

July 2003

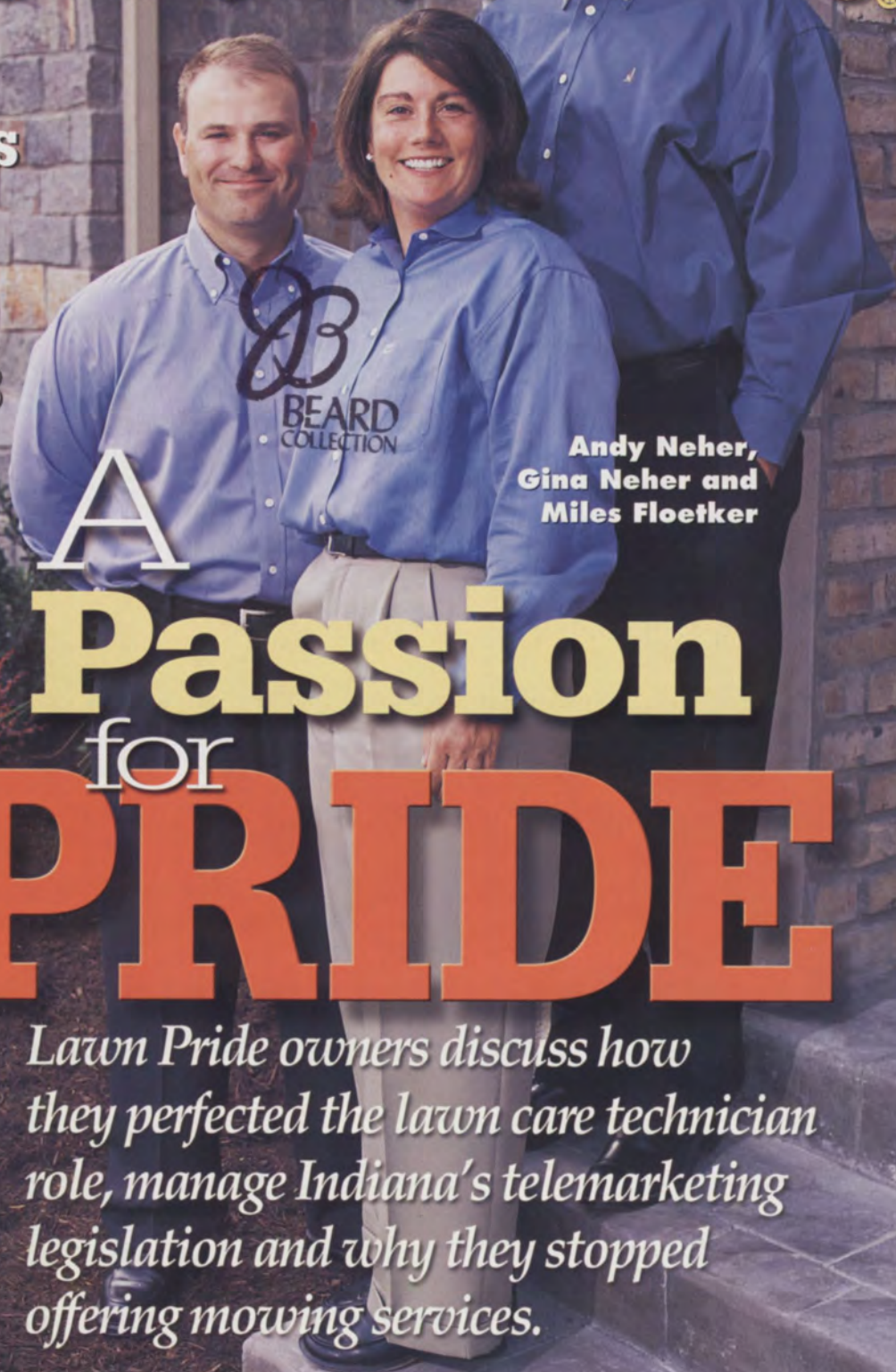
# Lawn & Landscape

## Vivid Visions

*Create bold plant borders in sizzling shades*

## Easy as H-2B

*Learn the basics of this popular government program*



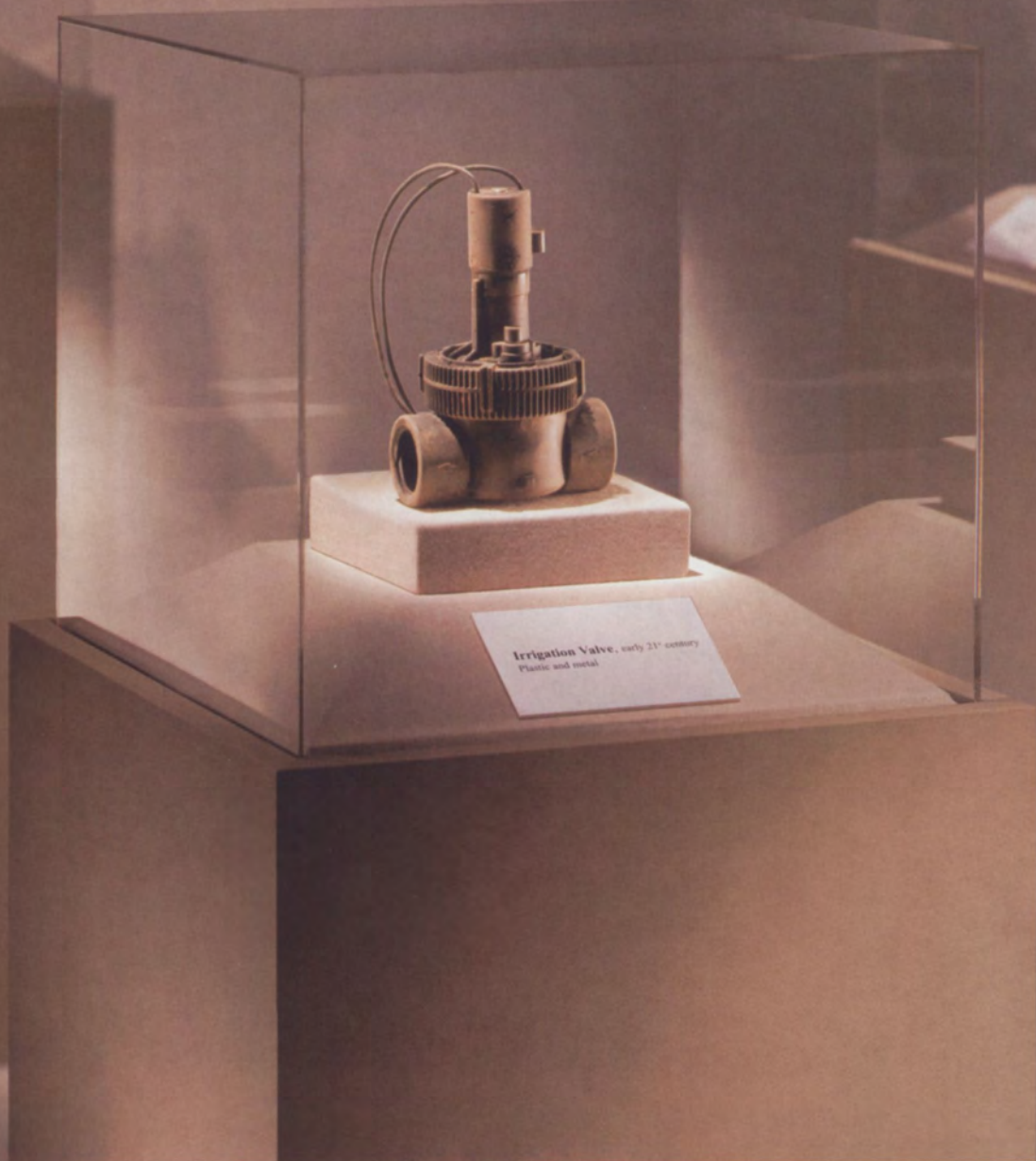
**Andy Neher,  
Gina Neher and  
Miles Floetker**

# A Passion for PRIDE

*Lawn Pride owners discuss how they perfected the lawn care technician role, manage Indiana's telemarketing legislation and why they stopped offering mowing services.*



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Cover photo: Shawn Spence

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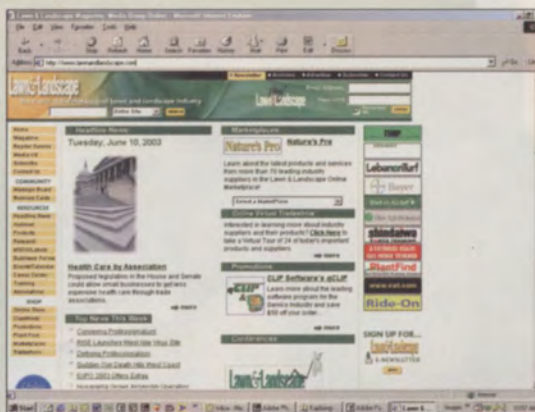
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Marketplace

## SPECIAL Features: Lawn & Landscape Headlines and Top News

Stay up-to-date on the latest industry happenings with the *Lawn & Landscape* online news section located on the homepage.

Here, you can click on specific stories to learn more or just browse headlines to get a feel for the top stories people are talking about. It's a great way to stay one step ahead of national and local news that could affect your business. Visit [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com) once a day to get your daily dose of landscape-related news!



## Extra! Extra!

Visit *Lawn & Landscape* Online for more info on this issue's articles:

- Bold Plant Borders
- Irrigation Pumps
- H-2B Workers

## DON'T MISS

Don't miss original features, like our industry news and new products e-newsletters, found only on *Lawn & Landscape* Online!



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## Under Promise, Over Deliver

Not unexpectedly, every year I field the same questions about the service quality of landscape contracting firms. And, typically, it's not good.

Inevitably, the questions go something like this: "They never return phone calls." "I've called seven companies and no one calls me back. Don't they need the customers?" "I have a \$40,000 landscape job...isn't it important to them?"

It doesn't bode well for our industry.

Granted, landscape contractors are notoriously up against inclement weather that sets them back hours, days and weeks. They're up against residential and commercial customers who want their expectations met here and now. They're up against the lack of qualified employees. They're up against price-cutters who devalue the quality work they perform. They're up against a turnstile of property managers who hire relatives over professionals.

It's not easy being a landscape contractor. But phone calls must be returned. Customer expectations must be met. Don't tell them you'll install a job one week then not show up or, worse, not even call until a week or two later. Customers and customer service are our livelihood. And, in the landscape industry, service needs are intensified based on the expectations of

the homeowner or the property manager.

Don't fall into these service pitfalls:

- 96 percent of unhappy customers never let a business know that they are unhappy.
- For every complaint received by a company, there are actually 26 customers with problems, six of which are serious.
- Customers who complain about a problem, even if it is not resolved, are more likely to do business with the company again than those who

don't voice their complaints.

You get the picture. And, while we've heard these figures more times than we can count, customer service skills lag when schedules get hectic.

Truth be told, the key to success is knowing what your customers expect, how to keep them happy and how to interact with them.


Providing good customer service is not enough. To successfully meet the needs of your customers, they must perceive that they are receiving good service. Our customers come to us with a need. It's up to us to determine what that need is and meet it according to expectations.

But you must also know your company's capabilities. To adequately serve your customers, it's important to guard against tunnel vision. Someone in your organization must be focused on the big picture. In many companies, this person is also charged with running a crew and/or selling and designing a job.

Without this person focused on the business plan, too many companies focus on the short-term and lose in the long-term. Sure, it's one thing to grab as much business as you can, but do so with a complete understanding of your production capabilities and an eye on profitability.

Unfortunately, you won't always be able to do what the customer wants. You can, however, make the experience less frustrating if you explain why it can't be done and by offering alternatives. Don't just say no; rather, try to find a solution to his problem.

Keeping customers happy is imperative if you want them to come back. Display common courtesy, make the experience easy and meet the needs of your customers. Don't over promise and under deliver. Always, always over deliver.

After seven and a half years with *Lawn & Landscape* magazine, Bob West has left our organization and is pursuing other opportunities. His talents, enthusiasm and infectious personality will be missed. We wish him well. 

*Cindy Code*

*"...service people are the most important ones in the organization. Without them there is no product, no sale and no profit. Indeed, they are the product." — J.W. Marriott, Jr., COB and President, Marriott Corp.*





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## SERVICE SOLUTIONS

### What's Behind Walls?

Retaining wall installations challenge many contractors, thanks largely to the complexity of installing walls. But that hasn't stopped a lot of landscape firms from building their businesses around these structures.

To learn more about what architects, engineers, contractors and consumers think about retaining walls, Anchor Wall Systems surveyed this group recently. Key findings of the research included:

- Aesthetics are important. Across all audiences, the issue of functional vs. decorative retaining wall projects is gaining more popularity for decorative purposes, according to the company. Color of the block is a major consideration to both consumers and architects. In fact, nearly half of the consumers who have recently installed a wall consider it to be more decorative than functional.

- Block selection hinges on color, cost and installation. Although different audiences have different priorities regarding which blocks they use for a wall, some common themes emerged from the research. Cost, color and ease-of-installation were important to all groups. Engineers value cost the most, followed by aesthetics, grading and soil retention. Durability matters most to architects, followed by cost and aesthetics, while contractors look for quality of product and ease of installation. And

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## IN THE NEWS

### Follow the Yellow Brick Road?

Though the Yellow Brick Road did wonders for Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, letting your clients' fingers do the walking down another famous yellow means of communication – the *Yellow Pages* – may or may not be a good solution, depending on how you look at it.

According to a recent *Lawn & Landscape* online survey, a majority 38 percent of contractors do advertise in the *Yellow Pages*, but admit that the book doesn't bring them much business, while 30 percent of contractors avoid the *Yellow Pages* because they realized after trying it that it doesn't reach their target clients. Another 13 percent of contractors report that they never have and never will spend money on *Yellow Page* ads and only 20 percent of contractors believe the *Yellow Pages* has been a beneficial marketing tool for their businesses.

For those who feel jaded by the *Yellow Pages*, but are willing to give it another try, take some advice from Jack Robertson, president, Jack Robertson Lawn Care, Springfield, Ill., who is a previous winner of the Professional Lawn Care Association's Best *Yellow Pages* Advertisement Award.

Robertson spends 10 to 15 percent of his advertising budget on *Yellow Page* ads. In the two ads he places, he sets up a dedicated phone number, so he can track the number of leads generated from the ad. "This way we can monitor it and see what cost benefit the ads offer," he says. "*Yellow Pages* are a necessary evil, if you will. It's not anything that I really love to do, but I feel I have to be in there and it does have its place in our business."

## HOUSING TRENDS

### Landscaping Boosts Home Prices

Framing clients' homes with picture-perfect yards might be worth more than just 1,000 words.

A manicured lawn, stately trees and an impeccably kept flower garden could translate into a quicker sale and a better price when clients are ready to put their homes on the market.

Studies have shown that attractive landscaping increases the value of a home, and that has been even more true in the past few years as the housing market continued to boom despite the soft economy.

Bob Fitch, executive director, Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association in St. Paul, said the association's members have seen an upturn in business in the past five years, not only at the retail level, but also with landscape designers and installers.

Consumers are more careful about getting bids and holding down

*(continued on page 18)*

*Do you advertise your company's services in the Yellow Pages?*

| RESPONSE  | % OF CONTRACTORS |
|---|------------------|
| Yes, it has long been a beneficial marketing tool | 20%              |
| Yes, but it doesn't bring in much business        | 38%              |
| No, the Yellow Pages don't reach target customers | 30%              |
| No, and we never will                             | 12%              |

Source: *Lawn & Landscape Online Survey*







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# Market Trends

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costs on landscaping projects, Fitch said. But with more people staying home and spending less on travel because of war, terrorism threats and financial struggles, many consumers are spending their discretionary dollars to sculpt outdoor areas for entertaining.

That desire for attractive outdoor features carries over to home buyers as well. Appraisers do take landscaping into account when comparing a home to similar properties. According to the Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers, a mature tree often can have an appraised value of \$1,000 to \$10,000.

A distinctive landscape is an even stronger selling point for townhouses and other high-density developments, according to Gary Zumberge, owner, CVS Home Appraisals, Edina, Minn. It's less expected in those projects and shows the owner took some extra care, he said.

Aesthetics isn't the only reason to landscape a lot. Trees can cut energy costs, fight air and noise pollution and help pre-

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## People

Kohler Engines announced two new staff appointments. **Chad Severson** was named vice president of sales and **Todd Niemuth** joined as director of marketing.

**Dwight Schlicht** was appointed landscape operations manager at Dora Landscaping Co.

**Martin Petersen** joined Gowan Co. as managing director.

Lastec founder **Jeff Laskowski** returned to his company as president and CEO after a five year sabbatical.

At Bayer Environmental Science, **Dave Ravel** joined as lawn care specialist for the southeastern states.

**Peter Cook** will add his experience to The Caledonian Group as vice president of business development.

Personnel additions at Bayer Environmental Science include the hiring of **Ben Cicora** and **Sam Snyder** as sales representatives for southern and northern Ohio, respectively.

Skinner Nurseries promoted **Philip Goodwin** to regional manager of Texas & Oklahoma and **Joey Walters** to regional manager of and Central and South Florida.

**Jeff Hess** joined BOSS Snowplow as northeast sales manager.

**Susan VanAlstine** was named marketing associate at Plant Health Care.



Sam Snyder (top), Dave Ravel (below)



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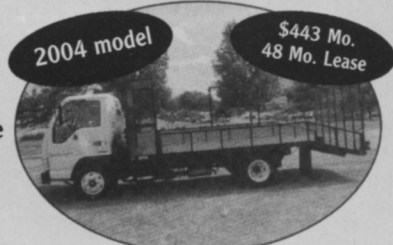
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# Market Trends

(continued from page 14)

vent erosion and storm-water damage.

Landscaping isn't cheap, but a well-executed design can cut maintenance costs. Among landscape projects that can add 4 to 5 percent to the selling price of an average home (\$250,000 and less) are trees, rock walls and gardens, native plantings, such as grasses, and woodland flowers and perennials, according to a 2001 survey for the National Association of Realtors. The percentage can grow to as much as 15 percent for high-end estates, where sprinkler and lighting systems and other such amenities are expected.

In addition, a good design can bring a recovery value of 100 to 200 percent of the project's cost at selling time, according to *Money* magazine. The recovery rate for landscaping is higher than that of kitchen and bathroom remodeling, the magazine said.

A yard clean-up and landscaping job can cost an average of \$470, but might add about four times that sum to the eventual sales price, according to a recent HomeGain survey of 2,000 real estate agents.

## 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.

**JULY 12-16** Ohio Florists' Association Short Course 2003, Columbus, Ohio. Contact: 800/424-5249 or [www.ofa.org](http://www.ofa.org).

**JULY 13-15** Texas Turfgrass Association's Summer Institute, Arlington, Texas. Contact: 979/690-2201.

**JULY 15-20** American Nursery & Landscape Association Convention & Executive Learning Retreat, Boston, Mass. Contact: 202/789-2900 or [www.anla.org](http://www.anla.org).

**JULY 16** Michigan Turfgrass Field Day, Lansing, Mich. Contact: 517/321-1660 or [www.michiganturfgrass.org](http://www.michiganturfgrass.org).

**JULY 22-25** Turfgrass Producers International's Summer Convention & Field Days, Dayton, Ohio. Contact: 800/405-8873 or [www.TurfGrassSod.org](http://www.TurfGrassSod.org).

**JULY 24** Green Industry Professional Field Day, Washington, D.C. Contact: 703/250-1368.

**JULY 24-26** Lawn & Landscape Sales and Marketing Bonanza Conference, Cincinnati, Ohio. Contact: 800/456-0707 or [www.lawnandlandscape.com/events](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/events).

**JULY 25** Lawn & Landscape Business Management Seminar, Baltimore, Md. Contact: 800/456-0707 or [www.lawnandlandscape.com/events](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/events).

**JULY 29** 2003 Midwest Regional Turf Field Day, West Lafayette, Ind. Contact: 765/494-8039 or [www.mrtf.org](http://www.mrtf.org).

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## Mattingly's MESSAGE

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

It is apparent that the landscape installation, design/build, maintenance enhancements type work has decreased significantly in many areas. Our clients are reducing their spending and awaiting lower prices.

To sell these services, you have to be the low cost provider. In order to do this, your overtime has to be kept to a minimum to reduce labor costs. The work in the field has to be preformed with efficiency, therefore we need excellent supervision at all times. Consider giving your field workers an incentive if they beat budgeted hours.

This also is a great time of year to take a look at the overhead you have incurred. Cut your expenses by 10 percent. Can you sell a truck or piece of equipment you are not using daily? You can rent it later. Are you finding that you are sometimes looking for things to do to keep an individual busy? Can you transfer him/her to another crew or division? Are you stockpiling plant material in hopes of selling it later? Get rid of it now.

The bottom line: Tighten your belt, watch your spending, reduce, reduce, and reduce some more. Make the tough decisions now. Look at financial income statements monthly, personally sign all the checks and watch everything. This year will remain tough and you have to make a profit in order to be in this business again next year.

*Jack Mattingly is a green industry consultant with Mattingly Consulting. He can be reached at 770/517-9476 or online at [www.mattinglyconsulting.com](http://www.mattinglyconsulting.com).*

### INDUSTRY NEWS

## UHS Acquires York Distributors

DENVER – United Horticultural Supply (UHS), a national distributor of turf and ornamental products, recently acquired York Distributors, a distributor for the structural pest control industry. Terms of the sale were not disclosed. The acquisition is integral to UHS's strategic growth plan, explains UHS Marketing Director Brian Payseno.

"For years, we've seen some crossover with the PCO business, with a lot of the same suppliers and, in some cases, the same customers," Payseno relates. "We were aware of York being a strong company, so we thought this would be a good opportunity to find some efficiencies between the two companies and achieve some growth."

York Distributors, based in Forest Hill, Md., primarily services the East Coast and Southeast, while Denver-based UHS has a network of warehouses throughout the United States.

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|                          |                            |                          |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>JULY</b>              | 19 Grand Rapids, Mich.     | 15 Dallas, Texas         |
| 14 Dayton, Ohip          | 20 Boston, Mass.           | 16 Ft. Worth, Texas      |
| 15 Cinn., Ohio           | 21 Stamford, Conn.         | 17 Houston, Texas        |
| 16 Columbus, Ohio        |                            | 18 Chicago, Illinois     |
|                          |                            | 18 Austin, Texas         |
| <b>AUGUST</b>            | 8 Buffalo, New York        | 23 San Diego, Calif.     |
| 6 Cleveland, Ohio        | 9 Albany, New York         | 24 Orange County, Calif. |
| 11 Indianapolis, Indiana | 9 Bakersfield, Calif.      |                          |
| 12 Milwaukee, Wisconsin  | 10 Farmingdale, New Jersey | <b>OCTOBER</b>           |
| 13 Madison, Wisconsin    | 11 Long Island, New York   | 1 Atlanta, Georgia       |
| 14 Pittsburgh, Penn.     |                            | 16 Pittsburgh, Penn.     |

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# Market Trends

"There are a lot of resources available to us that might not have been available to York and vice versa, so I think the acquisition will open markets for both sides," Payseno notes.

As part of the agreement, York Distributors will continue to operate under the same name and Cliff Mohrhaus will serve as general manager of the PCO business. Payseno says all of the York offices will continue to operate as usual and that UHS is not planning any immediate changes to the York sales team.

## SUPPLIER INSIGHTS

### Deere Reports 80-Percent Gain

John Deere & Co. stunned Wall Street with its second-quarter earnings.

The company reported worldwide net income of \$256.9 million, or \$1.07 per share, for the quarter ending April 30. That's an increase of more than 80 percent over last

(continued on page 20)



# L&L

## Book Report

### Lawn & Landscape Technician's Handbook by Richard Kramer

Almost forty years ago, the author drug his first lawn spraying hose across a yard in Florida. Little did he know at that time this would lead to a lifelong career in pest management. The one thing that he felt was missing then and was lacking until now, is a handbook designed specifically for the turf and ornamental pest management technicians.

While there are many references on turf or ornamental pests, they are written for entomologists and are not suited for carrying in service vehicles. This book is designed as a ready reference to carry in the service vehicle and can be used by the service technician and shared with customers.

The book provides information on major groups of turf pests and ornamental pests. This easy-to-use reference provides information on pest identification, habits, damage and integrated pest management practices. There are color photographs throughout to assist readers and their customers in pest identification.

Pest control procedures include inspection and monitoring techniques, cultural practices, mechanical control strategies and pesticide application. For each pest, the book discusses application timing, treatment preparation, and post-treatment steps.

The book also contains chapters on Pest Management and Society, Integrated Pest Management, Pest Identification and Control, Pest Management Materials and Safety, making it a study guide for technicians preparing to take certification exams. This book is a must for every technician's service vehicle. — Nicole Wisniewski

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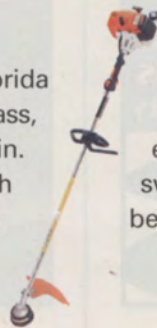
Chuck Vannelli, V.P., South Florida Bushog

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power-to-weight ratio, Chuck's crews can run longer and faster with the FS 250 than with anything else. As Chuck says, "When you're waist-deep in swamp, cutting sawgrass and snakes, your trimmer better be the best there is."

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# Market Trends

(continued from page 28)

year's second quarter net income of \$141.8 million, or \$0.59 per share. For the first six months, net income was \$324.9 million, or \$1.35 per share, more than triple last year's six-month net income of \$103.6 million, or \$0.43 per share.

"Increased profitability of our construction and forestry and our commercial and consumer equipment operations contributed to the strong second quarter, asserts Robert Lane, chairman and CEO. "Even though the domestic farm-equipment sector remained weak, our improvement initiatives, as well as increased sales outside of North America, helped drive higher agricultural equipment profits. These results are further evidence that John Deere employees worldwide are executing the strategies necessary to build a better business."

Worldwide net sales and revenues grew 10 percent to \$4.400 billion for the second quarter as compared to a year ago and increased 11 percent to \$7.194 billion for the first six months. Net sales were \$3.867 bil-

## On the WEB

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Wakefield Landscape -                        | <a href="http://www.wakefieldlandscape.com">www.wakefieldlandscape.com</a> |
| Western Landscape & Geotextile Supply-       | <a href="http://www.weedbarrier.com">www.weedbarrier.com</a>               |
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| Illinois Landscape Contractors Association - | <a href="http://www.ilca.net">www.ilca.net</a>                             |
| Bandit Industries -                          | <a href="http://www.banditchippers.com">www.banditchippers.com</a>         |
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lion for the quarter and \$6.141 billion for six months, compared with \$3.409 billion and \$5.347 billion last year.

Net sales increased due primarily to higher physical volumes in all three major equipment divisions. Additionally, currency exchange rates and price realization had a favorable impact on this year's sales. Compared with last year, overseas sales increased 22 percent for the quarter and 21 percent for the first six months. Excluding the impact of changes in currency exchange rates, the in-

creases in overseas sales were 10 percent and 11 percent, respectively, due primarily to higher agricultural equipment sales.

Deere's equipment operations reported operating profit of \$339 million for the quarter and \$382 million for the first six months of 2003, compared with \$217 million and \$82 million last year. The increases for both periods were primarily due to improved price realization as well as higher sales and production volumes and manufacturing efficiencies.

The absence of goodwill amortization

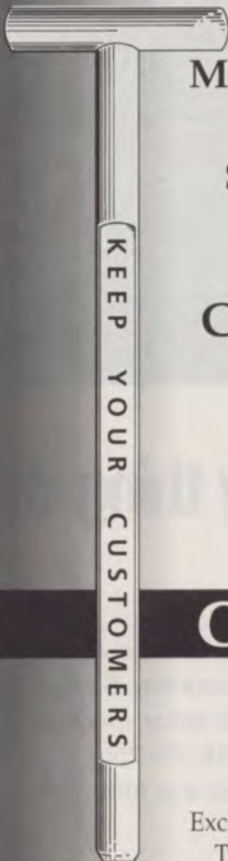
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this year had a favorable pretax impact of \$14 million for the quarter and \$28 million for the first six months. Additionally, results for both the quarter and the year-to-date benefited from the impact of translating the foreign earnings at higher exchange rates. Partially offsetting these factors was a pretax increase in postretirement benefit costs of \$69 million for the quarter and \$143 million for the first six months.

These same factors mentioned above also led to Deere's equipment operations achieving net income of \$181.6 million for the quarter and \$176.4 million for the first six months, compared with net income of \$94.9 million and a net loss of \$15.6 million for the respective periods last year. **LL**

## Corrections

On pages 58 and 70 of the May issue, the photographs of the Caterpillar 262 and 246 skid-steer loaders were reproduced without the proper equipment logos. Also, on page 82 of the May issue, the photograph should be attributed to Bayer Environmental Science. *Lawn & Landscape* regrets the errors.

## What's Behind Walls? (continued from page 12)

consumers said price ranks No. 3 on their list, after the landscape contractor's recommendation and block color.

According to *Lawn & Landscape* magazine's most recent readership survey, more than 51 percent of landscape contractors install retaining walls or hardscapes, which means nearly half of the industry can look at this service as a possible new service offering. A lack of knowledge/experience is clearly one obstacle keeping many companies from offering this service.

Nearly 30 percent of the landscape architects and engineers surveyed admitted they aren't very knowledgeable about retaining wall blocks and their use, while nearly 60 percent of the surveyed contractors said they'd like more information on installation techniques.

Information gathered via Anchor Wall's survey also should help contractors sell more walls. For example, approximately 76 percent of the survey respondents said that installing a retaining wall increased the value of their property. And, despite the complexity of installing a retaining wall, the sales process doesn't have to be a lengthy one. More than 70 percent of survey respondents said they spent less than three months planning their project.

"In an organization such as ours with multiple distribution layers, it's critical to understand the needs and nuances of each level," noted Lynn Barnhart, Anchor Wall's landscape market manager. "We invested in a substantial, multi-faceted research endeavor to ensure that we understand each of our critical audiences. Now, we're using the information to help our trade channels improve their businesses and our consumer audiences enhance their experience with our products."

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# Nursery Market Report

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**CELOSIA PLUMOSA 'FRESH LOOK RED.'** In the summer heat and humidity – in drought or in rainy conditions – 'Fresh Look Red' thrives in mass landscape plantings or patio containers with rosy red plumes. This low-maintenance plant covers up spent plumes by producing new foliage and blooms so the plant looks fresh with no grooming.

When grown in full sun, 'Fresh Look Red' plants mature at 12 to 18 inches tall and spread 12 to 20 inches. The central plume can sprout 8 to 10 inches tall and 5 inches wide.

**CELOSIA PLUMOSA 'FRESH LOOK YELLOW.'** This golden yellow beauty offers season-long color with minimal care. Golden plumes are produced in abundance, at times covering the plant. The central plume grows 9 inches tall and 6 inches wide with numerous side shoots that cover mature blooms, eliminating the need for deadheading. When grown in full sun, 'Fresh Look Yellow' reaches a height of 12 to 17 inches and spreads 12 to 15 inches.

Plants tolerate heat, humidity and severe weather. 'Fresh Look Yellow' is recommended for combination planters with other heat-tolerant annuals and for use in mass plantings for properties and public gardens.

**GYPSOPHILA 'GYPSY DEEP ROSE.'** An annual with dainty, rose-like blooms, *G. muralis* showed several improvements over comparisons. The flower form is double and semi-double, is a dark rose color and grows up to  $\frac{3}{8}$  of an inch with blooms over a long flowering

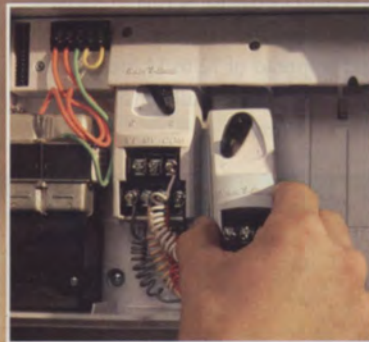
(continued on page 26)



*Celosia Plumosa* 'Fresh Look Red' (below) and 'Fresh Look Yellow' are heat tolerant. *Gypsophila* 'Gypsy Deep Rose' (upper right) provides dainty, rose-like blooms, and *Hollyhock* 'Queeny Purple' (lower right) offers frilly flowers. Photos: All-America Selections



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# Nursery Market Report


(continued from page 24)

season. 'Gypsy Deep Rose' forms an enchanting mound plant with a height of 8 to 10 inches and a spread of 12 to 14 inches. This diminutive plant prefers full sun and adapts to container culture.

## HOLLYHOCK 'QUEENY PURPLE.'

This flower is the first hollyhock available as a single color, not part of a mixture. Frilly-edged blooms have a cushion center and measure 3 to 4 inches. 'Queeny Purple' produces abundant flowers on compact,

branching plants and will reach a mature height of 20 to 30 inches, perfect for small-space landscapes.

**PETUNIA F1 'LIMBO VIOLET.'** This single grandiflora petunia features large flowers on a compact plant with a restricted habit. This means less stretching in packs for improved bedding plant or pot appearance. 'Limbo Violet' plants become mounds, which at times, are completely covered with blossoms. The finished plant size is 6 to 7 inches tall, spreading 10 to 12 inches. 'Limbo Violet' is designed for small space landscapes, such as urban residences or formal plantings requiring neat, tidy plants. At 3 inches or larger, the dark violet blooms recover quickly from severe weather. In addition, plants are maintenance free, with no pinching needed. — Ali Cybulski 



'Limbo Violet' petunias (above) stretch less in packs and pots for an improved appearance in landscape designs. With a mounding habit, finished plants are up to 7 inches tall, with a spread of nearly 12 inches. Photo: All-America Selections

The author is Contributing Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at [acybulski@lawnandlandscape.com](mailto:acybulski@lawnandlandscape.com).

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| 0004 | Planting 1 1/2" Caliper  | 4        | \$250.00   | \$1,000.00   |
| 0005 | Planting 2" Caliper      | 5        | \$300.00   | \$1,500.00   |
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| 0009 | Planting 4" Caliper      | 9        | \$500.00   | \$4,500.00   |
| 0010 | Planting 4 1/2" Caliper  | 10       | \$550.00   | \$5,500.00   |
| 0011 | Planting 5" Caliper      | 11       | \$600.00   | \$6,600.00   |
| 0012 | Planting 5 1/2" Caliper  | 12       | \$650.00   | \$7,800.00   |
| 0013 | Planting 6" Caliper      | 13       | \$700.00   | \$9,100.00   |
| 0014 | Planting 6 1/2" Caliper  | 14       | \$750.00   | \$10,500.00  |
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| 0023 | Planting 11" Caliper     | 23       | \$1,200.00 | \$27,600.00  |
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| 0042 | Planting 20 1/2" Caliper | 42       | \$2,150.00 | \$90,300.00  |
| 0043 | Planting 21" Caliper     | 43       | \$2,200.00 | \$94,600.00  |
| 0044 | Planting 21 1/2" Caliper | 44       | \$2,250.00 | \$99,000.00  |
| 0045 | Planting 22" Caliper     | 45       | \$2,300.00 | \$103,500.00 |
| 0046 | Planting 22 1/2" Caliper | 46       | \$2,350.00 | \$108,100.00 |
| 0047 | Planting 23" Caliper     | 47       | \$2,400.00 | \$112,800.00 |
| 0048 | Planting 23 1/2" Caliper | 48       | \$2,450.00 | \$117,600.00 |
| 0049 | Planting 24" Caliper     | 49       | \$2,500.00 | \$122,500.00 |
| 0050 | Planting 24 1/2" Caliper | 50       | \$2,550.00 | \$127,500.00 |
| 0051 | Planting 25" Caliper     | 51       | \$2,600.00 | \$132,600.00 |
| 0052 | Planting 25 1/2" Caliper | 52       | \$2,650.00 | \$137,800.00 |
| 0053 | Planting 26" Caliper     | 53       | \$2,700.00 | \$143,100.00 |
| 0054 | Planting 26 1/2" Caliper | 54       | \$2,750.00 | \$148,500.00 |
| 0055 | Planting 27" Caliper     | 55       | \$2,800.00 | \$154,000.00 |
| 0056 | Planting 27 1/2" Caliper | 56       | \$2,850.00 | \$159,600.00 |
| 0057 | Planting 28" Caliper     | 57       | \$2,900.00 | \$165,300.00 |
| 0058 | Planting 28 1/2" Caliper | 58       | \$2,950.00 | \$171,100.00 |
| 0059 | Planting 29" Caliper     | 59       | \$3,000.00 | \$177,000.00 |
| 0060 | Planting 29 1/2" Caliper | 60       | \$3,050.00 | \$183,000.00 |
| 0061 | Planting 30" Caliper     | 61       | \$3,100.00 | \$189,100.00 |
| 0062 | Planting 30 1/2" Caliper | 62       | \$3,150.00 | \$195,300.00 |
| 0063 | Planting 31" Caliper     | 63       | \$3,200.00 | \$201,600.00 |
| 0064 | Planting 31 1/2" Caliper | 64       | \$3,250.00 | \$208,000.00 |
| 0065 | Planting 32" Caliper     | 65       | \$3,300.00 | \$214,500.00 |
| 0066 | Planting 32 1/2" Caliper | 66       | \$3,350.00 | \$221,100.00 |
| 0067 | Planting 33" Caliper     | 67       | \$3,400.00 | \$227,800.00 |
| 0068 | Planting 33 1/2" Caliper | 68       | \$3,450.00 | \$234,600.00 |
| 0069 | Planting 34" Caliper     | 69       | \$3,500.00 | \$241,500.00 |
| 0070 | Planting 34 1/2" Caliper | 70       | \$3,550.00 | \$248,500.00 |
| 0071 | Planting 35" Caliper     | 71       | \$3,600.00 | \$255,600.00 |
| 0072 | Planting 35 1/2" Caliper | 72       | \$3,650.00 | \$262,800.00 |
| 0073 | Planting 36" Caliper     | 73       | \$3,700.00 | \$270,100.00 |
| 0074 | Planting 36 1/2" Caliper | 74       | \$3,750.00 | \$277,500.00 |
| 0075 | Planting 37" Caliper     | 75       | \$3,800.00 | \$285,000.00 |
| 0076 | Planting 37 1/2" Caliper | 76       | \$3,850.00 | \$292,600.00 |
| 0077 | Planting 38" Caliper     | 77       | \$3,900.00 | \$300,300.00 |
| 0078 | Planting 38 1/2" Caliper | 78       | \$3,950.00 | \$308,100.00 |
| 0079 | Planting 39" Caliper     | 79       | \$4,000.00 | \$316,000.00 |
| 0080 | Planting 39 1/2" Caliper | 80       | \$4,050.00 | \$324,000.00 |
| 0081 | Planting 40" Caliper     | 81       | \$4,100.00 | \$332,100.00 |
| 0082 | Planting 40 1/2" Caliper | 82       | \$4,150.00 | \$340,300.00 |
| 0083 | Planting 41" Caliper     | 83       | \$4,200.00 | \$348,600.00 |
| 0084 | Planting 41 1/2" Caliper | 84       | \$4,250.00 | \$357,000.00 |
| 0085 | Planting 42" Caliper     | 85       | \$4,300.00 | \$365,500.00 |
| 0086 | Planting 42 1/2" Caliper | 86       | \$4,350.00 | \$374,100.00 |
| 0087 | Planting 43" Caliper     | 87       | \$4,400.00 | \$382,800.00 |
| 0088 | Planting 43 1/2" Caliper | 88       | \$4,450.00 | \$391,600.00 |
| 0089 | Planting 44" Caliper     | 89       | \$4,500.00 | \$400,500.00 |
| 0090 | Planting 44 1/2" Caliper | 90       | \$4,550.00 | \$409,500.00 |
| 0091 | Planting 45" Caliper     | 91       | \$4,600.00 | \$418,600.00 |
| 0092 | Planting 45 1/2" Caliper | 92       | \$4,650.00 | \$427,800.00 |
| 0093 | Planting 46" Caliper     | 93       | \$4,700.00 | \$437,100.00 |
| 0094 | Planting 46 1/2" Caliper | 94       | \$4,750.00 | \$446,500.00 |
| 0095 | Planting 47" Caliper     | 95       | \$4,800.00 | \$456,000.00 |
| 0096 | Planting 47 1/2" Caliper | 96       | \$4,850.00 | \$465,600.00 |
| 0097 | Planting 48" Caliper     | 97       | \$4,900.00 | \$475,300.00 |
| 0098 | Planting 48 1/2" Caliper | 98       | \$4,950.00 | \$485,100.00 |
| 0099 | Planting 49" Caliper     | 99       | \$5,000.00 | \$495,000.00 |
| 0100 | Planting 49 1/2" Caliper | 100      | \$5,050.00 | \$505,000.00 |

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USE READER SERVICE #29

# What Are You Waiting For?



# Design Notebook

## Design Notes

It's rare that clients allow designers free reign – an empty canvas rather than a paint-by-numbers page of plant requests and design expectations. For Bill Peregrine and a six-person design team at Malone's Landscape & Nursery, Kent, Wash., the Seattle Street of Dreams offered a clean slate and a generous budget to stretch their creativity.

"In landscape design you are designing for the client and we don't get many chances to design to try to win awards," Peregrine says, adding that the home builder, Libby-Fredricks, wanted curb appeal and awards. "This gave us an opportunity to design eye candy – elements in the landscape that are very eye-catching so on the first impression, as you walk through the garden, you are impressed with the level of detail and execution of the landscape."

In a word, an "awesome" landscape, Peregrine sums up.

**CHALLENGES.** Of course, laying out plans for the "looker" required attention to the area's water restrictions. Set in the Covington water district, regulations allow new homes only 30,400 gallons of water two years after installation, initially allowing time for

plants to establish. A typical site of this caliber might soak up 80,000 to 90,000 gallons of water, Peregrine relates.

In addition, 3,400 square feet of the 13,000-square-foot Hoover residence is nestled on untouchable septic and septic reserve fields and designers could not place water features within 10 feet of septic lines. These parameters also imposed irrigation system design implications, Peregrine notes.

"You can't irrigate through any of the septic fields, you have to irrigate around the perimeters and spray over the top, and you can't have large root structures, so you can't put trees in those areas," he explains. Peregrine avoided thirsty plants in many areas, opting for wildflowers and native

grasses that don't need special irrigation attention.

In addition, space issues caused design concerns, Peregrine notes. A circular driveway cut the front yard into sections, so water features had to fit without looking cramped. "The challenge was to design a structure that looked natural in a very cramped setting and that wouldn't touch the septic areas," he describes.

The back yard presented similar design issues. Butting up against a golf course, Malone's design team carried this atmosphere into the property, installing a series

(continued on page 30)

An eye-catching waterfall and reflecting pool provide "award-winning" appeal to the property's front yard. The Malone design team planned extravagant, luxury designs for the properties on the Seattle Street of Dreams. Photo: Malone's Landscape & Nursery







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# Design Notebook

(continued from page 28)

of rock outcroppings and creating sandy areas to represent sand traps. Here, too, drought-tolerant grasses were necessary to accommodate water restrictions and septic concerns on the property.

**DESIGN APPEAL.** Water and septic roadblocks didn't prevent Peregrine and the crew from executing an attention-grabbing property entrance. A waterfall serves as the centerpiece—anextravagant element that pushes 300 gallons of water per minute. A courtyard promenade welcomes visitors into the front doors, and on the opposite side of the driveway is a 12-by-20-foot reflecting pool constructed of poured concrete with black colorants and trowel finished to give the appearance of large, stone slabs.

The waterfall's natural appeal originates from the basalt rock, which contains a lot of iron and lends a rusty, weathered. "We brought in an old, western red cedar stump from the mountains, which required its own semi-truck to get it to the property," Per-

egrine says, describing the massive, imported stump.

The formal pool against the natural waterfall draws an appealing contrast, and paired with dense layers of plant material, the colors and textures add to the property's "eye candy" quality. Essentially, plant material created additional structural interest, Peregrine says.

"We used a lot of structural massing or hedging material to give us a backdrop, and some of the plant material is flowering, which is a benefit," he notes. "We used a lot of perennial color and grasses and plants with various colors and textures in the leaves. It's a very layered effect with a lot of depth to it."

Planting beds in prime focal areas, like near the front door and entryway, provide annual color. Container plantings offer variation. "The pots are interesting and the plants spill out of the pots to add interest," Peregrine adds.

Rather than filling in the property with turfgrass, Peregrine was cognizant of water restrictions and opted for sweeping areas of

wild flowers with a grass mixture. "The homeowner who moves in can determine if they want to mow the wildflowers and use it as a pastoral setting or allow the wildflowers to grow up," he says.

A similar approach guided the backyard design, where the team chose ornamental grasses that resembled the ornamental golf course grasses. "We picked up a lot of the design used in the golf course and utilized that as a design element," he explains. "It had to be very drought tolerant. On top of that, it had to be somewhat eye-catching – and dramatic – to win an award."

The Hoover residence and the other five homes on the Seattle Street of Dreams achieved just that. "I think we met our design objective, and that was to develop a landscape that developed an immediate sense of awe and had a lot of show – a lot of eye candy," Peregrine remarks. – *Kristen Hampshire*

The author is a Contributing Editor to *Lawn & Landscape* magazine and can be reached at [khampshire@lawnandlandscape.com](mailto:khampshire@lawnandlandscape.com).



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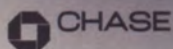
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## CURRENT TRENDS

# ABT Update

Everyone knows where paths paved with good intentions lead... So was the case with the former industry-leading forage and turfgrass seed company AgriBioTech (ABT).

With plans to ultimately benefit the entire seed industry, ABT's massive, rapid consolidation of seed companies made it the industry's largest company within three years. Still, by January 2000, ABT's goal of 45 percent marketshare (about \$500 million) fell through, leaving its distributors, buyers and consolidated companies stranded and concerned during a period of corporate bankruptcy and reorganization.

"One of the goals of AgriBioTech was to use its accumulated resources to approach research and development in a big way," explains Risa Demasi, marketing manager, Grassland Oregon, Keizer, Ore. Demasi cited large fertilizer and chemical manufacturers – companies who have R&D programs with significant dedicated resources – as inspirations for ABT, and notes that before the consolidation process began, no single company in the seed industry had enough capital to advance to that next level.

But despite ABT's best efforts, the same is true today. "We're really back to where we were before [ABT], perhaps even a little more fragmented," comments Demasi, who currently works for a seed company that rose from ABT's ashes. "I don't think [the industry] is really going to see major research developments in the near future, but there are companies trying new things now. Will they be quick to market or will they be successful? It remains to be seen."

But the fact that companies in the seed industry are trying new things is a good sign in and of itself. "The turf seed industry is turning a corner, but we're not out of the woods yet," cautions Gayle Jacklin, key accounts manager, Jacklin Seed/Simplot, Post Falls, Idaho. "There are still large surpluses on some species; however, this industry is pretty cyclical, and that situation can turn around with one good sales season in the east or a crop reduction in the west."

Steve Tubbs agrees. "The ABT bankruptcy in 2000 sent an already reeling industry into a tailspin," remarks the president of Turf Merchants, Tangent, Ore. "Though the ABT corporate structure went away in January of 2000, they had 100,000 acres of grass in production in Oregon that growers had no choice but to harvest that year. In addition to non-ABT companies having to sell their own proprietary production, the industry had to absorb all that extra seed, which led to unbelievable low prices and low margins." Tubbs notes that by 2002, many growers had dramatically reduced their acres, including plowing most of the remaining ABT acreage. For 2003, this equates to supply becoming more equal to demand, pulling prices and margins back up for growers and dealers.

Additionally, former ABT employees have formed more than a dozen new turfseed companies since 2000, according to Tubbs.

"It was a bad time to start a company, but it was also a good time to start a company," Demasi expresses. "There were some large inventory pockets, mixed information regarding who owned what from the bankruptcy and declining markets. Starting new, we didn't have those inventories, although we needed to have something to sell to open our doors. It was very chaotic."

Though there is still litigation regarding the ABT bankruptcy, the seed industry dust is settling. Demasi mentions that consumer confidence may be on the rise as distributors and end users can see more clearly which products are available and from whom. Also, consumers can get a better feel for which companies will be able to stay the course in a cyclical industry, which appears to be on an upswing.

*(continued on page 34)*





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# In Your Turf

(continued from page 32)

"The new home construction industry remains one of the strongest sectors despite a struggling economy," Jacklin observes. "In 2003 to 2005, it is predicted we will see steady increases in housing started driven by population growth and affordable mortgages." Jacklin also forecasts that, with the "Drought of 2002" waning, adequate wet

weather will do well to get the turf industry back on track.

Overall, the outlook is better for those people and companies hardest hit by the ABT downfall. "I don't think anyone would want to go through it again, but the ABT consolidation was a good opportunity to meet so many people and really gain a respect for people who had been your competition," Demasi relates. "We all have to look forward. If you can't learn from and move beyond the

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past, you're in the industry for the wrong reasons." — Lauren Spiers

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at [lspiers@lawnandlandscape.com](mailto:lspiers@lawnandlandscape.com).

## ABT Timeline

**JANUARY 1995** — AgriBioTech (ABT) begins business with plans for rapid consolidation of seed industry companies.

**MAY 1997** — ABT becomes largest seed-producing company in the world by acquiring Burlingham Seeds, Forest Grove, Ore.

**FEBRUARY 1998** — ABT acquires 17<sup>th</sup> seed company and has pending acquisitions of five other companies. ABT reports annualized net sales of about \$326 million.

**FEBRUARY 1999** — Founder Johnny Thomas resigns his position with ABT as stock prices fall and the organization

declines. Thomas is replaced by Richard Budd, former CEO of Loft Seeds, an ABT acquisition.

**JANUARY 2000** — ABT and operating subsidiaries file voluntary petitions for reorganization under Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code.

**JULY - AUGUST 2000** — ABT and its subsidiaries sell most of their operating assets.

**SEPTEMBER 2000** — ABT finalizes sale of the company to the turf and horticulture group of J.R. Simplot Co., Boise, Idaho.

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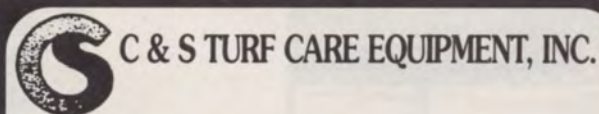
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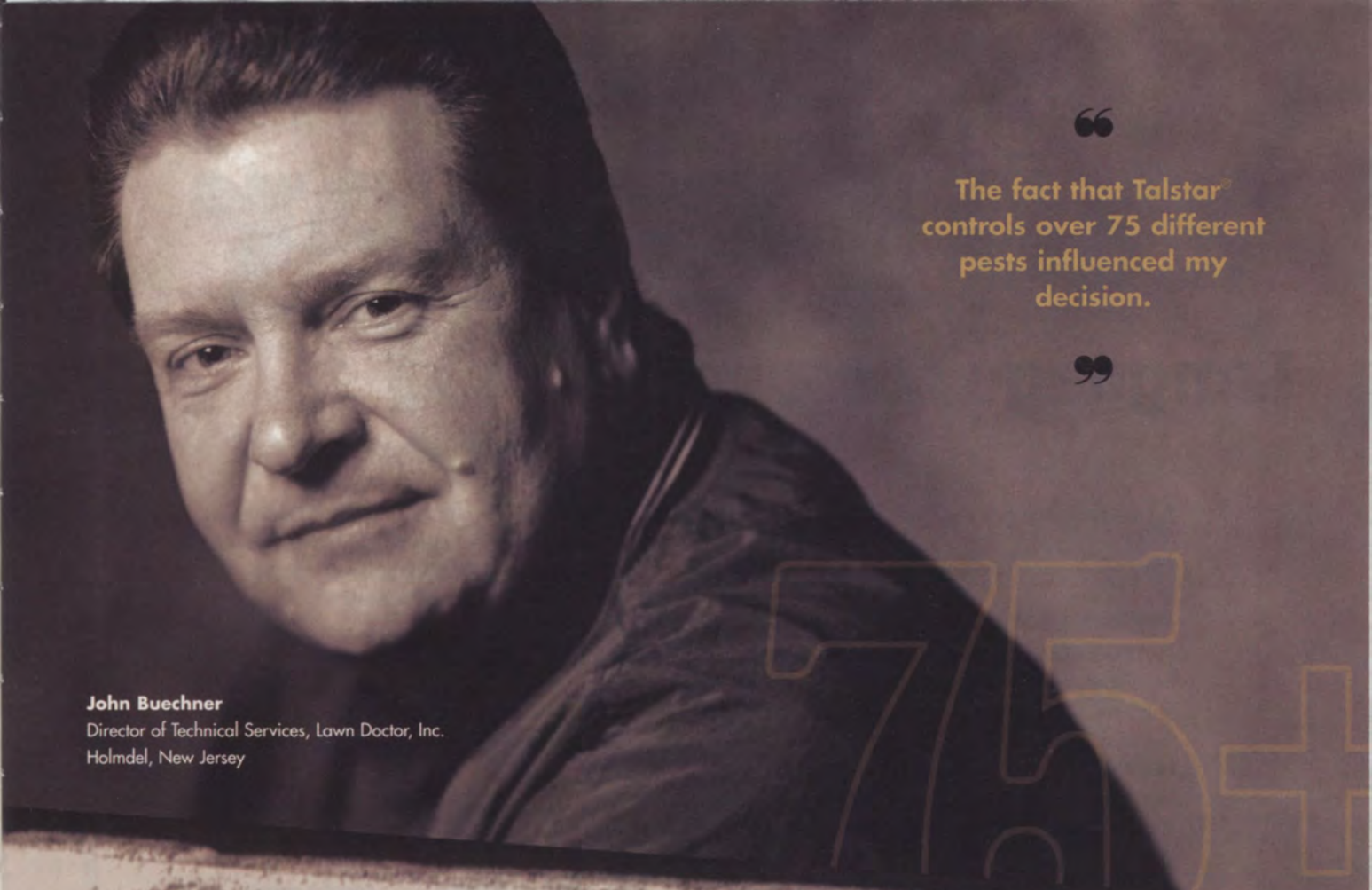
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On

# Paper

## Language Lessons

A little more than two years ago, the applicants for available positions at Green Bay, Wisc.-based Landscape Associates started changing.

"The Hispanic population in our community was growing and we were getting more people who couldn't read English coming in to apply for jobs," explains company President Gerry Andrews. "These people were interested in working for us, but they would take the application and find someone who could translate it for them and then bring it back all filled out."

To encourage more Hispanic applicants to walk into Landscape Associates' office and apply for jobs on-the-spot, Andrews created a Spanish version of the company's employment application.

He hired a translator to convert the English into Spanish, which cost about \$150, and then had his superintendent, who was fluent in Spanish, review the changes.

Shortly after creating the Spanish application, Andrews had a compliance check on his Human Resources materials and his attorney suggested that if the company was going to grow its Hispanic workforce, it should add a line to the application that read, "Only U.S. citizens or aliens that have a legal right to work in the United States are eligible for employment. Can you upon employment submit documentation of identity and your legal right to work in the United States?"

This statement helps weed out illegal immigrants who cannot provide documentation and protects the company, Andrews says. "Only people who can answer yes to that question turn the forms back into us," he points out.

Though only three members of Landscape Associates' 28-person workforce are Hispanic, Andrews wants to make sure the company is not discriminatory and that His-

panic employees who join the organization feel that the work environment is open to their culture. Converting the employment application to Spanish was the first step. - Nicole Wisniewski

The author is Managing Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at [nwisniewski@lawnandlandscape.com](mailto:nwisniewski@lawnandlandscape.com).



### APLICACIÓN DE EMPLEO

### Questionario de Empleo

|   |  |  |               |
|---|--|--|---------------|
| Nombre (Su Apellido Primero)  |  | Oportunidades Iguales en el Empleo             |               |
|   |  | Número de Seguro Social                        |               |
| Su Dirección  | Ciudad   | Estado   | Código postal |
| Dirección Permanente  | Ciudad   | Estado   | Código Postal |
| Número de Teléfono  | ¿Como se entero de nosotros? ¿Por el periódico, amistad ó otra forma |  |               |
| Otro No. de telefono para localizarlo ó Mensaje   | ¿Tiene al menos 18 Años ?  |  |               |
|   |  | Si   | No            |
| La Posición(es) de empleo en que desea aplicar.   | ¿Cuándo quiere empezar?  | ¿Salario deseado?                              |               |
|   |  | Si   | No            |
| 1.) Ha sido Ud. acusado ó encontrado culpable en actos criminales?  |  |  |               |
|   |  | Si   | No            |
| Si contesta sí a la pregunta, eso no quiere decir que no lo vamos a emplear. Todo depende de la gravedad y la naturaleza de la ó las ofensas y de cuando ocurrieron. También si se rehabilitó y la posición de empleo que busca. Si contesto que sí por favor describa las acusaciones. |  |  |               |
| 2.) ¿Tiene Licencia de Wisconsin?   |  | ¿Su Número?                                    | Si No         |
| 3.) ¿Sebe manejar vehículos de cambios?   |  |  | Si No         |
| 4.) ¿Sebe manejar camión de volteo?   |  |  | Si No         |
| 5.) ¿Ha Ud. manejado estirando remolque ó trailers? Describa que tipo:  |  |  | Si No         |
| Nombre y dirección de la escuela que atendió:   |  | ¿Que grado?                                    | ¿Titulo?      |
| Secundaria  |  |  | Clases Studio |
| Colegio   |  |  |               |
| ¿Tiene Oficio ó Experiencia?  |  |  |               |
| Describa cualquier tipo de entrenamiento y conocimiento ó especialidad que Ud. ha adquirido y que sería útil en este trabajo.   |  |  |               |
| El equipo/maquinaria que Ud. ha usado anteriormente.  |  |  |               |
| Monta Carga ¿Con que tipo de aparatos?  |  | Rosador  | ¿tipo?        |
| Tractor ¿Con que tipo de aparatos?  |  | cortadora de sacate de hilo                    |               |
| Transito  |  | Cortadora ¿Tipo?                               |               |
| Sarrucho de ladrillo  |  | podador de arbustos                            |               |
| Sarrucho de concreto  |  | sopladora en espalda                           |               |
| Sarrucho de Leña(chain saw)   |  | rescadora de orillas(para sacate en banquetas) |               |
| Otro tipo de herramientas.  |  |  |               |



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**Varied chemistries.** We understand that successful insect control calls for a variety of products. That's why we offer OPtions™, a unique, integrated insect management program that includes our diverse product line with multiple chemical classes. The result is a cost-effective, broad-spectrum insect control program that supports your quest for lush, green turf and healthy landscapes.

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## Choose the OPtions chemical families and products for your insect control needs

### Chloronicotinyl

- **Merit®** (active ingredient: imidacloprid)

A broad-spectrum, systemic insecticide, Merit is highly effective at low use rates, delivering outstanding control of a variety of turf and ornamental insects. Through its unique

**MERIT®**

mode of action, Merit provides top protection against the white grub complex, from egg lay through second instar. Key grubs controlled include Japanese beetle, Northern masked chafer, Southern masked chafer, European chafer and Oriental beetle. Merit also controls mole crickets (when applied before or during peak egg hatch), and its systemic activity makes it the most effective control product for ornamental pests.

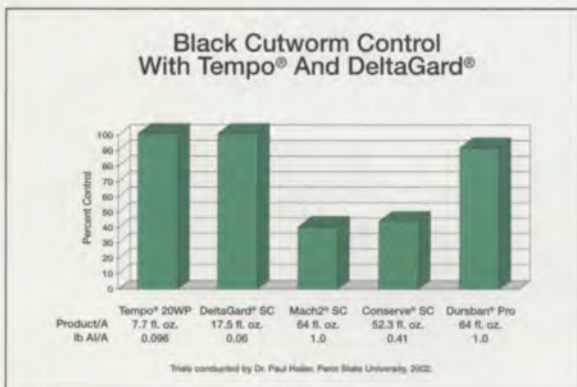
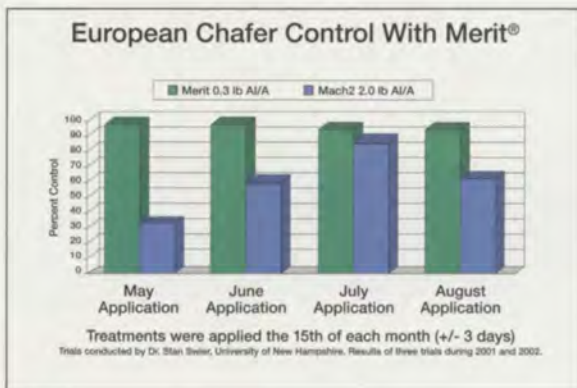
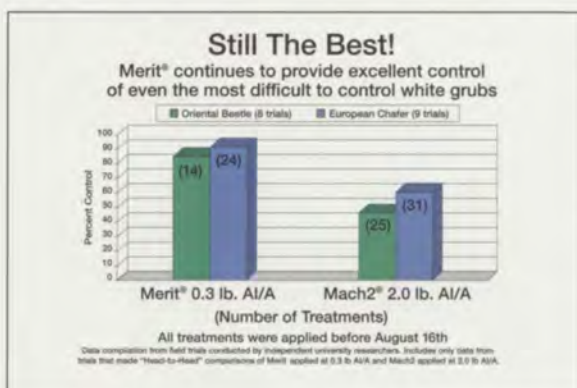
This trusted product offers long-lasting residual activity and superior biological performance at rates up to 96 percent lower than other soil insecticides registered for use on turf. The number of available formulations and pack sizes (granular and liquid) also make Merit very easy to use.

### Pyrethroid

- **DeltaGard®** (active ingredient: deltamethrin)

As the world's most popular pyrethroid, DeltaGard is an economical, all-purpose insecticide, offering broad-spectrum efficacy at some of the industry's lowest application rates. DeltaGard is effective against more than 50 insect species, including ants, fleas, ticks, chinch bugs, mole crickets, billbugs and bluegrass weevils. DeltaGard's powerful punch provides quick knockdown, high mortality and long residual activity, and its toxicity is extremely specific to insects.

Several studies have shown DeltaGard is an effective organophosphate replacement product, performing as well or better than Dursban. Other DeltaGard benefits include reduced odor and flexible application options. As a tank-mix





partner, DeltaGard is compatible with a wide variety of fertilizers, fungicides and herbicides.

- **Tempo® and Tempo Ultra®** (active ingredient: cyfluthrin and beta-cyfluthrin)

Tempo is an advanced-generation pyrethroid insecticide proven effective against a broad range of surface-feeding and foliar insects on turf and landscape ornamentals. Tempo controls more than 50 turf and ornamental pests, including armyworms, bag worms, cutworms, Japanese beetles (adult) and sod webworms. Key product benefits include fast insect knockdown and residual control for up to 30 days.

Tempo works effectively at up to 80 percent less active ingredient than organophosphates, which means less chemical in the environment. And for greater application convenience, Tempo is a compatible tank-mix partner with most commonly used fungicides, miticides, liquid fertilizers and insecticides.

### Carbamate

- **Sevin®** (active ingredient: carbaryl)
- Sevin insecticide's broad-spectrum, economical control of more than 130 insects on turf, trees and ornamentals has made it the world's most popular carbamate. This time-tested product controls most major pests, including aphids, beetles, chinch bugs, cutworms, mole crickets, white grubs and weevils.

# Sevin®

Sevin also has shown good efficacy against organophosphates, performing better than Dursban on pests such as billbugs, cutworms, June beetles and sod webworms. Working on contact and through ingestion, Sevin offers quick knockdown and residual control for seven to 14 days. Sevin is tank-mix-compatible with a broad range of products, including herbicides, fungicides, adjuvants and other insecticides.

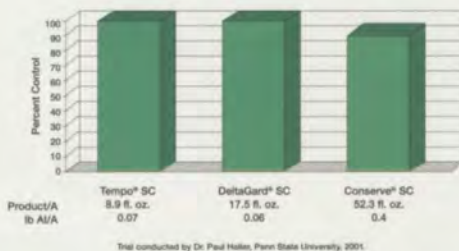
### Organophosphate

- **Dylox®** (active ingredient: trichlorfon)
- Dylox provides fast-acting control of white grubs and other surface-feeding and soil insects through contact and ingestion. Contact activity provides quick knockdown and ingestive activity ensures complete pest control. Dead grubs have been observed as soon as 24 hours after application when irrigation or rainfall moves Dylox into an infested zone. Dylox penetrates thatch up to 1/2 inch thick with proper watering.

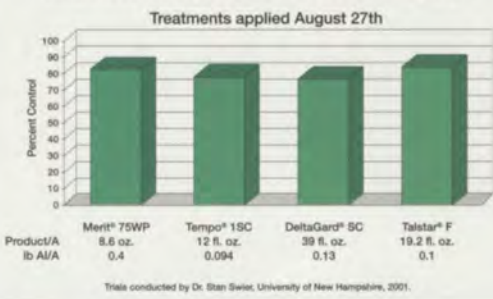
# DYLOX®

Other major pests controlled include cutworms and sod webworms. After doing its job, Dylox degrades quickly under normal conditions. Dylox has no turf species or site restrictions when used in landscape and recreational areas.

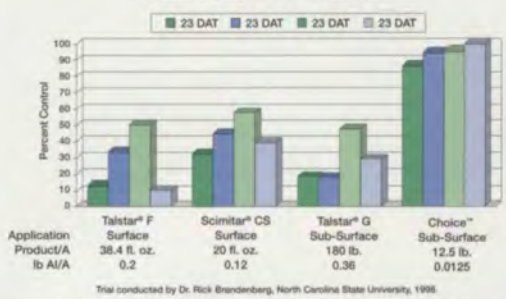
## Fall Armyworm Control With Tempo® And DeltaGard®



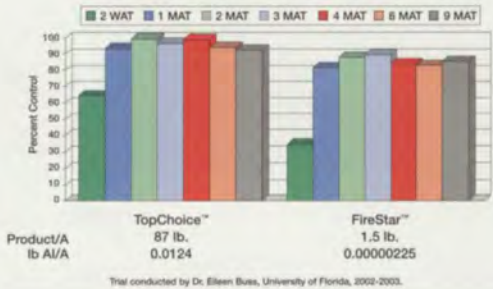
## Hairy Chinch Bug Control With Merit®, Tempo® And DeltaGard®



## Mole Cricket Control With Chipco® Choice™



## Imported Fire Ant Control With TopChoice™ And FireStar™





## Control mole crickets and fire ants with fipronil

Mole crickets and fire ants have long been the leading insect problems for turf managers in the South. Our fipronil family of insecticides offers you the ultimate solutions for these pests with proven low-dose formulations: Chipco® Choice™, Chipco TopChoice™ and Chipco FireStar™.

- **Chipco® Choice™**

Chipco Choice has revolutionized mole cricket control on golf courses with superior effectiveness and season-long residual control at very low rates. So low, in fact, that just one pound of fipronil delivers the efficacy of 200 pounds of an organophosphate active ingredient. Launched in 1996 as a slit-applied product, Chipco Choice provides control of mole crickets for six months or more with just one application. Since then, new sites, pests and the flexibility of broadcast application have been added to the label. When broadcast-applied for fire ants, a single application of Chipco Choice provides up to 52 weeks of control, plus control of mole crickets (4 months), fleas and ticks (one month), and nuisance ants (three months).

 chipco®  
**choice™**

- **Chipco® TopChoice™**

Chipco TopChoice provides one-step fire ant control for up to a full year. Formulated for broadcast application with a standard spreader, TopChoice requires just one easy application to achieve up to 95 percent control in four to six weeks and eliminates the threat of fire ants for up to a year. No time-consuming mound treatments are necessary. Plus, an application of Chipco TopChoice for fire ants also controls mole crickets, fleas, ticks and nuisance ants.

 chipco®  
**topchoice™**

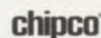
- **Chipco® FireStar™**

Chipco FireStar delivers fipronil in a unique, easy-to-use granular bait that's highly attractive to fire ants. The result is effective control with just 0.00015 percent active ingredient, the lowest concentration in any fire ant treatment. FireStar makes an excellent partner with Chipco Choice or TopChoice — use both to treat landscape beds, embankments and sand trap perimeters, the bases of trees, and other hard-to-reach places fire ants favor.

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JULY.03



by Nicole Wisniewski

# LAWN PRIDE

### HEADQUARTERS:

Indianapolis, Ind.

**FOUNDED:** 1987

### 2002 REVENUE:

\$3.17 million

### 2003 PROJECTED

**REVENUE:** \$4.1 million

### SERVICE MIX:

55 percent lawn care, 45 percent landscape installation

### CLIENT MIX:

10 percent commercial, 90 percent residential

**EMPLOYEES:** 35 year-round, 46 seasonal

### EQUIPMENT LINEUP:

one sprayer/spreader, three ride-on spreaders, two skid-steer loaders, one chipper, one hydroseeder, seven trailers, nine landscape vehicles and 15 spray vehicles

Andy and Gina Neher are full of pride – pride in their work, pride in their organization and pride in their people.

And why shouldn't they be? They are satisfied with their company's progress and growth over the years and they feel as if they have fine-tuned and structured systems to the point where they really understand their business.

It takes some time to build this kind of pride though. Like many landscape contractors, the Neher's started mowing commercial lawns in 1987 as a way to earn money for and set their own schedules around their Ball State University political science and business courses. By their final year of school, they had 50 accounts and were generating \$100,000 in revenue. They realized after graduation that they could make the business, which they called Lawn Pride, work full time. "We understood that being young is the time to take some risks," Andy says.

By 1993, the duo started replacing a heavy commercial client base with residential work, and by 1997, they had traded in mowing for other more lucrative services, such as lawn care and design/build. Starting as a commercial mowing operation and transforming into a more residential specialty service organization, Lawn Pride's smart decision making has pushed the company to nearly \$4 million this year.

**SERVICE SOLUTIONS.** When Lawn Pride first offered mowing services, its client base was made up of very large commercial sites, some



Nuts

for

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*The owners of Lawn Pride discuss how they perfected the lawn care technician role, manage Indiana's telemarketing legislation and why they stopped offering mowing services and are happier because of it.*

### Lawn Pride

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*The Lawn Pride management team, from left to right: Dennis Guyette, Keith Baughman, Michael Wiesemann, Susan McIntosh, Bryan McIntosh, Gina Neher, Andy Neher, David Kelley, Miles Floetker, Matthew Flint and Beth LaRochelle. Photo: Shawn Spence*

that were more than 10 acres or 1 million square feet in size and required six-man crews, such as industrial sites and cemeteries. "We were pretty good at offering that service – it was our niche," Andy says.

But mowing became a drain on profits by 1997. "And we had a difficult time getting guys to go out and spend 10 to 12 hours a day to mow. Labor was tight in the Indianapolis area," Andy says. "We thought we'd have greater opportunities focusing on services with higher profit margins. I realized I could go out with a design/build project and make more on one job than with mowing where I have to have multiple jobs to get there."

Plus, pursuing more residential clients in other services gave the company more security. "With very large commercial jobs, if you build up staff around one or two key clients and one of them goes away, you lose a lot of cash flow instantly and feel as if you have to replace that account right away. By adding a larger concentration of residential lawns, we're protecting ourselves in case we ever lose a key commercial client."

When exploring other services to add about 10 years ago, Andy and Gina joined forces with Miles Floetker, the company's landscape division manager, after landing their first design/build job – a renovation that involved some major tree planting on a site with two apartment complexes. "They hired me as a subcontractor to help with the job," Floetker says, adding that a little more than one year later, Andy asked him to come on board and head up Lawn Pride's design/build division.

The first year the company offered the service, it reached \$285,000 in revenue, jumping to \$400,000, then \$600,000, and growing about \$200,000 each subsequent year. This year, the business' design/build division will be at \$1.6 million.

To kick design/build off in the beginning, Lawn Pride used direct mail pieces, targeting homeowners with incomes greater than \$50,000. The company used AmeriList to obtain the names and addresses, spending less than \$3,000 annually for the information.

Another service Lawn Pride added was snow removal in 1992 for commercial sites, such as movie theaters and office parks. All of



the company's trucks can easily be equipped with plows, so labor is the only cost.

The service has enabled the company to keep 75 percent of its employees over winter months. "We went from keeping one hourly employee when we started to having eight guys work full 40-hour weeks this year," Andy says.

To handle liability issues that often come with providing snow services to commercial sites that experience a lot of foot traffic, Lawn Pride prefers to have full run of when to salt sidewalks or push snow. "We won't assume liability if they don't give us total management of their site," Andy explains.

*(continued on page 46)*



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**L**awn Pride, Indianapolis, Ind., has a system in place to handle past due clients that it feels works well, says Gina Neher, the company's controller.

"We send out invoice statements on a biweekly basis," Neher says, adding that the business' office manager handles this process. "Then we have two people in the evening go back through and call our customers who are 30 days past due. We recently started to take credit cards. We don't advertise it, but this does help get past due revenue in more quickly than waiting for a check."

Accepting credit cards can cost as much as 3 percent per transaction for the company, but Neher says it's worth it. "It's much easier over the phone to get someone to give you credit card numbers than to send a check – for that, we'll take the 3 percent," she says.

"Then by 120 days, a past-due bill goes from receivables off of our books and goes straight to collection," Neher says, adding that collection costs are typically 33 to 50 percent of the amount due.

The company budgets 1 percent of total revenue each year for the additional cost of using an outside collection agency, and this amount is usually sufficient to handle the number of past due accounts that reach this level. "If we saw a trend of that number increasing beyond 1 percent, then we would increase our budget number," Neher says, "but it usually stays right around 1 percent." – *Nicole Wisniewski*

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**"Your mowers keep me looking good against the competition."**

Ray West,  
Professional Grounds  
Maintenance, Inc.,  
Vermilion, Ohio

**"Undoubtedly, the best grass machine I have ever owned, I have had many other brands and no comparison in 60 years."**

Harold A. Jensen,  
Fayetteville, Georgia

**"We operate a two person lawn care company. My wife and I would not be able to do this without our Walkers."**

Gary Vassallo & Loretta Tunstall,  
Lawn Cruisers Lawn Care,  
Kalispell, Montana

**"At age 76, my wife and I both enjoy mowing with our Walkers - best thing since sliced bread."**

Jack Ray,  
Wetumpka, Alabama

**"Has changed our lives - more time to extend areas of our business. Just love it!!"**

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**"No other mower does it like a Walker"**

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Groomed Gardens,  
Jacksonville, Florida

**"I never knew what a pleasure grass cutting was 'til I got my first Walker."**

Merle Stremming,  
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**"Walker is by far the best mower in this size available, and I am exceedingly pleased with my Walker."**

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Travis Keen,

Travis Keen Lawn Service,  
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Stephen D. McBride,  
Mac's Lawn Service,  
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Mike Pillsbury,  
Chariton, Iowa

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Luxor Landscape,  
Maple Valley, Washington

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## Cover Story

(continued from page 44)

"We won't put ourselves in that position."

Also, in case Mother Nature doesn't cooperate and provide enough snow for the company, Lawn Pride budgets "based on the worse we'll do," Andy says. "We don't do lofty budgets. We set numbers we know our team can make and exceed, while still budgeting for growth."

Today, the company's service mix is comprised of 55 percent lawn care and fertilization, tree and shrub care and aeration and 45 percent landscape planting, mulching, grading, hydroseeding, pruning and hardscaping. The company services 25 percent commercial and 75 percent residential clients on the design/build side and 3 per-

cent commercial and 97 percent residential on the lawn care side.

Andy's main responsibilities for the company now are financial and strategic planning. He tries to plan three years ahead, but he wants to be able to look even further down the road. The company budgets for about 16 percent growth each year, and has exceeded that with 26 percent in 2000, 30 percent in 2001, 29 percent in 2002 and 22 percent so far this year.

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**TECHNICIAN TALK.** On the lawn care side of things is where Lawn Pride still retains a small commercial client base, and this is an area where Andy says he sees the most future growth for the company.

However, retaining lawn care technicians has challenged the company and it has made some changes recently to ensure success.

To improve retention, Lawn Pride decided to look at lawn care technicians' top complaints. Their biggest beef was having to come back to the office and refill trucks after servicing clients' turf all day. "We expect them to go out and spend a big day on lawns - doing maybe 200,000 square feet or \$1,000 in revenue daily," Andy says. "But if they have to come in and wait in line for the two fill stations we have, they might be here until 7 p.m. We can't expect them to do both."

So, the company brought on a fill technician who comes in at 3 p.m. daily to concentrate on filling and preparing the trucks for the next day's work. On that same note, the company now keeps technicians on the same route and in the same truck daily. "We were guilty of hurrying and then having to place guys in and out of different routes and trucks," Andy points out. "But the guys really take pride in their routes and how they like to manage their clients and they take pride in how they use their truck, so they don't want anyone else ruining a relationship with their clients or messing up their truck. For this reason, we've made a commitment to the guys that if they are assigned to a route or truck, it's theirs."

Technicians' second most frequent challenge was making call-aheads. "The guys would come in after a day's work and make five to 10 call-aheads each," Andy explains. "But when coming in at 5 p.m. after a full day, it was tough for them to be

(continued on page 48)

USE READER SERVICE #39





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(continued from page 46)

their personal best on the phone. So, we brought on a dispatcher, who does the routing and calling ahead, taking this job off of the technicians' plates."

Similar to call-aheads, technicians also used to run their own service calls, Andy says. In years past, the company would send a technician out to the same site two or three times for the same problems and they weren't getting fixed. To alleviate the situation, Lawn Pride put two operations managers in the field to handle client calls and complaints and instituted a 48-hour policy where one of the managers will respond to client calls in a timely manner.

Another responsibility that used to fall on technicians was yearly renewals. "They'd make calls to their service base in December to retain clients for the next year's lawn care," Andy says. "But some of the problem was that many of the guys were scared of the phone - it wasn't what they were used to doing on a daily basis."

So, today, the company uses its sales team to confirm its customer base for the season. "They are on the phone every day - it's a part of their living, so why shouldn't they do it," Andy explains, adding that if confirmations are done correctly, this dramatically decreases the company's client cancellation rate. "Plus, this is a great time to upsell with aeration services and tree care, so we should have people comfortable doing this on the phone in charge of it."

Also, since most lawn technicians are one-man crews, which can make it a long and lonely job, the company started adding helpers to crews to make them more efficient and provide a training ground for someone else who wants to learn that service area.

Now that lawn care technicians can focus on clients and their lawns, they are more confident in meeting daily production goals since they have less distractions and duties taking them away from their main job. "It's working so far - we're hoping it'll help us take the lawn care division to the next level of growth."

**MARKETING MAGIC.** The Indiana no-call lists have challenged Lawn Pride's telemarketing procedures for the past two years. As a result of these lists being put into place, the company has to purchase

(continued on page 50)



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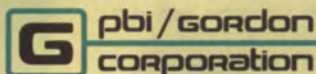
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**Cover Story**

(continued from page 48)

and operate with an updated no-call list four times a year, which costs the company \$750 annually to obtain. The Indiana state no-call list today is up to more than one million names.

"Each quarter, it takes one full day to make sure we accurately update the list and don't leave phone numbers on there that shouldn't be on there," Gina says, adding that this is vital to avoid fees that range all the way up to \$10,000 for calling people who chose to be on the no-call list. The company conducts telemarketing during March and April evenings until about 9 p.m. to kick off the spring season.

But with the no-call lists, there's a lot of gray area, Gina points out. "We've been working with the attorney general's office on this," she explains. "For instance, if a former customer is on the list, can we call them? There are many challenges, but we're following the rules very strictly and trying to supplement our telemarketing with other means of client communication."

Lawn Pride budgets 3.7 to 4 percent of its revenue annually for marketing, which includes telemarketing, Yellow Page and other advertising, direct mail, job signs, brochures, Web site, etc. The additional labor used to pass out fliers and make calls brings this number closer to about 10 percent.

Because telemarketing poses more challenges each year as more people are added to the no-call list, Lawn Pride has put more strength in other types of marketing. For instance, the company added color and boosted the size of its Yellow Page ad to remain competitive.

Also, 10 percent off coupons on the Web site draw new clients in who find the company on the Internet. And for those who drive by the 15,000-square foot facility located in a high-traffic area on the south side of Indianapolis, the company's new neon building sign in green, orange and yellow draws them in.

Then, when clients call in, Lawn Pride meticulously tracks lead sources by using a tracking sheet and giving codes to each type of marketing. "Then we build our sales plan around what we know works," Andy says.

**PEOPLE PLEASERS.** Lawn Pride employs 49 people and 11 of them are His-

(continued on page 52)



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**USE READER SERVICE #50**

**Cover Story**

*(continued from page 50)*

panic. The company started hiring local Hispanic labor six years ago for the landscape side of the business because they experience less turnover with these employees and the population of Hispanic labor has increased in Indianapolis, providing the company with an additional labor pool to draw from.

To merge this new culture into the business, Floetker took some Spanish classes for better communication and crew foremen take Hispanic labor out for lunch as a morale builder every once in awhile. Also, once a month, the company caters in breakfast to get everyone together. Several times during the year, the company also has afternoon cook-outs to promote interaction.

Additionally, the difficulty of adding design/build to the mix was the normal separation that formed between lawn care and design/build employees. To bring people together and boost communication, Lawn Pride incorporated more interaction into its monthly company meetings. Floetker comes up with the ideas each month, which range from teaming up people from different departments for a breakfast biscuit bounce to see who can bounce the most biscuits into a large pale to coming up with the top 10 reasons why clients prefer Lawn Pride services.

The company has a mission statement that comes from its name. L-A-W-N stands for Leaving A Winning Name. At a recent company meeting after finishing a great month, the company decided to ask the employees its thoughts on what they think P-R-I-D-E should stand for. So, it posted the letters up in the office and people wrote their ideas underneath each letter. The new P-R-I-D-E stands for Personalities, Respectability, Integrity, Determination and Excellence. "The employees really got into this and so we decided to use the most popular words employees came up with," Andy says. "To us, this new P-R-I-D-E means that the employees of Lawn Pride are responsibly determined to perform with a high level of excellence." **LL**

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

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**USE READER SERVICE #48**



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USE READER SERVICE #51



*Every day, David Renninger focuses even more on making his company everything it can be.*

# Serious BUSINESS

Starting your own business is hard.

Starting your own business while you're commuting to college an hour-and-a-half each way, several days a week, is harder.

But David Renninger, president, Village Lawns, Kingwood, Texas, did everything he could – including change his major – to make his interest in horticulture grow into a profitable business. And he's happy to see it's paying off.

"The company started really as away for me to pay for college," Renninger remarks, "but once I realized my love of the landscape industry and running my own company, it really took off. I guess you could say it started out of necessity and grew out of a passion."

**GRADUATION DAY.** Like many contractors, Renninger's introduction to landscaping began by mowing lawns as a high school student. As he got older, his search for spending money widened and ultimately became a real money-making opportunity rather than a weekend hobby.

"As my client base grew and people began asking for different jobs to be done, I gradually stepped into other types of basic landscape services." Renninger comments. "I watched landscape companies at work to get an idea of how to do installations and learned through my own observations."

At Texas A&M University, observations turned into hands-on experience after Renninger changed his major from construction management to horticulture. But even with knowledge of landscape maintenance and installation techniques, one question remained: Exactly how do you turn a hobby into a small business?

"On the business side of things, I was kind of thrown to the wolves," Renninger admits. Understanding the importance of "the bottom line" over gross sales and recognizing business liabilities like taxes, permits and license fees were a couple of topics he hadn't considered. "I didn't really anticipate [these issues] in the beginning," he says, "but through trial and error and in networking with other companies and industry leaders, I've been able to make up for what business experience I lacked."

With this help, Renninger is now the watching Village Lawns grow by leaps and bounds. "Last year we experienced a 40-percent increase in sales from \$320,000 in 2001 to \$450,000 in 2002," he raves. That jump in size left the company temporarily short-handed and required hiring a few extra employees, but it didn't deter Renninger from reaching for even

*(continued on page 56)*

## Village Lawns

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David Renninger grew his company as a student at Texas A&M University and prides himself on his horticulture knowledge. Photo: Village Lawns



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## First Look

(continued from page 54)

bigger goals. "This year we're expecting to reach \$600,000," he remarks. That being the case, Renninger is well on his way to meeting his goal of having a \$2-million company in the next eight years.

**ONWARD & UPWARD.** Upon reaching his \$2-million goal, Renninger plans to hold

off business growth in order to increase efficiencies and turn Village Lawns into a "well-oiled machine." To get to that point though, he already recognizes some aspects of the business that he will have to adjust.

"I feel it's important to shift my sales focus from residential to commercial," he notes. "One of our problems is dealing with



Village Lawns' team members specialize in different business areas, promoting efficiency throughout the company. Photo: Village Lawns

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so many residential clients and their requests, scheduling them and executing everything in a timely manner – it's challenging."

Because residential landscaping is something Renninger and his employees enjoy most, their intent is to alter sales on the maintenance side of the business instead, focusing on commercial accounts to minimize the number of client contacts they handle. "By having fewer people to answer to, I feel like we will be able to provide better service and manage these accounts better than residential," he says.

Specializing employees is another practice Renninger has in place to help the company run at peak efficiency. "I've hired additional people and making sure their responsibilities are specialized is a big part of the process," he explains. "I have a right-hand man who focuses on certain requests in sales, for example. His position has him in charge of irrigation, drainage and lighting and I handle everything that revolves around maintenance and landscaping. We're trying to focus our energies on certain tasks.

As the company grows, Renninger intends to have employees focus on more specific tasks. For instance, one person would handle irrigation, one person would deal strictly with landscape, one person would deal with all maintenance matters, so the management level would grow along with sales. As certain service segments grow, Renninger will delegate responsibilities to employees with the most potential. For example, if landscape lighting gains popularity, he will likely entrust the management of that segment to an employee who has proven him or herself in that area in the past.

As the company grows though, Renninger also recognizes the need to nail down certain operations details to keep current and future employees on the same page. For instance, he explains, "we have a hand-

(continued on page 58)



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USE READER SERVICE #55

## First Look

(continued from page 56)

book, but it's not always enforced. I need to be a little stricter with employees and not so lenient and forgiving. We've learned from other companies to treat the handbook like a contract and have employees sign a page in the handbook to keep on file. From there, we have to have a three-strikes-and-you're-out system in place."

Renninger has already reached some goals that let him know he's on the right track for running his business. "The accomplishments I'm proud of aren't always visible to anyone," he explains. "They're along the lines of establishing good credit, being approved for a loan if I need one, and just getting respect from within the industry."

"Every day is new and I'm always making changes to the company and my plans," he expresses. "I talk about this \$2-million mark or even the \$1-million mark and if I reach that, right now the plan is to stay at that level and fine-tune everything. But when I get there, I may want to see the \$10-million mark and keep reaching for bigger and better goals. That's just the kind of person I am." **LL**

The author is Assistant Editor of *Lawn & Landscape* magazine and can be reached at [lspiers@lawnandlandscape.com](mailto:lspiers@lawnandlandscape.com).

**D**igital technology makes staying in touch easier by the day, but email and cell phones will never fully replace good ol' handwritten communication. David Renninger, president, Village Lawns, Kingwood, Texas, understands this and uses two creative business forms to help his clients get their thoughts and ideas down on paper.

On initial visits to potential design/build clients, Renninger uses a design pad to sketch out landscaping ideas on the spot. The 8½-by-11-inch carbon-copy form displays the company's logo as well as a disclaimer reminding clients that the hand-drawn designs are property of Village Lawns and can't be copied without permission.

"I may spend 30 minutes to an hour working on a design, but by creating it on-the-spot, I can also provide my client with a bid right away," Renninger expresses. "It really eliminates the backlog of estimates that can occur if I went back to my office every time to put a design together. Also, most people are visual thinkers so these on-the-spot designs give them an image to look over in tandem with considering the bid."

Renninger also uses the tried and true customer survey approach to gain feedback from his clients. "We've been sending the surveys out twice per year, but I'd like to step that up to quarterly," he muses. "I like to allow people to tell me about their problems even so I find out about them before they build into something big."

These satisfaction surveys allow clients to give their opinions on three primary areas of service – maintenance, landscaping and business practices.

To see what types of questions the surveys include or get a closer look at the Village Lawns design pad, visit the Business Forms section of [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com). – **Lauren Spiers**

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




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## Mowing Back-Up Plans

by Kristen Hampshire

*When weather puts the brakes on mowing, crews with back-up plans can fill schedules with productive projects saved for rainy days.*

In a perfect world, grass grows during drought, clients never complain and crew members don't miss a day of work. "In a perfect world, it would rain during the night and on Sunday," adds Steve Rak, vice president, Southwest Landscape Management, Columbia Station, Ohio.

But the world isn't perfect, and the weather is far from predictable. When conditions keep mowing crews from cruising their maintenance routes, landscape contractors must flip-flop field work, scramble schedules and revert to Plan B. "It's tough," Rak admits. "I lose sleep over [rainy days]. If I wake up in the middle of the night and I hear rain on the roof, I think, 'What are we going to do?'"

Whether crews stay indoors and catch up on shop chores or suit up in rain gear and raise their mower decks to cut properties, contractors with back-up plans, rainy-day to-do lists and scheduling smarts will cut through no-mow days without trimming productivity.

**MOW OR NO-GO?** Rak is a self-described weather addict. He listens to reports and considers how conditions will affect the next day's maintenance schedule. Light rain won't keep crews indoors, but thunderstorms and lightning are a different story, he comments.

"First and foremost, if it's a safety issue, we won't go out," Rak says, adding that he sits down with his foremen every morning during a meeting, which is when the team decides how to handle inclement weather and mowing conditions. "We will prioritize the areas, and we might do open fields or back areas [if it is drizzling]. We'll work until we can't work anymore. We have to go out and do what we can do."

Judgment calls from foremen are crucial when determining whether to reschedule or roll out the mowers, points out Milton Ninde, director of operations, Clippers, Chantilly, Va. "We put a lot of empowerment in our foremen coaches," he remarks. "We leave the decision to mow up to them, and it really depends on the type of property that is scheduled."

Crews push-mow some areas that are flat, so these expanses don't require special attention during poor

*(continued on page 64)*

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## Mowing Back-Up Plans

(continued from page 62)

conditions. And some small properties still can be serviced during soggy days, Ninde notes. He and his coaches stick to the "safety first" rule of thumb, also determining if mowing will make a mess – grass clumps and muddy wheel tracks, for example. "Mowing can damage the lawn and leave some ruts if the property doesn't have good drainage,"

he says, pointing out times when foremen skip scheduled accounts.

Since his coaches know properties best, Ninde trusts their instincts.

"We put a lot of trust in our guys in the field, he reiterates. "They can say, 'I can get this property cut and keep us on a schedule and we won't lose time. It might take more

time, but I can do a nice job.' Or, they will say, 'I can't go out to this property. There are too many hills and it will be a mess.'"

Besides safety and soggy turf, contractors also must weigh the week's work against the day's productivity potential. In other words, if conditions keep crews from mowing properties, is it better to send some workers to care for detail work like weeding and pruning, or is it better to reduce man-hours and make up the maintenance on a different day? "Budgeted hours and accountability go into [the decision,]" Ninde says. "There is a balance between what we have on our schedules vs. whether it is financially prudent to send out guys to do a job."

Ninde might cut down labor staff, send a couple workers to a commercial account to manage detail maintenance and save mowing for better conditions. If he can't realize maximum productivity on a job, he figures out how many crewmembers can finish tasks efficiently, then he adjusts the schedule.

"The biggest thing is that [the decision to mow] really is a balance," Ninde sums up.

**TO-DO LIST.** Missed mowing days don't always strand crewmembers at home base – Stephen Chapman hasn't skipped a day in the field yet this season. After all, rain days aren't vacation days. "Maintaining your schedule and customers' expectations is key," notes the operations manager for KCS Landscape Management, Falls Church, Va. "Our policy is to show up and try to work. And many days, we break out raincoats to mow."

Chapman's six-day workweek allows for five mowing days and one enhancement day, or what he calls "flexible work." When conditions prohibit crews from revving up the mowers, he simply adjusts the schedule, he says, explaining that he raises mower decks from 3½ inches to 4 or 4½ inches so damp grass will not clog mowers. As long as mowers don't leave tracks on the turf, his crews don't miss a beat.

This doesn't mean Chapman will run machines in swamp-like situations. "If we've had an inch of rain we wait it out, and if the guys are going to be unproductive, it's best for them to go home and we'll spend time catching up on another day," he reasons. "But seldom do we get rain where the guys will miss a solid day."

(continued on page 66)

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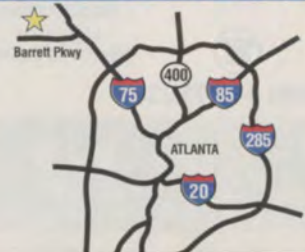


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## Mowing Back-Up Plans

(continued from page 64)

If Chapman predicts worsening conditions in the afternoon, he plans accordingly by pushing out crews earlier. "We might say, 'Don't worry about weed pulling, just get the bulk of the grass cut,'" he describes. "We can edge every other week, but we do what we can to keep up with the mowing.

"With a seasonal workforce, our guys want to work regardless, and we'll always find something for them to do," he adds.

Rak tends to the small stuff when weather conditions prohibit mowing. His crews trim shrubs, conduct spring cleanups and even mulch in the rain, but Rak identifies a cut-off point when even enhancement tasks turn into a mess. "If you leave the property messy, customers will get upset, and we try not to let that happen," he says.

Ninde also sticks to his schedule for small installation projects like planting, he says, and since his crews are cross-trained, he can assign maintenance crewmembers to these jobs without extra training. This flexibility

Crewmembers at Clippers don't twiddle their thumbs when weather conditions prohibit mowing. They simply check a to-do list of projects saved for rainy days.

A "sidebar" next to the schedule board contains a list of tasks, and employees add items to this list during the week, explains Milton Ninde, operations manager at the Chantilly, Va.-based company. "If something needs to be done but it isn't pressing, we write

it on the list," he explains, adding that this is especially helpful when workers want hours, but don't want to waste time on "busy work."

Some items might include picking up parts for mechanics, cleaning trucks, organizing equipment, obtaining supplies for scheduled projects, scouting properties or tending to preventive maintenance, Ninde says.

"Once the rain stops, we've lost a day of productivity, so we want the shop to be organized," Ninde reasons.

— **Kristen Hampshire**

## Save it for a Rainy Day

eases scheduling concerns later, when maintenance crews are playing catch-up with their mowing accounts. "This is the time when [cross-training] is a bonus, because I can shift some of the guys," he notes.

And, again, workers still can clock hours on the job, adds Shawn Williamson, presi-

dent, Cutting Edge, Granbury, Texas. "If employees are cross-trained, then the mowing guys can do hedges and get in their hours and still make us a profit and, ultimately, make customers happy," he reasons. "It also helps for future days when it is not raining.

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## Mowing Back-Up Plans

(continued from page 66)

Then, it frees up the guys to mow, pull the weeds and go."

When stormy days spell danger for mowing, Williamson's crews might tackle another outdoor job that doesn't require machinery. "For every crew, I have a backup plan," he notes. "We handle every facet of the landscape, so if irrigation technicians can't do their jobs because of rain, we have tree jobs, brush pickup jobs, construction cleanup – there are other things to do to keep on going," he adds.

Even when conditions keep crews indoors, Williamson doesn't waste time – these off-days can be a blessing in disguise, he points out. He recalled a week of rain that kept crews indoors counting blades, nuts and bolts.

"We did a total inventory check," he describes. "We got the shop organized. If we didn't have those rainy days, I'd have to have days when I didn't work in the field to do that so I would know where everything is."

Besides cleaning shop, missed mowing days offer training opportunities, as well, Ninde notes. He might visit properties and review progress with foremen or sit down with crews and discuss in-field issues that crop up frequently. "I may say to a person running a job, 'Let's go out and grab some lunch. Give me your paperwork and let's review where you're at and your game plan,'" he says.

Busy in-season schedules often don't allow for one-on-one attention, and the individual training Ninde can devote to foremen on days when mowing slows down ultimately improves productivity, he says.

In addition, foremen can devise productive plans for making up missed jobs. "They can use the day to get organized for what will be a pressed week," Ninde remarks.

**BACK ON TRACK.** One day without mowing is a reprieve – several in a row, now that's the tough part, Rak relates. "That's

"There is a **balance**  
between **what we have**  
**on our schedules**

vs. *whether it is financially*

**prudent to send out guys**

**to do a job." – Milton Ninde**

when you really have to play catch-up and the biggest challenge is preparation," he says. "I am a schedule fanatic, so I will look at my accounts and crews, and try to make things fit."

Furthermore, contractors who overbook mowing routes in the first place might find this "fit" is more of a tight squeeze. Too many accounts and too little time turns into unfinished jobs and unhappy customers when crews can't mow. "Try not to over-schedule yourself – and that can be hard because we all want the work," Rak admits.

Nevertheless, Chapman agrees that re-scheduling maintenance work requires some

(continued on page 72)



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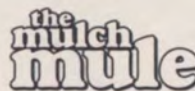
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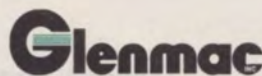
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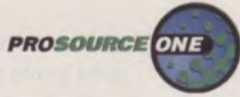


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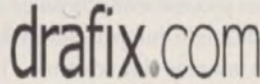
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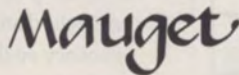
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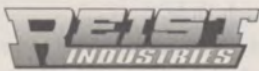
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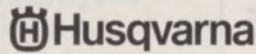
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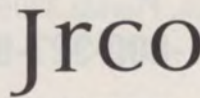
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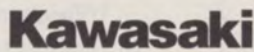
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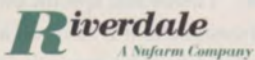
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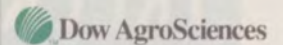
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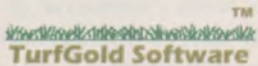
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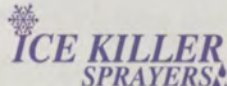
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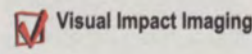
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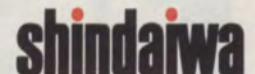
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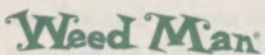
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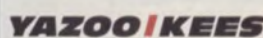
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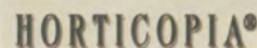
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## Mowing Back-Up Plans

(continued from page 68)

juggling, and getting back on schedule is the greatest challenge, he notes. "The biggest problem with [days you can't mow] is the uptime after the downtime," he remarks.

And more work means more overtime. Chapman budgets for this labor expense but, still, too many extra hours of makeup work can pinch the bottom line.

Some contractors reserve Saturdays to make up missed work, and others, like Williamson, assign mowing work to enhancement crews once weather clears so mowing crews can proceed with scheduled properties.

Ninde might bump his seven-day cutting rotation to a nine-day schedule. "It depends on the time of year," he says, adding that it is

easier to rearrange schedules in the fall when grass grows more slowly.

The key to rescheduling is communicating with customers, Ninde emphasizes. For example, Saturday mowing days might not appeal to apartment complexes, where tenants expect quiet weekend mornings.

In this case, crews might move an office complex to Saturday and take care of the apartment complex during the week. "That way, no one gets disturbed and we can have some efficiency on that missed day," Ninde figures.

Rak's crews visit accounts on the same day each week, so rain days might push back the schedule a couple days. He motivates employees to work extra hours in the evenings to make up the work. "I will coax the guys into working a 12-hour day just to get things done," he says. "I'll say, 'Let's get psyched up! You had two rain days where you got to leave early. Let's get back on schedule.'"

Rak knows which customers tend to be concerned with schedule changes, and he is careful to contact this group when crew members can't mow.

Williamson keeps a list of sensitive clients and also includes details in his contract so customers understand the company procedure. "We don't work on Sundays, and if the rain day falls on a Sunday we bypass that week," he explains. "I make that specific on the contract. I tell customers if it rains on a Friday or a Saturday, we can't enter their gated communities on Sundays, so I will let them know when they will be rescheduled."

Since many of Ninde's commercial clients expect weekly visits, even if crews can't mow, someone from Clippers stops in just to "make an appearance," he says. "We know there are things that need to be done and we will be hustling the next couple of days, so we take time when we can't mow to do some of fine-tuning work," he explains.

And a little "hustle" isn't always a bad thing, Ninde remarks. Unpredictability is the nature of the business, and as long as contractors can fill no-mow days with productive side work, rain isn't so gloomy for operations. "That's what makes the job fun—otherwise it would be boring and anyone could do it," he says. **LL**

The author is a Contributing Editor to *Lawn & Landscape* magazine and can be reached at [khampshire@lawnandlandscape.com](mailto:khampshire@lawnandlandscape.com).

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by Lauren Spiers

# PUMP It UP

*Choosing the right pump for an irrigation job keeps pressure and flow running smoothly.*

When Kobe Bryant steps onto the court, Lakers fans go crazy. A powerful figure, Bryant exerts every ounce of his basketball prowess each time he competes in a game. The ball becomes an extension of his arm that almost can't miss the net as it so gracefully arches through the air.

But, somehow, that magic moment would vanish if the ball came to a hard thud beneath the basket without so much as rolling away. Obviously, Kobe can't dribble a flat basketball but pumping up the ball and inflating it to just the right pressure keeps him in the zone.

Irrigation contractors have their own "zones" to worry about and pressure is important in that respect as well. On properties where an irrigation design has several zones over a wide area, ensuring that each foot of pipe carries the right water pressure and flow is essential. Sometimes a boost of power from an irrigation pump is necessary to achieve the proper results.

**PUMP PROPERTIES.** When the pressure provided by an existing water source is too low to effectively run a sprinkler system, installing a pump can solve the problem.

"A pump speeds up that water flow," comments Gail Mueller, general manager, Munro

Pump, Grand Junction, Colo. "There's pressure built up and the water is going to look for the least amount of resistance. In irrigation systems, that's the sprinkler heads, so the heads pop up and provide a place for that water to go."

"Pumps are engineered to deliver water at the desired pressure over the entire range of flows created by the irrigation system," adds Joe Sciole, national sales manager, Flowtronex, Dallas, Texas. "The flow for any particular zone or combination of zones in an irrigation system can be significantly different depending on the design criteria. The better pump control systems can react to



*Irrigation pumps can range in size and horsepower with smaller models for residential projects and giant pump systems like these for municipalities and larger properties. Photos: Flowtronex*



*Choosing the correct irrigation pump requires accounting for pressure loss due to friction and changes in elevation on hilly properties.*

*(continued on page 76)*



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## Pumps & Irrigation

(continued from page 74)

varying flow demand and deliver a constant pressure. This helps ensure that each sprinkler head delivers the proper or designed precipitation rate."

Because of issues like site elevation and pressure loss due to friction, sizeable irrigation jobs can benefit from one of the three basic types of pumps available to contractors.

When the main water source is a well or lake, vertical turbine pumps are usually the best bet, since their configuration allows them to pull water up through a pipe to feed a ground-level application. For situations where flooding is a concern or where above-ground pumps are prohibited, submersible pumps installed entirely

underwater may be the top choice.

The most popular type of pump used in landscape irrigation though, is the centrifugal or horizontal end suction pump. According to Mike Higgins, golf/turf sales representative, Grand Junction Pipe & Supply, Grand Junction, Colo., their efficiency, ease of use and reasonable cost, make centrifugal pumps a solid bet for contractors. This pump type has two subcategories to choose from: Self-priming and non-self priming.

"Priming a pump is the act of creating a near vacuum in the pipe going from the water source to the pump — this is called the suction pipe," Higgins explains. "This is done by filling the suction pipe with water, which pushes the air out and reduces the atmospheric pressure inside the suction pipe to a point where the pressure outside the pump is higher and forces the water up inside the suction pipe."

To clarify, both Higgins and Mueller equate the process to sucking water up a straw and then holding the end of the straw with your finger. "Once the straw is full, as long as you don't move your finger, you're fine," Mueller comments. "But once you move your finger, you lose your prime."

Self-priming pumps have enough power to pull water in and hold their prime between uses, whereas non-self priming pumps depend on gravity to keep water in the chambers. "You always want the water source higher than the pump so the water will keep running to the pump as it pushes the water through," Mueller adds.

**IRRIGATION SPECS.** To choosing the right pump, manufacturers and suppliers agree that there are several details contractors must consider.

"Selecting a pump is a matter of pulling together all the pumping requirements for the irrigation system," Higgins says. "First, you need to know how much water you want to pump in gallons per minute (gpm). The largest zone on your system gives you this number, and then I like to add a 'fudge factor' of 20 percent. To come up with the flow requirements, I multiply the gpm needed for the largest zone by 1.2."

Higgins' reasoning for this practice comes from trying to avoid an irrigation event known as cavitation. In an automatic system,

(continued on page 78)

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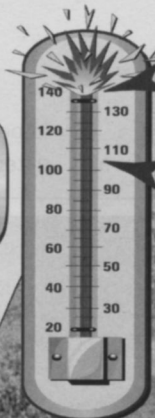
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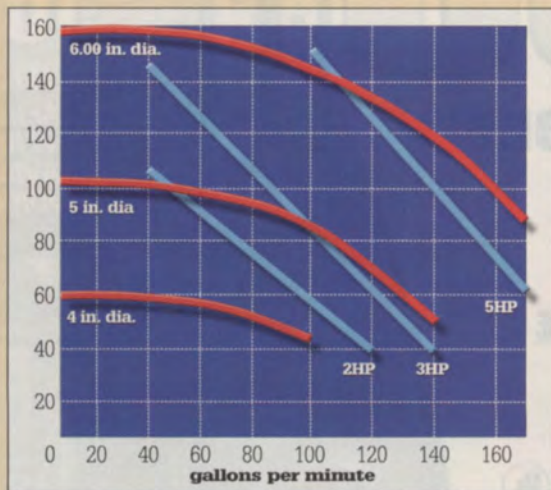
BOOK THIS 57



**C**reated by pump manufacturers for each model they produce, pump curves identify the right size pump for a given irrigation job. To use this chart, contractors must first determine their irrigation system's required flow in gallons per minute (gpm) and required pressure in feet of head.

On this chart, the red curves represent the impeller size and the green lines highlight the pump's horsepower. To use the curve, find your required pressure on the vertical axis and follow that line over until it meets the vertical line identifying your necessary gpm. Mark this intersection and use the

impeller and horsepower marks just above that point to determine the best pump configuration.



For example, if your requirements are 80 feet of head and 80 gpm, find the intersection on the chart and mark that point. The point is above the green 2-horsepower line so that size motor won't work - a 3-horsepower motor is necessary. Also, looking at the red curves, these requirements determine that a 5-inch impeller is the minimum usable size.

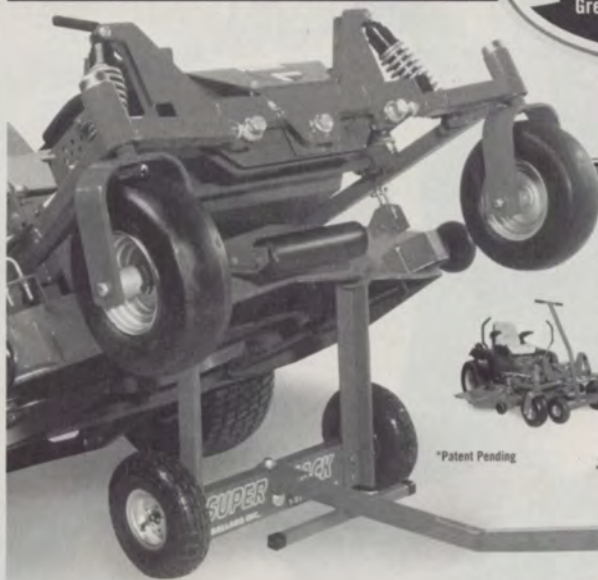
Source: [www.irrigationtutorials.com/pump.htm](http://www.irrigationtutorials.com/pump.htm) by Jess Stryker. Please note that this is only an example of a pump curve. Pump curves are available from pump manufacturers.

## Curvy Calculations

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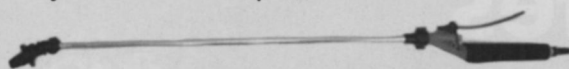


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## Pumps & Irrigation

(continued from page 78)

the moment when one valve turns of an another turns on can result in a hard clanging sound as the water in the system changes from a liquid to a vapor and back to a liquid due to pressure changes. A higher flow rate increases the amount of water in the system, and, therefore, decreases the severity of the pressure change.

"You also need to take into consideration how much elevation there is from the bottom of the system to the top, because you have to account for that space when you figure the discharge of the pump," Mueller says.

"If you have a pump that's pumping 100 gpm straight into the air and you attach a pipe that runs 200 feet away, as that water runs through and against the pipe walls, there's friction loss there," she explains. "Instead of getting 100 gpm then, you might only get 90. From there, if you raise or lower that 200-foot pipe based on the terrain or the water source, for instance, the water then has to push against that elevation, creating even more friction loss."

Determining friction loss doesn't necessarily change the flow rate for an irrigation system, Mueller notes, but it can have an impact on the system's pressure requirements. In his "Irrigation Pumping Systems" tutorial, Jess Stryker, president, Stryker & Associates, Ventura Calif., explains, "in the United States, the pressure output of pumps is measured as 'feet of head,' which is simply height of elevation."

Stryker mentions that the weight of water is what creates pressure, noting, "the water pressure at the bottom of a column of water is simply the total weight of all the water in that column." In this example, Stryker is refers to static pressure, which is the pressure of water not in motion. But, in an irrigation system, the important figure to determine is the dynamic pressure.

"With the water in a dynamic state - flowing in the pipe - the water loses pressure due to friction on the sides of the pipe, resulting in a lower pressure," he comments. "In most cases, we measure water pressure in the static state when designing irrigation systems. Then we use calculations to determine the friction loss that will occur in the pipes and subtract it from the static pressure to arrive at the dynamic pressure."

"The flow and pressure required are absolutely necessary to begin the selection process of pumps," Sciole agrees. "A common mistake contractors make is not calculating friction losses in devices and structures [such as the pipe, meter or backflow]. You must know the limitations of the supply and what will happen when water starts moving. There's no easy fix once a pump system is installed if the supply was not calculated properly." Additionally, Sciole notes that the power supply must match the motor without exception in order for a system to run correctly. Carefully calculating these needs can help contractors choose the best pump for the job the first time around.

Some manufacturers offer in-house or online pump-selection services to keep contractors from scratching their heads. "By answering questions about an application, the [online] program can size, specify, provide drawings and provide a budget for pricing a pump," Sciole details.

**"The flow and pressure required are absolutely necessary to begin the selection process of pumps." - Joe Sciole**



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Visit [www.irrigationtutorials.com/pump.htm](http://www.irrigationtutorials.com/pump.htm) to learn more about calculating dynamic pressure and using pump curves.

Otherwise, using a pump curve like the one on page 78 lines up site specifications with pump sizes. Contractors should note that on a pump curves use pressure calculations in feet of head, which is simply the irrigation system's required pressure in PSI multiplied by 2.31.

**COST & CARE.** Not only do pressure and flow affect a contractor's choice of pump, but it can also influence the price.

"Flow and pressure will have everything to do with pricing," Sciole says. "A 1-horsepower [centrifugal] might cost \$200 and a 75-horsepower vertical turbine might cost \$12,000. Then you need controls, piping, labor, etc." That wide price range does exist, but the pump size relates directly to project size. Municipalities, for instance, may have an interest in the higher-volume, higher-cost pumps, while residential projects may only require the small, \$200 model.

Of course, contractor's shouldn't simply

install the least expensive pump to save money. Mueller assures that, in terms of pumps, you get what you pay for. "There are inexpensive plastic pumps available, but if you put a plastic pump in the hot sun, it's not going to last as long as a cast iron pump," she offers. "Also, pumps that use brass impellers tend to be more forgiving than plastic impellers. When [a pump] begins to run it will hit 3600 rpm immediately. A brass impeller will take that change, whereas a plastic impeller may start to get brittle over time and cause damage when the motor starts."

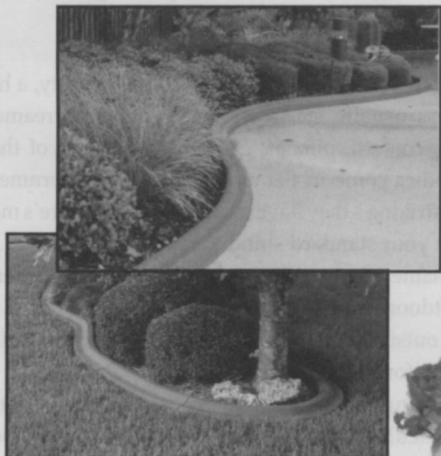
When the correct pump is in place on an irrigation system and is not significantly over-used, most manufacturers and suppliers agree that a pump can last a good, long time. "It's not unusual for pumps to last 20 years provided they've been sized properly and protected from the elements," Higgins remarks. "Pumps need a certain amount of ventilation when they are running to keep the motor cool, and it's best to keep water off

non-submersible models as much as possible to keep the cases from corroding."

"There is little maintenance that can be done to the pump directly," Sciole says, "but maintaining the water supply and keeping the irrigation system controls tuned to minimize stress on the pump system are good practices that will help prolong pump life." He also offers that occasionally verifying pump performance by measuring pressure and flow at different levels and recording these results as a good way of determining where a pump is in its life. **LL**

The author is Assistant Editor of *Lawn & Landscape* magazine and can be reached at [lspliers@lawnandlandscape.com](mailto:lspliers@lawnandlandscape.com).

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by Nicole Wisniewski

*Don't just dabble in color –  
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# WILD Visions

Forget pastels and blushing tints of baby blue, seafoam green and little girl pink. This year, landscapes aren't holding outdoor baby showers or having year-round Easter egg hunts – the party gets much wilder with vibrant punchbowls of lava reds, pumpkin oranges and lemon meringue yellows.

"Bold is in," says Joe Pack, president, design and landscape development, Progressive Land Systems, Dallas, Texas. "The economy is tight and people are spending more wisely and they want the biggest show possible for their money. And with bolder colors the show is more striking and can be seen easily from distances, contrasting with the green landscape."



These floral borders aren't for bashful wallflowers. Encourage clients to emerge from their dark, dreary shells to landscapes that draw lots of attention and bring passers-by to screeching halts. Create crowd-pleasing, stare-stimulating, traffic-stopping color.

**VIBRANT VARIETIES.** When planning a party, a host or hostess usually starts with decorations. Streamers, balloons, confetti, piñatas, games ... and none of these gala goodies come in demure shades. The adornments must be striking – they have to tell guests that there's more than just your standard shindig happening here.

The same idea applies to bold borders. Summer is here, outdoor barbecue smells are in the air, children are playing outside – this jubilant juncture deserves a little tonal transformation.

According to Jessie Atchison, marketing services, Ball Horticultural Co., West Chicago, Ill., warm, bold colors and dark, rich-hued foliage is in. "Showy colors

*(continued on page 84)*

*Daybreak Red Stripe gazania (above) strikes a bold chord in vibrant yellows and reds, while Fairytales Cinderella portulaca (left) jumps at the chance to show off its fuchsia and yellow blooms. Photos: Ball Horticultural Co.*





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## Plant Borders

(continued from page 82)

like blue, orange, red, purple and bright yellow make really eye-catching landscape borders," she describes, adding that patriotic colors of red, white and blue also are trendy this summer.

In North Carolina, Leslie Herndon said clients prefer a more fiery look. "The tropical look with its bold foliage and brilliant colors is really what's hot right now," says the floriculturist and account manager at Greenscape, Holly Springs, N.C. "It can really uplift your spirits on a dreary day as it makes you think of a tropical oasis."

Currently, carrot orange is the dominant flame tinting North Carolina beds. To bring out this hue, Herndon uses Canna 'Bengal Tiger,' variegated shell gingers and hibiscus.

Similarly in Missouri, orange, as well as hot pink, purple, magenta and lime green are stealing garden scenes "because they make your eyes light up and bring a smile to your face," comments Trella

*Lemon Chiffon violas exhibit gold brights in landscape beds when mixed with Sorbet Blue Heaven violas, which showcase a rare but trendy garden color - blue. Photo: Ball Horticultural Co.*



Banks, seasonal color designer, Audrie Seeley & Co., Kansas City, Mo. For blossoms in these brights, Banks uses wave petunias, sun Coleus, Strobilanthes, sweet potato vine, impatiens, croton, cannas, purple fountain grass and Mandevilla because they have stature, bold color, non-stop bloom and good structure.

While these highlighter shades bring light to Missouri gardens, red-hot is the hue warming Texas landscapes and caladiums are the plants that best showcase that color, Pack says. "They are extremely tolerant of the Texas heat," he explains.

Another warm-shaded plant Pack uses is sun or shade Coleus, which he incorporates for its cherry, pink, yellow, white, green or burgundy foliage. "They are a tremendous source of rich, vibrant and varying color," he says. "They are also very heat loving."

Once contractors introduce color into local landscapes, clients want to extend the party through the four seasons, Atchison points out. "It begins in early spring when

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bulbs begin to flower and continues through the rest of spring and summer with flowering annuals and perennials," she says, adding that clients don't want color to stop there. "Fall is a great time for the bold, bright colors of Luminaire trailing snapdragons, Sorbet violas, Bingo pansies and Wink and Whisper diascia. Winter color can come from evergreens, including plants like holly that provide bright berries."

The Gerber daisy is one of Pack's favorite plants that he uses as a perennial during milder Texas winters. "Their assortment of very vibrant yellows, oranges, reds, salmons and pinks is unbeatable for instant color," he exclaims.

"I use a lot of yellow violas and pansies in the winter for a real attention getter," Herndon adds.

Changing color schemes from season to season also cues people into the fact that something different and fresh is happening in the landscape, Banks says. "In the fall,

some beds need to go with shrubs that have fall color - these shrubs can do double duty to make beds stand out even more," she explains. "You can find the same issue at work in the spring when there are flowering ornamental trees and shrubs and bright new green leaves for a background for pansies or tulips. For winter, rely on textures, berried shrubs, various colored evergreens and perhaps hardy pansies."

When it comes to commercial and residential clients' varying opinions on color, Herndon finds that most commercial clients just want bright color "that shows up from the road and draws people in," she says, while others are more selective. "I do have a few clients who like to know ahead of time the colors I'm using and for those clients I print out color selection sheets so they can see exactly what plants I have chosen and what they will look like together. This way I can fix any problems ahead of time."

But experimenting with color on commercial sites is easier than on residential properties, Herndon points out. "You just have to go with what you like, unless clients have specific tastes," she says. "The only colors I don't like together are orange and hot pink. But color is a personal issue. I think bold is the way to go with commercial clients because we only do two changeouts a year and we want them to really pop."

Though vibrant varieties are in, Atchison reminds contractors that while some clients may like heart-stopping shades, others don't. "Bold color attracts attention, so a wild purple and red planting is not for the faint of heart - if clients want peaches and pinks, it's probably best to stick with the pastels."

This is mostly an issue with residential clients, Herndon explains. They tend to incorporate new trends more slowly than their commercial counterparts. Currently, residential clients are asking for more of a "garden" feel. "They tend to stick with pastels

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with bright accents," Herndon says. "Some like more outgoing designs but most stick with what they know they like."

**TONAL TRICKS.** There are no rules for creating bold plant borders, Atchison says. But "there are several different ways to approach the creation of a stunning border and which one you choose will depend on the client's needs," she explains.

Banks starts with background plants that have size, splash and structure to focus attention on the bed. Next, she adds large areas of the same plant at a lower level for impact. "Generally, balance is the key to make sure color plantings go with the rest of existing plantings," Banks points out. "It is one job to draw the eye to important elements of the jobsite, i.e. entrances, flagpoles and signs for commercial sites, and sitting

areas and garden rooms for residential sites, but overall seasonal color should make everything look better – more enhanced."

Using colors on opposite ends of the color wheel provide punch, Banks advises. For example, contrasting colors like red and purple can make a big statement, Atchison says. "You can also plant different shades within the same color group," she comments. "Long borders can be broken into smaller units by planting a different color between various color groups. Generally, plants seen from a distance, such as those along highway medians, should use bolder, brighter, contrasting colors. Plantings closer to sidewalks or other nearby viewing areas can be subtler. When planting a border against a dark background, such as evergreens, avoid darker tones like deep blue or mahogany, as these colors can disappear

Check out our July Online Extras section for a list of suggested plant varieties in different color categories.

into the background. Instead, use brighter tones like hot lavender or magenta so the blooms will stand out from backdrop plants."

Crafting a simple, yet effective theme and using it throughout the landscape is an easy way to maximize color. "Create a bold pattern and repeat it rather than creating several different areas of color that may not blend well together," Pack suggests. "Sometimes boldness can be created by picking up colors from a plant such as a caladium with other plants like begonias or impatiens – for example, white queen caladiums with pink and red begonias. My most successful bold borders have been to create a line of bold mixed colors, then clump groups of something different and larger within the border as a contrast, usually every 8 to 10 feet depending on the length of the bed."

And contractors should remain faithful to specific themes or designs after they choose them. Despite the trend for eye-popping shades, there is still such a thing as too much color when it's not designed well, Pack maintains. "Using too many different colors just doesn't work with annuals," he says. "Pick a theme with three or four colors that work together and stick with it. Most combinations work OK as long as too many different colors aren't introduced into the border."

Combine bright with bright, not pastel with bright, Banks adds, pointing out that using too few plants exhibits a "skimpy" look rather than a lush one.

Consider size as well. "The biggest mistake I made originally was not having enough large material in the beds," Herndon relates. "Three cannas look really out of place whereas five or 10 would look a lot better and really make the statement that I intended."

Also, avoid darker colors that can create landscape gaps instead of appeal. "I keep my bright colors to a maximum and my darks to a minimum, especially on roadside beds," Herndon shares. "I find dark colors recede into the background causing 'holes' at 35 or 45 mph, especially in winter."

**PLANTING POINTERS.** The first step in preparing for a vibrant color yard party is

**L**eslie Herndon, floriculturist and account manager, Greenscape, Holly Springs, N.C., lists her favorite plants for show-stopping color.

- **ANGELONIA 'ANGEL MIST,' 'MANDIANA' OR 'TIGER STRIPE'** – with our drought last year, these still thrived
- **LANTANA** – always dependable, try 'New Gold,' 'Silver Mound' and 'Pink Caprice'
- **DRAGON WING BEGONIA** – a definite conversation piece in pots by homeowners' doorways
- **SCAEVOLA** – Herndon used 'New Wonder' last year and just like the angelonia, the plant just exploded with color by mid-summer. "Pay close attention to the height on these different cultivars though," Herndon warns. "I put begonias behind this one and by July you couldn't see them over the scaevola."
- **CANNA 'BENGAL TIGER'** – provides a great carrot orange color
- **COLEUS** – another great standby, but watch for mealy bugs, Herndon says. "But you can't beat the many colors that are available," she stresses.
- **RUDBECKIA** – "Last summer, I used 'Indian Summer' and it was fantastic for the first half of the summer and then faded completely away by July," Herndon says. "But it did a great job of coming on strong early on when everything else was creeping. And the other plants quickly covered the hole that was left, so I'm using it again as well as several new ones."
- **SUN CALADIUMS** – great foliage, adds a lot of interest to a bed
- **HIBISCUS** – tropical and perennial, has great flower size and colors and really works well with a tropical theme
- **BANANAS** – great statuesque quality in beds, but can get huge and are a little difficult to remove at the end of summer, Herndon warns.
- **ANY PERENNIAL USED CREATIVELY** – these are really making a move into annual beds.

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## Plant Borders

knowing what plants can tolerate specific site conditions, such as shade, sun or drought, and then planting accordingly. If contractors don't follow these rules, they can mute colors and lose the overall bold border boost. For example, "plants that desire shade but are in the sun will fade and lose valuable color," Pack explains.

Banks uses a crew of two to three workers for spring planting when the company needs to install all the commercial color at once. Then she uses a crew of one to install small residential plantings and containers. "I use dedicated crews that handle the plants more carefully and have an eye for detail," she says. "It is good to have someone that is customer friendly as well since they will work more closely with clients in planting and maintenance."

During planting season, Herndon uses a similar approach, employing two workers to plant flowers according to her designs for residential clients and three to five workers for commercial sites.

Commercially planted seasonal color will generally not do well unless contractors perform regular maintenance, including water, deadheading and fertilization, Banks reminds. Regular deadheading particularly helps boost color, especially with certain varieties, such as pansies and caladiums, Pack comments.

To aid with customary care, contractors can plant low-maintenance varieties, Atchison says, pointing out that these plant types will still require a little attention with regular fertilization and watering. "Keep an eye on plants particularly when they've just been installed," she says. "They'll need regular watering to get established. Following the general care requirements for each selected plant variety will help keep it healthy all season."

While using the same reliable varieties annually is tempting, contractors should use different species in beds every couple of years to avoid the build up of organisms that might be harmful to one specific plant type, Atchison stresses. "Aside from that fact," she says, "planting new annual varieties each year keeps things interesting." **LI**

The author is Managing Editor of *Lawn & Landscape* magazine and can be reached at [nwisniewski@lawnandlandscape.com](mailto:nwisniewski@lawnandlandscape.com).

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## Wood-Boring Insects

by Bart Drees

*Locust borer adults are dark brown or black with distinctive yellow markings. Photo: Robert Anderson, USDA Forest Service*

Wood-boring insects can cause havoc on trees and shrubs. Keep these pests at bay with proper identification and control methods.



# BOREER BASICS

Many insects feed on and make their homes in the bark, trunks and branches of shade trees and shrubs.

Weakened, damaged, dying or dead plants attract most insect borers. These insects are referred to as "secondary invaders" because they attack only after a plant has been weakened by another stress.

The other type of wood-boring insects that attack healthy trees are called "primary invaders." Primary invader infestations often go unnoticed until plants or plant parts begin to die or show external damage. These insects often produce a sawdust-like excrement called frass. Their holes are round, oval or semicircular and are found in a random pattern on the plant.

Both types of borers damage plants by tunneling through the inner bark layer (cambium) into the sapwood (xylem) that transports nutrients and water to the leaves. These insects are called phloem feeders. Partial girdling reduces plant growth and vigor above the site of attack, and when the cambium layer is completely girdled, the plant eventually dies above or beyond the damage site.

**IDENTIFYING WOOD-BORING BUGS.** There are three main categories of wood-borers—long-horned beetles, flat-headed borers and bark beetles. Following are some typical insects that fall under each type.

**Long-horned beetles or round-headed borers.** Adults are called long-horned beetles because their antennae are longer than their bodies. Larvae tunnel underneath bark and into the heartwood. Larvae of some species are legless, but most have three pairs of small legs on the first three segments behind the head capsule. Many species of beetles belong to this group, and most are secondary invaders. Some examples of long-horned beetles include:

- *Locust borer.* Adults are medium-sized ( $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch long) are frequently found feeding on goldenrod or other flowers in the fall. They are dark brown to black with distinctive gold-yellow markings. Larvae hatch from eggs laid in bark crevices. Visible symptoms of infestation are wet spots and frass on the bark of black locusts. Later, larvae tunnel into the inner bark and construct cells in which they spend the winter months.

*(continued on page 90)*



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## Wood-Boring Insects

(continued from page 88)

In one year, the larvae are fully grown and about 1 inch in length.

- **Cottonwood borer.** Adult beetles are large (1¼-inches long) with an attractive black and whitish-yellow pattern, are active from May through August and are frequently found on cottonwood, poplar or willow trees. The larvae (1¾ to 2 inches long) tunnel at the base of the trunk or below ground level and require about two years to develop.

- **Red-headed ash borer.** This is one of the most common wood-boring beetles. It has a narrow body with a reddish thorax and light brown wing covers marked with four yellow lines on each that are slanted downward toward the middle, giving the appearance of a "V" across the back. The antennae are rather short and the long legs are thin and fragile. Red-headed ash borers feed on many species of wood including ash, oak and elm.

- **Red oak borer.** This pest attacks oak and maple trees. The reddish-brown adults (5/8 to 1 1/8 inches long) lay eggs individually in bark crevices during July and August. Larvae tunnel under the bark and into the heartwood. Larvae often tunnel completely around the trunk or branches they infest, producing noticeable scars or girdling. Red oak borers feed for more than a year before pupating in chambers tunnelled into the heartwood. Damage kills limbs and increases secondary invader and disease risk.

- **Twig girdler.** Damage from this insect, which attacks pecan, mimosa, chinaberry and huisache, occurs primarily from egg laying. The grayish-brown adults (1 1/16 inch long) girdle limbs during the fall (late August through mid-November) by chewing a V-shaped groove entirely around twigs, branches or terminals. Eggs are inserted into the bark on the girdled part of the branch away from the tree. Girdled limbs eventually break and fall to the ground, particularly during high winds and storms. Damage can disfigure a young tree and leads to secondary branching, particularly if the terminal is attacked. Larvae reach up to 7/8 inch long and are unable to develop in healthy sapwood. Removing the girdled twigs and branches from the ground during winter and spring and destroying them can reduce the population of these insects.

**Metallic beetles or flat-headed borers.** Adult beetles are flattened, hard-bodied and boat-shaped with short antennae and distinc-

*The red-headed ash borer adult (right) and the round-headed borer (below). Photos: Gerald Lenhard, Louisiana State*



tive metallic colors (green, blue, bronze, copper), while larvae are cream-colored and legless with wide, flat body segments. Consequently, when these larvae tunnel beneath bark or into the sapwood, they produce oval or flattened tunnels in cross sections. Galleries are often winding and packed with frass. Tunneling girdles trunks and branches. The bronze birch borer and the flat-headed apple tree borer are flat-headed borers.

**Bark beetles.** Bark beetles tunnel below the tree barks and into wood. Adult beetles are small and reddish-brown. Larvae are cream-colored grubs without legs. One member of this group, the European elm bark beetle is the carrier of Dutch elm disease. Other members of this group include:

- **Southern pine beetle.** A primary pest of southern pine forests, adult beetles are active during warmer months when temperatures are above 58 F, and disperse widely to injured, weakened or stressed trees in the spring. Seven or more generations may be completed within a year. When abundant, they can attack healthy trees. Larvae tunnel beneath the bark producing galleries in patterns resembling the letter "S." This tunneling quickly disrupts the cambium layer, girdling the tree. Needles of newly attacked trees turn reddish-brown one to two months after infestation during the summer and up to three months in the winter. Removal and destruction of infested trees may prevent surrounding healthy trees from attack.

- **Ips engravers.** These insects usually attack weakened trees and their gallery patterns tend to be more parallel to each other. Recently felled wood should be covered with plastic to prevent Ips beetle infestations.

- **Asian ambrosia beetle.** This is a newly introduced species that attacks healthy, stressed or freshly cut elm, pecan, peach, oak, sweetgum and other trees. Tiny (2 to 3 millimeters long), dark reddish-brown adult female beetles tunnel into twigs, branches or small tree trunks, excavating a system of tunnels in the wood in which they lay eggs. They also introduce a fungus on which the larvae feed. Visible damage includes wilted leaves on infested branches and protrusions of compressed wood dust from numerous small holes. Dead and dying bark areas (cankers) can form at the damage site, eventually girdling the tree and killing it. There are several generations per year.

### MANAGING WOOD-BORING BUGS.

Since most wood-boring insects are considered secondary invaders, the first line of defense against infestation is to keep plants healthy. Follow these horticultural practices to promote tree health:

- Select well adapted species of trees that are not commonly attacked by wood borers in your area. Arizona ash, birch, cottonwood, locust, soft maple, flowering stone fruits, slash pines, willow and poplar are especially prone to borer attack.

- Choose a good planting site to avoid stress, freeze and sun damage and wind burn.

- Minimize stress and stimulating growth with proper watering and fertilization.

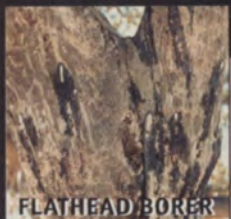
- Avoid trunk injury from lawn mowers, weed trimmers or construction.

- Promptly care for wounded or broken plant parts using pruning or wound paint during all but the coldest months of the year.

(continued on page 92)



# EMERALD ASH BORER



FLATHEAD BORER



EUCALYPTUS LONGHORNED BORER



PINE BARK BEETLE



LONGHORNED BORER

LARVAE



## FLATHEAD BORERS

AND

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## Wood-Boring Insects

(continued from page 90)

- Thin and prune during cold months.
- Remove and destroy infested, dying or dead plants or parts, including fallen limbs.
- Use plastic trunk protectors to help prevent injury from mowers and trimmers.

Once trees and shrubs are infested, non chemical options for borer control are limited. One option is to remove and destroy heavily infested or injured plants. Damaged trees also can be inspected closely to determine if the larvae stages can be extracted.

Stressed, unhealthy trees can be attacked repeatedly and will need repeated applications of insecticide. When using chemical treatments, efforts always should be made to improve overall tree health.

Insecticide products registered for borer control are mostly applied as sprays to the trunks and branches, and are non-systemic, residual insecticides. While these products do not kill larvae that have already penetrated the sap-wood or heartwood, they will kill adult and larval stages tunneling through the treated bark layer. These are

primarily a preventive treatment. Some products act as fumigants to repel egg-laying adults or kill accessible larvae.

Trunk injection products, which deliver insecticides into the cambium and phloem tissues where borers feed, are registered for treatment of some borers. These injections are most effective against sap feeding insects and rarely affect wood borer larvae. Consider the following factors when using insecticides.

- Time your treatments to match adult activity. Knowing when adults lay their eggs is critical, as insecticides are most effective if applied when adults are emerging and eggs are hatching. For most beetles, the adult egg-laying period is either long or unknown. Surface treatments are effective for only a three- to 10-week period. Therefore, regular re-treatment of susceptible plant parts is needed for effective control.

- Be sure coverage is complete and minimize drift. Effective treatment for borers requires that all surfaces of trunks and branches be covered. Only in a few instances

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is treatment of only the base of the tree trunk sufficient to protect the tree. To minimize drift, spray large trees only on days when wind is less than 6 to 7 mph.

- When making applications, always wear proper protective clothing (long-sleeved shirt, hat and eye protection as described on the product label) to avoid contact with the pesticide.

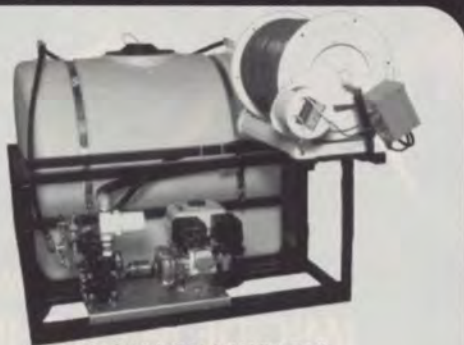
- Treat susceptible plants. Treatment of highly-valued landscape trees is justified. Newly transplanted trees and shrubs are naturally stressed and may need treatment, especially when borers are known to attack newly planted trees in the area. **LL**

The author is professor and extension entomologist at Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, and can be reached at b-drees@tamu.edu.



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by Lauren Spiers

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H-2B laborers fill out this landscaping crew. Photo: RAR Landscaping Co.

Classified ads like the one above may not always be so brutally honest, but all landscape companies place them and many of those companies often come up short in terms of finding good, qualified workers.

However, landscape companies across the country are discovering a south-of-the-border solution to their staffing problems. Through the H-2B program, contractors can hire foreign workers and bring them into the United States with completely legal working papers.

Of course, contractors are busy people and dealing with government agencies, applications and recruiting efforts is time consuming. For this reason and others, H-2B provider companies can handle the details while contractors focus on managing their businesses.

**H-2B BASICS.** Most contractors understand that H-2B allows them to hire foreign workers and bring them to the

United States to work for their companies. This opportunity is available to companies that can illustrate (through revenue statements, for instance) a seasonal, peak load, intermittent or one-time need, making the lawn and landscape industry a perfect candidate. But even green industry companies who have a constant revenue stream cannot hire H-2B workers, and workers' visas are only valid for a maximum of 10 months. Keeping workers in the country after their visas expire is against the law.

There are certainly penalties for violating the terms of an H-2B permit, but law-abiding contractors can improve their man power and productivity by using the program. But coordinating recruitment and hiring efforts of foreign workers is time consuming with all the government agencies involved. And frequent trips across the border certainly don't simplify matters.

This is where H-2B providers make a huge difference.

"It's good to use a provider because it's all we do," explains Terry Foley, chief operating officer, Foley Enterprises, Austin, Texas. Just as a homeowner is better off hiring a landscape company rather than handle all aspects of the job himself, contractors often find great benefits in letting H-2B providers handle their employment legwork.

(continued on page 96)

# Easy

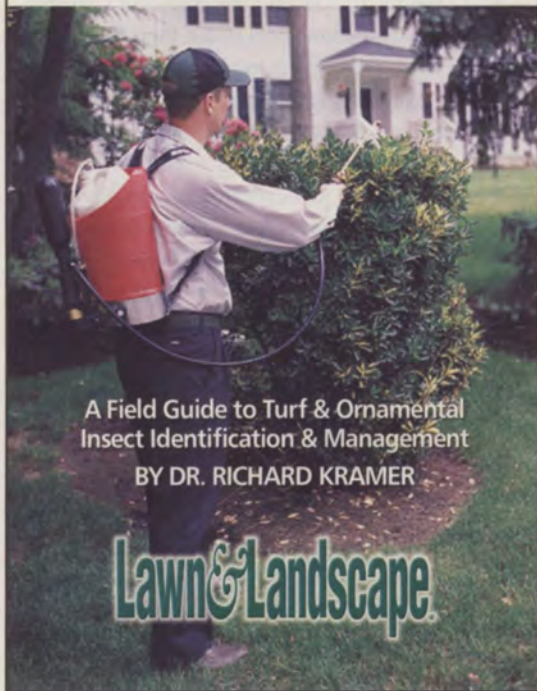
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# H-2B



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USE READER SERVICE #87

## H-2B Programs

(continued from page 94)

Bob Wingfield, owner, Amigos, Dallas, Texas, sums it up: "If I were a contractor, I would rather be selling work and letting somebody else do my H-2B paperwork. Then, I could build up business to where I need some H-2B workers, rather than sitting here, mired down in all the paperwork."

Jennifer Ricciardi, president, Career Company of America, Lititz, Pa., agrees. "The process involves so much time because there are so many rules, regulations and requirements, that a lot of companies get frustrated. We try to alleviate the employer's frustration and allow them to use their time doing what makes them money."

Indeed, applying for an H-2B permit is tedious and working with the government doesn't always produce efficient results. With three government agencies involved, the time spent on the phone - or on hold - can triple. "The program takes about 120 days," Foley mentions. "It starts at the state level, which is typically the employment agency. Then it goes to the department of labor for that region and finally to the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service)." The INS, now known as the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services or BCIS, ultimately grants contractors' H-2B permits.

These steps may seem simple enough, but the trick is to complete them all in the correct time frame. For instance, contractors are not even permitted to submit their application to the Department of Labor (DOL) more than 120 days or fewer than 60 days prior to the first day they need their foreign workers. Ricciardi explains that if her client wants his laborers to begin work on April 1, she would not be able to submit applications to the DOL any earlier than December 1. "Of course, there's a lot of preparation in advance of that," she comments.

In addition to performing a labor market test at the state level, which involves placing a help-wanted ad in a local newspaper for three days, contractors must also determine how many workers they will need and begin recruiting in the foreign country.

With so many factors to consider and coordinate in the H-2B process, exactly what services do provider companies provide?

**PROVIDER PRINCIPLES.** "A competent H-2B agency should perform two main services for clients," insists Libby Whitley, presi-



**J**ust like interviewing a prospective employee, scouting H-2B providers requires asking some questions and getting solid answers to help make the right decision. Libby Whitley, president, Mid-Atlantic Resource Association, Lovingson, Va., offers the following tips to help contractors choose the best H-2B provider for their needs:

- Make sure the agency knows its business. An employer can be prosecuted for legal violations perpetuated by its H-2B agent, even if done out of ignorance.
- Ask other landscapers if they are satisfied with the quality and timeliness of their H-2B service provider
- Look closely at H-2B agencies' fees and make sure there are no hidden charges. For instance, find out if the H-2B agency charges employers and workers [for the same services.] Gouging workers in addition to charging employers is an unsavory practice and in many areas the U.S. State

Department will reject an employer's visa petition if an agent charges workers excessive recruiting fees.

- Be very leery of H-2B agents who offer to pay you to take workers. [These companies may be] smuggling illegal aliens or are extorting vulnerable foreigners desperate to get away to the United States.
- Remember Ann Lander's Law: "If it seems too good to be true, it probably is." If an H-2B agent promises to deliver skilled, English-speaking workers in fewer than 120 days with drivers' licenses who will work for \$6 per hour and be happy with no more than 40 hours per week and pay \$200 per month in housing costs, keep looking.
- Be reasonable. The H-2B program is not the cheapest labor program but it's the most reliable. Like anything else, you will get out of the H-2B program what you put into it.

## H-2B Programs

dent, Mid-Atlantic Resources Association (MARA), Lovingson, Va. "First, it has to honestly represent its clients' labor needs to in obtaining H-2B labor certification and visas. Second, a good agency should support clients through the entire employment season with labor/law compliance and solving worker-related problems."

Whitley explains that employers can be held criminally liable if their provider company misrepresents labor needs on a federal application. Also, "abandoning employers and workers, particularly in their first year participating in the program, is unfair to everyone," she continues.

In terms of fulfilling these services, "we're all a little bit different," Foley notes. "For the most part, we all process the appropriate applications and some companies also offer recruitment services."

Contractors may alternatively work with an H-2B attorney like Robert Kershaw, Robert Kershaw & Associates, Austin, Texas. He and

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## H-2B Programs

other immigration attorneys can provide legal counsel on H-2B matters, should the need arise.

"We guide the employer through the H-2B process and the paperwork, up to and beyond when employees arrive," Kershaw explains. "If the employer has further questions regarding an employee taking off without telling anyone, for instance, they'll call us and we can give them legal advice as far as what their responsibilities are under the H-2B program."

Another facet of the H-2B provider is the H-2B recruiter like Jeff West, general manager, LLS International, Goodrich, Mich. West and other recruiters work with contractors through their H-2B providers to find laborers and also act as a contact for the workers once they're in the United States.

"If a worker has a complaint about something [with their employer], we want to know about it," West asserts. "Oftentimes, it's something minor, but if we get two or three workers complaining about the same thing, that raises a red flag and we then notify the

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Check our July Online Extras section for more questions to ask your H-2B provider and a closer look at recruitment firms.

provider who contacts the employer to see what's going on." West describes recruiters as "advocates of the workers," but notes, "we encourage the workers to go to their supervisor first with a problem, but to let us know if we can help resolve any issues."

Ricciardi's clients work with recruiters in Mexico and South Africa (an up-and-coming H-2B source) to find and interview prospective employees. Kershaw also sub-contracts with recruiters in Mexico, but Foley Enterprises does not recruit, allowing contractors to choose workers themselves. Still, the company does have a colleague in Mexico to facilitate employer-worker interactions and represent workers at the U.S. Consulate where they receive their visas.

The majority of H-2B providers stay in constant contact with their clients even after the workers arrive. "We give employers all the information they need for when the workers get up here - getting social security numbers and numbers for their dependents, for example"

Foley adds. "We want the recruits to be successful, so we do stay in constant communication and continue to advise and assist employers."

Recruiters can also aid in the transition to American culture. "We provide workers with debit cards - although they don't always want to take them," West remarks. "They can use one card to get direct deposit from their employer and leave the other card with their spouse so they can take money out." For a fee, West's firm also helps acquire individual taxpayer identification numbers to account for all of a worker's dependents, and files income tax returns as well.

**MONEY & MUST-KNOWS.** Hiring an H-2B provider isn't free, but most companies are reasonably priced, considering the value foreign workers can bring to a business.

"For a long time there was a per-visa price," Foley remembers. "We went to a flat rate last year and I think the trend is really moving that way."

Per-visa prices can range from \$150 to \$750 each, depending on the number of visas needed. Companies like Foley Enterprises, however, use tier systems by applying a flat fee up to a certain number of visas. Contractors who need one to 20 visas can expect a charge of \$2,000 to \$3,500, and for 21 to 100 visas the cost goes up to about \$5,000. Foley notes that 10 is the average number of visas requested.

For one to 100 visas, Kershaw also uses a flat rate. "The fee is not per visa - it's per application," he notes. "Your application can be for several workers, but the INS does scrutinize applications with more than 100 workers more closely than if you're asking

*(continued on page 112)*

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USE READER SERVICE #93



# Product Profile

## A Smaller Footprint

Robert Maffei's landscaping business has grown quickly over the past 13 years. What started as a four-person company, Maffei Landscaping Contractors, Marstons Mills, Mass., now ranges from 45 to 60 employees, depending on the season.

Maffei attributes a good portion of his business' success and growth to efficient use of crew and machinery time.

In 1996, Maffei's equipment fleet included everything from basic tools, such as weed wackers and lawn mowers, to more advanced equipment, including bark blowers and skid-steer loaders. Though using hand labor on big projects was taking a toll on his crew's efficiency, Maffei couldn't justify the costs involved with larger pieces of equipment. "I started thinking about the type of equipment that would help make my crews operate more efficiently," Maffei says. "They need equipment that's versatile and tough, but also small enough not to damage a customer's property."

Maffei was not alone in his quest for the ideal landscaper's tool. Fortunately, equipment manufacturers recognized this demand in the early 1990s.

At an efficiency seminar Maffei attended in hopes of growing his business, a speaker discussed a new, labor expense-trimming type of equipment called a "power wheelbarrow." The product offered some of what Maffei was looking for in a new piece of equipment, but not everything. Then, he stumbled across something more promising – the compact utility loader.

While growing in popularity, compact utility loaders are still relatively new to the market. They are multi-purpose

machines that utilize various attachments to tackle landscaping projects. Initially, compact utility models featured wheels, which operate well on turf and standard, even surfaces, but the first tracked models entered the market in 2000, allowing users to travel on varying surface conditions, such as mud or sand.

Maffei conducted a two-week demo of a Toro Dingo compact



*Instead of moving large boulders with shovels, Maffei Landscaping Contractors' crews use the Dingo compact utility loader to simplify the job. Photos: Maffei Landscaping Contractors*

utility loader and he realized that this was the piece of equipment for which he was looking.

In Maffei's experience, the compact machines offer as little as 3.4 psi of ground pressure, and, unlike some heavier skid-steers and track loaders, they do not destroy landscape surfaces like sod, soil and brick. A compact utility loader's light footprint, combined with its small size, permits Maffei to travel across and work on turf without damaging the clients' properties.

Compact size also allows the machines to pass through small spaces where otherwise only people could work. Some compact utility loaders measure 33.7 inches wide, providing the ability to fit through standard doors, gates and other areas. "Basically, I have the ability to carry a 3- to 4-inch caliper tree across a beautiful front lawn, over a newly installed patio and through a small gate to install that tree in a backyard," Maffei says.

The lightweight, compact frame size also makes for easy transport. Maffei's business uses trucks with single axle trailers to carry the equipment, including compact utility loaders that have a rated operating capacity of 500 pounds with a lift capacity of up to 1,500 pounds. "Instead of the crew trying to move quarter- or half-yard boulders with shovels, we're able to take the Dingo off the trailer and move them in a matter of minutes," Maffei says. "Using a skid steer to move 3- to 4-inch caliper trees or a yard of loam just doesn't make sense. We've used the Dingo for many projects, from hauling boulders to grading soil for turf installation to hauling trees. The machine has been a part of nearly every job we've worked on for the past seven years."

Maffei's fleet now stands at six Dingos. "They perform nearly any task and improve working conditions by eliminating the hard, manual labor," he says. "They don't call in sick and they don't take a paycheck until we use them." In addition to improving his bottom line and increasing productivity, Maffei's employees have experienced fewer back injuries since the compact utility loaders joined their crews.

"I can count on [my Dingos] to get jobs done and the employees love them," he says. "These machines have literally revolutionized my business." – *Kate Sedlacek* **LL**

*The author is public relations specialist, The Promersberger Co., representing Toro Dingo, Bloomington, Minn.*





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# Products

## SuperFlex Flatproofed Tires on Caterpillar Telehandlers



• Polyurethane flatproofed tires are now optional on Caterpillar's new Series B telehandler models

- SuperFlex-filled tires function similar to air-filled tires
- Soften ride to protect the operator and machine from vibration and jolting
- Increase tire life and performance

**Circle 205 on reader service form**

## Bob-Cat LEO

- First zero-turn mower with optional Powerlink that generates up to 1000 watts of AC electric power
- Available with a 17.5-, 18- or 25-hp Briggs & Stratton electric-start engine and a 48- or 52-inch side discharge deck
- Includes 23-inch drive tires, hydrostatic transmission and 5-gallon fuel tank
- Exclusive Powerlink technology allows the mower to pivot through 180 degrees without leaving a circle of uncut grass

**Circle 206 on reader service form**

## Automatic Fertilizing System

- Proven, patented flow design ensures precise, constant distribution of fertilizers to an entire landscape through irrigation
- Can be attached to any new or existing mainline sprinkler or drip system
- Available in four sizes: 1.5-, 3-, 5- and 10-gallon units with four different feed rates
- Has no moving parts, electrical connections or complicated programming
- Entire installation requires less than 30 minutes

**Circle 207 on reader service form**

## CareTree Model 754-5

- Tough, compact, 4-spaded digger produces a wide range of root balls
- Adapts to large skid steer loaders, articulated loaders and crawler loaders
- Transplants 5- and 6-inch caliper shade trees, plus evergreens and conifers up to 20 feet
- Equipped with semi-truncated spades for producing the perfect root ball
- Two gates provide a wide opening for conifers and ornamental trees

**Circle 208 on reader service form**

## Echo PE-260 Power Edger

- Provides a powerful, lightweight, operator-friendly design to achieve and maintain well-groomed properties
- Features Echo commercial-grade 25.4cc Power Boost Tornado engine
- Power Boost Tornado technology delivers fuel-efficiency, speed, power and torque
- Boosts productivity with an open-face metal shield that reduces potential clogging
- Ergonomically designed for comfort and control with heavy-duty vibration reduction engine mount and padded handles

**Circle 209 on reader service form**

## Shindaiwa PowerBroom Nylon Bristle Brush

- Aggressive nylon bristle brush designed for models PB270 and PB2500
- Ideal for installing synthetic turf



- Also very effective in sand filling and breaking apart synthetic turf fibers
- Adds volume to synthetic turf, further producing a real grass feel and appearance
- 100-hour life expectancy

**Circle 210 on reader service form**

## Symbiot SiteManager

- An easy-to-use, handheld system
- Automates timesheet entries all day, every day – no more end-of-the-day entries and faxing from branch locations
- Increases staff efficiency as recurring tasks are scheduled and double entry of payroll is eliminated
- Generates reports of all types quickly, including



employee hours, material usage, estimated vs. actual hours, accidents and checklists

- Provides precise job costing – with just a click, the system schedules, records and tracks crew production
- Improves communication while strengthening relationships between crew members, management and clients

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## Woods RCC42 Single Spindle Rotary Cutter

- Can handle weeds and light brush up to 1-inch in diameter found in pastures, trails and gardens
- Features deep, sturdy side frames and a smooth, sloped deck capable of shedding water and debris
- Includes four compact yet powerful attachments for smaller tractors with up to 25 horsepower
- Features 60-inch rear grading blade, 60-inch landscape rake and 48-inch box scraper and new 42-inch rotary cutter

**Circle 212 on reader service form**

## Pro-C Modular Controller from Hunter Industries

- Versatile irrigation controller with 15-station capability
- Can be customized from 3 to 6, 9, 12 or 15 stations with the addition of multiple expansion modules
- New flexibility is designed to reduce installation time on residential and commercial jobs
- Features an advanced Easy-Lock module system with a unique "slide lock" mechanism to simplify the installation and removal of modules
- Can significantly decrease inventory and overhead expenses

**Circle 213 on reader service form**

## King Innovation Catalog

- Four-color catalog details King Innovations's products including DryConn Waterproof Connectors, Proline, Safetyguard and Easyguard connectors, irrigation products, hand tools and electrical accessories
- Includes product information on King Innovation's Proline, Safetyguard and Easyguard connectors, which are also color-coded and available in various sizes
- Features King Innovation's irrigation products including the DryConn connectors with UV protection, King Drains, SnapTap saddles and King Grips
- New technical section serves as an excellent reference for product specification sheets, a glossary of common industry terms, conversion factors and useful code information

**Circle 215 on reader service form**

## Ditch Witch SK500

- Compact, walk-behind model designed for a variety of applications
- 500-pound lifting capacity



- 24-hp Honda engine
- Travels on rubber tracks powered by dual independent hydrostatic ground drives
- Can be configured as a material loader, trencher, augering machine and forklift

**Circle 216 on reader service form**

## Anchor Highland Stone

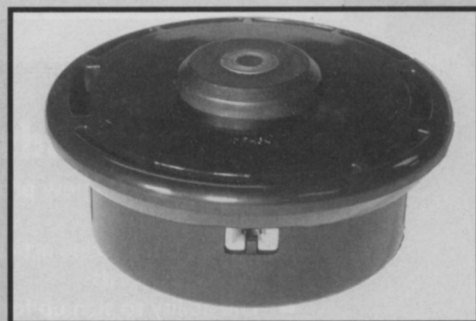
- Versatile, new Jumper unit can be used to create multiple design options with the look of natural stone retaining walls
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- Gravity walls can be built up to 4 feet high
- Reinforced walls can be constructed to any height
- Features the popular, patented Anchor rear-lip for accurate, fast installation and structurally sound design

**Circle 217 on reader service form**

## RedMax PT104 Plus String Trimmer Head

- New, heavy-duty tap-and-go head for RedMax string trimmers
- Metal insert in the nylon tap knob extends the head's life by reducing wear and abrasion to the nylon
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**Circle 214 on reader service form**





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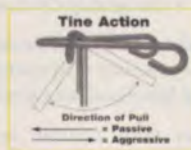
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## HELP WANTED

### Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting District Sales Manager

Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting, the nation's fastest-growing landscape lighting manufacturer, located in Simi Valley, CA, is seeking highly-motivated individuals to develop new sales territories and call on existing accounts in key markets. Qualified individuals will implement sales and marketing programs, and will handle technical and field support for Vista's expanding line of low voltage and line voltage products. They will also be asked to liaison with landscape architects, designers, landscape contractors and distributor personnel. Qualified individuals will have 5 to 7 years of experience in industry sales. Various territories available. Competitive compensation and benefits package.

Send resume and salary history to: Cruz Perez, Vice President of Marketing, Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting, 1625 Surveyor Ave, Simi Valley, Calif. 93063 or Fax: 805/527-6830.

### Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting Factory Trainer

Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting, the leader in landscape lighting and factory support (located in Simi Valley, CA) is looking for candidates with strong communication skills to conduct factory tours, training and seminars at the Simi Valley manufacturing facility. Qualified candidates must have 3 to 5 years of experience with installation, voltage drop, cable sizing, design layout, photometrics, and proper transformer and lamp selection.

Send resume and salary history to: Cruz Perez, Vice President of Marketing, Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting, 1625 Surveyor Ave, Simi Valley, CA 93063 or Fax: 805/527-6830.

### Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting Field Trainer

Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting, the nation's fastest-growing landscape lighting manufacturer, located in Simi Valley, CA, is seeking motivated individuals who will work in the field to train contractors and distributor personnel on proper design, installation and troubleshooting techniques. Qualified individuals will work closely with local factory representatives and must have hands-on experience with voltage drop, cable sizing, design layout, photometrics, and proper transformer and lamp selection. Various territories available. Competitive compensation and benefits package.

Send resume and salary history to: Cruz Perez, Vice President of Marketing, Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting, 1625 Surveyor Ave, Simi Valley, Calif. 93063 or Fax: 805/527-6830.

### Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting Independent Electrical Representatives

Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting, the leader in landscape lighting for the specifier, contractor and distributor, is looking for independent electrical representatives in several markets. If you would like your company to be considered, please mail or fax a resume and line sheet to: Cruz Perez, Vice President of Marketing, Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting, 1625 Surveyor Ave., Simi Valley, Calif. 93063 or Fax: 805/527-6830.



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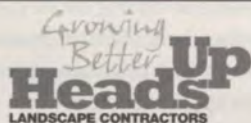
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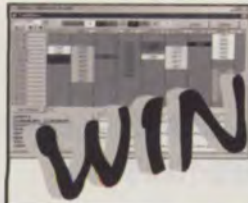
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## H-2B Programs

(continued from page 81)

for 20." Kershaw also says that providers should never charge the worker for the cost of their visa because that constitutes visa selling, which is illegal.

These fees are money well spent, but contractors shouldn't expect the charges to end there. Employers must pay for the labor market test help-wanted ad, and, as expected, the U.S. government must be compensated as well. A \$130 processing fee is required, but recent policy changes compel employers to pay an additional \$1,000 "expedite fee" to ensure quick approval.

"The standard processing fee is very small, but there's no guarantee that the workers will arrive on time," Ricciardi laments. "The BCIS gives a time frame of four to six months to look at your application, so a lot of companies do pay the expedite fee and the BCIS agrees to look at it within 15 days."

Wingfield encourages his clients to pay the \$1,000 since *not* paying the fee can significantly lengthen the application process. However, he notes that premium processing is charged per application rather than per visa. In other words, if a client requests Wingfield's four-worker minimum, the employer must only pay for premium processing once, since all four workers' information goes on one application.

Providers comment that the H-2B process can move quite smoothly, but this depends largely on contractors' cooperation.

"[Employers] have to be aware of how long the process can take and that it's very important to always be available to the process and respond immediately to any requests," Foley emphasizes.

Most providers begin working with their clients between June and August with the aim of having all foreign workers ready to go by the beginning of February.

"Prospective H-2B program users need to decide on whether to use the H-2B program and who to hire as an agent in late summer or early fall of the year preceding the intended H-2B employment," Whitley remarks. "For instance if [contractors] intend to use the H-2B program for workers starting in spring (February or March) 2004, [they should] start looking around now." **LL**

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at [lsapiers@lawnandlandscape.com](mailto:lsapiers@lawnandlandscape.com).



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## How We Do It

# Accounting for Travel Time at Outdoors Service Groups

For the first five years in business, we sold landscaping, grounds maintenance, lawn care and anything else we thought would create an invoice. Our focus was on putting dollars in our pockets.

Then in 1986, I decided to track our efforts to see how well we were doing. We began by using simple forms where crews logged their times in and out at each job, and we still use this approach today. As the year progressed, we transferred the data to a spreadsheet so all the information was right in front of us.

I learned from this project that you can put a lot of dollars in your pocket working 80 to 100 hours a week. However, our tracking showed that while our income levels were good, our per-hour income rate was disastrous.

That was when I realized that I was not selling landscaping or mowing or even chemical care. I was selling *time* – my employee's time and my time.

I also realized that if time was my product, then I had to recover my product in a business-like manner, which meant requiring the company to recover a profit for every hour worked inside or outside the office. Now, each hour paid to an employee has to be recovered with a profit attached to it. Even the travel time to and from my customers' properties should be profitable.

The initial foray into recovery involved setting up an easily managed tracking system. We use a simplistic daily run sheet and incorporate those times into our accounting software. Our crews get daily worksheets with their schedules on them and blank areas to fill in

when each job starts and stops – from morning punch-in to afternoon punch-out. The natural time between jobs is "travel time."

At Outdoors Service Groups *all* "travel time" per crew is considered to be one job. Possibly, just one of many that day. Individuals in our accounting department check all jobs, including travel time, every day to ensure that production times stay in line with our bids. This process doesn't take long since bid times are in the our accounting program for immediate comparison to production times. Though some accounting software can be expensive, we've learned that cost is always negligible when compared to potential losses that can occur without proper documentation of what is really happening in the company.

By making travel time a daily "job" we force ourselves to contend with tracking the exact expense – loss of productive income – on a daily basis. By dealing with its daily cumulative effect, it is easier to rationalize that travel time should also be a profitable "job" within our company and that it needs to be accounted for within each day's income. We do not charge our clients separately for travel time, but maintain that each crew's average daily hourly income match or exceed our company's hourly set price, which is derived from our overall budget. This requires incorporating that travel time into each bid.

Looking at the travel time "job" on a daily basis instead of a per-client basis gives us more leniencies in recovering its income. If a prospective client is out of sync because travel time to their site is so high, this practice will magnify the time cost to our company and force us to place added labor into their bid. Increasing bid prices due to excessive travel time naturally eliminates any bids that may negatively impact our bottom line. However, if we *do* win the bid, then we guarantee a positive impact no matter how far out of route order the job may be.

By looking at travel time as a daily factor we lowered our risk of income loss if clients choose to cancel their accounts. If a day's work is one client then we bid travel time within that single job. If we lose the job, we incur no extra loss due to travel time. At the same time, if a day's work is 10 clients, our exposure to losing that route is 10 times less, and our cumulative income decreases proportionately with each lost client. But our travel time job value will stay static, forcing us to make pricing adjustments as client structure shifts. – Stan Schlueter

The author is systems administrator for Outdoors Service Groups, Washington, Ill., and can be reached at 309/694-7252.

## 5 KEYS TO *Accounting for Travel Time*

1. Recognize that *not* accounting for travel time can cause huge losses for your company.
2. Determine the cost per man-hour that it takes to run your business.
3. Develop an easy-to-understand form for crewmembers to log their time in and time out on each job and compare these times to budgeted hours and job bids on a daily basis.
4. Look at travel time as a "job" unto itself. Like a landscaping job, this time costs money that needs to be recovered.
5. Add the cost for travel time into each bid to ensure that cost is recovered.





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