:** There are more landscapers today than there were 20 years ago, and a lot of them are bigger businesses. They used to be one-man and two-man operations, but they're much more sophisticated now. That means they are better at buying, maintaining and costing their equipment.

**BW:** What does that change mean for manufacturers?

**DS:** That means we need to maintain a closer relationship with our end users even if that means bypassing the dealer and distributor in some ways. I used to just have 15 customers because they were the 15 distribu-

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## Conversation

tors and the 800 or so dealers, but we need to be more attentive to the landscaper, and there are thousands of them. That's a key to our success; so we've recently become more involved with the major corporations because they buy in large quantities, for example.

**BW:** How will the machines of the future be different from today's models?

**DS:** Machines in the future will probably cost five times more than they do today. My first 21-inch mowers could be sold for \$200, and that was a lot of money. The mid-size machines sold for \$1,200, and that was a lot of money, and those numbers are 10 times higher today.

Unfortunately, in my opinion, the technology of mowers will change little or not at all. We're still cutting grass a lot like we did 10 or 20 years ago, and we'll still be doing the same thing in the future. I relate it to Father Time using his scythe, only now put a hole in the center of that scythe and attach a motor to

that scythe and rotate it. That's called the modern technology of cutting grass, and that's really very primitive.

If I wanted to cut more efficiently I could use the reel machines—they require a fraction of the horsepower and provide a better quality of cut, but the blades get dulled, hit rocks and sand and dirt. They take a lot more effort to maintain because you are always sharpening the blades.

However, I'm not a person to give up, and I think many people expect us to try other ways to cut grass. We are experimenting with a number of these other ways right now, and I think there will be a breakthrough in horsepower requirement and the method of running the cutting utensil, whatever that utensil is. Rather than going to higher and higher horsepower as we talked about earlier, wouldn't it be nice to have a 72-inch

In fact, this **industry** is composed

of 90 percent **"me too"**

**machines**. If you **remove** all of

the **paint and decals** from all of

the **mowers** you would be **very**

**hard pressed** to tell them apart.

machine that today uses a 25- or 30-horsepower engine and power that machine with 9 or 10 horsepower? Think of the cost efficiency in terms of the cost of the engine going down, the cost of the fuel going down, the pollution going down. That is a tremendous challenge. So we need to spend a lot of time on other ways to cut the grass.

**BW:** Can more than 30 manufacturers continue to succeed manufacturing commercial mowers?

**DS:** The simple answer is no. We've already seen some major consolidation in the past

*(continued on page 98)*

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## Conversation

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year or two where some of the big have gobbled up some of the small, and we'll continue to see that. It will be very difficult for the smaller manufacturers even though in this industry we're not talking about expensive tooling to make a few hundred machines a year. But it will still be very difficult for the small manufacturer to capture the interest of the dealer, the distributor and the end user who are now becoming more sophisticated. The landscapers are getting this information on the Internet and they want more from us.

That is going to be very, very difficult for the 20 or so manufacturers to compete against the four or five of the biggies. And a biggie to me is a company that is doing around \$100 million or more. That gives you the Textrons, Deeres, Toros, Blount, and now I'm running out of names. I would put us about about half way up there. The R&D that is required is expensive. Those prototype machines you saw today each cost us \$250,000 to produce

with the time, the labor, the engineering, the testing, the production drawing. If you have to make four or five of those to develop a new product, that's a lot of money.

**BW:** Is your plan for Great Dane to remain independent?

**DS:** You have to understand I've found that a big part of the reason for my success is that I love to travel and to talk to people, especially landscapers. I love to understand what they would like, what their problems are and what they need.

The biggest research facility we have in this industry is the world out there, and when I travel my contacts with the landscaper and the dealer help me uncover many, many things. They're always saying, 'I wish we had this, I wish we had that.' And, I must admit, 90 percent of what I hear we can't do because it's too expensive. But the other 10 percent is doable and very, very challenging; and it's that 10 percent that sparked me along the way to make the various improve-

ments, to come up with the latest designs.

But, you know, the sad part about the bigger manufacturers is that they are so structured with an engineering committee and a research committee and a finance committee and on and on and on with other committees. No one goes across those lines, so the committees make decisions, and that means decisions take a long time.

Large manufacturers will tell you that it takes them two to three years to come out with a new product. By that time, the idea behind the new product may have passed. We've got a committee, but it's just a committee of one, and we can come out with a new product in six months. All I have to do is ask myself if a new product is necessary? Is developing it worthwhile? Will the end users accept it? Can we afford it?

**BW:** How had the development of Great Dane compared to your expectations for it?

**DS:** We have been much more successful than I expected. We think we've captured 10

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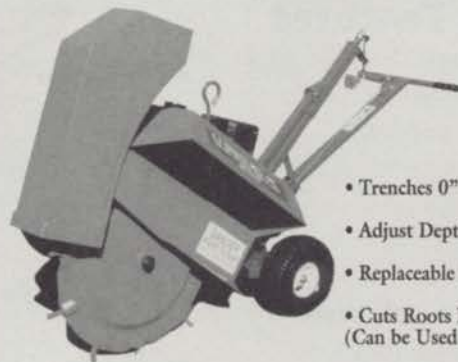
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Finally, he gets the **machine** down,  
**flips down a platform** and **stands**  
**on** it to mow. I said, 'My gosh, you've  
**done it again.'**

to 15 percent of the market share of commercial machines with a cutting width of 21 to 72 inches. I had no idea three years ago that we would become as big as we even are today. In fact, if you would have asked me three or four years ago what I thought about becoming a \$20 million or \$40 million company, I would have said, 'No way. I've done it before so there's no challenge in it.' Then I feel a tremendous responsibility to my employees, to their families, to the dealers and distributors who count on me, and the end users. I really feel a great responsibility to anyone who buys my machine, who puts their money on the table because they trust our reputation of doing a job and doing it well.

**BW:** How do you see outdoor power equipment dealers changing?

bit of service since those consumer machines weren't used enough to require a great deal of service. Now, major outlets like Wal-Mart and Home Depot are becoming very strong in consumer products and they can sell the machine at a much better price and easier terms than a dealer can. So I've seen dealers go from 100 percent consumer to probably 70 percent to 100 percent commercial products today. Those are your successful dealers.

Now, remember that it's not just a flip of a coin to become a commercial dealer. Being a commercial dealer requires a good deal more money for inventory, a bigger facility to be able to display the bigger machines and, most important of all, what the successful dealers have learned is that being a commercial dealer requires a well-equipped ser-

vice department. When a commercial machine requires any repair it isn't cutting grass and the owner of that machine is losing hundreds of dollars when that machine is sitting in a dealer's shop. Quite typically, you'll see lawn mower operators who will go back to the shop that will give them quick turnaround. And the dealer can do that because they have good mechanics, effective equipment like hydraulic lifts and a good inventory of service parts. The dealer that can turn around a machine in only a few hours is going to be a successful dealer. The dealer who puts a tag on that machine and puts it in the corner for awhile is going to die on the vine.

**BW:** What does Great Dane need to do for continued success in the future?

**DS:** Frankly we need to mature. We grew very, very rapidly. We developed six or seven families and 25 or so different models in a three-year period. We have now filled the

(continued on page 114)

## Conversation

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USE READER SERVICE #69



# Products

## Scag Tiger Cub Riding Mower

- Zero-turn riding mower
- Deck sizes are 40 to 52 inches wide
- Choice of five engines



- Mowing speeds up to 10 mph
  - Compact design
- Circle 200 on reader service card**

## Little Wonder Blower

- 13-hp engine
  - Height-adjustable, ergonomically designed handles with anti-vibration grips
  - Air deflector splits the airstream to promote more efficient debris movement with less blow-back
  - Three 10-inch, ball-bearing pneumatic wheels
  - Safety guard on discharge chute
  - Computer-balanced steel fan blade
  - 12-gauge steel housing with arc-welded seams
  - Variable throttle control can be mounted on the handle's left or right side
- Circle 201 on reader service card**



## Turfco 512 Sod Cutter

- Handle grip clutch control
- Operating instructions on the handlebar
- Optional blade for installing tree rings

- 12-inch angled blade
  - Cuts a circular ring as small as 12 inches in diameter
  - Sealed bearings for extended life
  - New knobby tires for added traction
  - Suitable for big and small jobs
- Circle 202 on reader service card**

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**USE READER SERVICE #70**



## John Deere 4700 Compact Utility Tractor

- 48-hp diesel engine
- Three transmission options, including hydrostatic and two "reverser" options



- Reverser transmission allows operator to change directions by flipping a level
  - Independent, shiftable rear and optional mid PTOs
  - Attachments for 4500 and 4600 compact utility tractors are compatible with 4700
- Circle 203 on reader service card**

## The Edge Trench N' Edger

- Retractable cutting blade
- Adjustable depth control device
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## Encore 52-inch Prowler Mid Cut

- Dual-path, hydrostatic drive with zero-turning radius

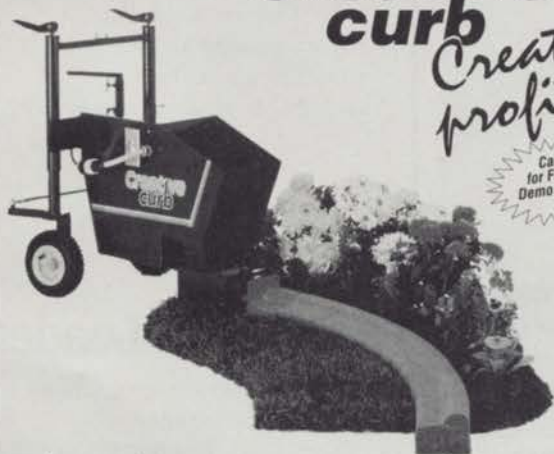


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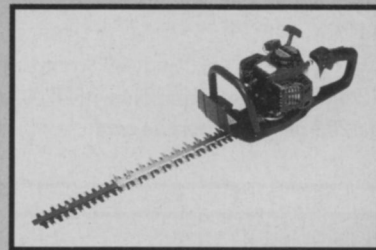
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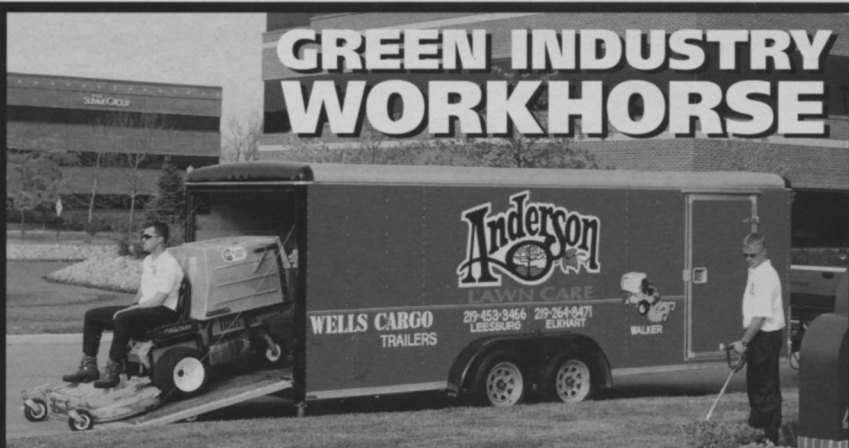


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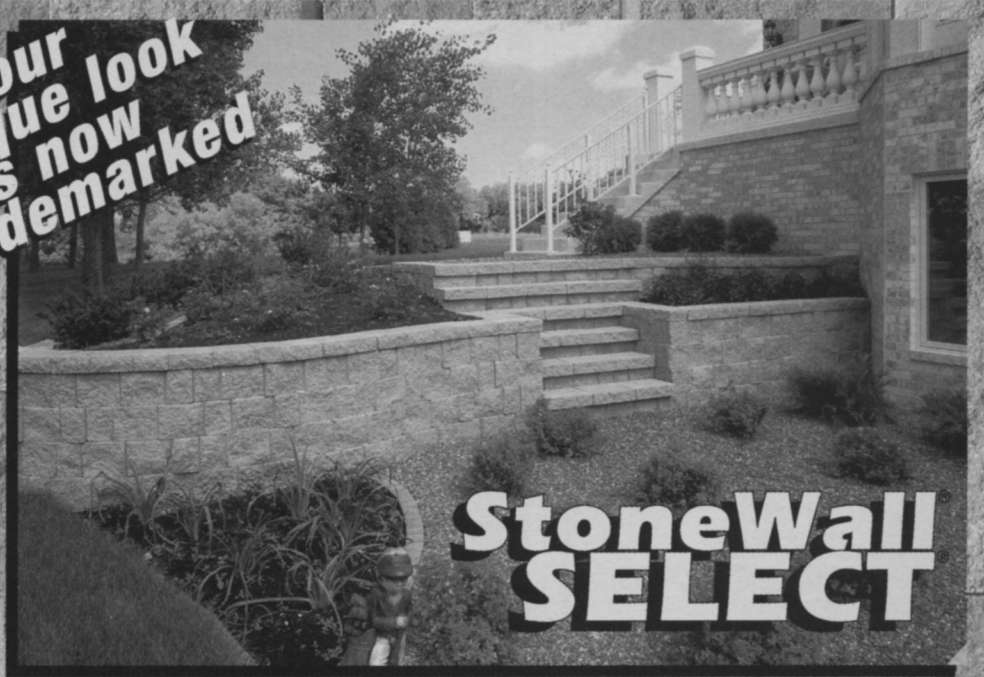


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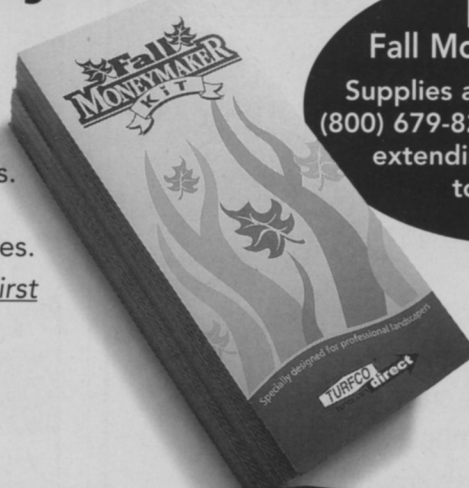
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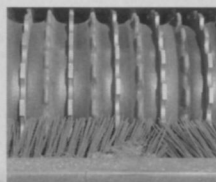
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  - Reversible tine rotation to release any jammed material
  - Reversible tiller reel can be set for either forward or reverse tilling
  - 42 inches wide, 22 inches long
- Circle 218 on reader service card**

## Sutech Airake Blower

- 11-hp engine
  - 1-gallon fuel tank
  - 8-gauge steel frame
  - Variable direction throwing
  - Reduced vibration and noise
- Circle 219 on reader service card**

## Solo Model 470 Blower

- Gas powered
  - Reduced noise
  - Padded backrest and adjustable carrying straps with quick-release buckles
  - Anti-vibration system
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## Vermeer BC625A Brush Chipper

- Handles brush and debris up to 6 inches in diameter
- Features a four-sided bed knife and a thick cutter disc for more cutting inertia
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| 4  | 28 | 52 | 76 | 100 | 124 | 148 | 172 | 196 | 220 | 244 |
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| 19 | 43 | 67 | 91 | 115 | 139 | 163 | 187 | 211 | 235 | 259 |
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| 22 | 46 | 70 | 94 | 118 | 142 | 166 | 190 | 214 | 238 | 262 |
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## Conversation

(continued from page 99)

niches form the small machine to the high end, so we now need to consolidate, improve, simplify and reduce our costs of operation. We have very few tools – almost everything we do is done through the computer from the drawings to the factory. This is very costly and very time consuming process. But the cost to purchase the components for manufacturing these machines is about the same for everyone, although the larger companies may have some better buying ability than we have.

So our task for the next two or three years is to look very hard at what we can do to reduce the cost of the machines as we build them. We need to simplify them to get more operating hours out of them so people get more reliability. Improve the durability so end users have greater confidence in the machine. Then we can say our machine has zero defects and it will last for five years, and if it doesn't we'll fix it for you and we won't charge you a cent. That should be the goal of this industry.

**BW:** How do you want to be remembered?

**DS:** When I retire, I will most likely continue to do what I do best, and that is remain active in design, improvements, new technology and stay on top of the challenges of looking for better ways to cut grass. I'll probably continue that until I pass away.

I'd like to be remembered as someone who is interested in helping the other guy be successful. I'd like to leave a legacy of genuine friendship with the people I've worked with – landscapers, dealers, distributors, employees. And I'd like to be remembered as someone who played a part in improving people's ability to earn a livelihood and provide for their families. That is a unique opportunity that very few people have the ability to contribute

You know, I think I could say without any lack of humility that every single landscaper in this country has heard my name. That's almost like Bill Clinton, isn't it? [laughs] And in some fashion they have heard that I have done something unique in the industry. **LL**

*The author is Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.*

## Cover Story

(continued from page 50)

consistent message from leadership and ownership," Winnestaffer said. "This is important, particularly when the procedure defines products that are used. If procedures aren't following, some nightmares could arise. Foremen will be given some latitude and discretion in completing tasks as long as the end result is the same."

The procedures manual may contribute to the success of a future goal for WinnScapes, which is the slow removal of 37-year-old Winnestaffer from the company's day-to-day operations.

"I plan to be substantially an absentee owner by the time I reach 40 years old," Winnestaffer said. "I would like to retain a percentage of ownership without having to deal with the daily responsibilities."

Winnestaffer has been planning this succession throughout the last three years. He originally had a long-term employee he was grooming for his replacement. But, an opportunity came up 1½ years ago for this employee to take over his father's business and quadruple his income.

Winnestaffer's started his new succession plan by creating two new positions – director of sales and director of operations – and recruiting people from outside the company who were experienced in those fields.

"I needed to get those two people in place and begin paying for them to accomplish the weaning period that needed to take place," Winnestaffer said. "In my first go-round, this was a longer process because of necessary training. This time, I went to market and tried to hire the talent to accomplish my goal in two years."

Even though Winnestaffer started this company essentially at age 9, the difficulty of letting go has worn off. "The more necessary letting go has become, the easier it is," Winnestaffer said. "Scott Hughes (director of operations) and Jon Bolton (director of sales) are providing leadership and management at a level that I was not able to provide because of all the hats I was wearing. The employees are adjusting well. One of my biggest enjoyments as a business owner has been watching young people, such as our production manager Carl Morris, who has worked his way up through the ranks, develop into professionals as they've grown here." **LL**

*The author is Associate Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.*

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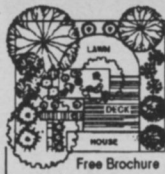
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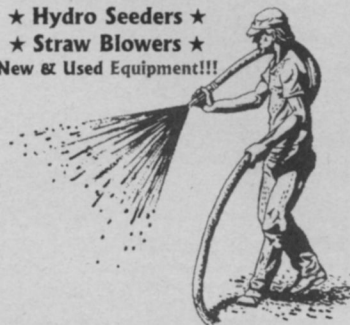
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## GENERAL MANAGER WANTED

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# Classifieds

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## How We Do It

# Strategic Planning at Tecza Environmental

### Step 1 – Operational

#### Planning Process.

Every fall, all departments

(sales, administration, construction and maintenance operations)

are involved in the preplanning process.

Department

supervisors meet with their respective employees to review

departmental procedures, safety concerns, customer

service, equipment, the company mission and new service

and training opportunities.

**Step 2 – Strategic Planning.** Strategic planning is completed in December. A four-member management team, which represents all departments, comes together for three days to review preplanning notes and prepare an outline for the company-wide session held in January.

During the strategic planning session, the management team reviews the effectiveness of the prior year's plan. Then the team looks at areas such as volume growth, profit targets, organizational structure, economic impact and the corporate mission. The analysis includes pointing out company strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities.

The outcome of this session includes a three-year growth projec-

tion along with a list of four to six specific objectives for each of the next three operating seasons, covering topics such

as sales, growth/improvement of facilities and personnel, customer service, marketing and cost controls. The strate-

gic planning outline is then sent to all supervisors and full-time foremen for study and review.

**Step 3 – Operational Planning.** In January, all full-time, year-round employees participate in our two- or three-day annual operational planning session held off-site.

We incorporate team building, brainstorming and training as part of the session to give employees another opportunity to express opinions and ideas. Thorough review of preplanning and strategic planning notes takes place. Different members of the management and supervisory team facilitate each part of the session. As strategies are discussed, specific tactics are identified to accomplish each task. Each tactic is assigned a name and date, and is tracked during the rest of the year. All employees are assigned tactics above and beyond their normal job responsibilities.

From this session, we assemble an outline of the primary objectives we wish to accomplish during the coming season. All notes and tactics are recorded and put into a document, which is given to all participating employees.

**Step 4 – Budgeting Process.** We also formulate a budget to address all standard income and expenses. The budget, along with our operational plan, is our blueprint, which we study and follow during the next 12 months.

Operational plan reviews also take place periodically throughout the season. Once a month, each manager must report tactic completion for all departments documented by date and percentage in a detailed spreadsheet. In addition, all full-time employees attend both a summer and fall update to discuss sales targets, profit results, budget deviation and tactic completion.

Tecza Environmental's success coincides with the operational plan's completion and its individual tactics. Our growth totaling 65 percent over the past six years shows that the time we spend planning pays off. – Ed Reier

The author is sales manager at Tecza Environmental Group, Elgin, Ill.



**tecza**  
**environmental**  
**group**

## FIVE

### Keys to Strategic Planning

1. Make strategic planning a team effort.
2. Incorporate a four-step program that includes a preplanning process.
3. Hold the company-wide session at an off-site location to encourage outside-of-the-box thinking.
4. Study and follow your operational plan throughout the year. Use it as a growth blueprint.
5. After the plan is in place, conduct operational plan reviews periodically throughout the season to check the progress of employee goals and give employees a chance to express concerns and new ideas.



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