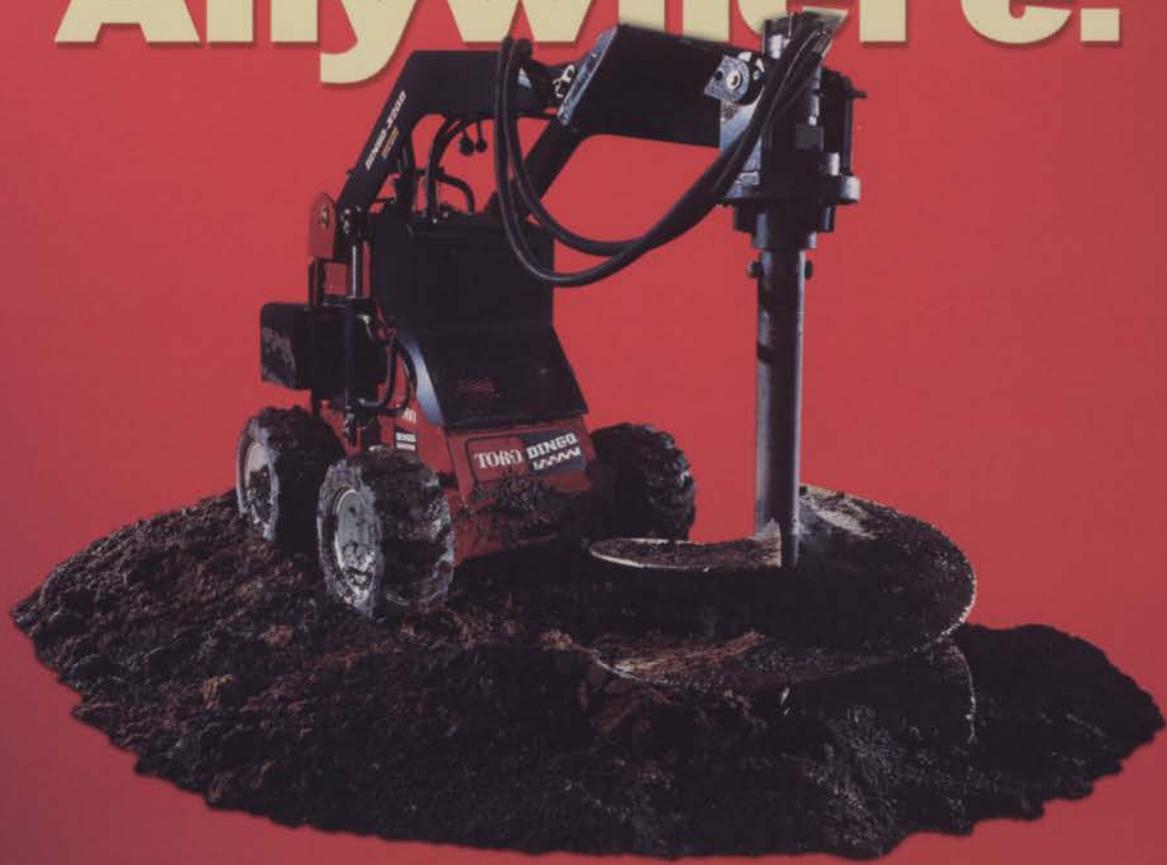




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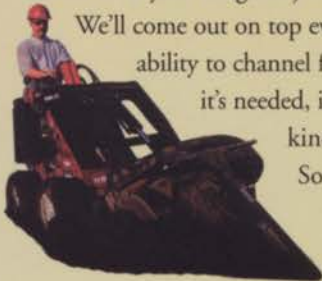


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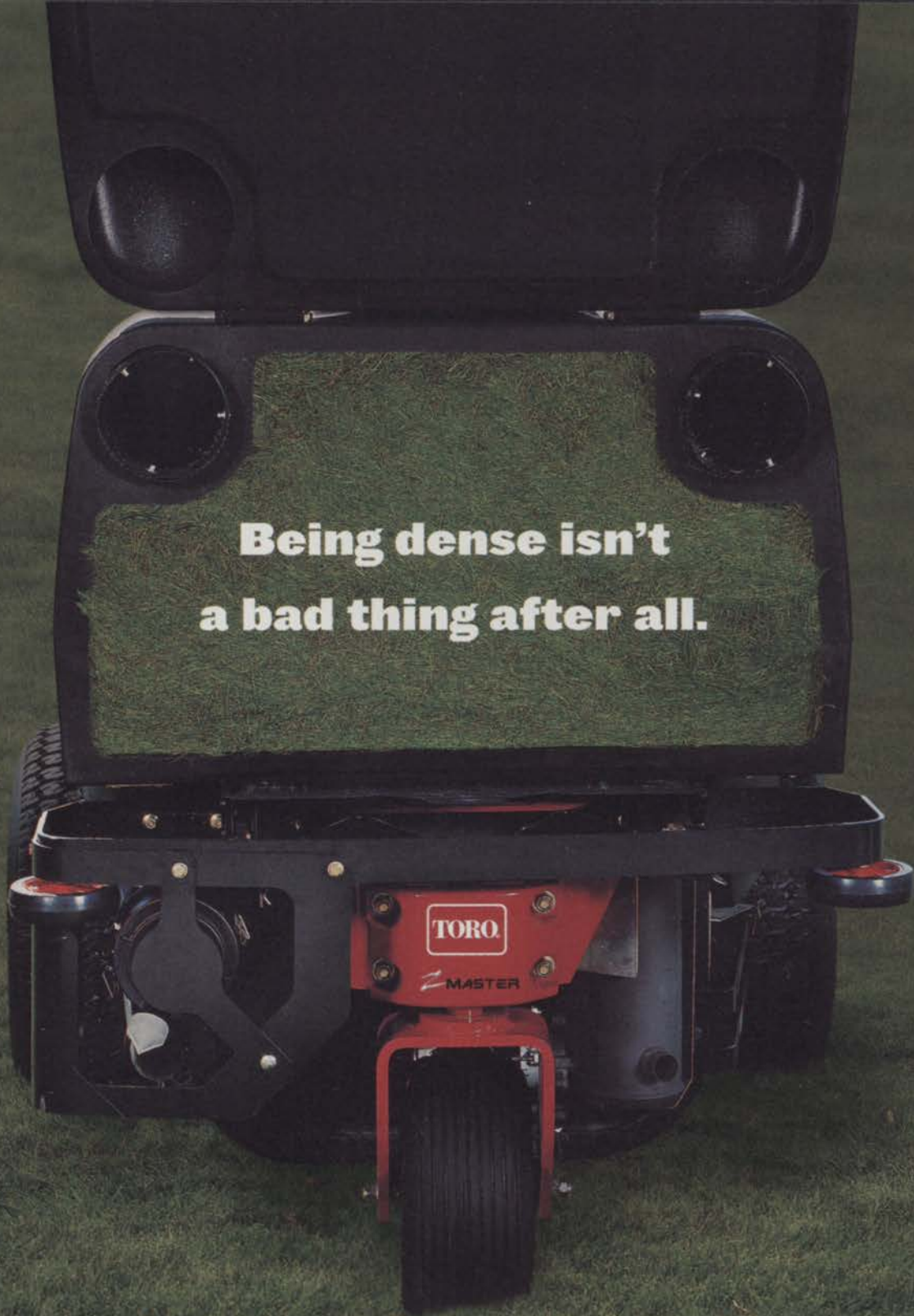
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## Cover Story

### High-Spirited Success

Settling into systems didn't stop Dan Standley's contagious energy from growing an enterprise founded on camaraderie, client concern and quality. .... **40**

### Get With The Program

Appealing, profitable and blooming in popularity, color programs dress up properties with a spectrum of brights and lights. .... **94**



### Tracking Every Last Drop

Performing an irrigation audit is the best way to test an irrigation system's efficiency, ensure proper scheduling and reduce water usage. .... **106**

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### One Hall of a Ride

Troy Hall learned about the dangers of ego-driven business decisions and the value of management, and his company is much stronger as a result. .... **50**



### Quick Clips

Productive mowing starts with the initial purchase and trickles down to trained people and accurate pricing. .... **53**



### Real Solutions to Ornamental Pests

Certain insects have become true pests in the landscape, but that doesn't mean they can't be controlled. .... **62**



### Better Safe Than Sorry

From eyes and ears to hands and feet, contractors need to select equipment to ensure safety on the job. .... **120**

### Issues That Matter

Product packaging and public perception spark discussion when lawn care operators sit down to talk about important industry issues. .... **128**



# Contents

Departments

Advertisers' Index .....	151
Association News .....	14
Breaking News .....	25
Calendar .....	18
Classifieds .....	152
Editor's Focus .....	6
How We Do It .....	158
In Business .....	23
In Minor's League .....	34
Insect I.D. ....	28
Labor Solutions .....	26
Letters to the Editor .....	22
Market Trends .....	8
Minding Your Business .....	35
New Products .....	143
Nursery Market Report .....	31
People .....	12
On the Web .....	16



## SKID-STEER/ LOADER

### *Buyers' Guide*

*With new skid-steer loaders and compact utility vehicles hitting the market and an influx of available attachments, this guide helps contractors review these options and make wise buying decisions.*

**Lawn & Landscape**  
**ONLINE**

Introducing key features of the lawn and landscape industry's most interactive Web site. .... **37**

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# Editor's Focus

## A Drink I'm Happy to Buy

*"It's not what you know,  
it's who you know that matters."*

I'm writing this with most of another day behind me and the start of tomorrow just around the corner. As usual, the office is empty and dark, the issue is complete and ready to go, and the designers keep (not-so-subtly) reminding me that another editor's column awaits my insightful words.

I would have gotten an earlier start on this month's column, at least by an hour or so, if the phone hadn't rung a little while ago. A friend on the West Coast, who we'll call Margarita, was calling with the industry's rumor du jour and, more importantly, giving me an idea for a column. (I really don't get enough of those calls!)


This rumor turned out to be false, but Margarita has called me with tips before that have had greater degrees of truth to them. Still, the most important part of those calls is that they come at all, and that they come because of our professional relationship.

The value of relationships like mine with this individual can't be quantified, and if you've got a successful business then I'm sure you can readily point to a number of relationships – either with individuals or groups – that have helped you achieve. What strikes me the most about professional relationships is how often they yield benefits that far exceed what you could ever expect out of them.

How many times have you gotten work through a friendship that developed by a chance meeting? Perhaps you got to know someone by attending chamber of commerce meetings and that person happens to own a large commercial property. Or maybe your old college roommate just got a promotion, a new house and a new landscape.

Talent, intelligence and hard work are certainly critical components to building a successful company. But quality relationships – both with people inside and outside of your company – are a must as well, and you must work to cultivate them.

What have you done lately to start new relationships or strengthen existing ones? Have you referred business to someone who could do the same for you one day? Have you called to wish a colleague happy birthday? Have you taken a business associate to a ballgame? Spending time doing these things won't make your company an overnight success, but eventually the value will be evident and worthwhile.

So, Margarita, you want that drink frozen or on the rocks? 

*Bob West*

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# Market Trends

## REGULATORY UPDATE

### Industry Wins Nassau County Court Case

NASSAU COUNTY, N.Y. – A New York judge overturned the controversial neighbor notification law.

Justice Stephen Bucaria ruled that the Nassau County legislature did not follow procedure under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), which requires a full environmental impact study to be completed before adopting this type of legislation.

The law, which was passed by the state in August 2000, requires commercial pesticide applicators to give a 48-hour written notice to neighbors within 150 feet of a property where certain insecticides and pesticides will be applied. The legislature let each individual county decide if it would adopt the law, but required that the law be adopted as is. To date, Suffolk, Nassau, Westchester and Albany counties have adopted the law, which went into effect on March 1.

"I'm pleased that the judge, who knew he was dealing with a very political piece of  
(continued on page 23)



"You only have one chance to make a first impression," so they say, and many landscape contractors are thinking twice about the risks of losing clients due to a poor company image.

Many contractors are looking for ways beyond word-of-mouth to convey their business image to customers, particularly because they are trying to banish the stigma that contractors are nothing more than manual labor wearing ripped jeans and driving run-down trucks.



The impression customers have of landscape contractors is hopefully improving more each day due to the high percentage of contractors who are presenting themselves as trained and specialized experts by proudly and properly showing off their business image in front of clients not only the first time, but every time.

The most popular way to do this is through bid forms and proposals, according to 37 percent of contractors who answered a *Lawn & Landscape* online poll. Wearing proper attire ranked second at 29 percent, and having a clean, logoed vehicle was third at 25 percent.

To participate in *Lawn & Landscape* online polls and to review past polls, visit [www.lawnandlandscape.com/poll](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/poll).

## IMAGINE That!

### Most Useful Methods of Conveying a Business Image to Potential Clients

METHOD	PERCENT OF CONTRACTORS
Bid form/proposal	37 percent
Attire	29 percent
Vehicle	25 percent
Signs	6 percent
Clip board	1.5 percent
Presentation bag	1 percent
Briefcase	.5 percent

Source: [www.lawnandlandscape.com/poll](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/poll)

## LABOR TRENDS

### Hispanic Population Rises

WASHINGTON – Early data from the 2000 census show that the U.S. Hispanic population grew by more than 60 percent in the last decade, pulling it into rough parity with blacks as the largest minority group.

The new data carry broad political and cultural implications for a nation undergoing major demographic shifts. In this case, demographers said the soaring Hispanic population was driven largely by waves of new immigrants, legal and illegal, as well as by an improved ability by census takers to count this group.

The figures showed that the number of Hispanic people who have Spanish-speaking ancestry but may belong to any race, including black, soared to 35.3 million from the 22.4 million recorded in 1990. The 2000 total was about three million more than the Census Bureau had previously estimated, a difference demographers attributed to illegal immigrants. In

(continued on page 12)





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USE READER SERVICE #132

# Market Trends

(continued from page 8)

contrast, the number of blacks rose by about 16 percent to 34.7 million from the 30 million counted in the 1990 census.

Demographers have long anticipated that Hispanics would supplant blacks as the nation's largest minority, but earlier census reports had forecasted that this would happen by 2005. While Hispanics are still concentrated in the Southwest, California, Florida and New York, new immigrants from Mexico and Central America have moved to states like North Carolina, Georgia and Iowa, where the Hispanic population was almost nonexistent a decade ago.

## IN THE NEWS

### The Weed Man Continues U.S. Growth

CLEVELAND, Ohio - When The Weed Man announced plans in late 1999 to bring

(continued on page 14)

## People

Ferris Industries promoted **Phil Wenzel** to vice president and general manager.

**Bill Dunn** was appointed vice president of Seed Research of Oregon.

**Paul Hoffman** will serve as sales representative for north Florida through Alabama at Skinners Nursery in Jacksonville, Fla.

PlantAmerica named **Todd Steadman** as vice president of content for the company's various Web sites.

**Greg Embury** was appointed vice president of sales and marketing at Kubota Tractor Corp.

Ariens named **Rick Von Schwarz** director of sales and **Kevin Wiseman** manager of OPE sales. **Barry Hagerdorn** was appointed to regional manager for the western region.

**Dennis Lighthall** was appointed power equipment sales manager and **Chuck Goode** was named industrial sales manager at SOLO.

Hermes Landscaping announced the promotion of **Charles Hagen** to president.

**Greg Moore** joined Harmony Products as northeast regional sales manager.

GreenDex recruited **Charles Elstrodt** to serve as vice president of sales.

Valent U.S.A. named **David Frye** marketing and alliance manager.



Dunn (top)  
Hoffman (bottom)

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# Market Trends

(continued from page 12)

Canada's largest lawn care company into the United States, its short-term goals called for selling six franchise units by mid-2001. When *Lawn & Landscape* sat down with The Weed Man management team for an exclusive interview in early April, the organization had 71 franchise units already in operation and ambitious plans for continuing to expand its national presence.

One key to The Weed Man's success thus far has been its unique franchising model, which features sub-franchisers who purchase a large, multi-territory area and then sell franchise units to franchisees. These units are broken up by population areas made up of 150,000 people. In addition to the sub-franchisers The Weed Man signed up last year, which include Terry Kurth, Ken Heltemes, Phil Fogarty, Bob Ottley, Charles Russell and Jon Cundiff, The Weed Man added Hank and Dave DeVries (southern Illinois, Tennessee), Jeff Kollenkark (northern California, Nevada), John Sanders (east-

(continued on page 16)

## Association NEWS

Roy DeBoer, professor of landscape architecture at Rutgers University, received the **American Society of Landscape Architects** Jot D. Carpenter Memorial Prize, which recognizes architecture educators. Along with a 45-year tenure at Rutgers, DeBoer is a licensed landscape architect in New Jersey and serves as a project consultant.

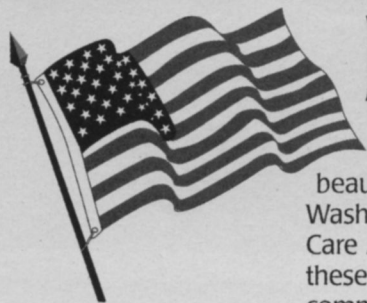
The **Pennsylvania Landscape and Nursery Association** honored Frederick Mummert with its Frederick J. Mummert Distinguished Service Award, which recognizes individuals who have served PLNA and demonstrated outstanding, lifetime commitment to the industry. Established in 2000, the award was named after its first recipient. The association also recently named Allen Fidler its new president.

The **International Turf Producers Foundation** (ITPF) distributed its book, "Water Right: Conserving Our Water, Preserving Our Environment." The book is an educational tool for green industry professionals to use when presenting the realities of available water supply to water policy decision-makers, businesses and consumers. Call 800/405-8873 for more information.

The **Landscape Contractors Association of Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Virginia** announced its 2001 board of directors. Jeff Waters is president, Mike McCartin is vice president, Jim Louth is secretary and treasurer, and Jeff Topley is immediate past president. Directors include Bruce Allentuck, David Angell, Joel Hafner, Mark Lucas, Ron Rubin, David Vismara and Deonne Wollman.

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## Green Industry Community Service Volunteers



*"We are giving back to those heroes what they gave to us—comfort and security. We are here to replenish Earth's natural healer and mender—the grass that you walk upon, the grass that cushions the Earth's hard surface and blankets those who have perished."*

—From the 1999 Dedication of Work Speech at Arlington National Cemetery by Jackie Hague, daughter of PLCAA Member Doug Hague, Lawn Classics, Findlay, Ohio

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# Market Trends

(continued from page 14)

ern Pennsylvania, New Jersey) and Tom Mauer (New England states).

The company's 2002 goals include selling its remaining five sub-franchise territories, adding another 50 franchisees and generating total lawn care sales of approximately \$12 million.

"What we want to do is offer a system through which lawn care companies can efficiently market and deliver their service to

the customer," explained Roger Mongeon, president, Turf Holdings, the company with rights to The Weed Man franchise for the United States. "People say they calibrate their spreaders every day or produce a working budget every year, but they don't really do this. The Weed Man's systematic approach is the key."

Mongeon speaks from experience, as well. His series of Weed Man franchises in Canada generate cumulative sales of nearly \$13 million annually. But he attributes the company's success in the United States to the sub-franchisers. "We had to approach the market this way where the sub-franchisers support the franchisees because we couldn't grow nearly as fast if we were providing all of the support from the corporate office," he explained.

The Weed Man admitted some surprise at the number

of landscape companies who have purchased franchises. "These are companies who were either dabbling in lawn care or are tired of subcontracting it out, and they want a way to grow their lawn care businesses successfully and without having to make all of the mistakes themselves," observed Fogarty, who along with Ottley owns the franchise rights to Ohio and western Pennsylvania.

"In the end, we will have more franchisees from outside the industry than from inside when we start getting referrals and friends of franchisees who see how they can succeed and make money in this industry as well," predicted Mongeon.

## PESTICIDE NOTIFICATION

### Oregon Follows Suit

SALEM, Ore. - The pesticide notification issue is sweeping its way across the nation as a radical bill has been proposed in Oregon that would require lawn care operators to

(continued on page 18)

## On the WEB

Elliott Irrigation - [www.waterlawn.com](http://www.waterlawn.com)

J. Murray Landscaping - [www.jmurray.com](http://www.jmurray.com)

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# Market Trends

(continued from page 16)

give 10-day notification to those who request it before pesticides are applied.

The bill, which has been proposed by Democratic Sen. Tony Corcoran, would require the agriculture department to develop a list of persons with documented pesticide sensitivity and to distribute that list to all licensed pesticide operators, pesticide applicators and private and public applicators. Applicators would then be required to provide written notification to people on the list at least 10 days prior to applying pesticides within the pesticide notification area.

Corcoran proposed the bill because a voter told him the pesticides her neighbors were using on their vineyard had a negative effect on her health.

The cost of implementing this bill remains in question, however. Corcoran doesn't believe that it would cause a logistical burden for the Agriculture Department, but Dale Mitchell, assistant administrator, pesticides division, disagrees.

"It is quite broad in its requirements and

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**MAY 16** CLP Interior and Exterior Exam, Charlotte, N.C.

Contact: 800/395-2522

**MAY 19** CLP Interior and Exterior Exam, Dallas, Texas. Contact: 800/395-2522

**MAY 19-23** American Society of Irrigation Consultants Annual National Conference, Savannah, Ga. Contact: 925/516-1124

**MAY 24** California State University San Bernardino Seminar: Selecting Planting, Moving and Managing Ornamental Trees, San Bernardino, Calif. Contact: 909/880-5977

**JUNE 21** Georgia Green Industry Association/Georgia Turfgrass Association Joint Trade Show Meeting, Atlanta, Ga. Contact: 706/632-0100

**JUNE 21-24** The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute's 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, Ponte Vedra, Fla. Contact: 703/549-7600

**JUNE 7** University of Massachusetts Extension Scouting for Pests and Problems of Woody Ornamentals in the Landscape, Sandwich, Mass. Contact: 413/545-0895. Also on June 14 in Stockbridge, Mass.; June 20 in Martha's Vineyard, Mass.; and June 28 in Amherst, Mass.

**JULY 12-15** American Nursery and Landscape Association Annual Conference, Cleveland, Ohio. Contact: 202/789-2900

**JULY 18-22** Turfgrass Producers International Summer Convention and Field Days, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Contact: 800/405-8873

**JULY 19-22** Associated Landscape Contractors of America Summer Leadership Meeting, Amelia Island, Fla. Contact: 800/395-2522

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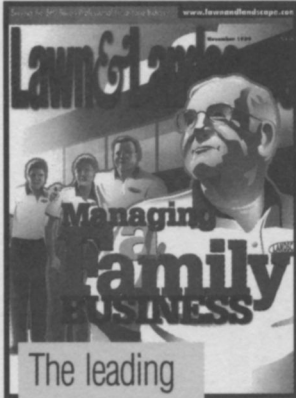
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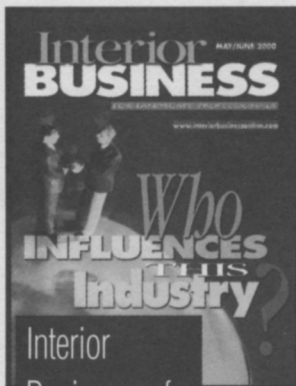
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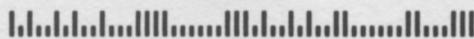
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# Market Trends

## Letters TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor,

I am writing in regards to your article "Lawn Care Roundtable" in the March 2001 issue. This subject is far more important than our industry realizes. This issue strikes at the heart of green industry people here and around the country.

We are slowly but surely being controlled and out maneuvered by special interest groups. This is only the beginning, and if we do not organize, we will be at their mercy. This issue is potentially lethal to all of us.

Greg Kenel

Creative Landscapes by Gregory  
Silver Spring, Md.

To the Editor,

I just read the article "Auger Appeal" in the February 2001 issue of *Lawn & Landscape*. The

article begins, "Ed Wojciechowski got tired of wasting one hour of manpower to dig one hole for one tree, so he invested in an auger attachment for his compact utility loader." I realize augers are a very useful product, but they are the wrong tool for planting trees. If digging by hand is difficult, it is likely because the soils we commonly plant in are abused, compacted subsoils on developed properties. A better tool or tractor attachment in this situation would be a rototiller or stump grinder that can loosen the soil, and perhaps incorporate some organic material, in a large diameter planting area. That way the tree roots will grow outward without being confined by a soil interface such as is created by an auger. And the attitude of having "wasted" a man-hour is misguided. Did you

ever hear the old nurseryman adage "Don't put a dollar tree in a dime hole?" The time spent in properly planting a tree is well invested. After all, you can't replace the time it takes to grow a mature tree. Thirty years down the road, the result of a poor planting job will likely be a tree that needs replacing, instead of an irreplaceable landscape asset.

Warren Jacobs

Jacobs Tree Surgery  
Perklotmenville, Pa.

*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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(continued from page 21)

## In Business...

Lawn care distributor **Van Waters & Rogers** changed its name to Vopak, to "reflect the expanding global presence of their parent, Royal Vopak" as the recently acquired Ellis & Everard is integrated into the company ... **Lebanon Seaboard Corp.** recently contributed \$88,957 to Rutgers University to further turfgrass research ... **Signature Control Systems** launched as a new irrigation technology manufacturer ... **Briggs & Stratton** Central Sales & Service Distributors were recently recognized for superior performance at the annual Briggs & Stratton fall conference ... **Otterbine Barebo** partnered with Unistar Leasing to provide a leasing/financing option on equipment ... **Gardeners' Guild** was one of the winners of the 2000 Waste Reduction Awards Program, sponsored by the California Integrated Waste Management Board ... Profile Products acquired Wood Recycling's mulch business. 

## Nassau County (continued from page 8)

legislation, had the courage to decide the case on the merit of the law and agreed that the SEQRA process was a requirement," remarked Daniel Van Starrenburg, president and CEO of Nature's Trees Inc., the plaintiff in the case.

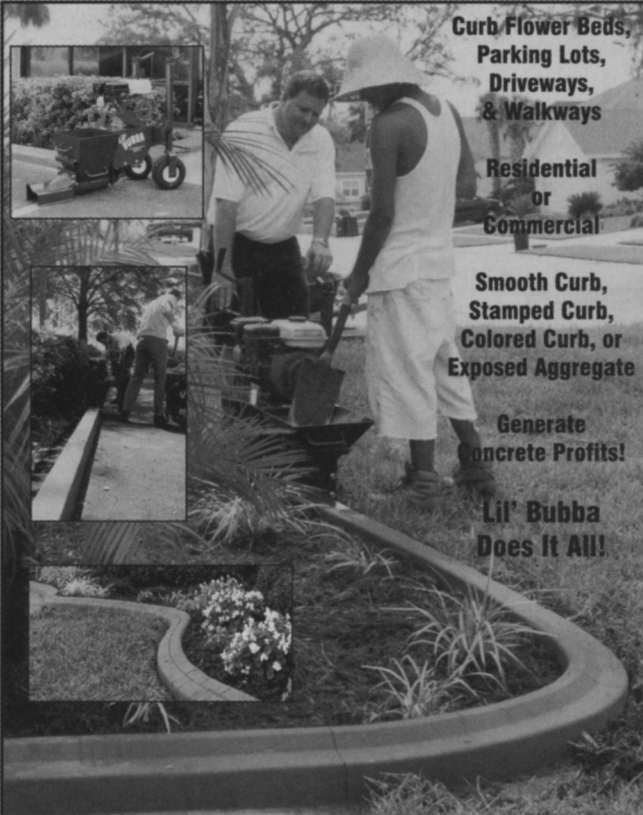
But Van Starrenburg emphasized that the issue is far from settled. The county can choose to appeal the decision or it can petition the state legislature for an exemption from complying with the SEQRA requirement, explained Larry Wilson, government affairs chairperson for the New York State Turf and Landscape Association and chairperson of the industry coalition that led the fight against the law.

"That would open up the entire debate again and is a pretty extreme measure," Wilson said about the exemption. The county's other option is to complete the SEQRA study, which could take quite awhile.

No matter how the county decides to proceed, the law won't be taking effect this year and there's a chance that the law won't be in effect in 2002. "Our attorney estimates that it's doubtful that this law will surface again or take effect before January 2003," Wilson stated.

Meanwhile, judges in Albany, Suffolk and Westchester Counties are considering the arguments in those cases. Wilson expects the industry to win the Albany and Suffolk cases but he has questions about the Westchester case because of that county's unique arguments in that case.

Wilson also noted that hearings are taking place all over the state regarding the neighbor notification law. However, he said that when legislators in Rockland County found out about the lawsuits in these counties, the public meeting was scratched and the issue was tabled. — Cheryl Green



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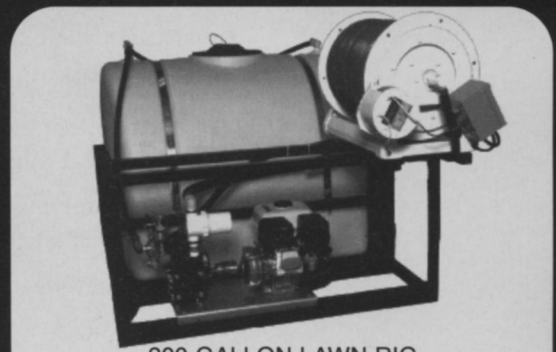
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## ORIENTATION PROGRAMS

# Mapping the Way

The first day of work is always awkward for a new employee. There are new faces, new tasks to learn and new procedures to follow, not to mention a new dress code, new benefits and new growth opportunities within the organization.

In a perfect world, confident and upbeat employees can survive these initial days and weeks without a problem, motivating themselves to find out where to pick up their new uniforms and asking questions when procedures seem confusing. But, realistically, most new hires are nervous and a tad shy as they attempt to fit in to new organizations.

Orientation programs can ease this employee tension and give contractors a moment in the spotlight to share company history, values, policies, procedures, benefits and safety reminders.

**PROGRAMS AND INSTRUCTORS.** The Groundskeeper started its orientation program in 1992 after completing an employee handbook and discussing the best way to introduce it to new employees. "We were also required to give training in OSHA communication hazards and our insurance company wanted us to start providing defensive driver training," explained Alicia Edwards, regional human resources manager, Gilbert, Ariz.

The company decided on a three-hour orientation to present this information. The first hour is spent covering OSHA communication hazards and safety facts and figures, including how to lift properly, the importance of safety goggles, and instructions on what to do when injured. During the second hour, a Groundskeeper supervisor or human resources manager explains defensive driving safety procedures and tests new employees to determine driving risks. And the third hour is spent explaining benefits, such as vacation time; policies and procedures, such as how to call in sick; and uniform information. A welcome and introduction to the company history and philosophies kicks off the program.

Because this makes for a lengthy agenda, the company chooses enthusiastic instructors and gives employees a break every hour.

"To obtain the information for the orientation program and to make it interesting, we pick everyone's

brains, including universities and the Internet, for the latest statistics on heat stress and safety," explained Robert Sagasta, supervisor and training coordinator, The Groundskeeper, Plum Yard, Tucson, Ariz. "For instance, many people are surprised by the fact that most employee injuries happen within their first year or by the fact that 90 percent of accidents happen in safe environments. Statistics and numbers along with some personal stories and anecdotes help employees grasp the safety issue. And one of the main things they need to understand before they go out in the field is that we care about their safety and we want them to go home in one piece."

"We explain to them everything they need to know in their first days so they aren't lost," Edwards added, pointing out that most Groundskeeper branches conduct orientation every Tuesday and instructors are bilingual so that Spanish and English employees can understand the information. "This makes them feel like they are more a part of a team – the more informed you are, the more of a team member you become."

Having the right person release initial company information to employees is a vital part of a successful orientation program, agreed Jay Long, people services manager, TruGreen LandCare, Ashton, Md. But while an enthusiastic person can enhance an orientation program, consistency can help guard against a poor program.

"If nothing else, a person can go through the steps of the program and stick to the outline," Long said. "If you have a Power Point program for instance, it walks a person through the right steps and keeps them from saying, 'We don't have to do the company values part today.' If a program goes from point A to point B, you can't eliminate the middle. And hopefully, what happens instead is that the person conducting the program is injecting their own positive personal experiences and anecdotes about the organization."

TruGreen LandCare conducts orientation on the Mondays for those hired the previous week. Initially, the company offered orientation on an employee's first day, but this became hectic in the summer because new people were hired daily. In the past, they displayed an organizational chart with photos of people who work in and head the various company branches, but due to turnover and promotions, this became an upkeep nightmare, so it was eliminated, Long said. Today, the program includes a Power Point presentation highlighting the organization's values, customer service principles and company objectives, in addition to some basic skills training with videos and a question-and-answer segment.

"It's important when people start somewhere that they have an opportunity to ask questions and get introduced to the company," Long explained. "In our case, we also want to explain to them that they are part of a larger organization and show them how they fit in to this family."

**OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND.** Besides informing employees of basic principles, The Groundskeeper encourages employees to make the most of their new opportunities. Edwards explained how one employee, who made \$7 an hour, learned in orientation that he could go through training and get certified, bettering his career and increasing the amount of his paycheck. In a short while, that employee went from a laborer to a crew leader to a spray technician.

While orientation acts as a great retention tool this way, it also allows those who don't want to excel the opportunity to say so. "They know up front what is expected of employees here and what opportunities are available instead of waiting three or four months to figure out what's going on and either missing opportunities or realizing they don't belong," Sagasta explained.

This encouragement includes prompting employees to use the company's open-door policy and talk to supervisors when they are aware of tasks being performed incorrectly.

"We also talk about our obligation to speak

up if they witness a safety issue," Sagasta continued. "This usually happens behind closed doors and reveals to us those who want to be part of a caring team when it comes to safety. This helps us create a relationship of trust with the concerned employee and renew a relationship with others who don't seem to be as aware of safety concerns."

#### **STARTING YOUR OWN PROGRAM.**

An orientation program doesn't have to be high-tech. "In a small company, it can be the owner getting together with new employees and saying, 'Hey, I'm glad you're here. I'm going to tell you about us, how we got here, what we do and then answer your questions,'" Long suggested.

Connie Brown, training coordinator, The Groundskeeper, Tucson, Ariz., recommended a mini-orientation checklist in English and Spanish, including information on who needs to be called in case of emergency, uniform and safety information and injury procedures. "That sheet can be signed and copied so one is put into new hires' personnel

files and the other is given to the employee."

The costs of an orientation program include the instructor's time, cost of handbook or printed information sheets and any additional materials, such as videos, Brown said. But, besides time, the real expenses are in the initial preparation of the program, Long said. "Cost is mainly in the effort and time it takes to put something down on paper or take pictures or do a videotape," he said.

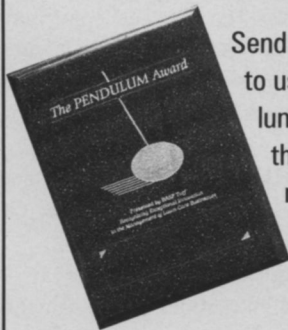
Once they establish an orientation program, contractors will find it's worth the cost and time. "We couldn't afford *not* to do this," Sagasta said. "Supervisors have seen a difference in attendance since we started the program. We've really noticed a boost in energy and enthusiasm from the start."

Despite the nature of the program, the key is to keep it consistent with a focused message, Long stressed.

"It's about making employees feel valued," Brown said. "The most important message we give is that we value the people who work here and we hope they stay with us and grow with us." — Nicole Wisniewski **LL**

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A THREAT TO TURF

## Leaf and Stem-Inhabiting Pests

Leaf and stem-inhabiting pests include those arthropods (insects and mites) that feed on the upper leaves and stems of turfgrass plants. Many of these pests often hide in thatch, others remain exposed on leaf surfaces, and the rest hide in the spaces beneath leaf sheaths and nodes.



Long front legs and red eyes help identify the clover mite, (right) which likes feeding off Kentucky bluegrass and ryegrass. Photos: David Shetlar



Winter grain mites are marked with the red-orange dorsal spot, although these pests can be a challenge to identify due to their night-feeding habits (left). Photo: David Shetlar

Most of these pests have piercing-sucking or rasping (mites) mouth-parts that pierce the plant and withdraw plant liquids as food. While this alone causes plant stress (yellowing and loss of turgidity), the primary cause of plant death from such pests is that the feeding process includes injection of salivary fluids into the host plant. By various means, including plugging vessels that translocate water and nutrients, these substances can cause the plant to die. The greenbug aphid, mealybugs and twolined spittlebug are included in this group.

**CLOVER MITE.** This pest attacks a wide variety of plants, including Kentucky bluegrass, ryegrass and clover.

Only females are known. Adults are reddish- to chestnut-brown, 0.016-inch (0.4mm) long, and have the front legs about twice the length of the other legs.

Like other mites, the clover mite probes the surface of grass blades giving a silvery appearance to the upper surface. Populations of four to five thousand mites per square foot are common. Sun and wind further desiccates host plants. Damage is similar to and may be misdiagnosed as winter desiccation caused by wind. Damage occurs on home lawns, usually next to buildings.

**WINTER GRAIN MITE.** The winter grain mite is a pest of grains west of the Mississippi but is widely distributed throughout North America. Grasses, including Kentucky bluegrass, fine fescues and perennial ryegrass, are also hosts but damage to legumes, vegetables and other plants has been reported.

The adults are relatively large for mites, up to 3/64-inch (1 mm) long. They are the only turf-inhabiting mites with olive-black bodies, bright red-orange legs and mouthparts, a pair of white eye spots, and a dorsal anus. Only females are found.

During warm sunny winter days, this mite can be found on the crowns of grass plants, in thatch and at the soil surface. On overcast days and at dusk, the mites often "appear" in great numbers on the grass leaves. The dorsal anus, surrounded by a red-orange spot distinguishes this mite from all others one might find in cool-season grasses. While the mite is visible to the naked eye, a 10X hand lens is needed to see the dorsal anus.

**BERMUDAGRASS SCALE.** In the United States, bermudagrass scale attacks bermudagrass from California to Florida and is known in Hawaii.

This scale is most frequently reported on bermudagrass, though it has been found on centipedegrass, bahiagrass, St. Augustinegrass and tall fescue.

Bermudagrass first appears to grow slowly, turn yellow in color, often resembling drought stress. Heavy infestations may dramatically thin and kill patches of bermudagrass. This type of damage is more evident during periods of hot, dry weather. Where bermudagrass enters a winter dormancy, this scale can cause delay in spring green up.

(continued on page 30)



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USE READER SERVICE #83

# Insect I.D.

(continued from page 28)

**RHODESGRASS SCALE.** Rhodesgrass mealybug occurs from South Carolina to southern California. This species attacks over 70 species of grasses, including rhodesgrass, St. Augustinegrass and bermudagrass wherever it is grown.

Only asexually reproducing females are known. The adult body is also scale-like, broadly oval, dark purplish-brown and 1/16- to 1/8-inch (1.5 to 3mm) long. The fluffy waxy covering turns yellow with age. The dark female body is exposed through openings at both ends of the waxy cover. A very long, 1/8- to 3/8-inch anal filament excretes a sweet liquid (honeydew). Though this pest is actually a mealybug, it is immobile, like a scale insect, once settled.

**GREENBUG.** This greenbug (an aphid) is reported to have damaged turfgrass from Kansas to New York, south into Kentucky and Maryland, and has also been found in California.

Over 60 members of the grass family are

hosts. Host turfgrasses include Kentucky bluegrass, Canada bluegrass, annual bluegrass, fescues and perennial ryegrass. This aphid is known to reproduce on Kentucky bluegrass, chewing fescue and tall fescue.

Young aphids look like adults except smaller. Their pear-shaped body is light green and usually has a darker green stripe down the back. The tips of the legs, antennae and cornicles (pipe-like structures on the upper side of the abdomen) are black. Nymphs destined to become winged forms have obvious wing pads in the last instar.

Adults are about 5/64 inch (2mm) long and have the same green color and black markings as the nymphs. Winged forms usually appear when overpopulation occurs, often after considerable turf damage has occurred. Winged adults are usually darker green and have wing veins marked with black.

Greenbug damage is commonly found as circular yellowed areas under trees, but also occurs in open areas as well. There is only speculation about why the damage oc-

curs under trees, but what is known is that this aphid does not (can not) feed on trees. Close (hand and knees) examination of turf in and around areas showing typical symptoms is necessary, since the aphids are not readily seen from a distance.

Young and mature greenbugs suck plant fluids from their grass host and simultaneously inject salivary fluids into the plant. This fluid causes the tissue around the point of injection to turn yellow, then orange. Individual grass blades may have 50 aphids on them. In heavy infestations, the turf turns to a distinct burnt-orange color (especially visible after rain or irrigation), and soon, the complete plant dies. Greenbug discoloration is often confused with the similar discoloration caused by turf rust disease. Greenbug infestations and damage can occur from June to November. **LL**

*Insect I.D. features excerpts from Destructive Turfgrass Insects by The Ohio State University entomologists Harry Niemczyk and David Shetlar. To order copies of the book, call 800/456-0707.*

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USE READER SERVICE #22

# Nursery Market Report

PLANT PRIMER

## Ornamental Grasses 101

Thanks to their versatility and subtle beauty, ornamental grasses are enjoying a comeback in the landscape. They can be used in a number of ways – to soften edges or to blend boundaries, for instance – and there are dozens of grasses to try, with new forms being introduced annually.

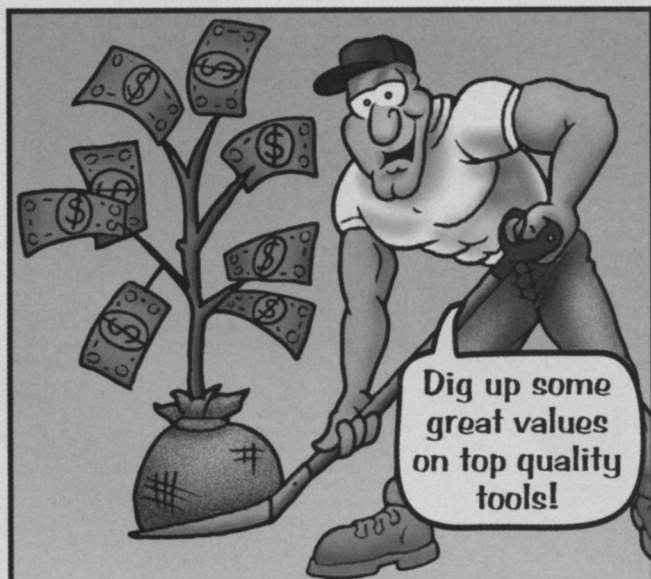
The reasons for their surge in popularity center on practical, as well as aesthetic, merits. Ornamental grasses can tolerate extreme drought and wetness, and they can endure the repeated soil freezing and thawing typical of Northeast and Midwest winters. At the same time, these grasses create several layers of interest in the landscape. When foliage catches the wind, it adds a sense of motion

and sound, and in winter, dried flowers are eye catching.

Beyond aesthetics, these grasses have many practical uses. In landscape borders, they can be used as edging or background plants, while larger specimens can be accent plants or screens.

Rhizome- and stolon-forming grasses can stabilize banks or serve as ground covers, and diminutive species can be used in rock gardens. Also, combining grasses with woody or herbaceous perennial plants, such as shrub roses or Sedum 'Autumn Joy,' help create beautiful and enduring sustainable landscapes.

**CULTURE.** Ornamental grasses, in both foliage and inflorescence (seed head), vary greatly in size, shape, color and texture. Mature plants range in height from 6 inches for blue sedge to 14 or more feet for hardy pampas. Grass forms vary from low mounding or fountain shaped to tall and vertical. Foliage colors include shades of green, yellow, blue, red, brown and variegated green and white. Also, a number of grasses change foliage color in the fall to displays of straw yellow, orange, red or purple, providing a wealth of choices. Foliage texture varies from fine to coarse,



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USE READER SERVICE #23

USE READER SERVICE #24

# Nursery Market Report

with blade widths from 1/8 to 1 inch. The inflorescence also varies in size and color and may change color in the fall, as well.

Although a few grasses tolerate shade, most require full sun. Some grasses tolerate wet soils, but most require well-drained soil. To become drought and pest resistant, plants require a suitable root zone. In compacted soils, even the root systems of the most drought-tolerant plants will not develop.

Incorporate organic matter into the root zone to improve water-holding capacity and oxygen levels. The improved root zone will allow for maximum root expansion and water extraction from the soil.

In handling maintenance, foliage should be cut down to the ground and removed each fall or spring, and some fertilization is required to compensate for nutrient loss. A 10-10-10 fertilizer may be applied at a rate of 1 pound per 100 square feet. A good deal of calcium and magnesium is lost when removing foliage, so a soil test for deficiencies of these elements should be carried out periodically and recommendations followed.

**A FEW CAUTIONS.** Planting grasses with dried foliage that will remain for the winter near combustibles such as a house or garage is not wise. Dry grass foliage and flowers can

be highly flammable, so remove foliage in the fall to avoid fire hazards.

Another point to consider is whether the grass is rhizomatous – spreading by underground stems – or clump forming. Rhizomatous types make excellent ground covers,

**Ornamental grasses can be used**

**in a number of ways – to soften edges**

**or to blend boundaries ... and there**

**are dozens of grasses to try, with new**

**forms being introduced annually.**

erosion control plants and dense cover plantings that resist weed invasion. The rhizomatous types spread at different rates laterally, some as much as 12 or more feet a year, and may be invasive. The clump-formers simply increase in circumference, requiring division every three or four years. Distinguishing between the two types and locating them in proper sites will prevent difficulties in managing the landscape.

Yet another important consideration is whether the ornamental grass is native or exotic. Native grasses were members of the local flora before European settlers arrived, while exotic grasses were introduced from

other states or countries. Some have escaped cultivation and become part of the local flora. Other grasses, such as little bluestem, annual pennisetums and the early-flowering *Miscanthus*, can reseed in the garden or spread to wetland areas, where they can be-

come real pests. New grass species and cultivars should be evaluated for invasiveness before they are installed in the landscape.

## ORNAMENTAL GRASS TYPES.

The most popular groups of ornamental grasses are *Festuca* (fescue), *Miscanthus*, *Panicum* (switchgrass) and

*Pennisetum* (fountaingrass).

*Fescue.* Fescue is a cool-season, clump-forming grass that requires protection from the hot afternoon sun. Blue foliage forms are the most popular.

Division in the early spring is often required to restore vigor. Regular fertilization may benefit this group.

*Miscanthus.* Considered the flashiest group of warm-season, clump-forming grasses, it has very showy flowers. *Miscanthus* is a large group of grasses with considerable variability in height and blade width. Select cultivars carefully to ensure adequate hardiness and adaptation to the landscape site.

*Switchgrass.* This native, warm-season, clump-forming group is becoming more popular as new cultivars become available. Cultivars with red fall color and blue-foliaged, upright cultivars are currently trendy.

*Fountaingrass.* Most are warm-season, clump-forming grasses. Some may become weedy. Both annual and perennial cultivars are valuable in the landscape. Flowers are showy and fox-tail-like in appearance. — Brian Maynard

The author is associate professor of plant science, ornamental horticulture, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, R.I.

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USE READER SERVICE #125

# In Minor's League

**Question:** I am having trouble getting financing from my bank for growth. What can I do?

I sit on the board and loan committee of a community bank here in Fort Worth. We have about \$400 million in assets and our target market is small- to medium-size businesses with growth potential and, obviously, borrowing needs. The situation you described is becoming increasingly common given the current soft economy.

Generally speaking, bankers are conservative, however, there is a reason for this. That reason relates to the slim margins banks operate under and the fact that just a few bad loans can mean the difference between a profitable year and a bad year.

My first suggestion is to evaluate your proposal to the bank. When you visit with a banker, prepare a professional presentation. Too many business owners underestimate the importance of this. They are accustomed to "shooting from the hip" and they think they can get by on their verbal communication skills. Sometimes this works, but you better have outstanding financials to back it up.

The presentation should include historical financial information as well as forecasts for the future. Include your budget for the next 12 months as well as three years worth of pro-forma forecasts. Prepare a business plan and make sure you are comfortable with its contents. You should be ready to defend the plan and clearly communicate why you need additional capital and what you will use it for. If you have had past credit problems or financial troubles, be sure you can provide a reasonable explanation for the problem and the remedies you have made to address these problems.

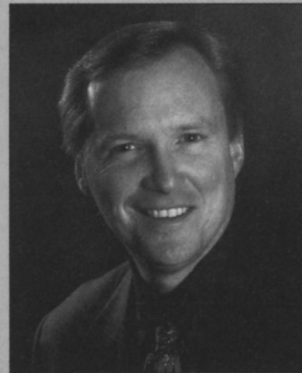
My second suggestion is to solicit funding from a variety of banks. The banking business is very competitive, and each has its own lending requirements. In addition, loan officers are very different. One may have more "clout" with the officers and loan committee members than another. One may have a lending limit that does not require committee approval while

another has to get approval for just about anything. If you have done a good "sales job" and your officer feels comfortable with you, he or she will be more inclined to be your champion to the loan committee.

**You will have to prove your company has adequate capital and resources to conduct its business and pay this debt...**

**Editor's**

## NOTE



In addition to serving the industry as a consultant and speaker, David Minor is the William M. Dickey Entrepreneur in Residence and director of the James A. Ryffel Center for Entrepreneurial Studies at Texas Christian University in

Fort Worth, Texas. Prior to joining TCU, David was the president of Minor's Landscape Services, a \$12-million, former INC. 500 award-winning company he founded in 1978 and sold to TruGreen-ChemLawn in 1998. Readers with questions for Minor can fax them to Lawn & Landscape at 216/961-0364 or e-mail them to [bwest@lawnandlandscape.com](mailto:bwest@lawnandlandscape.com).

However, understand that many banks won't even take a loan to the lending committee if the fundamentals don't make sense. You have to prove that your firm has the cash flow and the financial and productive capacity to pay all debts, including the new one, out of current operations. You will have to prove that your company has adequate capital and resources to conduct its business and pay this debt if it can't be paid out of current earnings. In addition, your collateral is critical, and the committee will closely evaluate what you are offering to cover this debt and whether it can be foreclosed on and sold or liquidated quickly.

The size of the bank and its market niche also may be a factor. Generally, large banks have decentralized their lending decisions, which has taken many discretionary decisions out of loan officers' hands. Ask in advance how lending decisions are made. If you have an aggressive request, stay away from banks that have taken the human element out of the decision-making process.

If all else fails, evaluate other financing options. These options may include venture capital (you better have an excellent plan and great growth prospects), a factoring company, and possibly a lender that provides mezzanine financing. Small Business Administration loans are also a possibility. Educate yourself about these options and the pros and cons of each before pursuing. **LL**

# Minding Your

# Business



## Spring Fever

**C**reating plans can be simple during the winter months, but sticking to them once spring season business picks up is much more difficult.

Last month, I explained how landscape contractors who spent the winter working on improving their companies can learn to manage a budget and modify or add systems effectively during this seasonal transition. This month, I'm tackling effective marketing techniques to help contractors sell additional work and recruit and hire new employees.

**MARKETING MANIA.** Successful companies find time to market and sell their services throughout the year. How many times do you work on letters or mailings when the weather is nice? Probably not very often. These tasks are usually performed when the weather is bad or business slows. As a result, we write letters and call on clients during those cold, rainy days when no one is thinking about their landscape. This is a flawed, inconsistent strategy. If you want your business to operate at full capacity, then marketing must remain an ongoing effort – not just a rainy day activity.

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# Minding Your Business

You'll know this time devoted to marketing was well spent when you are suddenly inundated with sales opportunities. Your phone rings off the hook and you can't find time to respond to all of leads.

This is when many companies decide that they have too much work and discontinue their marketing efforts. However, this is evidence that your efforts are paying off, and if you quit now, you may miss out on some great opportunities. If you are over capacity, raise prices and improve your overhead recovery on each job.

**RECRUIT, RECRUIT, RECRUIT.** This winter, you probably identified the need to hire new employees to handle your growth. Therefore, you placed ads in your local paper hoping to find qualified candidates.

Occasionally, you will find a diamond in the rough, but more often than not, you end up hiring someone who is not qualified for the job. Then, instead of changing your plans,

you try to move forward with your original plan even though you don't have the most qualified person. In this case, you are setting up yourself and the employee for failure.

**Successful companies find time to market and sell their services throughout the year.**

In order to hire qualified employees you must make an honest effort to recruit on a regular basis. Finding good employees is not easy, and good landscape companies have realized that recruiting is an ongoing process. The challenge then becomes finding the time to recruit. Too many companies limit their recruiting to the slow winter months, but at this time they usually don't even have a position to offer.

Recruiting involves more than just running a few ads during the winter months. Finding qualified employees requires attending job fairs, local colleges and universities, using recruiting Websites, and getting involved with industry events throughout the year – not just in the off-season. Managers and owners need to find time during the busy time of the year to recruit and hire new employees.

After setting goals to recruit workers, and sell and market your services, you need to stick with these plans and evaluate them throughout the year. After all, you have invested a tremendous amount of time and effort into these plans, and you cannot afford to throw them all away just because you are too busy. – *Tim Lynott*

The author is a consultant with Landscape Consulting Services. He can be reached at 410/795-6248.

Want to know how other contractors handle a particular business challenge? Ask us, and we'll find out. Send ideas for "Minding Your Business" topics to [bwest@lawnandlandscape.com](mailto:bwest@lawnandlandscape.com) or via fax at 216/961-0364.

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- LANDSCAPING PROPOSAL** (smaller version): A simplified proposal form with a 'FREE LASER' callout.
- Lawn Maintenance Invoice**: A form for recurring lawn care services, with a 'Lawn Maintenance Invoice' callout.

 Each form includes the company name 'CASCADIA LANDSCAPING' and contact details for Portland, Oregon. A central callout box states: 'Approximately 32 characters and spaces per line, 8 lines maximum.'



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USE READER SERVICE #27

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*Monsanto scientists used scanning-electron microscopy to photograph the effects of weeds sprayed with Roundup Pro and an imitator. Taken just one hour after application, these images clearly show more formulation in the leaf sprayed with Roundup Pro.*

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***In the first two hours, it delivers three times more power to the roots than Glypro Plus<sup>™</sup> herbicide.***

**Roundup**  
**PRO<sup>®</sup>**  
Herbicide



***The proof is in the roots.<sup>2</sup>***

*Scientists also used autoradiography to photograph and measure the amount of herbicide in the roots two hours after application. Time after time, at least three times more herbicide showed up in the weeds sprayed with Roundup Pro. With the imitator, barely any herbicide has moved to the roots.*



*This is a cross-section of a weed leaf magnified 1000x. The yellow droplets mean Roundup Pro is already at work inside.*

**Roundup**  
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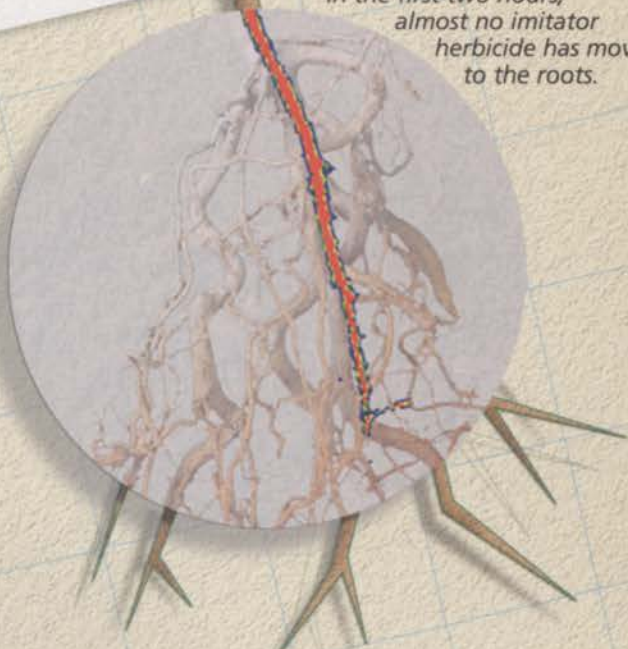


*This weed, sprayed with the imitator, has almost no droplets in the leaf.*

**Glypro Plus**

*In the first two hours, almost no imitator herbicide has moved to the roots.*

*Scientific photography taken two hours after application shows three times more Roundup Pro in the roots. More color means more herbicide.*



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## Online Sweepstakes Are Back

Who said there is no such thing as a free lunch? One lucky sweepstakes winner will get free lunch, not to mention the two complimentary



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## Daily Features

*Lawn & Landscape Online* offers daily features on a variety of topics. Our current schedule is as follows:

**Mon.** - *Contractor Talk*: Profiles of industry professionals and discussions of common practices.

**Tues.** - *Irrigation Issues*: An update on new products and hot-button issues.

**Wed.** - *Lawn Care Roundup*: A look at problems and solutions for the lawn care world.

**Thurs.** - *Landscape Issues*: The information you need to bolster your landscape design, installation and maintenance skills.

**Fri.** - *Business Management*: Industry consultants and management firms offer advice on running a business.

**Plant Of The Month**: Author Barbara Ellis highlights *Euphorbia* in May, which include poinsettias and crown-of-thorns. Find these features at [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com).

## Share Opinions And Ideas With Other Pros

Join the *Lawn & Landscape* Online Message Boards for your chance to share your business ideas, equipment suggestions and human resource concerns with our growing community of industry professionals. Activity on the board has more than tripled recently with the 10,000th post recorded in April - less than four months after the introduction of the board.

Discussion topics range from business management issues, such as tracking overhead expenses, exploring add-on services and finding employees, to legal issues, like application licensing, workers' compensation plans and insurance coverage.

Share ideas and ask questions of the online community by visiting [www.lawnandlandscape.com/messageboard](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/messageboard). Be sure to register for your My Lawn & Landscape account at [www.lawnandlandscape.com/my/adduser.asp](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/my/adduser.asp) to be able to post threads and replies and to search the message boards for topics already covered.



## ONLINE Contents

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USE READER SERVICE #84

by Kristen Hampshire

### DAN'S LANDSCAPING & LAWN CARE

**HEADQUARTERS:** Terrytown, La.

**FOUNDED:** 1981

**2000 REVENUE:** \$780,000

**2001 REVENUE PROJECTIONS:**  
\$858,000

**SERVICE MIX:** Eighty percent of the revenue comes from commercial/industrial clients, 10 percent from residential and 10 percent from government/municipal. Seventy-five percent of the company's work is maintenance services, 10 percent is installation, 10 percent is lawn care and 5 percent is irrigation.

**EMPLOYEES:** Eight year-round, 2 seasonal

**EQUIPMENT:** Ten trimmers, eight blowers, six edgers, three pruners, three chain saws, four hedge trimmers, four maintenance vehicles, six 60-inch zero-turn mowers, two mid-size 36-inch walk-behind mowers, six 21-inch push mowers and two skid-mounted spray tanks.

### THE COMPANY

**MISSION STATEMENT:** Exceptional people providing exceptional service. Satisfied customers are our greatest asset.

**FUTURE CHALLENGES:** Retaining employees in a tight labor market and pricing services competitively while accounting for increased fuel and insurance costs.

### THE OWNER

#### Dan Standley

Standley started the company out of his home in 1981 after working nine years in New Orleans oil fields.

**At a  
Glance**

# High-Spirited SUCCESS

This isn't a story about perfection – or happy beginnings and smooth transitions.

This is a real story. One that portrays a man, like many, cut out by corporate downsizing, hurt by lagging economic times and disgruntled by the complexity of operating systems. This is a story about a man, Dan Standley, and his company, Dan's Landscaping & Lawn Care, which is carving a name in Terrytown, La., and leaving a dent in the New Orleans commercial market by building slowly, learning gradually and fine-tuning constantly.

Today's Standley knows that untimely endings make fruitful beginnings – and successful businesses, for that matter. In his office, he proudly displays a neatly embossed seal commemorating the company's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The insignia also embellishes his invoices, and two decades after founding his company, this long-term success still catches him by surprise.

"I had no inkling we'd be where we are today," he remarked, modestly downplaying a success story with a \$780,000-revenue ending. "But, when you hit rock bottom, you have no place to go but up." Standley didn't dredge the bottom long when he was laid off in 1981 after working nine years in the oil field – a job that followed his departure from University of Texas where he spent a couple years taking business classes and playing football.

"A real-world, nuts-and-bolts type of guy," he turned misfortune into opportunity, rewinding to high-school summers spent mowing neighbors' lawns in Houston, Texas, with his brother, Tom, for \$3.50 a pop – \$5 for corner lots, which were a treat, he said. Then, Standley had no idea this makeshift money-maker would ignite a thriving full-service landscape business that would celebrate 20 birthdays.

However, before any anniversary come rites of passage – turning points, milestones, signs of a company driving forward. Standley

*Settling into systems didn't stop Dan Standley's contagious energy from growing an enterprise founded on camaraderie, client concern and quality.*

# rited ESS

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*Dan Standley motivates employees with incentive programs and retains workers with a generous benefits package.*

*Photo: Keith Adams*

notes the pivotal marks in his business history. Hiring his first crew in 1983 proved he was growing, and joining Associated Landscape Contractors of America in 1988 spring-boarded his industry involvement and fed him ideas to improve operations. Moving his business out of his garage soon after demonstrated increasing financial strength.

**A PEOPLE PLACE.** Standley goes to work everyday with a genuine smile – a true-to-life, toothy grin. He simply loves his work. "After being laid off and starting my own business, I had a feeling of independence and power – just a great feeling. A happy feeling. A feeling of fulfillment and closure," he described. "I wake up each morn-

ing with a zest for life, and I smile ear to ear because I love my job."

This contagious enthusiasm remains a principle of his business – he carries it throughout his client and employee interaction, incentive programs and internal operations. Energy drives Dan's Landscaping & Lawn Care, and people know it.

"Every company has internal and external clients, and I really try to treat my internal clients A+, because my employees make the company," he reasoned. "If they're happy and devoted and have the right training, they'll make our clients happy."

Standley takes care of his "internal clients" with generous incentive programs, including bonus bucks employees can put toward prizes (see sidebar page 46), breakfasts, staff pizza parties and an annual crawfish boil he hosts for their families. He also awards outstanding efforts with employee-of-the-quarter certificates. But most of all, he listens.

"You have to be a good listener and a good coach," he said. "We really focus on, 'What did you learn from that?'" Many times, Standley finds himself learning, too. He encourages technicians to exchange constructive ideas and praises input with \$25 rewards for the suggestion of the month.

"I'll say, 'Look, you are the expert. You've been out there,'" he reasoned. "'I don't want you to write up a suggestion that says, 'Buy a new machine.' What I want you to do is come up with labor-saving, money-saving or employee-benefiting ideas that will help the overall structure of the company.'"

Input leads to implementation. One technician suggested rerouting crews to improve transportation efficiency. Another recommended installing a boat winch to lower trailer ramps and alleviate aching backs from unloading equipment, which saved the company money from workers' compensation claims. And, by learning from mistakes and focusing on safety, the company keeps insurance rates in the lowest bracket.

These bonuses help build his business, because growing a reliable workforce requires not just attracting, but keeping, valuable workers, Standley said, identifying employee retention as a barrier to success for many businesses, including his own at times.

"The available workforce is less," he pointed out. "You have to form creative ways  
(continued on page 44)

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## Cover Story

(continued from page 42)

to entice them and keep them in the door. We get people a lot of times coming from other companies because they hear a lot about the things we do for our employees."

Standley is not just referring to the rewards, but the givens. His eight full-time employees enjoy competitive benefits packages with medical insurance and an IRA. A

profit-sharing initiative is in the works, as he hopes workers will see how they impact the company's success.

While business thrives, Standley realizes the importance of trust and delegation, one of his weak links, he admitted. "I was working 15 hours a day and I was too stressed out," he described of his earlier super-man

management tactics. "I couldn't do it all, and I had to get some key people out there."

Now, Standley manages the bulk of sales and marketing, still dipping into maintenance work, and his crew supervisor, Anthony Ruffin, handles operational duties. Elizabeth Ravindran, office manager, keeps systems intact.

Passing on responsibility not only relieved Standley of over-packed workdays, but also allowed key employees to grow along with the organization, he said. Ruffin moved up the ranks, starting 13 years ago as a technician. "At one time, Dan was the only one who did the scheduling, and now he passed that down to me," Ruffin said, also noticing Standley's hefty workload.

Now, Standley is loosening the reins and passing out more than incentives. "I used to jump on a mower and help the guys mow, and I found that my expertise is dealing with clients, quality checks and sales calls," he realized. "I thought I was doing a good job, but I was being counterproductive."

Eventually, he would like to shift business into "autopilot," but first the company must solidify its systems, he noted. Still, he sees stepping out of day-to-day operations as a challenge. "I like being involved," he said simply. "I always have."

**OPERATION OVERHAUL.** A pivotal point in Dan's Lawn Care & Landscaping business timeline falls in 1988, when Standley joined Associated Landscape Contractors of America, a connection he refers to as "a life-long business partner." Networking with other contractors—borrowing ideas and sharing tips—drafted the skeleton for more efficient operating systems.

"I learn the best from visiting other companies, and the benchmarking tips I've gained have been unbelievable," he said, listing a four-day work week, pre-employment drug screening and equipment advice as suggestions he lifted from other businesses.

"I've learned a lot of lessons over the years and prior to getting involved with trade organizations," he said. "Ten years ago, I ran my business from the seat of my pants. It would take me five hours with a pot of coffee late at night to do invoices. With our software, it now takes my office manager a little more than an hour."

(continued on page 46)

*If time is money in your business...*

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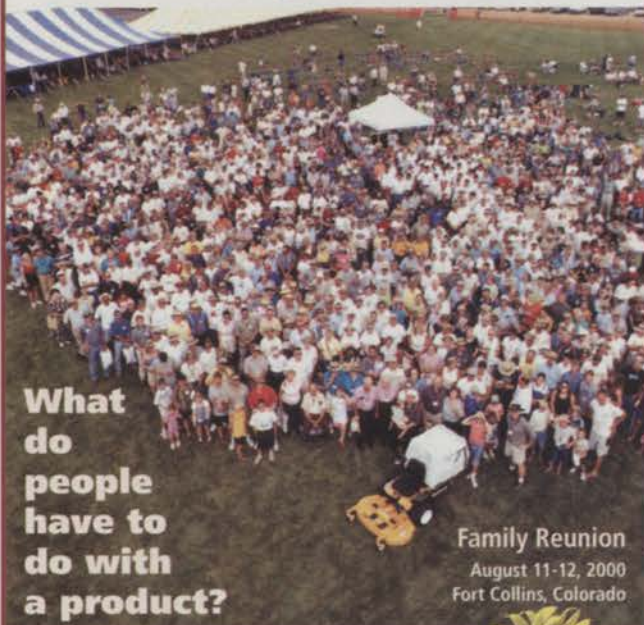


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## Cover Story

(continued from page 44)

This is only one of many systematic overhauls that sharpened the company's daily operations, Standley added. "I think that having decent controls in effect has been an evolutionary process. We've never been out of control, we've just improved the ones we had."

Managing financials, undoubtedly, is one of Standley's greatest challenges, he said. Ravindran recalled the shuffle of paperwork and technicians on her first day at work eight years ago when the business was still in Standley's home. "There was no system," she remarked. "There was no employee manual. We didn't have a route sheet, and we would just write the crew name and where they were going to go on a piece of paper, and they would return at 5 p.m. Dan used to write proposals on an itty-bitty piece of paper that had carbon behind it, rip it off and give it to the client."

Now, systems at the company are the norm. Spreadsheets organize scheduling and routing, and job costing allows the company to identify productivity pitfalls and determine which accounts yield a profit or a loss. A tracking system prevents inefficient routing by

(continued on page 48)

**D**an Standley is willing to show employees the money—at least those who show him the work. The bonus buck incentive program at Dan's Landscaping & Lawn Care, Terrytown, La., motivates his eight-man staff to perform at their peak and offer innovative input, he said.

"It's an inexpensive way to show appreciation to your employees, and the incentive makes it kind of fun," he said.

Faux money, printed in 5-, 10- and 15-dollar increments, is issued to crewmembers that display outstanding effort in their work. This might be going the extra mile on a property, earning positive feedback from a valued client, helping another crewmember finish a challenging task, consistently arriving to work on time or offering a solution to improve operating efficiency, Standley listed. Crew leaders and the office manager help Standley distribute the money.

These dollars add up, and employees can shop the prize showcase to redeem rewards. "We have a little showcase and we put prizes in there, like a safe, a clock radio, a television, a dinner for two, a CD player," he explained. "Each one has a dollar amount on it. A television might cost \$50 or \$100 bonus bucks."

Suggestions at the company aren't limited to business-related ideas. Standley is open to feedback when it comes to filling the showcase, he said, adding that he encourages employees to flip through office catalogues to look for appealing prizes. "Their ideas of what's good to get is a moving target, too," he said. "If there's something that they want in the Office Depot catalogue, I tell them to pick it out and they'll have something to work for." — *Kristen Hampshire*

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USE READER SERVICE #97

# Cover Story

(continued from page 46)

creating geographic territories. "Before the spreadsheet I had old formulas that people had given me through the years, and they weren't accurate and I wasn't using them properly," Standley remembered.

Additionally, he keeps a labor attorney on retainer and meets regularly with an accountant to produce periodic financial re-

ports. He hired several consultants to evaluate his company's financials and formulate a business plan, which outlines a model of gradual, consistent growth.

Most importantly, Standley maintains relationships with other industry professionals, learning through their experiences as to not "reinvent the wheel," he noted. "It's a

two-way street. You share back and forth, and there are no barriers. The walls go down, and it's a very open forum for growth."

With expectations for a 10-percent revenue increase in 2001 and a history of incremental growth, Standley predicts more maturity. "Financially, we can always improve," he stressed. "I'd like to see us not growing as much, but netting more. We all want to see that."

**EASY GROWS IT.** Standley doesn't want to overextend his operation. He isn't planning for branch offices and he doesn't crave quantity. "I've learned that bigger isn't necessarily better for me," he explained. "You can gross a lot [of revenue], but it's what you net that matters. I think that most small businesses fail after three to five years, and we're doing something right."

Doing it right means doing it slowly, for Standley.

"There were some years where I had growth spurts, and that was back when I didn't have any real business plan and I wasn't seeking any help," he recalled. "But my growth has been very gradual. I was very leery of not having the people to handle the work and losing the bread and butter clients that pay the bills."

Core clients are Standley's first priority, which he justifies with a common business philosophy - the 80/20 principle, which figures most company profits stem from 20 percent of the client base. Reselling services to these accounts is unnecessary since customers are already pleased, he explained. Their satisfaction with the services supplies additional selling opportunities. "Those are the people you focus on," he said. "Instead of going out on five new Yellow Page calls, where one may pan out and the others don't, I'll resell add-on services to existing clients. They like us, the job we're doing and it's a done deal."

The company provides landscape maintenance and lawn care services in-house, and uses strategic alliances with companies for irrigation installation and tree services. "A lot of our clients expect one-stop shopping," he explained. "They want to call one person to fix the tree and the irrigation system."

"I don't want to buy extra equipment or train people to do these jobs," he continued, stressing the value of his subcontractor rela-

(continued on page 150)

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## First Look

by Bob West



*Troy Hall learned about the dangers of ego-driven business decisions and the value of true management, and his company is stronger as a result.*

### Hall's Horticulture Design

323 Old Hebron Road  
Charlotte, N.C. 28273  
704/679-9510  
www.hallshd.com



*Matt Posvar (left) and Will Sutterlin (right) are two key managers Troy Hall (center) is counting on to assume more responsibility. Photos: Hall's Horticulture Design*

**T**roy Hall understands ambition and the desire to be the biggest. When he founded Hall's Horticulture Design in 1994, he was confident that his ambition and an intense customer service focus would be enough to eventually ensure his company's position among the elite landscape firms in the Charlotte, N.C., market. He didn't anticipate, however, the extent of the challenges associated with running a growing landscape company.

Hall's Horticulture Design began with one truck, one man, \$6,000 and a vision. "I knew that I needed a maintenance base of clients because that's where the cash flow comes from to keep you operating," Hall related. "But the idea all along was that I didn't want to have to depend on

anyone else to do work for us, so we wanted to be a design/build/maintain company."

After four months, Hall hired his first employee, Will Sutterlin, who is his partner today. "Will and I mowed together for six to nine months, and then we hired someone to mow for me so I could focus on landscape work," Hall noted.

As the landscape work grew, Sutterlin joined Hall in that area of the business so Hall could move on to irrigation. The company grew this way for its first three years, adding irrigation, hardscapes and lawn care to its service menu.

At the same time, Hall focused on customer service. "We got a lot of jobs early on when people called us because their previous contractor didn't show up," Hall recalled, adding that he calls customers any time he knows he is going to be at least 10 minutes late for an appointment. "We tell maintenance customers they will see us within a two-hour timeframe on a certain day unless it rains, in which case they will see us the next day. They like knowing they can count on us like that."

Hall's commitment to running the business the right

*(continued on page 52)*

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**USE READER SERVICE #113**

## First Look

(continued from page 50)

way also included an educational emphasis – becoming a registered business contractor and a certified plant professional in the state of North Carolina, earning a pesticide applicator's license and attending a series of training opportunities in irrigation and landscape design. "I didn't feel like I was knowledgeable enough to compete with the bigger companies when I started out, so that's what we had to do," Hall said.

**THE BURDEN OF BIG.** By the end of 1997 the company had established the requisite divisions to call itself a full-service firm. At that point, Hall believed, the company was poised to take on the proverbial 'big boys' in Charlotte and enter the commercial market.

"Our first few years we were all residential, and I thought we were missing the boat," he explained. "We had consolidated all of our business with one bank that gave us a credit line and an equipment line, the economy was good, so we got into commercial work with some big projects."

Sales doubled for the year, employee count climbed to 26 and the company surpassed the \$1-million mark. Breaking into the commercial arena wasn't particularly challenging for the company since its first commercial jobs came from residential customers who also owned or managed corporate properties. But Hall quickly learned that the differences between residential and commercial customers are significant.

"The growth was a nightmare," he admitted. "We had to hire people, but we didn't have a training program because we didn't know we needed one. The quality of work deteriorated, and I had no idea of the amount of red tape we were getting into with general contractors. We didn't get paid for six to nine months on some jobs."

These large, commercial jobs created more challenges than Hall expected. "I thought we could do commercial work, and I wanted to bang heads with the big boys," he acknowledged. "We got out there and did the work, but I bid the jobs too low because I didn't know what we were getting into."

Today, Hall looks back upon this experience and appreciates it. "We got through the year, and it helped us identify what type of customer we want," he related. "We are a high-end residential/low-end commercial design/build/maintain firm. We want cus-

tomers who understand what it costs to install a landscape."

In addition, Hall learned how the company needed to improve. For starters, he had to develop systems, including a procedures manual. "The idea is to make the employees self

sufficient," he commented. "They always ask me, 'What should I do with this?' or 'How should I handle that?' When I'm not here, they get stumped because they don't know how to do things. I've tried to put everything down on paper so the company would work fine tomorrow if I wasn't here."

Hall also had to develop some systems, such as pricing. "One of the most important things we've done has been establishing a consistent pricing structure," he noted, adding that the company's estimates are computer-generated through an Excel program. "Now we can tag the unit costs for any plant or service on any estimate. We also know that we will work 45 hours a week with 16 or 17 laborers, and we need to recover \$16.71 in overhead per man-hour in order to break even. Everything starts there."

Along with formalizing his pricing, Hall created an annual budget for the company. "Pricing and a budget go hand-in-hand," he explained. "But having a budget doesn't mean saying you'll do \$20,000 a month in irrigation for the year. We spent a lot of time doing this so we really know what we can expect to do for each service in each month, and we measure our results against that."

By producing a budget based on historical performance, Hall realized the company was losing money from Dec. 15 to Feb. 15 every year because it tried to complete installations during this time. "There are too many weather variables at that time that hurt our profitability, so we cut back on our people at that time of year and just keep providing our core maintenance services, and this saves us thousands of dollars a week in labor."

Looking at past numbers also helped Hall identify a hidden demon in the company's financial performance. "I was so sales driven that I didn't realize we were getting killed with the overtime," he warned. "We kept going after more and more work and cramming it

1994	\$76,000
1995	\$125,000
1996	\$303,000
1997	\$507,000
1998	\$1.1 million
1999	\$988,000
2000	\$1 million
2001	\$1.2 million (projected)

## Annual Sales

into the same crews because we didn't want to buy more trucks. But we weren't pricing our work with overtime in mind."

As a result, employees were working 20 hours of overtime a week, which meant paying nearly two dozen employees for an additional

30 hours on top of their regular pay. "Now I know I need to match the dollars per-hour that we're taking in with what we're spending," Hall commented. "If we've already got four crews doing all they can in a week, taking on another job doesn't make sense unless that customer is going to pay for the overtime."

**GROWING THE RIGHT WAY.** After peaking at nearly \$1.1 million in annual sales in 1998, the company had sales of \$988,000 in 1999 and \$1 million last year, which was fine with Hall because the company did so with six fewer employees and nearly tripled its net profit. "Now we go after net profit through better management, training, safety and so on," he explained. Today, about 75 percent of the company's sales comes from residential customers as the it continues doing some commercial installation work for two general contractors that provide referrals on highly profitable residential renovation work.

Meanwhile, Hall is redefining his role in the organization as he learns to manage his managers instead of doing the work for them. "I have to commit to these individuals and trust them to make mistakes and learn for themselves," he pointed out, adding that he just hired the company's first designer/salesperson to assist him with those tasks. "Early this year, I was still doing accounting, budgets, sales, designs, payroll and getting the crews going in the morning. I've been micromanaging, and that has hindered us."

This transition challenges Hall daily. "I have to sit back and listen to various conversations without saying anything even if I think I have an idea that is better than whatever they're talking about," he related. "I keep reiterating the importance of this trust to myself." ■

The author is Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.



The background of the entire page is a close-up, slightly blurred photograph of green grass blades. The blades are long and narrow, with a natural green color and some lighter green highlights where they catch the light. They are arranged in a somewhat vertical, overlapping pattern, creating a sense of depth and texture.

IS THERE INSECT

*control*

AFTER ORGANOPHOSPHATES?

It's happened before. More than once. Insecticides you've trusted and relied on have been restricted, even banned. Organophosphates are the chemical class currently in the spotlight. Their use has already been limited, and further restrictions may follow as the EPA continues reviewing them under new FQPA guidelines.

If you're concerned about losing your organophosphate insecticide, or interested in alternative insecticides for any reason, we at Chipco Professional Products would like to invite you to consider three diverse products with much to offer. Each is from a different chemical class. Each is successful and respected. Two provide you with virtually the same spectrum, control performance, plant safety, and cost effectiveness you get with organophosphates. Perhaps at least one of them should be added to your arsenal for insect control.

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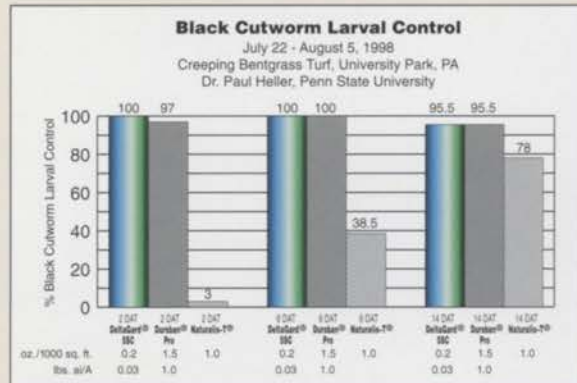
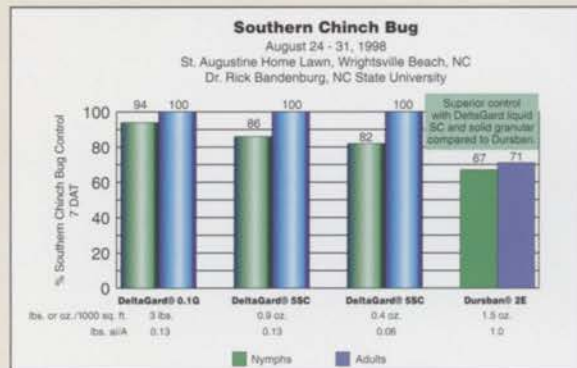
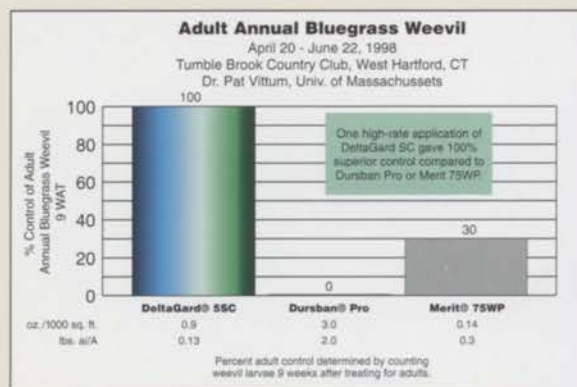
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DeltaGard is effective against more than 50 insect species, including ants, fleas, ticks, chinch bugs, mole crickets, billbugs, and bluegrass weevils. DeltaGard's broad spectrum efficacy is matched by power: DeltaGard provides quick knockdown, high mortality, and a long residual. Yet, its toxicity is extremely specific to insects.

As an organophosphate replacement, DeltaGard is up to the challenge. Several studies have shown it to perform as well as, or better than, Dursban. (See charts on Bluegrass Weevil, Chinch Bug and Cutworm control.) And DeltaGard insecticides carry wide use labels, enhancing the natural flexibility of the products.

DeltaGard has other benefits, too: There's little odor, it provides for flexible application, and it's economical to use. It combines readily with many fertilizers, fungicides, and herbicides, too, making it a good tankmix partner. And with more than 25 years' experience in the field, DeltaGard has been repeatedly tested and proven.

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Sevin stacks up well against organophosphates, too, performing better than Dursban against pests like billbugs, cutworms, June beetles, and sod webworms. (See charts.)

Sevin works both through contact and through ingestion. The combined effect of these two modes of action is quick knockdown and thorough control. Long residual activity keeps Sevin effective for 7 to 14 days, yet people may re-enter treated areas as soon as the spray has dried.

And Sevin has many other features that make it easy and attractive to use: It's unaffected by temperature or weather conditions. It's not subject to photodegradation. It's



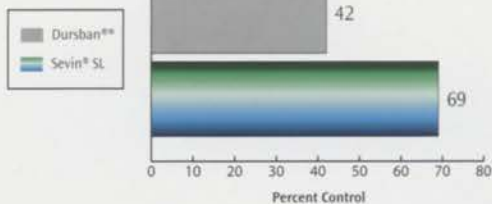
not toxic to plants. It won't stain equipment, clothes or any surface of any kind, and it doesn't leave an odor.

Diverse formulations allow Sevin to be applied with virtually any type of application equipment. It's economical, and it's compatible in tankmixes with a broad range of products, including herbicides, fungicides, adjuvants, and other insecticides.

Finally, 35 years of use have not diminished Sevin's effectiveness in the field. Insects rarely show resistance to this dependable compound.

If you've never tried Sevin, perhaps you should.

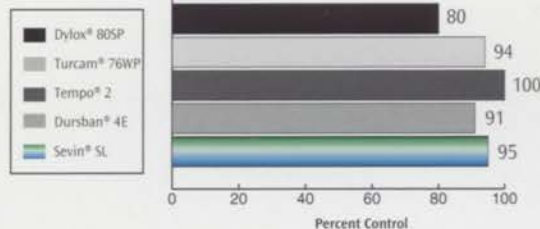
### Billbug Larva Control



\*various formulations

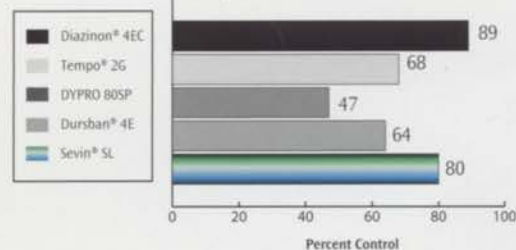
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### Sod Webworm Control



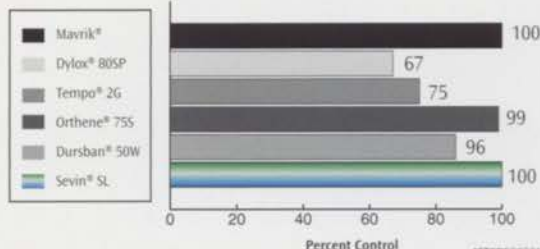
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### Green June Beetle Grub Control



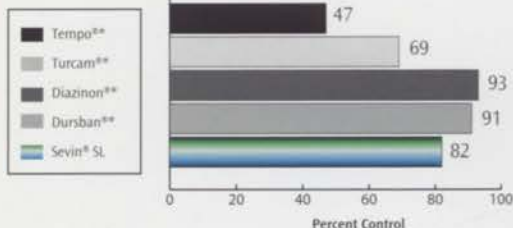
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### Cutworm Control



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### Chinch Bug Control



\*various formulations

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To get the same level of control that one application of Chipco Choice provides would require five or more applications of an organophosphate. Or to put it another way, one pound of fipronil, the active ingredient in Chipco Choice, is equal in efficacy to 200 pounds of an organophosphate active ingredient.

In more ways than one, fipronil and Chipco Choice are in a class by themselves.

**chipco**  
**choice**

The class is phenyl pyrazoles. It appeared on the scene with the discovery of fipronil in 1987. Its unique mode of action distinguishes it from every other class of insecticide.

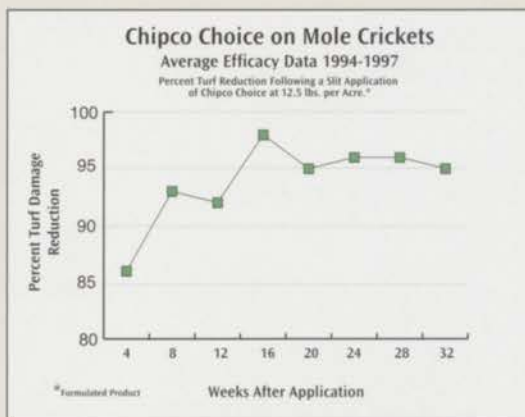
Chipco Choice is currently labeled only for mole crickets, but its unprecedented success against that stubborn pest has golf and lawn and landscape professionals eager for expanded labeling. EPA registration for broadcast use against red imported fire ants (RIFA), is pending, and additional label expansions are being considered. In the meanwhile, you can guess at the potential of fipronil by observing its great success in agricultural, veterinary, and environmental applications:

Fipronil has revolutionized flea, tick, and termite control in the U.S. with brands like Frontline®, Topspot®, and Termidor®. It's also used around the world for controlling insects in crops as diverse as cotton, rice, bananas, potatoes, and sugar cane.

Obviously, fipronil is versatile and trusted. Another plus is that fipronil is extremely effective at very low and infrequent doses. In the case of mole crickets, for example, just one application of Chipco Choice provides a full season of the most effective mole cricket control available.

Fipronil works both by contact and ingestion, providing preventative and curative action. Extremely long residual activity means that fipronil not only eliminates existing insect problems, but prevents future problems from occurring. Humans appreciate the fact that it's odor free.

The full potential of fipronil in insect control remains to be seen, but by all accounts to date, it's a chemical worth watching and waiting for.



## More than exceptional products

We hope you'll consider these exceptional products as you consider what to do beyond organophosphates. Please also keep in mind the company behind them: Chipco Professional Products is an excellent resource for professionals like you who might have questions about the changing state of pest control, or concerns about what course of action to take next.

For more information, please contact your Chipco representative or call us at 201-307-9700.

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by Kristen Hampshire

*Productive mowing starts with the initial purchase and trickles down to trained people and accurate pricing.*

A “super mower” would be equipped to climb hills, contour teasing bed lines, maneuver around trees and speed over turf without a tear. What contractor wouldn’t choose an equipment cure-all – a purchase that fits on a trailer, stays out of the repair shop and delivers profits instead of poor productivity?

But then, some things are simply too good to be true.

“One product to handle every job – it’s really not there,” admitted Peter Whurr, vice president of product management, Textron Turf Care and Specialty Products, Racine, Wis. “The long and short of it is you have to look at the application, and the products are designed to meet those applications.”

Contractors inevitably confront more than one application on a service route – one property might require a high-speed riding mower, while another could call for a compact walk-behind. Pairing proper equipment with a property’s characteristics means multiple mowers. And operating mowers efficiently means considering labor, organization and estimating.

When productivity is the bottom line, machine downtime, careless operation, negligent maintenance and faulty estimates drag down a company’s efficiency.

**PURCHASE POWER.** Marc Scaggs is a power shopper. He wants speed – movement to push him through full schedules and position him ahead of his competitors. “You need to be as efficient as possible,” he remarked. “The competition is trying to be as efficient as possible, too. That’s what everyone is striving for, and that’s why you see higher horsepower engines on mowers in the last couple of years.”

When purchasing equipment, horsepower is a key consideration for Scaggs, owner, Scaggs Lawn Care, Martinsville, Ind., and he will buy the most power he can find, he said. “In our area, a lot of times in the spring and early summer, places might need to be cut twice a week, so you need all the help you can get,” he explained. “If you have the horsepower, you’ll keep

*(continued on page 56)*

# Quick

# CLIPS



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USE READER SERVICE #38

## Mower Productivity

(continued from page 53)

your blade tip speed up, which will allow you to keep up the quality of your cut."

More contractors today are "horsepower hungry," Whurr observed. In addition, more contractors consider comfort. Long hours on rough mowers can grate on operators. "To some degree, contractors are looking at better environmental conditions for their operators," he said. "They are looking after the creature comfort side. They also don't want to break the bank, so they want something cost effective. But at the end of the day, the key is, 'Am I going to make money?'"

Those who answer yes probably keep up with equipment advancements and purchase up-to-date mowers to replace older, less efficient models, added Bill Trimmer, owner, Professional Grounds, Lorton, Va. Making money – keeping that bottom-line buffer – requires learning about new products.

"What used to be state-of-the-art, just isn't state-of-the-art anymore," Trimmer said. "If you're not buying the latest thing out there, you're losing ground. I guess you could say that you're losing productivity by not keeping up with the new equipment out there."

Trimmer eased his company into new equipment five years ago when he purchased zero-turn mowers, which are more maneuverable and quicker than his out-front mowers. "I've got two 62-inch, out-front mowers,

and I've got them up for sale," he admitted. He also switched from belt-driven to hydrostatic walk-behind mowers, which also increases tight-space turning, he said. However, he avoids equipment that has been on the market for less than a year, not knowing their quality track record, and looks for mowers with available parts.

"Many manufacturers offer overnight service for parts," he noticed. "If you've got a \$10,000 riding mower sitting because it's missing a \$3 part and you can't get it for three days, it's a huge issue."

A machine with missing parts represents the No. 1 productivity killer for most contractors: downtime. For companies that rely on their mowers to operate 20 to 25 hours a week, like DeWayne King, landscape division manager, Hy-Tech Parking Maintenance, Richmond, Va., time out means money lost. "Downtime is one of the major keys that costs companies money," he said. "That's why you want parts that are easily attainable. We'd rather our full-time mechanics work on our trucks than our mowers. We'd rather have our crewmembers fix the mowers on site. We'd rather take a part off, turn to a local store, put the part on and then continue without any downtime."

Preventing downtime also means avoiding the temptation to price shop when pur-

**M**achines that aren't running on a property aren't adding to the bottom line. "It's all about uptime," stressed Randy Harris, equipment marketing manager, Toro, Bloomington, Minn. "Regardless of the rationale for purchasing a piece of equipment – price or product features – the machine is only making money when the blades are cutting grass."

In this case, Harris offers some purchasing tips to avoid mower downtime:

- Look for productivity enhancing features, such as ergonomic design, quality construction and customer-friendly warranty coverage.
- Partner with a commercial dealer that carries an ample stock of fast-moving parts, provides quick and reliable service and has loaner equipment if needed.
- Purchase mowers with a proven track record and a reliable reputation.
- Look for an excellent parts-fill rate.
- Schedule a demonstration before making a purchase to determine the quality of cut, ground speed, ease of operation, operator comfort, serviceability and overall design.
- Don't be afraid to ask the manufacturer questions. – *Kristen Hampshire*

# Productive Purchasing



chasing equipment, Whurr added. Longevity and reliability are more important than dollars and cents. "The mower has to put up with a lot of abuse," he said. "It is not treated with kid gloves. It's out there to do a job. It's out there to make money for the contractor. And if that product malfunctions, it's killing his productivity."

Avoiding downtime can be as simple as adhering to a maintenance plan, which includes sharpening blades, changing oil and greasing necessary parts. Or, it could mean keeping a spare mower in case one in the fleet fails, Trimmer said. Most of all, maximizing "uptime" and eliminating downtime starts with educated buying, King stressed.

"You want to use the mower for a lot of different properties, not just one," he said. "You want a mower that you've heard of, that is going to be dependable. You want the largest mower you can use on the most properties without hurting the operator."

Personalize the purchase, in other words. A "super mower" for one company can represent a productivity nightmare for another.

**CREW COORDINATION.** No two properties present the same terrain challenges. Large properties are easy to mow – if they don't have a number of obstacles that "cut up" the area. Beds, curbs and slopes require special attention. Ideally, a mower would skim through these areas without stopping the productivity clock, however, this possibility is but a pipe dream.

Instead, contractors must tailor the mower to the surface – and match the technician to the terrain.

"For us, there are so many different terrains out there, and to get the right piece of equipment on that terrain can be tough at times," Trimmer commented. "A lot of companies can't own every mower that would suit every one of their needs. The mower itself might not be designed for what it is supposed to be accomplishing."

This is why Trimmer tours each new property with his crew, pointing out challenges, identifying tricky typography and noting which piece of equipment will best finish the job. The foreman, who visits the property on a weekly basis, plays a key role in mapping out the ground, he said.

"After we make the proper selection of the crew size and match the equipment to

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**USE READER SERVICE #63**

## Mower Productivity

that crew, the foreman lays out the area for the laborers and they take it from there," Trimmer explained.

Ideally, each technician will finish their assigned task on a property – whether it be trimming, mowing or blowing – at the same time, so they can regroup, leave the job and move to the next account without wasting time, Trimmer said. Assigning proper equipment and allocating tasks so everyone finishes in tandem enhances efficiency.

Scaggs echoed the importance of delegating specific tasks to each crewmember, and not only dedicates duties to his employees, but also holds them accountable for completing their job on time and maintaining the condition of their assigned equipment. Familiarity improves efficiency, he figured.

"I try to have my guys do the same areas each week, so if there is a big hole in one area, they know where that hole is," he compared.

Besides assigning crewmembers to a property so they are acquainted with its nooks

and crannies, Trimmer said he keeps his crews small. This way, he finds better luck pairing technicians with tools, he said.

"A three- or four-man crew is more efficient than a seven- or eight-man crew," he figured. "If you send the larger crew out, they will get done before the smaller crew, but if you total those hours spent on the job, the total hours will be less with the smaller crew. The larger crew might get back a little earlier, but not enough to offset the labor costs of extra workers."

In essence, cutting out man-hours parallels the importance of maintaining an efficient workforce, Trimmer said.

"Your biggest expense in ground maintenance is labor, and you have to find ways to cut down," he noted. "If you can send out a three-man crew with the right equipment rather than the four-man crew, you can save a lot of money."

King said property details, such as mowing unnecessary patterns, can soak up time if

crewmembers aren't trained to manage the area efficiently. Communication among employees while mowing a property is important, he stressed.

"If two guys are on the same property and they get away from each other, they aren't watching what each other mows," he explained. "You see duplicated mowing areas. I have caught guys wanting to mow a pattern, which if you have it budgeted is wonderful. But if that's not how the property is supposed to be done, it can cost you time if it takes him 30 minutes to do the extra mow and he does four of them."

Labor-saving concerns also play into equipment purchases. Riding mowers spare operator fatigue and can trim down the number of technicians needed on a job, noted Bill Cox, president, Lawn Management Company, Houston, Texas. After purchasing a fleet of 13 riding mowers – an admittedly large investment – he noticed labor costs

(continued on page 60)

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## Mower Productivity

(continued from page 58)

dropping nearly 5 percent, he said. However, he still keeps one walk-behind mower on hand for smaller areas or when a riding mower breaks down.

**RECORD TIME.** Productivity starts with accurate estimates, and jobs that lose money are those that siphon valuable time out of the daily

work schedule. These lost hours cannot be replaced and can quickly pull dollars from the bottom line.

Trimmer tracks man-hours for each property by having crewmembers sign in and out, and entering that data in the company's computers, he explained. At year's end, these totals uncover inaccurate estimates and re-

veal productivity pitfalls, so properties can be reevaluated for the next year's renewal.

However, to avoid too many property reconsiderations at the end of the year, communicating estimated man-hours for a property with the foreman is essential, King added.

"The foreman may ruin the budget for the property for the year because he is mowing it opposite of how I priced it," he explained. "If he is using a different mower size or if a crew is going to the site with fewer or too many men than the property needs, then the company could see a lot of money lost in labor hours and inefficiency."

To ensure his preliminary man-hour goals are met, King also checks in with crewmembers with a route sheet every morning, which records the technicians assigned to a job, necessary equipment and the start/stop time. "You have to find out what the problem is—is it taking more or less time than expected?" he noted. "Are you doing the job the way it was set up to be done? Were there any breakdowns? Did all of the men show up? If it is taking longer than expected, maybe they are not using the right equipment."

With these records, King then makes equipment decisions for various properties.

Scaggs jots down daily notes, documenting incidents from cutting accidents to invariable weather. This way, he can review his observations and determine why a job was lagging. Commercial cutting consumes 90 percent of his business, so identifying efficiency slowdowns is important to the company's financial health, he added.

Looking back on records, Scaggs noticed that even Mother Nature can hold the cards in the productivity game. "One of our biggest productivity problems is weather," he cited.

No matter the forecast, contractors must make property predictions that will surge their productivity.

When tracking time, money, efficiency and profit, contractors should strive for a balance of these elements, Trimmer noted. "It's that fine line between quality control and being efficient," he described. "We can all go out and do a quality job, but if you are not efficient, you will price yourself out of the market. You need to find out where that line is and make it work." ■

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.

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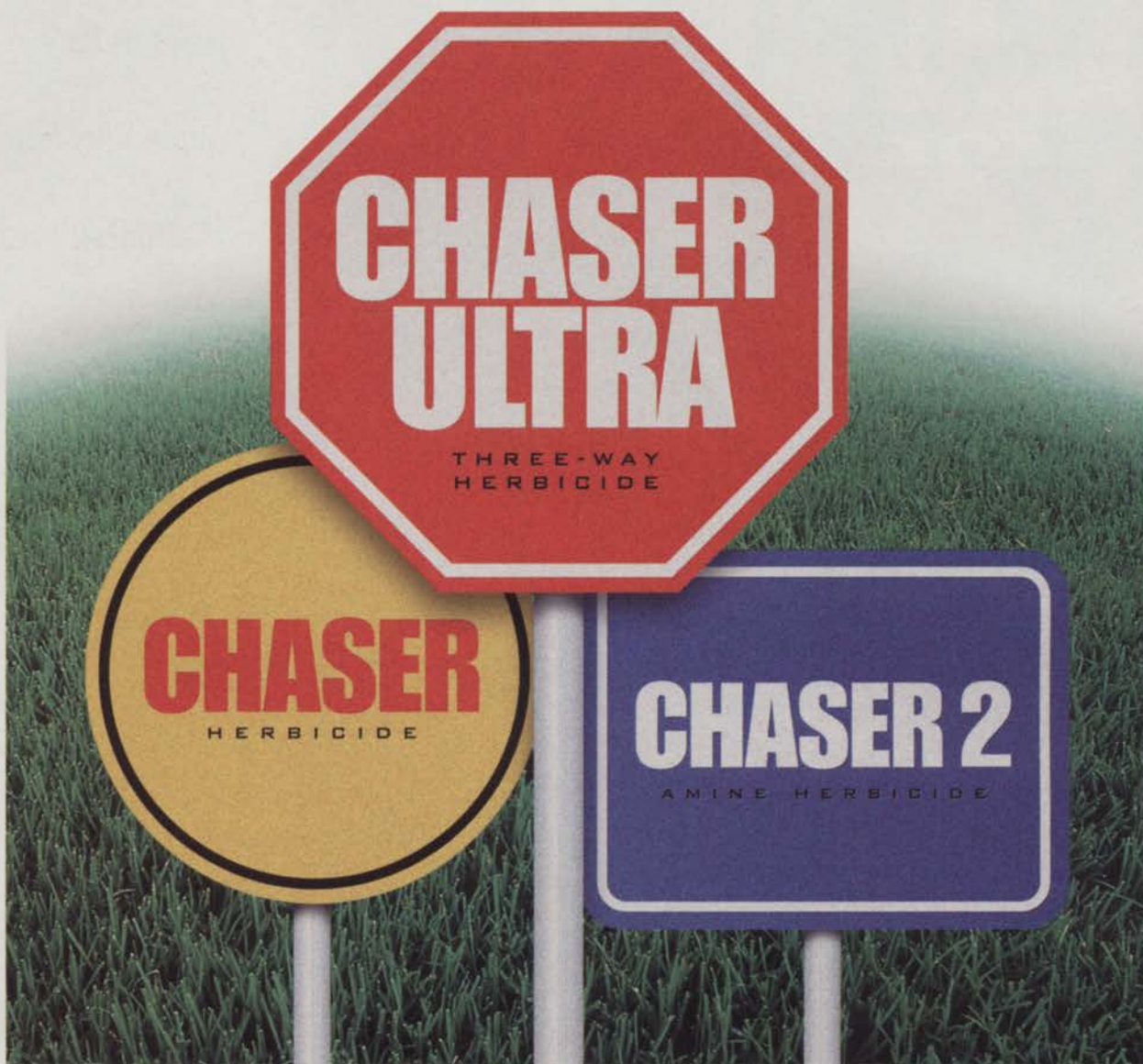
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by Douglas Spilker, Ph.D.

# REAL SOLUTIONS for Ornamental PESTS

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Finding ways to rid ornamental trees of damaging insect pests has become increasingly difficult for landscape professionals. Hauling out equipment to spray 50-foot hemlocks or tuliptrees is often problematic on a half-acre home lawn. In commercial or residential landscape settings, such a high-profile treatment can create negative environmental images, and timing the application to be cost-effective presents other challenges.

Ornamental pests, such as scale, hemlock woolly adelgid and bronze birch borer, cause aesthetic damage as well as physical injury to landscape trees and plants. Researchers constantly explore new ways to prevent, reduce or eliminate them. One key to successful control is understanding the biology of these troubling insect pests and the damage they cause. That information, combined with sound control recommendations, can lead to healthy trees for years to come.

**STRUGGLING WITH SCALE.** Scale insects appear in every U.S. state but do not always damage plants to the point where treatment is necessary. Soft scale insects produce a sugary, liquid waste product called honeydew, which serves as a growth medium for sooty mold, a black fungus that eventually covers honeydew-laden areas.

Honeydew attracts nuisance insects such as ants, flies and wasps, and creates an unsightly mess when it drips on parked cars, sidewalks and benches, which makes it an annoyance and a threat to plant health. In large numbers, scale feedings may cause plant injury by reducing vitality and vigor, which often leads to limb dieback and, in some cases, kills the plant.

*A little insect  
biology  
background  
combined  
with control  
methods can  
preserve trees  
threatened by  
damaging  
insect pests.  
Photo: Solo*

*(continued on page 64)*

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ABOUT TREE INSECT CONTROL**

## Insect Management

(continued from page 62)

However, not all scale species ingest sap and produce honeydew. Two general types of scales commonly appear on U.S. ornamental trees and shrubs: soft scale and armored scale. Both scales spend most of their lives immobile, feeding on the same spot on a plant. After eggs hatch beneath females, crawlers—called such because they are in the mobile stage—move to new sites, where they settle and feed. Crawlers are small and flat, looking like dust particles. Scale infestations spread to other plants as crawlers hitch rides on animals or are blown by the wind.

Armored scale insects flatten after feeding and produce a clear wax shell, which covers their bodies and is difficult to penetrate with insecticides.

On the other hand, soft scale insects are not covered by waxy shells. They hatch in mid-summer and crawl directly to leaves, where they begin feeding and excreting honeydew. Then, they return to twigs and bark

*Horticultural oil, insect growth regulators, pesticide applications and soil-applied materials can help control scale. Photo:*

*J.J. Mauget*



where they spend the winter as settled second-stage scales, and continue to grow on twigs in the spring until they mate.

Milder winter temperatures have made soft scale more of a problem in many areas of the U.S., according to Dr. Clifford Sadof, extension entomologist at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Ind. "Scales are usually a problem in disturbed habitats, in warmer temperatures and where plant health is compromised," he noted. "For instance, if you want to find pine needle scale, go to a fast food place and look on the south side of the parking lot—the more gravel, the better."

Natural enemies can control scale, added Sadof. "If you increase numbers of flowering plants near trees or shrubs affected by scale, you can enhance populations of natural enemies in the immediate area," he observed. "But, a customer with cottony maple scale dripping honeydew all over the picnic table and causing yellowjacket wasps to swarm does not want you to tell him to plant a few flowers and wait two years for natural enemies to take care of the problem."

Sadof recommended the following steps:

- Identify the species. "Flip over suspi-

(continued on page 66)



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USE READER SERVICE #143

## Insect Management

(continued from page 64)

cious looking bumps on twigs and branches with your thumbnail," he advised. "Tissue usually remains intact beneath a scale. If the tissue rips, it's probably a gall."

- Once you have identified scale, ask yourself: Is it a problem? Unless you see accumulations of honeydew, there's no reason to do anything about soft scale.

- Consider applying horticultural oil. This material works by smothering scales, therefore good spray coverage is essential for acceptable control. Unlike other pesticides, horticultural oil can control scales after they have settled while the scale body is still somewhat clear.

- Consider applying insect growth regulators. These materials kill scales as they molt.

- Consider pesticide applications. Conventional foliar-applied pesticides cannot penetrate a scale's tough skin or waxy cover. To achieve maximum control, apply pesticides at the beginning of the crawler period.

Thorough coverage on tall trees is difficult, and these materials do not control scales after they settle.

- Consider applying soil-applied materials. Applied from spring to early summer, these products can be translocated throughout medium-sized evergreen and deciduous trees in two to three months or throughout medium-sized shrubs within approximately a month.

**HEMLOCK WOOLLY ADELGID.** Easily recognizable because of the woolly masses clinging to young twigs, hemlock woolly adelgid infestations cause hemlock needles to dry out, turn grayish-green to yellowish and drop from the tree. Since the pest prefers to feed on new twig growth, buds never develop and little new growth is produced. Once affected, hemlocks gradually lose vigor, and the formerly lush canopy turns sparse. Major limbs wither, progressing upward

from the bottom of the tree. Trees often die in four to six years.

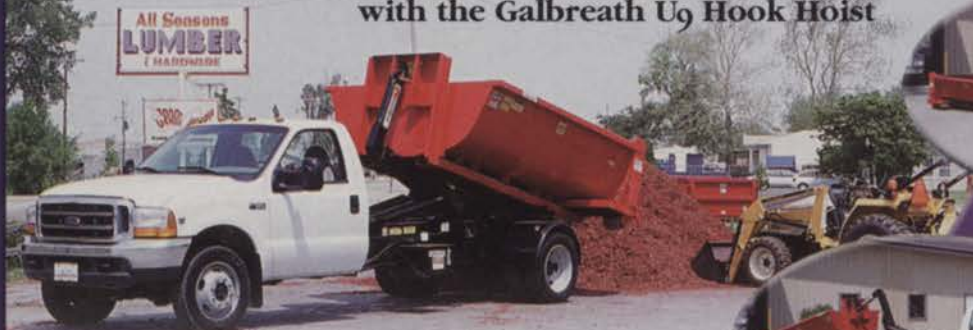
The hemlock woolly adelgid has a complex life cycle, with overwintering adults laying 50 to 300 eggs on young twigs in dry cottony masses during March and April. Nymphs hatch in April and May and migrate to new growth, where they lose their legs and feed at the base of the needles. They remain in the same spot until they reproduce and die. The spring generation matures by the middle of June and begins laying eggs. After the second generation hatches by early June and settles on new growth, it hibernates until the middle of October, when feeding resumes. Nymphs feed and develop through the winter, reaching maturity by spring.

"The hemlock woolly adelgid is a huge problem in the eastern U.S.," remarked Dr. Mark McClure, chief scientist at the Valley Laboratory of the Connecticut Agricultural

(continued on page 68)

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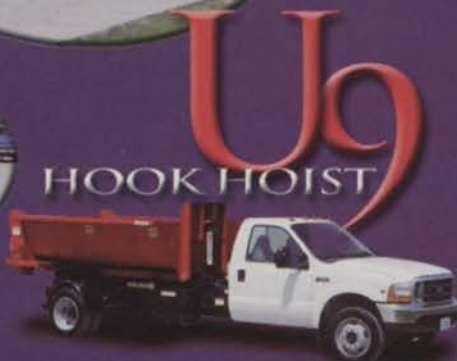
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## Insect Management

(continued from page 66)

Experiment Station, Windsor, Conn. He said the insect has moved north from Mid-Atlantic states and has the capability to move up to New England states.

McClure offered the following control measures:

- Locate early infestations and remove branches or limbs to reduce further colonization. Pruning also promotes new growth by increasing sunlight exposure.

- Improve tree health by keeping trees as stress-free as possible. Proper watering is critical to hemlock health.

- Plant resistant hemlocks. Western and Japanese hemlock species tend to be more resistant to hemlock woolly adelgid.

- Use insecticidal soaps and horticultural oils. Complete coverage is crucial to achieving control. Although one yearly application may be sufficient on small, isolated trees, two annual applications are usually needed on large trees where thorough coverage is unlikely or

**S**oil treatments provide many benefits for arborists and landscape professionals. Because applications are made to the soil, potential for spray drift or dermal exposure to people and pets is virtually eliminated.

Contractors should make soil treatments when the soil is moist. Fall to early winter and spring to early summer are ideal times for soil applications to control soft scales, bronze birch borer and hemlock woolly adelgid. Research data shows that many pesticides take approximately two to three months to move throughout medium-sized evergreen and deciduous trees that are approximately 15 to 20 inches in diameter. Uptake in shrubs takes less time and should be based on the physical size of the plant.

Place soil drenches near the base of the tree in a grid pattern or within the drop line. Make soil injections 2 to 4 inches deep for shrubs and 6 to 8 inches deep for trees. If soil is dry, rainfall or irrigation will be needed to move the material down into the root zone. To ensure good uptake and distribution, make soil applications to plants and trees before they become heavily infested and stressed by the insect. — **Douglas Spilker**

## The Scoop on Soil Treatments

on trees near infested hemlocks that are not being treated. Sprays can be applied anytime from April through October.

- Use soil applications so the material moves through medium-sized hemlock trees within two to three months. "When injected

into the soil before trees are damaged to any great extent, control products can be very effective," McClure said. "But, if you make the soil treatment after trees are suffering, you may not get the same degree of control."

(continued on page 93)

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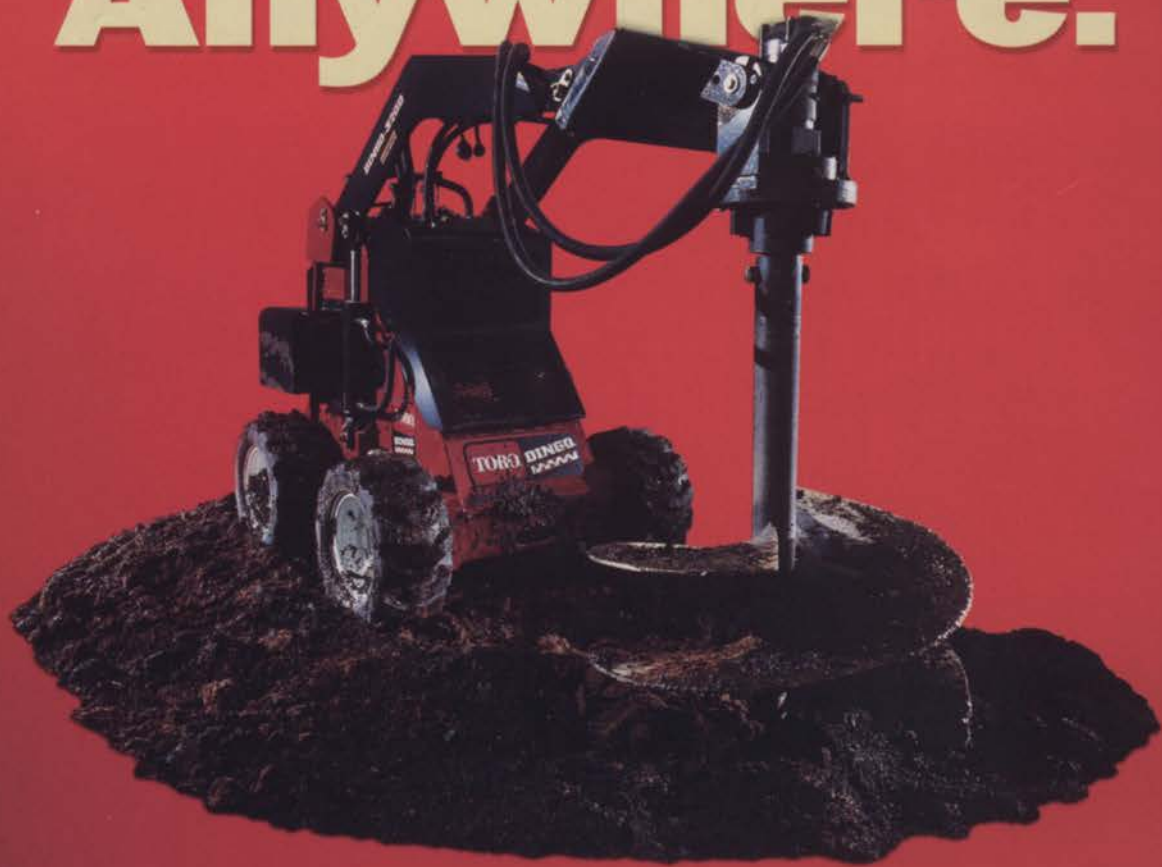
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# Table of **CONTENTS**

## **MULTIPLE CHOICES**

*Contractors need to review their many options before purchasing a skid-steer or compact utility loader. ....* **4**

## **CONNECT FOUR... OR MORE**

*The increasing number of attachments available to landscape contractors boosts the importance of making wiser buying decisions. ....* **12**

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**AD INDEX** ..... **21**

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## FOCUS: SKID-STEER/LOADERS

*Contractors need to review their many options before purchasing a skid-steer or compact utility loader.*

*by Nicole Wisniewski*

In Andrew Aksar's opinion, a design/build contractor who doesn't use a skid-steer loader on the landscape construction site is like a painter lacking a ladder – without one, the job cannot be completed.

Aksar, owner, Outdoor Finishes, Walkersville, Md., owns a mid-size skid-steer loader that "is big enough to lift a full pallet of pavers at ground level, yet small enough to get it into residential properties," he described. And, like most landscape contractors, Aksar focused on a few keys when choosing his equipment.

"Our choice was based on size, brand loyalty, function, abilities and price," he said. "We felt the machine we purchased was built for durability and longevity.

Also, the machine is engineered plain and simple – it practically has autopilot capabilities."

Some contractors rely on full-size skid-steers to for their heavy-duty needs. Others use compact skid-steer loaders or compact utility loaders because they need a smaller machine to access work areas. Even more are finding that small and large loaders can be used together to increase productivity.



**FOR MATURE AUDIENCES ONLY.** John Palasek, owner, Aspen Garden Designs, Yaphank, N.Y., has been in business for six years. Palasek's business is based on design/build jobs, particularly landscape renovation tasks, including ripping out driveways, installing ponds, moving pallets of stone and, essentially, "tearing the place apart," he described.

He rented skid-steer loaders the first three years he was in business because he didn't have the cash flow to purchase a major piece of equipment. When the time came to buy the machine, he knew which one he wanted. Due to the nature of his work, Palasek doesn't need to gingerly move his machine over turf he doesn't want to disturb, but he does need to carry heavier landscape materials and remove trees and concrete with a machine that is forceful and stable.

"I can't see bringing a compact utility loader into the job for what I do," he explained. "I clear out wooded areas, grade properties and add planting areas. None of those apply to that machine."

Most landscape contractors choose larger loaders if their jobs typically involve lifting heavy objects. "Larger units are used to move heavy loads of sod and landscape stones," explained Randy Vargason, marketing manager, Mustang, Owatonna, Minn.

"Larger skid-steers are much heavier and have a

*Compact utility loaders bring power to hard to reach areas while full-size skid-steers maximize lifting capacity.*

*Photos: Toro Sitework Systems (left) John Deere (top)*

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longer wheelbase, which allows them lift to larger payloads to higher heights," added Dana Ellefson, director, maintenance products division, Finn Corp., Fairfield, Ohio.

This is precisely the reason Robben Salyers, chief executive officer, Jake's Garden, Maple Plain, Minn., relies on skid-steer loaders. "With my skid-steer loader, I can pick up retaining wall blocks or pallets of sod," he said. "We lay sod 35 or 40 yards at a time. My machine with counter weights can pick up what we need in a safe manner - I can lift 2,000 or 3,000 pounds. With a compact utility loader, you're talking about only a 500- or 600-pound lift capacity."

**SOMETIMES SIZE MATTERS.** Even if landscape contractors depend on medium- or full-size skid-steer load-

ers for their lifting needs, sometimes the size of the machine becomes an issue.

For instance, Len Brochu II started a landscape job last September that required the installation of more than 1,000 trees.

In one particular section of the site, Brochu, co-owner of L.A. Brochu Landscaping & Nursery, Concord, N.H., had a difficult time squeezing his skid-steer loader or backhoe into the 4- to 5-foot-wide entrance. The trees, which were being planted every 10 feet on center, also narrowed his access.

After starting the job, Brochu rented a compact utility loader. Not only could he utilize the machine to speed tree installation on this job, but he also could test it to determine the potential value, if any, it could add to his equipment fleet.

By the time the job was half complete, Brochu purchased the machine. "The time it saved me in digging holes paid for itself," Brochu said, pointing out that in addition to unloading five trailers full of trees, including one load of 8- to 10-foot

## Before the BUY

Prior to choosing a machine, contractors need to examine the work they do, pointed out Paul Anderson, attachments manager, Bobcat Co., West Fargo, N.D. One way to do this is to ask yourself specific questions, such as: "What type of ground needs to be covered on the job? Are landscaping tasks primarily in developed areas that require a more compact loader to get through, narrow gates or confined lots? Or, are tasks on larger sites that better accommodate larger equipment?" Anderson said.

Equipment transportation also is a concern and can contribute to the buying decision. "Contractors should examine how they'll transport their equipment," Anderson stressed. "Is their truck and trailer adequate to get to and from job sites, or would a smaller loader and, consequently, a more compact truck and trailer be more appropriate? Some users working on big jobs in confined access areas go with smaller loaders because transportation is easier." - **Nicole Wisniewski**

white pines, he used the machine to plant more than 4,000 trees last fall.

"The goal is to be more efficient," Brochu explained. "But if you can't find the labor, you need to do something."

Like Brochu, contractors with specific design/build needs who require a smaller machine or need to speed-up manual labor tasks are jumping on the compact utility loader bandwagon.

When the compact utility loader was introduced, the marketplace considered it "a toy," said Ken Lange, engineer, Ramrod Equipment, a division of Leon's Manufacturing, Yorkton, Saskatchewan, Canada. "People thought they were tiny toy skid-steer loaders you could fit into backyards and confined spaces or through gates."

But throughout the last four years, their reputation has improved. "Market development by the main players has done much to remove the 'toy' image," explained Alan Porter, president, Kanga Loaders, Broken Arrow, Okla.

Today, people view this machine as

the "Swiss Army Knife of the job site," pointed out Marc Bowers, marketing manager, Toro Sitework Systems, Minneapolis, Minn. The reason being that the general purpose contractor who does a little bit of everything, such as building fences and ponds, laying driveways and installing sprinkler systems and electric wires for lighting, can have one machine to handle multiple jobs.

"Versatility describes these machines," added Carol Dilger, corporate marketing services manager, Ariens Construction Equipment, Brillion, Wis.

The compact utility loader also has been looked at as replacement labor, particularly during times when there is a manpower shortage, because it was designed as a substitute for time-consuming, shovel-and-wheelbarrow tasks, such as tree and shrub planting, back-

filling and hauling, Bowers said. The machine's characteristics, including stand-up operation, 360-degree visibility, rapid change attachments and a hydraulic system, are meant as one-man body extensions.

**WE GO TOGETHER.** As for frequent comparisons between the compact utility loader and its supposed 'big brother' - the skid-steer loader - most manufacturers discourage evaluating the two machines against each other.

"How are they the same? They both employ skid-steer style steering," Bowers explained. "Beyond that, they are completely different machines."

"Compact skid-steer loaders only share the name 'skid-steer' with the larger units," Ellefson agreed. "The compact units are a different design. For instance, the weight-to-strength ratio is greater for compact units, they generally run at higher system pressures and they have better visibility. Their forte is operating

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## FOCUS: SKID-STEER / LOADERS

attachments that require significant flow, such as augers, box rakes, trenchers, etc., and / or operating in tight environments."

Despite their differences, many manufacturers and contractors say that skid-steer loaders and compact utility loaders can be used together to increase productivity on the job.

"It is not uncommon to see both sizes operating on large projects, with the compact unit being used for trenching, auguring or performing operations close to the foundation, while the larger unit is used for loading or hauling," Ellefson explained. "Almost all attachments available for the large units are available for the compact units."

Using both machines also allows contractors to offer more services.

Most contractors purchase a loader with a purpose in mind, such as planting trees or digging postholes, Lange said. "Once he has the basic package and gets accustomed to the machine, it's easier for him to offer other services," he explained. "Maybe he started off planting trees, but now he wants to get into irrigation. Maybe he couldn't do it before or had to hire an outside contractor, but the trencher attachment isn't that big of an investment once he has the machine."

Instead of displacing workers, a contractor can expand the business while still utilizing his or her current workforce. "With each addition of a unit and its system of tools, contractors can split their workforce into more viable profit centers and take advantage of means to enhance profits," Ellefson explained.

Additionally, a contractor who is just testing a new area of business doesn't want to make a huge investment on a dedicated machine when he or she doesn't know if the new service will be profitable. "If I wanted to buy dedicated attachments for each area of business I wanted to get into, I could easily add up the investment to \$75,000 or \$100,000," Lange pointed out. "But contractors purchasing a loader with attachments will have a hard time spending \$30,000." **LL**

The author is Managing Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.



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By Nicole Wisniewski



## CONNECT FOUR... or More

*The increasing number of attachments available to landscape contractors boosts the importance of making wiser buying decisions.*

Once contractors have the machines they require – whether they are full-size skid-steer loaders or compact utility loaders – the next logical step is choosing the right attachments to fit their landscape needs.

The average machine leaves the dealer's door with at least five attachments, pointed out Ken Lange, engineer, Ramrod Equipment, a division of Leon's Manufacturing, Yorkton, Saskatchewan, Canada. "We no longer sell these machines by themselves," he said.

Since purchasing five attachments can cost as much as the machine itself in some cases, contractors need to know what attachments fit their application needs before making their purchasing decisions.

**LIKE A GLOVE.** When John Palasek, owner, Aspen Garden Designs, Yaphank, N.Y., purchased his skid-steer attachments, he considered which ones would perform multiple tasks to meet his various responsibilities. Palasek purchased a combo bucket with jaws because he

could use it for land clearing and grabbing 6- or 7-inch tree stumps. He also purchased a set of bucket teeth for digging into harder, rockier soil and a regular dirt bucket with forks for trenching. "It mitigates my costs if I can buy something versatile," Palasek explained.

A common mistake contractors make is buying their skid-steer or compact utility loader before thinking about their attachment needs. If contractors know what attachments they need and the lift capacity, width and hydraulic requirements for those attachments before purchasing the loader, then they won't waste money on a machine that doesn't fit their needs, stressed Chris Faller, marketing manager, FFC, Lee, Ill.

"Landscape contractors go out and buy a skid-steer and they don't realize that all attachments don't work on all skid-steers," Faller explained. "When they go to buy the attachment they need they realize, for instance, it has a hydraulic parameter of 16 gallons per minute, but the machine only offers 10 to 15 gallons per minute."

To avoid this error when investing in attachments, contractors need to carefully assess the kind of work they're doing first. "They need to ask themselves, 'What is the task that slows progress down the most on the job? Is there an attachment that increases that efficiency and cuts time on that job?'" explained Paul Anderson, attachments manager, Bobcat Co., West Fargo, N.D.

Most attachments directly correlate to the hand labor jobs they replace, pointed out Marc Bowers, marketing manager, Toro Sitework Systems, Minneapolis, Minn., which makes relating specific jobs to the right attachments an easy task.

The hard part is matching the right attachment to the right machine. Most loader manufacturers make attachments to fit their machines, and attachment manufacturers design their products to fit different brand load-



*Being able to minimize capital expenditures by using the same machine to operate different attachments, such as a bucket and a trencher, helps contractors build their bottom line. Photos: Gehl (top) and John Deere (left)*





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ers. Even competitors' attachments are reasonably compatible with other manufacturers' machines, Lange said. But regardless of the attachment and the machine, hydraulic flow, pounds of pressure, attachment weight and size, and lift capacity need to be seriously considered.

For instance, contractors tend to mistakenly equate loader horsepower with attachment horsepower. "A user with a 50-horsepower loader operating a trencher does not have a 50-horsepower trencher," Anderson explained. "In reality, the trencher may be running at 2,500 pounds per square inch (psi) at 16 gallons per minute of hydraulic flow, which is roughly half of the loader's horsepower."

To properly match attachment to machine, contractors need to examine the machine's auxiliary functions and understand attachment and loader psi. "They should always know the auxiliary hydraulic flow and the auxiliary relief pressure capability and can use the following formula to calculate attachment horsepower: auxiliary hydraulic flow times auxiliary relief pressure divided by 1,714," Anderson advised.

**SAFETY TOWN.** Of course, safety always matters. "The attachments contractors use need to be approved for use on their loaders," Anderson advised. "Attachments also should match a loader for safe mounting and dismounting. Users should always be able to maintain a three-point stance getting in and out of the machine - users need two hands and a foot or two feet and a hand on the machine at all times."

Some attachments, such as landscape rakes, pallet forks and buckets, have rated operating capacity (ROC) measurements on them specifically designed for safety. "Users should ensure an attachment's ROC is suitable for their loader's ROC as well as the job at hand," Anderson stressed.

Size is also an issue, and choosing the right size attachment to match a loader can

## Top 10 Most Popular ATTACHMENTS

Based on the highest selling attachments at Ariens Construction Equipment, Bobcat Co., FFC, Kanga Loaders, Mustang, Ramrod - a division of Leon's Manufacturing and Toro Sitework Systems, here is a rundown of the landscape industry's 10 most popular attachments for skid-steer and compact utility loaders:

1. Buckets, 4-in-1 buckets, rollover buckets, mulch buckets
2. Augers
3. Pallet forks, utility forks, tree forks
4. Carryall leveler, power rakes, grader rakes
5. Trencher
6. Tillers, rototillers, soil cultivators, scarifiers
7. Backhoes and dozer, backfill and angle blades (tie)
8. Angle and bucket brooms
9. Tree spade
10. Vibratory plows and tooth bars (tie)

ensure safety for the machine as well as the contractor. "If the loader is too small for the attachment, a contractor won't be able to utilize the attachment," Anderson pointed out. "Conversely, if the machine is too big, it can damage the attachment."

**DO I OR DON'T I DEDICATE?** Whether a contractor's landscape needs require a skid-steer with many attachments or a dedicated machine for various tasks is based on the contractor. Regardless, contractors should plan on getting the most out of any equipment purchase.

"If I was a specialized contractor and my focus was installing irrigation systems, I'd buy a dedicated trenching machine," Faller said. "But if I make an investment in a dedicated backhoe that I use once or twice each year, it makes more sense to have an attachment or rent a backhoe when I need one."

"The advantage of an attachment is that there is a wider diversification of how you use it," Faller added, "but it doesn't give you the ability to specialize."

"One skid loader with numerous attachments is much easier to transport to a job than many individual dedicated machines," added Randy Vargason, marketing manager, Mustang, Owatonna, Minn.

The cost of a dedicated machine vs. a

loader with attachments can vary greatly. "With a trencher, you're talking about the attachment costing about 5 to 10 percent of the cost of a dedicated trenching machine," noted Faller.

Robben Salyers, chief executive officer, Jake's Garden, Maple Plain, Minn., went with a full house of attachments to fit his landscape construction needs for greater flexibility on the job.

"You can't be one-dimensional in the landscape construction business," Salyers said, pointing out that his attachments include a grading bar, trencher, pallet forks, low-profile bucket for excavating, 1-yard snow bucket, snow plow, u-blade and an auger. "For us, having one piece of equipment for every job isn't cost effective. We have a lot of attachments, but we didn't buy all of them at once. We phased them all in based on priorities."

Justifying equipment costs is another way contractors can figure out what type of equipment or attachment is right for them.

"Dedicated machines carry a large price tag and are most often underutilized," Vargason pointed out. "Consider a dedicated machine only when you can justify using it on a regular basis." ■

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



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Rockford, Ill. 61108  
815/381-6028  
www.woodsonline.com

**EDITOR'S NOTE:**

Lawn & Landscape made several attempts to contact all manufacturers for this Buyers' Guide. The inclusion or omission of any company should not be taken as an endorsement or criticism of its products.

# Skid-Steer / LOADER *Buyers' Guide*



Quality you can rely on

# KOMATSU Utility Equipment "Setting the Standard"

The World Leader  
In Compact Excavator  
Production



### TEN COMPACT EXCAVATORS FEATURING:

Flywheel Horsepower: 13.8 HP – 69.0 HP  
Max. Digging Depth: 6'3" – 13'11"  
Operating Weight: 3060 lbs. – 16,470 lbs.



### TIGHT TAIL SWING AND COMPACT EXCAVATORS FEATURING:

- HydraMind Systems
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- Easy Maintenance

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**KOMATSU** *Utility*  
Utility Corporation

USE READER SERVICE #172

# FOCUS: SKID-STEER /LOADERS

MODEL:	RATED OPERATING CAPACITY (IN LBS.):	TIPPING LOAD (IN LBS.):	HYDRAULIC PUMP CAPACITY (GPM):	LENGTH/WIDTH/HEIGHT (WITHOUT ATTACHMENT, IN INCHES):	HEIGHT TO BUCKET PIN (IN INCHES):	ENGINE MAKE/HP:	MACHINE WEIGHT (IN LBS.):
<b>COMPACT UTILITY LOADERS</b>							
<b>ARIENS CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT</b>							
200	300	600	10.5 at 3,000 psi	74 by 39 w/bucket	67	20-hp Honda	1,430
200D	520	1,020	10.5 at 3,000 psi	74 by 39 w/bucket	67	20-hp Kubota diesel	1,540
<b>FINN CORP.</b>							
250	550	1,100	13.25	L: 65.5, W: 35.5, H: 52	71.25	25-hp	1,672
Eagle 200D	560	1,200	13.25	L: 65.5, W: 35.5, H: 52	71.25	20-hp	1,872
<b>KANGA LOADERS</b>							
KK113	220	440	5.2	L: 52, W: 30, H: 45	46	13-hp Honda	942
G520	550	1,000	10.5	L: 59, W: 39, H: 49	67	20-hp Honda	1,430
550	1,000	10.5	L: 59, W: 39, H: 49	67	24-hp Honda	1,430	E524
DL520	550	1,000	10.5	L: 59, W: 39, H: 49	67	20-hp Kubota	1,540
<b>RAMROD EQUIPMENT</b>							
550TG	550	1,325	8.5	L: 61, W: 31, H: 50	65	16-hp Briggs	1,450
750TG	750	1,510	8.5	L: 61, W: 35, H: 50	65	16-hp Briggs	1,583
750TO	750	1,600	8.5	L: 61, W: 35, H: 50	65	20-hp Kubota	1,780
900TG	900	1,820	8.5/2.9	L: 61, W: 41, H: 50	65	23-hp Kohler	1,683
900TD	900	1,910	8.5/2.9	L: 61, W: 41, H: 50	65	20-hp Kubota	1,842
910TG	900	1,820	8.5/2.9	L: 61, W: 41, H: 50	65	23-hp Kohler	1,958
910TD	900	1,910	8.5/2.9	L: 61, W: 41, H: 50	65	20-hp Kubota	2,117
944TG	900	1,820	8.5/2.9	L: 61, W: 41, H: 50	65	23-hp Kohler	1,760
944TD	900	1,910	8.5/2.9	L: 61, W: 41, H: 50	65	20-hp Kubota	1,920
<b>TORO</b>							
Dingo 420 TX	500	1,480	11.2 at 3,000 psi	L: 70.5, W: 33.7, H: 46.1	65.8	22-hp Kohler gas	1,830
Dingo 322 4-Paw	515	1,030	12 at 3,000 psi	L: 62, W: 40.5, H: 48.7	66	22-hp Kohler gas	1,678
Dingo 320D 4-Paw	524	1,048	12 at 3,000 psi	L: 62, W: 40.5, H: 48.7	66	20-hp Kubota diesel	1,722
Dingo 222 gas	515	1,030	12 at 3,000 psi	L: 62, W: 40.5, H: 48.7	66	22-hp Kohler	1,430
<b>SKID-STEER LOADERS</b>							
<b>ASV</b>							
RC-30	800	1,600	10	L: 91, W: 46, H: 71	80	31.5-hp Caterpillar	2,935
2810	2,350	4,700	19/25	L: 112, W: 69, H: 82.5	109	83-hp Isuzu	7,450
4810	2,950	5,900	19/30	L: 115, W: 69, H: 82.5	116	105-hp Caterpillar	8,640
<b>BOBCAT CO.</b>							
463	700	1,421	10	L: 140.3, W: 76.8, H: 79	94.5	15.7-hp Kubota	2,708
553	950	1,953	8.5	L: 153.6, W: 79.6, H: 89.7	103.7	22.5-hp Kubota	3,664
753	1,300	2,600	14.3	L: 120.5, W: 55, H: 77	109.1	43.5-hp Kubota	4,740
763	1,500	3,000	15	L: 130.3, W: 68, H: 77.3	114.5	46-hp Kubota	5,368
773	1,750	3,900	16.7/27	L: 130.3, W: 68, H: 76.3	118.2	46-hp Kubota	5,808
773T	1,850	3,900	16.7/27	L: 130.3, W: 68, H: 76.3	118.2	56-hp Kubota	5,808
863	1,900	3,800	18.7/29	L: 135.4, W: 74, H: 82.3	121	73-hp Duetz	7,045
873	2,400	4,800	18.7/29	L: 140.7, W: 74, H: 79	124.3	73-hp Duetz	7,285
883	2,750	5,500	20.7/30.7	L: 140.3, W: 76.8, H: 79	124.3	73-hp Duetz	8,760
963	3,000	6,000	26.2	L: 153.6, W: 79.6, H: 89.7	128	105-hp Perkins	9,900
T190	1,900	5,430	16.7/27	L: 130.3, W: 68, H: 76.3	118.2	56-hp Kubota	7,244
T200	2,000	5,714	20.6/32	L: 135.4, W: 74, H: 82.3	121	73-hp Duetz	8,080
<b>CASE CORP.</b>							
75XT	2,200	4,400	19.1	L: 103.1, W: 71.1, H: 79.3	N/A	70-hp Case	6,700
85XT	2,400	4,800	20.3	L: 103.1, W: 72, H: 80	N/A	80-hp Case	8,057
90XT	2,450	4,900	20.3	L: 105.5, W: 80, H: 80	N/A	85-hp Case	8,950
95XT	3,150	6,300	22.8	L: 110.6, W: 80, H: 80	N/A	85-hp Case	9,050
1825B	885	1,770	9.6	L: 84.8, W: 39.3, H: 70.1	N/A	30-hp Kubota	3,223
1840	1,400	2,800	15.3	L: 96.5, W: 59.9, H: 77	N/A	54-hp Case	5,216
1845C	1,750	3,500	16	L: 101.3, W: 72, H: 80.3	N/A	60-hp Case	6,185
<b>CATERPILLAR</b>							
216	1,350	2,600	15.1	L: 99, W: 60, H: 76	112	49-hp Cat	5,740
226	1,500	2,710	15.1	L: 99, W: 60, H: 76	112	54-hp Cat	5,830
228	1,500	2,840	30	L: 99, W: 60, H: 76	112	54-hp Cat	6,030
236	1,750	3,440	22	L: 110, W: 66, H: 80	122	59-hp Cat	7,030
246	2,000	3,650	22	L: 110, W: 66, H: 80	122	74-hp Cat	7,200
248	2,000	3,830	33	L: 110, W: 66, H: 80	122	74-hp Cat	7,500
252	2,250	N/A	N/A	L: 110, W: 66, H: 81	128	59-hp Cat	7,615
262	2,500	N/A	N/A	L: 110, W: 66, H: 81	128	74-hp Cat	7,655
<b>COYOTE LOADERS</b>							
C170	3,550	2,700	N/A	L: 144 (w/bucket), W: 43 (over tires), H: 72 (to cab top)	N/A	29-hp Perkins	N/A
C265	5,225	2,645	N/A	L: 164 (w/bucket), W: 50 (over tires), H: 86 (to cab top)	N/A	34-hp Lombardini	N/A
C285	5,335	2,866	N/A	L: 164 (w/bucket), W: 52 (over tires), H: 88 (to cab top)	N/A	45-hp Lombardini	N/A

# PRESENTING THE SCHAEFF SCL 515—

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By the way, our versatile

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With its quick-attach coupler that works on virtually all skid steer attachments and auxiliary hydraulic circuits (standard), it can do just about anything a skid steer can do, only better and more economically. Plus, it doesn't tear up the ground or wear out tires on paved surfaces the way skid steers do.

To find out more about the SCL 515 Compact Loader, and for the name of the dealer nearest you, call SCHAEFF today at 1-877-907-8300. When you see how competitively-priced the SCL 515 is, you'll see why, on many job sites, it runs circles around skid steers.



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# FOCUS: SKID-STEER/LOADERS

MODEL:	RATED OPERATING CAPACITY (IN LBS.):	TIPPING LOAD (IN LBS.):	HYDRAULIC PUMP CAPACITY (GPM):	LENGTH/WIDTH/HEIGHT (WITHOUT ATTACHMENT, IN INCHES):	HEIGHT TO BUCKET PIN (IN INCHES):	ENGINE MAKE/HP:	MACHINE WEIGHT (IN LBS.):
C5	5,500	3,525	N/A	L: 156 (w/bucket), W: 53 (over tires), H: 90 (to cab top)	N/A	27-hp Deutz	N/A
C415	8,750	6,300	N/A	L: 157 (w/bucket), W: 73 (over tires), H: 101 (to cab top)	N/A	47-hp Perkins	N/A
C8C	9,590	6,575	N/A	L: 167 (w/bucket), W: 68 (over tires), H: 102 (to cab top)	N/A	38-hp Deutz	N/A
C10B	9,590	7,606	N/A	L: 210 (w/bucket), W: 71 (over tires), H: 102 (to cab top)	N/A	50-hp Deutz	N/A
C14C	9,876	8,200	N/A	L: 209 (w/bucket), W: 72 (over tires), H: 103 (to cab top)	N/A	59-hp Deutz	N/A
C9	10,210	7,275	N/A	L: 195 (w/bucket), W: 70 (over tires), H: N/A	N/A	49-hp Deutz	N/A
C15	10,780	7,363	N/A	L: 197 (w/bucket), W: 78 (over tires), H: N/A	N/A	59-hp Deutz	N/A
C19	11,550	8,025	N/A	L: 212 (w/bucket), W: 72 (over tires), H: N/A	N/A	70-hp Deutz	N/A
C18	11,650	8,450	N/A	L: 195 (w/bucket), W: 80 (over tires), H: 103 (to cab top)	N/A	63-hp Deutz	N/A
C20	12,100	8,800	N/A	L: 198 (w/bucket), W: 80 (over tires), H: 103 (to cab top)	N/A	70-hp Deutz	N/A
C18B	12,785	8,465	N/A	L: 216 (w/bucket), W: 80 (over tires), H: 106 (to cab top)	N/A	66-hp Deutz	N/A
C22	14,109	11,243	N/A	L: 216 (w/bucket), W: 87 (over tires), H: 111 (to cab top)	N/A	70-hp Deutz	N/A
C26	14,800	12,235	N/A	L: 220 (w/bucket), W: 83 (over tires), H: 111 (to cab top)	N/A	83-hp Deutz	N/A
<b>DAEWOO</b>							
1340XL	1,300	N/A	11.9	L: 90, W: 59	112	41-hp Yanmar	4,907
1550XL	1,500	N/A	15.8	L: 99, W: 59	115	52-hp Daewoo	5,849
1760XL	1,700	N/A	20.5	L: 99, W: 65	119	62-hp Daewoo	6,594
2060XL	2,000	N/A	22.4	L: 99, W: 65	122	62-hp Daewoo	6,900

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USE READER SERVICE #156



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## SKID-STEER/LOADER Supplement

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| 121 | 122 | 123 | 124 | 125 | 126 | 127 | 128 | 129 | 130 | 131 | 132 | 133 | 134 | 135 |
| 136 | 137 | 138 | 139 | 140 | 141 | 142 | 143 | 144 | 145 | 146 | 147 | 148 | 149 | 150 |
| 151 | 152 | 153 | 154 | 155 | 156 | 157 | 158 | 159 | 160 | 161 | 162 | 163 | 164 | 165 |
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| 196 | 197 | 198 | 199 | 200 | 201 | 202 | 203 | 204 | 205 | 206 | 207 | 208 | 209 | 210 |
| 211 | 212 | 213 | 214 | 215 | 216 | 217 | 218 | 219 | 220 | 221 | 222 | 223 | 224 | 225 |
| 226 | 227 | 228 | 229 | 230 | 231 | 232 | 233 | 234 | 235 | 236 | 237 | 238 | 239 | 240 |
| 241 | 242 | 243 | 244 | 245 | 246 | 247 | 248 | 249 | 250 | 251 | 252 | 253 | 254 | 255 |
| 256 | 257 | 258 | 259 | 260 | 261 | 262 | 263 | 264 | 265 | 266 | 267 | 268 | 269 | 270 |
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  - 3. Lawn Maintenance Contractor
  - 4. Ornamental Shrub & Tree Service
  - 5. Irrigation Contractor
  - 6. Landscape Architect
  - 7. Other Contract Services (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

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- Manager, Director, Supt., Foreman
- Agronomist, Horticulturist
- Entomologist, Plant Pathologist
- Serviceman, Technician, Crew member
- Scientist, Researcher
- Company, Library copy only
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

#### 3. What services does your business offer? (please check all that apply)

- 1. Landscape Installation
- 2. Landscape Maintenance
- 3. Landscape Renovation
- 4. Mowing and related maintenance
- 5. Irrigation Installation
- 6. Irrigation Maintenance
- 7. Turf pesticide application
- 8. Ornamental/tree pesticide application
- 9. Turf fertilization
- 10. Ornamental/tree fertilization
- 11. Tree Pruning
- 12. Snow Removal
- 13. Interiorscape
- 14. Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### 4. How many full-time (year-round) employees do you employ?

\_\_\_\_\_

#### 5. What year was your business founded?

\_\_\_\_\_

#### 6. What were your company's gross revenues for 2000?

- 1. Less than \$50,000
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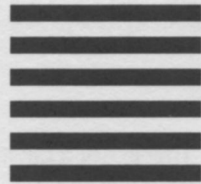
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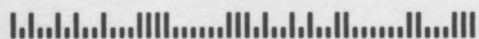


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# FOCUS: SKID-STEER/LOADERS

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<b>GEHL CO.</b>							
3635	1,050	N/A	10	L: 88.5, W: 48, H: 139	108	39-hp Ford	4,159
3935	1,260	N/A	10	L: 90.4, W: 57.9, H: 141	110	28-hp Kubota	4,239
4635	1,425	2,850	12	L: 89.5, W: 62, H: 153	115	44- or 57-hp Deutz	6,060
4835	1,625	3,250	12	L: 93.96, W: 62, H: 153	115	57-hp Deutz	6,240
5635	1,800	3,600	16	L: 100, W: 66.25, H: 163	122.75	60- or 80-hp Deutz	6,960
6635	2,300	4,600	16	L: 106.75, W: 66.25, H: 163	122.75	80-hp Deutz	7,365
7600	3,150	N/A	15	L: 109.5, W: 79.5, H: 183.8	142	90-hp Yanmar	9,425
7800	3,600	N/A	15	L: 117.5, W: 79.5, H: 187.3	142	110-hp Yanmar	9,475
<b>HYUNDAI CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT</b>							
HSL610	5,236	2,706	9.8	L: 127.9, W: 60, H: 77	77	42-hp Yanmar	
HSL810	15,906	3,872	14.5	L: 136.6, W: 67.3, H: 78.7	78.7	70-hp Yanmar	
<b>IHI COMPACT EXCAVATOR SALES</b>							
IC-30	5,500	N/A	8	L: 124, W: 60, H: 62	N/A	32-hp Isuzu	4,620
IC-45	8,800	N/A	N/A	L: 175, W: 89, H: 100	N/A	115-hp Mitsubishi	12,760
<b>JCB</b>							
160	1,323	2,646	14.5	L: 96.5, W: 54, H: 76	110.3	44-hp	5,310
170	1,543	3,086	15.9	L: 98.5, W: 63, H: 76.5	115.3	47-hp	5,532
185	1,874	3,748	20/32	L: 111, W: 67, H: 78	130.5	73-hp	7,128
1105	2,314	4,628	20/32	L: 111, W: 67, H: 78	130.5	78-hp	7,434
<b>JOHN DEERE WORLDWIDE COMMERCIAL WORKSITE PRODUCTS</b>							
240	1,500	3,400	14.6	L: 102, W: 64.1, H: 75.4	114	53-hp	6,195
250	1,750	3,600	17.6 std./29.5	L: 102, W: 68.9, H: 76.8	115.2	64.4-hp	6,290
260	2,200	4,818	19.4 std./31.3	L: 115, W: 76.9, H: 82.9	127	72.4-hp	7,900
270	2,600	5,200	21.3 std./34.9	L: 115, W: 76.9, H: 82.9	127	81.1-hp	8,140
<b>MUSTANG MANUFACTURING</b>							
2022	1,050	2,100	14.4	L: 88, W: 48.3, H: 70.3	108	36-hp Yanmar	4,400
2032	1,250	2,500	14.4	L: 90, W: 48.3, H: 72.3	110	36-hp Yanmar	4,600

## SKID-STEER/LOADER AD INDEX

ADVERTISER	WEB ADDRESS	PAGE	RS
ASV	www.asvi.com	S9	168
Bobcat	www.bobcat.com	S10, S11	170
Brown Bear	www.brownbearcorp.com	S22	158
FFC	www.ffcattachments.com	S3	153
Finn	www.finncorp.com	S15	169
First Products	www.1stproducts.com	S21	157
Glenmac	www.glenmac.com	S8	154
John Deere	www.johndeere.com	S7	167
Kanga Loaders	www.kanga-loader.com	S24	173
Kobelco	www.kobelcoamerica.com	S5	166
Kubota	www.kubota.com	S23	171
Komatsu	www.komatsu.com	S17	172
McCulloch Cover-up	www.mccullochcoverup.com	S20	156
Mustang Mfg.	www.mustangmfg.com	S13	151
Schaeff	www.schaeff.com	S19	150
Toro Sitework Systems	www.toro.com	S2	152
Triple D	www.tripled-enterprises.com	S20	155

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MODEL:	RATED OPERATING CAPACITY (IN LBS.):	TIPPING LOAD (IN LBS.):	HYDRAULIC PUMP CAPACITY (GPM):	LENGTH/WIDTH/HEIGHT (WITHOUT ATTACHMENT, IN INCHES):	HEIGHT TO BUCKET PIN (IN INCHES):	ENGINE MAKE/HP:	MACHINE WEIGHT (IN LBS.):
2042	1,350	2,700	18	L: 95.2, W: 58.8, H: 76.5	112	43-hp Yanmar	5,950
2050	1,550	3,100	18.5 std./28	L: 96.8, W: 60.4, H: 76.5	115	49-hp Yanmar	5,950
2060	1,750	3,500	27 std./37	L: 102, W: 60, H: 82.5	119	82-hp Isuzu	7,000
2070	2,100	4,200	27 std./37	L: 106, W: 70.8, H: 82.5	119	75-hp Isuzu	7,450
2085	3,150	6,300	29 std./40	L: 117.5, W: 79.5, H: 80.8	142	90-hp Yanmar	9,425
2105	3,600	7,200	40 std.	L: 117.5, W: 79.5, H: 80.8	142	110-hp Yanmar	9,475
<b>NEW HOLLAND</b>							
LS140	1,380	2,750	10.6	L: 120, W: 59.6, H: 72.8	111.1 (ht. to hinge pin)	32-hp New Holland	4,395
LS150	1,400	2,800	12	L: 120, W: 59.6, H: 72.8	111.1 (ht. to hinge pin)	38-hp New Holland	4,500
LS160	1,695	3,390	15.5	L: 126.8, W: 65.6, H: 74.8	115.5 (ht. to hinge pin)	42-hp New Holland	5,534
LS170	1,705	3,410	17.7	L: 126.8, W: 65.6, H: 74.8	115.5 (ht. to hinge pin)	52-hp New Holland	5,540
LS180	2,352	4,704	18.5	L: 141, W: 71.4, H: 78	124.5 (ht. to hinge pin)	67-hp New Holland	7,193
LS190	2,800	5,600	20	L: 141, W: 71.4, H: 78	124 (ht. to hinge pin)	83-hp New Holland	7,860
<b>POWER EQUIPMENT CORP.</b>							
1300	1,300	2,600	16	L: 121	114	37-hp	4,800
1700	1,700	3,400	23	L: 129	123	48-hp	5,800
2050	2,050	4,100	21	L: 135	123	70-hp	7,080
2250	2,250	4,500	23	L: 136	126	70-hp	8,400
2650	2,650	5,300	26	L: 143	143	80-hp	9,860
3250	3,250	6,500	26	L: 157	146	100-hp	10,380
<b>SCHAEFF OF NORTH AMERICA</b>							
SKS-633	4,000	9,240	16	L: 200, W: 73, H: 105	124	60-hp Perkins	11,035
SKL-823	4,620	8,000	9.9	L: 190, W: 73, H: 103	126	50-hp Perkins	9,100
SKL-515	2,260	4,520	10	L: 170, W: 61, H: 90	120	50-hp Deutz	7,400
<b>TAKEUCHI</b>							
TL126	1,310	3,750	13.2/17.4 at 2,285 psi	L: 106, W: 60.2, H: 79.4	119.2	Isuzu	6,813
TL150	2,470	7,056	16.9/23.4 at 2,986 psi	L: 130.8, W: 73.2, H: 86.8	126.1	Isuzu	10,692
<b>THOMAS EQUIPMENT LTD.</b>							
95	900	1,800	8.7	L: 91, W: 47.75, H: 71	102.5	33-hp Kubota	3,650
105	1,000	2,000	8.7	L: 91, W: 50.75, H: 71	102.5	33-hp Kubota	3,700
115	1,100	2,200	8.7	L: 91, W: 39, H: 71	102.5	33-hp Kubota	3,850
153	1,500	3,000	16.6	L: 104.4, W: 57.5, H: 73.5	110	50-hp Kubota	5,520
245	2,400	4,800	20.5	L: 119.5, W: 30.8, H: 84	123.3	90-hp Kubota	8,000
<b>TOWN &amp; COUNTRY LTD.</b>							
Patriot 1545	1,500	3,000	15.1	L: 101, W: 61, H: 78	118	46-hp Isuzu	5,390
<b>VOLVO CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT</b>							
ZL 402	N/A	4,050	8.5 std./14	L: 177, W: 63, H: 98	117	36-hp	7,500
L 30 B	N/A	5,710	13.7 std./25	L: 204, W: 76, H: 106	126	58-hp	10,472
L 35 B	N/A	6,810	18.4 std./25	L: 209, W: 76, H: 107	131	70-hp	12,566
L 40 B	N/A	8,270	28 std./35	L: 229, W: 85, H: 115	118	86-hp	16,094
L 45 B	N/A	9,645	28 std./35	L: 237, W: 97, H: 115	144	100-hp	17,593

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(continued from page 68)

## BATTLING BRONZE BIRCH BORER.

Borers are among the most destructive pests to ornamental plants and shade trees, causing girdling, branch dieback, structural weakness and eventual death. The bronze birch borer is the larva of a beetle native to North America that feeds on the phloem and cambium layers of birch trees, creating galleries under the outer bark. Since the bronze birch borer cannot survive in healthy trees, successful larval development depends on the host being in a weakened condition from injury, adverse weather or old age.

From mid-June to early July, adult birch borers lay eggs on the surface or in crevices of the outer layer of bark, often at the site of a recent mechanical injury to the tree. Larvae burrow into the tree and feed on the phloem throughout the summer and into the fall. The insect has a one-year life cycle. In winter, the bronze birch borer hibernates in the phloem of birch trees, completes development and pupates in the xylem, emerging as an adult beetle in late May to mid-June.

While native birch species are resistant to the bronze birch borer, the susceptible European white birch is common throughout the eastern and midwestern U.S. "Native species don't grow as fast or turn white at as early an age," remarked Dr. Dan Herms, assistant professor at The Ohio State University's Ohio Agricultural Research & Development Center, Wooster, Ohio.

In addition to selecting native, resistant species, such as paper birch and gray birch, Herms offered the following suggestions:

- Do not plant birch trees in the shade, as they are not a shade-tolerant species. Plant trees so roots are shaded but the canopy is in full sunlight at all times.

- Maintain tree vigor through proper planting, mulching and adequate irrigation during drought periods. "Irrigating is critical to limiting susceptibility," Herms added. "My research showed that you can make paper birch trees immune to bronze birch borer with as little as 1 inch of water per week during summer months."

- Prevent injury to young trees, as stressed trees are particularly vulnerable to bronze birch borer.

- Initiate a pesticide program for high-value trees. "The use of soil injection products looks promising, though more research is necessary."

The soil injection method of pesticide application offers some advantages over bark sprays when treating for bronze birch borer, Herms said. "Bark sprays require three precisely timed applications at two-week intervals," he noted. "With soil application, arborists and landscape managers can tailor treatments to follow a more relaxed applica-

tion schedule. They also reduce the chance of drift and, for the most part, avoid the public-relations problems generally associated with spraying in residential neighborhoods." **LU**

The author is Turf and Ornamental Research Manager for Bayer Corp., Kansas City, Mo.

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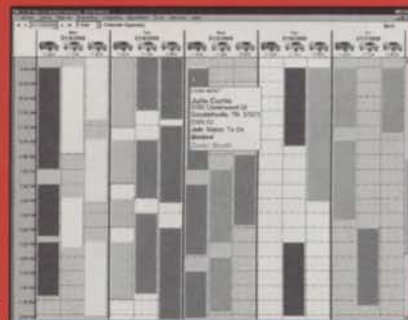
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## Color Programs

by Kristen Hampshire

*Appealing, profitable and blooming in popularity, color programs dress up properties with a spectrum of brights and lights.*

Color smears personality on a property.

Some landscapes burst with every color point on the spectrum, others blend a conservative selection of hues. Some are tailored, others whimsical. Color programs create a pinwheel of possibilities, and more contractors are finding that installing annuals, perennials and flowering grasses make landscapes blush.


In addition, color offers an array of benefits for clients – eye-candy for apartment tenants and curb-side appeal for homeowners. What's more, color programs can put companies a shade above their competition, added Scott Carter, senior seasonal color designer, The Morrell Seasonal Color Group, a division of Omni Facility Services, Atlanta, Ga.

"There are so many office buildings and so many options for real estate and office space," he said. "Customers want to bring more attention to their properties. They want to say, 'Look what we can offer you – a beautiful landscape when you come to work, great park areas and jogging trails.' These are ways of bringing employees in. Color programs are amenities they can offer their clients."

This is why some contractors are dedicating and training crews, and selling and scheduling color – an add-on service many feel promises profits.

**A BRIGHT ADDITION.** Color programs are gaining popularity, and The Morrell Seasonal Color Group supports this trend

*(continued on page 96)*



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## Color Programs

(continued from page 94)

with its 30 percent annual growth rate. People are looking for a splash of color and are boldly branching out beyond the traditional plant palate. "Most of our customers have gone from basic plant materials to wanting to see more exotic plant materials," Carter noted. "They try to beat other companies' landscapes with something new on the market. They want to be first - they want something different before anyone else has it."

And in some cases, Carter's commercial customers want their plant installations to be exclusive - the only one of its kind on the block. Most of the time, he will honor this. Summer offers limitless options for unusual selections, and sometimes the group will even incorporate interior plants in beds to add pizzazz, he added.

These originality seekers comprise roughly 30 percent of the color department's customers, he estimated. The rest opt for the tried-and-true. Many color programs consist of a base selection of annuals and perennials

and a set design, unless clients choose to alter the format. Greg Fracker, owner, Colorscapes by Design, Newark, Ohio, said most customers stick with standard red, white and pink plants and basic bed arrangements.

Whether eccentric or simple, more expendable income is allocated to landscapes as gardening tops American pastimes, noted Rachel Williams, client representative, garden services, Mariani Landscape, Lake Bluff, Ill. "[Color programs] are becoming almost a necessity for a lot of people," she noted. "It's just something more that someone can have. Numerous Web sites and magazines have popped up recently, and they are giving people the opportunity to see what they can be doing to their properties."

This increased real estate value initiated many clients' urges to add color. As Carter pointed out, visual impact carries a hefty resale value and attracts customers to shops, tenants to apartment complexes and em-

**"Color programs are becoming almost a necessity for a lot of people now. It's just something more that someone can have."**

**- Rachel Williams**

ployees to businesses. Color adds bonus points to a property, summarized Joe Burns, president, Color Burst, Atlanta, Ga.

"It's not a basic necessity," he noted. "You're generally selling first impressions."

**SPECTRUM OF STAFF.** These impressions take work, however. Every spring, Color Burst is a "madhouse." Man-power doubles and tasks multiply, as well, Burns said. To manage the spring installation rush, the company hires up to 50 extra full-time employees for its four branches to help pull up the old flowers and put in the new.

(continued on page 98)



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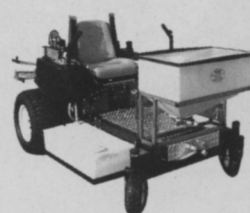
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USE READER SERVICE #55

## Color Programs

(continued from page 96)

Training is a sort of an incremental puzzle for the company, as it gradually moves the new hires into positions of responsibility, Burns described. "We don't double our size on day one—it takes us seven or eight days to double," he said. "We bring in a few at a time so we don't have to train a whole mass—that would be a quality control nightmare.

"We bring them in a couple days ahead of time and teach them the basics," he continued. "When we start, the first week we won't put them on crews. We'll start the first crew and have the new people pulling up dead flowers or raking up old mulch. Then, we start them on grading the beds. Then, we move them up to positions where we can trust them."

Many employees return the following season, so there aren't too many new technicians on board, Burns added. Seasonal workers easily build off of their skill base from the prior year—a helpful quality for any technician learning to install color programs, considering the variables associated with plant installation. Williams admitted most training chal-

lenges center on unpredictable factors that weather and changing seasons present.

"The weather changes, the garden changes," she explained, noting the importance of hands-on training to learn how to deal with these conditions. "Some of these gardens can be so dynamic that they change from week to week. Just the amount of information that is useful for maintenance is large."

On-site education is slightly improvisational, depending on the property's conditions, and inevitably mixes a little botany with some plant identification, Williams added. And then there are the care-taking tidbits technicians pick up along the way that don't appear in the pages of a textbook. "It's getting the years of experience behind someone so that they can start making judgments," she noted.

This experience produces dedicated employees, specialized crewmembers and niche departments within landscape divisions that focus specifically on color.

(continued on page 100)

**W**ondering which flowers to stock for spring? Curious about new, hot colors? The answer to choosing the season's top plant picks might lie in the display window of local stores, noted Greg Fracker, owner, Colorscares by Design, Newark, Ohio.

"Different upscale stores will actually put the colors of the year that people are interested in on their display racks toward the front of the store," he said, picking up this tip from a seminar at the 2001 Central Environmental Nursery Trade Show in Columbus. "If you check those out, you might learn what color flowers people want this year. It's like a national trend where the designers know what colors people want this year, and it will trickle down to us and what people want in flowers."

This year, purples, bright pinks and blues are sprouting in both stores and gardens, he said, adding that he notices his clients' tendencies to choose these colors when he is estimating their properties. To cater to purple flower preferences, Fracker said his company is installing Heuchra Palace Purple, a shade-loving plant noted for its deep purple foliage and white flowers. Those leaning toward wine-infused purples—closer to burgundy—might choose purple leaf sand cherry or pygmy barberry. Evergreens that turn purple in the winter, like Youngstown Andorra juniper, are also a purple plant option, he recommended.

For those clients still wavering over plant options, Fracker suggests they take their indecision to the mall.

"We've been telling our customers to go into clothing stores, see what the colors are, and that will reinforce the colors for flowers and foliage," he said. — **Kristen**

**Hampshire**

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## Color Programs

(continued from page 98)

More than potted plants and ornamentals, the garden services department at Mariani Landscape handles vegetable and perennial gardens, bulb installation and container design, Williams described. "We basically try to do more specialized garden design for our clients," she said.

The company's color department is a subdivision of the landscape management branch and employs trained technicians to sell the special services. The client representatives are horticulturists with training in garden design, perennial maintenance and specialty garden maintenance. The dedicated crews are educated to install these special-order color programs, and the customers expect this professionalism, she said.

"Landscape management used to be all in one and we started to recognize the need to have a separate entity for garden installation," Williams said. "I think as color becomes more popular, we will see more of that."

Separate departments don't always indicate separate crews, however. Fracker keeps his workers limber enough to stretch over to various jobs, not pigeon-holing employees into specific categories, like "flower planter," he said. "All of my crews are versatile and can go from one aspect of the job to another. Depending on the size of a job we might have to combine the crew."

Burns keeps color crews organized by assigning a team leader who is responsible for certain accounts year round, tending to their maintenance, installation and design needs, as well as regularly meeting with the clients. Two technicians comprise the leader's base crew, with extra employees joining during peak planting times in April.

"We like the continuity that a regular crew develops with the client," Burns noted. "The customer knows who their contact is and if they need anything, they can call."

Consistent routes are also a priority at The Morrell Seasonal Color Group, where operation managers handle different regions, Carter noted. The same crews work with the same managers on the same properties. "That way they take ownership for their work and can see the job through from beginning to end," he added.

Caring for color from "beginning to end" doesn't necessarily mean hanging up the gardeners' gloves after the first fall frost. In fact,

(continued on page 102)

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## Color Programs

(continued from page 100)

most color department managers note that seasonal color requires year-round attention.

This translates into establishing annual service contracts and keeping full-time employees. "In the spring, we are preparing perennial beds, mulching and fertilizing, and then in April and May we are installing our summer annuals," Carter listed. "The summer is spent maintaining those beds, weeding, pruning, deadheading and making replacements. In the fall, we go through the same schedule of planting the fall flowers and then all of the bulbs. The latter part of November, we install holiday decorations."

Though flowers aren't blooming in chilly months, labor needs are still budding. Burns' crewmembers visit properties every two weeks during the summer, pulling weeds, touching up mulch and edging beds on one visit, and performing minor "check-up" duties on the next. In the fall, full-time employees plant perennial bulbs for the spring.

"Your people are better trained when

they work year-round," Burns added. "You can market an image and get people to associate your name with color specialty."

**VIBRANT VALUE.** Communication with clients is crucial to maintaining a healthy front yard "first impression." Open conversation with the client begins with open minds. "Once clients decide that they want some kind of a garden, once they have it in their minds, it is already sold," Williams said. "The tricky part is turning it into something that the client will be happy with."

This is why Fracker accompanies his color sales pitch with pictures. "One thing you don't want to do is take an order of red geraniums and take it to the site and find out the owner wanted white," he said. "They could be very upset, because they're stuck with those red flowers. Even with our previous clients, we'll call them each year to find

"We like the **continuity** that a regular crew develops with the **client**. The customer knows who their **contact** is and if they need anything, **they can call.**"

— Joe Burns

out if they want to change programs."

Fracker also walks the property, discussing plant possibilities with clients and gathering their feedback. Here, he can gauge their budget and estimate a price.

Pricing color programs is a science for Burns, who carefully tracks his costs so that estimates are not guesstimates. From his records, he customizes color program prices, accounting for the number, size and accessibility of beds, and other variables, such as the proximity of the property to the company's office.

Since no two properties carry the same color program, personalized pricing is important.

(continued on page 104)

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## Color Programs

(continued from page 102)

"If a property has several big beds, it's going to be a little cheaper per square foot than one with two small beds," he figured. "Pricing varies a lot. If we have big beds, it's a volume issue - we'll be planting more flowers in a more concentrated area, so it will be cheaper to put in, and we will pass that on to the customer."

A three-tiered installation selection provides the pricing framework for The Morrell Seasonal Color Group. Properties are priced by square footage and clients can choose from either a low-end program, which includes basic plant materials such as begonias or Salvia, or a middle-of-the-road option, which mixes in a few exotic plants, such as Bengal Tiger Canna lilies or black elephant ears. High-end installations feature various unusual plants - a culmination of new market selections, Carter described. Prices are then figured based on plants and property size, he said, noting that most clients choose the middle-range mix.

Burns offers a six-month program that includes two plantings, or three plantings in the deluxe program. The customer pays a lump sum of \$5,000, which includes maintenance on the property until the next plant is installed, he explained.

Just as the medley of color opportunities for landscapes provides plenty of options for consumers, contractors can take advantage of year-round color and sell programs that last for months, Fracker noted.

"Top selling time for annuals is from the first part of May, then sales drop off by the end of June," he estimated. "The pansies are more of a cool-weather plant, so we'll start selling those in March, and those will last until the weather starts getting warmer in April. Then, we'll replant in September and they'll survive the frost. We try to do all the selling at the beginning of the year."

These color program sales bring in considerable profits, Fracker added. Though he said the company can't charge as much per

flat for annuals as other plants, the mark-up on flowering shrubs and perennials brings dollars to the color division.

Much like other add-on services, color programs can be a money-making extra, profit stemming from accurate prices and renewed contracts from satisfied customers, Burns said.

Residential clients are drawn to the aesthetic qualities color programs bring to landscapes, and commercial customers appreciate the competitive edge and heightened property values associated with flowering displays. Most of all, color offers a creative outlet that adds personality to properties.

"Color programs are really about understanding what your client is looking for, how they are going to use their outdoor space, and then rising to the challenge of meeting that need," Williams reasoned. **■**

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



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USE READER SERVICE #48

## Irrigation Audits

by Brian Vinchesi

*Performing an irrigation audit is the best way to test an irrigation system's efficiency, ensure proper scheduling and reduce water usage.*

A properly irrigated lawn or landscape is obviously more appealing. A properly maintained yard, in particular, results in a reduction in water runoff, there is less deep percolation or water that flows past the root zone, and the healthy turf requires less inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides.

The rate at which the water is applied varies with the type of sprinkler being used, the spacing and the pressure. These and other factors positively or negatively affect the system's efficiency and water application uniformity. The best irrigation efficiency is accomplished when the largest percentage of the water applied by the irrigation system is used by the landscape material being watered. By having high irrigation efficiencies the amount of water is reduced and costs are less. The efficient application of water is based on proper scheduling and good

uniformity. To properly schedule the irrigation system operation and to understand the system's uniformity, an irrigation audit should be performed.

**WHAT IS AN AUDIT?** An irrigation system audit consists of a series of steps performed in a logical order to arrive at a base irrigation schedule to reduce water use. The steps include a system tune up, data collection, calculation of appropriate station run times based on collected data, and developing schedules based on weather that reflects actual site conditions.

When performing a system tune up, a record drawing of the irrigation system installation is helpful. But most systems do not have a record drawing, hence a visit to the audit site usually is in order. Once on site, the auditor should locate all of the irrigation system components, including the point of connection, water meter,

*(continued on page 108)*



*Any sort of small containers can work for an irrigation audit as long as they're positioned properly.*

*Photo: Brian Vinchesi*

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## Irrigation Audits

(continued from page 106)

backflow preventer and shut off valve. The controller needs to be located and operated so that the sprinkler can be observed while operating. The auditor should record the current schedule and available features in the controller, such as water budgeting, repeat cycles, number of programs and any sensors that affect the schedule.

Record the station number, zone location, plant material being watered and types of operating sprinklers for each station. The auditor should also note if the station stands alone or if its coverage interfaces with another station. While operating each station, note valve malfunctions, pressure, whether sprinklers are level, interference with the spray or throw, misaligned arcs, clogged nozzles, broken sprinklers or seals, and low head drainage.

A simple spreadsheet for the site inspection (see sidebar on page 110) can be used for recording data. Many times, a system tune up can be performed at the same time you

prepare the system audit. If the system problems are more severe, the audit should be postponed, as auditing a poorly operating irrigation system is a waste of time. Items such as old or worn out equipment, valves that don't close, unmatched nozzles, different types of sprinklers on the same zone, poor spacing, incorrect pressure, limited controller functions and poor zoning should be repaired/fixed before an audit takes place.

**PERFORMING THE AUDIT.** Before the field data is collected, there are many different steps that must be taken. 1) review the record drawings, 2) observe the system operation, 3) perform the system tune-up or verify that it has been completed, and 4) select what zones on the site are to be tested as not all zones will be audited.

Also, please note that this field work is best accomplished early or late in the day when wind and evaporation losses are at their lowest. When the audit is performed,

conditions should be consistent with the irrigation system's normal operation. Pressures and amount of wind should be similar.

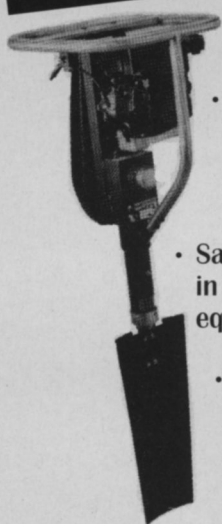
The audit will test multiple and/or single stations. As implied, a single-station audit tests the uniformity of a single station. All of the water from that station covers a specific area. A multiple station area has water applied to it from more than one controller station or zone. The stations should be marked in groups, which is easily done by using colored flags. Assigning different colors to zones helps quickly identify multiple station groups, but flags may have to be removed before testing to avoid interfering with the sprinklers' distribution pattern. The audit should be performed on representative stations. If there are five zones of spray sprinklers on turf at a 15-foot spacing, only one needs to be audited and that data can be used for the other four.

Next, check the pressure for each station

(continued on page 110)

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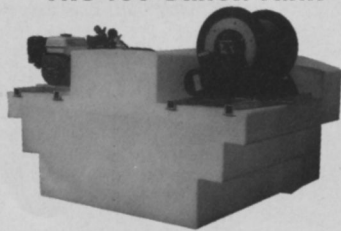
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# May 2001

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2

## **S8** Earning His Snow Stripes

*The snow division of Samuel Granados' pavement striping company has grown from an add-on service to a core profit generator.*



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*There's more to a successful snow maintenance program than heavy snowfall.*

## **S15** Snow Equipment Buyers' Guide

*A comprehensive listing of de-icing products.*

## **S19** Insurance Basics

*Tips on finding the right insurance program and protecting your snow removal operation from liability.*

## **S22** New Products

*The latest offerings in snow and ice removal products.*

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### **ALSO IN THIS ISSUE...**

**S4** SIMA Says

**S6** SIMA News

**S26** Classifieds/Ad Index

## Start Preparing Today

Another winter season is concluding and what a season it has been, especially for the East Coast. Even in those markets that didn't receive record snowfalls, it was still a good year compared to the past four or five seasons. Now it's on to landscape work, pavement maintenance, home remodeling or whatever your "off season" work might be. For my company, it means thanking our clients and signing up new business for next year, in addition to the landscape work we do. Some might not understand the reasoning behind preparing now for next season, but snow is a year-round business for many in the industry. I hear of more and more full-time, year-round snow contractors who are using this time of year for signing up new business. Through the efforts of SIMA, those that work within our industry are gaining more self respect and becoming more informed in how to systematically attack an ongoing storm.

Speaking of respect, contractors shouldn't forget to send customers a note that expresses an appreciation for the business and the contractors' wish to continue to serve the customers next season. Sometimes all it takes is a simple "thank you" to keep the door closed on competitors.

On a separate note, SIMA continues to grow steadily as the message gets out that there is an organization dedicated to raising the bar for professionalism within our ranks. I hear from contractors about how much they learn by being part of a group dedicated to increasing the awareness of the snow and ice removal industry. Communication is key to growing the association and to educating our members about the advances in equipment, supplies and techniques. Communication enables contractors to better serve their customers whether they be college students, retail customers, industrial sites or employees that rely on you to clear their lots, or walks, in order to get into work.

In that light, some great things are on the horizon for SIMA. This year's Annual Snow and Ice Symposium, June 7-9, 2001, in Denver, is shaping up to be a record breaker in terms of attendance, both from attendees and vendors. We are currently finishing up production on our next instructional video, and expect to have it ready for everyone to view and purchase at the Symposium. Additionally, at the Symposium, we will announce a new SIMA program to raise the professionalism of our industry several more notches. This year's meeting will definitely be the place to witness great strides in the level of professionalism in the snow and ice industry. **SB**



**John Allin,**  
Board President, SIMA

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## New Board Members

SIMA has appointed two new board members: Craig Geller, Pro-Tech Sno Pusher, Rochester, N.Y.; and Sam Granados, Integrated Striping Systems, Inc., Golden, Colo.

Granados will fill the vacancy left by Tom Yackley, Yackley All Weather Service, Oswego, Ill., who resigned from the SIMA Board in November for personal reasons. In February, Rick May, Dow Chemical, Ludington, Mich., accepted another position within Dow, taking him out of the de-icing arena and prompting his resignation from the SIMA Board. Geller will complete May's term.



**Sam Granados**

"We are excited by the addition of Geller and Granados to the board. Both have been extremely involved in the association prior to their appointments and are sure to bring us to our next level," said Tammy Higham, executive director, SIMA.

## Member Campaign Recruits 100 New SIMA Members

SIMA's Member-Get-A-Member campaign, which concludes May 31, has recruited more than 100 new members. It is expected that more than 150 new members will be recruited before the campaign ends.

As you may recall, existing members receive one entry into a prize drawing for every new member that they recruit between Aug. 1, 2000 and May 31, 2001. To qualify for the grand prize — an Avalanche unit donated by Ledex Industries — a SIMA member must recruit a minimum of seven new members. Two members have reached that goal and surpassed it — Dino Tudisca, Exterior Solutions/All Things Ice & Snow, Bozrah, Conn., and Chuck Smith, AC Grounds Maintenance, West Orange, N.J. Each have recruited eight new members. Just one away from grand prize eligibility are those members that have recruited six new members: Jeff Tovar, Tovar's Snowplowing Inc., Elgin, Ill., and Scott McEachern, Reed & Associates, Lindsay, Ontario.

Contractors that have recruited five new members are: George Gaumer, Davey Tree, Kent, Ohio; Sam Granados, Integrated Striping Systems, Inc., Golden, Colo.; Chris James, Chris James Landscaping, Midland Park, N.J.; Mike Nelson, NY Snow Pros, Inc., Fishkill, N.Y.; and Mike Rorie, Groundmaster Inc., Cincinnati, Ohio.

The prize drawing will take place at the general membership meeting, Thursday, June 7, Denver Marriott Southeast. Good luck to everyone that has worked so hard to make this campaign a success.

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## New Sidewalk Video Produced

SIMA has produced a second training video, *Basic Sidewalk Clearing*, which will be available in June and formally introduced at the Fourth Annual Snow & Ice Symposium. John Deere sponsored this video, which will be available in English and Spanish.

Last year, SIMA introduced *Basic Snowplowing Techniques*, its first foray into training videos. *Basic Snowplowing Techniques* is now available for purchase in Spanish (in addition to the original English version).

If you would like additional information, please contact SIMA at 814/835-3577.

## Web site Redevelopment

Since its redevelopment in early January, [www.sima.org](http://www.sima.org) has averaged more than 10,000 hits a day. Visitors to the site can find current association news, and SIMA members can



communicate with each other using the members' only forum. Furthermore, consumers visiting the site will be able to find SIMA members in their area, as well as important information regarding winter maintenance needs. SIMA members visiting the site for the first time must register to gain access to the members' only

section. While registering, they will be asked to create a username and password. In the forum area, users will be asked to register again, this time creating a username to use in the forum area. If you have any problems while registering, call SIMA at 814/835-3577.

## Fourth Annual Snow & Ice Symposium

If you haven't yet made your reservations for the Fourth Annual Snow & Ice Symposium, what are you



waiting for? The Denver Marriott Southeast in Denver, Colo., will host the symposium, June 7-9, 2001.

The educational sessions will include a variety of topics from subcontracting to liquid de-icers, and the trade show has drawn many of the top manufacturers and suppliers. For a complete look at the agenda or to register online, visit [www.sima.org](http://www.sima.org).

Also, for more information read *Symposium Preview*, on page 10.

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# SYMPOSIUM PREVIEW

This June will mark the Fourth Annual SIMA Snow and Ice Symposium. This year's meeting promises to be the biggest and best to date, featuring a new exhibit hall and an expanded line-up of educational sessions. Below is a brief preview of what attendees can expect.

## When:

Thursday, June 7 – Saturday, June 9, 2001

## Where:

Denver Marriott Southeast, Denver, Colo.

## Exhibitors:

New this year to the Snow & Ice Symposium is a tradeshow featuring the latest equipment from more than 50 different manufacturers.

For more information please contact SIMA at 814/835-3577 or [www.sima.org](http://www.sima.org)

## Seminars:

More than 15 educational sessions from the foremost snow and ice removal experts in the country. The educational sessions feature a healthy mix of technical and business-oriented seminars.

- Insurance Update
- Where Do You Find The Operators?
- Using Chemicals And Abrasives
- Watch Your Step! Contracting For Snow Removal Business
- Real Business Is Snow Business: Go Plowing With WinnScapes
- Putting Teamwork To Work
- The Power Of Collaboration
- Growth Through Subcontracting
- Interactive Information Sharing
- Marketing And Selling To Commercial Properties
- Time And Money Management
- Training For Crews And Supervisors
- Succeeding With Liquid De-Icers
- New Snowfighter Training Program

## Recreation Events:

This year's symposium includes a variety of optional recreational events ranging from a golf tournament to a family aquarium outing.

- Breakfast Snack And Chats
- Denver International Airport Operations Tour
- Golf Tournament, Inverness Hotel & Golf Club
- Ocean Journey Aquarium Family Event
- Night Out In Denver (dinner, shopping, music and dancing)





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USE READER SERVICE #60

## COVER STORY

BY STEVE SMITH

Dino Tudisca (foreground) and his team of snow and ice professionals.

Photo: Carol Phelps.

*Dino Tudisca has  
built his snow  
business by  
placing quality  
above quantity.*



Exterior Solutions isn't the biggest snow and ice removal company on the East Coast. In fact, it's not even the largest operation in Connecticut. And that's exactly the way owner Dino Tudisca likes it. Not to say the company isn't interested in growth — last year the Bozrah, Conn.-based firm grew 60 percent — but at the core, Exterior Solutions is driven by quality, not quantity.

For instance, last year the company bid on just 25 percent of the work it considered. "We are very selective about who we choose as a customer, more so than who chooses us, I think," Tudisca said.

For example, Tudisca typically avoids retail accounts because of the added liability exposure and traffic. Likewise, he avoids situations where the client tries to dictate the level of snow service needed. "The way I look at it, I'm the professional in this market. You are hiring me as a professional," Tudisca said. "Many times customers want a bare-bones service, but it's not something we are interested in, because it reflects on us."

Before taking on new accounts, Tudisca meets with each client, outlines what strategy he thinks is necessary to service the property and what the program will cost. If the customer agrees, then Tudisca knows he can deliver a high level of service, satisfy the client and still turn a profit. If the client balks at his price, then most likely Tudisca will walk away rather than pare

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## COVER STORY

down the service he's offering. "Over the years, I've just become more [adamant] about letting the customer know that this is how we are going to handle it. I don't tell you how to do your business, don't tell me how to plow snow. You have to do it tactfully, of course, but that is basically what it comes down to," Tudisca said.

**COMMERCIAL VS. RESIDENTIAL.** Tudisca's focus on quality and comprehensive service means he's inclined to pursue commercial and industrial accounts — businesses that often demand the highest level of attention. "We revel in the role of making sure a facility is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week," he related. Tudisca also achieves a higher financial return on work at commercial and industrial facilities, providing further impetus to focus on these clients, such as primary health care facilities, condominium and townhouse units and industrial operations.

"Where we cross sell a lot of our services is in the year-round maintenance category where we have a few condos and industrial/commercial accounts that we offer our services to year round, including lawn care," he added. Exterior Solutions does not have a lawn care division, however. Tudisca sold it three years ago, so now he sells lawn service to year-round customers and subcontracts the work to another provider.

But Tudisca's summertime home remodeling operation still provides an ample supply of subcontract labor and equipment. As a result, Tudisca has contacts with many excavators who make their

backhoes and loaders available during the winter. "We have one property where we use a pusher box," he pointed out. "We own the pusher box, but it goes on someone else's machine. So we hire his loader and an operator to do the work on that facility. Then we just go back and handle the clean up work."

**BUILDING BUSINESS ACUMEN.** Like many small operators, managing the financial side of the job has been an ongoing education for Tudisca. "I have a very hands on background, not a business background, so it has been a learning curve."

While Exterior Solutions has offered snow removal since 1987, much of the company's early efforts were expended on its summertime business of home remodeling and repair. "On the home repair side, it is fairly easy to build in profit," he explained. "Profit is just 'X' dollars per square foot of roofing or 'X' dollars per window, etc."

When Tudisca decided to focus on snow and ice removal three years ago and drive the division as a profit center, he learned that managing the financials would be more difficult, especially with increasing overhead and a tightening labor market.

A key to his success has been implementing systems, Tudisca said. By creating standard procedures for his operation, he has been able to spend less time in the field and more time managing. "We have learned that it's the system that makes the company run smoothly," he affirmed.

But systems won't work without indi-

## VITAL STATISTICS...

### EXTERIOR SOLUTIONS

**HEADQUARTERS:** Bozrah, Conn.

**FOUNDED:** 1986

**PRIMARY SERVICES:** Home improvement services and snow and ice control

**2000 TOTAL REVENUE:** \$270,000

**2000 GROWTH:** 60 percent

**PROJECTED GROWTH:** 25 percent

**SNOW SETUP:** 10 trucks, 8 snow plows, 3 snow throwers, 3 hopper spreaders, 1 tailgate spreader

**COMPANY HISTORY:** In 1991 Tudisca purchased a plow for his SUV and began subcontracting in the winters off from his home remodeling operation. After several years of subcontracting, Tudisca decided to form his own snow and ice removal company, which he has watched grow throughout the last 3 years.

viduals within the organization to take on more responsibility. "By developing key people in each (geographic) area that we cover, they can run the snow removal operation there without me being there," Tudisca noted. "Also, we can free up an individual to man the phones, move personnel and trucks where needed, and keep abreast of changing weather conditions."

Streamlining operations via systems also creates more time for strategic think-

## TURNING COMPETITION INTO CUSTOMERS

When Exterior Solutions Owner Dino Tudisca began using urethane plow edges and a new salt pretreatment (a corn-based solution applied to salt to reduce its corrosiveness and increase the working temperature range), he liked the products so much he decided to distribute them to other contractors and institutions.

Using a spin-off company called All Things Ice and Snow and its Web site, [www.allthingsiceandsnow.com](http://www.allthingsiceandsnow.com), Tudisca has managed to sell product to many parts of the country, including Minnesota, Kansas, Colorado and throughout the Midwest and East Coast.

"Now every other contractor that plows out there, instead of being the competition, is a potential customer. And rather than competing with them, we'd rather sell to them," Tudisca said. The distributorship is a relatively easy source of added revenue for Tudisca, especially with the advent of the Internet, making it possible to reach a nationwide market through e-commerce. "We've moved a lot of urethane edges."

The urethane plow edges, Tudisca said, combine the advantages of a rubber edge with the durability of steel. "The primary thing we like with the urethane edge is that it reduces the amount of stress on the plow and the truck because the edge absorbs so much of the impact," he explained. "So, if you happen to bounce into a curb or you hit a raised manhole cover, the plow doesn't even think twice about it." — Steve Smith

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USE READER SERVICE #16

## DIARY OF A SNOWMAN

The following is a diary kept by Dino Tudisca, Exterior Solutions, Bozrah, Conn., over the course of seven days during a storm that hit up and down the East Coast this winter. Tudisca's service area in Connecticut receives an annual total snowfall of 40 inches. The 2000-2001 snow season was especially difficult, with several storms that amounted to 12 inches or more of accumulation each.

**March 4, 8:00 p.m.:** It is nighttime now; weathermen are still predicting 18 to 24 inches of snow for my area during the next few days. We have prepared as best as we can. Trucks and equipment are in place as well as relief drivers. All one can do now is wait to start dealing with the worst of what winter has to offer. Sleep is hard to come by, adrenaline is flowing, and there are many thoughts to be processed. The phone never seems to stop ringing, but the last call was a good one — another relief driver and truck at my disposal. If things stay as

forecasted, I will need him. A lot of things run through your head, not the least of which is to keep your people safe. We will be in conditions that will test, in some cases, our very lives. Somewhere during this storm in the affected area, people will die. I want to make sure it isn't one of us. I just finished a book that outlined the great blizzard of 1888 — funny, but that seems to be all I can think of right now, and how eerily similar the projected track of this current storm is to the one of 1888.

**March 5, 6:00 a.m.:** We started with a 50 percent call out at 2 a.m., and 75 percent at 3 a.m. All accounts have been plowed and sand salted. I got about three hours sleep last night, so I am already very tired. Weather forecasters still are predicting very heavy snow this evening.

**March 5, 11:15 a.m.:** Back home once again. Storm has been delayed until this evening and into tonight and all of tomorrow. With the delay one wonders if it will occur at all, but we keep

the vigil all the same. Forecasters still say 12 inches plus of snow, down from the 24 inches predicted yesterday. Now forecasters say another similar storm will hit by the weekend. I continue to monitor weather reports, and watch as the storm starts to develop off the New Jersey coast, south of Long Island. The storm is really something — thunder, snow and lightning.

Snow is beginning and coming down very heavy. Crews are called in immediately. During long-duration storms we guarantee round-the-clock service. At some sites, the trucks never leave. At one condominium complex we serve there is an empty unit, which the property managers provide the driver as a warm place to sleep during storms.

All trucks are running in pairs. I really don't want anyone alone. Plus, we learned from a storm in February to always carry a chain saw. We have a business that we plow on a dead end road, the truck went up

*(continued on page 26)*



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ing, fine-tuning and making the necessary management decisions. This year Tudisca decided to trade a cut in margins, by using more subcontractors, in exchange for making more money per hour by finishing routes more quickly.

"We were at a point several years ago when we were doing 30 to 40 hours per storm with two or three trucks," Tudisca recalled. "I didn't want to do that any more. I wanted to keep our time out there to no more than 15 or 20 hours (per truck). I don't want to sound melodramatic, but I worry about my guys out there and their safety. I try to make it easier and safer for them by keeping the trucks in a central location and not having them drive all over the place."

Increased use of subcontractors had other benefits, as well, Tudisca said. "The customers like it better because their facilities are snow free more quickly and employees are less stressed. Overall, I think

it will end up leading to more growth," Tudisca added.

The freedom to focus more time on the business side of the operation, a condition created by Tudisca's implementation of systems and increased reliance on subcontractors, has yielded positive results for the business. Recently, a former employee came back to the operation after several years of living in a different city. When the employee came back to work for Exterior Solutions, "He said he couldn't believe the difference, how everything had really compacted. He was impressed," Tudisca said.

**A DEVELOPING STORY.** The story of Exterior Solutions is still very much in development. As Tudisca spends more and more time actually managing the business and hands more of the day-to-day responsibilities to his key staff members, he hopes he can accelerate growth in the company. Most of the growth will come from the snow side

and a focus on high-end commercial clients. Several large, commercial clients, including a major hospital, are coming up for renewal next year and Tudisca wants to make a run at them. "We'd like to continue to position ourselves with these high priority accounts to prove that we can do it better, and we can do it more efficiently."

Ultimately, only time will tell if Tudisca is successful in this transition. He is confident his organization will continue to grow in expertise and its ability to deliver top-quality service. "What I would like to do is position myself to be the person in the area that is most serious and most knowledgeable about what we do," he asserted. "We may not be the biggest, but when somebody has a question about a product or service, the first name that pops into their head should be Exterior Solutions." **SB**

The author is managing editor of Snow Business magazine.

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USE READER SERVICE #20

SNOW BUSINESS

MAY 2001 SB17

## WORKING WITH SUBCONTRACTORS

BY JOHN ALLIN

*Subcontractors can grow your business, provided you know how to attract and retain them.*

**G**rowth in the snowplowing business is usually dependent upon how much equipment and manpower you can muster to deal with an increase in business. Additional equipment requires substantial capital investment however, if you choose to own all the necessary equipment.

One proven method of reducing your capital investment in such growth is to use subcontractors. These are individuals that supply both the manpower and equipment necessary to adequately service your customer base during any particular snow event. By following the basic guidelines and suggestions in this article, you can greatly increase your chances of securing, retaining and organizing subcontractors.

**SNOWPLOWERS NEEDED.** Advertising is generally the most accepted method for attracting plowing subcontractors. A couple of lines in the "classified" section of the local paper will typically elicit inquiries. This can be as simple as "Snowplowers, with vehicle, needed. Routes throughout

---

Reliable subcontractors can help you tackle new business, thus growing your revenue despite a tight labor market. Photo credit: Hiniker



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USE READER SERVICE #53

# WORKING WITH SUBCONTRACTORS



In addition to providing added manpower, subcontractors with specialized equipment can help expand your capabilities. Some companies opt to pay these "specialized" subcontractors a bonus based on their unique abilities.

Photo credit: Sweepster

(your market) area. Call - 555-1234 for information." Those individuals who respond will have some specific concerns and questions, and you should be prepared to address these inquiries. These questions often will include: "How are we getting paid?; When do you pay?; How do we get told when to plow?; Where will I be plowing?"

Developing an information packet that can be mailed to the potential subcontractor will go a long way toward eliminating any misconceptions later in the winter. This packet should include your policy on insurance, a formal subcontractor agreement that lays out the sub's responsibility as well as your own, the pay rate or pay scale, and an explanation of your company policy about how you generally deal with subcontractors. This packet of information can be mailed to the perspective subcontractor after he/she calls.

Another effective method to attract additional subcontractors is establishing a referral program. Such a program allows existing subcontractors to "refer" your company to other potential subs.

Snow subcontractors generally talk with one another on citizens band (CB) radios during snow events—and they get to know the good contractors. If you pay a referral fee to your existing subcontractors and if you have treated your subs fairly (meaning you paid them on-time and in-full, as promised), you'll soon find existing subcontractors recruiting others to come work with you.

One suggestion would be to pay \$200 to an existing subcontractor who refers another subcontractor to work with your company. You could pay half the referral fee up front and the balance at the end of the season if the new sub has worked well over the entire season.



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**POTENTIAL PITFALLS.** Unfortunately, using subcontractors can also be a source of irritation at times, and one needs to be cognizant of the pitfalls associated with subcontractors.

For example, prepare for the fact that a percentage of the available subs will not come out when called. The reasons for these no shows run the gamut, including sickness, hangover, broken down vehicle, no babysitter and the phone being turned off (inadvertently, of course).

However, subcontractors normally take much better care of their equipment, and thus avoid accidents and damage, because they have a vested interest in ensuring the equipment has a long life of efficient operation.

When a subcontractor's equipment does break down, they normally work very hard to get the problem fixed quickly. Subcontractors will often carry spare parts

and tools to effect repairs immediately so they can get back to work, earning money.

**MAKE PAYMENT A PRIORITY.** Another potential pitfall when working with subcontractors is disputes surrounding payment. When subs have completed their work for the night (or day, as the case may be), they should report the hours they worked that same day. This way any discrepancies in recorded hours can be immediately addressed. If not, you can end up arguing later when no one actually remembers what went on during a particular snow event. Sometimes this means calling the subcontractors at home during non-working hours, but you're better off addressing this particular issue right away rather than waiting until the money is due.

The manner in which a subcontractor is paid is a critical issue. Subcontractors can be the lifeblood of your business, and

you need them to survive, especially in times of high activity. Therefore, it should go without saying, that subcontractors should be paid on time and in full, every time. Failing to pay a subcontractor on time only leads to bad publicity over the CB airwaves. These guys know who's paying on time and who isn't. The word gets around, both good and bad. Some companies have subcontractors waiting in line to work for them, simply because they have earned the reputation as a company that pays on time and in full - this is a big deal to subcontractors, so don't underestimate the power of paying in full and on time.

Subcontractors should also be paid on a scale in accordance with the equipment and experience they possess. For example, start with a base rate that is fair, then pay more money for a larger or more efficient plow (i.e.: the 'V' blade, snow wings or

*(continued on page 26)*

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USE READER SERVICE #24

# Keep On Truckin'

*Tips for choosing the right vehicle for snow plowing. By Steve Smith*

Ask a group of snow contractors about their favorite vehicle for plowing and you're not likely to get the same answer twice. Indeed, the types and makes of vehicles used for snowplowing can be as individual as snow contractors themselves.

"I really don't think there is a 'right' vehicle that will satisfy everyone," said Alan Nadeau, Nadeau Lawn and Landscape, Milton, Vt. It's impossible to find a one-size-fits all vehicle that works for each contractor because finding the right vehicle depends on the individual operation and conditions within which it will be used.

"Get the vehicle that suits your needs best. Just because it works for someone else, doesn't mean it will work for you," said Charles Smith, AC Grounds Maintenance, West Orange, N.J.

Obviously, a contractor serving a large commercial customer would need access to a variety of heavy equipment from loaders to skid steers to dump trucks, while a contractor serving the residential market might do well with just a modestly equipped pick up truck.

**ITEMS TO CONSIDER.** While vehicular options abound, there are several basic issues to consider when selecting a pick up truck for snow removal operations.

**Fuel Type.** There are two basic options to choose from: gasoline- or

diesel-powered engines. Many contractors reported that they prefer to purchase diesel-powered trucks because they typically offer increased power, added reliability/serviceability and, most importantly, increased fuel economy.

Other contractors aren't convinced that diesel is the better option. "I'm not real big on diesel power. I like the fuel economy, but the weight of the diesel is just that much more on the front axle," Nadeau said. "With the weight of the plow you're already heavy up front in most applications, and you really notice it if you get into soft ground."

**Two- or Four-Wheel Drive:** There are some contractors who plow with two-wheel drive trucks, but the vast majority advise using four-wheel drive. In fact, with the treacherous conditions snow contractors face during a heavy storm, four-wheel drive is, in general, a requirement.

Pat McTavish, MacKenzie & McTavish Snow Removal, Inc., Silver Spring, Md., uses a four-wheel-drive truck but switches to two-wheel-drive when he uses the truck for personal travel. For contractors who use their trucks similarly, McTavish recommends getting manual locking hubs, rather than the automatic versions. In McTavish's model of truck, the automatic hubs are made of Teflon and can be easily stripped. Before he finally converted to manual hubs, McTavish had replaced the automatic hubs four times.

**Transmission:** More than any other "under the hood" component, transmissions take the biggest pounding from snow removal operations. Tom Peters, Northwest Snow & Ice, Schaumburg, Ill., has replaced his transmission four times. "In a lot of these new trucks, people are finding that the transmission can't handle the torque of the diesel motors," Peters said.

"The worst enemy of an automatic transmission is heat," according to Smith. "Anything you can do to help your transmission run cooler will extend its life."

Smith suggests the use of an auxiliary transmission cooler and allowing the truck to idle a few minutes after plowing before shutting it off. Shutting the engine off immediately after operation stops transmission fluid from circulating, and thus, prevents cooling the transmission. Preventive maintenance, such as draining and changing transmission fluid, should also be completed. Remember that because you are putting more than average strain on your vehicle, you should change the fluid more frequently than what is recommended in the owner's manual for "average" use.

Most experienced contractors agree that automatic transmissions are the preferred choice because they are easier to operate, given the frequent forward and backward changes required for snow plowing.

Photo credit: Boss Snowplow

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USE READER SERVICE #26

**Suspension.** Selecting a truck with "Heavy Duty" specifications is preferred for snow removal operations. While the ride may not be as smooth, the demands placed on the vehicle from snow removal usually calls for a sturdier construction. "People don't buy heavy duty trucks to ride like cars. I don't want it to ride like a car, I'm buying it to get the job done," Peters said.

"Plowing definitely qualifies as severe service, so I feel it's important to spec heavy duty, especially if you plan on carrying a salt/sand spreader, as well as the plow," said Rob Nagle, a snow contractor in Orillia, Ontario, Canada.

In general, a ¾-ton or heavier vehicle should be used, and leaf springs are generally preferred. "Leaf springs are best for a plow truck," reported Smith. "Coil springs are good, and I wouldn't mount a plow on torsion bars unless it was for personal use. With the torsion bars, I would get the lightest blade I could find."

Ultimately though, the "right" specifications for a vehicle depend on what you use it for. "If I intend to plow mainly large commercial lots," Smith said, "I would want a full-size vehicle - maybe a 1-ton dump truck. Or, maybe you will be plowing with your one daily driver pickup, so the best choice would be a ¾-ton truck. That's an example of how everyone has different needs."

**ODDS AND ENDS.** Once you've tackled the big questions and selected a truck that fits your unique needs, there are a host of other miscellaneous items to consider. For instance, McTavish suggests spending an extra \$300 to \$500 to have electrically operated windows and heated mirrors. These options proved greater visibility for drivers, and the electronic controls allow a driver to easily adjust settings to his preference, which is especially important in snow removal since several different drivers may use the same truck throughout a storm.

Heated windshield wipers are also available as an optional upgrade to improve visibility. "I think having those features adds a lot more safety - a lot more than you think," McTavish remarked. "With all our vehicles we try to make it as safe as possible for the guys to drive them."

McTavish also advises contractors to pay attention to the ergonomics of the cab, since you're likely to be spending a significant amount of time in the vehicle. "Someone that sits in a vehicle quite a bit, you realize the small things you might not notice when you buy a vehicle," he pointed out. "For example, leg room is important. When your foot is on the gas, instead of your knee being shifted off to the side, you need to have enough room to keep your leg straight or it may lead to knee problems."

**CONCLUSION.** There are a wide variety of vehicle options available to snow and ice removal contractors. Each option has its benefits, disadvantages and associated costs. The best strategy is to take a good look at what you need - ask yourself what you want the vehicle to accomplish - and then find the truck that can handle your requirements. Once you have a clear idea of what you need, you can compare price and service from dealer to dealer and ensure you get the best package. **SB**

The author is managing editor of Snow Business magazine.



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# WORKING WITH SUBCONTRACTORS

(continued from page 21)

capture blade). A bit more money if they carry a cellular telephone, and more money still if this is the subcontractor's second or third year with your company.

Further, more money can be paid for subcontractors who have trucks with an automatic transmission instead of a manual transmission. No matter how much the subcontractors plead with you, they can't back up as fast with a standard transmission as they can with an automatic transmission.

**WARNING WORD.** While you want subcontractors to "feel at home" and be happy to work for you, be very careful with how you treat subcontractors while they are actually plowing snow for you. You do

not want to give anyone, including your own employees, the impression that they are your employees. While you can give them direction, that direction should be limited to what your customers' expectations are as far as a finished product after the plowing is completed.

Further, when working with subcontractors, keep these warnings in mind:

- Don't restrict subcontractors from plowing for themselves or other contractors (if you treat them right and pay them as promised - they won't go elsewhere anyway).
- Never put your logo or sign on their truck or on a piece of subcontracted equipment.
- Do not pay any of their expenses.
- Require proper insurance coverage.

• Never pay any sub until they have filled out an IRS Form W-9 for your files. Always issue a proper IRS Form 1099 to the subcontractor at year-end, and make certain that the subcontractor knows that this income will be reported to the government, as is required by law.

The use of subcontractors is an important tool for growth. Obviously it is not the only way to grow your snowplowing business, but it may be one of the easiest methods for growth without substantial capital investment. Treat subcontractors right, and they will be loyal and productive members of your team. **SB**

*The author is president of Allin Companies, Erie, Pa., and is board president of the Snow & Ice Management Association.*

## DIARY OF A SNOWMAN

(continued from page 16)

fell across the road, trapping the truck. We had to retrieve a chain saw to let the truck out. So, now we always carry a chain saw in each truck.

**March 5, 11:00 p.m.:** Snowfall is accumulating at 1 to 2 inches per hour. From 5:30 to 7 p.m. snowfall rate is 2 to 3 inches per hour. This rate keeps steady from 7 to 11 p.m. At 7:30 p.m. the driver of my truck tells me that he has run over a mailbox. He calls a few minutes later to tell me that the plow is acting funny. The scoop function on the plow is no longer operating. He still has a straight plow function, and that will suffice for now. Next he calls to tell me the horn isn't working. Last time I let my truck go out with another driver.

I speak with a good friend that works at the Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT). The DOT drivers are having a hard time keeping up, and some roads are barely passable.

**March 6, 1 a.m.:** I finally get behind the wheel. The roads are terrible. Some people use their trucks off road, but driving in heavy snow will test the mettle of any driver and truck. We easily have 10 inches of snow on the ground, and it is still snowing hard. I make the driveway rounds and get back to commercial plowing about 2:30 a.m. I plow all commercial accounts straight through until about 11 a.m. The snowfall has stopped, but there is more snow predicted. I've called in another subcontractor at 3 a.m. and, along with my three trucks, we get all the places cleaned up fairly well. We have had a total of 10 different trucks out at one time or another.

This fast pace keeps up until 3 p.m. when we are finally caught up. Off to do a few driveways. This is where the V plow shines. We have 12 to 18 inches of heavy wet snow, and some drives have not been plowed. The V plow cuts them right open.

**March 7, 4 a.m.:** I get a call to plow a drive near a condo that we do. When I get to the driveway, I find another truck there plowing. I am really upset. I just went an hour out of my way, for nothing. In not so nice terms I explain that I better get some money for a wasted trip. The homeowner is trying to explain what happened, but I am in no mood. Then I realize that the other truck is stuck, so I give him a pull. He leaves, and I plow the drive.

**March 10, 4 a.m.:** Another 2 inches of snow. At 6:15 a.m., I call one truck to see how he is doing. He informs me that he is only into his first stop - he fell back asleep before leaving and became delayed. Now I am hurting; good thing it's Saturday.

**March 11:** Sunday is a day off, but the rainstorm predicted for Tuesday is now forecasted to be ice. And so it all begins again...

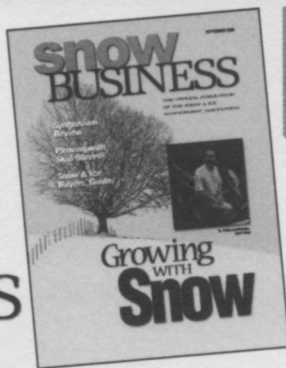
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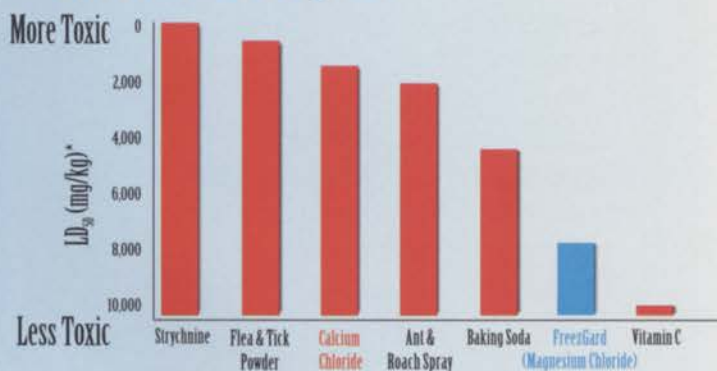
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## Irrigation Audits

(continued from page 108)

being audited using a pressure gauge. This is best done within the zone being tested.

Make sure that the system pressure is approximately the same as when the system is operating to see if the pressure is uniform throughout the zone. The pressure should be taken on each sprinkler zone and at the beginning, middle and end of each zone to verify that the pressure doesn't significantly differ within the zone. Then compare the pressure to the sprinkler's required operating pressure from the manufacturer's literature, the record drawing or the original design drawings. The easiest way to measure the pressure is to use an adapter that screws onto the sprinkler or a pitot tube can be used to get the pressure at the nozzle.

The sprinkler spacings need to be measured in order to calculate the precipitation rate of each station. Sprinkler spacing should be head-to-head and row-to-row. This is easily accomplished with a 100-foot measuring

(continued on page 112)

## Irrigation System Audit System Tune Up WorkSheet

Problem	Zone # One	Zone # Two	Zone # Three	Zone # Four	Zone # Five	Zone # Six	Zone # Seven	Zone # Eight
Valve Malfunction								
Low Pressure								
High Pressure								
Tilted Sprinkler								
High Sprinkler								
Low Sprinkler								
Plugged Nozzle								
Missing Nozzle								
Deflected Spray								
Arc Misaligned								
Low Head Drainage								
Broken Sprinkler								
Sprinkler Not Turning								
Leak								

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USE READER SERVICE #66

## Irrigation Audits

(continued from page 110)

tape. The type of sprinklers and nozzles should be recorded. The zone should be checked for match precipitated nozzles.

Using a soil probe, a soil sample should be taken to measure the root zone depth and estimate the soil texture and structure so that the soil can be classified. Once the preliminary data has been collected, the distribution data can be collected using catch devices.

Catch devices are small containers that are evenly spaced throughout the area being irrigated in a set pattern. Catch devices (cups) can be many different types such as cat food cans, tuna fish cans or expensive containers specifically made for auditing. The most important thing to remember is that the cup should have a consistent top area (throat) and have some weight to it so that it will stay in place. Once the cups are in place, each station to be audited is operated for a specific time period and the amount of water is measured. The results are used to calculate a net precipitation rate and distribution unifor-

mity for the area. The irrigation system is then scheduled based on actual field data as opposed to the manufacturer's catalogue theoretical data.

Proper cup placement is critical to proper auditing. Correct placement of the cups will save time, minimize the number of cups needed, and provide good data. In most cases, cups should be placed near each sprinkler and halfway between one sprinkler and the next. In multiple groups, all stations that contribute water to an individual cup need to be tested before that cup's data is recorded as they all effect the total amount of water the area will receive. When placing cups it is important that the cups are lined up and evenly spaced. When looking down a row of cups, all the cups should be in a straight line. Be careful not to put the cups too close to the sprinkler, as they can get knocked over when the sprinkler comes on or the stream will be deflected by the cup. This may require that the test be started over

again or that the test be completed with one less cup. For irregular shaped areas with irregular sprinkler spacings, cups are better placed in a straight grid pattern. The larger the sprinkler spacing the larger the grid spacing, but a 20-foot by 20-foot or 15-foot by 15-foot grid seems to work best.

The amount of time to run each cup test depends on the sprinkler being operated. Sprinklers should be operated until a minimum of 25 ml of water is collected in the average cup. This translates into about five rotations for rotary sprinklers (12 to 15 minutes) and about seven minutes for sprayheads. Record the amount of water collected in each cup and the location needs to be recorded as well as the amount of time the sprinklers were operated. The cups should be recorded to the nearest millimeter, and the same person should read all the cups so that the resulting data is consistent and accurate.

Problems always occur when testing, but if

(continued on page 114)



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USE READER SERVICE #102

# Irrigation Audits

(continued from page 112)

the problem is a result of the test sequence, either throw out the data from that cup or repeat the test after correcting the problem. If the problem is with sprinkler operation, then the data should remain as it is consistent with the normal operation of the system.

After completing the cup tests, make sure that all the necessary field data has been collected. This includes cup test data, sprinkler spacings, wind speed and direction, sprinkler pressures, sprinkler type and nozzle, soil information, test run time, plant material, stand alone vs. multiple stations and controller information. Making a small sketch of the areas tested with the sprinklers and cup locations noted also helps. Lastly, document any problems that occurred during the testing.

**CALCULATIONS.** Now that all the field data has been collected, calculate a base schedule for each irrigation system station. This can be done manually or with the use of a simple computer program. Base schedules

are for a watering time and more than one base schedule will be needed. Depending on the irrigation system location, a monthly base schedule may be required.

In order to determine the base schedule, not only is the amount of water being applied needed, but also the amount of water required by the plants. The plants' water requirement will be based on a number of weather factors, including solar radiation (sunlight), wind, temperature, rainfall and relative humidity. All of these factors can be used to calculate the evapotranspiration rate (ET) – a combination of evaporation from the soil and transpiration from the plant – of the plants to be irrigated. ET is difficult to calculate without a weather station, so find a local source, which might include universities, Internet Web sites, extension service historical data or evaporation pans.

An auditor needs to be familiar with several terms to calculate base schedules, such as distribution uniformity, efficiency,

precipitation rates, scheduling coefficient and coefficient of uniformity.

The distribution uniformity (DU) measures how uniformly water is applied to the irrigated area. It is tied to the sprinkler spacing and how the individual sprinklers distribute water. Conditions such as wind, pressure and worn nozzles can affect sprinkler distribution. In auditing, usually the lower quarter distribution uniformity is used as opposed to

$DU_{LQ}$	=	$\frac{AVG_{LQ}}{\text{Average}}$
$DU_{LQ}$	=	Lower quarter distribution uniformity (percentage)
$AVG_{LQ}$	=	Average of lower 25 percent of sample
Average	=	Average of total sample

the overall distribution uniformity, which can skew the number toward drier areas. Distribution uniformity is determined in the field with

(continued on page 116)



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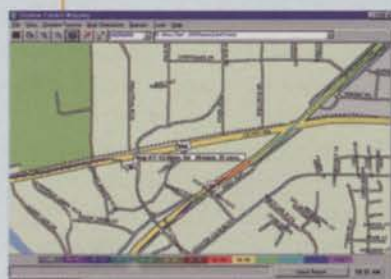
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11:00AM	11:25AM	00:25	In Transit	1.00	
11:25AM	11:27AM	00:02	1-Block City Station	0.00	
11:27AM	11:55AM	00:28	In Transit	1.00	
11:55AM	1:00PM	00:05	5-Year Company Office	0.00	
1:00PM	1:10PM	00:10	In Transit	1.10	
1:10PM	4:00PM	00:00	L-Over & Stay 88	0.00	
4:00PM	4:00PM	00:00	In Transit	0.00	
4:00PM	6:00PM	02:00	5-Block, Downtown TX	0.00	
6:00PM	6:00PM	00:00	In Transit	1.00	
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USE READER SERVICE #30

## Irrigation Audits

(continued from page 114)

the cup test results and is the main reason for performing the cup tests. It is the average water applied in the 25 percent lowest amount of cups compared to the average of all cups.

Irrigation efficiency is a measure of the amount of water applied vs. the amount of available water. It is affected more by subjective factors rather than mechanical factors like uniformity. Time of day, over-watering, low head drainage, and drift all affect efficiency. Although efficiency and uniformity are related, they are two very different measurements. A system can have a high uniformity but a low efficiency due to poor operation, such as over-watering, where the excess water is lost to deep percolation or runoff occurs. Irrigation efficiency is very difficult to measure and is usually assumed.

Gross precipitation is calculated in inches per hour using the general formula or by looking it up in the manufacturer's catalogue.

By conducting an audit, a more accurate precipitation rate can be calculated using the

### Gross Precipitation Rate = $\frac{96.3 \times \text{GPM}}{\text{Area}}$

Where: 96.3 = conversion constant  
GPM = gallons per minute going into the area  
Area = area being covered by the sprinklers in square feet

cup test results. This form of the "net" precipitation rate is calculated as:

### Net Precipitation Rate = $\frac{\text{CV} \times 3.66}{\text{TR} \times \text{CDA}}$

Where: CV = average catch volume (ml)  
3.66 = conversion constant  
TR = Testing run time (minutes)  
CDA = Catch device throat area (square inches)

Scheduling coefficient measures uniformity to compare the lowest precipitation

rate for a defined area to the average precipitation rate over the entire area. It is calculated with the formula at the top of the next page.


This measurement looks at the driest 1, 2, 5 or 10 percent of the area being watered and is very skewed to the dry side. It compares the ab-

solute lowest precipitation rate to the average. This figure is difficult to calculate without a computer, but it effectively distinguishes between wet and dry spots.

Once the distribution or other uniformity measurement has been established, the total run time per station can be calculated using the irrigation water requirement, which is presented in the box on the bottom of the next page.

**AN EXAMPLE.** Let's use a small irrigation system audited as an example. During the audit, 20 cups (16.5-square-inch throat area) were used and the cup data is outlined in the

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SC = PR  
LPR

Where: SC = Scheduling Coefficient  
PR = Average precipitation rate of entire area  
LPR = lowest precipitation rate in a defined continuous area (inches/hour)

chart on page 118 along with the calculations. The test lasted 15 minutes. The average spacing of the sprinklers was 35 feet by 35 feet, each using 4.0 gpm at 40 psi pressure. The plant water requirement is 0.35 inches.

Based on the audit, that station representing the 20 cups would require an 86-minute run time to apply 0.35 inches of water. That could be on a daily, weekly, monthly or annual basis depending on the plant requirement. In this case, it is most likely a daily requirement and the controller would be set

Irrigation Water Requirement =  $\frac{\text{Plant Water Requirement (inches)}}{\text{Distribution Uniformity (Lower Quarter)}}$

Total Run Time =  $\frac{\text{Irrigation Water Requirement (inches)}}{\text{Net Precipitation Rate (inches/hour)}}$

up to irrigate in cycles to percent runoff. This is why noting the controller features and determining whether the existing controller can implement a schedule that allows for multiple start times per station is so critical.

The same procedure would be performed for each station for which data was collected. This data would then be applied to similar stations. Ultimately, the auditor provides a number of base schedules for the irrigation system with the required operating time for each station. The base schedules are for specific periods of time and amounts of water to be applied. In addition to run time, they include days per week and number of cycles required per day for each station.

Auditing an irrigation system is a fun and educational experience. It is a quick and visual way of learning how sprinklers apply water and

## Irrigation Audits

the problems associated with irrigation system operation. The audit needs to be performed in steps in a logical manner to obtain accurate results. The cup tests are the main part of the audit and provide the data necessary to calculate the distribution uniformity and net precipitation rates. With these figures, base schedules can be determined and implemented to reduce water use throughout the audited irrigation system. **LL**

*The author is a principal with Irrigation Consulting, Inc., an irrigation consulting firm in Pepperell, Mass., and Huntersville, N.C. He can be contacted at [www.irrigationconsulting.com](http://www.irrigationconsulting.com).*

*The Irrigation Association produces an auditing manual on which much of this article was based and regularly teaches auditing seminars throughout the United States. As part of its auditing program, a Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditor designation can be obtained. For more information, contact 703/536-7080.*

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## Irrigation Audits

Cup#	Result (ml)	Cup#	Result (ml)	Cup#	Result (ml)	Cup#	Result (ml)
1	25	6	23	11	26	16	16
2	22	7	28	12	30	17	18
3	20	8	19	13	19	18	20
4	18	9	17	14	31	19	26
5	16	10	27	15	17	20	28

This example demonstrates the various formulas for irrigation contractors to use when conducting an irrigation audit. The numbers above are real data from a sample irrigation audit.

- The gross precipitation rate equals:  

$$\text{Gross Precipitation Rate} = \frac{96.3 \times \text{GPM}}{\text{spacing}} = 0.31 \text{ inches/hour}$$

$$\text{Gross Precipitation Rate} = \frac{96.3 \times 4.0 \text{ gpm}}{35 \text{ feet} \times 35 \text{ feet}} = 0.31 \text{ inches/hour}$$
- The net precipitation rate =  $\frac{\text{CV} \times 3.66}{\text{TR} \times \text{CDA}}$   

$$\text{CV} = \frac{\text{Total Volume of Catch Devices (ml)}}{\text{Total Number of Catch Devices}} = \frac{446 \text{ ml}}{20} = 22.3 \text{ ml}$$

$$\text{Net Precipitation Rate} = \frac{22.3 \text{ ml} \times 3.66}{15 \text{ min} \times 16.5 \text{ sq in}} = 0.33 \text{ inches/hour}$$
- The Low Quarter Distribution Uniformity =  $\frac{\text{Average LQ Catch}}{\text{Average Catch (CV)}}$   

$$\text{Average LQ} = \frac{25\% \text{ Lowest Catches (ml)}}{\text{Number of Catches}} = \frac{16+16+17+17+18}{5} = 16.8$$

$$\text{Lower Quarter Distribution Uniformity} = \frac{16.8 \text{ ml}}{22.3 \text{ ml}} = 0.753 \text{ or } 75\%$$
- The irrigation water requirement =  $\frac{\text{Plant Water Requirement (inches)}}{\text{Distribution Uniformity (Lower Quarter)}}$   

$$\text{Irrigation water requirement} = \frac{0.35 \text{ inches}}{0.75} = 0.47 \text{ inches/per unit of time}$$
- The total run time =  $\frac{\text{Irrigation Water Requirement (inches)}}{\text{Net Precipitation Rate (inches/hour)}}$   

$$\text{Total run time} = \frac{0.47 \text{ inches}}{0.33 \text{ inches/hour}}$$

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USE READER SERVICE #52

by Dave Clancy

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Most contractors agree that eye care is at the top of the safety list. "Safety glasses are the most important items to use," said Joe Munie, president, Outdoor Services, Fairview Hts., Ill. "We require safety glasses to be used on almost every job site."

Munie explained that since the bulk of his clients are industrial operations, taking the safety requirements of those operations outside to the landscape keeps his employees thinking about safety. "Many of our clients require safety glasses for their employees when work is being performed, so we are able to

make a consistent work environment by requiring our employees do likewise," he added.

Besides providing safety glasses, it is equally important to make sure that the employees actually use the equipment. Safety glasses have an "uncool" reputation (remember eighth grade shop class?), so contractors often have a difficult time getting their employees to wear them.

"One of the problems we face is men tend to try and be 'macho' and wearing safety gear, especially glasses gets in the way of that look," related Bill Adams, CEO, Southern Landscape Professionals, Willow Springs, N.C. "So we have tried to compromise and give them a look that is 'cool' while providing the protection they need."

"If guys are resisting the glasses because of the look, remind them that they could look like a dork with no eyes," added Dwayne Galloway, owner, Lawn Butler, Regina, Saskatchewan.

Galloway provides his employees with a plain set of safety glasses and lets employees use their own,

*(continued on page 122)*

*Face shields, respirators, helmets, gloves, boots and glasses are among the most common industry safety supplies.*



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## Safety Equipment

(continued from page 120)

more stylish types if they so choose. "A few of my guys have their own, which is fine as long as they meet the safety standards," he added.

"The key to glasses and getting the employees to wear them is allowing them to pick them out," noted Adams. "If we spend \$4 on generic glasses, our employees won't wear them. Instead, we let them select some-

thing more fashionable and comfortable – something they'll be more likely to wear.

"Most of these guys use safety glasses for sunglasses anyway, so by making them comfortable, they will wear the equipment," Adams added.

Southern Landscape Professionals provides its employees with one pair of safety

glasses per quarter, replacing older pairs that get scratched with use. "We'll buy one pair," he said. "If they lose their glasses or break them more often, they are responsible for the replacement.

"We feel that we can replace them quarterly because scratches do happen, and it is best to make sure the employee can see all the time," Adams explained.

For Mark McCoy, owner, McCoy's Landscaping, Marion, Ohio, providing one pair of safety glasses is enough, and he doesn't worry about style. "We provide the safety glasses, and I explain to our employees how important it is that they wear them," he said.

"I'll hold up my hand and ask them to count my fingers," he noted. "Then I'll tell them to imagine a day when they can't see to do that. Many of these guys have families and we instill the importance of their eyes, not only to them as individuals, but to their families.

"If they still resist, I tell them to take a look at their families, because they are running the risk of not seeing those people ever again," McCoy explained.

Much of the resistance to wearing safety glasses comes from contractors that believe that they are less than attractive.

The additional cost of "stylish" safety glasses was worth it for Steve Jancics, operations manager, J.R. Thomas, Cincinnati, Ohio. "They are like the sunglasses that many people wear on the streets today, but they are actually safety glasses so they offer the necessary protection," he said.

"They cost just a few dollars more, and we have no problem getting the employees to wear them," he added. "Why buy something that is just going to sit there and not be used? If a person is not going to use it and not be protected, then who cares if you paid \$5 or \$10 for it?"

**EAR PROTECTION.** Hearing loss usually occurs over time, and by the time a worker realizes he needs ear plugs, the damage is done. Therefore, landscape contractors should provide appropriate protection and make sure the workers actually use it.

There are three basic styles of hearing protection that contractors use: ear muffs, ear bands and ear plugs. Most contractors opt for either the muffs or the plugs and allow employees to select their preference.

(continued on page 124)



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## Safety Equipment

(continued from page 122)

"Our maintenance division uses the muffs while our landscape division uses ear plugs almost exclusively," Adams said. "The muffs tend to filter out more noise, but they also restrict some of the sounds that workers need to hear."

For instance, skid-steer operators do not use ear muffs because they need to hear directions, other workers and other vehicles in the area.

"Each piece of equipment in our shop comes with a set of ear muffs," Jancics said, adding that he likes hanging them on the handles or safety bar. "Those muffs stay with the machine and are stored in a place that is very conspicuous so the operator has no excuse for not using them."

Jancics added that the company keeps a full supply of ear plugs on hand for employees who wish to use them instead of the muffs. "Once again, we provide the necessary equipment for our employees to complete their work safely," he said.

**FOOT PROTECTION.** While landscape contractors realize the importance of a good, solid shoe fit, they do not agree on the need for steel-toed work boots. Here, the need depends on the task the employee is performing – those lifting items that can be dropped on their feet should consider steel toes.

Southern Landscape Professionals requires all employees wear steel-toed boots. "They must have them and wear them before they can work for us," Adams said.

However, at J.R. Thomas Landscaping, steel toes are not required, and for many tasks, they are discouraged. "We do a lot of bending over and planting and mulching," said Jancics. "We have found that steel toes tend to cut into workers' feet, which causes more problems than they are worth."

"When steel toes are needed, they should be worn, but we prefer our employees to use simple work boots," Jancics added.

"I'll hold up my hand and ask them to **count my fingers**. Then I'll tell them to *imagine a day when they can't see* to do that."

– Mark McCoy

**HAND PROTECTION.** Many companies provide gloves to employees for protection from scrapes and cuts. Simple knit gloves are inexpensive, and can be used for basic protection from minor abrasions. However, stronger leather and leather palm gloves offer better protection and tend to last longer.

"When you work with rocks and other abrasives, string gloves fall apart," said Ross Kaye, safety products manager, Gempler's, Janesville, Wis. "A stronger glove will give you more protection and will last longer."

Kaye said there is no correlation between the weight of gloves and the tasks they are best used for. "Using gloves is a personal

(continued on page 126)



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## On Prequalifying Customers...

**Andrew Hardscape** - I am trying to come up with a simple, quick, unimimidating way that my secretary can prequalify perspective clients. I feel like prequalifying is as much a skill as selling is.

Who has a system that you use when you have a secretary or office manager handle the phone calls?

**Rex Mann** - We use an upfront contract or ufc for short to qualify potential clients.

1. Purpose of the appointment (explain why you are having the meeting)
2. Prospect's agenda and expectations (find out what their expectations are before and during the meeting)
3. Salesperson's agenda and expectations (explain to the prospect what will happen during the meeting. Also explain your expectations of the prospect, including what information you need from them ask that all decision makers are present)
4. Time (schedule the date, time, location and length of meeting)
5. Outcome (at the end of this meeting you will decide to either proceed with or stop the selling process)

Both you and the prospect must agree to the outcome for each stage of the contract.

Getting the prospect to agree to all the elements means they are willing to invest their time. Therefore, they probably are not shopping. Also, they know what to expect when you arrive. This weeds out most of the shoppers. But, on occasion, one slips through the cracks. However, they are easy to spot. They usually break the upfront contract — meaning, not all decision makers present, only can give you a half-hour instead of an hour, etc. When this happens, we ask if they want to re-schedule. If it is a real prospect they will re-schedule. If it is a shopper they will usually want to go ahead with the meeting anyway. They want free consulting from an expert. We won't have the meeting if we feel it is a shopper.

**Phil Nilsson** — Price checking, tire kicking is part of the "consumer's tactics" for finding the right contractor at the right price. When the phone rings look at it as an opportunity to be of service. Because of all the "screwball" pricing that goes on in this business ... you know ... same work, same job, one guys says \$2,000 and another says \$3,000 is there any wonder why customers are skeptical? There is no standard pricing structure from which a customer can start drawing conclusions in advance, they never know what to expect. Many have never purchased the services before. It's not like comparing the cost of a loaf of bread between two super markets. Chase all leads. Some customers don't know what they need or what they really want. It's your job to fill needs. Go out and find out what the needs are. Don't be standoffish.

**Gregg Williams** — We follow up pretty much every lead. If they are price shopping, so what? Give them the better price for good service and get the account! We work our suppliers for lower prices, right?

**Erich Heinrich** — I usually tried to offer three levels. I would also try to find a budget that they wanted to stay within before I started working on the designs. If they don't know what they want, I see no reason why you can't at least ask what fits their budget. Also, when things start getting busy, have you ever thought about telling the client that you don't give free estimates? It seems it would weed out many.

## On Aeration...

**Paul Cullimore** — There seems to be a vibe going around here that people are steering away from thatching every three years and just aerating there lawns. I ask this because a lot of clients are requesting and I am contemplating going out and purchasing a new aerator. Any advice?

**Dale Wiley** — Aeration is far more beneficial to the turf. Dethatching is often a remedial cure for other problems and often causes more trouble by spreading non-desirable turfgrass species. Verticutting, like is used on golf courses, is more beneficial. Our new program involves aeration in combination with a complete kill off of the non-desirable species and total turf and then slice seeding new QUALITY turf seed, starting an organic program, preemergent applications for crab grass and other non desirables.

**Chuck Twist** — If there is a thatch PROBLEM, de-thatch! For preventative purposes and/or for slight thatch problems, aerate! You can't see thatch without taking a soil profile. A shovel may work, but I haven't had luck with a shovel. I have a soil profiler. Takes a plug out about 3.5 inches wide, about 6 inches deep and about 1/2-inch thick! Yes, de-thatching is more detrimental than beneficial, if unnecessary! However, it would be more beneficial than doing nothing if the thatch were more than 1/2-inch thick!

**Gregg Williams** — We aerate once and sometimes twice per year. Twice per season on high traffic lawns, and once for everything else. Usually time it right before the winterizing fertilizer. Works so far. Thatching is usually performed prior to the herbicide application.

**Pro Turf Landscape** — We tell our clients that we will be using a Power Rake on their lawns and not a dethatcher. We use a solid reel that slices into the first layers of soil and cuts thru the grass stimulating growth. If you use the flail type reels they just beat at the ground and cause more damage to the turf than the alternative reel.

## On Being Too Diversified...

**Gregg Williams** — We have five maintenance crews, two install crews (irrigation included with that), a full-service garden center that is doing deliveries six days a week with two full-time employees, tree removal and stump removal, full-service lawn care applications, and all the miscellaneous work. Where do you draw the line?

**Matthew Morgan** — If you have quality people to do these tasks and you can do the managing well, keep up the good work! If you are struggling with management, people problems and quality problems then it is time to re-evaluate. You can do a few things extremely well or do a lot of things just so-so.

**Phil Nilsson** — I think you use the "laws of 70 percent" in answering it. If 70 percent (a passing grade) of what you do comes out okay, don't worry about the other 30 percent. Delegate the "micro management stuff" to the employees and trust that they will be able to handle it ... and start over again.

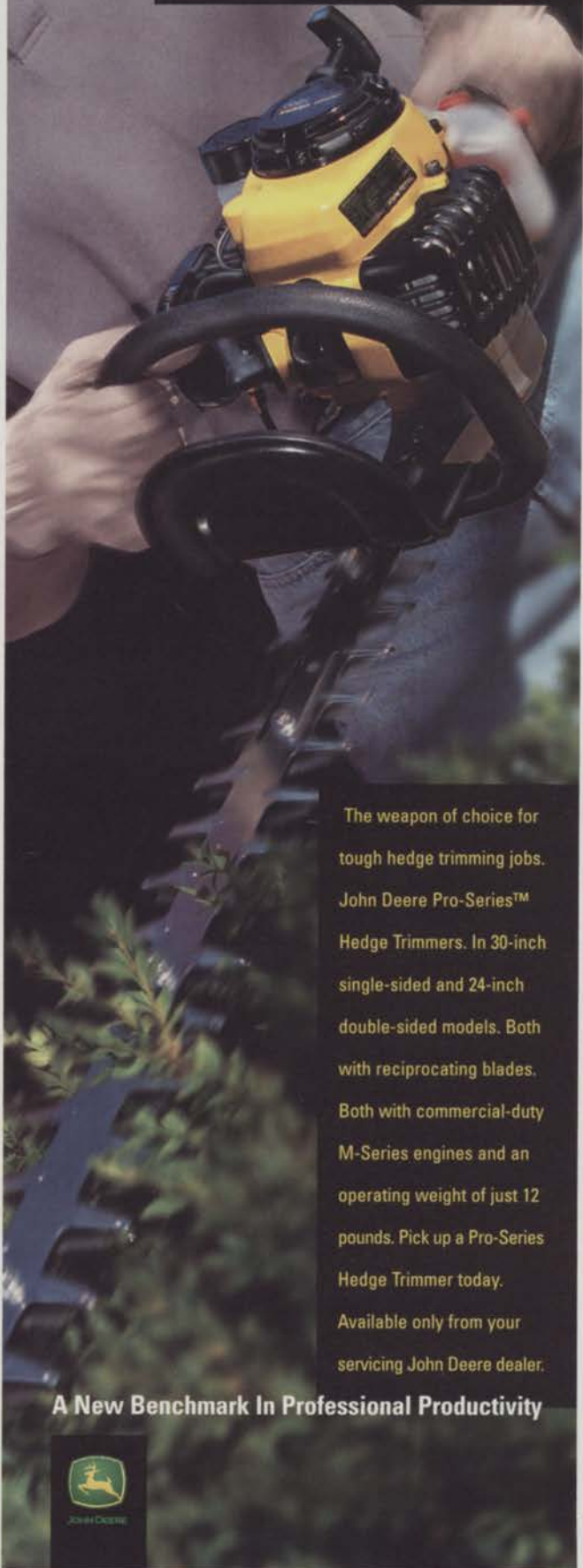
**Chuck Twist** — In today's tight labor market, you are too diversified! Find a niche, one or two services that you do best, and stick to it! Otherwise, you MAY be too offering a lot of services, but all those services may be lacking a little in quality and professionalism!

**Mark Warden** — I offer a lot of services, especially for how small my business is. I think that I am stretching myself thin by doing it sometimes, but it is important to my business and to me by creating new and more challenges. At this point I could go 100 different directions with my company. I think I could quit mowing and focus on design/install, or tree trimming, or applications or etc. The way I see it, all of my services are profitable as well. Of course, it is a constant issue of fine tuning to adjust all of your prices accordingly.

**Chuck Twist** — Keeping it organized IS the key! Can you say with ALL honesty, that all your telephone calls are returned the same day, or on the next business day in the case of weekends and holidays? Can you honestly say that Mrs. Jones lawn gets mowed on the same day of the week EVERY week, and at approximately the same time of day, plus or minus one hour? Is your equipment getting maintained on a regular schedule, somewhere close to manufacturers' specifications?

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USE READER SERVICE #64

## Safety Equipment

(continued from page 124)

preference," Kaye said. "It is better to provide a variety of choices to the user and to let him select which ones he likes the best."

While landscape contractors realize the need for gloves for hauling items, many are still learning the importance of using gloves when handling pesticides and fertilizers, Kaye said.

"These will keep the [products] off your hands," he said. "Even if you are using dry fertilizer, that fertilizer becomes wet when you sweat. If you wipe your brow with fertilizer-coated hands, you run the risk of getting it into your eyes."

"A simple, 4-mil disposable glove will help keep the employee safe from any potential danger," Kaye added.

**BACK SUPPORT.** Weightlifters have used back support belts for years. Weightlifting belts are designed to support the lower back when an individual is lifting heavy objects. Only in recent years, however, has the weightlifting belt made its way into the workplace.

Yet the landscape contractor industry is still not 100 percent sold on the idea. Some companies, such as Southern Landscape Professionals, provide all employees with back support belts. Others, such as Lawn Butler, leave it up to individuals to make the purchase.

"We had employees try five different belts," Adams said. "They selected a fairly wide belt which gives them the support they need when lifting heavy items."

Adams said he was surprised by his employees' selection of the wide belt because it weighed more than a lightweight one the company considered. "We thought for sure the smaller belt would be their choice, but they claimed it tended to pinch them when they lifted with it on," he said.

"That shows you the importance of letting your employees decide what equipment is best for them," he added. "Had we gone out and bought the one we thought was best, our employees would have been unhappy with it, and probably wouldn't have used it."

"Instead, we listened to them, made the appropriate choice, and they are using the equipment properly."

Southern Landscape Professional's employees are required to use the belts when lifting any object that weighs more than 15 pounds. "It just makes sense, an additional security measure," Adams said.

**SUN PROTECTION.** Every pair of sunglasses sold in the United States is required to have some level of ultraviolet ray protection. Safety glasses that double as sunglasses should provide employees with protection from harmful sun rays as well.

However, protecting skin from melanoma is a different story.

Landscape contractors spend the bulk of their time outside in the sun, facing dangerous rays day in and day out. While most contractors do not provide their employees with sunscreen lotions, there are ways they can ensure their employees take proper measures to maintain healthy skin.

Hats are one way. J.R. Thomas Landscaping provides hats as part of its uniform. With today's haircuts growing shorter and shorter scalps are more susceptible to sunburn, and a hat can offer inexpensive protection against sunburn on an employee's face and head. The protection doubles as advertising when the company's logo appears on the front of the hat.

Comfortable shirts also shield workers from the sun. Many contrac-

tors are not allowing their employees to remove their shirts on a job site. While this is usually policy for professional reasons, a secondary benefit is additional sun protection for the employees. Some contractors' uniforms include T-shirts, which allow sweat to dissipate so employees stay cooler.

When considering T-shirts, think about color as well. The darker the color, the more heat the shirt will absorb. While that may not be a concern in Seattle in March, a summer day in Kansas can get very hot – hot enough to overheat even fit landscape employees.

**FIRST AID.** Though safety equipment is designed to protect employees, accidents do happen. First aid kits should be a part of all safety inventories.

At Southern Landscape Professionals every employee is provided with two first aid kits. One is sealed, and never opened unless there is a serious emergency. The other can be opened and used as needed.

"The kit that is opened is replenished every evening that something is removed from it," Adams explained. "The second kit is there just to ensure we stay in compliance with OSHA regulations."

Adams explained that when a bandage is removed from a first aid kit, that kit is no longer a complete kit – for the remainder of that day that crew is technically violating OSHA requirements. "By keeping the spare kit unopened, we are always in compliance."

While most contractors will not go to that extreme, having a first aid kit on every truck will ensure prompt first aid when necessary, and prevent small mishaps from becoming larger ones.

**STORAGE AND SPARES.** Sure enough, no matter how carefully you plan, inevitably an employee will misplace or forget his hearing protection or safety glasses at least once. Keeping a spare pair on the trucks will help maintain a level of protection when an employee fails to

keep up his end of the safety bargain.

In addition, replacements should be available at the office, where employees have the opportunity to replenish ear plugs, bandages, or scratched and cracked lenses.

"Our managers carry spare items in their vehicles, so they can provide it to workers they see using equipment without them," Munie said. "We also have a secretary who comes in at 6:30 every morning, and she has access to anything that a crew might need."

Availability of equipment to employees is crucial. Safety glasses do no good if they are locked up or sitting on a truck seat. Ear protection doesn't save hearing sitting in a glove box.

The only way the safety equipment can do its job is if it is available for proper use. Anything less is a waste of money, and a risk to both the employee and the employer. **LL**

*The author is a freelance writer based in Gahanna, Ohio.*



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USE READER SERVICE #114

by Bob West

# Issues THAT Matter

Product packaging and public perception are big issues when lawn care operators sit down and talk.

The following dialogue is part three of a two-day roundtable discussion sponsored by Aventis Environmental Science/Chipco Professional Products, Montvale, N.J., and *Lawn & Landscape* magazine.

### How often are you using fungicides?

Keith Burrell, *The Lawn Co.* – "There's a huge opportunity in fungicides."

Ken Wentland, *Lied's Landscape Design & Development* – "We don't do a lot with fungicide in turf because there isn't a huge need, but 2000 had a wet spring, summer and fall and drove our turf fungicide applications up 10 times. We sell this as an add-on service, and that has worked well for us with a granular product."

Gary Chamberlin, *TruGreen-ChemLawn* – "We get more interest commercially than residentially with sports turf and large turf areas. Residential customers will just buy more seed."

Burrell – "Necrotic ring spot and red thread are so bad for us in New England. Leaf spots were bad this past summer, and rust and dollar

spot was on every lawn. We do hundreds of fungicide applications and they work fairly well if you can educate the homeowners."

Gary Clayton, *All-Green* – "It's similar to the tree and shrub market because you have to educate the homeowner about the value. We only program fungicides in certain markets."

Gary LaScalea, *GroGreen* – "But a problem for us is why fungicides cost so much more than any insecticides or herbicides."

Clayton – "Sometimes you have to suck it up and not make as much because you can't get the same margins with fungicides. Otherwise you're giving customers something less than the best lawn possible. Fungicides are a loss leader for us."

Wentland – "We have few fungus problems on turf up in Wisconsin. When we had wet weather, the clients give us the leeway to make the decision. Even though the fungicides are more expensive, we can knock that problem out in one application if we're there to fertilize. Then we avoid the return visit."

Tom Tolkacz, *Swingle Tree & Lawn Care* – "It used to be that necrotic ring spot would just show up on sod lawns that were two to four years old, but now I've got necrotic all over the place – under trees, on 80-year-old lawns with 4-inch thatch and everywhere else. I don't know what the signs are now. We just can't figure out what causes it."

Chamberlin – "Anything a fungicide could do for conifers or pines would be great. We like flowables of everything because they're easy to measure as water-based products. Water-soluble packets are also user friendly."

(continued on page 130)



**"Our average lawn care program is seven applications a year, so I have a problem trying to tell them everything is extra." Gary LaScalea**



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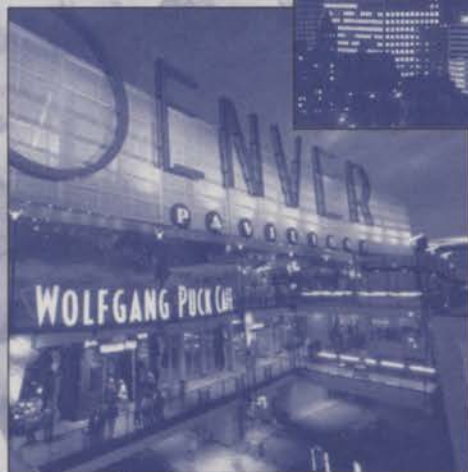
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## Industry Roundtable

(continued from page 128)

### How much fire ant control do you do?

**Buechner** – "With fire ants, you just chase them to the neighbors' property."

**Lang** – "The whole southern end of Georgia has fire ants, and nothing has worked consistently. Now they're moving up the coast and they've gone through the Carolinas in the last few years."

**Clayton** – "Now they've found fire ants in every county in Georgia, and the ants have adapted to the cooler climates so they're not as susceptible to winter kill and they can keep migrating inland."

**Tolkacz** – "I've heard of some populations of fire ants in southern Colorado."

**Chamberlin** – "I'm wondering about the distribution along the coast if they don't follow the St. Augustine grass adaptation and if that grass doesn't serve as an indicator of the presence of fire ants."

**LaScalea** – "Fire ant control is very hit-and-miss. We have our own cans we've made. We service all residential fire ants as part of

our programs at no extra charge and bait in spring and fall for commercial properties. But we're currently charging less than \$100 an acre so any product for \$250 an acre would be a problem. How well we control depends on the season. We got good control last summer, but if we get rain in the fall we'll really be chasing them around."

**Buechner** – "A real concern of mine is how fire ants are handled by companies. So many companies include it in the program so customers expect it. Then, trying to sell fire ant control to them as an extra will be difficult unless some problem comes along that is really difficult."

**LaScalea** – "Our average lawn care program is seven applications a year, so I have a problem trying to tell them everything is extra. We're doing a good job and keeping our customers, so that works for us. We also guarantee we'll come back and treat any problems, which has really enhanced our growth."

**Lang** – "We don't give anything away,

and we're charging for anything we offer."

**Clayton** – "Customer education is the issue with any pest because they have been oversold or don't understand what we can do with the products we have. We can do a good job, but we can't do a great job. You just can't offer a guarantee on mole crickets. That's where lawn care operators have gone awry. In our program, we try to educate and get communication going and meet the expectations that can be met."

### How could product packaging improve?

**LaScalea** – "I like the squeeze bottles that automatically measure application doses. Most are in quarts and pints, and the device does the measuring for each squeeze."

**Lang** – "I don't want to deal with triple rinsing. Plus, there needs to be greater variability in packaging because we've got 600-gallon main tanks and backpacks at the same time and we're not always filling up these

(continued on page 132)

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— GEORGE TOMA  
NFL Artificial & Natural Turf Consultant

## Industry Roundtable

(continued from page 130)

entire tanks. Figuring out the dosages gets real difficult then."

Wentland - "It would be nice to have water-soluble packets in 25-, 50- and 100-ounce sizes and dry packs for backpacks for insecticides or fungicides. They could be about the size of a salt packet in a restaurant for a 3- or 4-gallon tank. Measuring out one to two drops of a product is pretty difficult."



**"Customer education is the issue with any pest because they have been over-sold or don't understand what we can do with the products we have. That's where lawn care operators have gone awry." Gary Clayton**

Tim Doppel, Atwood Lawn Care - "We're using more hand-held and backpacks as we take more of an IPM approach, whether that's for dry flowables or water-soluble products."

Jack Robertson, Robertson Lawn Care - "Granular applications fit best in our program because of the restrictions with the department of agriculture."

Chamberlin - "I'd love to see a granular product where we could apply 3 pounds of product per 1,000 square feet. The tendency

is to over apply, and we won't get uniform distribution at lower levels."

Wentland - "The problem there is that the applicators don't know how to set the spreader calibration."

Buechner - "I'd like to see us get to 1 to 2 pounds but maintain some consistency in formulation in terms of particle sizes. Right now, we're all over the board depending on whether we're putting down 8 or 16 feet."

Bill Hoopes, Scotts Lawn Service - "I agree that we need lower levels of active ingredient and more pounds per thousand because technicians don't understand the application and overlapping. Essentially, we need anything that will make it idiot proof. And anything for tree and shrub care or similar small quantities can't require measuring."

"The days of mixing large quantities of pesticides and carrying them around are over. All we haul now is water and everything is site mixed."

(continued on page 134)

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## Industry Roundtable

(continued from page 132)

Jim Campanella, *The Lawn Dawg* – "This might be real idealistic, but a granular product for a broadleaf herbicide control with some root uptake would be great."

Hoopes – "The more we spray, the more trouble we've got. I'm sorry, because I know this is a spray world, but that's what gets us on the Channel 8 News."

Buechner – "We're replacing Dursban based on the spectrum of control and cost other products offer. I agree that cost isn't always a big issue, but our franchisees are looking at spending three times as much to replace Dursban, and that creates an emotional issue for them."

Lang – "I don't worry about the product cost because it costs me \$25 to pull the truck up to someone's house. I want something that will work."

Burrell – "Hopefully you've got a choice of products to choose from in the same ballpark, and then cost comes into play when paying \$5 vs. 65 cents per thousand square feet.

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Tolkacz – "On our turf and ornamental side, we'll blend three products to get the same broad spectrum of control. You can triple or quadruple your costs by adding these materials and the results aren't necessarily that much better, but you're trying to alternate products to avoid resistance."

LaScalea – "You really have to take a pencil to some of those things. You can't just look at \$245 per gallon because you may only be using 1 ounce of that product. You have to look at the actual application cost."

Hoopes – "What is the residual for synthetic pyrethroids vs. organophosphates? We're all getting pressure to reduce the pounds of AI per year – doesn't that have to be something we look at when we select products? So everything is going to have to be long residual, which flies in the face of 'Isn't this product great? It goes away.'"

The consensus response was that the residual is virtually the same for both classes.

Buechner – "We also have to use two products instead of one like we did in the past because of the reduced spectrums of control on the newer products."

Wentland – "But AI levels are much lower so we're actually applying less product."

Larry Norton, *Chipco* – "We can't get products with long residuals approved by the EPA, so we have to reduce the residuals. What this means is being more efficient at timing the applications to get the control we need, and that's a cost issue for lawn care operators. Some of the pyrethroids get longer residuals with greater rates, but that boosts the AI application. Granted, we're lower in our applications than 10 years ago, but isn't this the answer. There just isn't that panacea out there now." LL

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

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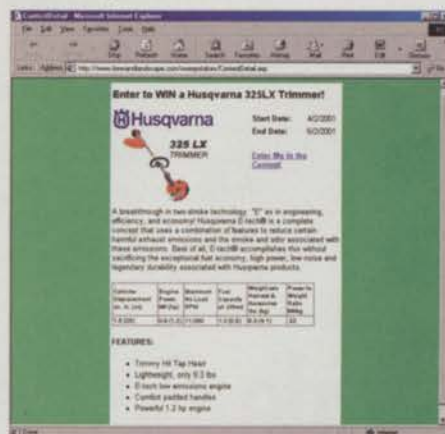
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# Equipment Notebook

TREE TIME

## Pruning Power

From thick branches and skinny twigs to sky-high limbs and brush-low boughs, pruning jobs can be as varied as the tree-trimming tools available to master them. Equipment that makes the cut is designed to handle these different shapes and sizes, and contractors who consider these pruning parameters will snip their way to success.

**DECISIONS, DECISIONS.** Contractors have many considerations to weigh when choosing tree tools, noted Mark Michaels, business unit manager for hand-held products, Husqvarna, Charlotte, N.C. "Most of their decisions are based on the size of the branch they're cutting," he pointed out.

"They should go with the least damaging piece of equipment that they can still be productive with."

Limb size determines whether a technician should use a chain saw or hand pruners, but productivity and plant species also come into play, Michaels added. Trees with thin bark are more susceptible to wounding from chain saws, whereas coarse bark and rough textures can stand up to high-powered cutting, he explained.

Basically, the equipment must fit the job, advised Paul Carnes, sales manager, Porter-Ferguson, West Boylston, Mass. "Assess the application and what you're trying to accomplish," he advised. "If you are low on the ground you can reach the branch with a hand pruner. If you don't have to cut to the point, you could use a 1-inch or 2-inch forester pruner. If you need to reach 16 feet or you're up in a bucket, then you can use the pole pruners."

Defining which pruning tools will fit the job starts with the sale for Bruce Phillips, president, Treemasters, a division of Bartlett Tree Experts, Fulton, Md. "The sales representative goes on the property first and talks to the clients to find out what their needs are, and then develops a

*(continued on page 140)*

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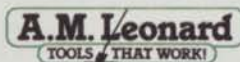
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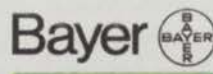
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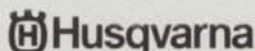
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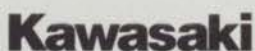
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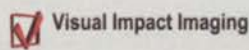
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# Equipment Notebook

(continued from page 136)

contract and a work order," he explained. "From the form you will know if you need to prune an oak tree, where you'll need a climber hand saw and a chainsaw. If the work order says to hedge a hemlock in the back and cut the back sides, you'll know that you need the pole pruner to cut off the ends."

Michaels listed a progression of equipment to handle trimming tasks, starting with hand pruners, then handsaws and finally chainsaws. An extension of all three of these types is available on poles, which adds reach for pruning distances up to 16 feet, he added.

While handsaws are used to cut through limbs up to 3 inches thick, a pair of hand pruners is adequate for a ground-level twig that is less than 1/2-inch wide, Phillips noted. Pole pruners are also used for smaller branches, but are useful for contractors who need to reach up into a tree to snip long limbs that can't be reached from the ground. "The pole pruners are just like hand pruners with extensions," he compared.

While pole pruners act as an extra-long

arm, Carnes prescribed point cut pruners for cutting through young sucklings, immature branches or clipping close to the trunk.

And when pruners won't make the cut, contractors turn to chainsaws—a productive alternative when cutting many branches or limbs with thick diameters, Michaels noted.

**CHOOSY CHOPPERS.** Functionality, practicality and durability are a few keys contractors should take to the shop when purchasing pruning equipment. Determining the complexity of tree jobs is the first step, and from there, contractors can decide which equipment to purchase.

"If you are a landscaper and not an arborist, you are doing much smaller work, so you could start with a pair of hand pruners and hand saws," Phillips suggested. "Also, landscapers do much more work on the ground, so loppers might come into play. The pull saws and pull pruners are two tools you can use from the ground."


A clean cut is also important, Michaels added. "Most of their pruning is for quality

or better health of the plant, so they want to consider high-quality equipment because they want the cut to look right and be healthy for the tree," he explained.

Phillips looks for tri-edge teeth on hand-saw blades, which produce a cleaner, faster cut, he said. Some chain saws include guards that keep blades from scraping trees and damaging them.

Ergonomics are also important, Michaels added. "You want the saw to be lightweight and maneuverable and have a high speed that can cut quickly without tearing wood or branches," he said.

Contractors should look for comfortable handles and lightweight equipment since contractors use these tools as an extensions of their bodies, Michaels noted.

"Pole pruners are heavier than their hand-held equivalents and harder to be precise when cutting because it is hard to see and position the unit," he said. "It's important that these products are lightweight and that the operators are experienced with long-distance pruning." — *Kristen Hampshire* 

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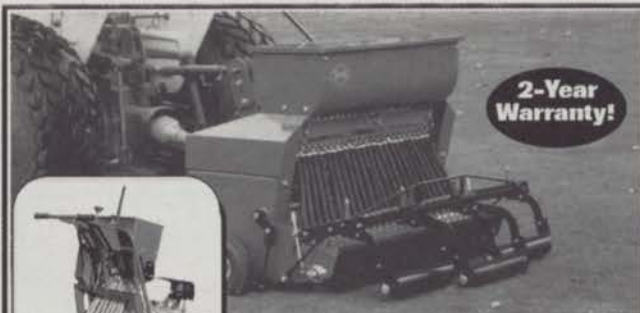
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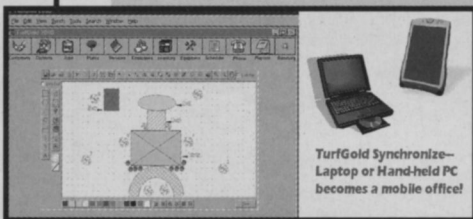


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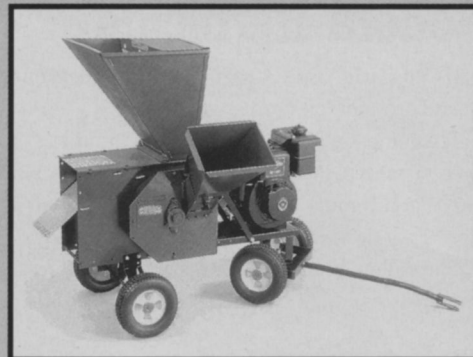


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- Offers auto scheduling, routing, chemical usage and customer marketing
  - Optional features include QuickBooks posting and 100 percent synchronizable database versions for both laptops and hand-held personal computers
- Circle 202 on reader service card**

## MacKissic Shredder-Chipper

- Chips 3½-inch branches into ¼-inch chips
  - Shreds leaves and other vegetation for mulch
  - Powered by an 8- or 9-hp Briggs & Stratton engine
  - Shredder includes 24 free-swinging, reversible, hardened-steel hammers
  - Includes a hardened special-steel blade on the flywheel
  - Versatile machine is ideal for quick cleanup and landscaping
- Circle 201 on reader service card**



## Bayer Tempo SC Ultra

- Provides control of more than 60 indoor and outdoor pests
  - Contains active ingredient beta-cyfluthrin, which is twice as powerful as cyfluthrin
  - Insecticide is a water-based, advanced-generation pyrethroid
  - The suspension-concentrate formula allows for even application and keeps the active ingredient on top of porous surfaces so insects get maximum exposure
  - Effective for ant management
  - Low odor and less visible residue
  - Available in a 240-ml tip-and-pour bottle or a 900-ml bottle for easy mixing
- Circle 203 on reader service card**

## SIMA Training Video

- 30-minute snow plowing technique training video comes with workbooks, training assessments, answer key, instructor guidelines and a sign-off sheet
  - Topics include pre-season preparations, pre-plowing checks, general snow plowing techniques, patterns and tips for specific jobs and post-plowing routines
- Circle 204 on reader service card**

## Bush Hog Mid-Mount ZT

- Available engines include the 22-hp Kohler Pro Command, 23-hp Kohler Aegis Liquid Cooled, 25-hp Kohler Pro Command and 26-hp Kohler Pro Command with electronic fuel injection
  - Available with 54-, 60- and 72-inch cutting decks
  - Mowers reach 10 mph ground speed
  - Mowers maneuver easily in tight spaces, and compact size allows easy loading on trailers, leaving room for other equipment
  - A pivoting front axle allows machine to follow ground contours
  - Large caster wheels help reduce soil compaction
  - A blade tip speed of 18,500 fpm allows the mower to deliver a clean cut and evenly distribute clippings
  - Drop-out spindles allow for maintenance accessibility
  - Includes a quick foot height adjustment that adjusts from 1½ to 5 inches in ¼-inch increments
  - A dual caliper parking brake locks both drive wheels for added safety
  - Mower includes an option of non-suspension or full suspension seats, armrests and controls
- Circle 205 on reader service card**

# Products

## Control Solutions Sonora Herbicide

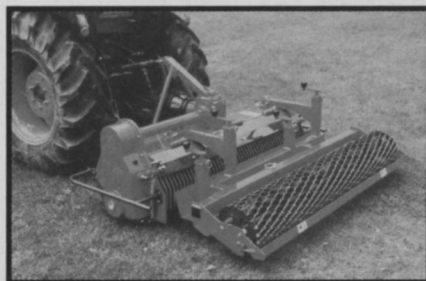
- 4SC herbicide is EPA registered for bare ground weed control in and around non-crop areas
- Recommended for control around buildings, storage areas, fences, pumps, machinery, fuel tanks, recreational areas, roadways, guard rails, industrial sites and other areas where vegetation is not desired
- One gallon treats up to 20,000 square feet and contains 4

pounds of active ingredient prometon per gallon

- With the new, soluble concentrate formulation, prometon is available in a more applicator-friendly product
  - Herbicide is non-flammable and non-corrosive to equipment
  - Effectively controls annual and deep-rooted perennial broad-leaf weeds and grasses, and other weeds including johnsongrass, bindweed, downy brome grass, oatgrass, goosegrass, marehail, quackgrass, puncturevine, etc.
  - Effective for one year or longer
- Circle 206 on reader service card**

## RotaDairon Soil Renovator

- Designed for compact tractors, the RD 145 caters to machines with a 3-point hitch, PTO and 30 to 50 hp
- Features a working width of 60 inches and a tilling depth of 5½ inches



- Soil renovator uses an oil bath chain drive system and torque limiter device
  - Users can prepare a seedbed, turn soil and create appropriate conditions for seed germination
  - Cultivates existing turf, turning it under and burying stones, clods and overgrowth to produce a level surface for seeding or sodding
- Circle 207 on reader service card**

## GREEN INDUSTRY WORKHORSE



Every Wells Cargo landscape trailer is built with rugged durability and hassle-free performance as standard features. No shortcuts. No cutting corners. Just the best built trailer you can own and customized the way you want it. Thousands of units on the road are our proof. Our comprehensive 3-Year Warranty Program is your protection. Call **(800) 348-7553** for a **FREE** information packet and nearest authorized Wells Cargo dealer.



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USE READER SERVICE #105



## DIG Leit Controllers

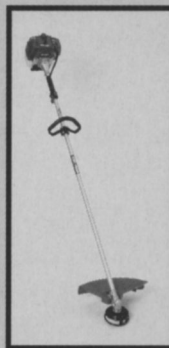
- Models 4000 and 4000E are light-powered, water-management controllers that feature a fast menu base and straightforward programming
- Controllers offer independent programs

for each valve, monthly budget, rain delays and status reports for past and current months

- Compact design and time-tested photovoltaic module harness the energy of ambient light to power the unit during the daytime or the evening
  - Endures all weather conditions
- Circle 208 on reader service card**

## Toro String Trimmers

- SE series string trimmers are available with 23-cc or 26-cc LE commercial grade engines or with a 26-cc or 32-cc AE industrial grade engine
  - Designed for operator comfort
  - Features polished steel straight shafts with six ball bearings, anti-vibration grips and engine mounts and a lightweight, easy-to-handle design
  - Trimmers range in weight from 10.6 to 12.9 pounds
- Circle 209 on reader service card**



## Isuzu Crew Cab

- The new 2002 N-Series cab fits seven people, still providing visibility and maneuverability
  - Truck is available with a 150-inch wheelbase configuration that accommodates 12-foot bodies or a 176-inch wheelbase that handles 16-foot bodies
  - A diesel engine with a four-speed overdrive automatic transmission delivers 175 hp at 2,700 rpm
  - An oversized, panoramic view front windshield, drop-side windows and large-view collapsible side mirrors enhance operator visibility
  - Available options include power-front windows and front and rear power door locks
  - Cab available in two sizes: NPR-HD weighs 14,500 pounds; NQR weighs 17,950 pounds
- Circle 210 on reader service card**

## Alternative Power

- Quality
- Reliability
- Features
- Performance
- Price
- Warranty
- Program flexibility

## Battery Powered

DIG 510.xxx and 540.xxxWS single and four station controllers are completely waterproof. Providing a long list of features, including four start times per day, durations as short as one minute, an AM/PM clock and weekly or cyclical programs. Powered by two 9 volt batteries and supported by a three year warranty, series 510/540 controllers are truly unique in their class.



email: [dig@digcorp.com](mailto:dig@digcorp.com)

## LEIT Powered

The LEIT® 4000 and 4000E are the most advanced "light powered" water management irrigation controllers. The LEIT 4000 series controllers are easy to use with a fast menu base and straightforward programming. Features include independent programs for each valve, monthly budget, rain delays, and status reports for past and current months. Compact design and time-tested photovoltaic module harness the energy of ambient light to power the unit day and night in any kind of weather.

- Operate multiple stations and a master valve or pump start without AC hookup, batteries or conventional solar panels.
- Compatible with most brands, styles and sizes of valves.
- Custom programming with 7-day calendar.
- Four independent programs per valve and three start times per program allow mixed irrigation

*You make the choice!*

For more information  
1-800-322-9146



USE READER SERVICE #106

# Products

## Scattrak Mini Excavator

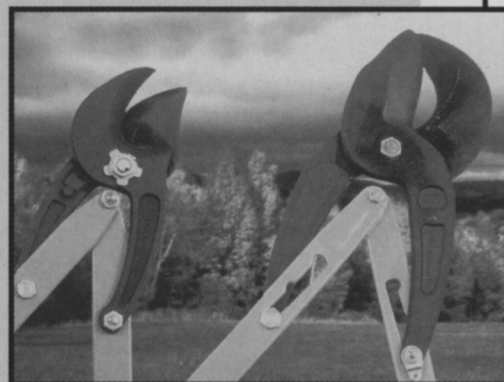
- Machine has an 8-foot, 5-inch digging depth and a 9-foot, 10-inch dump height
- Powered by a 34-hp Kubota V 1305-E Diesel engine
- 4,410-pound bucket breakout force
- Includes a dual power hydraulic system with faster cycle times
- A 14.8-gpm auxiliary hydraulic capacity, allows ample flow for attachments
- 360-degree stability eases digging and lifting over the side of tracks
- Rubber tracks are self-cleaning and easy on ground surfaces
- Machine's long undercarriage creates a stable platform for challenging digging applications
- Designed with steel-reinforced rubber tracks for longer tread life

Circle 211 on reader service card

## Porter-Ferguson Brush Cutters

- The Forester Model 0290 is 27 inches long, weighs 4 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> pounds and features a cutting capacity of 1½ inches
- Forester Model 0390F is 34 inches long, weighs 7¾ pounds and is designed to cut 2-inch material
- Cutters feature two cutting blades constructed from forged alloy steel
- Handles are made from heat-treated spring steel
- Both models feature a slide power shift, which allows users to exert the maximum leverage needed to cut through hard, thick material
- Both blades cut through material, which increases cutting precision and minimizes damage to bark and cambium, promoting clean healing from both sides of the branch

Circle 212 on reader service card



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USE READER SERVICE #107

USE READER SERVICE #109

# Products

## Takeuchi Rubber Track Loader

- Loader features rubber tracks
- Tilt-back operator's compartment offers operators easy access to the engine and hydraulic system
- Emergency shutdown system protects

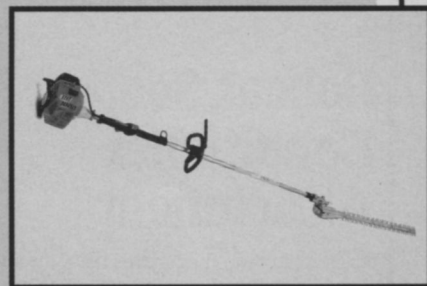
- engine from damage due to low oil pressure or high coolant temperature
- Pilot-operated joystick controls provide precise, fingertip control of loader and travel functions
- Hydrostatic drive system is coupled with planetary final drives for a durable, efficient power transfer system
- Track undercarriage provides the flotation

- needed for working in muddy or loose ground conditions
  - The track loader weighs 10,692 pounds and is powered by a 101.5-hp Yanmar engine
  - Loaders feature a tipping load of 7,056 pounds and a bucket breakout force of 8,692 pounds
- Circle 213 on reader service card**

## Stihl Hedge Trimmer

- HL73 and 73K models are built with stratified charge engines that meet CARB II standards
- Solid shaft drives transfer more power from the engine to the cutting head
- 25.4-cc engines allow machine to work quickly
- 73K includes a zero-degree fixed blade
- HL 73 features an adjustable angle cutting head that maneuvers from zero to 90 degrees
- Interchangeable attachments can be used with both models

- to convert trimmers into pole pruners
  - Additional attachments convert HL 73 into a broom or power scythe
  - Both models are available with 42- or 59-inch shafts and include a harness to distribute weight evenly across the user's back to lessen fatigue
- Circle 214 on reader service card**



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USE READER SERVICE #110

USE READER SERVICE #111

# Products

## John Deere Chain Saws

- Pro-Series saw models include the CS36 and CS40 light-weight professional saws, the CS56 and CS62 heavy-duty professionals saws, and the CS71 and CS81 professional chain saws
- CS36 and CS40 are powered by 35.2-cc and 39-cc engines with 2.1 and 2.4 hp; bar sizes available from 12 to 18 inches
- CS56 and CS62 are powered by 56.6-cc and 61.5-cc en-

gines with 4.1 and 4.7 hp; include .325-inch chisel chains and 16- to 24-inch guidebars

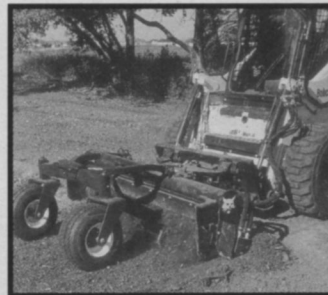
- CS71 and CS81 are powered by 5.2-hp engines and come with 20- to 32-inch guidebars and  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch chisel chains; electronic speed limiter prolongs engine life
  - CS56, CS62, CS71 and CS81 features semi-self-cleaning air filters to prevent residual buildup
  - A decompression valve allows for easy starting
- Circle 216 on reader service card**

## Bobcat Soil Conditioner Attachment

- The attachment prepares beds for seeding or laying sod
- Can windrow rocks and debris to the left or right and de-thatch lawns
- Manual-or hydraulic-angle options pro-

vide operator flexibility

- Bolt-on end wings for easy debris removal
- By fastening end wings, attachment collects windrow in a pile for easy pickup or turns it into a drum-style box rake
- Drum is designed with carbide teeth and can rotate in both



directions to operate in forward or reverse

- Attachment can be operated with drum in either float or lock mode
  - For use on Bobcat 753, 763, 773, 863 and 873 skid-steer loaders and the 864 compact track loader
- Circle 215 on**

**reader service card**

## Mini-Clik!



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USE READER SERVICE #112

## Performance Software Route Rite 32

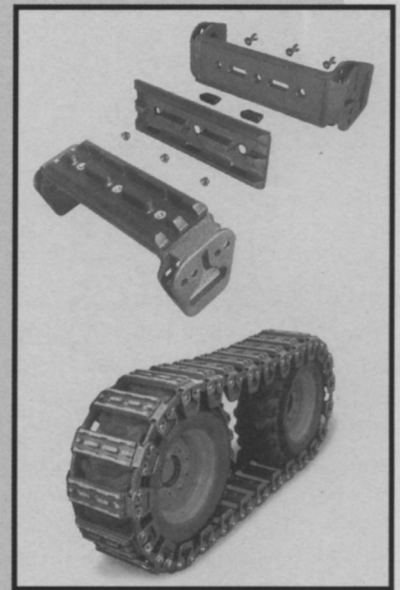
- Offers real-time integrated modules to eliminate duplicating entries
- Export capability allows users to send data to accounting or mapping programs
- Includes a customer history module, onscreen scheduling and routing, and accounts receivable
- Optional modules for the software include inventory, sales tracking, vehicle/equipment maintenance, branch link, pen writer link, time and material job costing, inspection, accounting link, annual software support, general ledger, accounts payable and payroll
- Web operating capability and interfacing capability with caller ID

**Circle 217 on reader service card**

## Grouser EX Combo Track

- Designed to reduce slippage and wear on tire and traction bars
- Replaceable shoe and traction inserts
- Bolted shoe eliminates the need for welding
- Traction inserts maximize durability
- Track includes built-in length adjustment
- A new link design features 1¼-inch hardened replaceable bushings
- Track offers traction and flotation in soft and muddy conditions
- The crossbar design is easy on tires, providing strength and protection
- Segmented design allows for self-cleaning between pads

**Circle 218 on reader service card**



## Loeering Attachments

- The Eliminator grading rake prepares various types of soil conditions and is ideal for along driveways, walks and curbs for removing scrub and small vegetation
- Grading teeth create a consistent final grade
- Scarifying teeth can loosen hard soils
- Skid-steers can go from an uncleared lot to finished bed seed with one attachment
- Scarifying and leveling can be done while the skid-steer is

operating in both forward and reverse, and precision placement allows user to push soil within inches of edges

- Available in 42-, 72- and 84-inch sizes
- The Mud Bucket concrete hauler hauls up to ½-yard of concrete
- Hydraulic gate unloads material, reducing labor needs
- The attachment's optional extension/reduction chute reduces to a 9-inch wide opening
- Concrete hauler can cross most terrains with no spillage, and can work in small, tight areas

**Circle 219 on reader service card**

## Work Smarter not harder with the Mulch Trailer!



- Eliminates one man pitchforking, saving as much as 8 hours of labor per day
- Load wheelbarrow in 5 seconds
- No pesky hoses or blowers
- 18 c.y. capacity
- A Honda-driven, one direction, moving floor and front conveyor
- Attach leaf blower to rear or front for easy fall clean up.

**For more information about this efficient, new mulch handling system call SKI LANDSCAPE, 317.897.5885.**

# Products

## FINN Bark Blower

- Model 605 blower features a 5-cubic yard capacity on an integrated trailer that can be towed



with a ¾-ton or 1-ton truck

- Powered by a 68-hp Kubota engine connected to an air pump that can deliver an airflow of 820 cubic feet per minute at a pressure of 12 psi
- Unit compares to larger truck-mounted versions of the FINN product line
- Equipped with a 4-inch- by 150-foot-capacity hose reel

**Circle 220 on reader service card**

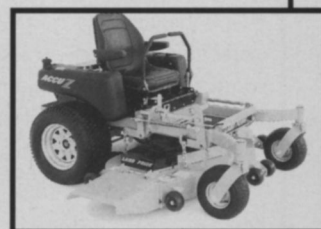
## Stens Catalogue and New Belts

- A selection of OEM replacement, True Blue® and True Trac Power Rated belts are featured in Stens Power Equipment Parts 2001 catalogue
- Belts are designed to meet or exceed OEM belt specifications
- True Blue® belts feature a double wrap with tough Kevlar cord
- New True Trac belts are ideal for low horsepower applications
- In addition, the catalogue offers listings for more than 5,000 available parts

**Circle 221 on reader service card**

## Land Pride Accu-Z Mid-Mount Mower

- Available in both 52- and 60-inch models
- Adjustable cutting height in ¼-inch increments
- Mows at a forward speed up to 11 mph and a rear speed up to 5 mph
- Zero-turn radius mower features a foot-operated deck lift with adjustable spring assist and heavy-duty pusher arms to stabilize the cutting deck
- Offers large-capacity fuel tanks and a fuel-efficient Kawasaki gas engine



- Features adjustable steering control and 24-inch by 12-inch drive tires

**Circle 222 on reader service card**

## Cover Story

(continued from page 48)

tionships. "I can use the irrigation technician, tack on a percentage and make money, and it's a win-win deal."

Standley also looks for winning accounts. Existing clients and commercial accounts are ideal business and residential clients within a \$2,000 to \$5,000 scope who "respect the value of a professional company" are welcome. He prefers to keep his growth within the parameters of his valued clients – commercial clients with regular maintenance.

Part of this client screening process includes avoiding those that reach for cost-cutting companies, and he will not compete with price slashers.

In fact, sometimes he simply offers other companies advice. He'll tell them there is a better way of running a business – a more fair way to price. Many ignore his feedback. Some take it seriously. "I told one contractor flat out that he was going to lose his tail, and he appreciated it," he quipped.

Still, Standley gets out-bid by companies that estimate a property below his break-even point. "That's where selling comes in and educating the client about the value of

your services," he pointed out. "When you can develop that relationship with the client and educate them on what they're getting for their dollar, the other guys go out the door."

**INTENSIVE CARE.** Standley's client base didn't hire him by responding to a television ad or a flashy bulletin board. That's because Standley keeps it simple. His marketing efforts consist of a Yellow Pages ad and visible company logos on his uniforms. His technicians also carry business cards to pass out.

Otherwise, his clients signed on for his service because they heard it was quality – their neighbors said so. And his customers tend to stick around, he added.

"We do what we say we're going to do when we say we're going to do it," he commented. "That's one of the things we really pride ourselves on. I give my guys a latitude of \$50 in labor or ornamentals to fix any problems right on the spot, and that empowers them to know that they can fix the problem and move on. It's an investment in the client relationship."

This is just one example of Standley's proactive service approach – a trait he said sets him apart from other companies. Quick response time is an undebatable priority. "If we mess it up, we fix it better than anyone.

We make the mistake and the complaint is positive because the client will like us even more after we fix it."

Conversation triggers this quick response, and Standley emphasized the importance, again, of listening, and then acting. Asking whether or not a client is satisfied with the service is a rudimentary question many technicians neglect, he said.

"A lot of times you can be talking to your clients and you get into the person – the kids, their soccer games – and you get ready to leave and you haven't asked if there is anything they need to know about," he said. "When you ask, it opens up additional sales and seals relationships because you cared."

After all, caring is one of Standley's keys to success. He cares about his employees, his clients and his company. A competitive streak advanced his business and an optimistic attitude molded his crew's work ethic.

"Have a zest for life and the job you do, and do it well," he advised. "When you are excited about your job, that excitement transfers down the ranks."

Chances are, this excitement will see Standley through the next birthday. **L**

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

# Ad Index

COMPANY NAME	WEB ADDRESS	PG NUMBER	RS NUMBER
Adkad Technologies	www.adkad.com	100	59
A.M. Leonard	www.amleo.com	31	23
American Isuzu	www.isuzuvc.com	13	120
Aquamaster	www.aquamasterfountains.com	48	34
ATTI	www.attinet.com	115	30
Aventis	www.aventischipco.com	53	117
B. & D.A. Weisburger			
Insurance	www.weisburger.com	117	93
Ballard Equipment	www.ez-gate.com	30	22
Bandit	www.banditchippers.com	111	66
Banko Manufacturing	www.spraytec.com	100	56
Barlow Chevrolet/Isuzu			
Trucks*		102	60
BASF	www.spd.basf-corp.com	33,49*	125,98
Bayer	www.bayerprocentral.com	10-11,54-55	132,99
Bed Shaper	www.ibsc.com/lpu.saving	130	75
BioPlex Organics		132	88
Brisco		108	35
Brite Ideas	www.briteidea.com	140	101
Brouwer	www.brouwerturf.com	118	70
Cascade Lighting	www.cascadelighting.com	58	40
Caterpillar	www.cat.com	105	48
Century Rain Aid	www.rainaid.com	42	28
Clorox	www.maxforce.com	99*	49
CNA Insurance	www.cna.com	51	113
Concrete Edge	www.lilbubba.com	23	73
Creative Curb	www.ccsi.com/~curb/	132	77
C&S Turfcare		134	90
Cub Cadet	www.cubcadet.com	97	144
Dawn Industries	www.dawnindustries.com	64	43
Destructive Turfgrass			
Insects		131	
Dig	www.digcorp.com	145	106
Dixie Chopper	www.dixiechopper.com	15	81
Earth & Turf	www.earthandturf.com	104	62
Easy Lawn	www.easylawn.com	147	110
Echo	www.echo-usa.com	38-39	84
Entomological Society	www.entsoc.org	114	69
Exmark	www.exmark.com	113	102
Fabriscap	www.fabriscap.com	31	24
Foley Enterprises		18	14
Galbreath	www.galbreath-inc.com	66	45
Gandy	www.gandy.net	140	95
GNC Industries	www.gncindustries.com	18	15
Gregson-Clark	www.gregsonclark.com	64	44
Hunter Industries	www.hunterindustries.com	148,160	112,21
Husqvarna	www.husqvarna.com	95	51
Hydroseed Innovations	www.tr3rake.com	147	111
ICD	www.selecticd.com	146	109
Integrated Paving Concepts	www.streetprint.com	57	63
Irritrol	www.irritrolsystems.com	107,123	139,53
Jacklin Seed	www.jacklinseed.com	103	86/87
J.J. Mauget	www.mauget.com	63	142
John Deere	www.johndeere.com	24-25,126	82,64
Kohler	www.kohlerco.com	47	97
Komatsu	www.komatsuutility.com	65	143
Lawn & Landscape Business			
Strategies Conference	www.lawnbusinessstrategies.com	137	
Lawn & Landscape Online	www.lawnandlandscape.com	138-139	
Komatsu	www.komatsuutility.com	65	143
Lawn Power & Equipment	www.brandtekus.com	35,96	26,47
LESCO	www.lesco.com	59	123
Little Wonder	www.littlewonder.com	114	68
Man Power		22	19
Marsan Turf & Irrigation		21,117	17,94
Middle Georgia			
Freightliner		127	114
Monsanto	www.monsanto.com	37A-F	118
NEBS	www.nebs.com	36	27
Neo-tech	www.neotech.com	108	37

COMPANY NAME	WEB ADDRESS	PG NUMBER	RS NUMBER
Oldham Chemical Co.	www.oldhamchem.com	23	74
Oly-Ola Sales	www.olyola.com	100	58
Outdoor Power			
Equipment Institute	www.opei.mow.org	133	
PBI Gordon	www.weedalert.com	109,159	50,31
Perma Green Supreme	www.ride-onspreader.com	136	91
Porter Ferguson	www.lowellcorp.com	56	38
Rain Bird	www.rainbird.com	29	83
RedMax	www.redmax.com	44	29
Regal Chemical	www.regalchem.com	7	39
Riverdale	www.riverdalecc.com	45	128/116
Robin America	www.robinamerica.com	110	65
RohMid	www.mach-2.com	17	32
Roll Rite	www.roll-rite.com	112	67
Roots	www.rootsinc.com	98	55
Rotadairon Emrex	www.mge-dairon.com	134	89
Scag	www.scag.com	101	140
Scotts Lawn Service	www.scottslwnservice.com	22	18
Service Communication			
Software	www.pickses.com	58	41
Shindaiwa	www.shindaiwa.com	121	124
SILC	www.silc-h2b.com	21	16
Ski Landscape		149	115
S-n-G	www.gosng.com	96,108,130,144	54,36,76,105
Snapper	www.snapper.com	43*	85
Snow & Ice Management			
Association	www.sima.org	129	
Sprayer Parts Depot	www.sprayerpartsdepot.com	68	46
Super Lawn Trucks	www.superlawntrucks.com	122	71
Textron Turf Care and			
Specialty Equipment	www.textron.com	67	108
TK Loader	www.tkloader.com	100	57
Toro Landscape			
Contractor Equipment	www.toro.com	3,124	79,72
Toro Sitework Systems	www.toro.com	2	78
Tree Tech	www.treetechservices.com	12	10
Truly Nolen	www.trulynolen.com	146	107
Tuflex	www.tuflex.com	60	42
Turbo Turf	www.turboturf.com	104	61
UHS	www.uhsonline.com	61	100
United Truck Parts	www.unitedtruckparts.com	116	92
Valent	www.valentusa.com	119	52
Vanguard	www.camelotsoftware.com	93	
Walker Mower	www.walkermowers.com	46	33
Weed Man	www.weed-man.com	16	13
Wells Cargo	www.wellscargo.com	144	104
Woods Equipment Co.	www.woodsonline.com	9	80
Yazoo/Kees	www.yazookees.com	16	12

## SKID-STEER/LOADER

ASV	www.asvi.com	S9	168
Bobcat	www.bobcat.com	S10, S11	170
Brown Bear		S22	158
FFC	www.ffcattachments.com	S3	153
Finn	www.finncorp.com	S15	169
First Products	www.1stproducts.com	S21	157
Glenmac	www.glenmac.com	S8	154
John Deere	www.johndeere.com	S7	167
Kanga Loaders	www.kanga-loader.com	S24	173
Kobelco	www.kobelcoamerica.com	S5	166
Kubota	www.kubota.com	S23	171
Komatsu	www.komatsu.com	S17	172
McCulloch Innovation		S20	156
Mustang Mfg	www.mustangmfg.com	S13	151
Schaeff	www.schaeff.com	S19	150
Toro Sitework Systems	www.toro.com	S2	152
Triple D	www.tripled-enterprises.com	S20	155

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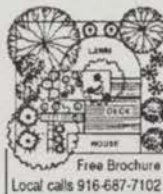
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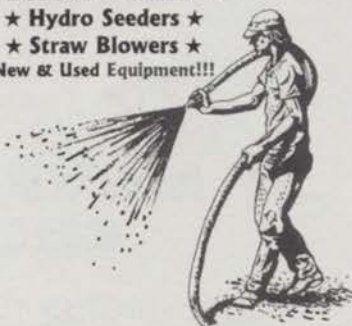
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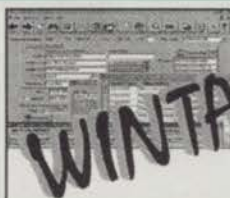
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Heidi

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# How We Do It

## Using Proposals at Bass Custom Landscapes

At Bass Custom Landscapes, we have a standard format to use for every proposal we present so we can increase customers' perception of our products' value and services when compared to our competitors' proposals. As a result, we rarely have to bid on a job.

Every proposal we prepare is eight to nine pages long, and the order of the pages helps guide our estimators through the sales presentation, which is the same for each estimator. Not only does this process keep our close ratio above 50 percent for all of our estimators, it protects our company from changing what we promise to all of our clients.

We begin with a cover sheet that restates the service or proposal the client has requested. It is important to use the client's exact words when naming his or her proposal. This shows that we were listening during the walkover.

Next is our company profile, which is a one-page document providing an overview of our company's history, our key employees and services offered. This gives us an opportunity to tell our company's story. The landscape business is a very personalized service business and during this initial meeting we establish who is going to be responsible for the personalized service. We also use this opportunity

to promote our add-on services in an informative – not pushy – manner.

Following this, we provide a list of references and information about our company's licenses and insurance. Providing recognizable names or projects that are similar to the project you are there to sell will dramatically increase your chances of making the sale.

We also include a copy of the most current company picture in every proposal to show potential clients that all of our employees are uniformed. The photo also helps them recognize our trucks and see that we have specialized equipment. Our sales people can also use the image to discuss the cultural diversity within our staff. Essentially, this photo really helps tell prospects a story we could never explain with words alone.

Pages four and five of our proposal explain our services. This helps build awareness and a perception of the value of our services. Instead of saying we will mow, edge and trim as needed, we say, "Prior to mowing, the turf areas will be policed for trash, tree limbs or obstructions. Turf will be completely and evenly mowed at a height most suitable for the species and the site's specific needs. In areas we cannot reach with a lawnmower, we will string trim the turf to the height of adjacent turf. We do not bag grass clippings. Turfgrass research shows that by using proper mowers, it is better to return clippings to the turf for nutritional replenishment." With this statement, our client knows what our services include, and we establish a level of understanding that prevents misunderstanding.

Page six is the price sheet, and we keep prices to one page. We always price the add-on services, even if the client didn't specifically request them so we have the opportunity for add-on sales in the future with a lot less effort. The key is that we delay discussions about the price until the end of the proposal so we can spend more time establishing the value of our service.

Page seven is our guarantee document. After presenting the price, we state in writing exactly what the customer can expect from our company.

Page eight is a copy of our monthly company newsletter. This is special treatment that keeps customers loyal for years and educated about the changes in our company.

– Tony Bass

*The author is owner of Bass Custom Landscapes and Super Lawn Trucks, Bonaire, Ga.*

*To see a sample proposal from Bass Custom Landscapes, check out this article with the May issue of Lawn & Landscape at [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com).*

## FIVE KEYS to Using Proposals

1. Establish a standard proposal format.
2. Explain your services in detail.
3. Mention price last so clients first come to appreciate the value you offer. Also, provide prices for add-on services even if the client doesn't ask you to so you can begin that selling process.
4. Place the pages of the proposal in an order that guides your sales force through the sales presentation.
5. Begin with a company profile that gives an overview of your company's history, key employees and services offered.

# Get it up fast...

# Get it up clean!

## Get it up fast with Launch® Biostimulant:

Fast establishment is critical when you're planting steep, erosion-susceptible slopes. That's what hydroseeding is all about: getting seed on the ground, up and established — *FAST*.

Hydroseeding research has shown that the addition of Launch Biostimulant to the hydroseeding mixture can result in 40% greater germination and establishment rates in cool-season grass applications. Bermuda-grass seed treated with Launch required three days for germination compared to 11 days to germination in untreated plots — *less than half the time!*

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Call 800-821-7925 for your free copy of "The Professional's Guide to Biostimulants" or visit us at [www.pbigordon.com/biostimulant\\_main.htm](http://www.pbigordon.com/biostimulant_main.htm)

## Get it up clean with Tupersan® Herbicide:

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USE READER SERVICE #31

# New Pro-C Modularity Makes Installation a Snap



## Pro-C Modular Controller

Expands From  
3 to 12 Stations

### Saves Time, Less Inventory



Pro-C Controller with "snap-in" modules  
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The Pro-C saves time, trouble and extra inventory. You and your customers will also enjoy the convenience of easy dial programming, three programs with four starts, independent day scheduling, one-touch manual operation and an advanced power surge protection system.

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USE READER SERVICE #21