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**Dealing with
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Supplier
Buyers' Guide**

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Lawn & Landscape

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VIRTUAL ONLINE TRADE SHOW

Lawn & Landscape Online presents an exciting, new product – the Virtual Online Trade Show. This multimedia tool allows Web users to learn more about products from 24 of the industry's top suppliers via video clips recorded on the trade show floor. Visit www.lawnandlandscape.com/otshow to experience this virtual tour.



DAY ON THE HILL

Lawn & Landscape Online features extensive coverage of the 14th annual Legislative Day on the Hill – an event sponsored by the Professional Lawn Care Association to give the green industry a voice in Washington, D.C. Coverage of this year's event, held July 13-15, includes a look at the scope and logistics involved in the annual Arlington Cemetery project, speaker highlights and today's issues affecting the businesses of lawn care operators nationwide.

ONLINE EXTRAS

Browse Lawn & Landscape Online for a collection of exclusive Web stories relative to this month's issue:

- This month, look online for a story about how one contractor has his crews functioning as their own small companies.
- Learn how offering incentives keeps employees on task and helps ensure productive workdays.
- Check *Lawn & Landscape Online* to find out how family members who work together keep business banter away from the dinner table.
- Look for a customer handout that details the key ingredients of a proper watering schedule.

WEB TOOLS

DAILY NEWS

Green industry news updates every day. www.lawnandlandscape.com

INDUSTRY EVENTS

A comprehensive list of conferences, trade shows and seminars for the landscape professional. www.lawnandlandscape.com/events

BUSINESS FORMS

A diverse collection of forms to help you run your green business more effectively. www.lawnandlandscape.com/tools

MESSAGE BOARD

The industry's most interactive message board. www.lawnandlandscape.com/messageboard

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A user-friendly index of the green industry, containing categorized information about contractors, dealers and suppliers. www.lawnandlandscape.com/links

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An easy-to-navigate directory of local, state, national and international industry associations. www.lawnandlandscape.com/associations

PRODUCT DIRECTORY

A growing compilation of industry products, complete with photos and manufacturer contact information. www.lawnandlandscape.com/product

MARKETPLACES

An interactive listing of industry manufacturers and suppliers. www.lawnandlandscape.com/marketplace

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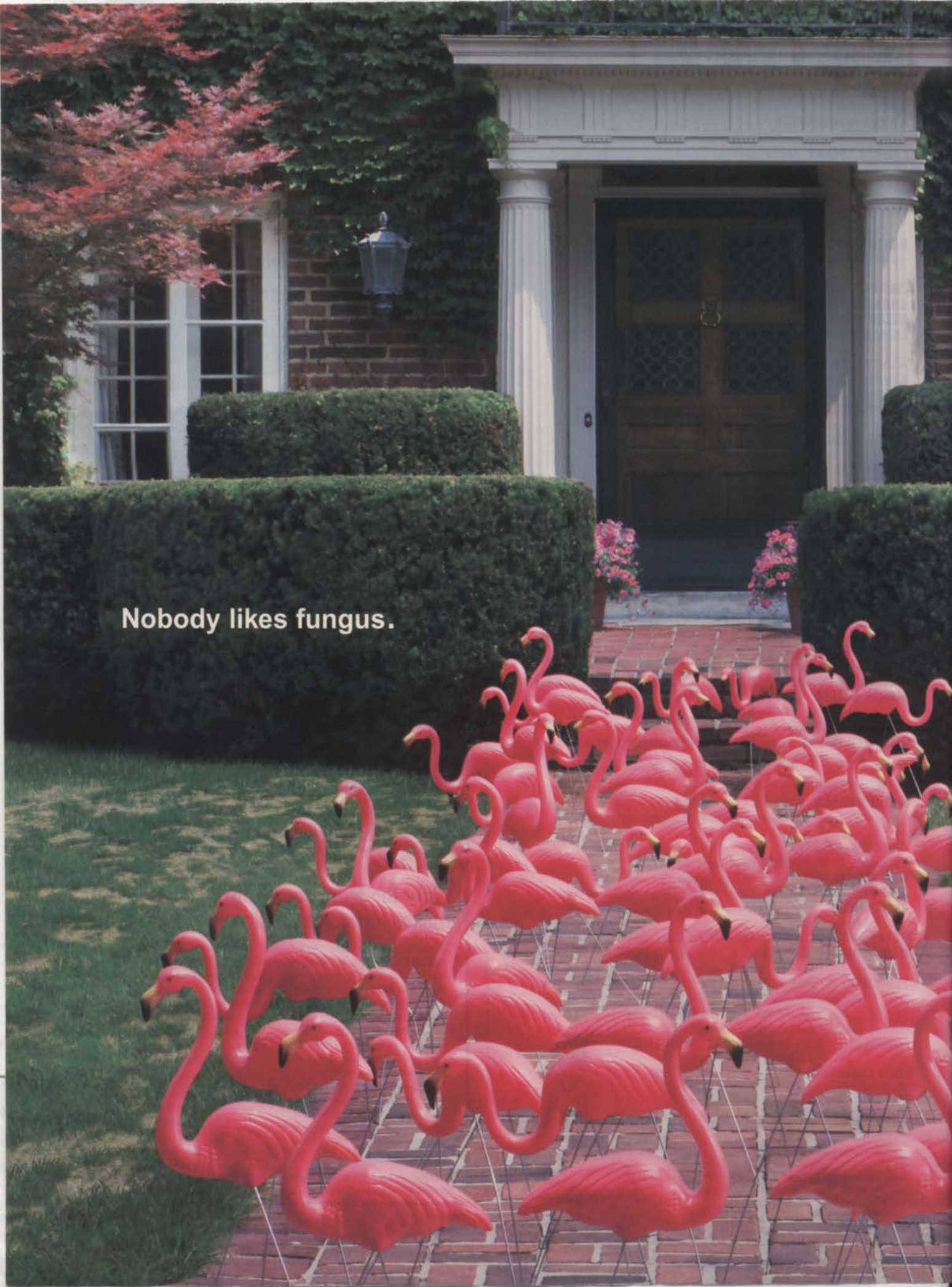
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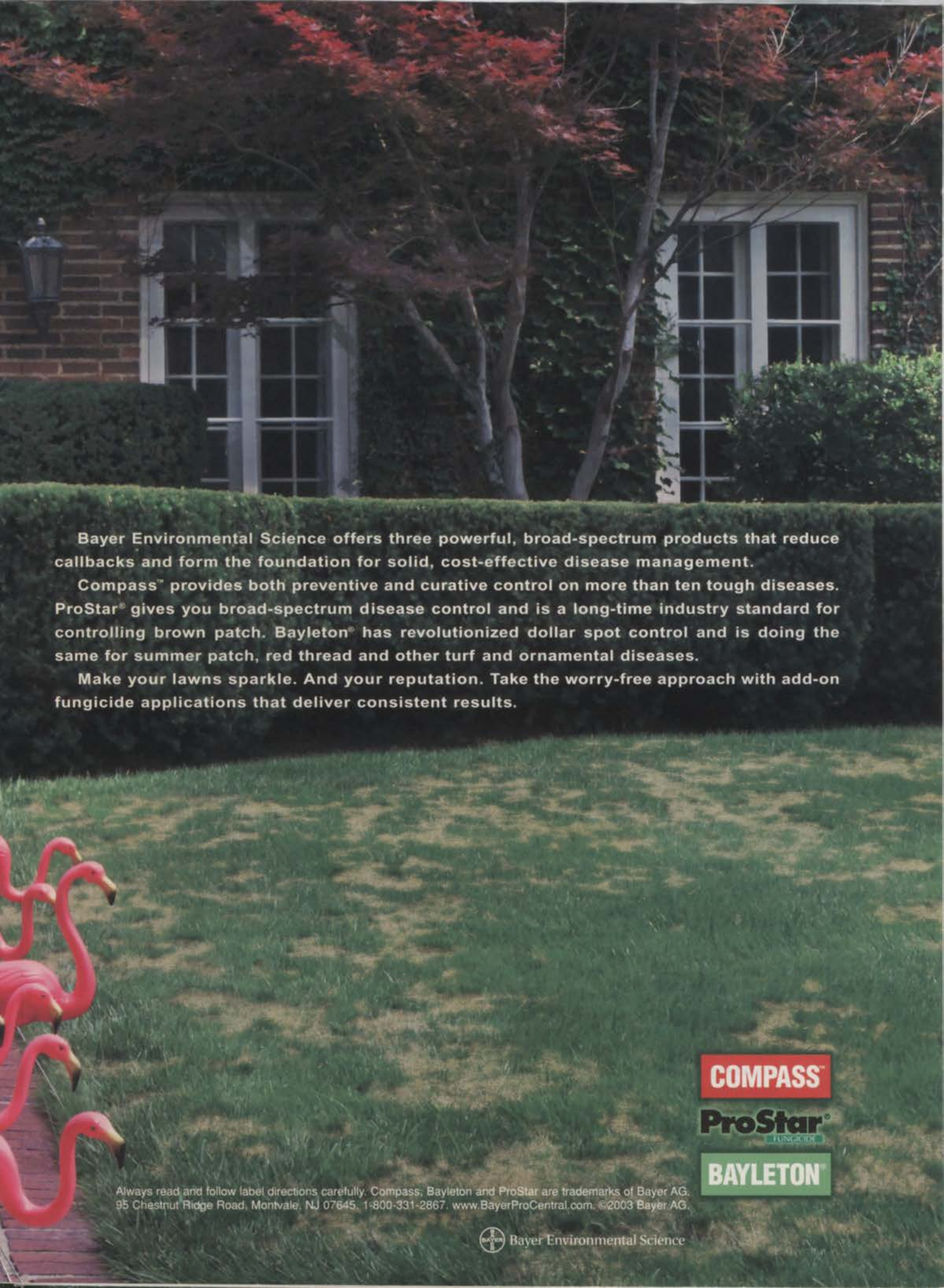
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Bayer Environmental Science

People Buy From People

Customers do not buy your company until they are first convinced your people are a good investment. —

Bob Clements, Bob Clements International

P People. They're all around us: Employees, customers, peers and acquaintances. People make the world go round.

Have you recently considered the people in your business? *Really* considered them? As business owners, it's common to focus on processes and day-to-day operations. But, it's the human side of the business — the people — who represent the greatest business challenge.

Hiring, training and retaining people are business essentials that can befuddle even the most competent owner. Not only do employees represent your largest expense, they're also your most unpredictable one.

Our industry faces its share of turnover, and current generational trends don't make it any easier for us. Today's workers don't want to stay with any one business for more than 24 months, on average.

To shield yourself and your business, surround yourself with a core group of people who will represent the essence of your company. These are the high performers you need for dynamic business success.

They not only need to understand your vision, but they need the ability to make people throughout your company grab hold of your vision.

Once the group grasps the grand plan, don't hesitate to put people in impossible positions and step out of the way. Impossible situations generally fire folks up and drive them to create new business ideas and opportunities.

Externally, your customers are the core that drives your business. You're in business to make money so do whatever it takes to keep your clients happy. 60 percent of your customers do business with you

because of value-added initiatives. Only 15 percent of your prospects buy on price.

Although we try to make it complex, business is really simple. Bob Clement, a training expert specializing in high performance people shares this recipe for business success:

- Acquire customers.
- Retain your customers; spend more time on retention than acquisition. After all, your existing customers are the cheapest to keep.
- Establish and incorporate processes.
- Hire the right people to make things flow.

Easier said than done? Perhaps. But focusing on the people in and around your business will put you in the enviable position of being a market leader. At the same time, it puts your competitors in the position of focusing on you and what you're doing, rather than their own businesses.

As you progress through the next few months trying to keep ahead of the weather and on top of your budget, remember to keep your focus on the people that contribute to the bottom line. Know your customers. Know your employees. And remember that there are thousands of competitors performing the same work that you are. Differentiate yourself.

Be a problem solver for your customer. Embrace and solve problems rather than viewing problems as headaches.

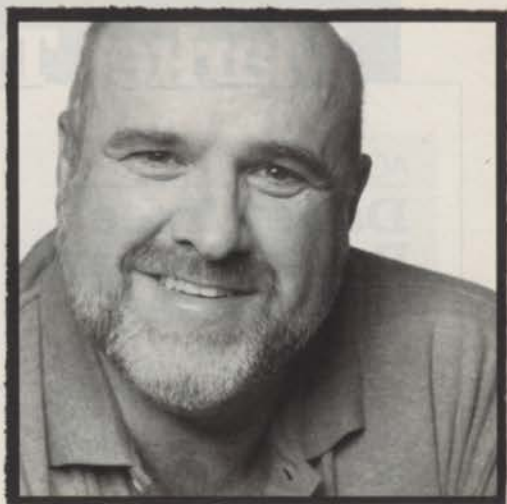
Never tell your customer no. Always tell them yes and then figure out a way to do it. Perhaps you're not in a position to do exactly what the customer has requested, but you can perform another service that meets them half way. This goes a long way in the customer's mind.

According to Clements, high performance organizations are constantly evolving. If what you're doing in your business isn't working, do something different. Things happen when you think differently; not necessarily when you work harder. **■**

Cindy Code



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GrasSnipper
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Market Trends

ACQUISITION NEWS

Davey Tree Buys Horigan Industries

CHICAGO, Ill.—The Davey Tree Expert Co. expanded its presence in the Chicago area by acquiring Horigan Tree Industries.

Davey's northeast Chicago office will serve former Horigan clients. Mark Kline, Davey's manager for northeast Chicago, says Horigan's operation meshes well with Davey. "They have been active in the Chicago area for about 12 years and have a reputation for quality tree work," he says. "Bruce Horigan knew Davey and likes what we represent. It was a good fit for them and for us."

He adds that Horigan customers will continue to receive tree care and be able to take advantage of additional services Davey offers, such as lawn care and fertilization.

Jim Stief, Davey's vice president for central, southern and western operations, calls the acquisition a move that will enhance Davey's ability to serve its Chicago-area clients. "The addition of Horigan's knowledgeable staff and its reputation for tree care is a real plus for us as we continue to expand our services in the greater Chicago region," he said.

Bruce Horigan, owner, and seven other employees will continue to serve Horigan's former customers under the Davey name.



IN THE NEWS

Seed Stats

In a recent set of surveys, *Lawn & Landscape* asked contractors for their preferences regarding turfseed usage and turf renovation methods.

In brief, of the companies polled that offer lawn renovation, lawn establishment, slitseeding or overseeding services, 49.3 percent prefer seeding to sodding or hydroseeding when establishing a new lawn. Additionally, 66.7 percent prefer seeding when renovating lawns. When choosing seed for lawn projects, 56 percent of contractors polled name drought tolerance as one of the top three characteristics they value in turfseed, and 44 percent look for disease resistance.

The majority of contractors — 68 percent — purchase their seed through a local dealer or distributor and 42.7 percent of respondents spend less than \$1,000 on turfseed per year. When purchasing seed, 38.7 percent of contractors buy it year round, while purchasing habits from April to June and July to September garnered 24 percent of the votes each.

SURVEY SAYS

Tree Care Trends

Lawn & Landscape conducted a recent survey of contractors to learn more about their tree care services.

According to the survey, 48 percent of contractors report that their tree care sales remained flat from 2001 to 2002, while 41 percent report increased sales and 9 percent experienced decreased sales.

For 2003, 32 percent of contractors expect their tree care sales to stay on par with 2002 numbers, while 61 percent are preparing for an increase in sales and 4 percent expect to see a decrease in sales from tree-care related services.

When asked what factors were limiting their tree care work, 30.2 percent of contractors cited lack of customer demand and 23 percent noted lack of technical knowledge. Lack of available labor received 14 percent of the votes, while competition and the economy received 9 and 7 percent, respectively.

In terms of pests and disease, in 2002, 51.2 percent of contractors treated trees for aphids most frequently throughout the year, followed by scale (44 percent) and mites (41 percent).

Aphids multiply quickly and can wreak havoc on infected trees. Infestation feeds on the tree's sap and coats the tree and its leaves in "honeydew," a sugary waste material, says

(continued on page 28)

What THREE characteristics do you find most valuable in your turfseed choices?

CHARACTERISTIC	% OF CONTRACTORS
Certified seed	50.7%
Disease resistance	44%
Drought tolerance	42%
Price	36%
Quick green-up	24%
Density	22.7%
Company reputation	22.7%
Endophyte-enhanced	9.3%
Other*	2%

*Includes availability. *Source: Insight Express



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Market Trends

IN THE NEWS

Toronto Pesticide Battle Turns Contractors into Activists

TORONTO – Although a pesticide-sensitive bylaw recently passed in Toronto, Canada, threatens long-term harm to the green industry, the legislative ordeal is lined with a spark of optimism.

That spark is the newfound motivation many lawn care operators, specifically those in and around Toronto, demonstrate in their fight for continued freedom from government-imposed bans of their lawn treatments.

As part of their plan of attack, several lawn care operators took to the streets, gath-

Association NEWS

The new chairman of the **International Franchise Association**

is Russel Frith, president, The Lawn Doctor, Holmdel, N.J. Frith has 30 years of franchise experience, the last 25 of which have been with The Lawn Doctor.



Russel Frith

The **Nevada**

Landscape Association

elects a new State Board of Directors. Officers are: Jason Perry, president; Dave Grillo, secretary/treasurer; and directors Tim Laskowski, Pete Luna and John Marman.

The **Professional Lawn Care Association of America** (PLCAA) and the **Associated Landscape Contractors of America** (ALCA) formed a new partnership. Unifying the associations' similar legislative efforts in Washington, D.C., PLCAA will now monitor government affairs for both associations.

ALCA and the Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado

are collaborating on a trilogy of landscape technician manuals. The first book, "Landscape Training Manual for Installation Technicians" is now available and manuals for irrigation and maintenance technicians will be released soon.

Market Trends

Mattingly's MESSAGE

EDITOR'S NOTE: Every month, industry consultant Jack Mattingly offers suggestions on key tasks for contractors to focus on. Here are his August thoughts.

Are you ecstatic about your business? Do you have a goal for where your business will be by the end of the year and are you on track?

Most of us want to continue to improve and grow our businesses. And this is the time to evaluate where you are and how you plan to end the season in a profitable manner with cash in the bank. Let me suggest a couple of practices to consider implementing now.

- **Identify inefficiencies.** Identify the jobs that are not accomplishing the margins you desire and visit those sites while the crews are there to determine how you can be more labor- or equipment efficient. If you cannot bring the margins back in line by season's end, consider canceling the job for next year or raising the price.

- **Track man-hours.** Does information on the administrative side of the business show that you and your people need to manage and stay on top of the man-hours allotted each week? If you do not have information on budgeted vs. actual man-hours for each job, each week, you are not managing the most important aspect of your business. Tracking hours help determine whether you make money. This can easily be done and will enable you to grow a profitable business.

- **Locate weaknesses.** Now is a perfect time to list all the weaknesses you observe in the company. Consider all departments, people, equipment, office and accounting systems, etc. Recruit your key employees to also contribute to the list in an objective manner. This creates a "hit list" of areas to improve upon. Some items you will attack now and others will contribute to your strategic planning for next year.

- **Implement systems.** If there is a system or program you have been reluctant to implement, probably because you were too busy, I recommend you try and do so now. Work has slowed down somewhat and if you can test a new idea now, you can better evaluate whether it is something you'll want to keep using.

- **Invite outsiders.** Having your business "pulse" checked by an outsider is invaluable. This individual, whether a consultant or a knowledgeable friend or colleague, can find the "trees in the forest" that others might not see. This is usually a guaranteed way to know that the recommended changes are proven and will work for our industry. You do not necessarily need to re-create the wheel. Getting trusted outside opinions reduces stress simply and effectively.

You are through the tough part of the year and can now continue to change and grow your business and profits. You *must* change. Take a look at where you are and make those changes this month. Some will not work the way you thought they would, but you have time to make the adjustments before the season ends.

Jack Mattingly is a green industry consultant with Mattingly Consulting and can be reached at www.mattinglyconsulting.com or 770-517-9476.

Jack Mattingly is a green industry consultant with Mattingly Consulting and can be reached at www.mattinglyconsulting.com or 770-517-9476.

ering signatures on petitions and getting the word out about the proposed ban of "cosmetic" pesticide use. Contractors have resorted to grass-roots lobbying, even picketing outside Toronto City Hall with signs displaying pesticide advocacy messages. Industry professionals also attended city council meetings to express their opinions regarding the proposed legislation, explains Tom Delaney, vice president of government affairs, Professional Lawn Care Association of America.

"This is an excellent example of the industry using environmental activist techniques to express their opinions," Delaney

observes, referring to the tireless efforts of activists in and around Toronto.

Lawn care operators also put their marketing skills to a new use, with auto-dial telephones getting the word out to customers through recorded messages.

"They started mobilizing customers to call the city," Delaney says. "And those customers took action. They called to say, 'Stop wasting taxpayer dollars. We're opposed to this bylaw.'"

And while the May 23 passage of a pesticide-sensitive bylaw may indicate that the industry's efforts went unnoticed, the opposite, in fact, is true. Advocates of the ban

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Market Trends

agreed to a "compromise bylaw" before the topic could be voted on rather than risk losing the issue on a vote. The lobbying efforts of lawn care operators had added too much uncertainty to the issue.

Now, weeks after reaching the compromise, industry professionals in Toronto are trying to jump back into business. The optimistic spark continues to motivate them in the ongoing battle against the pesticide ban.

RESEARCH REPORT

Landscaping Offers Economic Benefits

For property managers, the advantages of a professionally installed and maintained landscape go beyond curb appeal and head straight for the bottom line.

According to a study by professor Joel Goldstein, landscape amenities have the highest correlation with occupancies of any

(continued on page 20)

People

Brian Callahan was named chief financial officer at Murray.

At Netafim USA, **Jim Anshutz** was promoted to director of the technical division.

Nancy Junk joined Seed Research of Oregon as regional sales manager.

BASF announced the appointment of **Mike Toco** as business manager for the Professional Turf & Ornamental group.

Skinner Nurseries reported three new personnel appointments. **Joe**

McDermott was hired as assistant manager and sales representative;

Dan Simon came on as outside sales representative for the Charleston, S.C. area; and **Kathy Boerner** will handle inside sales for the Hardeeville, S.C. office.

David Schwartz became product manager of industrial tools and accessories at Stihl.

The Maryland region at Chapel Valley Landscape Co. saw two promotions recently. **Bill Benoit** became regional manager and

Michael Holland is commercial sales manager.

David Reist was named head of the system-wide franchisee training effort for U.S. Lawns.

Larry Reed was appointed to manager of the south central territory for Finn Corp.

Rain Bird appointed two new regional sales managers. **Donn Mann** is responsible for Midwest sales and **Dan Puthuff** took over sales in the southwest. Additionally, **Jeff Tuel** was hired as product manager for the Rain Bird Irrigation Supplement.



Bill Benoit (top), Mike Toco (below)

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14 Dayton, Ohio	20 Boston, Mass.	17 Houston, Texas
15 Cinn., Ohio	21 Wallingford, Conn.	18 Chicago, Illinois
16 Columbus, Ohio		18 Austin, Texas
AUGUST		22 Houston, Texas
6 Cleveland, Ohio	8 Buffalo, New York	23 Austin, Texas
7 Pittsburgh, Penn.	9 Albany, New York	23 San Diego, Calif.
11 Indianapolis, Indiana	9 Bakersfield, Calif.	24 Orange County, Calif.
12 Milwaukee, Wisconsin	10 Farmingdale, New Jersey	OCTOBER
13 Madison, Wisconsin	11 Long Island, New York	1 Atlanta, Georgia
14 Pittsburgh, Penn.	15 Dallas, Texas	16 Pittsburgh, Penn.

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- Build greater shoot mass
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- Increase photosynthesis

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Those studies have consistently shown a positive effect on early plant growth and development and with mature plants under stress. Sod farms results show that turf can be harvested earlier due to increased root mass and quicker establishment from seed or sprigs. Mature turf has greater root mass with a noted "tighter" visual appearance and less susceptibility to stress.

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Effect of Fertilizer with Prospect Plus on Creeping Bentgrass Density

Ohio Turfgrass Foundation Research and Educational Center - 2000

Treatment	Rate	% Turf Density
Check		60.00
Fertilizer (46-0-0)	0.014 lb. N/1000 sq. ft.	72.00
Fertilizer (46-0-0) + Prospect Plus	0.014 lb. N/1000 sq. ft. + 48 oz./acre	77.00

Seeded on August 4, 2000 with G-2 creeping bentgrass at a rate of 2 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft. Density measurements were based on % cover taken visually on 10/4 (8 weeks after treatment)

Study Results: "... a significant increase in creeping bentgrass establishment two months after seeding with the application of fertilizer and Prospect Plus compared to the untreated control." A 22% improvement over check and more than a 12% increase over fertilizer alone!

For more information, contact your local UHS representative

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USE READER SERVICE #19



United
Horticultural Supply

Market Trends

(continued from page 18)

other architectural and urban design variables evaluated. A well-designed landscape invites potential customers and residents in the door and produces higher occupancy rates, increased rentals and lower vacancies. Contractors can use this information to bolster sales.

Additionally, bottom line figures increase even more when you consider that the proper selection and placement of plant material can lower heating and cooling costs by as much as 20 percent while creating a healthier environment. Also, using landscape plants to lower noise levels, reduce crime and enhance unpleasant views are economical alternatives that add up to increased profits for property managers.

A shopping center in San Diego cites landscaping as the reason for high occupancy and the ability to charge rental rates double those of other shopping plazas. The project uses landscaping to create a refuge in the midst of a busy shopping area.

(continued on page 22)

Calendar of Events

TO ENSURE

that your meeting date is published, send an announcement at least 12 weeks in advance to *Lawn & Landscape Calendar*, 4012 Bridge Ave., Cleveland, OH 44113.

AUG. 8 *Lawn & Landscape Business Management Seminar*, Northern New Jersey. Contact: 800/456-0707 or www.lawnandlandscape.com/events.

AUG. 8-10 *Associated Landscape Contractors of America Interior Landscape Symposium*, Atlanta, Ga. Contact: 703/736-9666 or www.alca.org.

AUG. 13 *Ohio State University/Ohio Turfgrass Foundation Turfgrass Research Field Day*, Columbus, Ohio. Contact: 800/510-5296 or www.OhioLawnCare.org.

AUG. 13 *Wisconsin Nursery Association Summer Field Day*, Manitowoc, Wisc. Contact: 414/529-4705.

AUG. 14 *Ohio Lawn Care Association's Diagnostic Seminar*, Columbus, Ohio. Contact: 800/510-5296 or www.OhioLawnCare.org.

AUG. 15 *Lawn & Landscape Business Management Seminar*, Orlando, Fla. Contact: 800/456-0707 or www.lawnandlandscape.com/events.

AUG. 15-17 *Texas Nursery/Landscape Expo*, Dallas, Texas. Contact: 800/880-0343 or www.txnla.org.

AUG. 20-23 *CalScape Expo*, Irvine, Calif. Contact: 707/462-2276 or www.cipaweb.org.

AUG. 22 *Lawn & Landscape Business Management Seminar*, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. Contact: 800/456-0707 or www.lawnandlandscape.com/events.

SEPT. 5 *Lawn & Landscape Business Management Seminar*, Greensboro, N.C. Contact: 800/456-0707 or www.lawnandlandscape.com/events.

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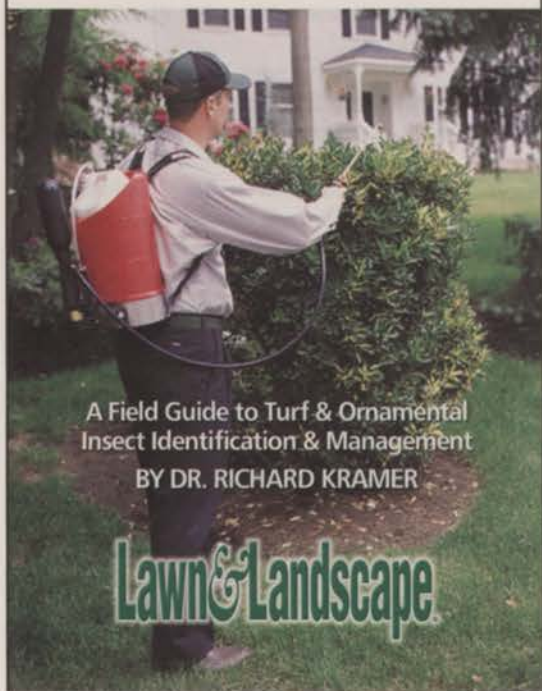


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Technician's Handbook



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THLHSAD

Market Trends

(continued from page 20)

A Chicago developer also points to unique interior landscaping in glass-roofed atriums as a major selling point and reason the building occupancy rates are 21 percent above the national level.

Landscaping can add as much as 14 percent resale value to a building and speed the sale of a building by as much as six weeks. What's more, in the 1990s, as corporations struggled to retain employees, the benefits of using landscapes to enhance work environments was a valuable sales tool.

Professional landscaping also can reduce utility bills and conserve energy. In climates with cold winters, properly placed trees and shrubs capture the winter sun. In warmer climates, they block the summer heat while channeling cool breezes.

During summer months, one large tree can absorb enough heat to lower temperatures by 10 degrees – the same as several window air conditioners. A single tree can provide up to \$273 in air conditioning, pol-

(continued on page 24)



L&L Book Report

How to Stop Worrying and Start Living by Dale Carnegie

Managing a business can cause significant stress and worry. Dale Carnegie opens his book with 21 words that can eliminate both – “Our main business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what clearly lies at hand.”

“How to Stop Worrying and Start Living” begins with the story of noted 19th century physician Sir William Osler, who used the sentence during a speech at Yale University. Osler told attendees to live their lives in “day-tight compartments.”

“In other words, don't worry about yesterday, and stop fretting about tomorrow,” says Chuck Twist, president, TNT Lawn and Landscape Management, Stillwater, Okla. But that doesn't relieve a

business manager of the task of planning. The book simply informs readers not to worry about what has been done and what can't be accomplished yet, says Twist.

Both an enjoyable and useful read, Twist says Carnegie's section “How to Eliminate 50 Percent of Your Business Worries,” gives readers four stress management questions to ask themselves. They are: 1. What is the problem? 2. What is the cause of the problem? 3. What are the possible solutions? 4. What solutions do you suggest?

“Anyone who reads this book can find something helpful in it because people don't really know how much they worry,” says Twist – especially lawn care operators who deal with challenging subjects like labor. Twist summarizes the importance of stress management with a quote he remembers from the book: “Businessmen who do not know how to fight worry, die young.” – Kevin McConville

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Market Trends

(continued from page 22)

lution fighting and storm water run-off control benefits.

Plants also absorb pollutants and block noise levels. For instance, a cypress hedge planted 2 feet thick along the front of a property will reduce street noise by 5 decibels. Dense or thorny plants placed at vulnerable areas around buildings can discourage break-ins, and landscape lighting enhances security around buildings for employees who work late.

FRANCHISER NEWS

Weed Man Adds Four Ohio Franchises

Weed Man subfranchiser Growing Opportunities sold four new Weed Man franchises in Ohio since the beginning of 2003.

In the Summit County/Akron area of northeast Ohio, Jim Freireich and Ned

On the WEB

Responsible Industry for a Sound

Environment West Nile Virus Page

www.westnilevirusfacts.org

Moon Nurseries

www.moonnurseries.com

Pacific Green Landscape Architecture

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Blue Sky Landscape Services

www.blueskyland.com

Forest Green Landscape

www.forestgreenlandscape.com

To announce a new Web site, e-mail nwisniewski@lawnandlandscape.com.

Cultrona opened Weed Man Summit County in January. Freireich and Cultrona's company, Eastside Enterprises, also owns Weed Man Cleveland East.

"Weed Man is the perfect complement to our current lawn care business," Cultrona explains. "We acquired more territory before it was taken by someone else."

Tom and Rose Curdes recently started Weed Man Toledo West. The Curdes also own a second company, Barron's Lawn Service, in Sylvania, Ohio.

Tim and Diane Rummins bought the Weed Man franchise rights in the Stark County/Canton area. They also own Hartville Nursery and its subsidiary, MT Pro Services in Hartville, Ohio.

The northwest Ohio Weed Man territory, which covers five rural counties, was sold to Corbin and Audrey Schlatter, who own WM Canna. The counties covered are Williams, Defiance, Fulton, Henry and Paulding. The Schlatters are adding Weed Man to their

(continued on page 28)



New

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For over 15 years CLIP has been specializing in time-saving software and solutions for the service industry. CLIP products give users the ability to do scheduling, routing, revenue tracking, billing and more – all from the convenience of their desktop.

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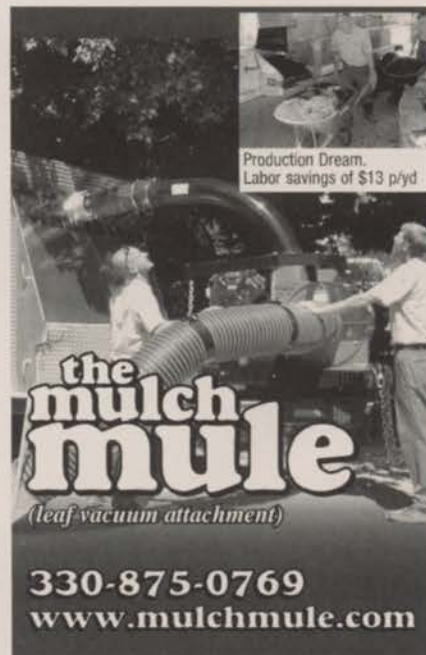
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TORO

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Market Trends

(continued from page 24)

existing lawn service company, Nature's Way Lawn Care.

Subfranchiser Phil Fogarty, co-owner with Bob Ottley of Growing Opportunities, says more franchise sales are in the works.

"Existing service businesses, such as pest control and landscaping companies, see the value in our systems and can capitalize immediately with their existing markets," Fogarty notes. "We receive several inquiries as soon as we open a market and then choose the most qualified candidate."

Fogarty and Ottley own the Weed Man subfranchise rights to Ohio, western Pennsylvania and upstate and western New York.

(continued from page 14)

SURVEY SAYS

Tree Care Trends

Bal Rao, research and technical development manager, Davey Institute, Kent, Ohio. A secondary fungus grows on the honeydew and covers the tree's leaves with black

patches that cut the leaves off from the sunlight necessary for sugar production.

"Lack of photosynthesis and the loss of sap can weaken the plant," says Rao, adding that the damage aphids cause can resemble herbicide injury. For that reason, closely examining unhealthy trees for aphids, living or dead, is important to accurately determine the problem. Rao suggests treating infestations by applying insecticides that are recommended for aphid extermination at least twice: the first application exterminates the living aphids and the second, applied later, kills the insects that were unhatched during the first treatment.

Concerning tree diseases in 2002, 21 percent of contractors noted anthracnose as the most notable problem. Diplodia tip blight followed with 14 percent.

Anthracnose is a fungal disease affecting trees in cool, moist weather. With those environmental cues, the fungus becomes active and spreads its spores, infecting the tree's leaves, says Rao. Infected leaves can no longer produce sugar, which forces the

Corrections

On page 68 of the July issue, *Lawn & Landscape* mistakenly ran an outdated copy of the Curbworld advertisement, containing incorrect contact information. The correct phone number for Curbworld is 866/287-2953. Please see their ad on page 22 for product information. *Lawn & Landscape* regrets the error and apologizes for any inconvenience.

tree to combat the infection by using its stored energy to grow new leaves.

"Normally the disease produces angular spores along the leaf veins," adds Rao. "As the disease progresses, larger areas of the leaf become blighted as the spores fuse. Once the leaves cease to function they defoliate and drop from the tree."

If left untreated, anthracnose, combined with normally difficult conditions like drought, predisposes the tree to borer insects and canker diseases, says Rao. He suggests applying a preventive fungicide two or three times at 10 to 14 day intervals when the bark begins breaking. Additionally, he notes that proper and timely fertilization strengthens susceptible trees, including Maple, Oak, Ash and Dogwood. **LL**



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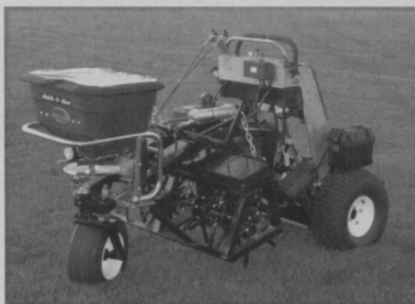
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Nursery Market Report

FLOWER DEBUTS


Boastful Blooms

A simple spot of color, whether sitting solitary in a pot or mingling with greenery in a larger planting, creates an instant focal point in the landscape.

Colorful selections abound with continual introductions of versatile and novel plants. Two recent blooms on the market include Canna Tropicanna Gold and Lily of the Nile 'Bluestorm,' available from Anthony Tesselaaar.

Here's more on each of these colorful plants.

CANNA TROPICANNA GOLD. Tropicanna Gold is distinguished by green and gold striped leaves, which grow richer in color when temperatures exceed 60F. Leaves are a dark gray-



Canna Tropicanna Gold features bold, striped leaves, which become bolder in color when temperatures rise. The plant tolerates a range of soils, even poorly draining locations, but avoid planting in windy sites. Photo: Anthony Tesselaaar

green to light yellow-green with alternating, interveinal, yellow-green stripes, which fade to creamy yellow as the plant matures. Interveinal stripes begin at the blade's midrib and extend upward and outward toward the leaf tips, and the shape and color of the stripes are irregular.

Tropicanna Gold's medium to large orange flowers are splashed with warm yellow edging and accents, and it flowers during the entire growing season – usually two to four months. There are four to eight flowers per stalks, and stalks grow and mature to flower throughout the season.

The tropical plant is suitable for borders, landscape plantings, ponds and containers. In the ground, Tropicanna Gold will reach 4 feet in height the first year and up to 6 feet in subsequent years. In a container, Tropicanna Gold will grow up to 4 feet tall – plant in a pot 10 to 16 inches in diameter or larger. It grows best in full sun but will also grow in partial shade.

This canna, which is sensitive to extended exposure to frost, is hardy in U.S. Department of Agriculture zones 7 and higher. As soon as the leaves begin to die back, cut off foliage to the soil level and leave in the ground or in large containers over the winter. In spring, growth will sprout as warmer temperatures arrive.

Tropicanna Gold tolerates a wide range of soils, even poorly drained areas, but it performs best in deep, fertile soil. Plant 2 to 3 feet apart in landscape beds, closer in containers. Avoid windy locations, as the large, soft leaves can be damaged.

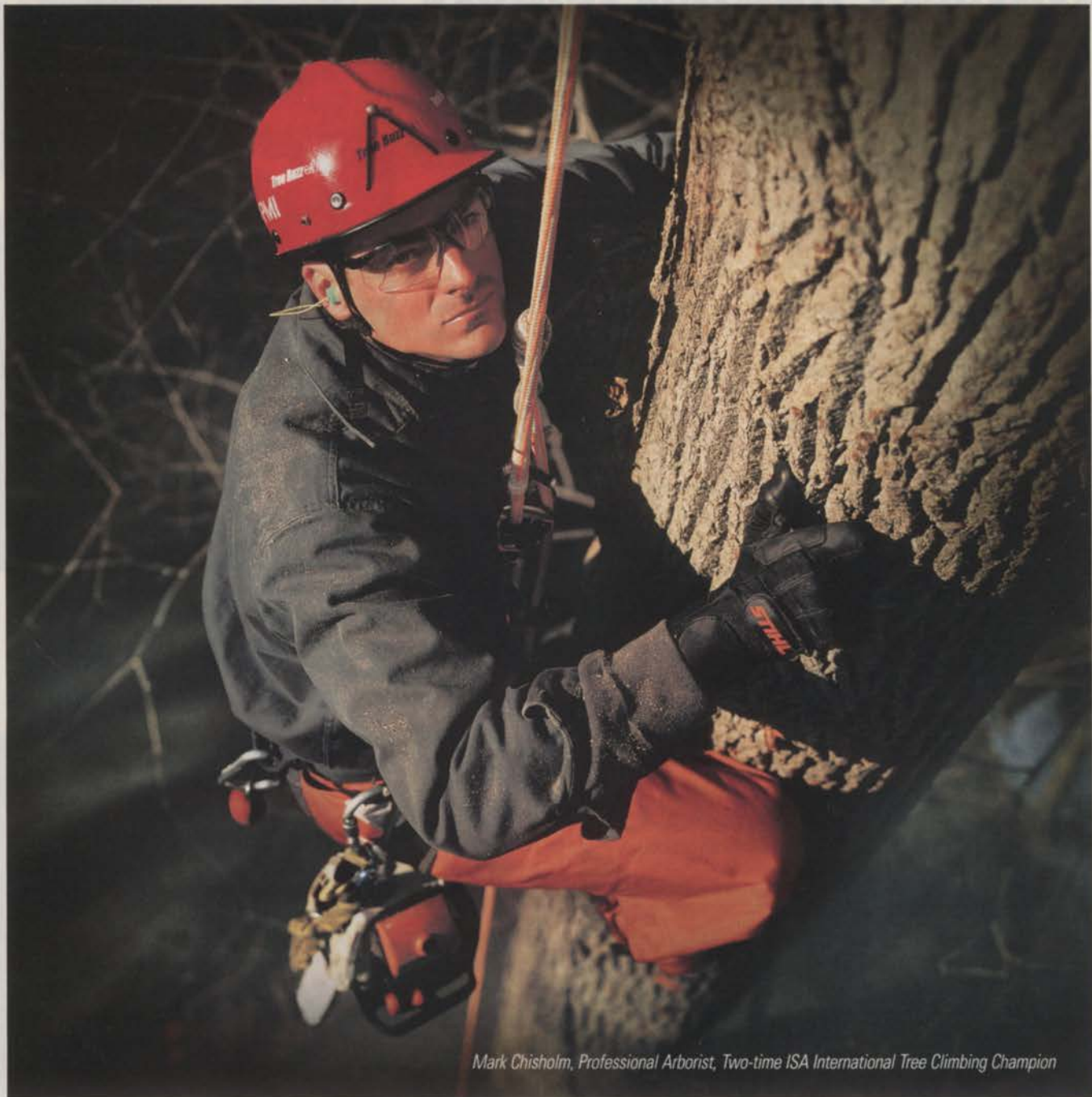
When caring for containers, if plants dry out excessively, leaves may fade. If this happens, cut back lackluster leaves or even the entire stem to the soil line. Water regularly and the plant will respond by sending up new shoots.

In spring, use a slow-release flowering plant formula high in potassium to encourage flowering. The slow-release formula is key because too much nitrogen can yield a plant that is excessively tall and elongated. Also, pruning or pinching is not required for this canna – spent flower blooms drop naturally.

Cannas are not prone to disease in the landscape, and there are no major pests that target this plant. Snails and slugs, though, can damage leaves.

LILY OF THE NILE 'BLUESTORM.' A sport of Lily of the Nile 'Snowstorm' (see February *Lawn & Landscape* 2003), 'Bluestorm' produces abundant blooms, flowering on average 70 days per growing season. When mature, this plant blooms in flushes, bearing up to 100 light violet-blue flower spheres per plant.

(continued on page 32)



Mark Chisholm, Professional Arborist, Two-time ISA International Tree Climbing Champion

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lightweight, powerful and designed for use up in trees. As Mark says, "Taking down a tree over power lines and homes isn't easy, so you better believe I want the best saw of its kind up there with me."

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Nursery Market Report

(continued from page 30)

Dense leaves are arranged in a tuft or cluster. Each leaf is narrow and strap-like, measuring on average 14 inches long by $\frac{3}{4}$ inch wide.

'Bluestorm' grows to a compact 28 to 34 inches, a preferred height for landscapes and container plantings. Most other agapanthus are either much taller or shorter.

BLUESTORM PRODUCES ABUNDANT BLOOMS, BEARING UP TO 100 LIGHT VIOLET-BLUE FLOWER SPHERES PER PLANT.

Hardy in zones 9 to 11, Bluestorm perennializes readily in warmer climate zones. The plant grows in most light conditions, requiring full sun for best flowering performance. But it will flower in reduced numbers in partial shade.

This easy-care plant is naturally disease resistant. While regular watering and feed-

Compact 'Bluestorm' grows in most light conditions, but it requires full sun for top performance. The plant produces abundant blooms with narrow, strap-like foliage. Photo: Anthony Tesselaar

ing are required for peak performance, the plant can survive with minimal water after it is established, making it well suited to landscape plantings in drier areas of the country. Lily of the Nile's thick, moisture-retentive foliage also makes a perfect addition to fire-retardant borders.

Bluestorm tolerates a range of soils from sand to clay and requires a high nitrogen fertilizer to promote initial growth. Once established, use a flowering plant formula high in potassium to encourage flowering.

This plant attracts no major pests, aside from snails and slugs, which may cause slight damage. — Ali Cybulski



The author is Contributing Editor of *Lawn & Landscape* magazine and can be reached at acybulski@lawnandlandscape.com.

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USE READER SERVICE #34

Tree Care Tips

FOCUS ON YOUNG TREES

Pruning Power

Whether your company handles large commercial design/build projects or maintains residential properties, as far as your customers are concerned, you are their professional for all things horticulture. Tree care may not be your specialty, but learning the basics keeps your customers

coming to you for answers instead of calling the competition.

One of the largest and arguably the best investments your customers make to improve the appeal and value of their properties is installing young trees, so caring for them is essential.

Each tree species (and cultivar) is unique, and ultimately requires individual attention to meet its specific needs. Fortunately, there are general rules that apply and can improve your overall knowledge of pruning.

Pruning practices used to create a strong, healthy tree are the same actions used to promote a visually beautiful tree. A healthy tree will grow strong and sturdy through maturity, providing not only function and beauty as nature intended, but safety for its surroundings, as well.



Choosing the correct placement for each pruning cut is essential on young trees. Cuts should be made with a sharp, clean blade and be placed away from the bark and at an angle. Photo: Moon Nurseries

MAKING THE CUT. Before pruning a "young" tree – between 1½- and 2-inch caliper – you should have a good visual idea of the tree's natural growth habit. It is always best to support young trees by pruning to encourage this habit.

Begin by choosing the proper tools for the job. There are many available, from scissors to shears to saws. Whichever you use, be sure that it is sharp, sterile and in good repair. Always make clean, deliberate cuts to a tree's tissues. This will allow each cut the best possible opportunity to heal. Specific placement of the cut will depend on the location and purpose of the removal.

To remove epicormic shoots (such as 'suckers' and 'water sprouts') or dead, diseased and crossing branches, make the cut slightly out from the stem or branch from which it is being removed. Never make a cut that is flush with the bark. Also, keep your cut at an angle, not shallow or blunt.

For pruning actions made specifically to promote additional growth, make cuts at a slight angle (45 degrees), approximately ¼ inch above the terminal bud. Your tree will have either opposite or alternating buds. Always make sure there are buds below the terminal bud before making your cut. By pruning just above these buds, you encourage bud break from the closest two or three buds. Essentially, from this cut you create two growth extensions to replace the one that was removed.

PLANNING IS EVERYTHING. Successful pruning hinges on good planning. Not only should you know what cuts you want to make before you start, but pruning trees at the most opportune time is essential. (Clearly it is best to remove diseased or infested limbs as they are discovered.)

Generally, evergreen trees should be pruned after the new growth flushes and hardens off, shade trees should be

(continued on page 36)

PROPER PRUNING

Common Mistakes

To ensure proper growth, there are certain tasks to avoid when pruning young trees. These include:

- Pruning at the wrong time
- Not keeping your utensils sharp and clean
- Not cutting at the proper angle (45 degrees is most always correct)
- Not properly assessing the bud formation
- Cutting too far from or too close to the bud
- Not knowing the specific growth habit of your tree – **Moon Nurseries**

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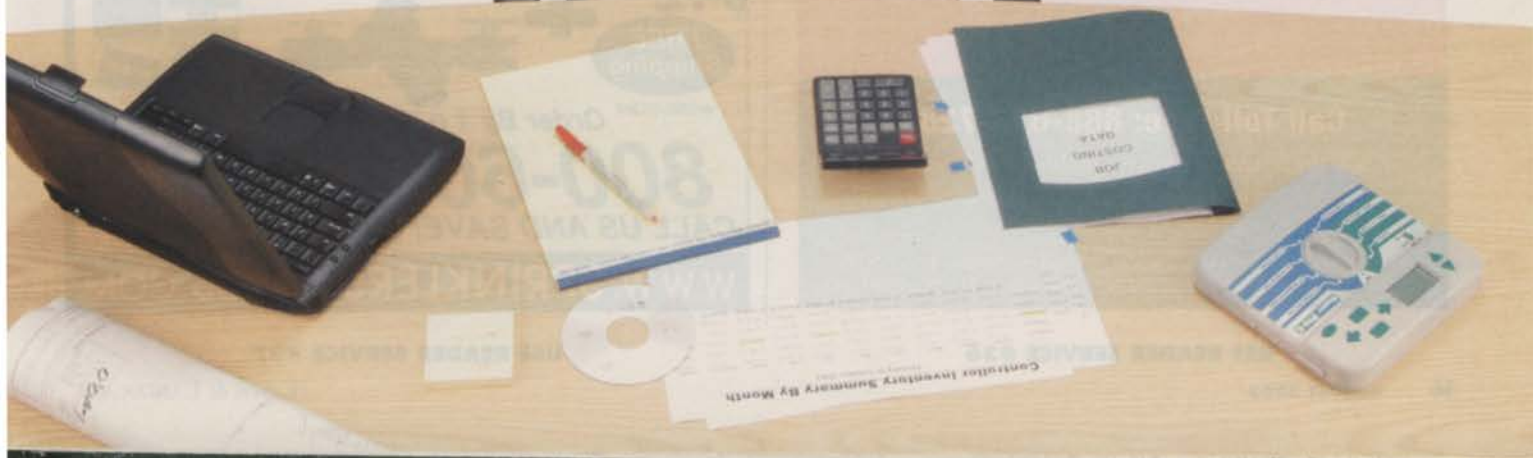
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USE READER SERVICE #35



Tree Care Tips

(continued from page 34)

pruned before they leaf out, and the best time to prune ornamental trees is right after they flower.

When you prune after leaf out, sap is running and you run the risk of causing cankers to form at your cutting points. These cankers are very susceptible to insect infestation and disease. Of course, if you prune these trees before they flower – including in the fall – your customers will not have a chance to enjoy their spring blooms. Be doubly careful to sanitize your pruning instruments as you move from tree to tree. And, not to worry, you will get a second flush from the ornamental after you prune.

Begin pruning your tree by removing dead, diseased and infested branches. Next, remove all crossing and inward-growing branches, followed by epicormic shoots. Epicormic shoots include all growth arising from the bark of a tree's trunk (sucker) or limbs (watersprout) that does not originate from a terminal bud. Finally, begin pruning for growth and aesthetic appeal of the tree.

THE THREE-YEAR

PLAN.

Well, two years actually – your tree will behave beautifully for the third. For the first year, you'll want to prune aggressively to shape the head, encourage dominance of the central leader and create new bud breaks. Your objective is a uniform and full head with equal spacing of branches both up and down the central leader and around the circumference of the trunk.

In the first year, removing up to half of the tree's growth is permissible. This firmly sets the tree's growth structure and encourages root growth that will support the tree's future fuller branching and leaf flush.

Begin by removing any larger growths that could compete with the central leader for dominance. Next, remove branches that are too closely spaced and braches that are inward-facing. Finally, prune the tree down to a uni-



Proper pruning yields both health and aesthetic beauty for young trees. Follow the three-year plan to ensure that trees thrive. Photo: Moon Nurseries

form shape, cutting just above the terminal buds to encourage additional shoots.

Year two is much less aggressive. Follow the same steps as the first year but prune away no more than 1/4 of the total growth. Pay

close attention to shaping the head of your tree and making appropriate cuts to encourage new growth. Your tree's root system will have strengthened significantly from the previous year's pruning and will enable strong growth in this second year. By the third year, your tree will flush full and uniform in all its intended beauty. Your customers will be pleased, your efforts and patience will be rewarded and your company's reputation will be strengthened. – Anna Martin

The author is marketing director, Moon Nurseries, Chesapeake City, Md., and can be reached at 800/803-TREE.

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Raving Replies

IM Most lawn care service customers have better things to do than watch someone aerate their lawns. Dominic Carlos understands this but needed a system to review the aeration and dethatching jobs his service crews performed when his customers weren't home.

"90-percent of the people we service aren't home," says Carlos, president, Four Seasons Aeration, San Diego, Calif. In 1994, after reading the book "Raving Fans: A Revolutionary Approach to Customer Service," he decided to implement a mail-in customer reply card to get feedback on his employees' work from the absentee property owners.

The invoice is a 4-by-5-inch card that features three Yes/No or N/A questions that furnish Carlos with the customer's satisfaction level regarding the completed job. Also printed on the card is a statement about the necessity of repeating the service every six months along with a

checklist of different return dates to help him determine whether or not the customer wants repeat service.


Most importantly, the invoice features open lines at the bottom of the card for any comments or complaints the customer might have. This section of the invoice, Carlos explains, is the key to retaining his customer base, which is made up of more than 21,000 regular customers.

Carlos says he responds to any complaints as soon as he receives a reply card in the mail because "if you wait too long, you forget." Usually, he leaves messages on customers' answering machines thanking them for their business and assuring them that any complaints will be taken care of as soon as possible since only one or two people he calls are home at the time.

The information from the card is also entered into a customer service information database that allows Carlos to track all of his customers and their needs.

Aside from being a tool to help Carlos track and retain his clientele, the customer reply cards help him track his employees and their work. With about a 50 percent response rate, Carlos saves every returned card, and briefly meets with each employee every Thursday to discuss the performances the returned cards denote.

"I don't have ESP," Carlos jokes. "[So] the card is very useful from a marketing and training standpoint."

"I think I only spend 3 cents per card," Carlos marvels, reflecting on what a simple, inexpensive but useful business aid a customer satisfaction card is to his business. — Kevin McConville 

The author is a Contributing Editor to Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at kmccconville@lawnandlandscape.com.



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- 4) **It is recommended that the process be repeated every 6 months**
(Some prefer more often & some prefer less.)
PREFER EVERY 3 Mo. 6 Mo. 1 Yr.

Any comments? _____

by Nicole Wisniewski



When a father and son bring their heads together, business focus and growth are the positive end results.

The Neave Landscaping team has grown their business through commitments to quality and solid business practices. Photo: Neave Landscaping

Allied FORO

As a child, Bill Neave grew up in New York's Westchester County, an upscale area 25 miles outside of Manhattan.

"All of my friends' fathers were landscapers, so we were raised mowing lawns and installing plants as summer jobs," Bill says.

A childhood chore became a key money maker when after being drafted and joining the Marines, Bill landscaped nights to increase his earnings while working days at the Con Edison Utility Co. "I just stuck with it," he says. After five years as a second job, landscaping elevated to a level of higher importance when in 1973 Bill saw the potential to push his after-hours activity into a full-time gig.

Just as Bill helped his father, Bill's son Scott was put to work at a young age aiding the family business. At first, the job wasn't Scott's favorite Saturday morning activity. "I used to pull weeds and pick up sticks - I hated it because I didn't want to get up at dawn," Scott says. "I wanted to sleep in and hang out with my friends instead."

But when Scott graduated high school, he didn't know what he wanted to do so he started taking landscape design courses at the State University of New York at Cobleskill. "After two years, I decided that I didn't want to be a landscape architect, but I liked the business end of landscaping," says Scott, who transferred to Pennsylvania State University to get a degree in landscape contracting.

Though he helped his father during the summer months while going to school, Scott still wasn't sure about joining the business. But meeting his wife, Sari, during his final year of college changed his mind. "After I met her, it was like I instantly matured," he says. "I started thinking about family more and about settling down."

When Scott joined the business as a crewmember in August 1998, the company revenue was between \$450,000 and \$750,000. But now that there were two key people

focused on sales, growth came in leaps and bounds. Managing the business together and handling quick growth challenged the duo's father-son relationship, but by talking about their ideas, structuring their roles and finding focus, they boosted business revenue to nearly \$4 million in 2003.

YOU SAY PO-TAY-TO, I SAY PO-TAH-TO.

Accepting change was difficult for Bill. He recognized in 1998 that he could have kept the business small, but knew that if Scott was working with him, it had to grow and support two families now instead of just one.

Those first two-and-one-half years after Scott joined Neave Landscaping were taxing for the father-son team. "He wanted me to be in the field and I wanted to focus on sales and business development," Scott explains. "He wanted to grow the business as well as I did, but he didn't want to change his ways to make that happen."

It took Bill and Scott some time to learn each other's strengths and to trust and accept each other's ideas. Scott moved up quickly and wanted to involve the company

(continued on page 42)

NEAVE LANDSCAPING

HEADQUARTERS: Wappingers Falls, N.Y.

FOUNDED: 1973

2003 PROJECTED REVENUE:

\$4 million

% OF REVENUE SPENT ON

MARKETING: 2 percent for direct mail, *Yellow Pages* and the Internet

OF EMPLOYEES: 14 year-round, 28 to 37 seasonal

CLIENT MIX: 88 percent residential, 12 percent commercial

SERVICE MIX: 44 percent design/build, 28 percent maintenance, 11 percent irrigation, 7 percent snow removal, 5 percent lawn care, 5 percent Christmas décor

AVERAGE SIZE JOB: Job sites range from 1/3 of an acre to 7 acres, most jobs are approximately 1 acre

PREFERRED # OF PEOPLE PER CREW: Two

EQUIPMENT LINEUP: 8 trimmers, 10 blowers, 2 edgers, 6 chain saws, 5 hedge trimmers, 8 maintenance vehicles, 2 spray vehicles, 2 skid-steer loaders, 1 backhoe, 7 trailers, 6 dump trucks, 1 van, 3 sales vehicles, 9 pick-up trucks, 1 compact utility loader, 1 vibratory plow/trencher, 5 snow plows, 3 snow pushers, 10 walk-behind mowers and 3 riding mowers

FIVE YEARS OF GROWTH:

1998 - \$800,000

1999 - \$1.1 million

2000 - \$1.75 million

2001 - \$2.4 million

2002 - \$3.2 million

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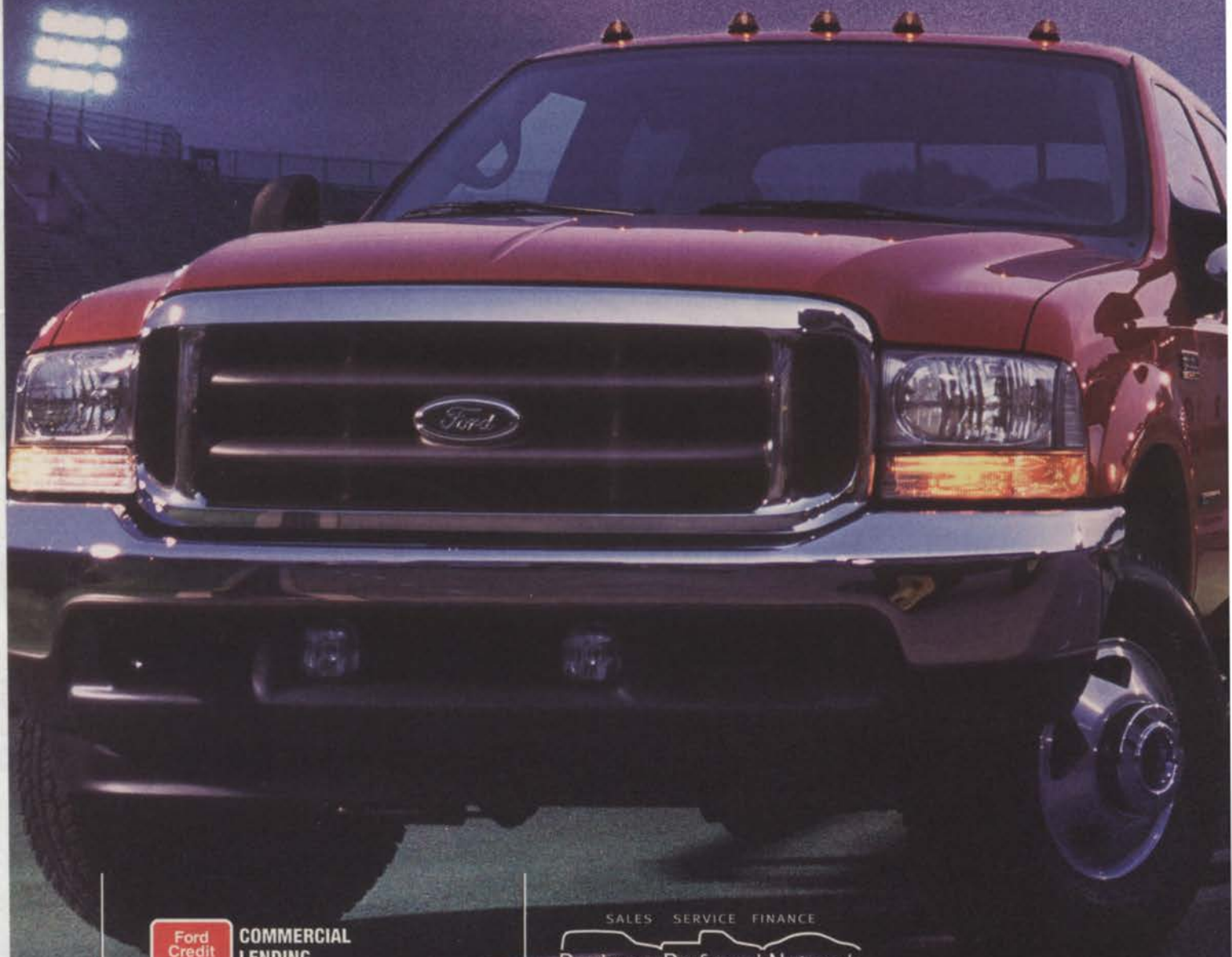
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USE READER SERVICE #38

Cover Story

(continued from page 39)

in associations, hire a consultant to improve estimating and planning and become more meticulous with setting and abiding by hourly budgets, but his father took a while to warm up to these ideas.

"I was headstrong and had tunnel vision – I didn't see the need to join associations, travel to industry trade shows or spend a lot

of money hiring consultants," Bill says. "I just wanted to sell jobs and get work done."

After Scott's first year with the business, the company passed the \$1-million mark, and he was exhausted. "We operated by the seat of our pants," Scott says. "When I came to the business, we had no idea what our costs were. We used pricing models like

'three times the cost of materials' or '2½ times the cost of plant materials.' We had no method of overhead recovery. Sure, you can do that when you're small and be OK, but this doesn't work when you're growing."

One year of this was all Scott could handle, so using experience he gained from college courses he began to figure out the company's costs and came up with a better pricing system in 2000. He tracked numbers and made everyone write down their hours.

At first, Bill thought all this extra work was a waste of time. "He said I should be estimating or working in the field instead of working on a pricing structure," Scott says. "I had a hard time getting dad to write down his hours."

But the new system instantly boosted profitability and so it didn't take long before Bill and the rest of the Neave Landscaping team saw the light. "I finally gave in and now

(continued on page 44)

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Loader 18'	\$5,400	\$4,050
Loader 20'	\$5,700	\$4,275
Loader 24'	\$6,600	\$4,950
Loader 30'	\$8,300	\$6,225



Backhoe Model

Backhoe 10'	\$3,500	\$2,625
Backhoe 12'	\$3,700	\$2,775
Backhoe 14'	\$4,000	\$3,000

Skid-Steer 6'	\$2,000	\$1,500
Skid-Steer 8'	\$2,200	\$1,650
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Scott Neave, president of Wappingers Falls, N.Y.-based Neave Landscaping, is constantly concerned with sales, cash flow, client issues and relationship building, employee management, marketing and next season's sales.

So how does he stay creative when working with his landscape designers? A conglomeration of practical thinking and innovative ideas from the company's two designers produce the best designs.

"It's hard for me to stay creative in my role – it's hard for me to change gears," Scott says. "The designers, who are able to be more creative, help me. They use their creativity to work on the drawings and I use functional thinking to edit them afterward."

For added inspiration, Scott looks through magazines for ideas and passes on landscape images he likes to the designers. He also stores these pictures in a binder for quick reference.

– Nicole Wisniewski

Creativity Corner

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Cover Story

(continued from page 42)

I see the value in all of it and what it's done for the company," Bill says. "Now the first question I ask daily is, 'Where are we at with our hours?' When we don't come in at or under budget, we're not making money. Since we've been watching hours more, we're bringing in better than 95 percent of jobs on time or under budget."

The company also started tackling overtime. First, they stopped working on Saturdays. Then they became strict – Bill has to approve overtime on all jobs. "It's rare that I do approve it," Bill says. "I would rather a couple of managers jump on in and help get done in time with the right quality than pay overtime. There have also been instances where I've turned down overtime when clients were the ones asking us to get something done. We just explain to them that it's an extra cost and that we are more than willing to help if they will pay extra for the overtime. Most clients are willing to wait to get the work done."

Scott Neave, president of Wappingers Falls, N.Y.-based Neave Landscaping, is an avid reader. "I'm constantly reading and seeking out new ideas – I think that's what makes business better."

So he collects ideas he likes from magazines and stores them in topic-focused binders so he can access them when he needs them. Some of the binder topics include marketing, employee relations, human resources and productivity.

Every once in awhile, he also makes copies of these articles and hands them out to people in the business who would benefit from them – for instance, giving an article on boosting productivity to the managers and office staff or an article on reducing client callbacks to the maintenance manager.

"No one is Albert Einstein," Scott says. "You take other people's great ideas and build on those, making them your own." – **Nicole Wisniewski**

Idea Stream

But while watching hours and limiting overtime is important to the company, so is maintaining quality. "We don't except shoddy work," Bill says.

After completing design/build jobs, Neave Landscaping gives clients a job satisfaction survey to monitor quality. The survey asks about overall service, quality of work, appearance of property, appearance of company, etc. Clients rate each category from one (poor) to five (excellent). The com-

pany also uses this form to track quality on their maintenance accounts twice a year.

If surveys come back with negative comments, Bill or Scott calls the client immediately to discuss and resolve the problem. If the issue is a matter of job quality with a crew, Bill or Scott informs the division manager of the concern who then explains to the crew why the client isn't happy or why job quality has to improve.

(continued on page 46)

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Cover Story

(continued from page 44)

MIDDLE MANAGEMENT. After more than two years together, it became evident that where Bill hated numbers and the business side of the company, Scott thrived in this area. And where Scott preferred focusing on the business to spending time in the field, Bill loved maintaining customers and focusing on job productivity and quality.

Today, Bill oversees managers in the irrigation and production departments, spending half his time in landscaping and construction and the other half in maintenance. "I do everything from meeting with clients to jumping in on crews when they need help," Bill explains. "And it's great because I'm not a computer guy. But Scott is 110 percent into that side of the business and he's a natural. You prove yourself by leadership and he's done it. When you're a leader, age doesn't have a lot to do with it. People will rally to

"YOU PROVE YOURSELF BY LEADERSHIP AND HE'S DONE IT. WHEN YOU'RE A LEADER, AGE DOESN'T HAVE A LOT TO DO WITH IT. PEOPLE WILL RALLY TO YOU AS LONG AS THEY TRUST AND RESPECT YOU."
— **BILL NEAVE ON HIS SON, SCOTT**

you as long as they trust and respect you."

Of course, going from a sole owner to having multiple managers is never easy. As the company grew, finding people to fill key roles was a challenge. "You need people who you can trust and who have the same level of commitment that you do," Bill says.

This worked out well when the company hired an administrative director to handle money management, including payroll, accounts receivable and human resources. However, when they started bringing people in to manage departments, such as irrigation and maintenance, Bill and Scott had different views on how to manage them. Scott advocated a hands-off environment with more freedom, while Bill was more of a micromanager. Bill agreed to give the managers a chance to be independent, but this didn't work as well as they hoped.

In 2001, the company grew but didn't make as much profit as expected. They realized that

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Check our August Online Extras section to find out about Bill and Scott Neave's father-son relationship outside of the office.

poor production and client and employee management were their biggest problems. Scott and Bill regrouped and cut some middle management positions, jumping back into some of these roles themselves to restructure the business and avoid the risk of losing clients and revenue. They also promoted D.L. Johnson to the construction manager position to have someone take control of that department, ensuring proper material orders, effective crew management, and seeing jobs through construction.

"We've had and have a lot of good people, and our success is directly related to their commitment and loyalty, but we've also had some bad ones with bad attitudes and they might have almost ruined the good ones," Scott says. "Our focus now is to build up the company again with great people with great attitudes."

Currently, the company seeks an account manager whose duties would include production and client management and upselling, to round out their maintenance department and set up this structure. This way, the maintenance manager can focus solely on selling new work, Scott says.

To drum up interest for middle management positions, Neave Landscaping posts job openings on the Internet and visits the State University of New York at Cobleskill and other local horticultural school career days. This helped the company obtain Victor Salamone, a designer who has been with the company for two years and is now primary estimator, and Duane Phillips, a maintenance division manager who started as a foreman, worked for the company through college and in 2001 helped make maintenance the business' largest growth area.

Neave Landscaping employs 14 year-round and 28 to 37 seasonal employees, 66 percent of which is Hispanic labor.

Last year, the company tried implementing an incentive program, but the point of the program – to motivate employees while boosting efficiency – didn't get through. "They didn't understand the concept of winning and losing together as a team," Scott

says. "And we failed to track people's progress consistently so we will not start it up again until we have a proven tracking system in place."

Instead, the company found that the best way to motivate employees to hit productivity and quality standards is through paycheck rewards. "If someone is doing well, we give him a raise and make an example of him," Scott says. "That's been our best approach and it's worked well so far."

Now that there is a structure in place and everyone's roles are more clearly defined, Scott has more time to focus on budgeting, which the company only started doing last year. "This year, the budget is better," he says. "We set our own production standards by going out in the field and actually timing different tasks and now we use it as a guideline, so we had better numbers to work with this year."

Budgeting has taught the company many business lessons. "It taught us to stay lean and forced us to look at our numbers and question them," Scott says.

Growth will continue for Neave Landscaping; however, Scott says they are going to slow it down a bit so they can catch up. "The most difficult part of fast growth and adding employees is keeping up with insurance, worker's compensation, OSHA guidelines, employee concerns and other HR issues," Bill says. "It's been a cram session to keep up with all of that. We get to plateaus and overcome the logistics of it and then have to regroup and try and get to the next level again without sacrificing clients. So, it's good to take a step back and regroup where we are now so we know we're moving in the right direction."

And now that Scott and Bill are working toward the same goals, the duo feels anything is possible. "I have to give Scott 100 percent of the credit for getting us organized and pushing us to that next level," Bill emphasizes. "We used to lock horns and argue, but now we just work as a team. We're both more involved in the business than we ever were before and the whole system is working well. He handles his end and I handle mine and by maximizing our strengths we're able to move forward together." **LL**

The author is Managing Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at twisniewski@lawandlandscape.com.

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best practices for seasonal employers

FIRST Look

by Lauren Spiers

Scott Olden (back row, fourth from right) and his employees have unique systems in place to keep the company in its top form. Photo: The Lawn Mowgul

Scott Olden tinkered with his company until \$20 per lawn turned into a \$1.1-million business.



Not many people can say they've worked almost their entire lives, but Scott Olden, president, The Lawn Mowgul, Dallas Texas, can. Olden's had business on his mind since age 14.

"I started out as a just doing some of the neighbors' yards and for a 14-year-old it wasn't too bad to have a little money," Olden comments. During his first years in business, he even advertised his fledgling company – an entrepreneur determined to succeed.

"By the time I was 15, I was probably doing 20 yards. The following spring, when I knew I could get a driver's license, I expanded out a little further," he continues. "I handed out more and more fliers and got up to about 30 or 35 yards. I realized that the more advertising I did, the more my business could grow."

Growth has been on Olden's mind since then. As a result, steady revenue increases have turned The Lawn Mowgul into a solid, \$1.1-million company.

DRIVING FORCE. Many teen-agers suffer from short attention spans, so those who push lawn mow-

ers for extra cash tend to abandon their endeavors after a few hot summers. Not so with Olden.

"I loved tinkering with my business – playing around and essentially being my own boss," he explains. This interest drove Olden to keep his business going during high school and his college career at Southern Methodist University; he also credits his parents for his early success. "My parents would say, 'If you keep working hard, you'll give yourself the means to go out and do the things you want to do,'" he remembers.

By his high school graduation, Olden was bringing in \$2,500 per week in the summers, which increased dramatically during college. "My parents said, 'We think you're making enough money that if you want to continue going to school there, you're able to pay for it,'" he comments. "I had to sit and think about tuition, which was about \$6,000 per semester. I said, 'Okay, \$6,000 equates to this many lawns,' and I started working backward from there.

(continued on page 50)

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First Look

(continued from page 48)

My goal became getting enough customers to pay for school."

In his senior year of college, the young entrepreneur realized revenue of \$175,000. He organized a staff of friends and classmates to answer client phone calls and to mow lawns while Olden took over administrative duties using his newly gained accounting education.

"I was getting a degree in accounting – something useful for business," he notes. "I still do all my own bookkeeping, prepare financial statements and all those sort of tasks."

But one rule all accountants know is that keeping accurate records and running a business by the books means accounting for taxes, as well. "In college, the challenge of putting a business together shifted," Olden insists. From 1988 to 1992, he focused on implementing business elements that would make The Lawn Mowgul a valid company.

"Some of the challenges I faced were taking taxes out of my employees' checks and telling customers I couldn't charge just \$20 to mow their lawns anymore," Olden comments. "I also had to get insurance in case something happened – important steps like that. I was adapting everything so the company wasn't under-the-table. I wanted it to function like a legitimate business."

LESSONS LEARNED. With a genuine business up and running in the early 90s, Olden

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Check our Online Extras section to learn more about The Lawn Mowgul's piecemeal payment system and employee incentives.

saw revenue between \$200,000 and \$300,000 through 1996. During that time, Olden began dabbling with business acquisitions, as well. "The fun part of that was figuring out what they were worth and how much advertising I would need to do to achieve those numbers vs. buy this other company," he comments.

In 1998 The Lawn Mowgul's revenue doubled to \$800,000, when Olden purchased a company about the same size as his own. "We took on all of the other company's accounts, eight to 12 of their employees and all of their equipment," he notes.

The acquisition added about 150 more customers to The Lawn Mowgul's client base. This was a huge step for the company, and one Olden stumbled over a bit.

"The new clients were used to dealing with the other owner who personally visited all the accounts on a regular basis," Olden says. "We had weaned our customers off the regular on-site visits by the owner. It offers a personal touch but realistically limits growth from a time management standpoint. Our quality of service wasn't going down – we were just training our crews to be able to tend to clients on-the-spot."

Unfortunately, Olden's business practices resulted in some service cancellations, but taught some practical business lessons, as well.

"We learned how difficult it is if you try to grow too fast," he notes, "but we've been able to make up for the accounts we lost." Between 1999 and 2001, Olden struggled to maintain his \$800,000 in revenue. It took three years to adjust to the sudden growth, but the company broke through the \$1-million wall in 2002.

Olden now prefers to grow his client base through advertising. "I've tried every-

thing," he assures. "I commit a little money every year to try something new. This year's experiment was radio ads and it didn't work very well. We had a good minute-long ad that we ran for three consecutive Fridays, 12 times per day. I didn't get any calls from it and that's really disappointing, but I feel that without trying things, you don't get to know the details of it."

Olden paid about \$600 per week for the radio ad – just a portion of the 5 percent of his yearly budget reserved for advertising. Though his portfolio of marketing techniques includes the Internet, truck signage, home and garden shows and contributing "one month of free service" deals to silent auctions and charities, the marketing tool that most successfully drives volume for the company is door fliers. The highest-quality accounts come from referrals.

"We really want to grow the commercial end of our business," he comments. The company currently has a 60/40 percent mix of residential and commercial work, and Olden notes that few of their commercial accounts came from organized marketing.

"The commercial accounts we have now just kind of fall into our lap," he says. "It's either a referral or our trucks happen to be near the job site. We're either there at the right time or we just got the luck of the draw in the phone book that day."

To overcome this obstacle, Olden wants to hire a skillful commercial salesperson. "The methodology behind building a database of commercial clients and collecting business intelligence on who to target and when their contracts are up, is different from what goes into targeting residential custom-

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Most contractors pay their crewmembers hourly rates commensurate with their skills, and most new hires expect that when they sign on with a new company.

However, Scott Olden, president, The Lawn Mowgul, Dallas, Texas, employs a payment method that not only puts money in crewmembers' pockets, but has a less damaging effect on the company's budget if a crewmember isn't pulling his or her weight.

"It's a confusing system at first," Olden admits, "but even if the crewmembers don't understand all the details, they can tell that they come out on top when they do the work they're supposed to."

The "piecemeal" payment system Olden uses divides the profit on completed projects between each crewmember in predetermined amounts.

"For us, two-person crews are the most productive. If we hire someone to work on a two-person crew and service 20 yards in a day, each yard would be worth a predetermined number of credits based on our profit expectations for each job," Olden explains. "The foreman and worker each have their own multipliers - similar to wages - for the credits they earn."

For legal purposes, Olden guarantees that each employee will make the greater of The Lawn Mowgul's piecemeal system or minimum wage with the applicable overtime. "That way I won't have a guy working a 60-hour week but hardly making any money," he notes. "I define the system so that a new hire is coming to work for minimum wage, but they'll earn much more than they meet targeted productivity."

Additionally, instead of giving raises, Olden's employees can have more lawns added to their routes as they become more efficient. "If I have a crew that can handle 15 percent more work than expected and they're not getting any complaints, they'll either benefit by finishing their work earlier in the day and keeping the same amount of money or we can add more lawns to increase the amount of money they take home," he adds. - **Lauren Spiers**

Piecemeal Payment

ers," he suggests. "We need someone to open those doors for us."

Though Olden is anxious to grow his business, he knows the best approach is slow and steady. "I've learned that growing too fast is detrimental," he comments.

"Last year when we broke \$1 million in sales, we added about \$600,000 in sales, but we only grew about 15 or 20 percent. We lost more

business from recurring work that we should have retained. I've done the math on our metroplex and the opportunity is out there - it's achievable - but we really need to remember to grow the business in steps." **LL**

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at lspiers@lawnandlandscape.com.



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Managing HOA Accounts

by Lauren Spiers



Homeowners' associations often share space with lakes, creeks, or woodland areas, creating lots of detail work for maintenance crews. Photo: Stay Green

Homeowners' associations are a unique service segment. Here are some tips on handling them.

After a solid 30 or 40 years working in the corporate world, many men and women dream of retiring from their jobs, heading south and moving into a nice condominium. Relaxing in a lounge chair in the sun certainly beats managing a bunch of employees in an office building, and in these all-inclusive environments, condo and homeowners' association (HOA) residents have all the necessary amenities at hand.

But many landscape contractors who service HOAs know that just because these customers have retired from their jobs doesn't mean they've also retired from managing their properties.

"Having an HOA account can be like having several private homeowners as bosses," describes Fred Hollman, owner, Frederick's Landscaping, Cincinnati, Ohio. "The residents have all had their own homes before and they

know how they used to handle the landscape at their houses and feel like that should be applied to the HOA when they move in. They don't usually look at the whole scope of the property or the total picture—they're just looking at their own little space."

To deal with the potential problems this situation can bring, Hollman and other contractors advise thorough, constant communication when handling HOAs.

KEEP IN TOUCH. In reality, HOA accounts are somewhere in the middle of the landscape maintenance spectrum, with commercial accounts on one end and residential jobs on the other.

"Homeowners' associations differ from commercial accounts in that this is where people live," comments Linda Novy, founder and chair, Gardeners' Guild, San Rafael, Calif. "The residents have a much

(continued on page 70)

HOA How-to

SUPPLEMENT TO

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Lawn & Landscape

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BY DOUGLAS WELSH

Falling FOR Trees

Fall is the ideal time for planting trees and shrubs.

During fall, the weather becomes slightly cooler and gardeners slowly migrate back outdoors, which is what makes fall the perfect time to add a new tree or a grouping of shrubs to the landscape.

Many people prefer January through March for planting, but the fall months of September through December have distinct advantages. Fall planting follows the heat of summer and precedes a cool winter season. Trees and shrubs planted use this to their advantage. During the winter months, the root systems of the fall-planted specimens develop and become established. When spring arrives, this expanded root system can support and take advantage of the full surge of spring growth.

Fall is the optimum time to plant balled-and-burlapped trees and shrubs since they have ample time to recover from transplanting and proliferate roots before spring growth begins. Remember however, all bare root plants, including roses and pecan and fruit trees, should be planted in late winter when they are completely dormant.

SELECTING PLANTS. When buying plants for the landscape, be sure to get healthy, well-grown plants. Always buy from a reputable dealer. Beware of plant

bargains. The price tag – especially on the cheapest plants – is not always the best guide to quality.

All plants have growing requirements. Think about the plant's needs before purchasing. Is it adapted to your area's soil? Will it grow in sun or shade? Does it need a wet or dry location? Is it cold hardy? Some nurseries have this type of information on tags beside the plant. If not, ask a nursery professional or the county extension agent.

Every plant in the landscape should serve a purpose. Ask clients if they want a plant for screening, privacy or for shade. How large will it be five years from now? Plants, like people, grow up. Remember, that a small 1-gallon size plant will look entirely different after a few years of growth in a client's landscape.

PLANTING PROPERLY. Here are a few guidelines on getting the job done right:

Dig a hole large enough in diameter so that the root system has at least six inches of clearance on all sides. The root ball should rest on a solid soil foundation, so don't dig the hole much deeper than the ball.

Plant the tree or shrub slightly above the level of the surrounding soil, to allow for settling and increased soil drainage.



Ensuring that trees and shrubs are properly set within the right size hole is key to successful plantings. Photo: Davey Tree

Carefully place the tree or shrub in the hole. Handle the plant by the root ball, not by the trunk. A broken ball of earth can mean a dead plant. Always remove any container before planting.

Backfill the hole, using only the native soil removed from the hole; do not use soil amendments when planting large shrubs and trees. Fill the hole, and firm the soil around the plant. Water thoroughly to settle the soil around the roots and to eliminate any air pockets.

Do not fertilize the tree or shrub after planting. Wait until early in the spring to do this, and even then, go lightly. Heavy applications of fertilizer may burn and injure the root system, and could possibly kill the plant.

Watering has been and remains paramount in transplanting. At the time of transplanting, soak the root ball and surrounding soil. A thorough watering every seven to 10 days dramatically increases the success ratio. More frequent watering may encourage root rot. Remember, more trees and shrubs fail from over watering than from under watering.

Before calling it a day, add 4 to 6 inches of mulch – pine bark, compost, grass clippings or leaves – around the base of newly planted trees and shrubs. This keeps weeds down and conserves soil moisture. **LL**

The author is professor and extension horticulturist, Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas A&M University System, College Station, Texas, and can be reached at 979/845-8568.

TREE IRRIGATION

BY LAUREN SPIERS

Contractors can purchase drip irrigation tubing with evenly spaced preinstalled emitters or can "punch-in" their own emitters for the ultimate in irrigation flexibility. Photo: Wade Pryor

Trees and shrubs are landscape focal points.

Brush up on proper watering to keep them full and green.

During training, football players often push themselves through two-a-days to practice passing, blocking and scoring strategies. Practice makes perfect, so the more often they train, the stronger the team is on the field. At the same time, though, if these athletes trained three times per day, their bodies might not be able to handle the extra stress.

Similarly, moderation is an important concept when irrigating trees and shrubs. Just because these landscape giants are larger than flowers or other low plants doesn't mean they can handle a heavy 20-minute soaking every day. At the same time, contractors shouldn't take trees' and shrubs' hardiness to mean that they can go without irrigation for too long.

Trees and shrubs are generally considered anchors of landscape designs, so having a better understanding of their watering requirements can help keep entire plantings firmly grounded.

BETTER WETTERS. "Trees are large, so you want to have a nice, deep root system," outlines Carrie Copeland, marketing program manager, Rain Bird, Azusa, Calif. "That means deeper watering."

Most tree care and irrigation experts and researchers agree that understanding this point is critical



when caring for trees and shrubs. Copeland notes that not only does deep irrigation allow water to reach all the way down to these plants' roots, but it also keeps them far below the surface. "The idea is to have water percolate down to the root system because if you only have surface water [through a sprinkler system], the roots will come up and run along the ground," she says. "That's when you see root systems breaking sidewalks and cracking building foundations."

To achieve deep watering, manufacturers provide irrigation products that are quite different from familiar rotors and spray heads. Emitters can range from effusive bubbler nozzles to trickling drip lines.

Soaking Solutions



LEAKY LEXICON

Some approaches to irrigation are ideal for tree and shrub care while others serve different purposes.

Dave Palumbo, xerigation specifications manager, Rain Bird, Azusa, Calif., provided some definitions for a few of the prominent players.

BUBBLERS – Bubblers can provide water at rates up to about 2 gallons per minute (gpm), and are best used to soak the root areas for trees and shrubs. Efficiency is high because little water is lost to drifting or runoff.

DRIP IRRIGATION – Drip irrigation uses lengths of tubing in combination with in-line emitters or emitters that contractors can “punch in” at the appropriate places to allow water to seep out very slowly and percolate down to plants’ roots.

ROOT WATERING – Originally an impromptu device created by contractors, root watering systems are buried with a tree’s root ball and allow water to circulate immediately around the roots. Water levels can be changed over time to avoid overwatering.

ROTORS – Rotors are generally single-stream sprinkler heads used in very large areas, usually on corporate campuses or athletic fields. Efficiency is much lower than drip irrigation or bubblers and precipitation rates are not usually high enough to adequately water trees and shrubs.

SPRAY HEADS – Spray heads provide an umbrella of water over a certain area. Like rotors, spray heads are used mainly for turf irrigation and are inefficient for tree and shrub applications.

– Lauren Spiers

ments Dave Palumbo, xerigation specifications manager, Rain Bird. “People will typically use bubblers or drip emitters on trees, but these products aren’t really effective if the soil is very hard or compacted. In those situations, it might take a very long time for water to penetrate down to the depth where the roots can use it.”

Palumbo explains that root watering systems consist of a tube surrounded by mesh so that, as the column of water fills up, the water trickles out through the mesh and goes directly to the root ball.

A typical flow rate for this type of device is around .25 to .5 gpm, according to Palumbo. Other forms of irrigation use much lower precipitation rates to achieve the same effect.

“One very effective product is called drip line, which is tubing that has emitters preinstalled in it,” Copeland mentions. “This product has pressure compensation so the same amount of water is coming out of every hole.”

Because each type of drip line can be calibrated differently, Copeland stresses that precipitation rates aren’t specifically calculated for this type of product, but they generally move .5 to 1 gallon of water per hour. Obviously, drip line irrigates trees and shrubs at much slower rates than bubblers. The lower rate allows the water to permeate down to the root ball over a longer period of time.

“Drip is our preferred method of watering,” mentions Dave Loe, nursery manager, Allisonville Nursery, Fishers, Ind. “Because of certain soil conditions here, if we used bubblers, we would end up with a lot of runoff, where drip gives the water time to soak into the ground.”

Hoveln adds that while bubblers may be a low-tech way to irrigate, they tend to

“Bubblers either attach to the top of a spray body or a riser and discharge water at the rate of .25 to 2 gallons per minute [gpm],” defines Steve Hoveln, marketing products manager, Hunter, San Marcos, Calif.

Products like this can either allow large amounts of water to flood out of the nozzle or have several streams of water to concentrate the irrigation on a certain spot, which is important for deep watering.

“Typically, when you’re irrigating trees and shrubs, there’s more of a concentrated area that you’re trying to water,” Hoveln comments. “The water needs to be discharged very close to the base of the plant material and is allowed to soak deep into the ground.”

He adds that irrigating large plant material with sprays or rotors is ineffective because such products spread water over a much larger area, limiting how deep the water seeps into the ground.

Deep root watering is important for the life of a tree, especially important when a tree or shrub is initially transplanted. Some manufacturers offer root watering systems that are buried next to the root ball, allowing the water to immediately reach the plant’s roots.

“A root watering system is basically a tube that allows you to get water deep down into the root zone of the tree,” com-

clog less than drip line, which has minute holes that can plug up with grit in and around the line.

“When you put in a drip system, it’s very important that you have filtration,” Copeland agrees. “These are very small devices with very small holes. A lot of areas use very small filters of 150 or 200 mesh to catch any debris in the line.”

Most drip line products are available with holes spaced about every 12, 18 or 24 inches, making it a good choice for hedgerows where the individual root systems have a uniform spacing. According to Copeland, contractors can purchase the

TREE IRRIGATION

appropriate tubing that would allow them to space emitters right next to the shrubs' trunks for effective irrigation.

Depending on the manufacturer, in-line emitter tubing costs between \$20 and \$35 for 500 feet of tubing and fittings for bubblers can run \$1 to \$5. Root watering systems generally cost about \$15.

SOAKER SECRETS. Using the right products, contractors are on their way to properly irrigating clients' trees and shrubs, but there are other important points to remember. First, because trees and shrubs require more water at lower frequencies than other landscape plants, experts advise running their irrigation on a dedicated line in the system.

"Any irrigation for trees and shrubs needs to be separate from the normal turf irrigation," Hovel insists. "There are different application rates, for one thing, and different watering requirements for different plant material. Turf might need to be watered three days per week to stay green whereas if you just water your trees one day per week and let that water soak into the ground, that would be sufficient."

Copeland adds that if lawn sprinkler systems run long enough to give trees and shrubs enough irrigation, the amount of runoff from the turf would be very high, wasting water and damaging the grass.

Though most contractors know that trees and shrubs require more water than flowers, for instance, the challenge becomes determining just how much water the bigger plants need.

"THE WATER needs to be discharged very close to the base of the plant material and is allowed to soak deep into the ground." - Steve Hovel

"There's no hard and fast rule for how much water trees need as compared with other plants," says Tom Smiley, arboriculture researcher, Bartlett Tree Research Laboratory, Charlotte, N.C. "Still, there are some devices that can help you monitor soil moisture." Smiley notes that tools called tensiometers effectively measure how much water is in the soil. Additionally, some new electronic devices can be buried in areas with trees or shrubs and can record data for up to six months before needing a new battery. Smiley explains that contractors can download this information to their computers and monitor soil conditions regularly.

"I use a probe that is sold on the market that you can insert in the ground to read the amount of water in the soil," says Joe Kelly, irrigation foreman, Davey Tree, Celebration, Fla. Kelly and his irrigation technicians visit properties at least once per month to check the soil moisture and irrigation system. He adds, "occasionally you

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can see the soil moisture for yourself. If you're watering too much, some of the water will stay at the surface and puddle up considerably."

Loe stands by another time-proven method of checking the soil. "Just feeling the dirt is a great indicator of whether or not you need to water," he says. "The biggest issue we see with our clients is not a problem of people not watering, but of watering incorrectly. Most of the time they'll put down too much water or water too fast so that it either runs off or runs into the loosened backfill instead of into the root zone area."

Loe and Kelly both mention that overwatering can harm trees and shrubs as much as underwatering – a key piece of information for keeping plants healthy. "If you're not irrigating properly, the stress will show in the tree or shrub itself," Kelly comments. "You could be lacking water or drowning the plant. That's why you really have to physically monitor them – especially the first few weeks after [planting]."

Smiley provides some telltale signs of drought and overwatering.

"If we're suspecting lack of water, we're going to look for drooping leaves, curling leaves, offcolor foliage," he comments. "There are actually very similar symptoms with excess water, although you can tell that the soil is saturated. We often encourage hand-watering new transplants to make sure they're not overdone."

Smiley also urges contractors to irrigate trees and shrubs at the bases of the trunks, but not directly against them. "We like to water close to the trunk, but never touching the trunk itself because that can lead to some disease problems – especially the rotting types of diseases," he details.

Finally, contractors should remember that unlike grass, for instance, the amount of irrigation trees and shrubs require decreases over time.

"For new transplants, we manually water them a good amount for the first few days,

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TREE IRRIGATION

then drop it down considerably to maybe 15 or 20 minutes every other day," Kelly says. "If you're using bubblers, you can set them to get 1.5 or 2 gpm at first and then lower the gallonage for the bubbler over time. That's when the 'green thumb' effect comes in – the tree is established and doesn't need as much water."

Loe adds an easy-to-remember trick to that effect. "Depending on the plant material and the weather conditions, watering trees and shrubs twice a week is usually sufficient," he says. "For new transplants, the general rule is to keep up that watering schedule one year for every inch in diameter of the tree. That's how long it takes for a tree or shrub to fully adjust to its new site." **LL**

The author is Assistant Editor of *Lawn & Landscape* magazine and can be reached at lspiers@lawnandlandscape.com.

FAIRY TALE IRRIGATION

Goldilocks would make a great irrigation contractor.

The same way she'd search for a bed that's not "too hard" or "too soft," the blonde befriender of bears could identify the ideal amount of irrigation different trees or shrubs require.

It's no tall tale that watering trees and shrubs is a considerably different undertaking than watering flowers in landscape beds. The following tips are provided by Allisonville Nurseries, Fishers, Ind., to help contractors keep trees watered "just right."

- Proper watering is a necessary requirement immediately after transplanting any balled-and-burlapped or containerized plant. Including a root stimulator with the initial watering will help lessen transplant shock and encourage new root growth. Regular watering during the first few months after transplanting is vital to establishing the plant in the landscape.
- Your trees and shrubs will need individual attention until they become established. Keep in mind that trees take one year per caliper inch become established.
- As a rule of thumb, plants need at least one inch of water per week through rain or irrigation. The best way to water trees and shrubs is to place a hose by the base of the plant and set it at a slow trickle. If set at the proper rate, water will be absorbed and not run off the root ball. A slow soaking is the goal.
- Overwatering can be as much of a problem as underwatering. Unfortunately, symptoms of both problems are similar. Signs of overwatering may include yellowing of leaves and an overall limp appearance. Additional watering will not revive the plant. Underwatered plants will also wilt and may brown around leaf edges. However, under-watered plants will respond with additional water.
- The best way to determine watering needs is to physically check the soil 4 inches deep around the root ball. If the soil is wet, don't water. If the soil is dry, the plants require irrigation.
- Balled and burlapped trees and shrubs require individual attention for the first year or two until their root systems are established. Allow a trickle of water the thickness of a pencil to run from the hose. Slowly soak the root ball and surrounding area.
- Most plants die by drowning rather than neglect. Don't "kill them with kindness" by watering too much.
- Infrequent, deep watering encourages deep root growth and discourages mildew, fungi and disease. — **Lauren Spiers**



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USE READER SERVICE #57



State officials, field entomologists and tree-survey crews are working hard to stop a citrus longhorned beetle infestation in the Pacific Northwest. Photo: Washington State Department of Agriculture

Citrus LONGHORNED Beetles

Washington state's tree slayer: The citrus longhorned beetle.

Trees in Puget Sound are at risk from a tree-killing insect first discovered there in August 2001. The citrus longhorned beetle (CLHB) is one of the worst non-native pests to ever enter the United States. The wood-boring beetle is considered a serious pest in Asia. In Washington, it poses an unprecedented threat to the environment because it attacks healthy trees and has no natural enemies. If this pest becomes permanently established in Washington, thousands of trees could be destroyed.

THE THREAT. A big insect with irregular white splotches – the citrus longhorned beetle is shiny and black. It has six legs,



measures 1½ to 2 inches long and has antennae that are distinctly banded with black and white. The antennae are longer than the body itself. This is a pest that can fly, thus it can spread relatively quickly.

Adult beetles emerge from the interior of trees from mid- to late-summer and live outside the tree for as long as three months. During this period, the beetles eat leaves and twigs, mate and the female lays up to 200 eggs under the tree bark. The adult beetles then die. Soon after the eggs are laid, cream-colored grubs hatch, chew their ways into the trees' interiors and feed relentlessly.

For nine months, the grubs bore several interior tunnels in the tree, severing tissues

that carry nutrients and water and, eventually, starving the tree to death.

SAVING TREES. In spite of its name, the citrus longhorned beetle attacks a wide range of hardwood species of trees, including maple, poplar, oak, willow and fruit trees, such as apple, pear and cherry. These are some of the more popular trees for landscaping in the Pacific Northwest.

By taking decisive action now, the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) and affiliated groups hope to spare hundreds, if not thousands, of trees from an untimely end. Research findings based on infestations of a similar insect – the Asian Longhorned Beetle – in New York City and Chicago indicate that plans to prevent an infestation must use a multi-tactic approach.

The WSDA instituted a quarantine ½ mile around the site where three CLHB beetles were captured and five others escaped. The plant quarantine took effect in late November 2001 and is expected to remain in place for a number of years.

Tree removal, the only proven way for killing CLHB larvae in trees, took place during July and early August of 2002. About 1,000 trees within a one-eighth mile radius of the CLHB beetle escape site in Tukwila, Wash., were cut and chipped. Tree injection, a process by which insecticide is injected directly into a tree, took place in early August along the outer edge of the tree-cutting area. About 1,500 trees were treated with a liquid insecticide that kills CLHB beetles feeding on leaves, twigs and bark.

One other key tactic to controlling the spread of the pest is tree inspection. An initial survey of trees from the ground and in the canopy took place from September through November 2002. To adequately detect the presence or absence of this creature, survey crews may take bark and tree limb samples. – Washington State Department of Agriculture

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For more information about the citrus longhorned beetle, visit the WSDA Web site at <http://agr.wa.gov/PlantInsects/InsectPests/CLHB>.

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USE READER SERVICE #64

Managing HOA Accounts

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more intimate connection with the land than people who work on a commercial office site do." Additionally, Novy notes that many HOAs "interface" with a natural border, such as a stream, wetland or woodland, which often require extra attention during maintenance.

Dealing with the residential facet of HOAs in combination with the commercial-sized aspects of the accounts requires contractors to establish a single point of contact on each property - usually a property manager. Ensuring that all contracts, requests and other documentation pass through the hands of this individual maximizes organization and efficiencies by having one person can "OK" everything without numerous people providing their input.

Still, HOAs can be quite expansive, so keeping in touch with the property manager is a must.

"Our account managers have every property manager's cell phone number," Hollman

(continued on page 72)

Most contractors who service homeowners' associations (HOAs) work closely with property managers or management firms to funnel all project bids, maintenance requests and other information through a single person rather than taking direction from a legion of condominium residents.

However, experienced HOA contractors also insist on gaining the favor of each account's board of directors.

"The board members are residents of the property," explains Linda Novy, founder and chair, Gardeners' Guild, San Rafael, Calif. "They're elected by the homeowners and sometimes homeowners also attend board meetings."

Novy has her account managers attend board meetings at certain times of the year, which provides opportunities for the company to hear and respond to residents' questions. "Generally, we'll go over a plan, a work order, give a seasonal update, or maybe discuss a particular is-

sue or topic that the board and the residents are interested in," she says.

"We really try to get that face time because you have a lot of critical eyes on you while you're there," agrees Fred Hollman, owner, Frederick's Landscaping, Cincinnati, Ohio. "Sometimes you become a target because any resident with a complaint will be there to confront you about it. [But] you can also explain yourself there and teach the residents who may not be educated about the landscape why you can or can't perform certain tasks they request."

Hollman notes that one of his properties is in a hilly area with a lot of swales that occasionally go unmowed because of their marshy conditions. "You can't mow when there's water sitting in them because it will create ruts and damage the turf," he expresses. "But the average person doesn't know that, so this is an issue that we can respond to and have it recorded in the board meeting minutes."

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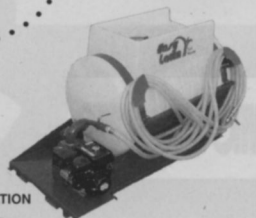
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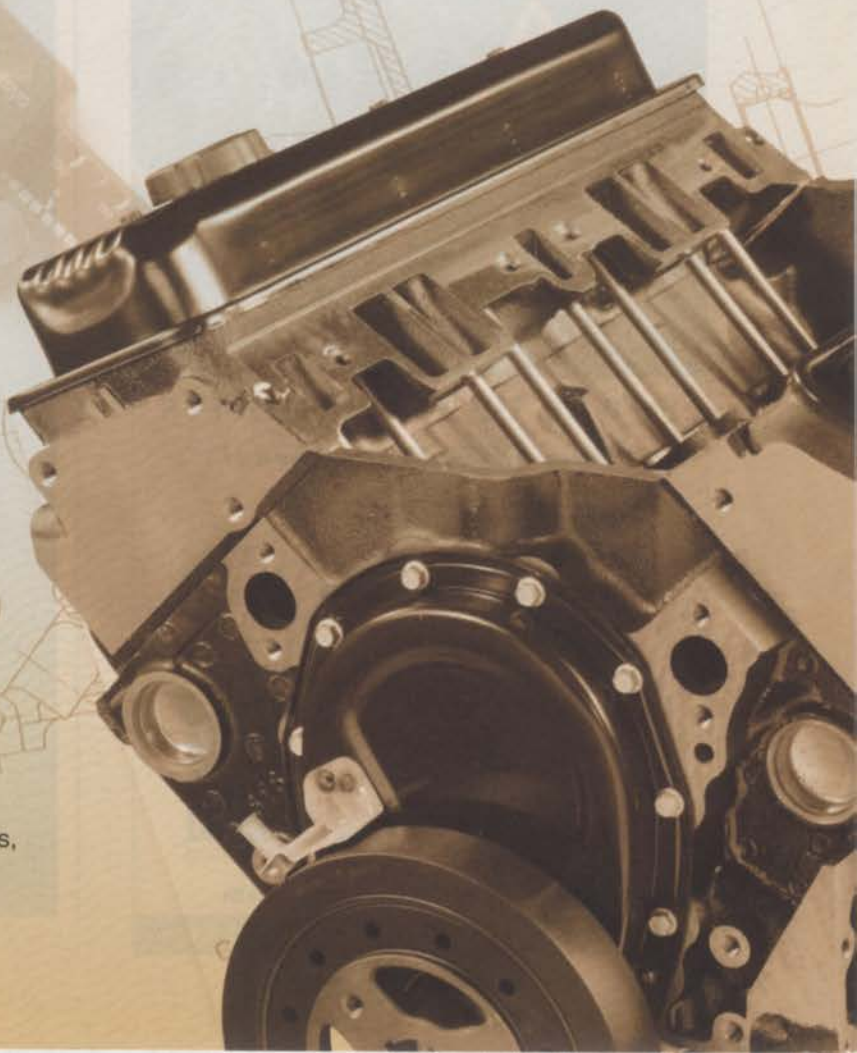
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Managing HOA Accounts

(continued from page 70)

mentions. "There's constant communication and it's our main goal to keep that communication going. We may talk to these managers two or three times per week on large sites."

Both Novy's and Hollman's companies advocate walking each jobsite with property managers several times a year to see and discuss all project details.

"We have two adjacent homeowners' associations and we recently did a walk-through with both [HOA] presidents and both property managers," Novy says. "We had a creek specialist join us because both properties interface with a creek and we had representatives from the city there as well. It's a great way to discuss plans, get the big picture and be in the field enjoying the landscape."

Novy's account managers handle walk-throughs monthly or quarterly depending on the property and Hollman's try to visit each property three times per year to get client feedback. Likewise, Eric Cross, president, Duke's Landscape Management,

Hackettstown, N.J., ensures that all of his HOA accounts are visited on a regular basis.

"I personally see all of our accounts at least once per month and my account managers are on each of their sites weekly to visit the crew while they're working," Cross notes. "When you're working with property managers, if you do a good job on one site, the property manager will try to bring you along to additional sites. Part of what we do is try to reduce headaches and phone calls for our property managers because we know that if we can make their job easier, they're going to fight for us and represent us at HOA board meetings."

In addition, most contractors agree that the most important responsibilities on HOAs are professionalism and being proactive.

"The way I look at a lot of these properties is to consider what's really best for them," Hollman expresses. "It's not about how many plants we can stick in the ground on an up-sell. I'm a firm believer that most of these

HOAs need to properly take care of what they've got instead of just adding to it. Being proactive means looking at what's in their best interest now, as well as two or three years down the road."

For Cross, being proactive has instilled a strong sense of trust in the property managers he works with; "It's gotten to the point where most of our clients will now tell us, 'We have \$20,000 in our budget for upgrades - where should we spend the money,'" he relates. "They come to us for advice because they trust our judgment and know we've looked out for their property in the past. And, of course, the work for these upgrades is more profitable because we're not bidding against five other competitors."

THIS OLD HOA. Just because most contractors work directly with property managers on HOA accounts doesn't mean work requests from residents stop coming in. In

(continued on page 74)



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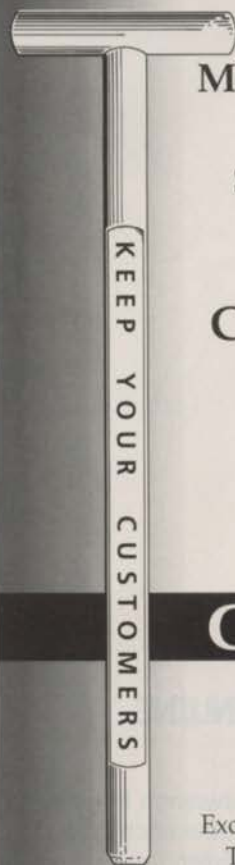
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Managing HOA Accounts

(continued from page 72)

situations where homeowners want their lawns spruced up or a few planting beds added – services that fall outside of general HOA maintenance contracts – contractors handle these requests differently.

"Many times, residents will call our company directly with requests and we gently steer them back to the property management company," Novy comments. "If they're asking for an improvement in what's considered a common area, we let the property manager filter those. Sometimes, though, a private individual will want a few things planted and we'll generally refer another landscaping company."

Other companies, however, will take on the additional work requests. "If a homeowner wants to re-landscape their unit, they get permission from the homeowners' association and then call us in to design a new landscape," Cross comments.

Hollman has a similar approach. "If it's an out-of-scope service – additional mow-

ing or something like that – we do check with the property manager first and if they approve it, we'll do the work, and there's a charge for that," he explains. In instances where the homeowner simply requests edging a few extra inches along the sidewalk, for instance, Hollman's crews will go ahead with the work to please the customer.

Novy agrees that communicating with homeowners is important. "If a resident comes out while the crew is there working and asks that they make sure to rake a certain area, for example, our crew is going to respond, 'Yes, absolutely,'" she remarks.

One Hispanic crew leader for Gardeners' Guild wanted to be able to communicate with homeowners so earnestly that he took an English as a Second Language class offered by the company and is now able to converse with residents on his route.



HOA residents' requests means extra revenue for some contractors.
Photo: Stay Green

"Because a lot of our workforce is Hispanic, there's a disconnect there if there's no communication," Novy says. "Being able to speak with the residents made the crew leader feel terrific and it made the homeowner feel terrific, as well, because they knew their requests were being heard and could tell that the crew leader really cared about his job and the property."

Another way contractors solidify their presence on HOAs and keep communication consistent is through effective routing.

"Our crews are dedicated to certain accounts," Hollman mentions. "With HOAs, there's a lot of hand-holding, so one supervisor has the same routes every week. You

(continued on page 76)

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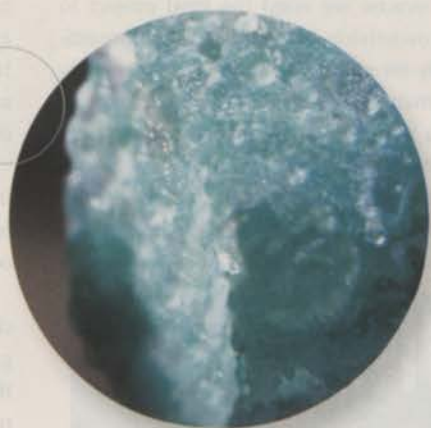
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Managing HOA Accounts

(continued from page 74)

have to have the same people visiting the site to build up a comfort level. We have the same maintenance crews handle the same accounts, so they'll get to know that 'Mrs. Jones' likes her lawn mowed a certain way and they remember that every week."

Novy agrees. "We're very sensitive not to have too many different crews on each

site because we want the final project to have ownership," she adds. "There's an emphasis on communication with the property managers and the HOAs, but there's also a tremendous amount of communication internally." Novy's employees attend staff meetings every Monday and Friday, as well as integrated pest management meet-

ings once a month. These give account managers opportunities to discuss needs and treatments on accounts and keep maintenance, irrigation and support crews up-to-date on what's happening at each property.

But despite all efforts to keep everyone informed and happy, there will always be a few accounts in this service segment that a contractor just won't be able to please.

"We've had new boards come in and want a clean slate, so they got rid of the attorney and the garbage company and the landscaper - all of that," Cross remembers. "More often than not they hire us again, but we insist on two-

"PART OF WHAT WE DO IS TRY TO REDUCE HEADACHES AND PHONE CALLS FOR OUR PROPERTY MANAGERS BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT IF WE CAN MAKE THEIR JOB EASIER, THEY'RE GOING TO FIGHT FOR US AND REPRESENT US AT HOA BOARD MEETINGS." — ERIC CROSS

to five-year contracts, which kind of insulate us from the changes that can happen."

Additionally, Cross recommends picking up accounts in this service segment that have been established for a couple of years rather than bringing on brand new HOAs. "New board members don't really understand the responsibilities or the roles, so we've found that it's better for us to wait a couple of years until things get settled and then it becomes a more attractive account for us," he continues.

When a new property manager does come into the picture, Hollman recommends getting in touch with the new manager to discuss the what's been going on with the account. "The most important step is to talk to him about what you've done and what you want to do," he suggests. "Also, talk with the board of directors because if you've done a good job, they'll think highly of you and that's who you want to win the favor of - they're who you're working for." **LL**

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at lsapiers@lawnandlandscape.com.



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USE READER SERVICE #73

True to



Fall Fertilization

by Kevin McCorville

Properly timed fall fertilization prepares turf for dormancy. Photo: Lawn & Landscape staff

Fertilize lawns in the fall before they take a winter rest to create strong root systems and reduce spring work.

How is a bear similar to a lawn?

Both require the right kind and amount of nutrition to hibernate.

This riddle's answer offers a couple of keys to preparing lawns for a long, cold winter.

Still, some customers might wonder why their lawns need fall fertilization if snow is right around the corner, but the process is crucial for maintaining root systems and early spring green-up.

"The average customer doesn't always know the importance of fall fertilization," admits Ray Buckwalter, product manager, Lebanon Turf Products, Lebanon, Pa. "But if I were going to start a lawn care program for a new customer, I would start it in the fall. If you don't fertilize your lawn in the fall, you can't catch up [the next spring]."

After a dry summer, fall is a recuperative period for cool-season varieties and some varieties of warm-season turfgrass, adds Bob Staib, consultant, Nu-Gro Technologies, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Indeed, a proper fall fertilization plan will maximize the grass's recovery period and prepare it for healthy growth once soil temperatures rise in spring.

WARM- & COOL-SEASON TURF NEEDS. To cope with the winter weather, both cool-season and warm-season turfgrasses require a balanced, nutritional diet applied at the right time in the fall before they become dormant for the winter. At the same time, though, cool- and warm-season turfgrasses require different nutrient amounts at different times of year, Buckwalter says.

This is because cool-season turfgrasses thrive in autumn's cooler soil temperatures and absorb more nutrients than in the spring, Buckwalter adds. But warm-season turfgrasses approach dormancy in the cooler weather and should be fed fewer nutrients.

"Fertilizing warm-season turf in the fall is similar to fertilizing cool-season turf in the spring," Buckwalter compares. "In both cases, the turf is headed into the period of greatest stress."

(continued on page 80)

A
Head
START

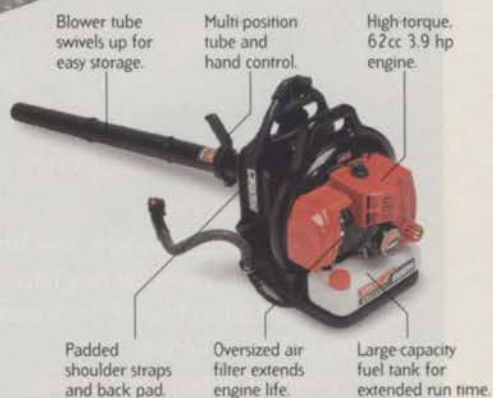
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Fall Fertilization

(continued from page 78)

Feeding warm-season turfgrass too much nitrogen-heavy fertilizer during the fall delays its period of dormancy and raises its risk of winter cold damage because the grass can't regulate the amount of nutrients it consumes, Buckwalter explains. "Generally speaking, they should be allowed to go into winter a little hungry to reduce winter mortality," he says.

Too much nitrogen too early in fall also can be detrimental to cool-season turf, increasing the risk of winter damage, according to Chuck Paulson, national sales manager, Spring Valley Turf Products, Jackson, Wis. He notes that dead patches of grass in spring may result and adds that application success "all comes down to timing and calibration."

TIMING IS CRITICAL. For lawn care operators (LCOs), promoting strong root growth is the most important factor in the fall fertilization process. Few, if any, turf varieties have something to lose from fall fertilization, unless the application is improperly timed.

"The long-term vigor of plants is determined by the root system's ability to supply nutrients and water through normal stresses of weather, disease and insect pressure – and in many cultured turfs – continuous, close mowing," Staib says. "Therefore, it's important to encourage maximum rooting at the time of the year when it occurs most naturally."

Staib explains that LCOs should wait until the soil in their area reaches a certain temperature range before beginning a fertilization program because the yearly timing of fall applications changes with varying weather patterns. He suggests making applications when soil temperatures are around the low 50s and air temperature roughly 60s at night for cool-season turf and a soil temperature in the low 60s for warm-season turf. "At these temperatures, energy resources are redirected from tissue production to root formation," Staib says.

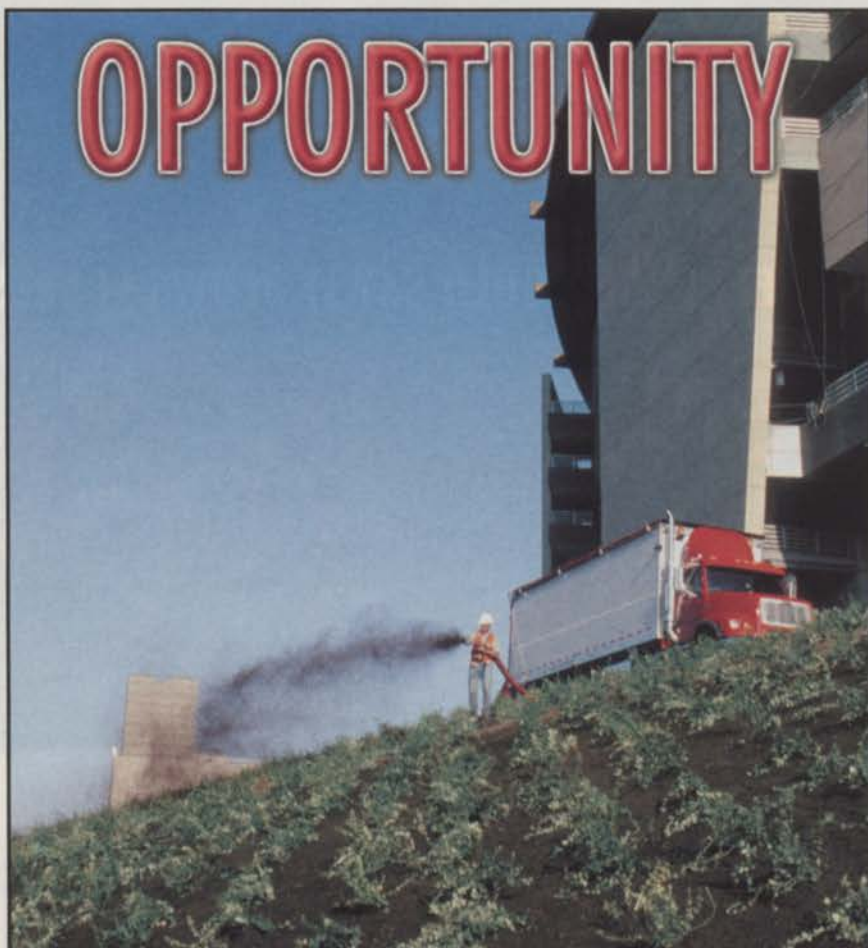
Buckwalter adds that he prefers a fertilization program consisting of two separate applications of high-nitrogen fertilizers, about 1 to 1½ pounds of nitrogen each – the first around mid-September and the second at the time of the last lawn cutting.

Apply 60 to 70 percent of the total nitrogen for cool-season turf in the fall, Buckwalter advises. "This can be done if 40 percent or more of the nitrogen is from quality, slow-release sources," he says.

Gary LaScalea, owner, GroGreen, Plano, Texas, warns of another fall fertilization timing danger for LCOs: turf can deplete the nitrogen contained in fertilizer before the winter even starts if it is applied too early. The idea behind fall fertilization is to make sure the turf's fertility is available throughout the winter. Otherwise, the turf will suffer winter damage, despite the fall application, LaScalea explains.

"It is better to be a little bit late than too early," LaScalea says. "Hold off for a few weeks. If you are putting a fall fertilizer down at Thanksgiving, it's not a problem."

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Fall Fertilization

(continued from page 80)

PRESCRIBE THE RIGHT AMOUNT.

Fall fertilization is an essential process for a lawn's health and beauty because it sets up what an LCO will accomplish the following spring, Paulson says. But applying fertilizer in the wrong amounts can damage a lawn as much as applying fertilizer at the wrong time.

"There are two schools of thought on how to properly fertilize a lawn," Paulson relates. "One is to go with a high potash application and the other is to go with a high nitrogen application."

If nitrogen is applied too early in the season, though, the grass simply cannot get rid of the excess nutrients and continues to grow when it should have begun dormancy, Paulson says. If turf is actively growing, he recommends a high potassium application, such as 1-1-2 ratio.

"Potash will promote a lot of root growth and through that growth, the plant will have more ability to pick up moisture and nutri-

Fertilizing trees is a slightly more complex process than applying fertilizer to a lawn. Both processes, however, should occur in autumn.

Because of the damage summer heat causes, most contractors consider fall to be the best time to fertilize trees, says Gary LaScalea, owner, GroGreen, Plano, Texas. Even though most trees become dormant during the fall, lawn care operators should make sure that nutrients are stored and ready for trees to use the following spring – the growing season for trees.

"The plants really go through a lot of stress during the summertime," LaScalea says. "You want to make sure the nutrients are there so when fall comes, they can store them and utilize them. Then, when spring comes, they're ready to grow."

Chuck Paulson, national sales manager, Spring Valley Turf Products,

Jackson, Wis., agrees that fall is the best time to fertilize trees because that is when they undergo the most root growth. And because 90 percent of a tree's feeder roots are in the top 6 to 10 inches of the soil – where most of the nutrients are going to be absorbed – Paulson says the best method of fertilizing a tree is through liquid injection.

"Too much of the granular fertilizer, especially if it is applied topically, is used by turf roots and other plant roots before the tree is able to utilize it," Paulson says. "There is a tremendous amount of competition within the top 6 to 10 inches of the soil and the plants closest to the fertilizer are going to get the most benefit from that application."

A liquid injection is a liquid fertilizer that is injected underneath the tree's drip-line in a grid pattern surrounding the tree, Paulson says. The injection into the soil is made every 2 to 2½ feet to deliver a

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predetermined amount of nutrients, which evenly spreads the overall amount of fertilizer used.

"With this grid pattern, [the injections] should be distributed throughout the root zone to the feeder roots," Paulson says.

Warde Teulon, technical director, Nutri Lawn, Vancouver, British Columbia, adds that generalizing a process for tree fertilizations is impossible because there are so many different tree species. Nutri Lawn does a deep-root injection of fertilizer in the fall for deciduous trees and in the spring for rhododendrons. For the smaller rhododendron shrubs, Teulon says Nutri Lawn uses a high-quality granular fertilizer because the feeder roots don't run as deep into the soil as the root systems of larger trees.

"Every region in North America has its own weather, its own plants and its own soil types," Teulon says. "All of those factors should really be considered when you are trying to decide what type of fertilizer to use and when to fertilize."

— Kevin McConville

ents and store those nutrients over the winter," Paulson says. "If the turf has gone dormant, however, then it would be wise to use a high nitrogen application."

In the early fall, LCOs should apply a combination fertilizer of slow-release nitrogen and phosphorus—a 2-1-1 ratio—to meet the turf's needs, Staib says. He also suggests that the nitrogen in the application be either urea or a natural organic source that will stimulate and be released by microbial activity in the root zone.

"The slowly available nitrogen and relatively immobile phosphorus will be in place to encourage maximum root formation," Staib says. "Some of the nitrogen and phosphorus will still be stored in the roots over the winter to be available for uptake when growth resumes in the spring."

However, Buckwalter adds that most soils do not need fertilizers with heavy phosphorus. LCOs typically use high amounts of phosphorus to "winterize" a plant

Fall Fertilization

because it helps to expand the root system and protect the plant from winter damages.

"Unless the area being treated is being seeded or soil tests show a phosphorus deficiency, this application is totally inconsistent with modern turf grass management practices," Buckwalter says. "Many soils have ample phosphorus, and phosphorus is not used in large quantities by the plant. It is rarely a limiting factor for turf quality."

For later in the fall, when the ambient temperatures have cooled enough so that mowing has stopped or slowed considerably, Paulson recommends a fertilizer with a 6-1-1 ratio. High nitrogen applications take advantage of what remains of the warm soil temperatures while the plant still can soak in nitrogen.

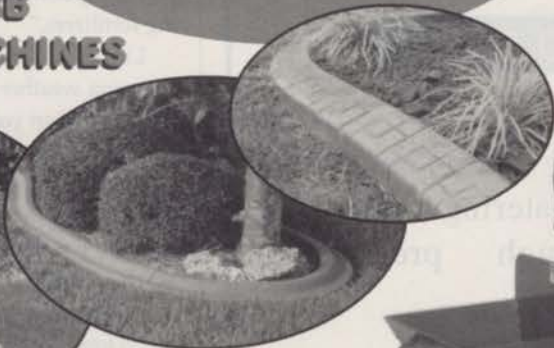
"The plant will take in nitrogen and store it as energy throughout the winter months as carbohydrates and sugars," Paulson says. "That is what the plant will use to come out of dormancy the following spring."

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Fall Fertilization

With high nitrogen fertilizers, LCOs also must remember to properly calibrate their fertilizer mixtures, says Doug Masters, regional sales and national manager, The Andersons, Maumee, Ohio. He suggests conducting a soil test to determine what nutrients the soil lacks before starting a fertilization program. And for a healthy lawn, he suggests using only 1 pound of slow-release nitrogen at a time.

"Don't overdo it," Masters says. "Consider using a slow-release nitrogen if the weather is still hot and humid. It will slowly release for a continuous green color."

GRANULAR VS. LIQUID. The argument over which type of fertilizer – granular or liquid – is more effective for fall applications boils down to which type the LCO prefers and what equipment he or she uses. Generally, LCOs choose a granular-based fertilizer because of their equipment needs and because its NPK ratio can be reformulated easier than a liquid fertilizer.

Warde Teulon, technical director, Nutri Lawn, Vancouver, British Columbia, says his company generally uses granular products for fall lawn fertilizations. "We use granular fertilizers because it's the last application and you don't have to worry about freezing tanks," Teulon explains. "The granular allows you the flexibility to change quickly. If your weather changes, you can quickly adapt by changing fertilizers."

Liquid fertilizers are more difficult to reformulate and adapt to changing weather patterns. "If you have 5,000 gallons of fertilizer mixed up, then you are stuck with it or you've got to reformulate it somehow," Teulon says.

Buckwalter, a former LCO, also prefers granular fertilizer applications for heavy fall feedings because liquid applications are better suited for supplying turf with fast-acting nitrogen for quick results.

"Getting more than a token amount of slow-release nitrogen in a liquid form is expensive," Buckwalter says. "Having nitrogen release reliably over time is critical to get better utilization by turf and avoid leaching and vaporization, which can have detrimental environmental impacts."

A PACKAGE DEAL. LCOs often sell fall fertilization services as a part of a year-round contract. They price based on the cost of the fertilizer, application time, equipment used and labor.

"We don't market much in the fall because it is all sold when the customers buy their programs from us in the springtime," LaScalea explains. "They buy a program for the year and fall fertilization is a part of that program."

'THE AVERAGE CUSTOMER DOESN'T ALWAYS KNOW THE IMPORTANCE OF FALL FERTILIZATION. IF YOU DON'T FERTILIZE YOUR LAWN IN THE FALL, YOU CAN'T CATCH UP [THE NEXT SPRING].'

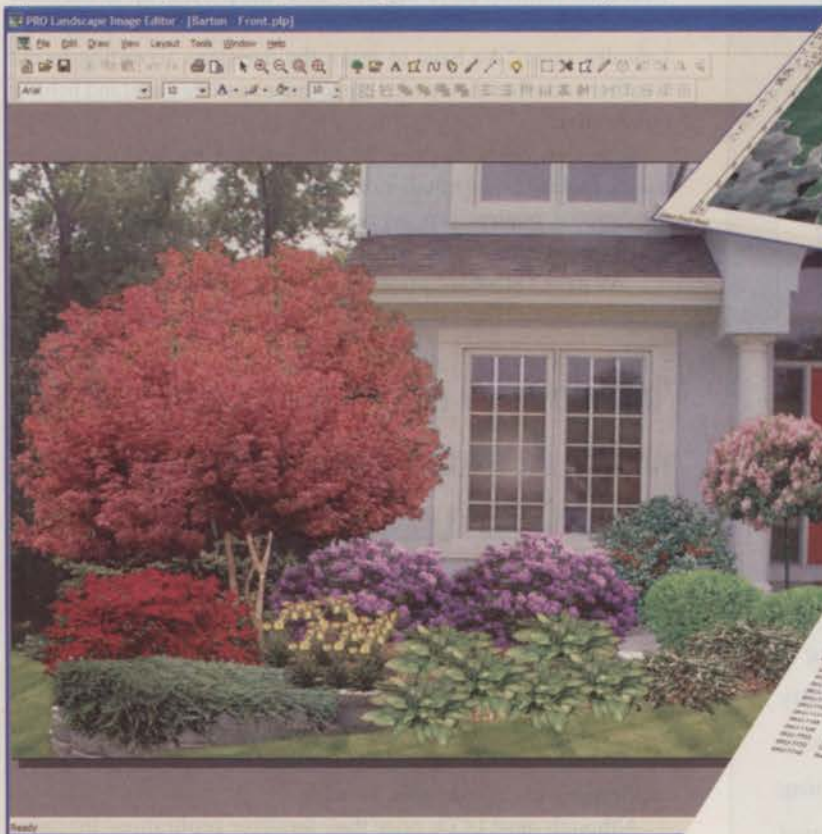
— **RAY BUCKWALTER**

(continued on page 86)

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Fall Fertilization

(continued from page 84)

LaScalea says he tends to get more work orders in the fall for weed control rather than fertilizer applications because customers "let their lawns go in the summertime and they become burnt up and full of weeds." Those who purchased the fertilization service with their contract leave the worries of the process up to LaScalea and his technicians. "They just trust us if they are on the program," LaScalea says. "We have to make the decisions according to the weather and what their needs are to make sure we can stand behind our results."

GroGreen bases its price for fall fertilizer applications on the square footage or the number of acres to service. However, the price for "special request" applications or for noncontracted accounts don't vary.

"We have a standard price per acre that we charge all year long," LaScalea says. "The only way that would change is if a certain

'IT'S BETTER TO BE A LITTLE LATE THAN TOO EARLY. IF YOU ARE PUTTING A FALL FERTILIZER DOWN AT THANKSGIVING, IT'S NOT A PROBLEM.' — GARY LASCALEA

property owner has a special blend that is more costly than our standard program."

Teulon says Nutri Lawn also markets its fall applications year-round by selling contracts, but they are normally offered as an added service. If a customer's lawn is weak or having difficulty maintaining a green color, then the LCO usually stresses the importance of the fall applications to close the sale, he adds.

Although most LCOs price their fertilizer applications the same all year, the cost of nitrogen can create a few headaches. Paulson says this year, there has been an increase in the cost of nitrogen, which may affect the amount of nitrogen LCOs use in fertilization programs and the cost of the application for customers.

"I think we may experience many lawn care companies reducing their nitrogen rates throughout the growing season," Teulon says. "This means they are going to have to make up for the nutrient deficiency somewhere in their program, and I think this fall is going to be a good time to address this issue."

LaScalea says his company tries to absorb the added nitrogen cost because increasing the service price is difficult for long-term customers under contract.

"What suppliers sometimes don't understand is when they come in with a big price increase, our contracts are already signed," LaScalea says. "You just can't tell a customer, 'Well, our price has gone up, so your price is going up.' You have to eat that stuff or people will get perturbed and want to go elsewhere."

To lessen price pressures, LaScalea suggests LCOs pay close attention to the type of fertilizer they purchase, get as many bids on fertilizer prices as possible and make sure technicians understand how to calibrate the spreading equipment correctly. **LL**

The author is Contributing Editor to Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at kmcconville@lawnandlandscape.com.

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Fall Planting

by Kristen Hampshire

Why limit yourself to only spring planting when fall installations can offer cultural benefits and extra cash flow?



Dig Into FALL

Planting isn't perennial – the service doesn't expire after the summer solstice, and prime planting conditions aren't pressured by a biological clock that stops ticking in late September. In fact, installing plant material is a 12-month mindset for contractors who don't hibernate after Halloween and still want to roll in additional revenues.

"Plants are not an intelligent life form – they don't know what month it is," notes Mike Pender. "They don't know if it is June or January." Besides, garden center plants that spend winters resting in pots or flats are much healthier once nestled into a customer's property, figures Pender, president of Classic Garden & Lawn.

This is why Pender sticks with a 365-day planting prerogative – his Birmingham, Ala., weather allows him to do so. But while regional divides and climate differences determine an ideal planting threshold, there's no reason for contractors to close their doors when temperatures drop. Contractors can ease fall planting by simply considering cultural practices, amending soil, sticking to basic installation smarts and paying attention to plant type.

ALL ABOUT AUTUMN. Traditionally, customers and contractors alike associate new plants and landscaping projects with spring. Warmer weather certainly promotes plant growth – and spring fever encourages clients to consider refreshing their beds. "Most people think that spring is when you plant, and spring is a wonderful time," says Rick Christensen, director of marketing,

(continued on page 90)

Fall planting can extend the work calendar for seasonal employees. Cross-trained crews can move from maintenance to autumn installation jobs. Photo: staff

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Fall Planting

(continued from page 88)

Teufel Nursery, Portland, Ore. "But fall is better and a lot of people aren't aware of that fact. In a moderate climate like the Pacific Northwest, fall is ideal. We are past our hot time of year and past the need for supplemental irrigation. At this point, the rainfall has started so there is plenty of moisture in the soil."

Supplemental water is crucial during root development, and temperatures in the spring and summer call for careful attention to irrigation practices, Christensen explains. Inadequate moisture is one of the main reasons plants fail, and contractors who plant in wetter fall weather conditions can increase the likelihood of plant survival, which can reduce warranty claims.

"During the first year, plants don't have the root system that they used to have in the nursery," Christensen describes. "Heat stress comes along and they don't have the roots to take up moisture. If you plant in the fall, then our rains start so the watering is taken care

of and homeowners don't have to worry about that."

On the other hand, too much water also can hinder plant establishment, Christensen adds. "We have heavy, clay soils and if plants are planted too deep they will drown

"PLANTS ARE NOT AN INTELLIGENT LIFE FORM — THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT MONTH IT IS. THEY DON'T KNOW IF IT IS JUNE OR JANUARY." — MIKE PENDER

in winter months," he notes, explaining that planting material higher in the soil can prevent this problem. Precipitation and soil moisture are usually more generous in the fall, and as long as clients understand that plant care isn't an automatic-pilot function, autumn installations settle well.

Besides water worries, insects are less of a concern in cooler temperatures, comments Josh Keller. Fewer creatures munching on material means fewer warranty claims when disease overwhelms plants. "In our part of the country, when you plant in the spring, the plant is under stress and it is more susceptible to insect damage, and if the plant is under warranty you have to pick up the cost of insecticide," says the vice president of Keller's Turf and Shrub Care, Independence, Mo.

"We prefer to plant in the fall," Keller adds. "There is less mortality. There is a better survival rate, especially if you are installing large plant material like big trees and balled-and-burlapped material. You can't plant those in hot weather."

Keller's crews appreciate the cooler weather, as well. His cross-trained landscape employees shift into fall planting, many of them working through the calendar since the company schedules installations in the fall.

(continued on page 92)



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Fall Planting

(continued from page 90)

And plants installed in the fall have a jumpstart come spring, Christensen points out. "Plants have all winter long to develop their roots, so when the growing season comes, they are putting on new growth," he explains, noting that plants installed in spring or summer still are establishing and clients won't notice as much development. "[Plants]

are establishing the roots in their new home and all of their energy is devoted to that. The following season is when you see growth [on spring and summer installations]."

For deciduous trees, fall planting is beneficial because their branches are bare, Christensen adds. Wind catches leaves and can disturb young trees with shallow roots.

"There is a better chance that the tree will remain upright and not be blown over by the wind without the leaves," he says. "Trees have all winter to establish their roots, so when the leaves do come out they are in that much better shape."

Clearly, cultural benefits cause many contractors to favor fall planting, but beyond climate chemistry, business owners view extended installation as a bottom-line booster. "Fall planting helps landscape contractors extend their income," Christensen says.

Joe Burns notes that his cross-trained employees can work longer seasons once summer closes. Fall planting provides additional work to keep crews busy longer. "Things slow down a little bit in the fall, and that makes it a good time to plant from an economic standpoint," remarks the president of Color Burst, Atlanta, Ga. "Depending on the weather, we can plant all winter long. The fall can extend right into the spring, so that is another cost-saving opportunity for us."

TALK TIMING. So when should contractors introduce fall planting possibilities to their clients? Drake Snodgrass figures, why wait?

"We don't even talk about fall planting here because planting is 12 months per year," says the president of Drake's 7 Dees Landscaping, Portland, Ore. Of course, there are certain timing thresholds that are more conducive to successful planting. For example, moisture levels are high in late November in the Pacific Northwest, and if plants aren't established at this point a cold spell or freeze can harm them.

"We try to balance it," he explains. "We have to continue to take in revenue, so we have to continue to landscape, but we want to do it in a way that doesn't cause anxiety to the customer via plant loss."

While Snodgrass contends that any time is a fine time for planting, he encourages customers to think ahead for large installation projects. "If the customer is thinking, 'I want a new water feature and my back yard renovated and landscaped and irrigation, I'll just wait until next spring,' that's the mistake," he notes. "They need to say, 'Let's call and get things going,' and set up a September or October installation."

From there, Snodgrass can prioritize what installation tasks are not time sensi-

(continued on page 94)

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Fall Planting

(continued from page 92)

tive and which are weather dependent. September and October are prime for planting, but in November and December Snodgrass pays careful attention to conditions. "You do the non-sensitive parts during the [poor] weather," he says. "That strategy is the key to being successful." Non-sensitive tasks include installing hardscape, concrete patios and paver stones. Soil preparation, on the other hand, is sensitive.

This type of planning keeps work – and revenue – flowing throughout the season. "Like anything, you need to plan fall planting for maximum efficiency and maximum profit," Burns confirms. Critical planning points include customer education and communication, and Burns starts conversations about fall planting early. When clients begin their budgets, he sells.

"For fall, that might mean you are working one year ahead," he notes. "The budgeting season for some [commercial accounts] is April 1, and others don't start until October."

Once he learns his customers' fiscal deadlines, he sets some due dates of his own, scheduling most fall plantings in June. "When you talk about fall, technically the first day is Sept. 21," he points out.

Christensen prioritizes his yearly installation schedule based on client requests, which is why understanding their landscaping goals is so important, he says. "We plant in the spring and summer for customers who have deadlines, but if it is a residential account and they just want to upgrade their landscape, will try to put them off until September, October or November," he says. "Then, it is an additional value we can give them because the plants will have a better survival rate."

But plant survival rate depends on the caretaker, too, which is why contractors who plant in the fall should carefully discuss and we review practices like watering with customers. But cooler conditions don't free homeowners from watering responsibilities all together, Pender points out. "Some people will water in July and August and then they will quit," he says. "I have had more plants die in September and October because people quit watering them."

HEALTHY START. Autumn installations appeal to business-savvy contractors, but just because conditions are conducive to

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See this story online for a customer handout that spells out proper watering practices.

planting doesn't mean material will grow magically. Proper planting technique determines installation success for any project, no matter the season.

Start with universal rule of thumb: Put the right plant in the right place.

Pender determines the best material for a property by conducting careful site inspections prior to installation. He notes sunny and shady areas, soil type and quality, and topography that might cause drainage difficulties.

And because water issues are so critical to plant health, assessing drainage is the first order of business for Christensen. "When we go on to a site, we identify where there will be puddles in a landscape," he says. "Surface drainage is the first thing we look at."

Next, Christensen prepares the soil, which is necessary on many new construction sites where building contractors usually lay down sod. "The homeowner has no idea what is under the sod," he remarks, adding that usually, what's underneath is not ready for planting. Christensen breaks up native soil so it is loose and pliable, and he will turn up soil beyond the designated planting area so feeder roots have room to grow.

Christensen doesn't add heavy organic material to soil. "The old school says you put as much as $\frac{2}{3}$ organic material and mix it in the soil," he says. "That creates a bathtub effect, which is soil that is a heavier density holds water and soil that is lighter, water will collect there. When you dig a hole to install a plant and you amend the soil with a light-weight organic material, it fills up with water during heavy rain periods. If there is not enough soil drainage, the plant will start to die and the roots will suffocate."

He sticks to turning up soil and carefully mixing any organic materials he adds to soil to create a "transition layer." "It's like the frosting on a cake," he compares. "A transition layer will allow you to have far greater success."

Increase the survival rate more by mulching beds. Soil will hold in moisture, protecting roots from freezing, Christensen adds. Pender prefers bark chips, which serve the same purpose.

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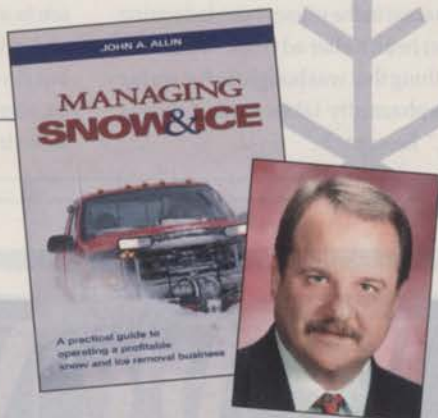
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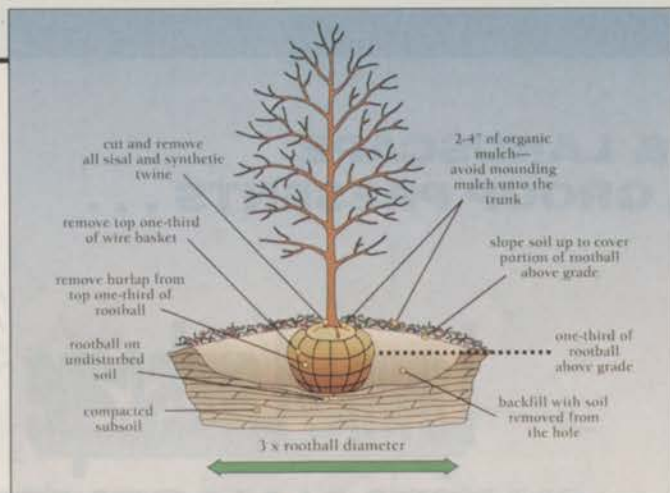
Fall Planting

(continued from page 94)

Then, apply fertilizer to feed plants nutrients so they stay healthy during the winter. Pender uses a fertiloam product, a rooting compound that is applied to the planting hole after installation. "It helps the roots break out of that circular confinement they've been in [so they can put] out a new root system," he explains.

Christensen adds that roots can't absorb large amounts of nutrients in beginning stages, so a light fertilizer application will do. "I would be more inclined to come back in the spring and do a nice topdressing of fertilizer then, when the plant can really take advantage of it," he says.

Besides preparation and nutrition, contractors who plant in the fall should ensure they are installing fresh plant material - not old stock that sat in the nursery during spring and summer heat, Keller advises. "You don't want something that was bought in the spring and was haphazardly taken care of during the season," he says.



When installing annuals that aren't in bloom during the fall, mark plantings with flags so the area isn't accidentally damaged during the winter, Christensen suggests. "Many times, we are planting what looks like empty pots - like Iris, for example," he describes. "It will die back and all you can see is a pot of dirt. The Iris tuber is in there, and in the spring it will come up beautifully, but if you are planting something that can't be seen above ground, you should put a stake in the ground so you can locate it."

This X marks the spot until plants bloom in the spring. Then, established roots secure plants for hardy growth once winter breaks.

"It's the old industry thing," Snodgrass relates. "Spring - spring is the best time for planting. Now it's fall - fall is the best time for planting. So, people ask, 'Which is it?' The fact of the matter is, any time is pretty good." **U**

The author is a Contributing Editor to Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at khampshire@lawnandlandscape.com.

Proper planting starts with putting the right plant in the right place. But cultural practices are crucial to ensure establishment, no matter the season.

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USE READER SERVICE #92



Drought/Flood Planning

by Ali Anderson

Despite an absence or abundance of moisture, any property can flourish if waterproof plans are made in advance.

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Is this life-sustaining liquid your friend or foe? Depending on what area of the country your landscape company calls home, H₂O could be a blessing or a curse. Perhaps drought-like conditions have you scraping for adequate moisture—or maybe floods of wet weather have you constantly up to your ankles in irrigation.

Either way, water can present crippling conditions for a vegetated property. Having too much moisture on a landscape can spell soil erosion, insecure root systems and drowned plants. Too little water on a landscape can dry out thirsty roots and wither leafy foliage. So, to maintain moisture as a life-sustaining commodity rather than a death-inducing agent, contractors must prepare for bad weather.

MANAGING MOISTURE. “The greatest challenge is to ensure that you can maintain the property to the level that is desired by the client, while effectively and efficiently managing the water,” explains Rick Bonds, business developer, ValleyCrest Cos., Dallas, Texas.

And meeting this challenge begins with careful planning. Contractors who plan and prepare for water conditions can keep landscapes in their prime, come drought or flood.

“Planning for droughts or floods is primarily a two-phased approach,” notes Tim Osborne, managing partner, Cotleur & Hearing Landscape Co., Jupiter, Fla. “First, the site conditions must be accounted for.”

Surveying the site means assessing its high and low points. Significant variations in elevation can influence runoff patterns and add to erosion woes, so being aware of dips and slopes can help contractors prevent water damage in the end. Industry professionals also can protect a property from water-related damage by determining whether the site will be interrupted by construction or other processes, Osborne shares. Planning for possible changes in the site’s gradation keeps the contractor one step ahead of a wet washout or desiccating drought.

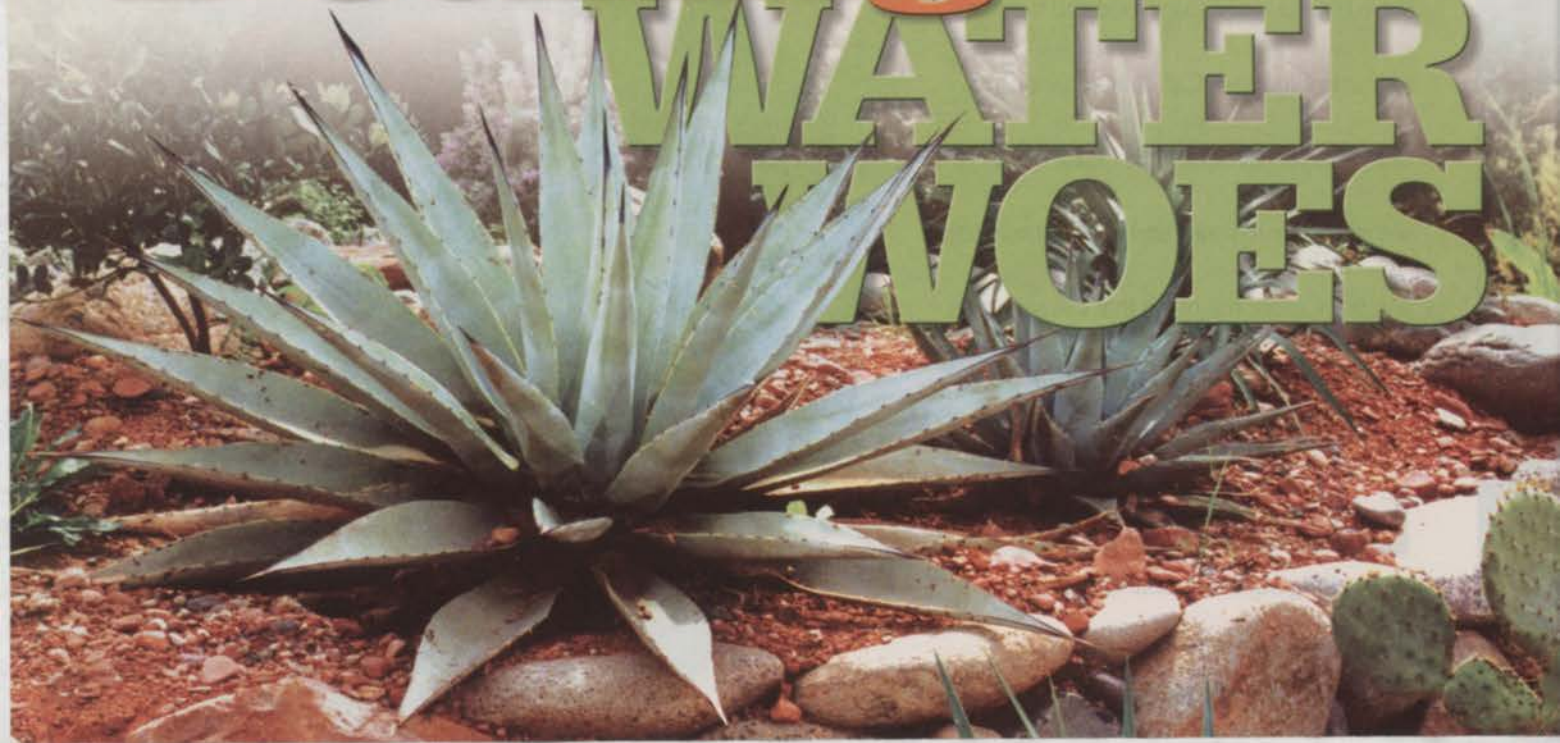
Once the site has been thoroughly scanned for potential problems, phase two of the preparation process begins: plant selection. Choosing appropriate plants for a site is critical when striving to prevent water-related damage, Osborne explains. Since every

(continued on page 100)

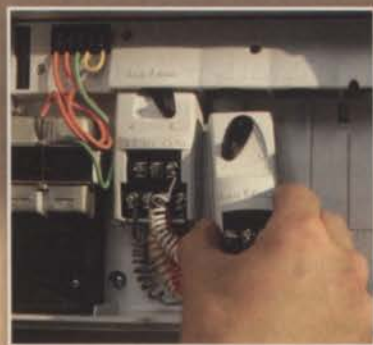


By planting hardy vegetation in water-sensitive areas, contractors can protect their clients' properties from drought and flood damage. Photos: L&L Staff

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Drought/Flood Planning

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property is unique, an individually tailored planting plan should be prepared for each individual site. Contractors must also assign the specific plants to the appropriate areas of each property. The motto Osborne subscribes to is: "The right plant in the right place."

But planting "the right" foliage in "the right" place requires attention to the details of each plant's characteristics. Thus, industry contractors often turn to the specialized knowledge and skills of landscape architects when making appropriate planting decisions.

"From the design viewpoint, we work with industry-leading landscape architects that know the climate, plant material and ways of containing water in the landscape that can be utilized in times of drought," Bonds observes.

Osborne recommends using plants already found in the water-sensitive area.

"One of the best planting design principles to follow when considering drought/

(continued on page 102)

Using these and other hardy plants, contractors can keep their clients' properties alive and reduce follow-up calls to job sites where water has the potential to wreak havoc.

DROUGHT SURVIVORS: Columbine, Spruce, Tyme, Sedum, Honeysuckle, Common Lilac, Privet, Ash, Catalpa, Hackberry, Locust, Sabal Palms, Cycads, Crown-of-Thorns and native species such as Cocoplum and Fakahatchee Grass.

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Drought/Flood Planning

(continued from page 100)

flood tolerance is to use a high percentage of native plants in the landscape," he explains. "In Florida, and I'm sure elsewhere, native vegetation is the material that seems the most unaffected by the extreme conditions of drought or flood."

In the midst of such water-sensitive planning and planting, customers should be included in the decision-making process, asserts Tom Fochtman, owner, CoCal Landscape, Denver, Colo.

"Our job as the contractor is to manage the most important element to the life of the plant, which is water – and to proactively approach our clients with solutions to the needs of their individual landscapes that will prepare them for future needs and avoid the unpredictable disasters of droughts and floods," he comments.

Planning for those future needs – namely, the lifelong maintenance requirements of the property – means water-minded planning,

with attention to possible flood paths and potential drought spots. Occasional tweaking may also be required once the property is completely landscaped.

"THE GREATEST CHALLENGE IS TO ENSURE THAT YOU CAN MAINTAIN THE PROPERTY TO THE LEVEL THAT IS DESIRED BY THE CLIENT, WHILE EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY MANAGING THE WATER."
— RICK BONDS, BUSINESS DEVELOPER, VALLEYCREST COMPANIES, DALLAS, TEXAS

FIGHTING FLOODS. Although adequate water is essential to the life of a landscape, extremely wet conditions can also pose struggles for foliage and contractors. Too much water drowns roots and prevents a plant from flourishing above ground as well. Flooding can do even more damage by washing out entire properties and eroding soil.

But contractors who deal with flood conditions in their service areas can prevent such disasters by planning ahead.

"The best way to plan for flooding is to

have addressed the issue at time of install and have the proper infrastructure in place," Fochtman observes. "We have added berms to direct water flow, installed underground drain-

age systems, changed the grade to get water to move, added concrete 'trickle channels,' etc., to alleviate and mitigate water damage."

These preventive practices can keep soil intact and plants in place, he notes.

Proper drainage, above ground and under ground, is another cure for flooding. Contractors can attempt to eliminate the amount of surface drainage running onto a property, so only natural precipitation impacts the site – but beyond that, drainage is difficult venture.

(continued on page 104)

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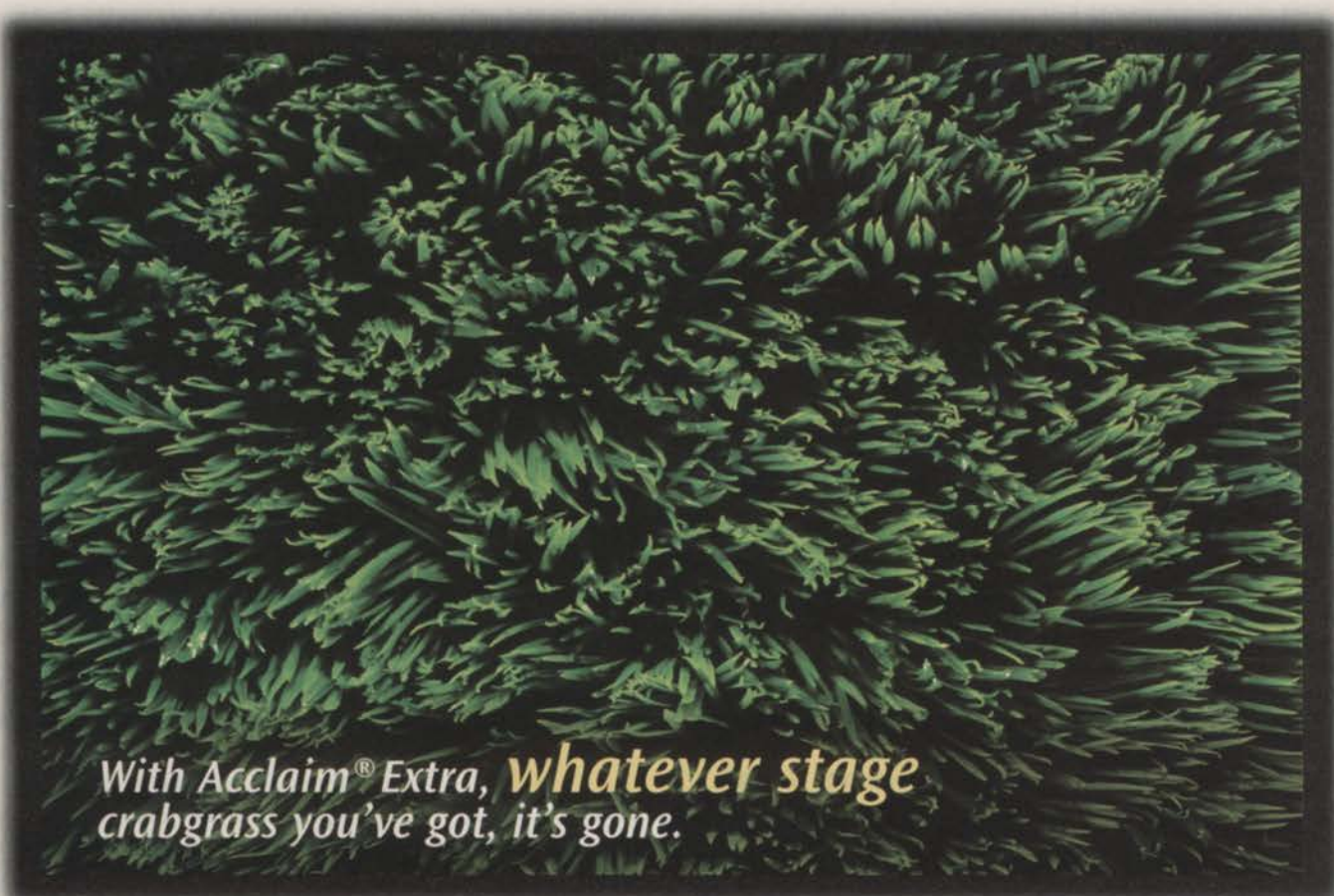
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Drought/Flood Planning

(continued from page 102)

"Drainage is usually the best solution, but it must be done early in the project, such as when the house is being built and the site work and paving haven't been started," Fochtman says. "Sometimes when off-site drainage cannot be provided, a simple retaining swale can be incorporated into the site."

Contractors also should ensure their irri-

gation systems are operating efficiently, Fochtman urges. "A certified water audit will provide valuable information and possible solutions," he adds.

Selecting flood-proof plants is a smart solution as well. (See Drought and Flood Survivors on page 100.) But, regardless of what plants a contractor uses on a flood-prone

property, planning ahead is the key, Fochtman reminds.

DEALING WITH DROUGHT. As drought reaches its suffocating fingers throughout the country, contractors are working to keep their customers' landscapes from dying of unquenched thirst. Watering restrictions in drought-stricken regions can prevent regular irrigation of thirsty sites. While this might spell trouble for most leafy materials, an assortment of drought-tolerant plants can be installed as healthy alternatives. (See Drought and Flood Survivors on page 100.)

Often, drought conditions cause people to reconsider the design of their landscapes altogether, Fochtman notes. "More often than not, we end up designing a more 'urban' type landscape, with more courtyards, pavers, patios, soft trails, etc."


COMPROMISING CREATIVITY? Despite the adjustments that often come with drought- and flood-proof planning, water conditions do not have to disrupt a landscape's beauty and functionality—especially if water factors are considered before and during the installation process.

"Neither [drought nor flood] really limits you, and it is easy to deal with at the time of installation," Fochtman states. "It is much more difficult and constraining if you are dealing with these issues during a landscape renovation. Structures, paving, parking, etc., create certain restraints that can't always be ignored."

Beauty is not necessarily surrendered when selecting hardy plant species, Fochtman says. Rather, landscape architects and contractors can select attractive landscape features that will survive water woes.

In fact, creative substitutes, such as rock gardens and Japanese gardens, provide unique aesthetic appeal in addition to weather resistance. "Planting is usually minimized, and interest is provided with features such as fountains, statuary and trellises which are independent of the weather," Osborne mentions.

Many industry professionals have resorted to these alternative methods of landscaping, namely substitute plants with rare resiliency to water conditions.

The author is Assistant Editor-Internet of Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at aanderson@lawnandlandscape.com. 



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The Death of Business Ethics?

Editor's Note: Webster's New World Dictionary defines ethics as the system or code of morals of a particular philosopher, religion, group, profession, etc. Does your company have such a "system" or "code of morals?" The answer is yes, even without a formal written policy or code of conduct. The system is defined by how your company puts its values into practice and this (no surprise) has to do with the leaders in the organization – in other words, you.

In my June column, I wrote about trust. Trust and ethics go hand in hand. Many employers realize the value of real trust in the workplace and sincerely want to know the extent to which it exists. It's not unusual when we conduct an employee opinion survey for the CEO to tell us, "We want to measure trust," or "We want to know if employees have organizational trust."

Impossible, we tell them. Why? Because the concept of institutional trust is an oxymoron. We don't trust institutions; we don't trust policies or processes. We trust people. To truly measure trust in an organization, we must ask about the behavior of its leaders. Business ethics, like trust, is first and foremost about people.

Unfortunately, many people, prior to entering the workforce, simply lack a strong foundation of values, morals

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Jean L. Seawright is president of Seawright & Associates, Inc., a management consulting firm located in Winter Park, Fla. For the past fifteen years, she has provided human resource management and compliance advice to employers across the country. She can be contacted at 407/645-2433 or jlpegg@seawright.com.




and ethical behavior. Don't believe me? Just ask a young person how common cheating in school is and what the school is doing about it. Nevertheless, these people go on to become leaders in an organization and often enforce their own ethical standards, further blurring the line between right and wrong for many workers. The result is in the form of poor decision-making, greed, compromised corporate values and bad judgment.

Yet, the desire for ethics in business is not dead. A *Wall Street Journal* article highlighted the latest outcome of the ethical dilemma facing corporate America: job seekers and recruits probing into the ethical standards and practices of potential employers. After all, when Barron's defines CEO as "Chief Embezzlement Officer" and CFO as "Corporate Fraud Officer," candidates (and current employees) have reason to question the ethical practices of would-be employers. The reality is that most people, ethical or not, want a stable position, a guaranteed paycheck, and a job with a company they can be proud of. Today's workers have figured out that there's a direct link between their paychecks and a company's ethical behavior.

New federal rules are demanding that companies outline an ethics policy. If your organization is publicly traded, under the new Sarbanes-Oxley Act (effective in July 2003), you are required to develop an ethics program.

The act protects "whistle-blowers" who report financial wrongdoing. Based only upon a "reasonable belief" that a violation has occurred, the employee can disclose his or her concerns within the company to regulators, law enforcement officials, or Congress without fear of reprisal.

Although this regulation applies to publicly traded companies, with or without the force of law, private organizations can no longer afford to ignore the liabilities born out of unethical behavior.

Are you prepared to demonstrate your commitment to ethical behavior? To find out how your company measures up, "Death of Business Ethics?—Part 2" in next month's column will present questions for you to analyze. 

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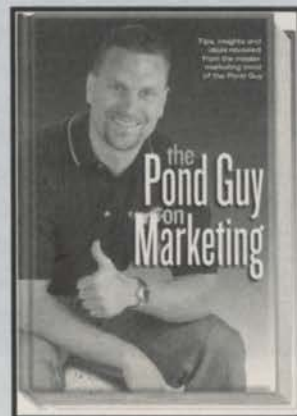
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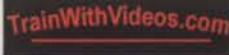
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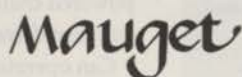
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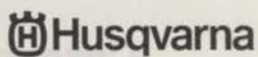
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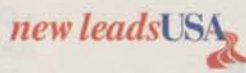
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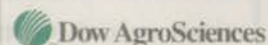
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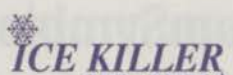
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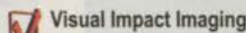
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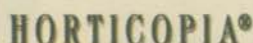
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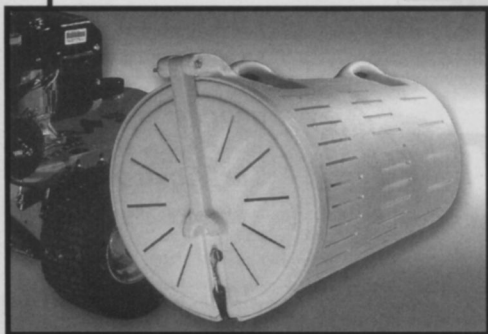
Komatsu Hydraulic Excavator

- The new PC160LC-7 replaces the PC150LC-6
- Technologically advanced model improves on productivity and stability while reducing weight to improve the machine's ease of movement
- Reduces operating costs by offering extended service intervals and increased production
- Cab is larger than previous models for increased comfort
- Turbocharged 110-hp engine
- Features four distinct modes: active mode, economy mode, lifting mode and breaker mode

Circle 205 on reader service form

Exalted Mechanicals Grass Packer

- Made especially for attachment to com-



mercial lawn mowers

- Cylindrical shape and evenly spaced slits enhance the product's circular airflow motion
- Patented system ensures debris is deposited at the rear of the chamber
- Prevents clogging and allows for maximum filling capacity
- Composed of lightweight, polyethylene material

Circle 206 on reader service form

Bluebird Collection System

- Model V260Z designed for zero-turn mowers without collection systems
- Requires little assembly
- Available in a custom hitch, boot and front weight bar to fit most models
- Compact and narrow for easy maneuverability and stability
- Large inlet hose reduces clogging while filling two 30-gallon containers
- Four engine options available

Circle 207 on reader service form

Elite Service Truck from Road Runner

- Commercial fleet truck model 1302 has 72 cubic feet of haul space
- 13-foot-long aluminum body comes with 26-inch-wide front compartments, skirt-mounted halogen floodlights and 22-inch side panels
- Includes electric-hydraulic lift gate with a 1,600-pound capacity
- Body options include a two-drawer cabinet, 15-pin socket rack and compartment lights
- Standard body weight is approximately 1,000 pounds

Circle 208 on reader service form

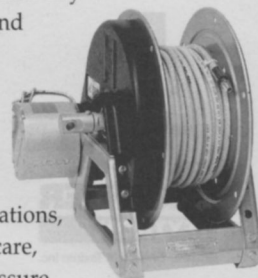
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- Online Employee Training: Advance your employees' knowledge with regular crew training and materials (available in English & Spanish)
- Ask the HR Expert: Handle workplace legal issues with advice from an industry HR expert
- TeamSymbiot Shop: Discounts and delivery on uniforms and other items inside Symbiot's online store
- Employee Newsletter: Customize your

Hannay E1500 Reel

- Model specifically engineered for long lengths of hose
- Compact, lightweight design offers versatility and the ability to meet special requirements
- Features an electrically powered chain and sprocket drive
- Can operate at pressures to 3000 psi
- Useful for a variety of applications, including lawn care, pest control, pressure washing and general agriculture

Circle 209 on reader service form



Caterpillar Multi Terrain Loader

- Compact, rubber-tracked machine model 287 designed for use in construction, landscaping and other applications
- Equipped with suspended undercarriage, vertical-lift loader linkage and comfortable cab
- Works productively in a broad range of applications and terrain conditions
- Wide cab opening, three-point grab irons and skid-resistant steps allow easy entry and exit
- Offers high-lift, long-reach and near-vertical lift path

Circle 210 on reader service form

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- employee newsletter by adding your logo and latest news to Symbiot's template
- Trained H2B Worker Program: Labor acquisitions and training through Symbiot's bilingual experts
- Employee Benefits: "Big-company" savings for your employees

Circle 211 on reader service form

Oly-Ola Edg-Keeper for Ponds

- Innovative pond-edging restraint
- Gives landscape contractors more creative choices and the flexibility to provide natural-looking pond edges that go directly into turf, paver paths, flowerbeds and stone
- Provides quality finish
- T-shape design allows plants to grow in the two inches of soil on top of the edging and liner around a pond perimeter

Circle 212 on reader service form



Lawn & Garden Pressure Regulator

- Ideal for drip or other low-volume irrigation systems connected to outdoor hose bibb faucets
- Helps system maintain a constant preset outlet pressure
- 10-, 15-, 20-, 25-, 30-, 35- and 40-psi models available
- Prevents wasteful over-watering
- Constructed of durable, high-impact engineering-grade thermoplastics with stainless steel compression spring

Circle 213 on reader service form

Professional Jeep Wheelbarrows

- Locking disk brake can be used to park on slopes, control heavy loads on hills and dump with precision
- Polyurethane tires are guaranteed for life
- Steel bushing eliminates the risk of the wheelbarrow seizing up after being dropped from a truck
- 16-gauge steel handles are virtually indestructible
- Brake can be locked with a simple push of a button

Circle 215 on reader service form

Coyote CY Wheel Loader

- One-yard loader features Deutz diesel 40-hp engine with oil-over-air cooling
- Features hydraulic rapid changeover system and comfort cab with access from both sides



- Automatic differential locks on front and rear axles ease operation and serviceability
- Comes standard with quick-change coupler and additional skid loader attachments

Circle 217 on reader service form

Hustler BAC-VAC

- 9-bushel, fiberglass hopper for rust resistance
- Hopper dumps right from the driver's seat
- Plastic cover on the door serves to protect the unit and property from impact damage and houses the air outlet that directs air flow down and away from the operator for greater comfort
- Blower and hopper are easy on/easy off in just a few seconds with no tools

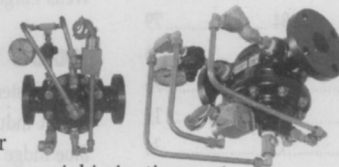


- Can be used on the 52-, 60- or 72-inch models of the Hustler Z or Super Z

Circle 214 on reader service form

Watts Industries Irrigation Control Valves

- 813 series specifically designed for use in commercial irrigation systems
- Available in sizes ranging from 1.5 inches to 6 inches
- Body and cover are manufactured out of ductile iron
- Seat, disc guide and stem are made from 316 stainless steel
- Features a blue NSF-approved, fusion-bonded epoxy coating inside and out



Circle 216 on reader service form

Pro-Vac Grass Catcher

- Large-capacity grass-catching system for Dixie Chopper's line of zero-turn riding mowers
- Features a powerful belt-driven blower and viewing window to see grass levels inside the catcher
- Can be dumped automatically from the driver's seat
- Self-latching rear door allows operators to continue cutting after dumping
- Two models available: 10-bushel capacity and 12-bushel capacity

Circle 218 on reader service form



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Take advantage of this opportunity to join one of the most dynamic landscape companies in the beautiful southwest. Our exciting and vibrant company has career opportunities in the following positions:

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MID-MANAGEMENT FIELD

CREW LEADERS - INSTALL & MAINTENANCE

We offer outstanding compensation and benefits package, relocation allowance, and an excellent family-working environment. If you are interested in a career opportunity please send, fax, or email resume to:

Heads Up Landscape, PO Box 10597

Albuquerque NM 87184.

Email jdelarosa@hulc.com Phone 505-898-

5510 Fax 505-898-2105

To find out more information about Heads Up Landscape please visit our website at www.headsuplandscape.com

SALES ASSOCIATE

Sebert Landscaping Co. is a heavy volume full service Commercial Landscaper seeking an experienced professional to develop and grow our client base. Minimum of 1-2 yrs landscape experience a must. Excellent benefit package.

Fax resume to Deidre 630/497-1002.

HELP WANTED

Award-winning Add-It and Green Machine Pro proportioning fertilizer dispensers for drip/conventional sprinkler irrigation systems. Strong Enterprises seeking independent sales representatives and dealers. www.fertilizerdispensers.com, addit123@aol.com 916/797-1056 phone/fax.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT/DESIGNER

National Award winning Gibbs Landscape Company a leader in Atlanta's landscape industry is seeking a professional landscape designer for residential design to join our very busy team.

An ideal candidate will have 3 to 5 years experience in residential design/build. Candidate must have strong design and sales skills.

Gibbs Landscape Company offers excellent medical benefits, 401k plan and paid vacations. This position offers an excellent opportunity to work with one of the countries premiere design/build firms.

Please fax resume to 770/432-9809
Attention Peter.

OPERATION MANAGER

Opportunity with a Southern California residential design build and maintenance company. The company established in 1980 is nationally recognized for its high-end projects. The job is operations manager leading to the general manager's job. The candidate must have 8+ years experience in increasing positions of responsibility with direct knowledge of design, production, costing and operations. Compensation starts at \$75K plus annual bonus earnings plan. Must be a team player, have a passion for excellence, and proven ability to grow a business unit.

Please submit resumes to dlfrost@cox.net

DISTRICT MANAGER TRAINEE

OneSource Landscape & Golf Services has an exciting opportunity in Puerto Rico for an experienced landscape maintenance operations manager. Must have solid knowledge of turf, golf & landscape maintenance, exceptional business management, and sales skills. Expanding existing customer base to golf courses/resorts a priority. Excellent supervisory, customer service, employee relations, communication and computer skills required. BS degree and minimum 5 years in the green industry needed. Must be bilingual. Trainee will assume District Manager position in approximately 6-8 months with proven ability. Competitive salary, benefit package, bonus potential and growth opportunities. Fax resume with salary history to 813/882-8967 or email jboynton@2onesource.com. EOE, M/F/D/V, DFWP.

HELP WANTED

SavATree/SavaLawn, nationally recognized for providing quality tree and lawn care services to residential and commercial clients, is currently looking for a Lawn Care Manager at our Bedford, NY branch. This is a working position that requires both supervisory skills to oversee the lawn care specialists plus extensive field time treating properties and diagnosing problems. Good organizational and interpersonal skills along with an agronomic background in turf are required to be effective. The ideal candidate will have lawn care or golf course background, a NY certified applicator's license for turf, also a NYS pesticide license. A CDL is also preferred. Excellent benefits. Please call or email Noel Dubak at 914/241-4999, x 153 or ndubak@savatree.com.

Industry Web Sites

INDUSTRY WEB SITES

Visit helpful and informative Web sites specifically designed for Lawn and Landscape business owners.

LawnCareSuccess.com

Free advice, Links, Newsletter

EverythingGreen.com

Search Engine

www.lawnsite.com

[green industry forum](http://greenindustryforum.com)

412/734-4528

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Wanted

WANTED

Facilities maintenance company looking to purchase a profitable landscape service business in Loudoun County, Virginia or Frederick, Washington or Montgomery County, Maryland with annual sales volume in \$500,000-3,000,000 range. Contact 301/360-1134.

WANTED

Existing landscape installation company is looking to purchase a small to medium size commercial-industrial-high end residential landscape maintenance company in the Southern California area.

- Good long term client base.
- Well established.
- Well managed & organized operation.
- Excellent reputation.
- Respectable profit margins.
- Capable of minimum 6 month turnover period commitment.

Please fax a company profile & price to Conejo Pacific Technologies 805/498-1781. All inquiries are kept strictly confidential. Company name is not required.

Warehousing

WAREHOUSING

Third party warehousing company located in Atlanta, GA specializing in the Green Industry. Let K.D.I. help lower your warehousing and shipping cost while offering your east coast customers same day service. 404/344-4187 or KDIIIncorporated@aol.com.

Web Designers

WEB DESIGNERS

Web Design, Brochures, Logos, Lettering and Printing Services for Landscapers. Your single source for marketing your landscape business. Samples online: www.landscapermarketing.com or call 888/28-DSIGN.

Lawn & Landscape

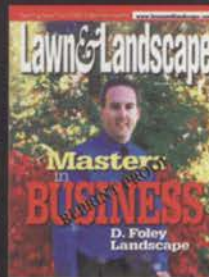
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Whether you are ordering 1000 or 25000 reprints, the Lawn & Landscape Media Group article reprint service is a cost effective, high-impact marketing tool to showcase your company's product and services to key customers and prospects. Using reprints allows you to distribute valuable information about your company in a professional format, straight from the pages of the most preferred publication in the green industry.

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Creating a Web Site at Coastal Creations

I started Coastal Creations five years ago when the Internet craze was really taking off. I knew our company needed a Web site right from the start.

To get an idea of what I wanted our site to look like, I surfed around the Internet to see what other green industry companies were doing. I used the "Favorites" tab in my browsers to bookmark sites that impressed me.

I designed and developed the first two versions of www.coastalcreations.ca, but as my business started to grow, I no longer had time to try and learn Web site development. After about three years, I decided to hire a professional to handle the development.

Because we worked in-house for so long, we needed to trust that the developer we hired would do a great job. We considered several outside companies before settling on one, and learned to check references and ask the designers lots of questions to ensure we would get what we wanted.

One of the most important aspects of the switch was to find someone whose portfolio had a similar style to what we were looking for. Our designer understood the sleek, corporate look we were going for, which saved us time and money trying to explain the look we wanted. Also, it can cost money to have a designer start working on a site and then change your mind about the design later. Don't be afraid to make suggestions about what you want and make sure to find someone who is flexible and will work with you early on.

5 KEYS TO *Creating a Web Site*


1. Browse other companies' Web sites to get an idea of what you want your site to look like.
2. Find a Web site designer who will help you achieve the look you want. Ask questions about their portfolio and check references as well.
3. Collect photos and content information that you want your site to display.
4. Provide the designer with lists or sketches of what you would like each page of your Web site to look like. Ensure that both you and the designer understand the ultimate goal for the site.
5. Update your Web site on a regular basis to keep the content new and interesting to potential clients.

In my previous experience, I learned that I could make a decent Web site with good commercially available tools, but they can be expensive, and just didn't give us the professional look we wanted.

In working with the designer, I made lists of the information I wanted each page of our Web site to include. First, I wanted our opening page to welcome viewers – potential clients – and included thumbnails of a few photos from recent jobs. From there, I wanted to list and explain our services and some information about our certifications. A portfolio of projects logically followed as the third page and the final page includes our contact information.

Fully developing the site took about three months. Normally, the process can happen faster but we experienced some delays on our part as we gathered and organized photos and content. The cost to hire a Web site developer was about \$1200 CDN (currently about \$900 USD) and we pay \$40 CDN (about \$30 USD) per hour when we he performs site maintenance. Currently, we try to update our site once or twice per month as we finish projects and gather photos, but this year we plan to work harder to update our site more often.

Many companies who are developing Web sites are concerned with the amount of hard drive space the project can take up. When you develop a site yourself, there can be a good chance of eating up a lot of Web and hard drive space with excess files and photos. However, professional developers know all the tricks of making images smaller so they load faster and take up less space. We have numerous photos as well as a sound file that plays as users browse the site. All of this would take up enormous amounts of space on our computers, but an outside company can handle it with no problems.

Creating a solid Web site had a great impact on our company. We receive a lot of positive feedback and the site reflects the professionalism and high quality work we do, making us even more credible. A current client hired us after seeing our Web address on a job site sign. He looked at the completed project, then at our website and said he didn't even have to meet us. He wanted us to create a design for him and renovate his whole yard. It ended up being a \$60,000 job and another great project to put on our Web site. – Rob Bouchard 

The author is owner of Coastal Creations, Mt. Lehman, British Columbia, Canada, and can be reached at 866/912-9090.

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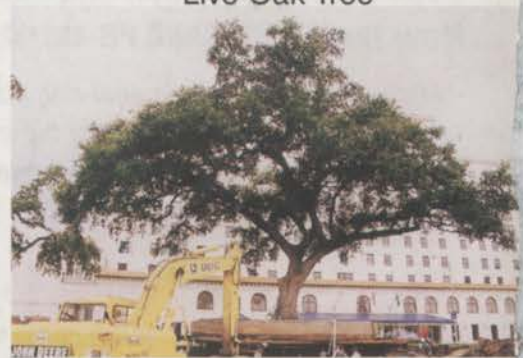
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