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Cover photo: Pete Damroth

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BASF

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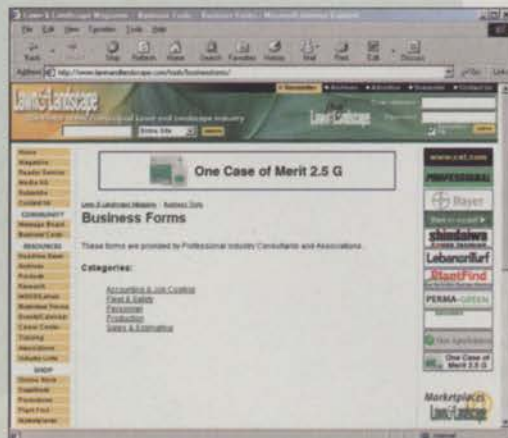
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SPECIAL Features: Lawn & Landscape Business Forms

Having a hard time drafting your own company forms to take care of business and keep facts and information organized? Instead of wasting time trying to come up with the perfect solution, borrow an idea from one of your fellow landscape contractors. In the *Lawn & Landscape Business Forms* section online, we've added more than 70 new forms and two new sections – Marketing and Customer Interaction/Education – so you can learn more about how to structure your business forms through this free industry resource. Start searching!



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- Grass-catching Mowers
- Symbiot Cover Story
- Insecticide Development

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Lawn & Landscape

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USE READER SERVICE #11

JUNE 2003

Powerful Partners

Complaining about industry suppliers is awfully easy and popular. I'm not a big fan of collecting nickels, but they would be piled high if one or two accompanied each manufacturer complaint that I hear.

"So and so doesn't honor its warranty."

"The deck on their mower is garbage."

"That sales guy never calls me back."

I'm sure, in many instances, such annoyances are entirely legitimate. No company is perfect, nor can any truly boast 100 percent customer satisfaction. But let me tell you one thing about the companies producing the goods and equipment you use daily – most of them truly care about their products' quality.

They pride themselves on what they produce.

Since joining this magazine in 1995, I've toured roughly two dozen plants that produce mowers, trimmers, irrigation supplies, hand-held and backpack blowers, pesticides, skid steers and more. I've operated machines on test tracks designed to destroy equipment faster than even your worst employee. I've watched product engineers tinker and tweak, looking for ways to add horsepower, reduce weight and cut cost.

But, most importantly, I've walked up and down countless assembly lines, following machines from pieces

and parts to finished goods that pass rigorous testing before being put in a box or a crate. The truth is that an assembly line isn't exciting, but it is impressive. Dozens of people – men and women, young and old – stand side by side, focusing intently on handling their task in the allotted time before the belt and their work moves on.

Time and time again, I'm struck by the pride exhibited by the people working on these machines. These

men and women aren't getting rich building landscape equipment or supplies, but that doesn't mean they don't care about doing the job the right way.

And the same goes for the manufacturers, including the part about not getting rich. Sure, prices for fertilizer, backhoes and herbicides continue going up. But the people producing these products can easily show you numbers that demonstrate how little these prices have really increased in the grand scheme of things, just as contractors talk about not being able to charge what they deserve.

Despite this ever-present pricing pressure, manufacturers are looking for ways to get better. Blower builders invest millions in 10-foot by 10-foot testing rooms with more hoses and wires than you can imagine just so they can measure the emissions coming out of their machines down to the millionth of a particle.

Meanwhile, mower companies create machines to test every unit coming off their line, ensuring the desired performance capabilities before the mower gets trucked off to an awaiting dealer. Skid-steer suppliers revel in mountains of dirt behind the plant, while irrigation manufacturers predictably spray thousands of gallons of water every day looking for new ideas and retesting old ones.

So, I know that suppliers can frustrate, and I'm sure some provide second-tier equipment or service. But the nature of our economic system will ultimately force them to improve or lead to their extinction. Those companies that stand the test of time do so in large part because of their commitment to their work, their products and their customers.

After reading this, I don't expect you to call a supplier and apologize for haggling over price or switching to another brand. But I know how few of you get to see where your equipment starts out, and that's too bad. Because I think that you'd only have to see one or two of these facilities to realize you've got more partners in this business than you think. ■

Bob West

"Loyalty cannot be blueprinted. It cannot be produced on an assembly line. In fact, it cannot be manufactured at all. It is a force that leaps into being only when conditions are exactly right for it – and it is a force very sensitive to betrayal." – Maurice Franks



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Managing the Trust Meltdown

For those of you who thought "trust" was an issue reserved only for lovebirds, guess again. Trust is, and has been, a viable workplace concern. While the concept of organizational trust is not new, it has been getting its fair share of attention lately.

Why is there so much emphasis on trust in the workplace? One of the reasons has less to do with corporate greed and more to do with the generational makeup of the workforce. After all, in many businesses today you can find up to four generations under one roof – talk about chaos!

WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE? The oldest group, the veterans (born between 1922 and 1945), is 52 million strong in number. As employees, these individuals believe in consistency, uniformity, structure and "law and order." Many veterans have already retired, and for the past 30 years, our workforce has been dominated by the baby boomers. With about 73 million Boomers, this group understands the meaning of the word "competition." Born between 1946 and 1964, they invented the 60-hour workweek. They have a strong work ethic, like challenges and value personal relationships.

In the late 1960s, our nation began to change as Generation X entered the scene. Xers saw every major institution called into question – religion, marriage, business, the presidency and even the military. The result? A generation of skeptics.

You see, the trust meltdown didn't begin with layoffs, big salaries for CEOs, Enron or even September 11. It began when the Xers entered the workforce. These young workers question every practice, policy, work rule, performance review and procedure. Why? Because they don't trust them, and guess what else? Acting on instinct, they may not trust you.

Many CEOs and leaders have been blindsided by these realities, and, instead of trying to under-

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stand this generation and address problems, they tend to blame them. But, this generation can be motivated and will work hard. The key is to create the right environment, and it starts with building trust.

FIVE TRUST BUSTERS. While these examples generally apply across the board to all employees, you'll find they are most important to and effective with Gen-Xers.

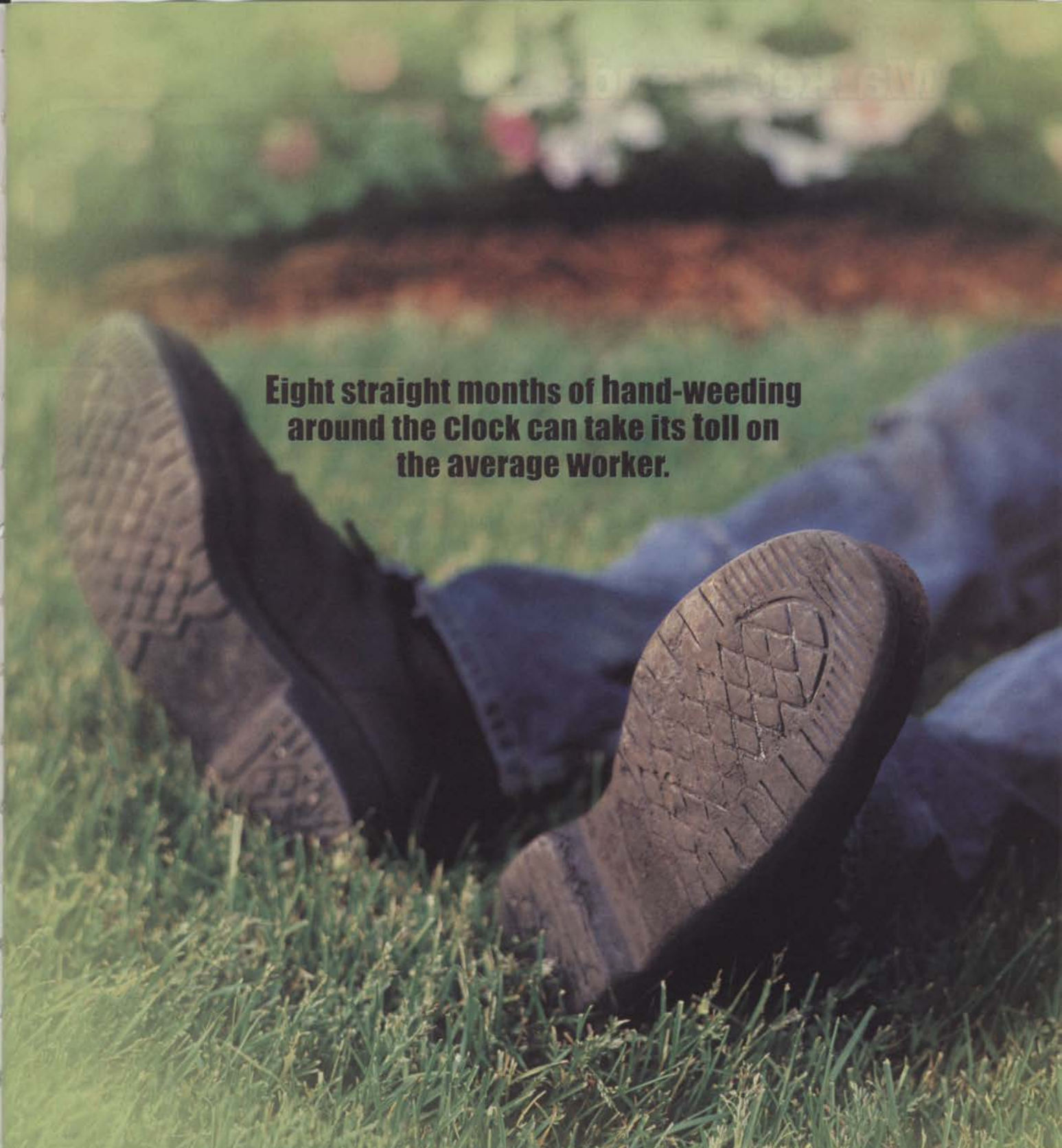
1. *Deny that trust is an issue and disregard it altogether.* One of the most common reasons for low trust in the workplace is that there was no effort to build it in the first place.
2. *Make commitments and don't keep them.* When employees experience a series of broken promises, trust erodes. This applies to small commitments ("I'll call you in the morning" or "I'll get back with you on that question") and big ones (We'll talk about your performance and raise next week").
3. *Beat around the bush with communication.* Gen-Xers hate "BS." Give it to them straight. Forget legalese, fancy speeches and corporate secrets – they can handle the truth.
4. *Ignore conflicts.* One of the key traits of a successful manager in the new millennium is "facilitation." Constructively address and resolve conflicts through effective negotiation.
5. *Wear your emotions on your sleeve.* Unpredictable and erratic behavior, mood swings, inconsistent discipline and an inability to control oneself are all effective trustbusters. When employees don't know from one day to the next what to expect from the boss they either A) stop caring about the boss and the work, B) start avoiding the boss and/or C) become mercenaries and start looking for a new job.

FIVE TRUST BUILDERS. How can you effectively build trust in a workplace filled with multiple generations and fewer Boomers? Consider these "trust builders."

1. *Practice the exact opposite of the five points outlined previously.*
2. *Get some training.* If you don't know how to communicate with, develop or motivate the younger generation of workers, get advice. Buy a book or attend a conference.
3. *Update your company policies and benefits.* What do they really communicate? Many employee handbooks are riddled with threats, legalese and a dictator-style tone. Revamp your policies. Change your communication style.
4. *Arrange for an employee opinion survey.* Then, accept the answers and address and resolve problems. Show an interest in employee concerns and perceptions.
5. *Be honest.* People are sick and tired of workplace spin. Don't pass the buck by telling your employees they have to do something because "the district manager said so" or "they dreamed it up at corporate."

If you make a mistake, admit it and apologize. Employees can handle bad news; it's the uncertainty or misrepresentation of the facts that erodes trust. Walk your talk and back up your words with actions.





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Since 1998, Briggs & Stratton has acknowledged impressive public U.S. lawns. This year the company honors green spaces located in or overlooking impressive scenery. Ten lawns, each boasting an impressive view, were selected to receive the 2003 National Top 10 Lawns with a View recognition.

Claiming the top spot on the list of 10, the Great Lawn is a freshly restored green space that draws native New Yorkers and Central Park visitors year round. While the neatly manicured lawn is impressive, the accompanying view of New York City's skyline is the real eye-catcher.

"This year marks the 150th anniversary of Central Park, and the Great Lawn recently underwent a two-year, \$18.2 million restoration," said Regina

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REGIONAL REPORT

Two for the Road

Ever wonder what the most popular residential landscape maintenance crew size is?

So did we, so we asked *Lawn & Landscape Online* users what they thought? A resounding 55 percent of respondents believe that a two-man crew is best.

"The smaller the crew, the more efficient," agreed Mike Lueders, owner, Lueders Cos., Needham, Mass., pointing out that two-man crews are efficient because of the decreased overlap in job responsibilities.

Three-man crews were the second most popular size with 28 percent of respondents checking this answer, but not all contractors agree with this theory. "We've noticed through time studies that a three-man crew really isn't any more productive than a two-man crew," explained Mike Mitchell, vice president of operations, Signature Landscape, Olathe, Kan. "A well organized two-person crew doing the different tasks in a specific order lets you divide the work easier."

Jobs, like homeowner associations call for more manpower, and 12 percent of respondents agreed, employing four-man crews or larger. Although, "the challenge with a big crew is finding a crew leader who can keep people focused," Mitchell said.

And the least number of contractors – 5 percent – believe that there's nothing more productive than a one-man crew. "Even having two people on a job can create downtime," Leuders said. "By the time two men show up, chat about the workload and get ready to go, they've burned some serious time."

Whatever crew size a contractor embraces, Leuders suggested they use labor hours and job size to determine the ideal crew and get the best results. "For instance," he said, "one worker could be trusted to do a job requiring only six to eight hours of labor, but for jobs requiring 70 to 80 hours of labor, a two-man crew is the best fit."

What do you think is the ideal size for residential mowing crews?

RESPONSE	% OF CONTRACTORS
One-man crews	5%
Two-man crews	55%
Three-man crews	28%
Four-man crews or larger	12%

Source: Lawn & Landscape Online Survey

EQUIPMENT FOCUS

EPA Proposes to Reduce Engine Emissions

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) hopes to create a comprehensive national program to reduce emissions from non-road diesel engines. If enacted, the comprehensive national program would apply rigid controls to nonroad engines and significantly reduce sulfur in diesel fuel, resulting in major improvements in air

quality throughout the country.

"This action represents a strong commitment from the Bush Administration to take the next step to achieve cleaner air and protect the health of all Americans, especially the health of children and elderly who are more susceptible to diesel pol-

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Market Trends

(continued from page 12)

Peruggi, president, Central Park Conservancy.

This year's lawns were evaluated based on overall appearance, lawn and garden maintenance, and scenery/view from the lawn. Briggs & Stratton worked with state tourism officials, lawn experts and lawn and garden media to identify and rank worthy lawns. In addition to the national list, Briggs & Stratton also recognized Top 10 Lawns with a View in the East, West, South and Midwest.

"From the East Coast to the West Coast, this year's winners highlight the best lawns and views this country offers," observed George R. Thompson, vice president, corporate communications, Briggs & Stratton.

This year's winners are:

1. Central Park's Great Lawn - New York,
2. Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art - Kansas City, Miss.
3. Piedmont Park - Atlanta
4. Minneapolis Sculpture Garden - Minneapolis
5. International Peace Garden - Dunseith, N.D.
6. Bicentennial Mall State Park - Nashville, Tenn.

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L&L

Book Report

The Five Temptations of a CEO: A Leadership Fable

by Patrick Lencioni

Once upon a time there was a business owner - an entrepreneur much like yourself, perhaps - who wanted desperately to please his co-workers and maintain office harmony. He wanted to ensure his own status in the company, make only the right decisions and be "the rock" - a company strength symbol. In effect, he fell into the five business traps that entice many CEOs: fundamental issues leaders confront on a daily basis. Screen writer and business coach Patrick Lencioni outlines these challenges in *The Five*

Temptations of a CEO: A Leadership Fable.

In a well-constructed, entertaining fable, a high-powered executive encounters a wise, older man on a subway and they discuss common managerial implications. Lencioni later addresses the five temptations, offering sound business solutions. The quick, 134-page read hit home with Dan Ariens, who said the book's focus on leadership issues is relevant to lead managers and especially family business owners.

"The five temptations are most difficult when family members are involved in a business," reflected the president of Ariens Co., Brillion, Wis. "The key is to remember that the family business is a business with family involved. Trying to keep the two separate is nearly impossible, however, it is vital for long-term success." - Kristen Hampshire



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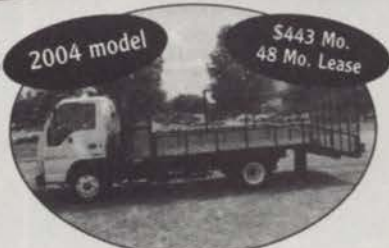


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RESEARCH REPORT

Construction Spending Stumbles

WASHINGTON – U.S. spending on new construction fell unexpectedly in spring on a decline in public spending, the government said, but residential construction rose.

Total construction outlays fell 1 percent to

an annual rate of \$868.5 billion in March, the Commerce Department said, well short of analysts' expectations for a 0.2 percent increase. It was the biggest slide since August.

The pace of residential construction climbed 0.1 percent to \$454 billion. However, public spending slid 3.5 percent on reduced government construction of housing, hospitals and prisons, the biggest fall since March 2002. Private nonresidential spending slipped 0.1 percent on a decline in office construction spending.

State and local government budget troubles are responsible for much of the fall

in construction spending, one analyst said. But weakness in spending on offices and factories, where business spending cutbacks have depressed activity, also weighed on construction spending, said Paul Kasriel, chief economist for Northern Trust.

"There's little going on in the non-residential private sector with continued high vacancy rates both in terms of office and industrial space. I'm not looking for a turnaround there," he said.

The U.S. housing market has surged on decades-low mortgage interest rates. Recent data show home building and buying at relatively high levels.

While sales of existing U.S. homes slid in March, new home sales surged, which some analysts interpreted as a sign the resilient market was rebounding from a harsh winter.

At the same time, in a possible sign the residential housing market has run out of room to grow, the number of Americans applying for a loan to buy a home and those looking to refinance their home loans

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

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USE READER SERVICE #16

Market Trends

dropped recently. "I think housing is starting to plateau. I don't necessarily think it's going to fall off a cliff, but I think the fastest growth is behind us," Kasriel said.

SUPPLIER INSIGHT

Scotts' Earnings Climb

The Scotts Co. reported better-than-expected second-quarter results with 9 percent sales growth and 11 percent earnings growth. Scotts' company-wide sales totaled \$676 million for the quarter, compared to \$598 million last year.

In particular, Scotts LawnService reported a 55-percent increase in sales to \$11.5 million for the quarter, despite a sluggish start due to unfavorable weather. For the first two fiscal quarters, Scotts LawnService's sales totaled \$26.8 million, a 67 percent jump over last year.

Scotts' stock has climbed to nearly \$57 a share in recent weeks, which is a 10 percent increase.

Association NEWS

The **Associated Landscape Contractors of Massachusetts** elected its new officers. They are: Scott Stacey, president; Owen Regan, vice president; Kate Watson, financial vice president; John Dinsmore, treasurer; Dick Churchill, secretary; David Schumacher, director; and Genie Holland, past president.

The **Professional Lawn Care Association of America** announced the appointment of Anna Demoret at Green Industry Expo trade show coordinator for 2003. Demoret will oversee daily operational aspects of the show, which will be held November 6-8, 2003 in St. Louis, Mo.

The **Western Nursery & Landscape Association** elected Nicholas Hand as the organization's president.

The **Iowa Nursery & Landscape Association** elected Les Gehrels president of the organization for 2003.

IN THE NEWS

Spring Hurts ServiceMaster

The late snowfall that hit areas of the country in March, along with continued cool weather throughout much of the Northeast, hurt first-

quarter sales at TruGreen-ChemLawn. Overall, ServiceMaster reported revenue of \$735 million for the first three months of the year, which were consistent with last year.

"We reported disappointing financial results in the face of difficult conditions," ex-
(continued on page 18)

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USE READER SERVICE #20

Market Trends

(continued from page 16)

plained Jon Ward, chairman and chief executive officer. "Although lawn care counts increased at TruGreen, late season snowfall delayed our production season.

"In light of these trends, we are moving aggressively to control costs, while keeping service levels high in every one of our brands," Ward continued. "At the same time, we are using new consumer research to ad-

(continued on page 20)

People

Personnel appointments at Stihl include **Gunther Stoll** to the new product manager for chain saws and **Daniel Hartman** to manager of manufacturing engineering. Also, **David Schwartz** was appointed to product manager of industrial tools and accessories.

Pete Hanrahan was named manager of distributor development at North American Green.

John Doyle took on the newly created position of specialty line manager for Simplot Partners.

Skinner Nurseries hired **Robb Gerard** to spearhead sales in the Virginia and Maryland markets as the company expands into the Mid-Atlantic region.

Bayer Environmental Science announced the promotion of **Bryan Gooch** to program manager for Chipco® Professional Products.

James Wissmar was promoted to account executive at Americalist Lawn and Landscape Marketing.

Marc Schmidt and **Christopher Greene** were promoted to area manager and branch manager, respectively, at Bozzuto Landscaping Co.

At Chapel Valley Landscape Co., **Sterns Lott** was named Virginia commercial sales manager.

Ariens promoted **Ron Marcellus** to national accounts manager.



Gunther Stoll (top),
James Wissmar



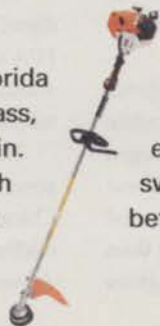
Chuck Vannelli, V.P., South Florida Bushog

"About the only thing that gets in our way is gators."

Chuck's crews tackle the toughest the south Florida landscape has to offer – all day, every day. Sawgrass, Bahia grass, even the occasional water moccasin. His trimmer of choice? The STIHL FS 250. With its compact design, increased torque and high

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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USE READER SERVICE #21

Market Trends

(continued from page 18)

just our go-to-market strategies and sharpen our brand value propositions to create a sustainable competitive advantage."

The TruGreen business, in particular, had first-quarter sales of \$226 million, down 1 percent from the same period in 2002. The company reported that it increased its customer count by more than 2 percent while boosting its customer retention to 63.5 percent, but completed applications still declined significantly. "This decline was wholly attributable to adverse weather in March in several key regions that delayed the normal completion of service anticipated to occur during the first quarter," reported the company. "Most, if not all of this service should be made up in the second and third quarters."

On the plus side, the TruGreen LandCare business benefited from the weather, especially in markets that offer snow removal.

Overall, however, the combined TruGreen business posted an operating loss of \$8.8 million for the quarter, compared with a \$6.5 million gain last year.

ServiceMaster's stock continues to trade around the \$10 a share mark.

BUSINESS BASICS

Eye Spy a Safer Workplace

Every day an estimated 1,000 eye injuries occur in American workplaces. The financial cost of these injuries equals more than \$300 million per year in lost production time, medical expenses and workers' compensation.

After working with the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) on a survey that revealed the

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

Mattingly's MESSAGE

Watch your non-productive hours. These are the hours that we pay an individual for travel, load and unload. Depending on how you arrive at your pricing per hour, these hours could be coming directly off your "bottom line."

When we are aware of these hours we generally make the right management decision to correct any abnormalities. Here is a system for tracking the hours:

First, when the crew reports in the morning, start immediately charging the time to the first job. (You should have estimated travel time while compiling your estimate.) A crew should leave your yard within 10 to 15 minutes of start time. They, of course, should have loaded and made the necessary arrangements for equipment, had all questions answered relative to today's work, etc. the evening before.

Next, track the time to a job and the total time on the job on your daily timesheet. Once the crew leaves the first job, start the time for the second job. Again, estimate travel time when you compile your estimate. If you track only the time on the jobs and measure a crew's performance based on such, you have miss a critical and costly part of the job expenses and are not holding the crew accountable for all related hours to perform the service.

At the end of the day when the crew completes the last job, this is when you incur legitimate non-productive hours. This is the time it takes to travel from the last job back to your yard, unload and load for the next day, service equipment, fuel, etc. I suggest you estimate the time you expect each crew to charge to non-productive hours and hold the crews accountable to that number.

However you choose to track non-productive hours, just be sure you do so for each crew. If you ever wonder why you are always meeting the hours but not making any money, you might be paying for too many non-productive hours.

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

key causes of eye injuries, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is encouraging contractors to reduce eye injuries by improving their workplace eye protection and safety regulations.

Not wearing eye protection or wearing the wrong eye protection for the job contributed to eye injuries at work. The BLS survey

reported that nearly three out of every five workers injured were not wearing eye protection at the time of the accident. About 40 percent of the injured workers were wearing some form of eye protection when the accident occurred, but their protective eyeglasses did not have side shields.

(continued on page 25)

EPA Proposes to Reduce Engine Emissions (continued on page 16)

lution," said EPA Administrator Christie Whitman.

The proposed emission standards would apply to diesel engines used in most kinds of construction, agricultural and industrial equipment.

The EPA estimates that affected non-road diesel engines currently account for about 44 percent of total diesel particulate matter (PM) emissions and about 12 percent of total nitrogen oxides (NOx) emissions from mobile sources nationwide. These proportions are even higher in some urban areas. The proposed diesel emission standards will reduce emissions by more than 90 percent, and are similar to the requirements for engines

being implemented for on-road highway trucks and buses.

These reductions in NOx and PM emissions from non-road diesel engines will provide enormous public health benefits. The EPA estimates that by 2030, controlling these emissions will annually prevent 9,600 premature deaths, more than 8,300 hospitalizations and almost a million workdays lost.

The EPA is accepting public comments regarding the proposal until Aug. 20, with public hearings in New York on June 10, Chicago on June 12 and Los Angeles on June 17. Submit feedback electronically, by mail, by facsimile, by voicemail or through hand delivery/courier. Visit www.epa.gov for more information.



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(continued from page 20)


The Bureau of Labor Statistics found that 70 percent of accidents studied resulted from flying or falling objects striking the eye. Injured workers estimated that nearly three-fifths of the objects were smaller than pinheads. Most of the particles were said to be traveling faster than a hand-thrown object when the accidents occurred.

Contact with chemicals caused one-fifth of the injuries. Other accidents were caused by objects swinging from a fixed or attached position, like tree limbs, ropes, chains or tools that were pulled into the eye while the worker was using them.

Wearing effective eye protection can prevent eye injuries. OSHA standards require that employers provide workers with suitable eye protection. To be effective, the eyewear must be of the appropriate type for the hazard encountered and properly fitted. For example, the BLS survey showed that 94 percent of the injuries to workers wearing eye protection resulted from objects or chemicals going around or under the protector. Eye protective devices should allow for air to circulate between the eye and the lens. Only 13 workers injured while wearing eye protection reported breakage.

Contractors should offer better training and education to help prevent eye injuries. Workers injured while not wearing protective eyewear most often said they believed it was not required by the situation. Even though the vast majority of employers furnished eye protection at no cost to employees, about 40 percent of workers received no information on where and what kind of eyewear they should use on the job.

Also, eye protection devices must be properly maintained. Scratched and dirty devices reduce vision, cause glare and may contribute to accidents.

The BLS reported that more than 50 percent of workers injured while wearing eye protection thought the eyewear had minimized their injuries. But nearly half the workers also felt that another type of protection could have better prevented or reduced the injuries they suffered. It is estimated that 90 percent of eye injuries can be prevented through the use of proper protective eyewear. 

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, Ohio 44113.

- JUNE 10** Ohio Sports Turf Managers Association's 2003 Summer Workshop, Cincinnati, Ohio. Contact: 419/824-9805 or www.ostma.org.
- JUNE 12-14** Snow & Ice Symposium, Buffalo, N.Y. Contact: 814/835-3577 or www.sima.org.
- JUNE 17** New York State Turfgrass Association Cornell University Field Day, Ithaca, N.Y. Contact: 518/783-1229.
- JULY 12-16** Ohio Florists' Association Short Course 2003, Columbus, Ohio. Contact: 800/424-5249 or 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.
- JULY 16** Michigan Turfgrass Field Day, Lansing, Mich. Contact: 517/321-1660 or www.michiganturfgrass.org.
- JULY 16-20** ANLA Convention & Learning Retreat, Boston, Mass. Contact: 202/789-2900 or www.anla.org.
- JULY 22-25** Turfgrass Producers International's Summer Convention & Field Days, Dayton, Ohio. Contact: 800/405-8873 or 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.
- JULY 25** Lawn & Landscape Business Management Seminar, Baltimore, Md. Contact: 800/456-0707 or www.lawnandlandscape.com/events.
- JULY 29** 2003 Midwest Regional Turf Field Day, West Lafayette, Ind. Contact: 765/494-8039 or www.mrtf.org.
- JULY 29-31** Pennsylvania Allied Nursery Trade Show, Fort Washington, Pa. Contact: 717/238-1673 or www.plna.com.
- JULY 31-AUG. 2** SNA 2003 - The World's Showcase of Horticulture, Atlanta, Ga. Contact: 770/953-3311 or www.sna.org.
- AUG. 1** Lawn & Landscape Business Management Seminar, Philadelphia, Penn. Contact: 800/456-0707 or www.lawnandlandscape.com/events.
- AUG. 6** Illinois Landscape Contractors Association's Annual Outdoor Summer Field Day, Ball Seed, N.H. Contact: 630/472-2851 or www.ilca.net.
- AUG. 8** Lawn & Landscape Business Management Seminar, Northern New Jersey. Contact: 800/456-0707 or www.lawnandlandscape.com/events.
- AUG. 8-10** ALCA Interior Landscape Symposium, Atlanta, Ga. Contact: 703/736-9666 or www.alca.org.
- AUG. 13** OSU/OTF Turfgrass Research Field Day, Columbus, Ohio. Contact: 800/510-5296 or www.OhioLawnCare.org.
- AUG. 13** Wisconsin Nursery Association Summer Field Day, Manitowoc, Wisc. Contact: 414/529-4705.
- AUG. 14** Ohio Lawn Care Association's Diagnostic Seminar, Columbus, Ohio. Contact: 800/510-5296 or www.OhioLawnCare.org.
- AUG. 15** Lawn & Landscape Business Management Seminar, Orlando, Fla. Contact: 800/456-0707 or www.lawnandlandscape.com/events.
- AUG. 15-17** Texas Nursery/Landscape Expo, Dallas, Texas. Contact: 800/880-0343 or www.txnla.org.
- AUG. 20-23** CalScape, Irvine, Calif. Contact: 707/462-2276 or www.clpaweb.org.

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Nursery Market Report

NEW VARIETIES

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SUN SELECTIONS.

- *Angelonia AngelMist Series*. The AngelMist series is heat tolerant and loves full sun. It adds drama to annual landscapes with 18- to 24-inch height and is available in seven colors, including award-winning Lavender Improved, Lavender Pink and Purple Improved.

- *Dianthus Bouquet Purple*. These well-branched, 18- to 24-inch-tall plants are vigorous growers and heat tolerant. Plants display lavender blooms during the growing season and hold up from heat to frost.

- *Gazania Daybreak Series*. A good choice for Southern landscapes, this series of gazanias is drought tolerant, with large blooms on compact plants. Among the selections in the series are Daybreak Bright Orange, Garden Sun and Red Stripe.

- *Ornamental Millet Purple Majesty*. This plant is ideal as a backdrop and in mass plantings and borders, as well as large mixed containers. Young plants begin green and then the foliage, stems and flower plumes turn deep purple. Plants grow 4 to 5 feet tall with striking plumes that attract birds. This plant received an All-America Selections Gold Medal for 2003.

- *Pentas Butterfly Series*. An award-winner at trials across the South, the Butterfly series flourishes in heat and humidity. It grows 12 to 22 inches tall and is available in five colors, including Blush, Cherry Red, Deep Pink, Light Lavender and Red. These plants also attract butterflies and hummingbirds.

- *Hedge Petunia Tidal Wave Series*. This is a taller Wave



Sorbet Orange Duet (left) provides early color in spring and autumn, while frilly Double Wave Blue Vein (above left) petunias spread up to 3 feet. New Guinea impatiens Celebrette Orchid Star (above right) are vigorous growers and ideal for containers. Photos: Ball Horticultural Co.

Nursery Market Report

petunia. Tidal Waves, when spaced 12 inches apart, will form a dense, mounded hedge. When they are spaced 24 inches apart, they will act as a groundcover spreading up to 4 feet. And with support, Tidal Wave petunias will actually climb like a vine.

- *Spreading Petunia Double Wave Series.* Frilly semi-double to double blooms are available in a broad range of colors. Try new Double Wave Blue Vein for a different look in the landscape. Plants spread 2 to 3 feet.

- *Spreading Petunia Wave Series.* This long-lasting petunia that requires no deadheading flowers all season in mass plantings and containers. It spreads up to 4 feet and is weather tolerant.

- *Trailing Petunia Suncatcher Series.* Vigorous growers, Suncatcher petunias bloom prolifically throughout the summer and into autumn. They are available in seven high-voltage colors that have been named outstanding performers in several university trials.

- *Verbena Aztec Series.* Aztec verbena is vigorous enough to fill out a landscape but controlled enough to accent a hanging basket or mixed container. Each variety provides large clusters of vibrant color, and plants like full sun and tolerate heat. Among the color selections are Deep Lavender Improved, Hot Pink and Plum.

- *Viola Sorbet Series.* These violas provide early color in spring and autumn with dependable overwintering. A range of colors and unique flower patterns are available. Sorbet Orange Duet received the Fleuroselect Gold Medal in 2003.

SHADE/PARTIAL SHADE SELECTIONS.

- *Begonia Dragon Wing Series.* A multiple award-winner at university trials and other independent sites, this plant with massive size – 12 to 15 inches tall and a spread of 18 inches – and easy care provides good value. Dragon Wing thrives in a wide range of conditions, from hot and humid to cool and wet. It fills in fast with all-season staying power and tolerates partial sun.

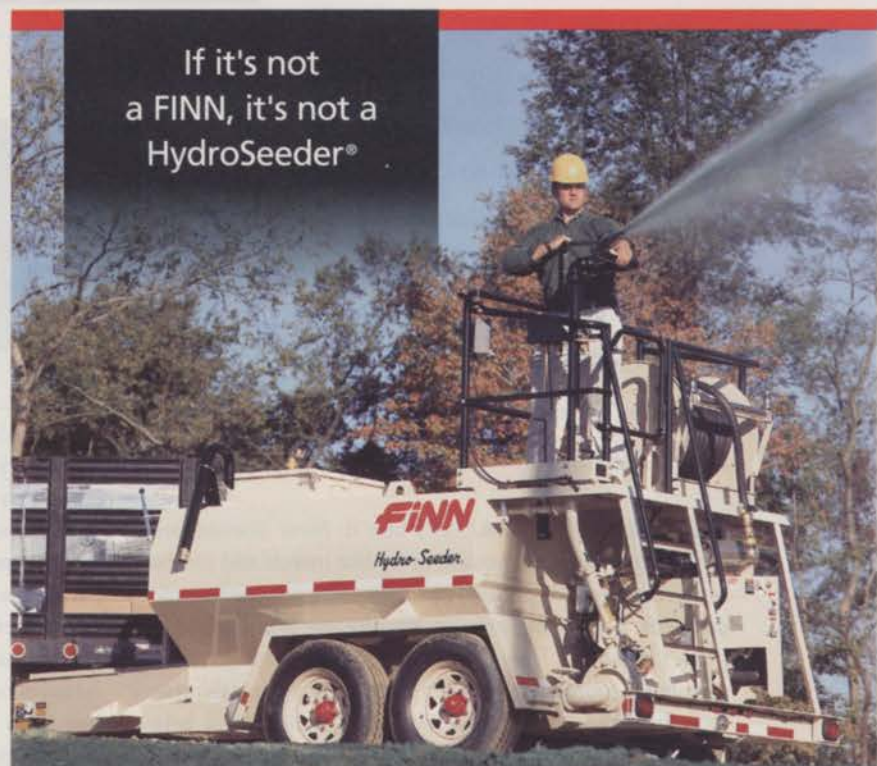
- *Double Impatiens Fiesta Series.* Topped with fully double large flowers, these plants thrive in full shade. They are the perfect complement to a mixed container or hanging basket.

- *Impatiens Super Elfin Series.* The first commercially available impatiens series provides vibrant color. These plants mound 8 to 10 inches in the landscape – slightly more in containers.

- *New Guinea Impatiens Celebrette and Celebration Series.* These two series are vigorous in the landscape and ideal for contain-

ers. Full, lush plants have large flowers and come in a range of hues, including Rose Star and Purple in the Celebration Series.
– Ali Cybulski

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



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USE READER SERVICE #23

Tree Care Tips

FUNGICIDE FOCUS

To Spray or Not to Spray

Trees form the backbone of most landscapes. They provide canopy, framing, shade, color, seasonal interest and texture. If a tree that is critically important to the landscape in terms of function or aesthetic appeal is lost to disease, the consequences can be severe. In order to keep clients happy, considering disease prevention and control in the overall landscape maintenance scheme makes good sense.

DISEASE DILEMMAS. Let's face it. Most diseases are confusing. They don't squirm or fly like insects and can be easily mistaken for drought stress or other non-pathogenic maladies. Yet, getting to know the diseases is important in proper treatment. How does a police investigator go about reigning in counterfeiters? They get to know the real thing so well that fakes are easy to spot. That strategy will help landscape contractors spot treatable diseases. So, first take a little time to learn the major diseases in your locale. It's the first logical step in control.

COMMON TREE MALADIES.

There are many diseases that affect trees. Some need fungicide for control, while others don't. How can a landscape contractor tell the difference? Following are some basic disease groups, accompanied by some brief management strategies.

Pathogenic diseases that can warrant fungicide applications include:

- Needle and tip blights of evergreens – These diseases can cause quite a bit of damage. Using several treatments that cover both existing and emerging foliage is important.
- Anthracnose of sycamore, oak, ash, dogwood and maple – These pathogens cause blotchy leaf patterns that follow leaf veins. Severe defoliation can occur. Direct treatments at emerging foliage and apply a follow-up cover spray.



Some diseases warrant fungicide use, while others don't. Dothistroma needle blight (top) and sycamore anthracnose are two destructive diseases that can be controlled with fungicides.

Photos: John Fech



- Dutch elm and oak wilt – These two are not the same disease, but they have many similarities (both are vectored by a beetle, both cause rapid death, both are hard to control). The key is early detection. Injection offers the

greatest control and makes sense for high priority trees.

- Powdery mildew of oak, beech, dogwood, Japanese tree lilac, birch and crabapple – Usually an early spring or late season disease, powdery mildew can cause defoliation and weaken important specimens. Take steps to increase air circulation around the tree and spray trees with a history of disease before infection occurs.
- Scab, leaf spots and rust of crabapple, oak, ash, elm, cottonwood, and linden – Observe the extent of the defoliation from these diseases. Prevent spotting by spraying foliage before infections occur. Most of these diseases require repeated spray applications, depending on leaf wetness, moderate temperatures and other weather conditions.
- Cankers – When trees become injured during hail or windstorms, canker-causing pathogens are ubiquitous and infect through the newly formed wound. Cankers produce a symptom of an oval or irregular blotch and split in the bark on the stems, and are usually raised or sunken. Advanced cankers cause a blockage in the transport of water and nutrients. Unlike the other major groups, fungicide treatments are ineffective for cankers. Removal of the infected stems and overall sanitation are the only recommended control methods.

Non-pathogenic diseases/maladies that do not warrant fungicide applications include:

- Root rot – If you see standing water by failing trees, think of root rot. Why? Once established, turf generally needs twice as much water as most ornamentals do, so it's easy to over-do it. Measure irrigation amounts applied over roots, adjust sprinklers and run times, and re-design landscapes to achieve a separation between turf and ornamentals.

(continued on page 32)

In order to keep clients happy, considering disease prevention and control in the overall landscape maintenance scheme makes good sense.

SIMPLY EFFECTIVE!

33 TREE DISEASES

Anthracnose
Dutch Elm Disease
Oak Wilt

Crabapple Scab
Hawthorn Leaf
Spot

Oak Decline
Pine Pitch Canker
Physalospora (Bleeding Canker)
Elm Wilt
Fusarium Wilt
Verticillium Wilt
Diplodia Tip Blight
Nectria Canker
Phomopsis Canker
Leptographium Canker
Dothiorella
Vermicularia Dieback
Palm Bud Rot
Philalophora
Botryosphaeria Branch Canker
Verticicladiella
Pestalotia
Melanconium Dieback
Mimosa Wilt
Ceratocystis Dieback
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Cedar Branch Canker
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Tree Care Tips

(continued from page 30)

- **Gall** – Look for swollen spots on roots, stems and leaves caused by bacteria and insects. When galls are found on roots and stems, pruning and hand removal is the best control approach. But when gall is found on leaves, raking and disposal is better. If gall is spotted on roots during planting, return the stock to the supplier – it's too hard to control.
- **Leaf scorch** – Nutritional deficiencies, hot winds and high temperatures can cause leaves to brown at the edges and curl up. This is mainly a problem on low fertility, rough sites and/or during periods of hot, dry weather. Once plants are installed, not much can be done. Get a feel for the suitability of the site with a soil test because proper siting of trees can help to prevent scorch.
- **Winter burn** – Caused by sudden and rapid temperature changes and cold winter winds, weather burn can be seen through symptoms of browning and burning of stems and leaves, especially on evergreens. Avoid planting susceptible species where they will be exposed to extreme winds in winter. South

and southwest windy sites are particularly tough on evergreens. Keep the soil evenly moist before entering winter. Apply anti-desiccants at regular six-week intervals to prevent foliar burn.

- **Wilts** – This is caused by a number of pathogens that colonize and clog conductive tree vessels. Pine wilt, verticillium wilt and fusarium wilt are representative of this group. Promote healthy growth and stressed plants usually succumb. Prune out wilted plant parts immediately after symptoms develop. Sterilize pruners between cuts.
- **Mower Blight** – Prevent tree trunk damage by installing mulch to eliminate the need for close mowing and trimming next to tree trunks. Brief the mowing crew about the importance of preventing tree damage.
- **Chlorosis** – Leaves that turn yellow and have green veins usually signals an iron or manganese deficiency, which is often due to pH imbalances. Conduct soil tests to determine pH and nutrient levels. Adjust soil with compost, sulfur, lime, peat moss and leaf mold as needed.

- **Construction damage** – Stunted growth and burnt looking foliage are often seen in areas near recent construction projects. Compacted soils and ripped and torn roots are the main causes. Keep construction crews far away from the roots of valuable trees and shrubs. Don't allow soil – even a couple of inches – to be distributed over the roots.

THE BOTTOM LINE. For many landscape contractors, the bottom line is, "So, should I spray? Is fungicide use warranted?" The answer is to let integrated pest management be your guide. Utilize the techniques of regular scouting/inspection, disease identification and consideration of threshold, and analyze the extent of the injury and the history of the disease symptoms. But, most importantly, know your diseases. – *John Fech*

The author is a certified arborist and horticulturist at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Neb., and can be reached at jfech@unlnotes.unl.edu.

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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

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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

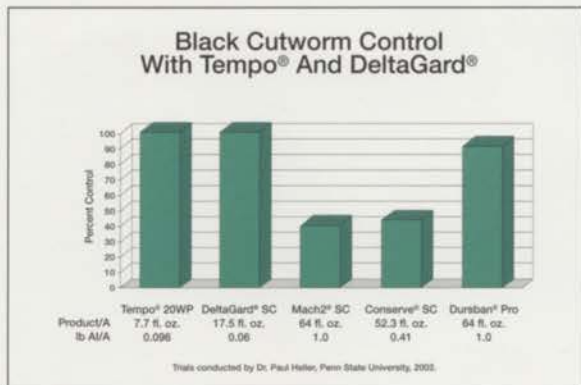
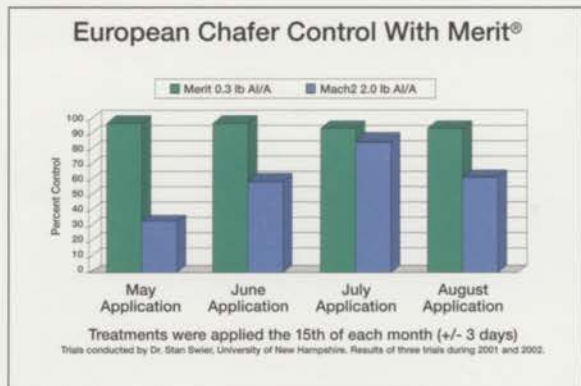
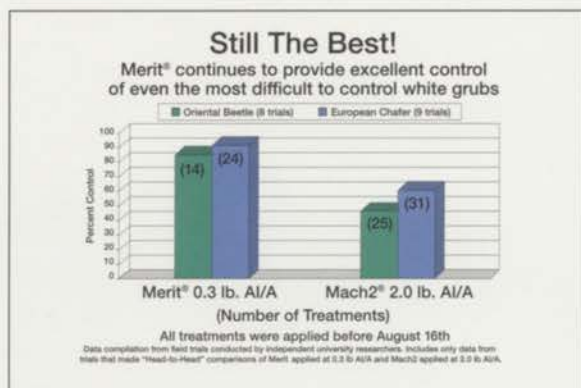
- **DeltaGard®** (active ingredient: deltamethrin)

As the world's most popular pyrethroid, DeltaGard is an economical, all-purpose insecticide, offering broad-spectrum

DeltaGard®

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

Sevin® product controls most major pests, including aphids, beetles, chinch bugs, cutworms, mole crickets, white grubs and weevils.

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)

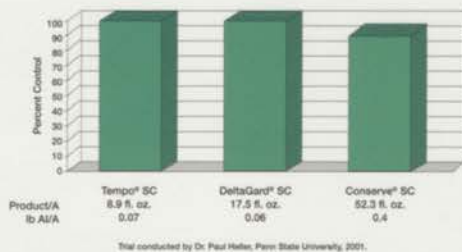
Dylox provides fast-acting control of white grubs and other surface-feeding and soil insects through contact and ingestion. Contact activity provides quick knockdown and

DYLOX® ingestive activity ensures complete pest control.

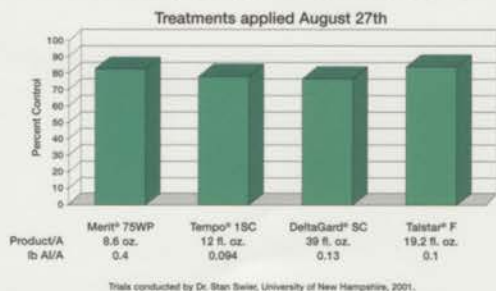
Dead grubs have been observed as soon as 24 hours after application when irrigation or rainfall moves Dylox into an infested zone. Dylox penetrates thatch up to 1/2 inch thick with proper watering.

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.

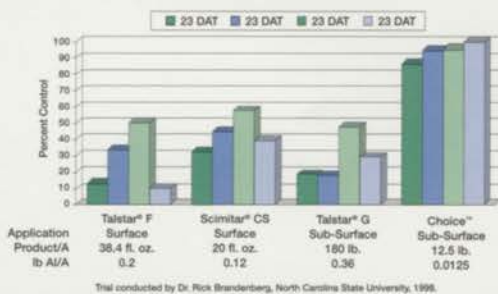
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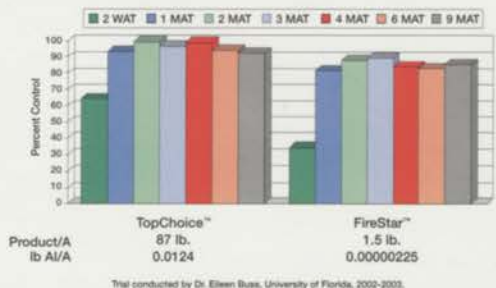
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efficacy of 200 pounds of an organophosphate active ingredient. Launched in 1996 as a slit-applied product, Chipco Choice provides control of mole crickets for six months or more with just one application. Since then, new sites, pests and the

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).

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On

Paper

Judging Jobs

After starting a program where he regularly monitors quality on maintenance work, Dan Foley realized he was leaving certain service crews out – his enhancement employees.

"Once we started this great program where we judged quality on our maintenance crews' work, we felt that the enhancement and installation crews felt neglected," said Foley, president, D. Foley Landscape, Walpole, Mass. So, the company came up with a way to judge quality on small installation and enhancement jobs right after completing them.

To create the outline of the form, first Foley and the company's Chief Estimator John Dinsmore thought about all the key points of an installation or enhancement job that are important to a quality outcome, such as aesthetics, shrubs, trees, perennials, mulch, walls, patios/walkways, irrigation, grading/lawn installation and customer and special instructions.

Then, underneath those main categories, they listed questions addressing certain tasks, such as "Has all debris and trash been removed from the site?" under the aesthetic category. Each question is worth 2 points. If Foley or Dinsmore awards a crew zero points in a category, this means the work is unacceptable, if they award a crew one point for a task that means it meets expectations and if they award two points for an area that means it exceeds expectations.

"You take the total points earned divided by the total points possible and that becomes their score," Foley explained. "And anything not included on that job – like if the job didn't include perennials, for instance – then we don't count that section and divide their total points by the total without that section."

Currently, the company doesn't judge every installation job. They judge two to three jobs per crew a year, but Foley would like to get to a point where he's judging every job.

"The goal is that if you are going to make quality important, you never want to make quality more important in a certain part of the business than another," Foley stressed. "Quality is a culture – you need to make it contagious in your business." – Nicole Wisniewski **LL**

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



CONSTRUCTION & ENHANCEMENTS QUALITY JUDGING

"Customer Satisfaction IS Customer Expectations
divided by Actual Results"

—Jim Paluch

Job: _____ Crew Leader: _____
Date: _____ Judged By: _____ Manager: _____

AESTHETIC:	POINTS:
Has all debris and trash been removed?	
Have all excess materials been removed?	
Have all tools been collected from site and accounted for?	
Have all work areas been cleaned and blown?	
Is there any loam, mulch, etc. on windowsills, steps, etc.?	

SHRUBS (including transplants):	POINTS:
Are all the shrubs in straight?	
Is the best side of each shrub facing forward?	
Are the shrubs planted at the right height?	
Are the shrubs mulched properly?	
Have the tags and ribbons been removed from shrubs?	
Have the shrubs been pruned as needed?	
Are the shrub plantings balanced and spaced correctly?	

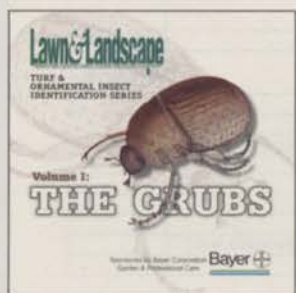
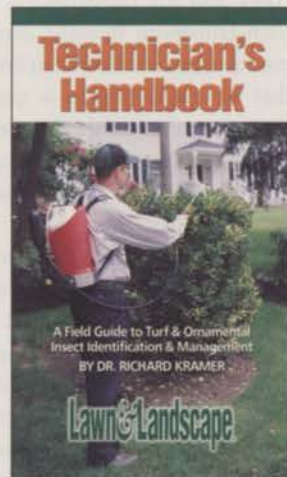
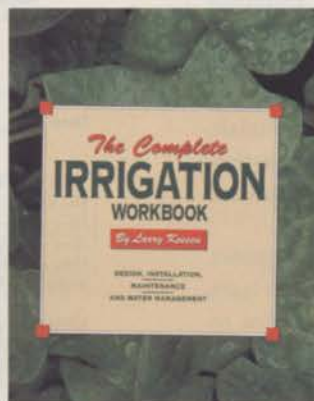
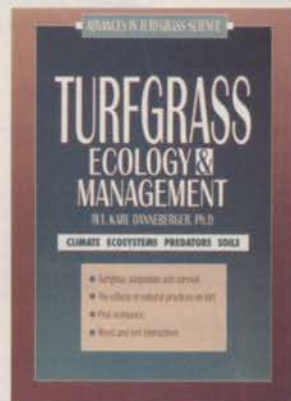
TREES (including transplants):	POINTS:
Are all the trees in straight?	
Is the best side of each tree facing forward?	
Is each tree planted at the proper depth? Is the root collar properly exposed?	
Are the trees mulched properly?	
Are the tags and ribbons removed from all the trees?	
Have the trees been pruned where needed?	
Are the trees staked properly?	
Are the tree cables and stakes tight, positioned properly & inside the mulch beds?	
Is the tree placement correct?	

PERENNIALS:	POINTS:
Have all perennial beds been properly prepared for planting?	
Is perennial spacing and placement correct?	
Are all perennials planted at the right depth?	
Have all tags and ribbons been removed?	
Are perennials mulched properly?	
Do perennial beds have properly defined edges?	

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**MONEY-BACK
GUARANTEE**

Cover Story

by Kristen Hampshire

Below, from left to right:
Emily Thompson, Steve
Glover, Drew St. John,
Matt Glover.

Photo: Pete Damroth

Symbiot Business Group

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Symbiot connects independent contractors to a national service hub, proving consolidation isn't the only way to win big-time contracts.

POWER

of

TWO



There's a new consolidation rolling up the green industry – a variety not characterized by buy-outs and layoffs or royalty fees in return for systems and support. It's a connection, a network – a band of professionals who enjoy big-time, national benefits without bartering their identity and sense of ownership. It's a philosophy based on pure organics – symbiosis and the power of two, association with mutual advantage.

The Symbiot Business Group is just a bit different.

Matt Glover, vice president, relates nature's multiplication method to Symbiot's interdependent structure, which connects contractors to a national network so they can pursue regional and national accounts they might not bid on otherwise. Members can hold their own in negotiations where the "big guys" bring efficiency and convenience to the table because, together, several independents form one, strong front.

Words like "consortium," "network" and "partner" define Symbiot – but tagging one term to the group is nearly impossible since it depends on the working parts of several partners and multiple industry talents.

"An 'economic ecosystem' is sort of a catchphrase we use," related Glover, the 26-year-old visionary who developed the concept for an entrepreneurial class while he attended Brigham Young University. "Two different organisms come together and work to develop a benefit that they couldn't develop on their own.

"What we're trying to do is see that we build products and services that deliver benefits to all parties involved," he continued, and so far the group includes nearly 300 members that produce nearly \$1 billion in combined sales – the [second] largest landscape "consolidation" entity in the United States, Glover noted. Now, Symbiot must focus its marketing efforts, increase its national account sales and fine-tune its internal clockwork so the organization can continue to nurture its group, from the inside out.

THE CONCEPT. Not quite a consolidator and far from a franchise organization, Symbiot's differences lie in its setup – and its origin. When Glover wired the business plan for his college class, he considered the power of working as a whole rather than many independent parts.

"The concept of mass customization appealed to me for property service companies," he said, reflecting on his experience working in service jobs, starting in landscaping with his father, Steve Glover, former owner of L&L Landscape Services in Sunnyvale, Calif., and current Symbiot CEO. "A lot of times [service businesses] are small and they don't have a lot of money to spend on infrastructure," Matt pointed out.

So Symbiot started with the tools. Its first products to "customize" and tighten efficiency were Web-based programs designed to help businesses build Web pages and manage phone calls and financials. Contractors could purchase the tools and improve their internal operations. That was in April 2002, when Steve, Drew St. John, president, Emily Thompson, national sales manager, and other green industry "trailblazers" invested in the venture.

Tools turned into contract selling in August 2002, once Symbiot's products and concept gained momentum and recognition from interested independent contractors – the "Who's Who" of the landscape industry, or at least the "whos" who didn't sell their companies to large consolidators. "There is a reason they didn't sell and I can guarantee that 90 percent of them had the opportunity and they passed on it," St. John pointed out. "They made the decision to remain independent, and what that

SYMBIOT BUSINESS GROUP

HEADQUARTERS:

Nicholasville, Ky., and Sandy, Utah

FOUNDED: April 2000

MISSION STATEMENT:

Symbiot is committed to improving the efficiency and profitability of our premier service providers by creating and disseminating innovative, high-quality and cost-effective business solutions and programs. Symbiot will serve as a trustworthy and efficient facilitator between our premier service providers and the property service industry.

MANAGEMENT:

Steve Glover, Chairman and CEO, manages the Symbiot Landscape Network
Drew St. John, president and chief operating officer, manages the Symbiot Management Group

Matt Glover, senior vice president, products & technology

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Cover Story

means today is totally different than what it meant 10 years ago."

In short, this means these contractors must stand next to "Goliath," or large, consolidated entities, St. John described. "Someone needs to represent David."

And that's exactly what Symbiot does. Represent. Interested independent contractors can apply to be partners or affiliates and enjoy the benefits of connecting with contractors in markets across the United States.

The key selling point of this model is a competitive edge for bidding contracts. Contractor membership is divided into partners and affiliates, and suppliers can join as P3 (Purchase Power Partner) members. With membership, contractor partners and affiliates can offer landscape services to accounts that want one service provider in several cities. In addition, members can share ideas, interact in online training sessions, access benchmarking information and enjoy national marketing materials that brand them as part of a group rather than a sole part.

"The mission is national coverage, local commitment," St. John defined. "You take the best of both worlds. We find an elite group of service providers, standardize the specifications and processes, centralize billing functions and offer the benefits of a national contract. But, you still have the benefits of a local company: owned and operated, in business for many years. Instead of having a branch manager – a non-owner involved – you have the owner there."

Symbiot is the "R&D" arm, in a sense. It provides technology and resources and connects contractors to a network while serving as a central port of call for national contracts that want to deal with one person, one company.

"When it's said and done, the significant reasons members participate are to grow their businesses, participate in a group with the best minds in the industry, reduce their costs and expand their professionalism," he summed up.

Contractors' involvement varies depending on their "partner" or "affiliate" status.

Partners. Consider larger, independent contractors – HighGrove Partners in Smyrna, Ga., for example. These members are located in major metropolitan areas. Benefits include quarterly benchmarking exercises, in which Symbiot collects partners' financials and as-

(continued on page 44)



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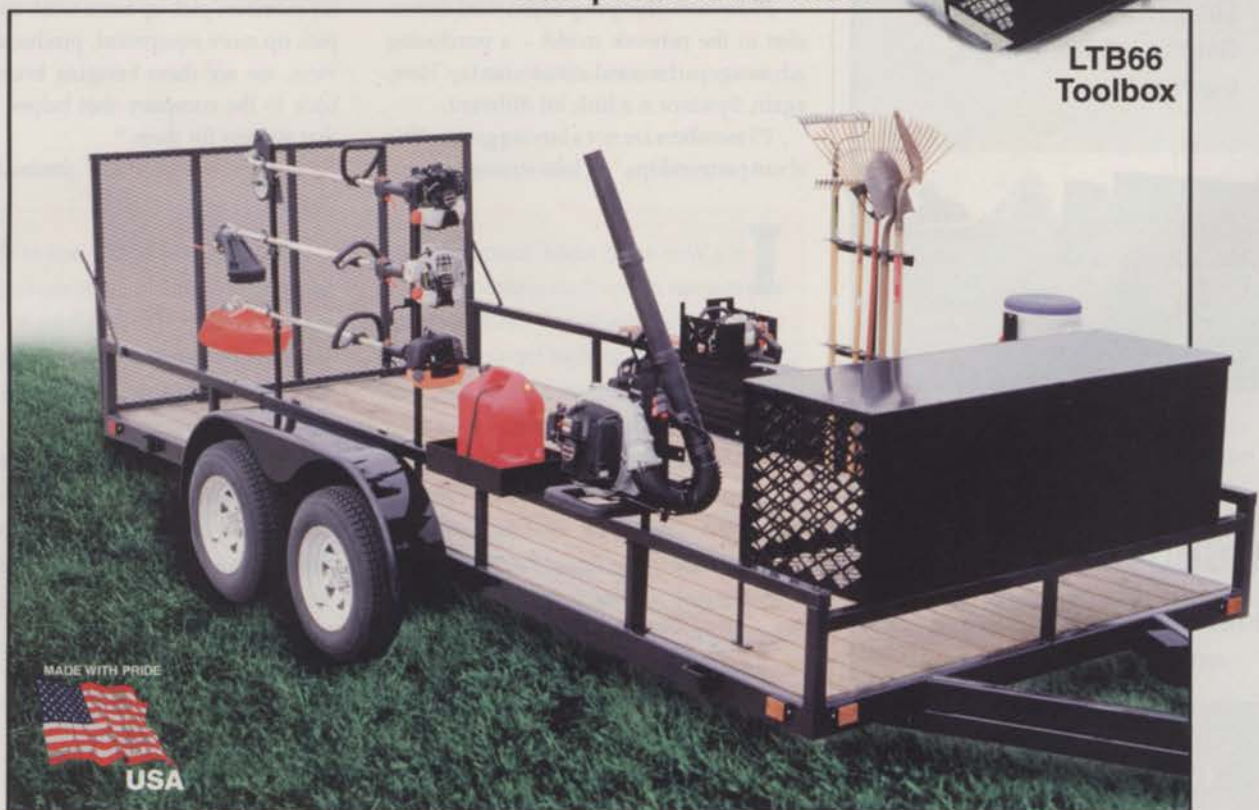
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USE READER SERVICE #29

Cover Story

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sembles a "standard" so contractors can compare their progress.

Monthly Web casts offer partners and affiliates training tools, and newsletters review topics covered during the sessions.

Partners also have the first right to refusal of national contracts in their markets. Some of Symbiot's first partners have earned a piece of the company through their partnership, Matt added.

Affiliates. Affiliates enjoy the same resources on a reduced scale. The members are located in smaller markets, or they are smaller companies located in the same markets as other partners. Their membership includes annual benchmarking rather than quarterly, and three Web casts per year.

Both partners and affiliates reach into Symbiot's "tool box," Matt described, referring to Symbiot's benefits and resources. "In essence, there are three main buckets of value, or three components to the toolbox," he outlined. "One is national contracts – national marketing – the Symbiot brand. No. 2 is the P3 supplier group, and No. 3 is knowledge sharing in areas that can mean savings or increased sales."

P3 Partners. This group adds a third dimension to the network model – a purchasing advantage partners and affiliates can tap. Here, again, Symbiot is a little bit different.

P3 members are not a buying group. "It's about partnerships," St. John stressed. "Com-

ponents of our P3 programs include certain payment terms, certain extensions on warranties – everyone thinks P3 is about price. It's about all these different components from high-level equipment manufacturers and product suppliers that make up programs."

So far there are 29 P3 partners; the goal is to reach 50 by the end of 2003 and ultimately end up with 100, St. John said. These partners might offer affiliates or partners the benefit of purchasing parts on a 6-month-no-interest plan, or the convenience of filing their own warranty claims.

If contractors buy large amounts of equipment, certainly there are cost savings involved. But most of all, the P3 portion of the Symbiot model is designed to fill out the network circle – add another element to balance the "symbiosis" of doing business in a consolidated market where other national landscape companies boast buying benefits.

The P3 membership dollars feed Symbiot's national marketing drive, providing the dollars to enhance the organization's brand awareness – a key challenge since, clearly, Symbiot is a unique entity. "What we create is a success cycle," St. John related. "As contractor members pick up more work and have to pick up more equipment, products and services, we see them bringing brand loyalty back to the company that helped facilitate that success for them."

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In a Web-wired world, contractors with success stories have embraced technology's convenience – and its ability to connect them to other top-notch professionals. Symbiot Business Group members can use its IntraLink to connect with other partners and affiliates in an instant-messenger style, noted Drew St. John, president of the Lexington, Ky.-based company.

"We are in the days of AOL Instant Messenger, and that's how IntraLink functions," he compared. "It's an instant messaging tool where you can recognize immediately that one of your affiliates is online and you can ask them questions and get responses immediately."

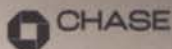
This Web tool is only one of the systems Symbiot offers network members. Its first product, DotComRunner, helps business owners develop and maintain their own Web sites. CashRunner manages accounting and billing and TeleRunner improves phone system operation. SiteManager is a handheld technology that creates crew schedules, generates work orders and tracks materials usage, travel time and site problems among other functions.

All these tools are designed with efficiency, productivity and, ultimately, business growth, in mind, St. John pointed out. – **Kristen Hampshire**

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(continued from page 42)

GOING NATIONAL. Part of the success cycle that allows Symbiot to feed work to its members requires contractors to round up national leads for Symbiot. The organization began selling national contracts last August, and so far has secured \$1 million in sales, though St. John expects the organization to "definitely be a multi-million dollar provider of national contracts and services."

However, Symbiot's national sales function – called the Symbiot Management Group – still depends on its members. Symbiot pursues national opportunities provided by its partners and affiliates and then passes out this work to members in various markets. The members provide an "in" to these accounts, since many of them service one of these clients' locations but maybe haven't expanded the service regionally or nationally.

National accounts are an income stream for Symbiot, in addition to its Web-based tools, which are available only to network members. Symbiot requires partners and affiliates to pay between 3 and 5 percent on national contracts that it adds to their client lists. At the same time, if members provide the national lead to Symbiot, they are not

docked with this fee for their contribution, St. John said. "We only charge them for work we bring to them that is a new opportunity," he clarified. "We don't charge them for work they already had – we don't want to diminish the opportunity for an affiliate to bring a lead (to the network)."

Once a national account signs on with Symbiot, the contract is filtered through one tunnel, which appeals to property management groups that don't want to place calls to multiple service providers, Steve added.

"We represent the partners and affiliates on a national basis, and that gives them an offensive marketing opportunity, but also a defensive one because if a national company comes in and wants to set up a contract with the account, the partner or affiliate can say they are part of a national organization that can offer national services."

St. John illustrated this in a story about a partner on the East Coast who lost eight sites to a national landscape player. "He was only a local provider – this was before we built the network," he said. Since then, the owner joined the network and expanded his service reach with other Symbiot members. "Now, he can say, 'Let me tell you about who I am affiliated

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with. We can provide regional or national landscape services for you and you can keep me locally.' He lost the work for a year, the national provider didn't service the client properly, and then he got the account back."

MARKETING THE MISSION. Of course, growing the national Symbiot sales initiative requires brand recognition. And this calls for smart marketing that spells out Symbiot's advantages.

"In marketing [to clients], we want to be the 'Intel inside' model," Matt compared, emphasizing that Symbiot's advantages to both landscape customers and network members stems from efficiencies and programs that the organization provides to its members – programs that increase exponentially as more contractors join the group. "A lot of smaller computer companies wouldn't have sold computers to anyone during their heyday if they couldn't say they had 'Intel inside.' We want to build a brand that shows it is advantageous for our partners and affiliates to use the 'Intel inside.'"

This could be a tricky undertaking for Symbiot, Steve recognized.

"Any time you have something totally new, it is a challenge to get people to understand what you are offering, and we are working with that," he admitted. Educating the industry about Symbiot's benefits and encouraging members to utilize its tools is top of mind as Symbiot works through its first national contract selling season.

To spark the marketing initiative, the group sent out its first marketing kit, complete with a CD ROM so members can post the Symbiot brand on their Web sites and announce their inclusion. "They are the top 1 percent of the industry – that is the real key," St. John pointed out. "If we can deliver the message of how they have been recognized and included in that top 1 percent, then we think that is a serious differentiator."

Also in the kit is a cobranded sales sheet that details the service conveniences customers will gain if they work with a Symbiot company. For example, the P3 program helps contractor members control and reduce costs

Symbiot Landscape Network – A consortium of independent landscape contractors who, together, can pursue national and regional contracts they might not otherwise bid on.

Partners – Independent contractors in metropolitan markets who strive to grow their companies and compete for national contracts, but still want to retain their independent company structure.

Affiliates – Independent contractors in smaller markets, or a smaller companies in large, metropolitan markets, who also wish to grow and still remain independent.

Symbiot Interior Network – An interior version of the landscape network, this group is a consortium of independent interior landscape professionals who work together to pursue national contracts. There are also partner and affiliate members, as well as a P3 network, developed and managed by Dick Ott, a 30-year interiorscape industry veteran.

Symbiot Management Group – As Symbiot's national sales and contract management arm, this segment manages national accounts, providing one contact for bidding, servicing, communicating and invoicing.

P3 (Purchase Power Partner) – Equipment manufacturers and industry suppliers that serve as partners to Symbiot networks, offering them special purchase programs.

Symbiot Defined

so they can pass these savings on to their clients, St. John said. In addition, members can stick Symbiot decals on trucks, print the logo on business cards and display the name in company literature – all part of “getting the name out.”

“It’s all about identifying and explaining the Symbiot brand in conjunction with the local, premiere service provider,” St. John concluded. “Symbiot on its own has no value to the local property service clients, but with our local partners and affiliates, it’s a team effort and we all offer business, productivity and financial success tools that can help the members be more successful companies, and thereby offer their customers a more superior product than the competition.”

Besides spreading the Symbiot word to national customers and property managers, the organization also must market its brand to potential industry members and define its mission. Symbiot is not an association or a regional landscape group. This misconcep-

tion follows Symbiot and is a message the organization is careful to spell out to contractors as it promotes its brand and recruits more members.

Symbiot doesn’t step in and dictate a company’s structure, St. John added, referring back to the “toolbox” the organization provides its members. “We offer opportunities that people can engage in or choose not to,” he said simply.

Herein lies the internal marketing conundrum: encouraging members to capitalize off of the Symbiot alliance. While the organization can offer monthly Web casts and online advisers, benchmarking tools and marketing materials, companies will not experience the growth they expect through a national affiliation if they do not utilize the services, Matt stressed.

The membership commitment requires about a half-hour every week and an Internet connection, as most of Symbiot’s tools, networking and advising sessions are online.

“We need to focus on going downstream to our partners and affiliates to make sure they are using the benefits,” Matt said. “We think we have the best involved now, but we want to keep them involved and we want to be that competitive advantage they are looking for.”

PRESERVING PERFORMANCE. Besides painting its blue logo across the green industry, Symbiot realizes that before it can make a mark, it must meet expectations. Quality control in large organizations can present inconsistency issues, and Symbiot tuned into this reality while building its membership.

“We handpicked our partners – the people we promote are people who are capable,” Matt explained. “We are preventive in the sense that we make sure we only have quality coming in. You hear the phrase, ‘garbage in, garbage out.’ We prevent that by only letting quality in from day one.”

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USE READER SERVICE #30

Zaiser's Landscaping

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As a sixth-generation owner, Scott Zaiser has taken his family's business to the next level.

For the Zaisers, landscaping runs in the family.

Zaiser's Nursery & Florist, Burlington, Iowa, originally opened in 1864, growing fruit trees and flowers. In 1960, the company started a landscaping side of the business, and Scott Zaiser started working for this division early on with his father. "I loved being outside and I liked working for dad," he said.

Zaiser got so interested in the business that he went to Iowa State University to pursue degrees in landscape design and horticulture, graduating in 1983. After college, he returned to his father's business and started at the bottom working his way up.

"Through those years, I developed relationships with homeowners in the area and built a strong client base," Zaiser said. "My dad, who wanted to retire from the landscape end of the business and focus on the nursery and flower shop, sold me the landscaping side in 1997."

The resulting decision-making freedom Zaiser had after acquiring the business was exhilarating. "I didn't have to get approval or review a master budget for three business areas before figuring out if there was room for me to buy a new piece of equipment I needed," he said.

The landscape business generated \$300,000 in revenue in 1997. Almost immediately after he started running it, Zaiser was experiencing 15 to 20 percent growth rates, which were hard for him to manage at first. "I was swamped – working 60 hours a week and feeling like I wasn't in control," he explained.

By learning to let go and delegate, Zaiser was able to maintain his business direction, and today, he's doubled the business' revenue to nearly \$600,000.

DELEGATING DUTIES. Zaiser's Landscaping is made up of 70 percent residential clients, 20 percent commercial clients and 10 percent government clients. The business is mostly design/build focused – with an 80/20 ratio of design/build and maintenance work.

After taking over the business in 1997, Zaiser tried to spend 50 percent of his time in the field and 50 percent of his time in the office. He admitted that he had his way of doing tasks

(continued on page 50)



The Zaiser's Landscaping team from left to right: Irrigation Manager Dan Kies, Hardscape Manager Jamie Dean, Lawn Care Manager Bill Balbort, Owner Scott Zaiser and Landscape Manager Tony Rich. Photos: Zaiser's Landscaping



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First Look

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and had a hard time trusting these jobs to other employees. "After a while I couldn't do it all myself anymore and had to start delegating," he said. "I realized that things always don't have to get done my way. And immediately my stress level went down."

Now, Zaiser said he only spends 30 percent of his time in the field and 70 percent in the office. "I'm the head designer here so I

like to do designs and then get out there to kick off projects," he remarked.

Managing time and staying organized were two tasks Zaiser tried to perfect over the years – what he refers to as "staying in control." "I used to write notes to myself all the time, but then I realized that I would think of things I forgot in the car on the way to a job and so I started carrying a tape recorder

with me and recording messages and reminders to myself," he explained. "I try to arrange my schedule so that by 4 p.m. I'm answering messages and organizing for the next day. Also, using a cell phone during travel to jobs or while working helps me handle some client calls and keep on top of things."

Zaiser's Landscaping has built a reputation in Burlington for drafting creative designs and Zaiser credits that to his college days when professors would encourage him to open his mind to a variety of designs. To keep a stock of fresh, new ideas on hand, Zaiser takes photos of landscapes, golf courses, plant schemes and hardscape elements, like rock creations, whenever he travels and keeps a file of them in the office. "We try not to limit ourselves to the same materials and we try and do something that stands

(continued on page 52)

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Instead of giving potential design/build clients addresses of previous customers and asking them to drive around the neighborhood to see his work, Scott Zaiser, president, Zaiser's Landscaping, Burlington, Iowa, shares job sample CDs with clients so they can view jobs in the privacy of their homes.

"I put about eight before-and-after job photos on the CD and I give them out to potential clients so they can look at some projects we've done and not have to drive around the neighborhood looking for them if they don't want to," he said. "Then I ask them to return the CDs when they are finished."

Since Zaiser has a digital camera and is constantly taking pictures of jobs before, during and after installations, all he had to do was have a friend help him compile them on a CD and then he was able to burn as many as he wanted. "But I only need about a half dozen here at the office since potential clients only borrow them and then return them – and I only have about two or three out at any one time," Zaiser said. "Lots of people today have computers so it's so easy for them to plug it in and take a look."

– Nicole Wisniewski

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First Look

(continued from page 50)

out on every job because that's what clients are paying us for," he commented.

RETENTION HEAVEN. With the high growth rates – particularly in 2000 and 2001 – Zaiser said to eliminate overtime and get work done he would use a day crew and then have a night crew come in and work from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. to get more work done.

"That way we would get another two hours in each day and the only person working overtime was me," he pointed out.

But when growth slowed in 2002 to a more reasonable 10- to 15-percent rate, Zaiser embraced a summer hour schedule where employees work four nine-hour days and are able to leave at noon on Fridays.

This, as well as higher-than-average wages

and summer outings, such as golf and baseball, is what Zaiser credits for retaining employees.

And while competitors in his area pay \$7 to \$8 an hour, Zaiser said his minimum is \$9 an hour and he pays up to \$16 an hour.

Zaiser also offers his six full-time employees a year-end bonus, which is based on business growth as well as employee attendance, productivity, leadership and attitude. "At the end of the year, I always make sure equipment is fixed and then I take the very year-end bottom line and from there figure out a percent of profit to use as bonuses," he said. "I think about what type of job the employee did that year and whether they were smiling and positive when they came in in the morning. I keep track of all this information throughout the year and that all contributes to each person's bonus."

Additionally, Zaiser conducts what he calls "pick-up truck reviews" with employees throughout the year. On the way to a job site or to pick up supplies, he will take along an employee and do the review on the way. "We talk about the business and any personnel issues – I turn those 15- to 30-minute drives into productive downtime," Zaiser said.

PLANNING AT A REASONABLE PACE.

Zaiser is very comfortable with his current \$600,000 revenue and he wants to maintain it. If he's going to alter any part of the business mix it may be to increase the maintenance percentage of the business. Currently, maintenance makes up 20 percent of the business and to Zaiser increasing it even to 25 or 30 percent would be a big step. "I'm testing the waters now to see if it will work," he said. "We're not cheaper than the competition, but we do offer a more professional image and service so this may help us get the work."

Also, Zaiser feels that he can be a competitive and creative designer at the \$600,000 level, but he feels that increasing his business to \$750,000 would warrant the hiring of a second landscape designer. "I may consider doing this but not for four or five years – I'm comfortable where I'm at."

For Zaiser, staying in control and continuing to embrace delegation will continue pushing his business forward. **LL**

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

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Grass-Catching Systems

by Lauren Spiers

Grass-catching systems don't just handle clippings anymore. Many contractors use spring and fall clean-ups as great collection opportunities. Photo: The Toro Co.

Grass-catching mowers and attachments are becoming just as popular as mulching mowers. Here are some catching tips.



CATCH as CATCH Can

What's the best part about the mowing season? The smell of a newly cut lawn. The fresh, clean scent wafts through the breeze, inviting neighbors to stop by and admire the plush carpet of grass that is so obviously the aroma's origin.

But what are all those clumps on the lawn? And how did those clippings get all over the flower beds?

Landscape professionals know that these small messes can drastically reduce a lawn's curb appeal and no amount of fresh lawn fragrance will fix that. In response to clients' pet peeves, contractors can turn to a plethora of grass collection systems currently available. Whether they're integrated systems with vacuum-like capabilities or well-crafted bagging attachments, mower and attachment manufacturers make grass collection a viable option for contractors.

PLAYING CATCH-UP. "There is a wide range of clients who contractors have to deal with when it comes to mowing," noted Bob Walker, president, Walker Mfg., Fort Collins, Colo. "On the low end are people who want weed control - all they're trying to do is knock down the growth to cut the weeds down. At the other end of the spectrum are people who lie down on their driveways and look across the grass to see if it's cut right. It's very important to those people that their property is well manicured."

Though, for the most part, contractors and manufacturers both recognized that aesthetics is the No. 1 motivation for

contractors to collect grass clippings or for clients to request grass collection. But there also are more practical reasons.

"There's really just one word and that word is 'juice,'" Walker continued, "When cool-season grasses come out of dormancy, there's a lot of moisture in the plant and people tend to confuse that with dew or rain. Dew and rainfall on grass is not nearly the problem this juice is because it's sticky."

Though many contractors use mowers with mulching capabilities, the sticky, wet turf they run into in the northern part of the country can clog mower decks as the blades chop "juicy" grass into tiny pieces. Not only does this increase the amount of necessary maintenance on the machine, but the mowers leave behind sloppy clumps of grass despite the goal of letting clippings evenly rest on top of the lawn.

Larry Linehan, owner, Linehan Landscaping & Property Maintenance, Salem, N.H., is all too familiar with this problem. "The lawns in our area have a tremendous amount of moisture in them at the beginning of the season, in the summer and then again in the fall," Linehan noted. "The lawns grow really fast and very often there are 2 or 3 inches to cut. That's a tremendous amount of debris and it's heavy and wet and has no mulching value. If you mulch, the finished product looks terrible."

Contractors and manufacturers agreed that there is a link between the final appearance of a property and grass collection, so even in the summer when lawns in Linehan's area are dry

(continued on page 56)

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USE READER SERVICE #37

Grass Catching Systems

(continued from page 54)

enough to mulch, he continues to bag clippings to satisfy his high-end clientele. As a result of this aesthetics factor, some manufacturers noted that grass collection is becoming increasingly popular in the southern part of the country, despite the fact that warm-season turfgrasses in that area are typically easy to mulch.

At the same time, most manufacturers reported that sales of bagging attachments and grass-catching mowers are not significantly on the rise, but all aspects of grass collection are reaching equilibrium with preferences for mulching machines.

"It seems that mulching and catching have achieved a rough balance in the last

couple of years," commented Peter Andonian, president, Accelerator Industries, Bellevue, Wash. "The mulching trend moved ahead rapidly in the late 1990s and has now kind of leveled off, letting collection catch up."

Randy Harris, marketing manager, Toro, Bloomington, Minn., attributes that catching-up phase to another advent in the mower industry. "I think sales growth of collection systems can be attributed to the growing use of [mid-mount zero-turn] mowers and the increased performance of outdoor equipment manufacturer designed and supported collection systems vs. third-party, one-size-fits-all designs," he explained. "At the end of the day, there's no faster way to collect grass and/or leaves." Because zero-turn mowers increase production speed, adding a catching system to those types of machines makes debris collection a snap.

COLLECTION CLUES. Andonian and other manufacturers understand that because of differences in turf type and moisture content, some contractors may want to mulch during certain parts of the season and bag clippings at other times. In cases like these, grass-catching attachments may be the way to go.

"The advantage of a collection system is that it allows the operator to provide the customer with a beautiful, pristine lawn every time," commented Ruthanne Stucky, marketing director, The Grasshopper Co., Moundridge, Kan. "[But] even operators who don't routinely collect grass clippings appreciate the seasonal capability to pick up leaves and debris when needed."

Additionally, Andonian mentioned that some contractors may only want to collect clippings on certain parts of a client's yard such as around planting beds or just on the front lawn. Grass-catching attachments allow mower operators to switch from side discharge to bagging quickly and easily, rather than having to deal with an entirely different deck or mower.

The prices for bagging attachments are relatively low. "Cloth catchers can run anywhere from \$150 to \$350, and some manufacturers will throw in a cloth catcher at a very low cost when you buy the mower," Andonian said. "The lowest cost catchers are made of steel and can go from \$150 to \$250 depending on

(continued on page 58)

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USE READER SERVICE #39

Grass Catching Systems

(continued from page 56)

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"A grass catcher attachment isn't a complex device," remarked Peter Andonian, president, Accelerator Industries, Bellevue, Wash., but that doesn't mean they're easy to manufacture. "I run into a lot of issues with fit," he continued. Because he and other attachment manufacturers produce "third party" catchers to fit almost any mower of any size, there are several details to take into account.

"The challenge for a collector manufacturer is getting the collector system to fit with all the different types of machines out there and keep those available in the right proportions for the market," Andonian explained, offering some tips for contractors to remember when purchasing grass catcher attachments.

• *Mounting strength.* "One of the big problems with mounting systems is that there's a lot of stress right at the mounting point," Andonian noted. "If you have a collector on the side and you go over a bump, it can put a tremendous amount of force on the mounting." He recommended that contractors make sure the attachment they buy has the heaviest amount of metal around the mounting to ensure it will stand up to mowing stress.

• *Catcher height.* The catcher's elevation also is important. "There's a 'sweet spot' where the catcher needs to mount, where it's high enough off the ground to avoid being destroyed, but it's low enough to still fill properly," Andonian explained. "The user first needs to check whether the lower edge of the catcher intake is at least as low as the mower blade. Ideally, it should be about ¼-inch lower than the blade at the front of the intake. At the outside edge, it should be about 3 to 4 inches off the ground and 5 to 7 inches is a good elevation at the back of the catcher."

• *Handle placement.* Andonian mentioned that location of handles on the catcher can be the attachment's downfall or saving grace. "There are questions of ergonomics in terms of how you lift the object and how easy it is to handle," he said. "Grass clippings can weigh 7 to 12 pounds per cubic foot, so a 6 cubic-foot catcher can weigh around 75 to 90 pounds when full." Aluminum catchers tend to be lighter, making them easier to handle, and catchers with a handle across the body rather than one on each side also have a more user-friendly ergonomic design. — **Lauren Spiers**

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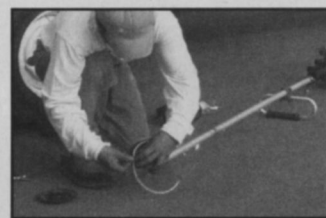
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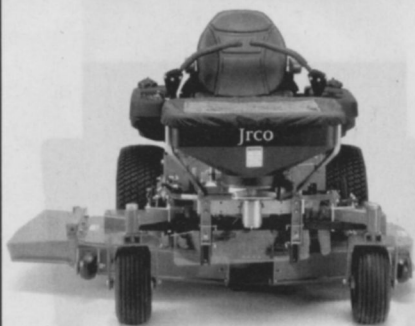
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USE READER SERVICE #46

Grass Catching Systems

(continued from page 58)

size, brand and what part of the country you're in. Aluminum would be the highest step up - between \$300 and \$500 depending on size and what mower it is going on." He added that while aluminum products do have higher price tags, the facts that they are lightweight and rustproof definitely increase their value.

In terms of mowers with integrated grass-catching systems, better technology yields a significantly higher cost than catcher attachments. With powerful blowers and hoses on many models, as well as features like large hoppers, from-the-deck debris releases, and updated vacuum technology, according to Harris, grass-catching mowers can range in cost from \$7,200 to \$14,000 depending on the brand, deck size and engine.

Finally, some manufacturers offer interchangeable decks to make it easier for contractors to switch from mulching to collection mode. "If you look at catching as the primary function, you can take one of these machines equipped to do catching and convert it into a side-discharge mower simply by purchasing another deck assembly," Walker explained. The extra deck can cost about \$1,300 and this option is ideal for contractors with applicable mowers who intend to bag clippings at certain times or on certain properties, and mulch on other occasions.

But when considering grass collection systems, the mower or attachment itself isn't always the only expense.

"These machines are quite a bit bigger because of their storage for clippings," Linehan noted. "On a multiple-person crew, where each crewmember is picking up clippings, it might require the company to purchase a larger trailer initially. The machines themselves are more expensive and with a new trailer, there is a larger initial investment to consider."

But there is certainly an element of time- and money-savings with grass-catching mowers and their accessories. "Some contractors found that they tried too hard *not* to catch and ended up doing a lot of extra clean-up work after they cut," Walker noted. "Things like double-cutting and going back to clean up what could have been collected takes a lot of extra time."

NICE CATCH. In addition to picking up goeey grass clippings, manufacturers and

(continued on page 62)



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USE READER SERVICE #98

Grass Catching Systems

(continued from page 60)

contractors raved about the fact that bagging mowers also are excellent machines for picking up other small debris.

"Collectors are used a lot for fall leaf clean-up," Andonian mentioned. "Occasionally, people will use a combination of side-discharge and collection for this. If they have a bunch of leaves on the lawn, they'll run

over and chop everything up with a mulching mower and then they'll throw a grass catcher on and pick up the debris."

Linehan mentioned that his crews discovered this benefit, but for them, one pass is all it takes. "The machines with strong blower/vacuum systems do a beautiful job of cleaning the lawn," he insisted. "Any

small sticks, leaves or debris that come down in the spring are vacuumed, which leaves a really nice cut when you're done."

Stucky also mentioned that some contractors use collection systems in combination with dethatching attachments, for instance, and can clean up that debris as well.

"Collection systems are replacing manual labor traditionally used in spring and fall clean-ups," Harris added. "Faced with continued labor shortages and the need to be more productive, [mid-mount zero-turn] collection systems are much more efficient than putting crews on job sites with rakes and backpack blowers."

But what to do with all the material that's been cleared from the lawn?

"One disadvantage [of grass collection] is the issue of what to do with the clippings and debris," Stucky admitted. "Many contractors have solved this problem with composting operations of their own or with other creative solutions like mulching."

Some third-party manufacturers of debris removal equipment provide lift systems or mechanical buckets to move clippings from mowers to trucks or dumpsters. Resourceful contractors rig up ramp systems that allow them to back up into a truck where they can release their debris, either emptying catchers by hand or using from-the-seat releases that open hoppers automatically.

As Stucky suggested, still other contractors, like Linehan, are able to use out-of-the-way areas of clients' properties (usually on large, wooded sites) to dump debris in a compost pile. If that's not an option, Linehan's crews transport clippings via dump truck to dumping sites at a charge of about \$100 per ton of clippings.

Mower manufacturers are also doing what they can to make debris handling easier.

"Our catchers have gotten bigger over time and hold more clippings - they're heavier to handle now," Walker acknowledged. He and other manufacturers are constantly looking for new ways to make loads lighter for contractors, including methods of

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Grass Catching Systems


"Some **contractors** found that they **tried too hard not to catch** and **ended up** doing a lot of **extra clean-up work** after they cut" – *Bob Walker*

dividing up the clippings into smaller bags or compartments.

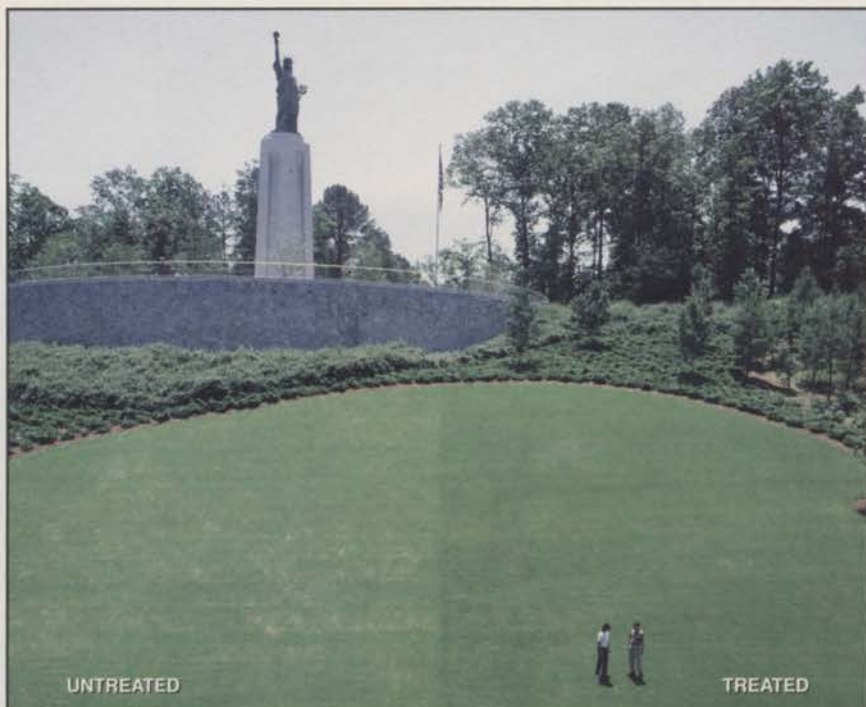
Once debris is moved to a waste site, the only thing left to do is clean up the mower. Collection systems can keep mowers from becoming caked with sticky grass as can be the case with mulching mowers, but there is still some maintenance involved.

"There's more work in terms of cleaning and maintaining the actual components of the grass-catching system," Linehan said, noting that hoses on some mowers may require a little extra cleaning to prevent clogging. "You've got to keep these systems clean and working properly because the most important things with these [accounts] are the final cut and appearance," he added. "If [the mowers] are not functioning correctly, and the crew doesn't take the time to clean off wet grass, clean out the vacuum properly, maintain the air pressure and keep the decks clean, it's not going to give you the result you want."

For Linehan, maintenance goes on throughout the day during wetter parts of the season – just a few minutes of clean up on each machine between properties. He recommends that all parts of the mower deck and catching system be thoroughly cleaned about once per week.

Really, contractors as well as their clients are driving the sales of grass-catching mowers and catcher attachments, Harris pointed out. Though homeowners and property managers are less concerned with *how* their turf is cut – as long as it's done properly – contractors know that collection systems help achieve high quality. Armed with these grass collection options, contractors clients can focus once again on the sweet smell of a freshly cut lawn, instead of clumps of clippings. 

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



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Insecticide Development

by Enloe Wilson

Come rain or regulations, the two-legged world forges ever onward in its timeless 'War on Bugs.'

In Search of



The green industry's ongoing battle against harmful insects is never without some newly unfolding drama. From the latest product developments to the most recent dictates of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), there's always something to keep battle-ready lawn care operators (LCOs) on their toes.

To maintain dominance over our multi-legged rivals, it's important that LCOs stay on top of the ever-changing specialty pest control market, and a cross section of experts offer information to help in the fight.

BUGGY BACKGROUND. Because humans arrived on the scene about 250 million years after the arrival of insects, we bipeds have battled bugs in our environment since time immemorial. About 10,000 of the 1 million identified insect species feed on plants, and modern commercial insecticides target about 700 of those critters that cause the most plant damage, suggested George Ware, emeritus professor of entomology, University of Arizona, Tucson, Ariz.

According to Ware, ancient Greek and Roman historians recorded some of man's earliest known uses of natural insecticides – sulfur extracts as an all-purpose fumigant, green lizard gall as a fruit protectant from worms and larvae. "Later," he shared, "a variety of materials were used: pepper and tobacco extracts, soapy water, whitewash, vinegar, turpentine, fish oil, brine and lye, for example."

By the mid-1940s, science had turned up a burgeoning assortment of natural and synthetic insecticides – arsenicals, nicotine, petroleum oils, pyrethrum, sulfur, rotenone, hydrogen cyanide gas and cryolite. But World War II's chemical weapons developments truly heralded the age of innovation, so that more than half a century later, the commercial insecticide field is largely the

(continued on page 68)



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Insect Development

(continued from page 66)

domain of synthetic organic formulas. The first of these was DDT, still widely viewed as the most useful insecticide so far, but also perhaps the most notorious chemical of the 20th century, said Ware.

"More than 4 billion pounds of DDT were used throughout the world beginning in 1940 and ending essentially in 1973, when the EPA cancelled all uses," Ware said. Research and popular outcry mounted against DDT, which biologists found to be detrimental due to its high residual and toxicity to ecological food chains. Though DDT had initially been considered "a scientific lifesaver" (Swiss entomologist Paul Miller received a 1948 Nobel Prize for discovering the chemical as a means to curb malaria), Ware sug-

gested, its highly politicized fall was ultimately as spectacular as its rise. The commercial insecticide industry has been looking for a similar product ever since.

INSECTICIDES & THE LANDSCAPE.

Since even before DDT, the impetus to find the perfect insecticide for the non-agricultural market has long been one of simple living comfort, explained Jacquelyn Costa, spokesperson for Dow AgroSciences, Indianapolis, Ind. "It's just better to have a nice, green, lush and enjoyable landscape that adds visual appeal that *doesn't* attract bugs and bees," she pointed out. Aside from being pests, insects can also present health concerns not

only to plants, but to humans as well. Mosquitoes, ticks and biting flies, all of which thrive amid lush greenery, are chief among harmful insects as they can transmit several diseases.

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Check out our Online Extras section for a story on the history of pesticide development.

But homeowners have more on their minds. "Property owners want insecticides for an extended reason – not only to repel insects that could be pests or harmful to humans, but so [they're] also not attracting animals that eat bugs," Costa pointed out. Like insects, those secondary animals could also be harmful to humans and the landscape itself, destroying terrain or plant materials while searching for a good six-, eight- or 100-legged snack, she suggested.

THINGS TO CONSIDER. Because insects are a staple in ecological food chains, Costa said LCOs need to be aware of several chemical composition factors that may effect the environment. The volume of available infor-

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mation on pesticides can be daunting, but Marc McNulty, insecticide business manager, Bayer Environmental Science, Montvale, N.J., suggested LCOs may want to start with a look at four primary issues where compounds are regarded: knockdown, preventive capacity, toxicity and residual.

- **Knockdown** refers to a chemical's curative power, or its ability to affect an immediate deterrence or control an existing insect population. "In most cases, LCOs will get a call from a client saying, 'You know, we've got a problem out here with ants, and our lawn looks awful. Can you do something about it - now?'" McNulty said. "So the ability to immediately rid a landscape of pests can be really valuable to a company's services."

- **Preventive capacity** regards a formulation's ability to curb the accumulation of insects over the long term. Here, contractors should be aware that while many insecticides remain on the surface of

plants where sprayers or spreaders can reach, increasing numbers of products are arriving in the marketplace that offer systemic protection - that is, they inundate a plant's entire structure, making the plant, itself, poisonous to feeding insects. "Within the last 10 years or so, the development of insecticides that have not only a good knockdown effect but a high preventive capacity has revolutionized the [insecticide] industry," McNulty said. "Some products can offer preventive protection for up to a year, effectively replacing several three- or four-application chemicals."

He added that newer, high-prevention formulas free LCOs from being locked into a "short window of opportunity" for controlling insect populations. "With white grubs, for example, [professionals] would need to apply a chemical in early to mid-August just before the third instar to ensure the best curative effectiveness," he said. "Lawn technicians now can apply [preventive applica-

tions] anywhere between late April and August, and still have season-long control of grubs. Think of these chemicals as you might a preemergent herbicide."

- **Toxicity** suggests the magnitude of an active ingredient's danger or lethality to insects and other species. Here, experts point out that there are different assessments of toxicity: "Acute toxicity involves harmful effects in an organism through a single or short-term exposure. Chronic toxicity is the ability of a substance or mixture of substances to cause harmful effects over an extended period, usually upon repeated or continuous exposure sometimes lasting for the entire life of the exposed organism. Subchronic toxicity is the ability of the substance to cause effects for more than one year but less than the lifetime of the exposed organism," according to an EPA glossary.

- **Residual** connotes a pesticide's enduring presence and stability in the landscape. Residual is closely tied to preven-

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USE READER SERVICE #54

Insect Development

tive capacity and environmental toxicity, but it is different than both.

McNulty pointed out that some chemicals linger in the landscape to control latter-stage insects, but they have little effect on eggs. Thus, these products have little preventive capacity despite a high residual presence.

That's why LCOs need to pay more attention than ever to targeting their pest applications. "It is very possible that a chemical can have a high residual and low toxicity to the general environment, but still be highly effective against insects," McNulty pointed out. "Manufacturers conduct so much research into the biology of insects that chemicals are now developed to act as 'guided missiles,' if you will - being deadly to targeted [species], but presenting little danger to other animals and humans."

MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL. Fortunately, amid all the science and field jargon, LCOs aren't lost in a sea of information about insecticides and their effects on the environment.

As far as what LCOs need to know on a day-to-day basis, "the label is the law," suggested Frank Davido, pesticide incident response officer for the EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs. "All users essentially have to do, whether they're certified professionals or homeowners, is make sure they're using a product in strict adherence to its directions for use. It's no different for any user."

Davido said the EPA's Consumer Labeling Initiative (CLI), a network of regulators, manufacturers, regional government officials and environmental activists, has been instrumental in setting standards for insecticide labeling and frequently communicates with end users to ensure labels are understandable and easy to follow.

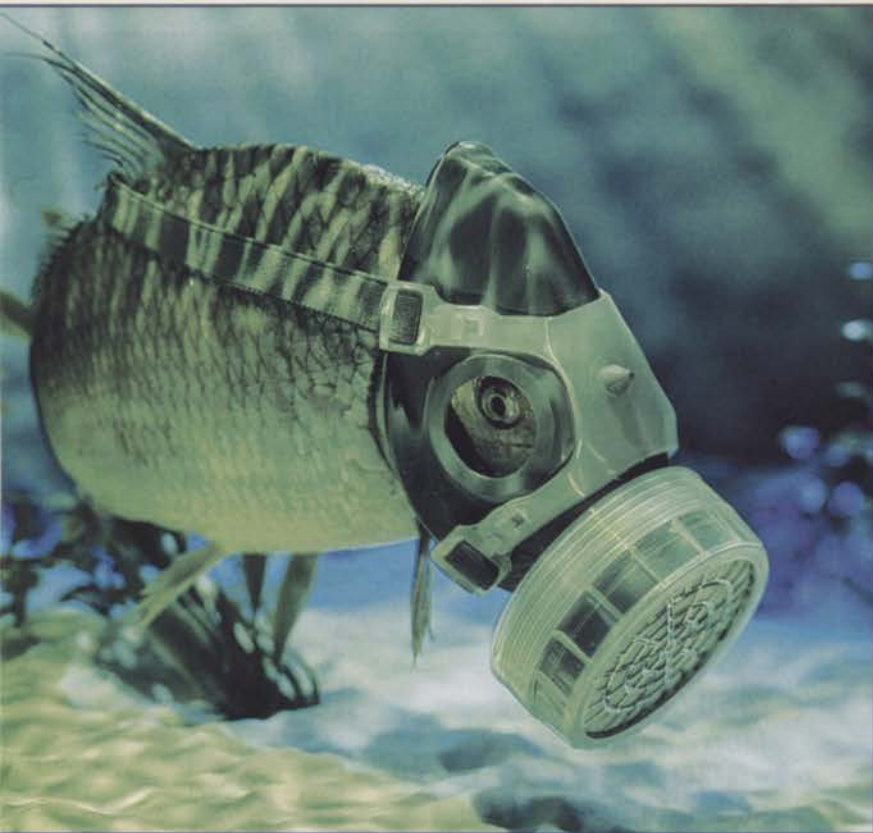
The CLI launched its multi-phase efforts in 1996 by polling pesticide users on ways to improve insecticide labeling. Since then, they have effected voluntary industry standardization that dictates that insecticide labels should

include: manufacturer and emergency care provider telephone numbers, common chemical names as opposed to scientific compound names, ingredient characteristics and toxicity levels, simple first aid procedures and proper storage and disposal information.

Despite all of these changes and challenges, LCOs and suppliers agree that the products exist to get the job done today, and they're usually better than ever. "I got out of pest control seven years ago because I was frustrated by the products and lack of control," recalled Ray Schad, lawn care manager, MaCall Services, Orlando, Fla. "I came back [in 2001] with renewed faith. Back then, they told me there were great new products coming out, and they finally have."

Schad continued, "We have to get renewed faith in the products that we have." **LL**

The author is Associate Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached via mvwnewski@lawnandlandscape.com.



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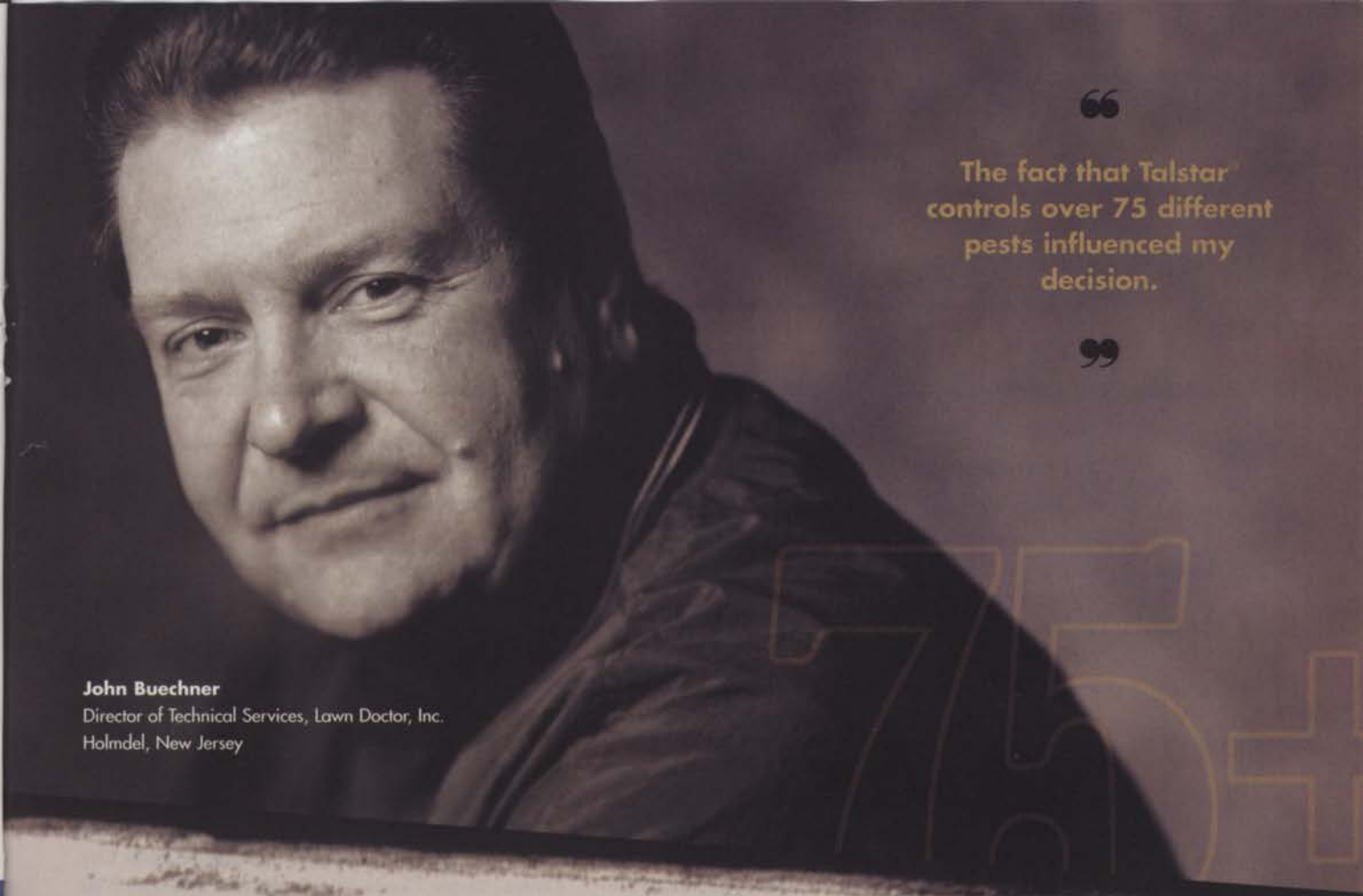
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USE READER SERVICE #56

Irrigation Run Times

by Ali Anderson

A handful of factors influence the irrigation needs of a lawn. Heed these words of watering wisdom to avoid turfgrass fatalities.

After careful installation of a lavish lawn and surrounding plant life, a contractor's work is far from complete. In fact, the lawn care process has only just begun. Specifically, water is a critical ingredient of successful lawn maintenance. Without vigilant watering, new turfgrass and accompanying foliage will surrender its root system to a shallow grave, burn up and die in the summer heat.

For most property owners, gone are the days of lugging a garden hose throughout each area of a yard. Instead, high-tech irrigation systems with heavy-duty sprinkler heads and control devices are available to keep turf and other vegetation in their prime.

But those systems must be programmed to fit the unique needs of each property. And that requires some watering wisdom on the part of the contractor.

WATER WATCH. A multiplicity of factors impact watering needs. Depending on geographic location, climate can have an immense effect on a property's needs. Given the variable conditions that come with diverse climates, there is no sure-fire formula for wise watering.

"It's a process of trial and errors," explained Brian Klimek, president, Greenworld-Irrigation, Monroe, N.Y. "Each property has its own 'formula of success.' We set



After installing an irrigation system, a tailor-made watering schedule is a must. Contractors should consider various factors when planning irrigation for a property. Photos: Hunter Industries (below), Rain Bird (above)

the irrigation timer for what we think should be a good watering schedule. Then we return to the property to fine tune the schedule."

Since each property presents a unique set of challenges, contractors must customize their irrigation approach with every job. And that individualized approach to irrigation often begins with a dialogue between the contractor and the property owner.

"We start with having a conversation with the client regarding their desire for end results," emphasized Jason Cupp, president, The Kincaide Company, Kansas City, Kansas. "Some clients have budgetary constraints but want to be protected from plant and turf loss, so the demands on a property are less in that scenario than an estate where the client has no budgetary constraints and desires for

(continued on page 74)

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USE READER SERVICE #57

Irrigation Run Times

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everything to be lush and green all the time."

Contractors should also include an analysis of the property's intended use in that dialogue with the customer, bringing up watering times and lengths, Cupp added.

And while printed materials can be helpful when determining a watering schedule, a sturdy sense of irrigation run times generally comes from daily encounters with customers, Klimek noted. Experience with various properties helps contractors get a grasp of what works and what does not.

"There is no substitute for experience," Klimek observed. "Knowing water requirements for different plant materials and soil intake rates is just the tip of the iceberg. You also have to calculate your watering schedule for sun and shade areas, have all watering completed by sunrise and, most of all, avoid water waste."

IRRIGATION FACTORS. While watering needs vary depending on climate and loca-

tion, there are some basics that contractors should be aware of in terms of soil type, drought conditions, sunlight, slopes and windy weather.

Soil types. The watering needs of a property depend on the type of soil present at the site. Specifically, clay-like soils require short watering cycles and sandy soils need longer watering periods, Klimek noted.

"Water passes easily through sandy soils, so water must be applied with greater frequency," explained Barbara Love, Love Irrigation, Ridgeland, Miss. "In the case of clay soil, water stays around longer, resulting in a greater usable holding capacity."

When in drought. Drought conditions impact irrigation plans as well, Klimek shared.

"Drought restrictions prevail in our area," he described. "This usually means that we have a short window of time to water all plant and turf material. This is where design comes into play."

A flawlessly designed system will use

water very efficiently with little waste, Klimek maintained. "A system with flaws in the design will require more time to water. In a drought, this is a no-no."

Such flaws could be missing sprinkler heads or the lack of head-to-head coverage.

Irrigating slopes. Watering sloped turfgrass areas can be tricky because of runoff possibilities. To start with, slopes must be zoned correctly, Klimek observed. "Incorrectly zoned sloped areas will result in poor watering," he said. "You need to zone all the heads together on top of a slope and all heads together on the bottom of a slope."

The sprinkler heads atop a slope will have a longer runtime than will those on the bottom, since water runs down the slope, Klimek explained.

Sunlight vs. shade. Contractors often consider the sunlight exposure of an area when designing an irrigation schedule, commented Scott Grimm, president, Agralawn,

(continued on page 76)



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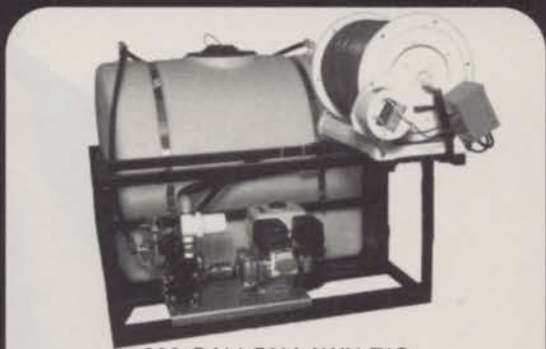


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Irrigation Run Times

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Lakeland, Fla.

"Actually, the watering needs are determined by the plant material chosen for the area, so a shady area could require the same water as a sunny area based on the needs of the plant material," Grimm noted. "You don't gauge watering needs based on whether the site is sunny vs. shady. You base it on the needs of the plants."

But beyond each plant's irrigation needs, there are some basic water scheduling tips when it comes to sunlight and shade.

"Shady areas do not need much water," Klimek outlined. "Too much water in these areas will result in the water not being absorbed by the ground. Therefore, the water will 'sit' on the surface. This is how most fungus is born in our area."

Wind and water. Contractors should also consider frequent windy conditions when designing an irrigation schedule.

"Wind dries up the surface," Grimm explained. "So, for sod that is especially thin,

the frequency of waterings may need to be increased for new sodding based on only two inches of planting depth. But, for larger plantings it may not affect them at all."

This relationship between wind and watering is simple, Klimek commented. "If there is no wind, then the system will water what it was designed to water," he noted. "If it is windy, the system will not water properly. All sprinkler systems that distribute water by 'spraying' it through the air are directly affected by the wind."

Contractors should check the irrigated properties to determine if wind is an influential factor, Klimek observed. If so, contractors can install "wind sensors." Such devices save water by preventing irrigation systems from operating when heavy winds are present.

"Dependence on the system to be **fully automatic** can be a **problem** also.

Meaning, a system needs to be evaluated **several times** during the **operating**

season, as **watering demands**, adjustments, timing, etc., can **change** as

the seasons do." — Jason Cupp

WHEN TO WATER. Knowing when to water is central to a successful irrigation schedule, Grimm shared. Contractors must factor time of day and time of year into the equation.

"Watering is crucial during all of the year," Grimm observed. "In the summer, the need is to keep it alive. In the winter, the need is to create good root systems."

However, springtime watering is especially crucial, Klimek shared.

"This is the time when you are applying chemicals and seeding and fertilizing the turf," he added. "You are also repairing any

(continued on page 78)



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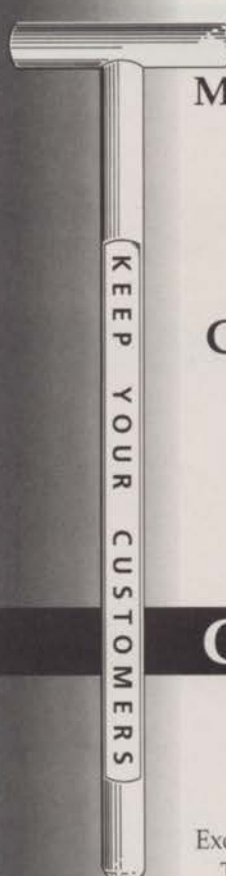
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Irrigation Run Times

(continued from page 76)

lawn damage from the winter. Also, spring flowers are in bloom. Irrigation is very important for all of these things."

In contrast, watering needs decrease drastically when fall and winter hit because temperatures drop.

"Except for in cases of fall seedings and some plantings, fall is when we decrease the days that we irrigate," Klimek described. "The temperature is cooling, and the days are getting shorter. There is no reason to water for long periods of time. All the plant material and turf are preparing for the winter."

Contractors should set irrigation schedules to run in the early hours of the morning, Cupp urged. Doing so allows the water to

"burn" off rather than sit on the turf or landscape beds.

"Watering at night is a major problem in our market," he described. "It increases substantially the possibility of a fungus."

IRRIGATION CHECK-UPS. Once an irrigation schedule is in place, a contractor's work is still not complete. Follow-up visits to the property are a must to keep the lawn alive and well.

"Dependence on the system to be fully automatic can be a problem also," Cupp reminded. "Meaning, a system needs to be evaluated several times during the operating season, as watering demands, adjustments, tim-

ing, etc., can change as the seasons do."

For areas that are constantly changing, contractors should check watering needs on a regular basis. "If there is an abundance of plant material this in an area with a unique climate, then you would need to schedule weekly visits to the account," Klimek stated. This is the only way to ensure proper watering practices."

Cupp recommended monthly visits to those properties that may have changing irrigation needs. **LL**

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

When correctly designed, installed and maintained, an irrigation system can help minimize the amount of water used, while still keeping a lawn looking healthy. These water conservation tips can keep contractors and property owners from wasting water and losing money.

DON'T DROWN – Avoid overwatering lawns and gardens. Much of the water is never absorbed anyway. Some water is lost to runoff when applied too rapidly, and some water evaporates from exposed, unmulched soil. But the greatest waste of water comes from applying too much, too often. Instead of watering for 20 minutes straight, water four times for 5 minutes each time, with a 15-minute break between each session. This will allow water to soak in, minimizing runoff.

WATCH THE CLOCK – Watering in the evening isn't a good idea because leaf surfaces can remain wet overnight, which means an open invitation for fungal diseases. Midday watering is better for plants, but bad for water bills because of water loss through evaporation. Try to water between 5 a.m. and 10 a.m., when the sun is low, winds are calm and temperatures are cool. Under these conditions, leaf surfaces have a chance to dry out during the day, reducing the chance of fungal diseases and conserving water because of reduced evaporation. Use low-angle nozzles in areas where wind is a factor.

PLAY THE ZONE – The goal of any irrigation system is to give plants a sufficient amount of water without waste. Divide the property into irrigation zones so grass can be watered separately and more frequently than groundcovers, shrubs and trees. Both sprinkler and drip irrigation can be incorporated to achieve efficient use of water.

RAISE THE BLADE – Trim grass at a higher mower setting to shade roots from sunlight and encourage deeper roots.

WATER ONLY THINGS THAT GROW – If the property has an underground sprinkler system, make sure the sprin-

kler heads are adjusted properly to avoid watering sidewalks and driveways. Also, a properly adjusted sprinkler head should spray large droplets of water instead of a fog of fine mist, which is more susceptible to evaporation and wind drift.

CONSIDER DRIPPING – When it comes to watering individual trees, flowerbeds, potted containers or other non-grassy areas, consider direct application of water to roots using low volume "drip" emitters. By applying water slowly to soil, drip irrigation is an efficient way to water. The water flows under low pressure through emitters, bubblers or spray heads placed at each plant. Water applied by drip irrigation has little chance of waste through evaporation or runoff and will prevent unwanted weeds from growing.

GET YOUR HEADS CHECKED – Since lawns should be watered in the early morning hours, a problem may not be discovered until it is too late. Once a month, turn on the irrigation system and make sure everything is working properly. A clogged head or a torn line can wreak havoc on a landscape and its accompanying water bill.

YOU CAN NEVER HAVE TOO MUCH MULCH – Mulch, a layer of non-living material covering the soil surface around plants, conserves water by significantly reducing moisture evaporation from the soil. Mulch also reduces weed populations, prevents soil compaction and keeps soil temperatures more moderate. Mulches can be organic materials such as pine bark, compost and woodchips; or inorganic materials, such as lava rock, limestone or permeable plastic, but not sheet plastic because soil needs to breathe.

BE RAIN SMART – Adjust the irrigation system as the seasons and weather change. Or better yet, install a shut-off device that automatically detects rain. They are inexpensive and enable property owners to take advantage of rain water without paying for it. – *Rain Bird*

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USE READER SERVICE #63

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Pricing Installation

by Nicole Wisniewski

When pricing design/build services, contractors have to factor in client needs.

Design/build services, such as patio installations, can be challenging to price for the assurance of profit. Photo: Gillman-Rose Landscape Architects and Contractors

FACTORING Fees

I hate to be the one to tell you this, but your clients obsessively watch Home & Garden Television (HGTV).

They keep the tube keyed in, hoping to absorb even the slightest bit of garden wisdom. On *From Martha's Garden*, the infamous Martha Stewart plops a few plants in a container and voila – an instant hanging garden with vibrant, thriving plants that look like they've been there for years. Or *Gardening by the Yard's* Paul James divides his 2-acre property into smaller, manageable garden plots, each with its own theme and by the end of the 30-minute adventure, the project glows, as if a magic wand couldn't have renovated that yard any faster. Oh, and let's not forget Rebecca Kolls' *Rebecca's Garden*, where she transforms a basic terra cotta pot and saucer into a classy garden birdbath or converts random everyday objects into an outdoor wind chime.

Your clients watch these shows – *Weekend Warriors*, *Landscape Smart*, *Landscapers' Challenge*, *Curb Appeal* – over and over again and then believe that they can do it themselves. After all, if it's on TV and the hosts make it look so simple, it should be easy, right?

Wrong. It takes a professional to makeover a landscape into one that fits clients' needs. And professionals aren't free.

Design/build landscape contractors provide clients with new visions for their landscapes – fresh slates where through communication, clients' ideas are expressed in their gardens. But translating words to paper takes years of experience, horticultural knowledge and hours of project planning.

"People think they are instant experts once they watch HGTV," explained George Kotalic, president, Kotalic Landscaping, Huntington, W. Va. "Clients are

(continued on page 82)

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Pricing Installation

(continued from page 80)

so used to going out and starting a project without a plan. They have one idea and do one part of their yard and a couple of years go by and then they get another idea and implement that somewhere else in the yard and then another trendy idea pops up and they do that in yet another place. All clients' ideas don't always come together. But if the design has cohesiveness – whether they are doing just a front yard or a master plan, it's our job to blend all of their ideas into one. That's where our value comes into play."

Pricing design/build work takes experience and a knowledge of the whole project from concept to completion – it's tough enough, but getting clients to appreciate landscape design and development's worth makes the job even more challenging. "Value comes from being able to educate people," Kotalic explained. "People wouldn't think about building their homes without plans – why would they do their landscape that way?"

Today, more landscape contractors charge design fees for their creative drawings and ideas. Photo: Gillman-Rose Landscape Architects and Contractors

FIRST THING'S FIRST. A design concept isn't just a fancy drawing, Kotalic pointed out. It's a facilitation of clients' wants and needs into one functional plan. "It's not just about generating paperwork – it's about making people's thoughts come alive and showing them how they can utilize their landscapes."

"Design is all about the basic, time-tested principles of space organization, line, form and balance, and respecting and understanding nature," added Jeff Korhan, president, Treemendous, Plainfield, Ill.

But, unfortunately, the current market isn't supporting what landscape design services are worth, Korhan pointed out. Most



design/build contractors don't make the money they are putting into designs currently through design fees. "We charge as much as we can with setting a minimum," he said. "It gets better every year. We've gone from no fees to a few hundred dollars in fees. Last year, we had a \$750 minimum. Part of the reason for the fee is to keep clients focused and get compensated for our work, experience and the expertise we're putting into it. It still doesn't pay for all of what we're doing."

Like other landscape contractors, Korhan

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USE READER SERVICE #66

Pricing Installation

(continued from page 82)

said he used to credit the design fee to installation costs, but the company stopped doing that because "we feel that devalues the most valuable part of the design process," he explained.

People value what they pay for, maintained David Himel, Gillman-Rose Landscape Architects and Contractors, Houston, Texas. Gillman-Rose charges a \$75 hourly design rate for landscape design services, Himel said. The company's projects range from as low as \$5,000 to as high as \$750,000, which includes costs for all hardscape and planting elements. "As far as design hours go, for average projects, which run about \$200,000 total, I would estimate we invest about 80 to 100 hours from the concept drawing stage until we complete the construction drawings," Himel explained. "Project management hours are additional."

Gilman-Rose's conceptual design charges are based on the hourly rate multiplied by the number of hours the company estimates

(continued on page 86)

Most design/build contractors expect clients to pay for projects in pieces vs. in one big chunk. "It's a lot harder to pay for a project all at once; it's much easier to pay in increments," explained George Kotalic, president, Kotalic Landscaping, Huntington, W. Va. Plus, receiving some form of down payment shows a client's intent to continue a project.

The pay phases start with the design itself. When shown or discussing preliminary drawings, clients are expected to pay half the total design costs and the remainder when the final design is finished at Kotalic Landscaping and Tremendous, Plainfield, Ill.

After that, Kotalic breaks projects out into easy phases and Tremendous President Jeff Korhan sets payment targets for various project points.

"We set milestones," Korhan explained. "After the design is finished, we accept a small percentage down for the project, which is the third meeting with the client. Then by the fourth meeting, they put up to 50 percent down. Then I might say we want another 25 percent when the hardscaping is finished. Near the end of the payment, we're waiting on only 10 or 20 percent of the payment instead of 50 percent."

The key is not waiting for a large payment chunk after a project is finished because clients are upset over a very small matter, such as waiting on the addition of a last minute shrub, Korhan pointed out. "The idea is to have the client finance his own project," he said. "In the beginning of a project, you at least want all of your costs covered."

Also, proper wording helps clients understand various payment options and programs, Korhan advised. Instead of using the word "contract," he uses "agreement," and "milestones" replace "due dates." "Clients are buying what's unique about us," he said. "These unique words make us different and aren't the familiar words clients have grown to hate over the years." — Nicole Wisniewski

Pay in Pieces

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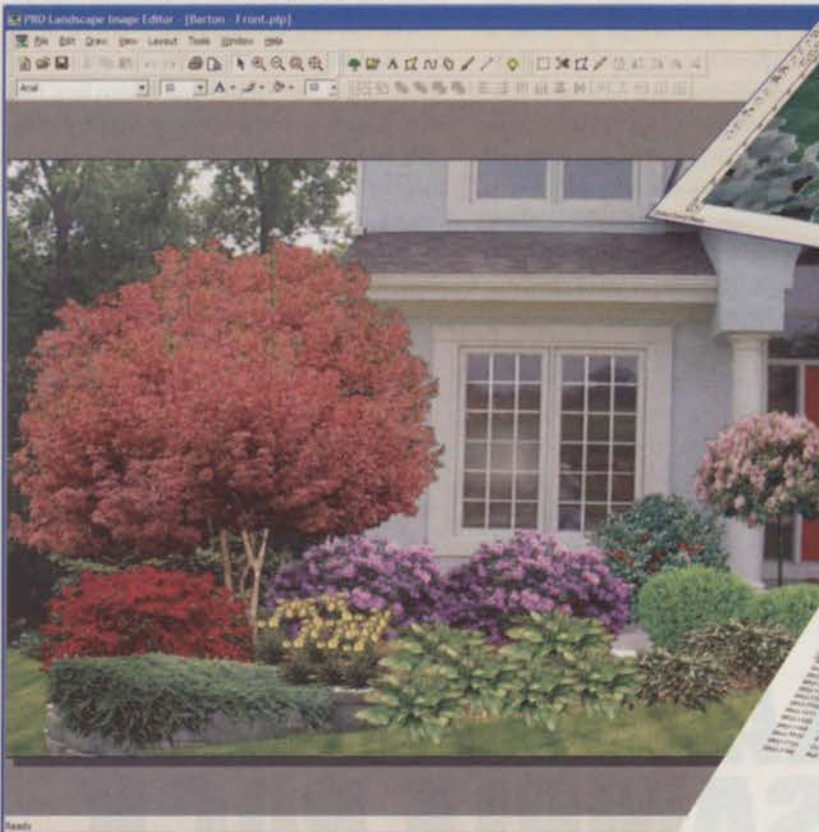
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6000	Lighting	100	1.00	100.00
7000	Planters	100	1.00	100.00
8000	Benches	100	1.00	100.00
9000	Tables	100	1.00	100.00
10000	Stools	100	1.00	100.00
11000	Chairs	100	1.00	100.00
12000	Tables	100	1.00	100.00
13000	Chairs	100	1.00	100.00
14000	Tables	100	1.00	100.00
15000	Chairs	100	1.00	100.00
16000	Tables	100	1.00	100.00
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USE READER SERVICE #69

What Are You Waiting For?

Pricing Installation

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its staff will utilize preparing the design. The fee is presented as an hourly cost and capped not to exceed a certain dollar amount, depending on the project's size and depth. "A large portion of our clients are first time users of a landscape architect and this tends to make them more comfortable financially knowing that they are not signing an open-ended contract for design services," Himel said.

"Once we have client approval on the concept designs, we present an additional design proposal for any construction documents that are needed for the project," Himel continued. "These drawings can vary from project to project, based on each project's design features and complexities, and they are prepared to enable us to properly construct the project, effectively bid the work, to obtain any subcontractors and for submittal to local authorities who oversee the project permitting. Our fees for this stage of the work are estimated to cost between 3 to 5 percent of the overall construction budget,

and are charged out at our hourly rate. In our design proposal, we do inform the clients of the hours that are estimated for the project's individual requirements."

Not only does Kotalic charge an average of \$1,000 to \$2,000 for design fees (and a designer will spend an average of six to eight hours on a typical job), based on project size, complexity, elevation, etc., but he also charges an initial consultation fee of \$35 to go to clients' homes, meet with them and offer design suggestions. Kotalic started charging the fee a few years ago when he started to get burnt out with having appointments every hour on the hour each Saturday and the late afternoon client was the only one that really fit in as one of Kotalic's niche customers.

"By the time I got to that client, I wasn't as enthusiastic because I'd spent the whole day meeting with people who weren't potential clients," Kotalic said. "So the \$35 qualifies clients. We don't make money on the meetings – most of the time we're giving

people \$500 worth of advice for \$35, but this fee eliminates the curiosity seekers and when people know they have to pay an initial consultation fee and still want to go through with the meeting, I know they are serious about wanting design/build services."

And the more design/build contractors educate clients on initial and design fees, the less clients grumble. "We've decided that the responsibility is ours to create value behind the design and the fee," Korhan explained. "Our challenge is to communicate it right away and if they don't understand it, then that's our fault. If they took the time to come down here to my office and they don't understand why they have to pay a design fee, then I have failed at communication."

CONSTRUCTION CHARGES. After figuring out how much designs are worth, contractors have to estimate installation costs and put proposals together for clients. Each

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USE READER SERVICE #72

Pricing Installation

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landscape contractor has a different yet profitable approach to pricing these services.

To recover overhead expenses and generate a profit, Gilman-Rose calculates an average man-hour cost from historical data. "We have developed an estimation program that estimates the man-hours that a new project requires," Himel said. "We consistently maintain this software by tweaking it with new cost data and actual man-hour

(continued on page 119)

Concerning landscape design/build projects, there are a lot of client meetings. How does one keep them straight? Organization.

Jeff Korhan, president, Tremendous, Plainfield, Ill., has four meetings with clients before design agreements are signed and projects are scheduled. He calls them the communication meeting, the collaboration meeting, the creative meeting and the commitment meeting.

"We try to have them each one week apart when we can control the pace," he said. "We also set commitments at every meeting – or what we call deliverables. At the first meeting, it's signing the design agreement after talking about many different ideas they have. At the second meeting, it's signing off on a budget – which then happens again at every meeting following this one. They sign a letter of intent at the third meeting and a contract at the fourth meeting."

In addition to having benchmarks, proper communication is vital during client meetings. During initial complimentary meetings, David Himel, Gillman-Rose Landscape Architects and Contractors, Houston, Texas, tries to explain design services and associated fees to potential clients right away. "We then follow up the meeting with a written explanation of the services we are proposing and also include conceptual construction costs that are based on the work scope understood at the initial meeting. By including these, we find that we increase the likelihood of retaining clients who are serious about proceeding with construction and helps to guide us in refining a budget as we design."

And when it comes to house calls, most contractors travel first and then expect clients to travel for the next meeting. For the first meeting, Korhan visits a client's home to take a look at their landscape and get a general picture of their needs and wants. By the second meeting, clients are expected to come to the Tremendous office with some collected materials or photos of ideas they like.

George Kotalic, president, Kotalic Landscaping, Huntington, W. Va., does this in a similar manner. "First, we meet at their site and then we go back and take pictures of the project and some measurements, recording any site challenges," he said. "Then they meet at our studio where we have all the pictures of their project taken at different angles and some two-dimensional and three-dimensional images with some preliminary sketches to share our thoughts." "There's a lot of time involved in these meetings, so maximizing it helps. "Time is money," Kotalic explained. "I provide six or eight references of people they can contact to help smooth the process. We also screen people well so we're not wasting our time by charging a consultation fee." — **Nicole Wisniewski**

Meeting Management



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USE READER SERVICE #73

Landscape Fountains

by Lauren Spiers

Landscape fountains are steady sellers that can add both good looks and good water quality to commercial waterscapes.

Making WAVES

Take yourself out of contractor mode for a moment and imagine you're just another customer looking for a nice home or office in an upscale part of town.

On your periodic journeys through different areas you discover two neighborhoods where you would like to move your family or business. In both areas, the buildings to choose from are almost identical. Both neighborhoods have great schools and are conveniently located near shopping and restaurants. Each area also has a large, well-kept retention pond with park benches allowing you to enjoy the aquatic serenity and draw in passers-by.

But one of those ponds has a fountain.

As a consumer, a fountain – or lack, thereof – can be a deal-breaker. Something about the fountain's ability to induce waves in the pond, its refreshing mist, and the water sounds that screen out noise from passing cars make them and their surrounding areas more inviting.

Now remind yourself you are a landscape or irrigation contractor and consider the benefits to both yourself and your clients if that fountain installation came from your company. Many contractors already know

that landscape fountains are popular, attractive and often functional installations from which both they and their customers can reap the rewards.

FORMAL FUNCTION. For the most part, landscape fountains are designed for use in commercial areas such as retention basins on corporate campuses or ponds in city parks. Many contractors also work with developers to install fountains in similar areas of residential developments, although they are far less frequently installed in individual residences. The industry's golf course segment also is a prominent end-user of landscape fountains.

Depending on the situation, there are several considerations contractors must make when choosing what type of fountain to install.

"There are three reasons to pick a fountain," commented Steve Springer, president, Oase Pumps, Camarillo, Calif. "One is aesthetics vs. aeration and that's really the first thing anybody looks for, and people have a tendency to use aerating fountains. The second reason to pick a fountain is the cost factor which ties into the third consideration of whether to use a fixed or floating fountain."

Beginning with aesthetics vs. aeration, many clients don't realize that the fountain they plan on

(continued on page 92)



By installing fountains in residential developments or commercial office parks, contractors can both beautify clients' properties and generate extra revenue.

Photos: AquaMaster (above), Air-O-Lator (left)

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Landscape Fountains

(continued from page 90)

using for display purposes also can be a highly functional piece of equipment. In retention basins or ponds that collect water run-off and contaminates, clients and contractors have the option of installing aerating fountains, which use their jets of water to induce pond oxygenation.

"A reason to use this type of equipment is if you have a problem with the pond – primarily with algae – that needs to be controlled," noted Doug Cramer, president, Air-O-Lator, Kansas City, Mo. Excess carbon dioxide that builds up in the water can trigger growth of algae that like all other plants takes in carbon dioxide and gives off oxygen. Adding oxygen into the pond keeps excess algae from moving in.

Jerry Goldberg explained the necessity of aeration. "Algae is an anaerobic matter and proliferates in non-oxygen environments," noted the vice president of sales and marketing, AquaMaster, Kiel, Wis. "To fix this, we put in a floating fountain aerator which has two ultimate goals. First and foremost, it raises the dissolved oxygen level and gets that body of water healthy again. Then, of course, you have the added aesthetic value."

Essentially, aerating fountains force water droplets into the air where they pull in oxygen molecules and bring that oxygen back down to the pond. This functionality is useful, but not necessary across the board. Most manufacturers also produce display fountains for areas that just need a little sprucing up. Of course, since display fountains put water into the air just like aerating fountains, both types should ultimately perform the same service, right? Wrong.

"The big difference between display fountains and aerating fountains is the volume," Cramer shared. "The more gallons of water you put into the atmosphere, the more oxygen will be transferred." The type of pump the fountain uses plays a large part in this distinction. For instance, Cramer mentioned that centrifugal pump systems, which use impellers rather than propellers to push water through the nozzle, make pretty fountains but are inefficient aerators.

"A 1-horsepower aerating fountain [can move] about 1,000 gallons per minute (gpm)," Cramer noted. "Conversely, the same horsepower with a centrifugal pump may only be 90 gpm depending on the nozzle

that's being used. That's really a dramatic drop, even though it's using the same amount of horsepower."

DIMENSIONS & DOLLARS. After determining whether an aerating or display fountain is the proper type for a given installation, Springer's suggested that contractors consider the fountain's cost as well as whether the equipment is fixed or floating. For the most part, this is directly proportional to the size fountain the client requests.

Floating fountains are the most popular style for use in the landscaping industry simply because they are significantly less expensive than fixed fountains. Fixed fountains, which rest on platforms and are hard-plumbed into their locations, have much more sophisticated control panels and nozzle systems and are most often seen in amusement parks and the like. For systems like these, the control panel alone can cost as much as \$15,000, Springer shared.

Floating fountains, on the other hand, can run as little as \$130 list price to upwards of \$25,000 depending on the manufacturer. The corresponding scale for fountain size is between ½ horsepower with a spray as small as 6 feet high by 4 feet wide, and 25 horsepower, which can shoot a jet of water 100 feet in the air or higher.

Contractors mentioned that their clients usually request fountains in the \$2,500 to \$5,000 range – generally around 2 horsepower. Adding in the costs of labor and routine maintenance, a contractor can make a pretty penny on a fountain installation.

"Prices can range anywhere from \$8,000 up to \$35,000 or more per fountain," commented Bob Pankonin, irrigation manager, A Touch of Green, Lockport, Ill. "This is why larger organizations use them as opposed to residential jobs. It's a good investment for those groups though. A lot of subdivisions use them for selling purposes – they catch people's eyes and invite them in."

Because fountain size and cost do tend to go hand-in-hand, contractors should calculate the area and depth of the pond or lake before installation for a couple of reasons. The first reason is to ensure that they're using the proper size fountain in the first place.

"The best ratio that we've figured is to use a pump with anywhere from 800 to 1,000

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Contractors and landscape fountain manufacturers know that the bigger a fountain display – especially if it includes lighting – the higher its cost. Because of this, Steve Springer, president, Oase Pumps, Camarillo, Calif., warned contractors not to put their clients into "sticker shock" when proposing fountain designs.


"Know your customer and try to anticipate their expectations before you present them with a number," Springer advised. He explained that, because places like amusement parks will expect to have their fountains large and lighted, they also would expect a high price tag. However, commercial property managers and developers may not know how extravagant their options can be and, therefore, won't be expecting a Las Vegas-style display or expense.

"If you say to the client, 'I can give you a \$20,000 fountain that's 200 feet tall,' he'll turn off immediately – that's sticker shock," Springer described. By approaching the customer with an inexpensive proposal and leaving lighting out of the equation initially, the results are much better.

"For a business in particular, they're not going to worry about lights, so if you throw a number at them like \$10,000 where half of it is lighting, you'll leave without a sale," he emphasized, "Instead, if you say to a business or developer, 'This is what it would cost for a 6-foot by 4-foot fountain and that's only going to be for the daytime,' then they'll ask about nighttime options and what bigger sizes are available. It's more of a soft sell." – **Lauren Spiers**

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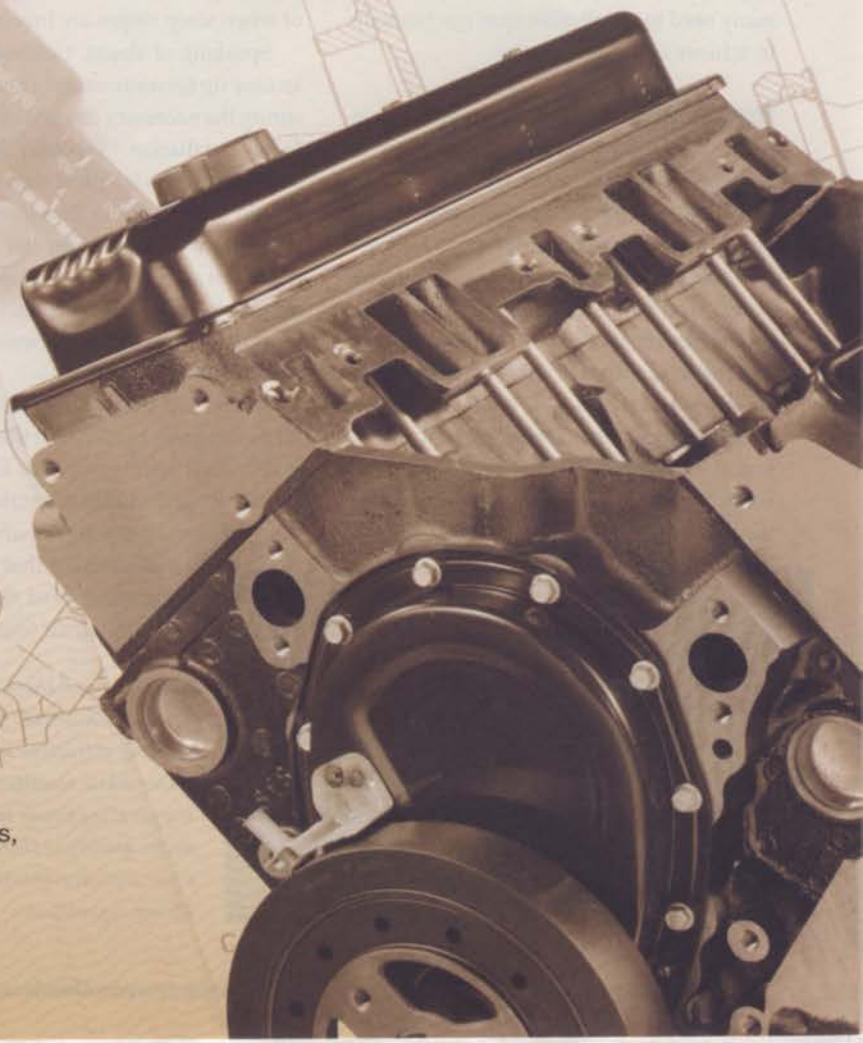
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Landscape Fountains

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gpm per surface acre of water," Cramer reasoned. "That's usually about 1 horsepower per surface acre and for smaller ponds, and ½ horsepower can handle anything from one-tenth of an acre up to ½ acre. That's somewhere between 350 and 500 gpm."

Goldberg made an additional observation. "When you're confirming the particulars of a body of water, depth is important," he explained. "Every manufacturer has different minimum depths, but the deeper the pond, the better. You may want to consider a deep-water intake system to pull water from greater depths so you're not pulling debris from the surface." For the most part, fountain assemblies have a minimum depth requirement of 18 inches. If the pond is shallower than that, the fountain may end up moving the same water over and over, warming the water and risking an increase in algae formation. Deep water kits require a more significant depth of 10 or more feet to work properly.

Manufacturers also reminded that, in some situations – such as long, skinny lakes or ponds, or those that curve – contractors many need to install more than one fountain to achieve sufficient aeration.

TIPS & TRICKS. With the right fountain ready to go, contractors can move on to installation. The process is not terribly difficult but for contractors working with developers, there can be certain steps to follow.

"Installation is really a process," Pankonin noted. "You have to have a separate drop box for the electric off of the main power source and that's done by a licensed electrician. It's almost like a set of stages. They come in and do their part and then we're able to go in and install everything from the timer out to the water." Even if a fountain isn't going into the subdivision immediately, Pankonin and

If the best option for a pond or lake is to enhance it with an aerating fountain, there are several details to consider. Jerry Goldberg, vice president of marketing and sales, AquaMaster, Kiel, Wis., offered the following list of requirements to address before beginning installation.

- *Pond description.* Factors such as surface area, shape and depth are vital when determining the number of [fountains] and horsepower required to aerate the space.
- *Water analysis.* This covers poor water quality symptoms that may be present such as stratification, odor and excessive algae. Considering the water source also may be important.
- *Technical information.* Know your potential electrical source, including any buried cable sizes present if substantial distance is involved.
- *Ultimate goal.* Are floating fountain aesthetics or water quality the main objective? Does your greens committee object to seeing anything in view in the pond? What is the proposed budget? – **Lauren Spiers**

Aeration Education

Cramer both recommended that contractors suggest the future use of fountains to make work easier down the road. This way, builders can run any necessary lines during development as opposed to installing extra electrical sources or plumbing after the fact.

Most contractors agree that the average installation job requires two crewmembers, though a third set of hands is sometimes necessary for installations in very large lakes or when steep slopes are involved.

Speaking of slopes, Goldberg provided an easy tip for contractors to use when measuring the necessary amount of cable to run for an installation. "Typically, when you're determining the length of those cables, you should allow a 15- to 20-percent factor for slope [from the floor of the pond]. If a pond is 200 feet across, you'd need about 100 feet of cable to get it centered, plus 15 to 20 extra feet to bring it up out of the water and to the electrical box."

After installation, contractors and manufacturers agreed that the equipment is relatively hands-off, save for the occasional clogged nozzle or intake screen, or the odd burned-out light bulb. Goldberg recommended that contractors thoroughly read their owners' manuals since fountain prob-

Aerating fountains provide the best of both worlds for clients by creating attractive sprays of water while simultaneously oxygenating ponds to relieve water quality problems like algae and stratification.

Photo: AquaMaster

lems like these are easy to identify and fix. Otherwise, a quick troubleshooting call to the distributor or manufacturer can clear up lingering questions and routine maintenance is equally effective.

"For maintenance, usually in the winter-time, they're pulled out and cleaned," Pankonin commented. "Each unit is serviced and if it needs anything a work order is put through to make sure it's approved and taken care of. We make sure that none of the breakers are tripping, that all the lights are working and every year the motor casings are taken off and cleaned, re-oiled, and new seals are installed."

Pankonin added that, more often than not, clients buy into maintenance packages that include a one-time fee for removal of the fountain in the winter, cleaning and checking over, and reinstallation in the spring. Outside of maintenance packages, most contractors charge clients a flat rate for a service call, plus an hourly rate and the cost of parts if necessary.

"Water features as a whole is growing faster than any other market segment right now in our industry," Springer affirmed. "It's primarily because of the baby boomer generation coming along and wanting to spend as much time in their own backyard as they do going out." Certainly, business is booming for contractors who know what options are available for landscape fountains, and with the right information at hand, the opportunities are endless. **□**

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



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Commercial Mower Specialist

by Bob West

The new head of BASF's specialty products division offers some strong opinions on the industry's future.

CONVERSATION

with

Stephen

BRIGGS



The specialty pesticide business is ever changing. New government regulations, global mergers and the struggling agricultural market are just a couple of the outside forces shaping pesticide suppliers' future.

At the same time, what used to be small, niche markets continue growing. Lawn care, structural pest control and vegetative management are three examples of pesticide users that never could get on these big chemical companies' radar screens. But that's not the case today.

Whereas the agricultural market has sagged in recent years, lawn care has grown. And thanks to mergers on top of mergers, turf and ornamental product sales now represent big enough numbers to garner attention in strategic meetings.

But what does this all mean for the average lawn care company? In many cases, these changes won't have any impact at all. But lawn care professionals can also expect to see new products available to them, thanks to these mergers. And they can likely expect to see pesticide suppliers offering new programs, marketing initiatives and partnership opportunities in an attempt to win business.

Stephen Briggs is the new director of the specialty products department for BASF. In an exclusive interview with *Lawn & Landscape*, Briggs talked about the challenges facing his company and his competitors, as well as sharing some thoughts on trends to look out for in the future.

LAWN & LANDSCAPE (L&L): What are BASF's strengths today?

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STEPHEN BRIGGS (SB): Our specialty products department is composed of three segments – turf and ornamental, pest control and vegetative management/forestry. So we have three distinct business groups here. From my standpoint and from the whole specialty standpoint, this gives us a broad basis of stable products in the market. From a product and people perspective, that means we have the ability to mix and match talents and crosstrain people, which gives us the opportunity to really have strong departments in these three distinct areas. I make the analogy that this is like diversifying your investment portfolio so that the whole department is not at jeopardy if one segment is down.

If you zero in on turf and ornamental, I truly believe our two core strengths today and tomorrow will be our product offerings and our people. One of my focal points is to make customer relationships a really strong part of who we are.

(L&L): What makes BASF different from other pesticide suppliers today?

(SB): I'm hoping our customers will see from us a solutions-based approach where we can handle different situations, providing good information, product recommendations and business solutions.

We consider our primary customers distributors because they have the ability to take our message to the end users.

(L&L) What are the biggest challenges facing specialty pesticide suppliers today?

(SB): Profitability would be one, especially given our tough overall agricultural environment. A lot of these companies are influenced by the agricultural environment, so their suffering can end up in the specialty products department as well.

As I look at the lawn care industry, I see our end users trying to offer different services, but that's tough to do if you can't get rewarded profitably, so there's a squeeze there. A lot of them are trying to tie in a total pest control or pest management service for consumers. I see lawn care operators interested in pest control and vice versa – as they develop the relationships with customers they're adding the products and expertise so they can deliver better customer service. That just makes sense.

(L&L): How much more consolidation will we see in the market?

(SB): I think you'll continue to see some of that, although the number of players is fewer. But if it makes sense corporately to get together, then it will continue to happen.

I think what we will see more of in the future is marketing alliances among suppliers where we can match core strengths for a win-win situation. Each of our companies have core strengths and areas we'd like to get into, but in today's environment you can't spend the money it takes to build strength, so it's better to match up and move forward together. I'll make the analogy that when I was growing up, you were either a Ford family, a Chevrolet family, or a Dodge/Chrysler family and so forth. Now you've got each of these companies making parts for each other to share resources, and I think chemical companies are heading that way.

(L&L): What are your short-term projections for the lawn care industry?

(SB): We put the industry's past and future growth in the 2-percent range, so we see continued growth that is steady. It all comes back to the economy – will it explode into a massive recovery or continue to struggle?

(L&L): What are the keys to BASF's future?

(SB): My charge to our team is to get closer to the customer. We want to be more customer-focused and viewed as a company they can easily do business with. Another thing from the professional side is that we have a couple of fungicides that will be registered in 2003, and then we will truly be a company with a portfolio of stable fungicides, herbicides and insecticides to take care of a lot of product needs in the market. We've been more of an herbicide-focused company in the past with pendimethalin, Image and Basagran, but we want to be a total solutions provider to our customers.

(L&L): BASF has built much of its success in the turf market on one product – pendimethalin. What are the pros and cons of such a situation?

(SB): We're viewed by many people as a pendimethalin company, dating back to American Cyanamid, but Amdro is the No. 1 fire ant bait, Image is the No. 1 nutsedge product, Drive and Basagran are both leading products in their sectors – we have a number of segment-leading products in turf, but pendimethalin has dominated the

On...**GENERIC PRODUCTS**

"[Suppliers resisting post-patent products] will either get on the train or get run over. By 2006, 80 percent of lawn care products will be post-patent." – Stephen Briggs

preemergence market for so long that people identify BASF with pendimethalin. It's a good problem to have.

No one shoots at us for our performance. When people are marketing against the color of your molecule, then that tells you just how well the Pendulum product really works.

This high performance standard allows us to stay in the industry, work on relationships and gives us a new base to pull new chemistries into the portfolio and introduce new products to the market more quickly than we could otherwise.

(L&L): What is your timeline for bringing new products to the turf and ornamental market?

(SB): The big hunt is on to get a new insecticide in turf, particularly a grub insecticide. That would be a big winner, and we've recently reinvested a lot of dollars in our insect discovery unit – they wake up every day thinking about grub materials for us. We have a lot of things in development. That's probably the big unmet need from our perspective.

From an herbicide standpoint, with the incorporation of TopPro, we're very happy with that portfolio.

(L&L): A lot of attention is being paid to the increasing prevalence of generic products, and BASF has recently folded the TopPro division back into BASF more closely. Why did you take this step with TopPro? What do you see as the future of generic products in the specialty market?

(SB): Two reasons for moving it in – doing so made sense from an efficiency standpoint. But the main reason is that the customers asked for it, and we're listening to them. It's a great move for us, particularly in turf because TopPro had some great post-patent chemistries that fill holes for us and our customers, and points us in the direction of being a more solutions-based company. TopPro's post-patent chemistries are now part of our broader portfolio, and they are receiving greater support as part of our family.

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Lighting Your Designs for High Impact & Enhancing Lighting for Plant Health, *David Osborn, Nightscaping.* Topics ranging from the use of lighting for creative enhancement, to practical aspects such as plant health and human safety issues.

Floral Programs, *Matthew Gardner, The Wright Gardner.* Considering adding a floral program to your company's menu of services? Find out how it's done from the business nuts and bolts to purchasing and designing.

Being Your Customer's Best Resource, *Cynthia Peterson and McRae Anderson, McCaren Designs.* A visual presentation of profit centers that are compatible with your core business.

The Plant Is Dead—I Think: Troubleshooting & Problem Solving for Techs and Trainers, *Vicky Cate, Evergreen Interiors.* Cut your replacements and service calls from unhappy clients & empower your staff to meet day-to-day challenges.

Patio Scaping, *Ruben Flores, Visionscapes.* Includes patio container technical topics as well as a slide show highlighting fresh ideas for patioscaping and award winning designs. Spanish option.

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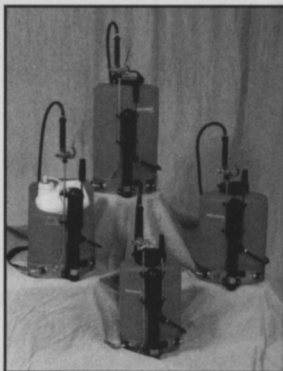
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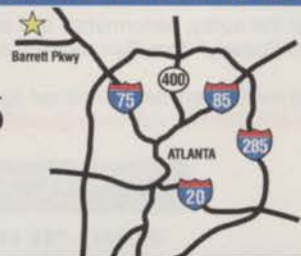


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Products

Glenmac Harley Modular Power Box Rake

- Modular design allows operator to choose or upgrade from straight mount or manual angle mount to fully hydraulic angle capability
- All models offer heavy-duty main

frames, pivot plates and long-lasting roller bearings

- Features adjustable Rhino-Hide barrier
- Includes dual independently adjustable gauge wheels
- Reversible endplates are easily removable for windrowing or reverse box raking
- Pure carbide proprietary teeth ensure efficient moisture retention and germination in seedbed sub-base

Circle 208 on reader service form

Scag CD-ROM Catalog

- Interactive catalog includes recent video footage, showing products in action, including new models
- Features a convenient electronic catalog that shows product features, specifications and accessories for each model

Circle 209 on reader service form

Gal-V Drop Spreader

- Multi-purpose, four-season drop spreader
- Allows for one-person operation to reduce labor and material costs
- Adjustable flow control
- Built-in agitator with filter grate



- Available in five widths, ranging from 40 to 72 inches
- Use it to spread sand, salt or calcium during the winter or to top dress with loam or sand in the summer

Circle 210 on reader service form



Presenting The New Line of Gravely Intermediate Zero-Turn Mowers

Zero in on your lawn with the **NEW** line of Gravely intermediate zero turn mowers. Every feature is engineered with the user in mind—from the short frame designed to fit easily on a trailer, to the deluxe adjustable-suspension seat, maintenance-free Gravely® XL spindles™, exclusive hydraulic deck height adjustment and affordable rollover protection system.

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SS8030 TURF TRACKER

- The original! Tried and proven since 1983.
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Uncontrollable weeds can kill your image.

Image® 70 DG herbicide provides powerful postemergent control of more than 30 previously uncontrollable weeds.* It actually starves targeted winter and summer weeds to death. Yet **Image® 70 DG** is tolerant to most established warm-season grasses as well as many landscape ornamentals and ground covers.

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And now, **Image® 70 DG** comes in a new dispersible granule formulation for ultimate performance and convenience. For more information, call **1-800-545-9525**, or visit www.turffacts.com. Always read and follow label directions.

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We make it better.*

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USE READER SERVICE #87

Products

Echo SHR-210 Backpack Sprayer

- Gas-powered sprayer covers more ground with commercial-duty power and lasting performance in an easy-to-carry sprayer unit
- Equipped with a powerful commercial-grade, dual-ring piston, two-stroke 21.2-cc engine
- Large-capacity fuel tank allows extends run times and allows for less fuel refills
- Heavy-duty, 5-gallon capacity tank is equipped with a recirculating pump, ensuring contents in the tank remain mixed without building excess pressure
- Covers ground quickly at a rate of 1.9 gallons per minute in a controlled, precise stream

Circle 211 on reader service form



Hunter ICR Long-range Remote Control

- Allows operational access to irrigation systems within a two-mile radius
- Designed to interface with all Hunter controllers with a SmartPort connection
- Allows contractors to quickly access irrigation systems of large commercial and residential sites
- Accepts up to 128 different programmable security codes so that any number of ICR receivers can be installed within the same area
- Eliminates need to travel back and forth to a controller in order to activate a system
- Features large LCD display and easy push-button operation

Circle 212 on reader service form

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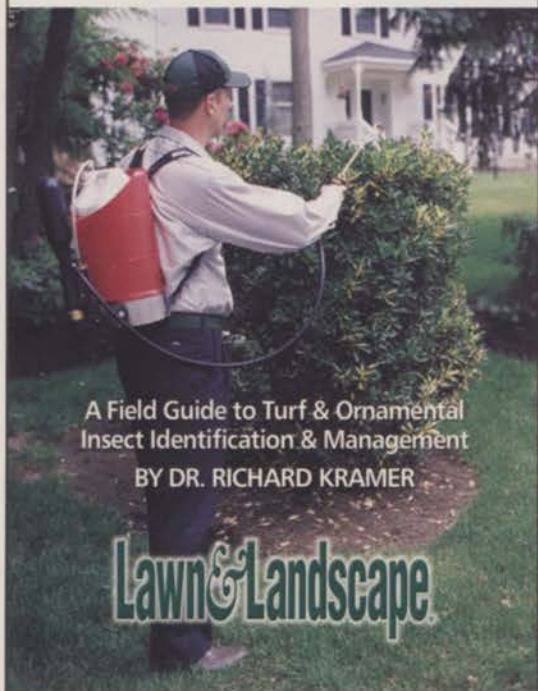
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Technician's Handbook



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BY DR. RICHARD KRAMER

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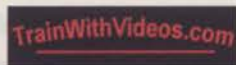
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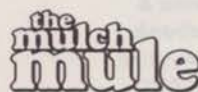
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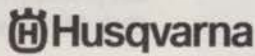
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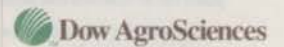
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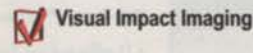
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Scag Clam-Shell Grass Catcher

• Allows users to conveniently dump the high-capacity hopper without leaving their seats



• Compact, vertical mount blower takes up less space

than the discharge chute

• Auto-sweep arm engages every time the dump lever is pulled, clearing the hopper of debris

• Dump lever can be set on the left or right side

Circle 213 on reader service form

PBI/Gordon Blade Herbicide

• Used primarily in the South to control bahiagrass, ryegrass, foxtail and many other grass and broadleaf weeds in warm season turf

• Effective at low rates, ranging from 0.125 to 1 dry ounce of product per acre, but has low toxicity to all animals

• Can be used in the lawn care market for broadleaf weed control in St. Augustinegrass turf, which has a high degree of tolerance to metasulfuron

• Packaged in 2-ounce bottles with a measuring device

Circle 214 on reader service form

RedMax Single-sided Hedge Trimmer

• Equipped with 25.4-cc Komatsu Zenoah's Strato-Charged engine

• Engine meets CARB II and EPA Phase 2 standards without a catalytic converter

• Owners realize a 34 percent fuel savings, 73 percent fewer exhaust emissions and 5 percent less weight over traditional RedMax engines

• Single-sided, 30-inch dual reciprocating blades are at an ergonomic 1.62-inch pitch

• Features blade speed of approximately 3.85 feet per second

• Grips are positioned for operator comfort and productivity

Circle 215 on reader service form

HERE'S YOUR TICKET TO RIDE!

Attach your LESCO push spreader to your ZTR walk behind mower and turn it into a riding electric broadcast spreader in minutes. Compatible with all commercial lawn mowers.

- Turn your ZTR or walk behind into a riding spreader in a breeze
- Double your fertilization Profits with half the labor
- Convert your LESCO push spreader to a 12-Volt riding spreader in seconds
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- Protected JABSCO motor
- Installs in a snap and receives LESCO commercial spreaders



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Quik-Spreder™ includes:

- 15 gallon tank and frame
- Agitation
- FloJet mod 2100 70 PSI motor and pump
- Pressure gage
- Adjustable pressure regulation
- 16-foot boomless nozzle
- 30-foot hose with adjustable wand
- Servicable strainer with sight glass

Ideal for turf, shrubs, and trees up to 30 feet

- **½ the time**
- **½ the labor**
- **2x the profit**



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Quik-Spreder™ Attachment

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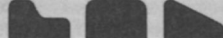
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Friday, August 8, 2003
Northern New Jersey

Friday, August 15, 2003
Orlando

Friday, August 22, 2003
Ft. Lauderdale

Friday, September 5, 2003
Greensboro

Tuesday, September 9, 2003
Toronto

Friday, September 12, 2003
Atlanta

Friday, September 19, 2003
St. Louis

Friday, September 26, 2003
Chicago

Friday, October 3, 2003
Dallas

Seminar Time:
8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Registration
Opens at 7:30 a.m.

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TALL FESCUE

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- Features improved disease resistance, fine leaf texture and a high endophyte level
- Dark green genetic color
- Exhibits excellent drought and extreme heat tolerance

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- Long-life, factory-installed lithium battery, designed to operate for up to 10 years
- Resistant to the hazards associated with lightning and power surges
- Waterproof design is submersible in up to six feet of water
- Six watering programs available per day
- Adapters available for use on a wide variety of valves
- Includes days-of-the-week, odd/even and interval scheduling options

Circle 217 on reader service form



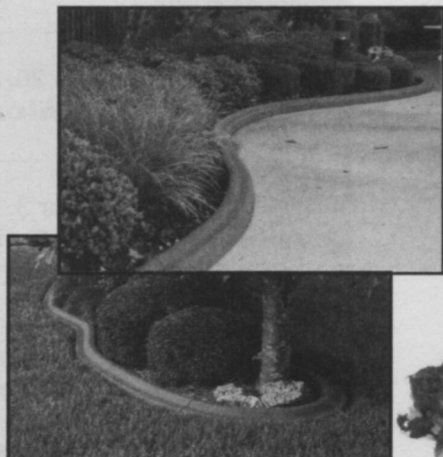
Toolite Shovel

- Blade is filled with strategically-placed holes to allow material to easily release from the shovel

- Weighs less than a similar-sized conventional shovel
- Despite the holes in the blade, little material seeps through

Circle 218 on reader service form

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Get On Your Horse Partner!



Howdy partner, this is your green industry marketing guru, Marty Grunder writing to tell you to get up on your horse and ride on down to Cincinnati, Ohio for the Lawn & Landscape Sales & Marketing Bonanza featuring me, Marty Grunder.

Why should you come? You should come to our Sales & Marketing Bonanza because I'm going to direct the largest, the best, and the most entertaining conference solely focused on sales and marketing ever presented in the Green Industry. I have been personally putting on seminars for the last seven years and I know how to teach in a way that is effective and fun. Chances are your competitors has been to one of my events and you've heard how beneficial they are.

If you like to catch up on your sleep at out-of-town events, this conference is not for you. At my seminars we work from sun-up till sun down. I believe in giving folks their money's worth and with the power of *Lawn & Landscape* magazine and its website, I'm sure we'll sell this bad boy out.

Anyway, let me make a few more points in case you aren't sold yet. The other presenters I have coming to this event are A-1, top grade. They include sales and marketing experts and one of my very best students who will share what he has learned from my seminars on how to grow his business. Last year he grew from \$1.3 million to \$2.1 million!

You will learn what to do when the other guy's price is lower, how to hire the right sales person for your company and 57 fun, cheap and different marketing ideas for under \$5,000. You will also learn how to write a sales letter that gets a response and how to make sure your marketing efforts can be easily managed, and mulch, mulch, more. **DON'T MISS THIS EVENT!**

Get on your horse and come see us in July!

Cordially,

Marty Grunder

PS - If you don't come, I only hope that your chief competition does not!

PPS - We should have our heads examined for only charging \$495 for this event!



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CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Thursday, July 24, 2003

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 9:00 – 12:00 p.m. | Facility Tour
Groundmasters, Inc. |
| 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. | Registration |
| 2:00 – 2:30 p.m. | Welcome Cowboys: Introductions, Ice Break |
| 2:30 – 4:00 p.m. | Target Practice: Aim Your Message at the
Watch Your Results Explode
<i>Speaker: Marty Grunder, Marty Grunder!</i> |
| 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. | Putting The Gitty Up Into Sales
<i>Speaker: Ed Eppley, Dale Carnegie</i> |
| 5:00 – 6:00 p.m. | Welcome Reception |

Friday, July 25, 2003

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 7:00 – 8:00 a.m. | Breakfast |
| 8:00 – 9:00 a.m. | Team Presentations & Assignments |
| 9:00 – 10:30 a.m. | 11-Step Selling Process, Part I
<i>Speaker: Marty Grunder, Marty Grunder!</i> |
| 10:30 – 10:45 a.m. | Break |
| 10:45 – 12:00 p.m. | 11-Step Selling Process, Part II
<i>Speaker: Marty Grunder, Marty Grunder!</i> |
| 12:00 – 1:30 p.m. | Group Networking Lunch/Team Photo |
| 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. | How To Hire The Right Sales Person
<i>Speaker: Marty Grunder, Marty Grunder!</i> |
| 3:30 – 3:45 p.m. | Break |
| 3:45 – 4:30 p.m. | Here's What I've Done with Marty's Mar
<i>Speaker: Matt Caruso, Decra-Scape</i> |

Saturday, July 26, 2003

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 7:00 – 8:00 a.m. | Breakfast |
| 8:00 – 9:00 a.m. | Team Presentations |
| 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. | What To Do When The Other Guy's Price
<i>Speaker: James Bleech, Leadership Deve</i> |
| 11:00 – 12:00 p.m. | 57 Fun, Cheap, & Different Marketing Id
<i>Speaker: Marty Grunder, Marty Grunder!</i> |
| 12:00 – 12:30 p.m. | Closing Ceremonies |

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All cancellations must be made in writing and faxed and mailed – voice mails and e-mails will not be accepted. A full refund will be issued if the cancellation notice is received by July 10, 2003 business days prior to the seminar. No refunds will be issued after that day or for no shows. Advance payment is required for registration. Attendees can notify *Lawn & Landscape* at any time that another individual will attend the conference in their place. All registrations postmarked by July 10, 2003 days prior to event will be acknowledged by mail. *Lawn & Landscape* reserves the right to cancel a program due to insufficient registration or instructor emergency. A full refund of registration fees will be issued if this occurs.

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Symbiot reviews potential members on a case by case basis – prequalification prevents performance issues later, St. John pointed out, noting that interested contractors must have insurance, licensing, and marketplace recognition. Symbiot calls customer references to validate applications. And so far, this method keeps that top 1 percent in, and those who might mar the organization's reputation out.

"We are normally dealing with the market leaders – high-end, high-service, high-quality, well-respected companies that employ well-trained and knowledgeable individuals who deliver service," St. John said. "So, 90 percent of the [quality] battle is taken care of for us."

Though, there is always that 10 percent, which Symbiot hopes to manage with a quality audit program that allows clients to score service providers. An electronic invoicing system allows contractors to attach digital photographs to bills, so customers can see enhancement work and projects and make sure properties meet their expectations.

Beyond this "system" St. John said Symbiot

will address issues, from sales to routing and scheduling, that can improve members' efficiencies in a national account policies and procedures manual. "We take it from start to finish in the national sales equation, from the lead generation to the sale to the contract to service implementation and quality control," he listed.

Meanwhile, St. John reflects on the organization's accomplishments so far – and where its organic model will take it.

"We have definitely validated a couple of key points," he outlined. "No. 1, we can build and operate property service networks. Second, we can market and sell national contracts back to these networks. The third validation that is about to take place is that Symbiot can go outside the green industry and build a network."

Pest control is in the works, under the direction of Larry Spruill – a who's who with 28 years experience with Orkin. "That is the key to building these networks," St. John identified. "You go find the industry experts – the industry-recognized veterans. We had

those people pulled together for our landscape and interior networks."

Tree care could be next – there are many other vertical service opportunities, Matt recognized. And once the Symbiot model is even stronger, it can be stamped. "Because of the size of our business in terms of footprints in who we represent, you'll see some interesting alliances between us and property managers, which will open up the doors for new sales," Matt predicted, not revealing specifics on who or when. For now, Symbiot will internalize most of its energy, spending it on those who nurture the network.

"You've got the sea anemone and the clown fish, the way the bumble bee spreads pollen to flowers – symbiosis from small cellular organisms to large animals," he related, digressing into the core of Symbiot's business model – and why it's so different. "It's a virtuous cycle." **LL**

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

(continued from page 88)

usage from previous projects related to specific tasks in the software. Not all crew man-hours are billable to clients, and by tracking these non-billable hours, we are better able to determine how much of our labor costs are 'overhead.'"

The company's man-hour rates range from \$30 to \$35 per hour. "To arrive at this rate, we utilize data from our accounting software to break out all of our overhead expenses and man-hours that were not directly billable to a project from the previous six months," Himel explained. "This could include man-hours that are incurred on a rainy day when crews will perform tasks around the shop or maintenance to their vehicles as well as the time allocated to training seminars or safety meetings. Each project is given a target man-hour projection that is based on the project cost estimate. Hours that are over those projections fall into the overhead or non-billable account. The total non-billable hours from the previous time period are then divided into the total of the overhead expenses to give us an hourly rate that will recover our overhead expenses. To

that hourly rate, we add our profit percentage during each job's costing process. And we try to recalculate our man-hour rate every six months using actual overhead expenses from the previous quarters to make sure it's accurate."

Himel said the company's design and construction services are priced out separately as two revenue sources. Gilman-Rose generates project management fees via a fixed percentage markup that is based on the total of the project's subcontracted costs. "We do not add any additional markup on services that are provided by our in-house crews, but only to the costs of outside contractors," he said. "The markup percentage is based on our overhead/profit calculations that are done twice yearly."

Kotalic, on the other hand, breaks every project out into phases. Clients have the option to purchase the entire installation, but when presented with phases, Kotalic said customers don't feel as much pressure. When faced with budgetary constraints, clients can pick and choose project phases for the initial construction and then do more later.

Pricing Installation

Also, projects are easier to price in smaller, more manageable phases, Kotalic said. "Any time I break a large job down into smaller parts, I feel like I can price it more accurately," he commented. "What I do is walk through the job in my mind – I go through the beginning when we're loading trucks and getting equipment ready to clearing the area and possibly renting equipment. I add a labor burden for worker's compensation and unemployment. If gas goes up, I implement a gas increase into our trucking fee. It's a lengthy, detailed process that I do by hand. You can't just add a fudge factor or double the price and pray that you're OK."

In the beginning, mistakes are inevitable, but with years of experience, estimation improves. Kotalic assured, "You do what you can to eliminate mistakes in the beginning, like measure site areas, take notice of site difficulties and contact utility companies, so you know what you're dealing with." **LL**

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

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HELP WANTED

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT/DESIGNER

We are seeking a creative and highly self motivated Landscape Architect/Designer to join our busy Landscape and Irrigation Company located in southern Delaware.

Ideal candidate will have 3-5 years' professional experience. You must have strong and demonstrable skills in design, graphics, contract administration, technical knowledge and communication. Organizational skills and team concepts are a must.

You should have experience and a strong interest in quality design, community liaison and possess an enthusiasm for your chosen profession.

We offer full benefits package and year round employment. This will be an exciting, excellent career opportunity for the right individual.

For immediate consideration please fax your current resume to 302/645/5109 or e-mail sposato@ce.net.

url address: www.sposatolandscap.com

HELP WANTED

Great Career Opportunity in the
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Wholesale Irrigation & Nursery Distributor seeking managers for multi-state expansion. Minimum 3 years experience in Landscape/Irrigation management or an Associate's Degree required. We offer a competitive salary and benefits package. Fax your resume and salary history to **Stovall & Co., Inc.** at 770/921-6167 Attn: Director of Irrigation.

HELP WANTED

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3. You understand that a service company is all about helping solve a problem - not finding a fault.
4. You have 3-5 years of experience in the Green Industry.

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NaturaLawn of America is a privately held 15-year-old company with 55 operations in 24 states. We expect to have 150 locations in 35 states within the next 4-5 years.

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Fax your resume in strict confidence to NaturaLawn of America at 301/846-0320 or e-mail us at resume@nl-amer.com.

Visit us at www.nl-amer.com

HELP WANTED

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

Wheat's Lawn & Custom Landscape, a premiere residential landscape firm in Northern Virginia since 1978, has positions available for management and sales. Interested candidates should want to surpass own personal expectations and have a desire to work with a motivated and successful team. Wheat's offers:

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Wheat's Lawn & Custom Landscape, Inc.

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Fax: 703/-641-4792

Email: wheatlcl@aol.com

MANAGEMENT OPORTUNITY

James Martin Associates, Inc., serving Chicagoland's northern suburbs, seeks experienced landscape management professional to join management group. Requires 10 years industry experience, business and computer literacy, and strong communication skills. Outstanding compensation package based on qualifications; benefits include ESOP. For confidential consideration, contact:

James P. Martin, CLP, ASLA

JAMES MARTIN ASSOCIATES, INC.

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Phone 847/634-1660 Fax 847/634-8298

E-mail: j.martin@jamesmartinassociates.com

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.

LANDSCAPE SALES

Washington D.C. area, award winning commercial company seeks experienced sales rep. Proven track record and knowledge of the Washington D.C./No. Va./Baltimore market preferred. Excellent salary, profit sharing, benefits, co. vehicle. Please fax resumes to our HR Dept. @ 301/390-5600 or e-mail at szwolinski@completelandscapingsservice.com.

HELP WANTED

VISTA PROFESSIONAL OUTDOOR LIGHTING

Factory Trainer

Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting, the leader in landscape lighting and factory support (located in Simi Valley, Calif.) 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, Calif. 93063 or Fax: 805/527-6830.

HELP WANTED

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.

HELP WANTED

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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or fax: 561/793-7025

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Gardener/landscaper needed for private estate in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Experience in ornamental horticulture required. Four-year college degree and relocation required. Responsibilities include maintaining outdoor landscapes which include trees, shrubs, and beds; preparing budgets and tracking expenditures; soliciting bids and proposals; hiring and supervising part-time help and vendors. Hands-on position. Competitive salary + benefits including single living accommodations on property and two meals per day. Send resume and letter stating your interest in the position to:

Joy Reed Belt Search Consultants, Inc.

PO Box 54410

Oklahoma City, Okla. 73154

Fax: 405/842-6357

E-mail: ExecutiveRecruiter@joyreedbelt.com

LANDSCAPE OPERATIONS

Marders of Bridgehampton seeks a Director of Operations to oversee Production Division. Must have solid experience in the operations of a landscape dept. Previous management, training/customer service/sales exp. Required. Mentor Project Managers and crews of approximately 70, oversee scheduling and installation of upscale landscapes. Outstanding benefits: medical, dental, bonus, 401K. Salary commensurate w/exp. Fax resume and salary requirements in confidence to Marders, Attn: Ms. Fallon @ 631/537-7023 or e-mail to efallon@marders.com. Visit our website at www.marders.com.

HELP WANTED

Marders is a 27-year-old established, up-scale retail store and landscape company in Bridgehampton, NY (east end of Long Island), committed to using only organic products. We have the following career opportunities available for the right person:

Tree/Shrub Buyer - Must have prior experience in purchasing a wide variety of trees/shrubs. Frequent travel required.

Organic Educator/Soil Doctor - Needed to initiate detailed training program for staff on organic techniques, applications, soil amendments and testing. Previous experience in soil science, horticulture and lawn/turf care, as well as training and educating in organic products.

Arborist - Act as Tree and Shrub expert on staff. Ability to diagnose insects and diseases on trees/shrubs. Previous PHC and supervisory experience necessary.

We are looking for talented individuals excited by and dedicated to horticulture with a focus on doing the right thing for the customer. We are interested in professionals who are highly motivated, consider themselves self-starter and who seek opportunity within a dynamic company. We offer a Sign-On Bonus, relocation expenses, an excellent benefit package and competitive salaries. Fax resume with salary requirements to: Marders, Attn: Ms. Fallon, 631/537-7023 or e-mail: efallon@marders.com. Visit our website @ www.marders.com.

HELP WANTED

Landscape Architect/Designer

Washington D.C. area's premier landscape company is seeking applications for a Landscape Architect/Landscape Designer. Top salary and benefits package to the right candidate. Fax resumes to 301/805-1876 attn: Peter.

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Conversation

(continued from page 98)

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Wanted

WANTED

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

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

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

Warehousing

WAREHOUSING

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

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WEB DESIGNERS

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

We'd all love to have five new products a year, but the reality is we won't. We need to rely on portfolio products that have been workhorses and continue to provide performance. Just because products are post-patent doesn't mean they don't have a great technological fit in the market. The end user knows that. What a great opportunity for us to have this wide-ranging portfolio of products. Some of our major competitors say that these dollars don't go to research and development, but I guarantee you that a certain percent of every dollar in BASF sales goes back for continued research, whether it comes from post-patent products or patent-protected products.

(L&L): Many pesticide suppliers seem to be resisting the idea of these post-patent or generic products.

(SB): Well, they'll either get on the train or they'll get on the train tracks and get run over. I'll predict that by 2005 or 2006, 80 percent of the lawn care products will be post patent. If they still deliver economical solutions for end users, they'll be purchased in the market, so why not have the opportunity to offer these products to customers?

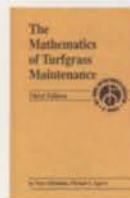
(L&L): What do you wish lawn care operators understood better about the pesticide development process?

(SB): A lot of lawn professionals think they understand the compound development process, but the reality is producing new chemistries can be challenging. It costs millions of dollars and several years to get a product through the pipeline and into the market. And, the success rate is miniscule when it comes to getting product from the lab or our greenhouses to the lawn care industry. All of those things can consume a lot of time and dollars, but we're committed to that research. Our research and development team is working feverishly and concentrating on the specialty products, whereas companies traditionally trickle their agriculture products into the specialty product areas. Over the last six to eight years, BASF selected dedicated people to find directive-based products, which specifically fill unmet needs within our specialty markets.

These products are all regulated the same way - they've all been tested, proven, re-tested and reproven. **LL**

Lawn & Landscape

TECHNICAL RESOURCE CENTER



The Mathematics of Turfgrass Maintenance, Third Ed.
by Nick Christians and Michael L. Agnew



Picture Perfect: Mowing Techniques for Lawns, Landscapes and Sports
by David Mellor

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www.lawnandlandscape.com

How We Do It

Building a Facility at Signature Landscape

Let's face it – we're all slobs. From the mountains of mulch to piles of salt, wrecked trailers to tons of yard waste, landscape contractors are lousy tenants.

If you are tired of paying rent to storage or warehouse space and want to seize current low interest rate opportunities, you might be ready to build your own facility, which is the route we took at Signature Landscape.

The first step was to put a five-year business plan together. This helped us avoid the mistake of building something we would outgrow in a short period of time. We studied our growth over the past several years and projected our employee and truck requirements out for five years. This gave us a rough idea of our facility needs for office space, shop area and parking for not only our fleet, but also our employees' vehicles.

The next critical step is to do a detailed travel time study because business location is vital. We got out a map and put pins in all our customers' locations. Then we found a location central to our client base to build on. The cost of land is important, but we found that travel time is much more critical. We also made sure we calculated our drive time at the hourly rates we charge clients vs. making the mistake of using a base hourly wage rate.

After determining a location based on travel time, we did research on local zoning laws. We checked with our city hall to learn zoning lingo and what fit our business.

Then we found a trustworthy realtor who helped with zoning laws and worked with us to begin locating land. Our realtor showed me a great piece of property during our first visit. I eventually purchased that property after spending a year looking at land all over the county.

Designing our dream facility was the most fun part of

the process. We worked out our blueprint with an architect experienced with the design and construction of metal buildings. My first step in the design process was to look at other landscape facilities. I also visited several contractors in our area and asked them what they liked and disliked about their facilities. In terms of building design, we incorporated the following features:

- A separate parking and entrance for administrative staff to keep mud and noise to a minimum in the office
- A dedicated classroom with lots of space for training and company meetings
- A break room with plenty of bulletin board space and vending machines separate from the shop area
- Account manager offices with tile floors adjacent to the break room to make communication with crew leaders efficient and convenient
- 20-foot-wide overhead doors for easy shop access
- High shop ceilings – 28 feet – for future expansion

An integral part of the facility design is the layout of the outdoor storage area. Our main focus was on how to have multiple crews move in and out of our lot efficiently. We made cutouts of trucks, trailers and equipment to scale and moved them around the plan. In regards to the lot design, we incorporated the following ideas:

- A separate entrance and exit for one-way traffic flow
- Fuel tanks and dumpster located just inside the gate, so crews fuel equipment and clean out trucks when returning for the day
- A plant holding area adjacent to a small, deep pond
- Marked and numbered parking for trucks and trailers
- A large salt storage area

Once we had our design ready, we found a builder with a good reputation and started the project.

Building your own facility is not for everyone. It's a time-consuming process with lots of challenges. Our process took two years from start to finish. Also, a custom-built facility is unique and not as marketable as your typical office warehouse. The resale value of our facility, for example, is lower than the construction and land purchase costs. However, the true value of any facility is in its ability to support your efforts to manage your business efficiently. With that in mind, a custom-built shop may be a great investment for you. – Bill Gordon

The author is president of Signature Landscape, Olathe, Kan., and can be reached at 913/829-8181 or at bill@signaturekc.com.

5 KEYS TO *Building a New Shop*

1. Compose a five-year growth plan.
2. Research your job travel time to dictate location.
3. Learn local zoning laws.
4. Let both your needs and imagination fuel the blueprinting process.
5. Work with reputable realtors and builders.



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