

March 2004

Lawn & Landscape

Become a Maintenance Efficiency Expert

Business Basics: Water Management

Issue Focus: Pesticides & Fertilizers

**Tony Bertotti,
Bertotti Landscaping**

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LAST**

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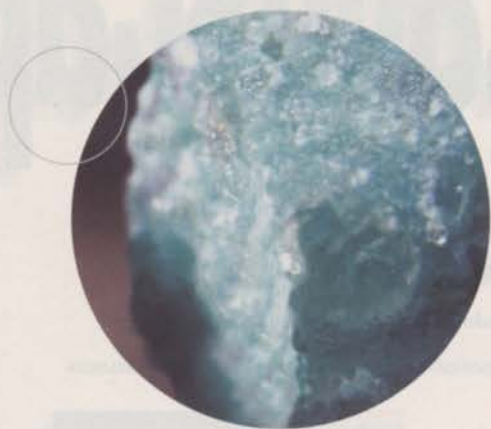


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Lawn & Landscape Online offers subscribers two weekly electronic newsletters – one, sent each Monday, features industry news coverage, educational resources and promotional offers, and the other, sent Thursdays, offers detailed information about the latest lawn care products and equipment. Subscribe to these weekly Web resources today by e-mailing Internet editor Ali Anderson at aanderson@lawnandlandscape.com.



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Best of the Web

Check out the new "Best of Web" section of Lawn & Landscape on page 66. This Web-related article takes a look at a variety of time-saving approaches to cemetery maintenance recently discussed on our message board.

Lawn & Landscape ONLINE Extras

ONLINE EXTRAS

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

- This month, visit Lawn & Landscape Online to read tips for determining the caliper of large trees before transplanting them.
- Check our March Online Extras section for information on how to educate clients about the proper use of their irrigation controllers.
- Look online to find out why Gary Wittstock spells pond maintenance "P.F.B.O.G."
- Visit Lawn & Landscape Online to find more advice for planting and maintaining featured colorful annuals.

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WHO'S TO BLAME



Get Some Great Ideas

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No matter what business problems you are facing – finding new customers, generating cash flow, paying your 2003 taxes or finding good seasonal help – the solution will always start as an idea. Now, the really great thing about ideas is that friends, spouses, employees, customers and even strangers offer them for free. (Consultants ideas are so valuable that they get to charge for them.)

The problem with ideas is that they often get shot down before they've had a chance to take flight. You'll know an idea is biting the dust when you hear things like this: "That won't work in my community." "We tried that once." And my personal favorite, "That's really a great idea, BUT ..."

There's no closed season on shooting down ideas, and we can do it alone or as part of a group. If you are the company owner or a boss, it can even be fun to shoot down ideas – it makes you feel strong and sound decisive.

Now, many ideas certainly deserve to be shot down – but doing so on full automatic means we're dismissing some of the very business ideas we desperately need.

Allow me to share a four-step process I was taught a few years ago that has helped me become a lot more sensitive to hearing good ideas. This process works best in a group setting, so try it with a group of your employees. All you need is a room with a flip chart and some time for brainstorming.

Step one is to focus on one or more specific problems, or on a problem area – like closing more prospects. The more specific the problem, the more specific the ideas can be to solve it. So pick one or two problems for your group to solve and tell them ahead of time that you will be holding a brainstorming session on the specific topic and that they should come prepared with their ideas.

Step two is to lay out the rules at the start of the brainstorming meeting. The rules are that each problem or problem area will be considered one topic at a time. Everyone can throw out as many ideas as they have – just the idea, no commentary, sales pitches, complaints or anything else. One person talks at a time with no interrup-

tions, and to generate maximum contribution go around the table asking for ideas. This session is dedicated to generating ideas, and each idea will be written down on a flip chart no matter how dumb it may sound. Anyone who criticizes an idea, or comments on it in any way will be penalized. The penalty process I learned was being required to drop a dollar bill into a large glass bowl in the center of the table we all sat around (the money went for group eats and drinks). Plan to be surprised at how fast you and others start to make contributions. The brainstorming session ends when no one has any more ideas to suggest. Take all the flip chart pages and tape them along the walls.

Step three is a group discussion and evaluation of each idea generated in the brainstorming session. This is the time for critical discussion, but only one person should speak at a time with no interruptions. Ideas can now be clarified, modified, joined with other ideas and shot down. Ideas that are not shot down are written in their new form on fresh pages of the flip chart. It's important at this stage to make sure criticisms are directed at ideas and not people. It's also important to ask others what they think of a criticism.

Step four is to take all the ideas that survived and discuss whether they can and should be tried and to prioritize them based on a cost-benefit basis. Ideas that don't require a lot of time or money, but which will go a long way to solving the problem, should be done at once. Ideas that take more time and money, and with a less certain chance of success, need to be evaluated further before deciding whether or not to try them.

I encourage you to try this in your company because it works. It gets people involved and gives everyone a chance to contribute without the negatives of having others shoot down their ideas and stifle discussion. Ideas are important, but fragile. In an increasingly competitive market, good ideas are the most important asset you can get. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roger Stanley". The signature is fluid and cursive.

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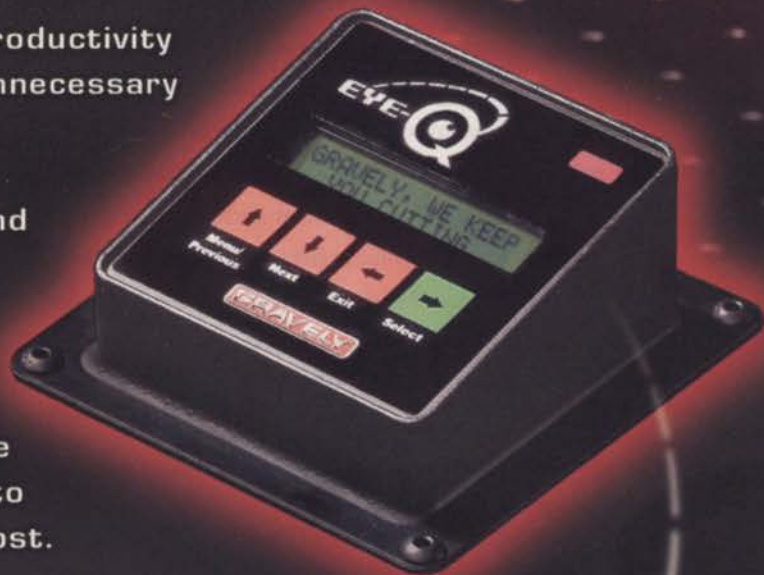
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USE READER SERVICE #13

Sales Smarts

Marty Grunder is a speaker, consultant, author and landscape contractor with Grunder Landscaping Co. He can be reached at 937/847-9944 and via www.martygrunder.com.



Entrepreneurs are not as smart as we think we are.

Recently my landscaping company hired a marketing research company to help us find out for certain why our clients choose us. We've done this in the past, but the information is so important that we're doing it again. And that's what I wanted to talk to you about this month – the importance of finding out why your clients did, in fact, choose to do business with you.

Entrepreneurs are a funny bunch. Whether you are one or work with one, you can undoubtedly identify with some of the following conclusions:

1. *Entrepreneurs are creative.* They are frequently coming up with new ideas.
2. *Entrepreneurs are not afraid to take risks.* There is story after story about the entrepreneurs who put everything on the line to make their businesses work. Sometimes the gambles pay off, sometimes they do not.
3. *Entrepreneurs are excellent at talking themselves into the brilliance of their own ideas.* Some of them work, some do not.
4. *Entrepreneurs sometimes don't use logic.* Once in a while you can get away with this, but most of time it will cost you.

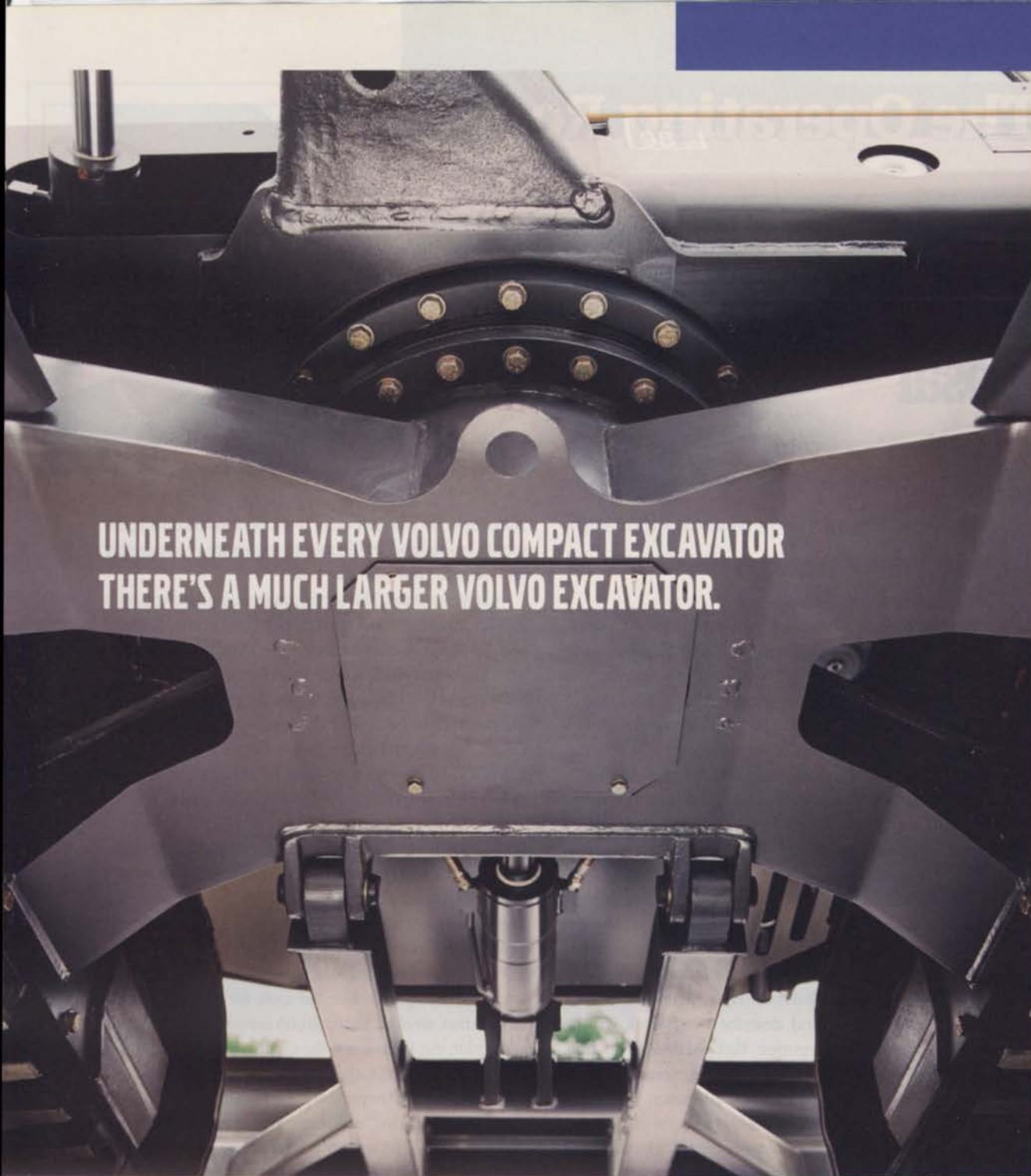
Do any of these sound like you or your boss? I'm willing to bet that they do. I know how entrepreneurs think because I am one. You see, we really don't answer to anyone, have few people challenge us, and end up making many decisions without the proper proof because we can. It is our business. However, smart entrepreneurs also know that any time you can improve your chances for success, you need to do it.

One of the biggest mistakes I made for years was marketing to my clients in the way I thought they wanted to be marketed to. You see, clients and prospects want to buy; they do not want to be sold. All of your marketing should center on this premise. We forget to ask our clients why they chose us; we think we can read their minds. For years, I sent out an eight-page newsletter, when all that I really needed to do was a two-page newsletter. For years, I sent out coupons, when all I needed to do was call

people back right away. And, for years, I spent thousands of dollars on advertising that did not work, when all I needed to do was ask my clients to tell their friends and family about us.

The reasons you think people do business with you are potentially not the same reasons your clients really do choose you. I encourage you to take some time and find out the real reasons your clients do business with you. It should be something that becomes part of your follow-up routine. Each time you complete a job, call or better yet visit with the clients, ask, "Why did you do business with us?" If you really see the value in this information, then either hire a firm that specializes in surveying folks or, if your budget is tight, hire a marketing student from a local college and get them on the phone and sending out surveys to your clients. The sooner you find out this information, the more effective your marketing will be and the less money you will waste.

Let me share with you what can happen when you follow my advice. A landscape contractor I have been working with in Atlanta thought for years his clients did business with him because of his prices. I challenged him to find out for sure. Once we surveyed his clients, we found out that price was not the real reason his clients spent money with him – his timely and friendly service was. Consequently, he raised prices slightly and hired a person whose sole job was to call and visit clients and make sure they were happy. The survey also showed that most of his business was coming from other happy clients in the form of referrals and not from the \$3,000/month *Yellow Page* ad he used. At last check, the company's sales and profits were up substantially, all because he decided to prove his theory. Had he not done this exercise, he never would have known why his clients did business with him and left money on the table. I hope you will spend some time in the next few months asking your clients why they do business with you. Sure, this is a lot of work, but nothing in life comes easily and, more importantly, sometimes entrepreneurs are not as smart as we think we are. ■



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Developing a Maintenance Proposal

Jack Mattingly is a green industry consultant with Mattingly Consulting. He can be reached via email at jkmattngly@comcast.net, through his Web site www.mattinglyconsulting.com or at 770/517-9476.



With all the different types of proposals a client might receive from green industry contractors, ensuring that yours stands out is crucial.

By submitting a proposal, you are essentially applying for a job with that client. With that in mind, your proposal should be as high-quality as any resume you would submit to a possible employer. All proposals should be presented on letterhead that includes your company's logo, as well as the logos of any local, state or national organizations to which the company belongs. Well-presented proposals should immediately indicate to the buyer that your company is professional, established and up-to-date with the industry practices.

COMMERCIAL PROPOSALS. Proposals for commercial and residential clients are similar, but a commercial proposal will be more detailed. Break down the proposal into several categories including the following:

- *Maintenance Specifications:* Here, detail the service you plan to provide and describe what work will be included in these categories: turf maintenance, tree, ground cover and shrub maintenance, seasonal color, mulch application and general maintenance.

- *Work Not Included:* This category is one of the most important clauses in a maintenance contract, but also one that is frequently omitted. Here, specify the types of work that are not included in the contract, such as hand watering, planting additional plant material, overseeding, pruning above 12 feet, extra annual color or mulch, storm clean-up, snow and ice removal, etc.

- *General Conditions:* In this section, state the "Term of the Agreement" (e.g., twelve months) and describe your termination requirements, such as 30 days written notice for cancellation of service. This is also where you can outline any automatic renewal and/or price increase policies.

- *Terms of Payment:* Here, state when invoices will be forwarded to your client and the time frame in which you require payment. This may read: "Invoices will be forwarded the first of each month with payment due by the

20th." Specify whether extra work performed during the month is invoiced in the month of service or separately and include your past due policy.

- *Legal Statement:* This section may outline the company's liability limitations and any issues related to how lawsuits will be handled, should they arise. Always consult an attorney when dealing with legal information.

- *Project Cost:* The only remaining point to specify in the contract is the cost of the service you will provide. Often, commercial clients are primarily interested in price, so you may want to consider making this the first page of the proposal, rather than the last page.

RESIDENTIAL PROPOSALS. Though they contain much of the same information as commercial proposals, residential proposals are generally less elaborate. Also, prospective residential clients are more prone to "sticker shock." To avoid this, consider breaking up your proposal into two to five sections and price each section separately. For example, you might itemize the costs for weekly services, fertilization services, horticultural services, mulching, annual color, etc. From there, the client can select the level of service they want in each category, based on their budget.

Again, the most important paragraph in residential is the "Work Not Included" statement. With these points spelled out, you can avoid uneasy conversations with clarity up front. Additionally, an overabundance of detailed legal jargon can make residential clients nervous.

To keep a step ahead of your competition, always include your Certificate of Insurance with your proposal. The residential market in particular needs more education on the consequences of hiring a contractor without proper insurance. You might even want to include a fact sheet explaining clients' liabilities if they hire a company without insurance. This will be a wake up call for many prospective clients, but making people aware of it will help raise professionalism throughout the green industry.

One final thought. Sale's is just a numbers game. Therefore, the more proposals you submit, the more sales you will receive – guaranteed. **LL**

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Ready to Reinstate

Jean L. Seawright is president of Seawright & Associates in Winter Park, Fla. She can be contacted at 407/645-2433 or jpileggi@seawright.com.



Editor's Note: Last month, we discussed the implications employers face when their employees are called to duty. Now, we will cover reinstatement legalities business owners must comply with when these employees return from military duty.

Now that your brave employees have served our country, they want to be reinstated at your company. Before you throw the welcome-back celebration, you should understand your responsibilities as a business owner. It is important that you comply with the reinstatement requirements under the Uniformed Services Employ-

BEFORE YOU THROW THE WELCOME-BACK CELEBRATION, YOU SHOULD UNDERSTAND YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A BUSINESS OWNER. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU COMPLY WITH THE REINSTATEMENT REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE UNIFORMED SERVICES EMPLOYMENT AND REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ACT (USERRA).

ment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).

Remember, employees returning from military leave are entitled to any benefits determined by seniority that they had when their leave began and also those benefits that would have accrued had they remained continuously employed.

REINSTATEMENT RIGHTS. Reinstatement rights apply to veterans whose cumulative period of uniformed service does not exceed five years while employed by the same employer, assuming the veteran has not received a dishonorable discharge.

Upon completion of military service, the returning veteran must provide notice to the employer. The amount of notice required and time allowed before reporting back to work depends on the length of time the veteran served, for example:

- For service of fewer than 31 days, the returning veteran must report to work by the beginning of the next regularly scheduled work period on the first full day after release from service, or if this is impossible or unreasonable, as soon thereafter as possible.
- For service of 31 to 180 days, he or she must apply for reinstatement no later than 14 days after military service ends, or if this is impossible or unreasonable, on the next calendar day on which it is possible.
- For service of 181 days or more, the returning veteran must apply for reinstatement within 90 days of the end of the military service.

Returning service members must be re-employed in the same or similar position they would have attained but for their absence for military service, with the same seniority, status, pay, rights and benefits. If necessary, employers must also make reasonable efforts to train returning employees for re-employment.

BE PREPARED. Employee handbooks should contain military leave policies and, before granting a leave, employers should consult with an expert to verify any unique compliance requirements in their state. Most important is the attitude with which an employer approaches the employee in need of a military leave.

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act was intended to protect the people who defend our freedom and who prepare to, and indeed, protect each of us. While USERRA's requirements may seem excessive and restrictive during peacetime, during a time of national threat, the sacrifices made by employers pale in comparison to those of the soldiers and their families. It is in this spirit that returning military employees be welcomed back with open arms.



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For more information about how matching precipitation rates just got easier, contact your Rain Bird Representative, or click on www.rainbird.com.

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Market Trends

BUSINESS BASICS

Deductions Add Up

Calling the millions of dollars that is overpaid to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) each year, "a widespread epidemic," the Tax Recovery Group (TRG) is releasing its list of the top 10 most-often-missed business tax deductions.

Failing to utilize these deductions accounts for the majority of businesses overpaying their taxes. And according to statistics, businesses throughout the country overpay their taxes to the sum of millions of dollars each year. This list is the result of TRG's work with thousands of businesses over the years for which they have recovered millions of dollars from the IRS.

Home Office Deductions. If a taxpayer runs a home office, he or she is entitled to deduct expenses for the percentage of square footage the home office is occupying. Expenses include the combined total of mortgage interest, property taxes, utilities, repairs, etc. For example, if 250 square feet of a 1,000-square-foot house is being used for a home office, the taxpayer is entitled to deduct a quarter of total expenses.

General Business Expenses. Often, business owners use their personal



EQUIPMENT FOCUS

Mower Shipment Update

The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) reported an overall boost in green industry product shipments, citing new technologies as a key contributing factor.

The net total for commercial turf care products showed a 4-percent increase in the 2003 model year with total shipments of 228,032 units. The zero-turning radius technology has continued to boost the commercial turf care industry with an increase of 22 percent in all commercial riding mowers to 141,867 units, which offsets the decrease of 17 percent in commercial walk-behind mowers to 86,165.

The model year for these products was Sept. 1, 2002, through Aug. 31, 2003, and the industry estimates represent shipments destined to United States markets only.

EQUIPMENT TYPE	# OF UNITS SHIPPED in 2003	% CHANGE COMPARED TO 2002
Commercial riding mowers	141,867	22% Increase
Commercial walk-behind mowers	86,165	17% Decrease
Total	228,032	4%

Source: OPEI

SALES SOLUTIONS

Landscaping Saves Energy

A period of cold weather is a good time to consider the effect landscaping can have on energy use inside clients' homes.

It has been estimated that carefully planted trees can lower your customers' annual heating and cooling costs by up to 25 percent. There is the benefit too of improving the look of their homes and adding to their value.

Well-maintained trees, shrubbery, hedges and other landscaping features can improve the look of a property. From an energy standpoint, this same landscaping helps provide much-needed shade in summer and a channel for breezes and warmth in winter.

Trees with high spreading leaves and branches work well on the south side of a home because they will protect the house in summer when the sun is at its highest point. To get the most out of the sun's benefits in winter, you want to plant trees that lose their leaves so they allow the warmth into the home when clients want it.

Trees with their fullest crowns closer to the ground are best suited for the west side of the home to help block the afternoon sun, which is lower in the sky. Studies have found that landscaping can lower summer cooling costs by as much as 50 percent. One study conducted in Pennsylvania on small mobile homes found air-conditioning savings of up to 75 percent from landscaping.

At this time of the year, trees can channel winds away from the home and act as windbreaks to protect a house. Putting in windbreaks on just the windward side of the house can lower fuel consumption by 25 percent over homes that are not protected from winds.

Department of Energy computer models have estimated that planting three trees in the right places around a home can lower energy costs by as much as \$250 each year. Source: The Orlando Sentinel



Market Trends

money or property for business expenses and fail to deduct it. For example, an individual makes a trip to Staples to purchase some office supplies and pays with personal cash but fails to account for or deduct the expenditure.

Imputed Interest on Corporate Shareholder Loans. If a shareholder loans money to his corporation, he is required to charge interest on it. The shareholder would be required to report the interest as income on his personal return, but the deduction on the corporate return can be used to reduce wages resulting in a refund of Social Security and Medicare taxes. This deduction is often missed.

Meals/Entertainment Expenses. Similar to the general business expenses deduction, many times business owners will use their personal money to pay for meals or entertainment expenses. This would include items such as entertaining clients.

Personal Assets Converted to Business Use. In many cases when a person starts a business, he uses personal assets to get the business going. The best example of this would be using a computer bought with personal funds for business use. The fair market value of these converted assets can be a business deduction starting with the date of conversion.

Self-Employed Health Insurance. As of the 2002 tax year, those who are self-employed are entitled to deduct 70 percent of their health insurance premiums.

Company Entertainment. Company holiday parties, barbecues and other forms of entertainment often are paid for with personal funds and are not accounted for or reimbursed.

Communications Expenses. Anytime a personal cell, telephone or Internet connection is used for business use, that is an additional deductible expense, which is often missed.

Fuel Tax Credit. Fuel that a business uses for off-highway equipment or machinery is entitled to a fuel tax credit. For example, if a landscaping company purchases fuel to power its lawnmowers or other equipment,

AND ACCORDING TO STATISTICS, BUSINESSES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY OVERPAY THEIR TAXES TO THE SUM OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS EACH YEAR.

(continued on page 24)

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Market Trends

(continued from page 21)

the company is entitled to a credit.

Automobile Expenses. Often personal vehicles are used for business purposes, but the individual will fail to deduct for mileage and other related automobile expenses. "Although some of these deductible expenses may seem minor at the time, over an entire year, they can add up to thousands of dollars that an individual business is unnecessarily paying the IRS," said Brace Barber, president and CEO, TRG. Source: Accountingweb.com

LEGISLATION EDUCATION

Rule Frees EPA's Hands on Pesticides

The Bush administration is proposing a strategy to end legal battles over the risks of pesticides to endangered species.

A rule scheduled for publication would authorize the U. S. Environmental Protec-

tion Agency to decide largely on its own whether a pesticide is likely to cause harm to any wildlife protected under the Endangered Species Act. Such decisions now require agreement from the federal fish and wildlife agencies charged with protecting such species, formal approvals the EPA historically has neglected to obtain.

The proposal comes months after conservation groups in Oregon and Washington won a lawsuit in Seattle against the EPA. In that case, the federal judge, finding cause

for immediate concern, recently banned dozens of pesticides along all rivers and streams where threatened or endangered salmon run in Oregon, Washington and California.

The judge ruled earlier that the EPA failed to consult with fish and wildlife services, as required by the Endangered Species Act, when approving pesticide uses. Similar lawsuits involving endangered frogs, sea turtles and other wildlife are proceeding in several states.

(continued on page 26)

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Customers Outdoor Services - www.customersoutdoorservices.com

The Greenery -

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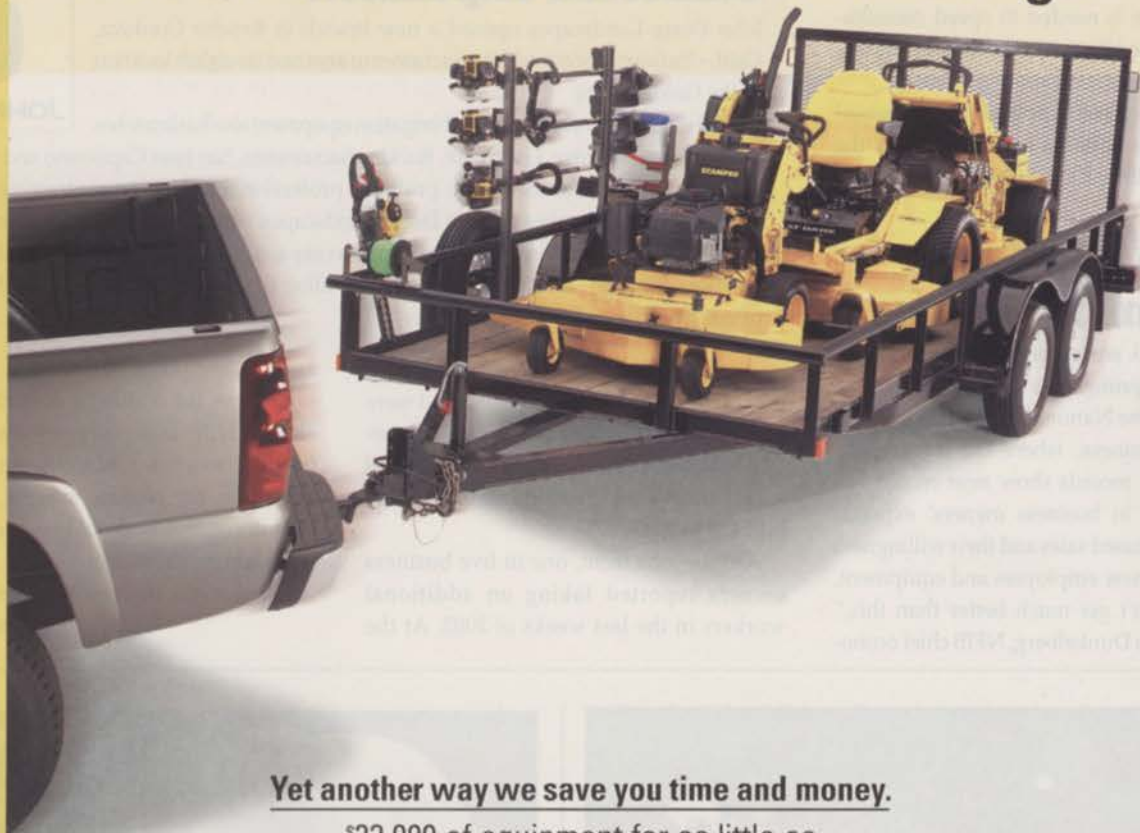
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Market Trends

(continued from page 24)

Conservation groups said the proposed rule would leave endangered wildlife vulnerable to widely used herbicides and insecticides. Bush administration officials said the new rule is needed to speed consultations over the effects of pesticides on endangered species.

Pesticide-makers applauded the proposal and said the lawsuits have overstated the risks to wildlife. *Source:* The Oregonian

BUSINESS NEWS

Small Business Optimism Blooms

As far as U.S. entrepreneurs are concerned, spring has sprung early this year. That's the word from the National Federation of Independent Business, where the latest Optimism Index records show near-record improvements in business owners' expectations of increased sales and their willingness to invest in new employees and equipment.

"It doesn't get much better than this," says William Dunkelberg, NFIB chief econo-

SUPPLIER NEWS

John Deere Landscapes Continues California Expansion

John Deere Landscapes opened a new branch in Rancho Cordova, Calif. – its fourth location in the Sacramento area and its eighth location in the Golden State.

The distributor of lawn care and irrigation equipment also has branches in Concord, Elk Grove, Livermore, Rocklin, Sacramento, San Juan Capistrano and Santa Ana.

"Our Rancho Cordova store provides professional landscape contractors faster and easier access to supplies at John Deere Landscapes within the Sacramento area," reports Brian Day, regional vice president of the company. "We will continue to add strategic locations through Northern California, providing landscape professionals the full breadth of our product and service offerings."



mist. Prompting his celebratory mood were business owners' responses to an NFIB survey, which put the Optimism Index at 106.9 – less than a point shy of the all-time high it hit back in 1983.

On the jobs front, one in five business owners reported taking on additional workers in the last weeks of 2003. At the

same time, the number of jobs classified as "hard to fill" rose two points, a trend that further suggests strong employment growth in the coming months. "Substantial job creation is about to get underway," Dunkleberg predicts.

Even more impressive were entrepre-
(continued on page 28)



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Market Trends

Lawn & Landscape wants to know who's who at your company. "People" and "Association News" press releases, including photos or digital images at 300 dpi can be sent to Lauren Spiers at lspiers@lawnandlandscape.com or 4012 Bridge Ave., Cleveland, Ohio, 44113

(continued from page 26)

neurs' plans for capital spending, which jumped nine points to reflect the 38 percent of outfits where the penny-pinching austerity that marked the downturn is giving way to a renewed willingness to invest in future growth. Now, says Dunkelberg, the time has come for business to break out their dancing shoes and boogie. "The economy is ready to rock and roll," he says. *Source: BusinessWeek Online*

IN THE NEWS

Scotts Co. Reports First Quarter Results

MARYSVILLE, Ohio – The Scotts Co. has reported an adjusted net loss for the first quarter, excluding restructuring and other charges, of \$43.1 million – flat with an adjusted loss of \$42.9 million for the same quarter last year.

(continued on page 30)

People

Bayer Environmental Science promoted **Bryan Gooch** to insecticides business manager. He will also take on the role of marketing lead for the lawn and landscape industry.

Todd Mohr joined Aqua Engineering as a project manager for irrigation design and water management.

Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting expanded its marketing staff with the addition of **Rebecca Dobner**.

Otterbine Barebo welcomed **Rich Daly** as the new Midwest regional sales manager.

Bike Howard was hired as director of e-business for Husqvarna.

A sales and marketing repositioning effort resulted in several personnel changes at Bayer Environmental Science. **Dave Ravel** and **Jim Davis** moved from their positions with the lawn care division to southern regional manager and northern sales manager, respectively, for the golf division. Bayer also named **Neil Cleveland** as LCO/landscape sales manager.

Charles Caubet was hired as marketing services manager for Shindaiwa's marketing team.

Ace Tree Movers promoted **Mike Cunningham** to general manager and added **Bob Wren** to their staff as director of business development.



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Market Trends

(continued from page 28)

The adjusted per-share loss in the quarter decreased to \$1.34 from \$1.42 in fiscal 2003 due to an increase in shares outstanding. These results exclude a one-time pre-tax expense of \$43.7 million associated with the company's recently completed debt refinancing and \$1 million of restructuring and other charges. Scotts anticipates it will benefit from significant interest savings as a result of the refinancing. Including these items, the company reported a quarterly net loss of \$70.7 million, or \$2.21 per share, compared with a net loss of \$46.8 million, or \$1.55 per share, for the same period in 2003. These results are better than expected due to favorable SG&A performance.

Because of the seasonal nature of the landscape business, Scotts historically reports a loss in the first quarter each year.

Net sales in the quarter were \$186.2 million, up 3 percent from \$180.8 million a year earlier. Excluding the impact of foreign exchange rates, net sales declined by 2 percent.

Scotts LawnService had a strong finish to its season with revenues up 21 percent for the quarter.

"We are pleased that our results today are better than we had anticipated. The growth in consumer purchases we saw in 2003 has clearly carried into 2004, giving us increased confidence that we will report adjusted net income growth of at least 10 percent again this year," says Jim Hagedorn, chairman and chief executive officer.

NEWS TO NOTE

Monsanto Anticipates Revenue Boost from Biotech Crops

ST. LOUIS – Monsanto Co. expects to see its revenue increase by about 15 percent from its biotech crops business, offsetting declining herbicide revenue, the crop biotechnology and pesticides company shared at its

annual shareholder meeting.

Hugh Grant, chairman, says the company's genetically modified seeds business would deliver "remarkable opportunities to farmers around the world."

In addition, Grant says the company plans to move forward with its genetically modified wheat despite resistance in Europe. Shareholders reelected Frank AtLee, Gwendolyn King and Sharon Long as directors of the firm until 2007. They also approved a proposal requiring the board to seek shareholder approval before implementing a "poison pill" program. The company currently does not have a poison pill program and does not plan to adopt one, it said in a statement. A poison pill is a move by a company to prevent a takeover by a potential buyer.

Shareholders rejected proposals that would have required the company to produce reports on genetically engineered seed and pesticides. *Source:* St. Louis Business Journal

(continued on page 32)



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USE READER SERVICE #29



Market Trends

(continued from page 30)

SUPPLIER STATS

Briggs & Stratton Restructures Distributing Channels

MILWAUKEE, Wis.—Briggs & Stratton Corp. announced a restructure of its U.S. distribution network, consolidating 16 sales and service distributors down to six.

Those distributors are: Atlantic Power/Power Equipment Co., Castleton, N.Y., and Visalia, Calif.; Central Power Systems, Columbus, Ohio, and Tampa, Fla.; Midwest Engine Warehouse, Aurora, Ill., and Omaha, Neb.; Preferred Power, Charlotte, N.C.; SEDCO, Norcross, Ga.; and Wisconsin Magneto, Milwaukee, Wis., and Anoka, Minn.

"We believe that more efficient and effective distribution to our dealers and customers will be the backbone of our service strategy going forth," explains Steve Rugg, senior vice president of sales at Briggs & Stratton.

(continued on page 34)

PEOPLE NEWS

Miller Leaves Dow AgroSciences

INDIANAPOLIS — Elin Miller announced that she is leaving her position as vice president of Global Pest Management for Dow AgroSciences.

Miller began leading the Global Urban Pest Business Unit for Dow AgroSciences in 2000. The company was restructured in 2002, and Miller became vice president of Global Pest Management. Earlier in her tenure with Dow, Miller was Global Vice President of Public Affairs, Dow Chemical.

Stan Howell has assumed the responsibilities of vice president of Global Pest Management, replacing Miller.

Howell, vice president of North America, Dow AgroSciences, will be merging Miller's responsibilities into his current position, which involves responsibility for Dow's crops business, turf and ornamental, range and pasture, and industrial vegetation management businesses. Howell actually will be returning to a position he formerly held at Dow AgroSciences. He served as vice president of Global Pest Management for Dow AgroSciences prior to Miller.

"I'm looking forward to getting reacquainted with the business, including the folks here at Dow AgroSciences and the customer base," he says.

Miller will be transitioning out of Dow AgroSciences by the end of the first quarter of 2004.


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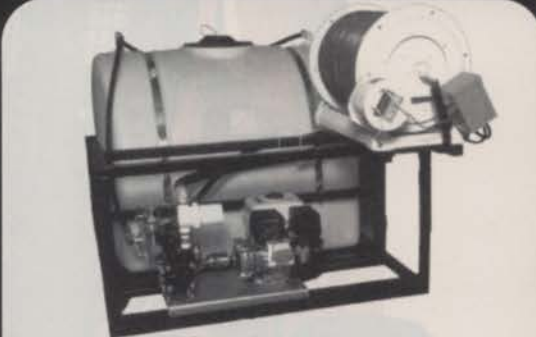


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A photograph of a very muscular man from the waist up, wearing a red tank top. He is holding a dandelion seed head in his right hand. The background is a light green wall with some faint, illegible text or a poster.

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OUR ABILITY TO HELP YOU
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USE READER SERVICE #33

Market Trends

Calendar of Events

TO ENSURE

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

MARCH 14-17 Environmental Lawn Care & Landscaping: Reaching the Consumer Conference, San Antonio, Texas. Contact: 801/466-3600

MARCH 19-20 Associated Landscape Contractors of America 2004 Masters in Management, Burlingame, Calif. Contact: 800/395-2522 or www.alca.org

MARCH 25-28 Associated Landscape Contractors of America Annual Student Career Days, Columbus, Ohio. Contact: 800/395-2522 or www.alca.org

APRIL 21-22 Grandy & Associate's 2004 Basic Business Boot Camp, Denver, Colo. Contact: 800/432-7963 or www.grandyassociates.com

JUNE 2-4 Green Roofs for Healthy Cities 2nd Annual International Conference, Awards and Trade Show, Portland, Ore. Contact: 416/971-4484 or www.greenroofs.ca

AUG. 26 18th Annual Indiana Professional Lawn & Landscape Association Summer Field Day, Carmel, Ind. Contact: 317/575-9010

SEPT. 24-26 International Lawn, Garden & Power Equipment Expo, Louisville, Ky. Contact: 800/558-8767 or www.expo.mow.org

OCT. 1-2 Middle Tennessee Nursery Association Trade Show, McMinnville, Tenn. Contact: 931/668-7322 or www.mtna.com

NOV. 4-6 28th Annual Turf & Grounds Exposition, Rochester, N.Y. Contact: 800/873-8873 or www.nysta.org

NOV. 4-7 Green Industry Expo, Charlotte, N.C. Contact: 888/303-3685 or www.gieonline.com

NOV. 14-16 International Irrigation Conference & Show, Tampa, Fla. Contact: 703/536-7080 or www.irrigation.org

DEC. 2-4 Lawn & Landscape Conference & Trade Show - West, Anaheim, Calif. Contact: 800/456-0707 or www.lawnandlandscape.com/events

DEC. 15 10th Annual Indiana Professional Lawn & Landscape Association Winter Workshop, Carmel, Ind. Contact: 317/575-9010

www.lawnandlandscape.com

(continued from page 32)

FRANCHISE FOCUS

Weed Man Announces 5 New Franchises

Turf Holdings, the master franchiser of Weed Man in the United States, recently announced the sale of five new franchises. In addition to the new dealers, four existing franchisees have acquired more territories. The company now has 77 American franchises and 13 sub-franchises.

The new franchises were sold to John

and Shawn Ferrie in Jersey Shore, N.J.; John Mahoney in South Hampton, N.Y.; Bruce Sheppard in Winchester, Va.; and David Pitchford in Baton Rouge, La.

Among the expanding franchises were Mike Ward, Cincinnati, Ohio, who acquired three new territories; Robin and Vicki Moeller, Cincinnati, Ohio, who bought two new territories; Mitch Block, Elyria, Ohio, who added one new territory; and Heather Schuster, Milwaukee, Wis.; who bought one additional territory.

(continued on page 42)

USE READER SERVICE #34

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defined big is now
redefining small.**



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"*Lawn & Landscape* magazine gave me guidance on choosing the right products for my business.

While reviewing the magazine in the early 1990s, I discovered a piece of equipment that we still use today – the C&S Turf Tracker. Since that time, we have purchased many pieces of lawn care equipment from C&S Turf Care Equipment. I also found our current software provider – Real Green Systems – in the pages of *Lawn & Landscape*."

**Paul Wagner, President
Masters Green
Walled Lake, Michigan**

Lawn & Landscape magazine's advertising market share is more than double the market share of our closest competitor. Even more significantly, we have double the number of exclusive advertisers than our closest competitor. Fact is, more and more companies are concentrating their advertising and marketing communications budget expenditures with *Lawn & Landscape* because of our dominant readership and market voice, rate efficiency and ROI value.

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It sounds like a big idea, but it's simple. Just one application of Barricade® prevents crabgrass for an entire season. No other pre-emergent herbicide works as long or as effectively. Stop worrying about repeat applications and breakthroughs. And start worrying about how you'll handle all the repeat customers. For more information on Barricade, call 1-800-395-8873.

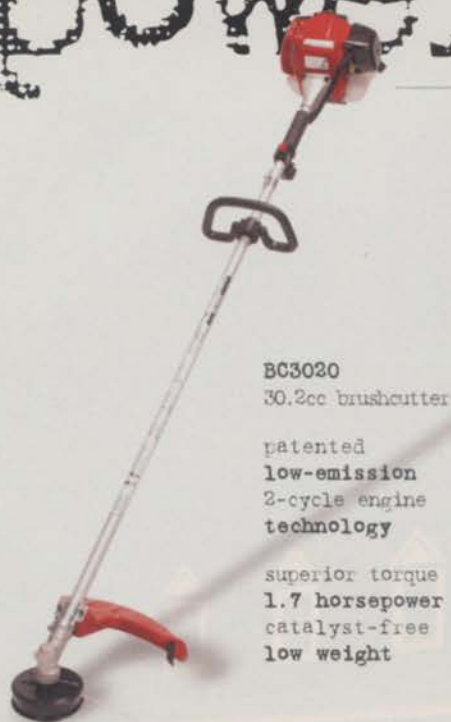


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Power. There are different kinds. A powerful message. Powerful people. Well the Maruyama BC3020 brushcutter, has good old-fashioned power. The kind that's tough. The kind that gets the job done. The kind that can be measured in horses. That's right, the BC3020 offers 1.7 horsepower on a CARB compliant, catalyst-free, fuel efficient machine. Furthermore, it's consistent power. The Walbro digital ignition guarantees that even during the toughest part of your day you have enough power to keep going. The BC3020 won't slow down in thick brush or wet grass. The BC3020 has the kind of power that you need.

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USE READER SERVICE #36

Market Trends


(continued from page 34)

RISING REVENUE

Syngenta Releases Rosy 2003 Results

GREENSBORO, N.C. – Syngenta announced a 6-percent boost in sales for 2003, with revenue from new products accounting for a \$0.5 billion profit during the year. The end result for investors: a 36-percent climb in earnings per share – to \$3.56 per share.

Especially significant for the green industry company's year of growth was an increasing profit margin in the second half of 2003. "In 2003, Syngenta delivered a strong performance which provides a platform for future growth," explains Michael Pragnell, chief executive officer. "The second half of the year was particularly encouraging with sales growth in both the third and fourth quarters."

Sales of selective herbicides, the Syngenta's largest product line, were up after several years of weakening revenue. 

Association NEWS

The **Professional Lawn Care Association of America** elected Jim Campanella the group's president for 2004.

Kurt Kluznik was named president of the **Associated Landscape Contractors of America** for 2004.

The **Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA)** announced that it will support the Principles of Turfgrass Management certificate program, which offers industry professionals the opportunity to become Certified Turfgrass Professionals. Successful program graduates earn 12 Continuing Education Units (CEUs), as well as a patch, credentials certificate and certificate of completion from the University of Georgia. STMA will award successful graduates ¾ of an education point toward application for their Certified Sports Field Manager program or 1½ CEUs toward recertification. More information is available at <http://www.gactr.uga.edu/is/turf/>.

The **Maryland Nursery & Landscape Association (MNLA)** elected three new officials for 2004. New MNLA directors are Andy Schlosser and Gregory Tracey, and Paul Babikow was chosen to serve as an officer of the association assuming the responsibilities of treasurer.

David Brannan was elected as the 2004 president for the **Texas Turf Irrigation Association**. Other officers elected to the board are John Shideler, president elect; Scott Long, secretary/treasurer; and Gary Salas, education chairman. New trustees elected for 2004 were John Morton, Gary Salas, Dee Cunningham, Nelson Haney, Michael Buxkemper, Cody Hobbs, Michael Standard and Robert Coy.

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Forget the kid stuff. Take a serious look at Encore's heavy duty Mid Cut and Front Cut Prowlers, Premier walk-behinds and compact Z-Series riders. These mowers have guts. They'll go toe-to-toe with any other make or model and come out on top.

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USE READER SERVICE #37

Book Report

TONY NUEMANN RECOMMENDS...

Who Moved My Cheese?

by Spencer Johnson

A Adapting to change is never easy. Whether it's change in personal or professional life, deviation from the norm is commonly met with apprehension and resistance. Dr. Spencer Johnson's book *Who Moved My Cheese?* addresses this through a modern-day parable. It distills Johnson's philosophy on confronting change via a metaphorical tale of mice, men and the cheese of change. While neither a self-help book nor the children's book you might mistake it for while paging through it, *Cheese* takes the universal fear of being left behind by unstoppable change, and makes it applicable to practically any facet of the reader's life.

"It's kind of like a fairy tale," says Tony Nuemann, owner, Sprinkler Solutions, Pheonix, Ariz. Nuemann has read *Cheese* numerous times and says that he finds new ways to apply it to his life with each subsequent read. "It's one of those books I've been able to read four or five times," he says. "And every time I read it I look at it just a little bit differently."

The story tells the tale of two mice and two "littlepeople" (named Hem and Haw) who all live together in a maze with the one common goal of finding cheese. Keeping in mind that this story functions as a metaphor, Nuemann explains how the tale explores the different ways these characters react when, one morning, they find that their cheese is no longer where they expect it to be. Someone, it seems, has moved the cheese, and the fable that follows chronicles how each of the characters behaves following the disappearance of the sustenance they had counted on.

"In the story, the mice are the smart ones," Nuemann explains. "They saw the changes coming and prepared for them while Hem and Haw were shocked to see that their

cheese was gone." The story then outlines how Hem and Haw's knee-jerk reaction to change – resistance, panic, outrage, skepticism – only leads them further away from the cheese they want and need, while the mice learn to adapt and move with the winds of change. But what, exactly, is the cheese supposed to represent?

"The cheese can mean something different to everybody," Nuemann says. "The first time I read the book, the cheese was my income and my business' stability. But my life has changed since the last time I read it, so now for me the cheese is what I want out of my life."

Nuemann says that he was surprised to pick up the book again and find how differently it affects him as time goes on. "It's amazing to look back and see how your own company can change over the years and how that affects your understanding of the book's message." The message,

Nuemann says, is that change can be good if you learn to adapt.

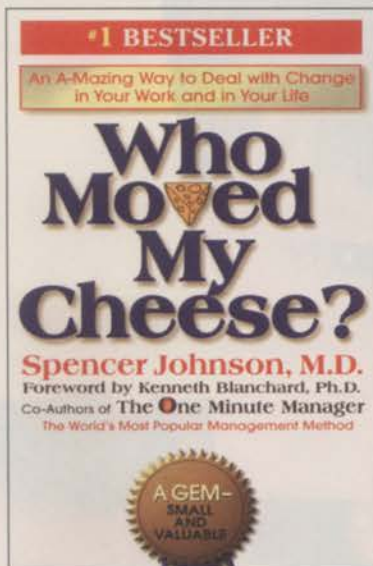
"The big story is that you shouldn't be so set in your ways that you don't recognize when things change," Nuemann relates. "I think we all get set in our ways, especially in this industry. You get into doing the same thing over and over without giving any thought to the fact that some day people's needs might be different and the world might change."

Nuemann says that tracking industry trends is one way he's learned to prepare for, and adapt to change. "I think it's all part of the cheese," he says. "You have to have insight into your company and the trends. Anybody who's been in this business long enough has probably seen giant companies go bankrupt. I think that has something to do with the fact that they lost track of how changes were happening in the industry and they weren't adapting to them."

"The message is, 'Do not get too set in your ways,'" Nuemann says. "Recognize that change is inevitable. You have to change when the situation dictates and that's not just with business – it's also with life in general."

Nuemann recommends *Who Moved My Cheese?* as a primer for learning how to deal with the curve balls thrown by the march of time. "It's short enough that you can read it quickly and it's a good book to leave in your truck to read throughout the day." – Will Nepper **LL**

The author is assistant editor of *Lawn & Landscape* magazine and can be reached at wnepper@lawnandlandscape.com. Purchase this book by calling Megan Erickson at 800/456-0707 or visiting www.lawnandlandscape.com/store.



WIN THIS BOOK!

Give us your best book recommendation and we'll enter your name in a drawing to win a copy of *Who Moved My Cheese?* Simply e-mail your book suggestion (include the title, author, your personal contact information and your reason for suggesting it to our readers) to Will Nepper at wnepper@lawnandlandscape.com or call him at 800/456-0707 with the information. The deadline for entries is April 1.

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Nursery Market Report

COLOR CONNECTION

Spring Sparklers

Spring ushers in a new crop of colorful blooms for landscape applications, from beds and borders to baskets and window boxes. Surprise your client with a mix that shows off some of the latest annuals, which can be planted after danger of frost has passed in your region.

Ball Horticultural Co. has introduced several new selections to add to your repertoire. These plants are available from your local grower, or contact Ball at 800/879-2255 to locate a supplier in your area.

Silver Falls dichondra (below) is a component plant for beds, while Pixie Double Sparkler (above) offers double burgundy blooms. Photos: Ball Horticultural Co.



PIXIE DOUBLE SPARKLER. This burgundy beauty, *I. wallerana*, is a double-flowering mini impatiens. Pixie Double Sparkler shows off petite, fully double burgundy and white blooms on free-flowering, well-branched plants. Dark green foliage provides color contrast.

This variety is the newest addition to the Pixie series, which also includes seven single-flowering varieties in a range of hues.

Pixie Double Sparkler Burgundy performs best in full to partial shade areas. A controlled, mounding habit makes this variety ideal for containers or small beds.

Because plants in containers dry out more quickly than those grown in landscape beds, be sure to water thoroughly and feed regularly with an all-purpose fertilizer.

SILVER & EMERALD FALLS DICHONDRA. This dynamic duo of trailing treats is part of the Fan-



tastic Foliage collection. Silver Falls and Emerald Falls dichondra are high-impact component plants for mixed plantings in containers and beds.

Silver Falls (*D. argentea*) is distinguished by its rounded, fan-shaped foliage on silver stems. The shimmering foliage trails 3 to 4 feet long, or as much as 6 feet with a longer growing season.

Emerald Falls (*D. repens*) has a slightly different, more rounded leaf shape than its silver counterpart and creates a denser, tighter plant. It grows fuller than Silver Falls but not quite as long, trailing about 3 feet in one season. Emerald Falls adds subtle color and texture to landscape plantings.

Silver Falls and Emerald Falls are heat and drought tolerant. Their applications also are many. They can be used as trailing components or even solo in containers or baskets, or cascading over raised beds or retaining walls. They also work as annual ground covers, filling in fast to form a lush carpet of small leaves in well-drained landscape beds.

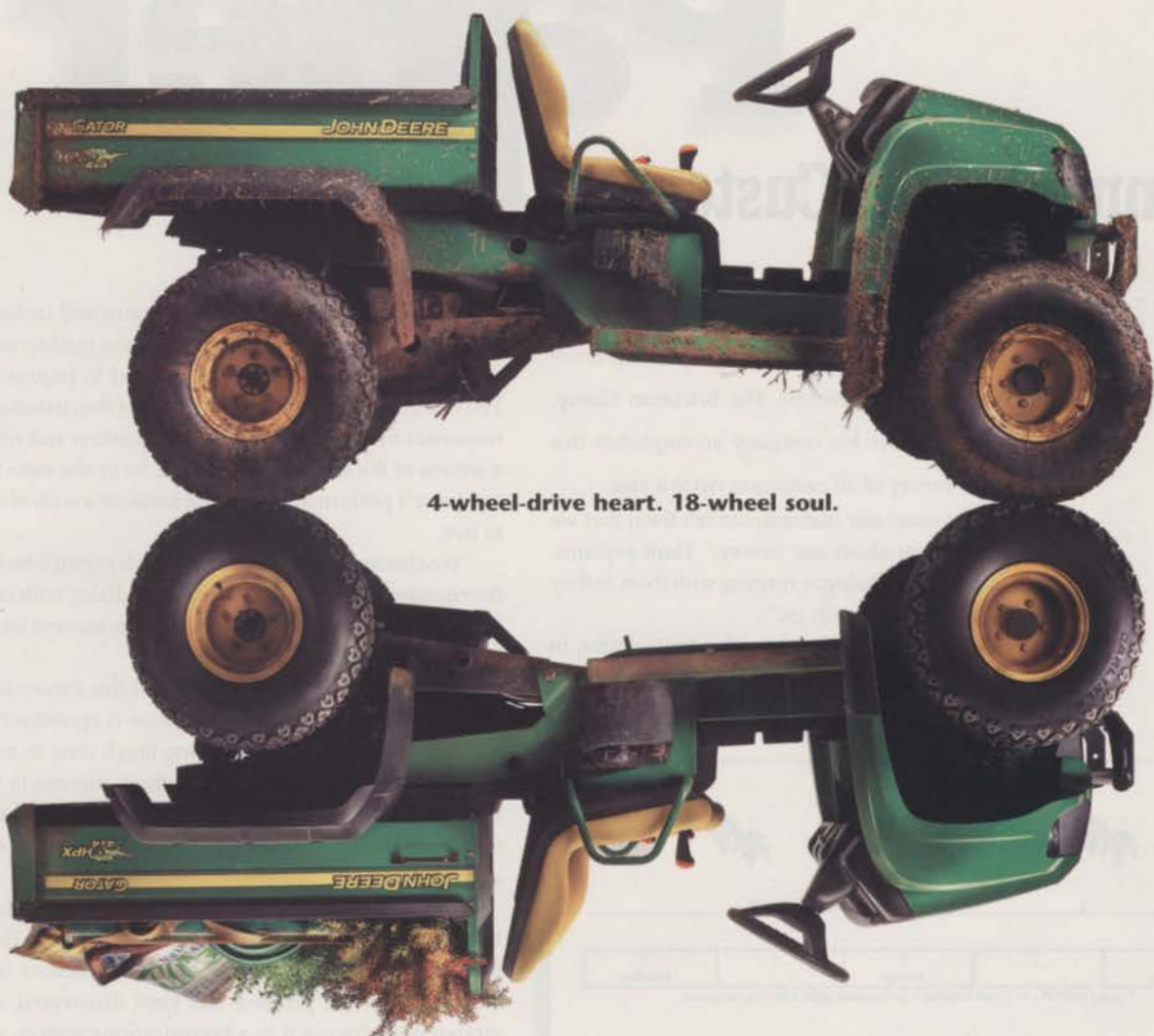
For best results, plant these varieties in full sun to partial shade.

For more information about these or other Ball varieties, visit www.balllandscape.com. — Ali Cybulski

The author is contributing editor to Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at acybulski@lawnandlandscape.com.

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Check our March Online Extras for more care and planting advice on each of these landscape plants.



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USE READER SERVICE #39

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On

Paper

Connect with Customers

To build a good relationship with clients, knowing whether their needs are being met is important. Bruce Hunt, corporate vice president, The Brickman Group, Long Grove, Ill., says his company accomplishes this with a phone survey of all customers twice a year.

"We call or email our customers to tell them that we intend to call them about our survey," Hunt explains. "We try to get a voice dialogue running with them so they are comfortable talking with us."

One individual, typically a branch administrator, in each of the company's five regions conducts phone interviews and records customer comments manually. The

phone survey takes less than 10 minutes and includes questions on customer service and service quality, such as, "In what areas does Brickman need to improve?" The branch administrator writes each of the customer's responses in the spaces under each question and when a section of the survey is completed, he or she rates the company's performance in those areas on a scale of one to five.

"We choose the administrator in each region who has the communication skills to carry out a dialog with each customer," Hunt says. "They do all of the surveys for all of the clients in their region."

The Brickman Group must conduct this survey over the phone because their customer base is spread out in each region and it would take too much time to meet with clients individually or send them surveys in the mail, Hunt says. After the surveys have been filled out, the information is tabulated and sorted by market, city and region.

Hunt says survey answers are written on the sheet by the branch administrator so everyone in the company can address specific problems a customer may have had. Once a problem has been discovered, administrators discuss it in a brainstorming session and then try to present the client with a solution, he adds. "You go back to the client and you qualify each complaint," Hunt says. "You ask them specifically what is wrong with the site and fix what the customer decides is a high priority."

Hunt says The Brickman Group developed these surveys by examining what other successful companies, including their own clients, have done to survey their customers and choosing the best aspects. "This survey is an evolving method of customer relations that is always improving," he adds.

But Hunt says it isn't very often that the survey gets a complete overhaul because yearly information needs to be comparable. "The goal is to keep the questions fairly uniform so you can measure the variance from year to year," he says. — Kevin McConville **LL**

The author is a contributing editor to Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached via nwisniewski@lawnandlandscape.com.

CUSTOMER SURVEY

Client: _____ Survey Date Submitted: _____

1	2	3	4	5
Poor		Average		Excellent

Using a scale of 1 to 5, rate Brickman's performance in the following categories

1. SERVICE:

A. Overall, how do you feel about the level of service and quality of work that Brickman provides you?

B. What are some of the things Brickman does best for you?

C. In what areas does Brickman need to improve?

D. Are we proactive? Do we call attention to areas of special concerns and explain them fully?

E. How do your tenants feel about Brickman's service?

F. Do you feel you can call on us in an emergency situation and be assured of a timely response?

Category rating:

ASK ABOUT
0% APR
FINANCING

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GMC Commercial Trucks



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TRUCK DEALER FOR YOUR
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48 MO LEASE



NEW 2004 GMC W-3500 DIESEL

Auto AC AM/FM Cassette 15 Ft Landscaper Body, Weedeater Rack, Watercooler Rack, Shovel Rack, Folddown Side

\$580 MO
48 MO LEASE



NEW 2003 GMC W-4500 DIESEL

Crewcab, 14 Ft Dump Body, Receiver Hitch, Tarp, Automatic, AC AM/FM Cassette

\$416 MO
48 MO LEASE



NEW 2003 GMC W-3500

6.0 Liter Auto AC AM/FM Cassette 16 Ft Landscaper Body, Weedeater Rack, Watercooler Rack, Shovel Rack, Folddown Side

\$695 MO
60 MO UNLIMITED
MILEAGE TRUCK LEASE



NEW 2004 GMC C-5500 DUMP

300HP Duramax Diesel Allison Automatic Transmission 14 Ft Dump Body with Hitch, Tarp & Snowplow

\$542 MO
48 MO LEASE



NEW 2004 GMC W-4500 DIESEL

Crewcab, Auto, AC AM/FM Cassette 19 Ft Landscaper Body, Weedeater Rack, Shovel Rack, Watercooler Rack & Folddown Side

ZERO DOWN! \$673 MO
60 MO UNLIMITED
MILEAGE TRUCK LEASE



NEW 2004 GMC C-5500 DUMP

300 HP Duramax Diesel Allison Automatic Transmission AC AM/FM Cassette

0% APR
AVAILABLE FOR A LIMITED TIME



NEW 2004 GMC C-4500

With New Deuce Dump Body
Call for Details

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6.0 Liter V8 Automatic AC AM/FM Cassette 16 Ft LAND KING Body
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USE READER SERVICE #40

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HEADQUARTERS: Petaluma, Calif.

FOUNDED: 1974

**YEAR COMPANY REACHED \$1
MILLION IN REVENUE:** 1987

**YEAR COMPANY REACHED \$2
MILLION IN REVENUE:** 1998

1999 REVENUE: \$3.5 million

2000 REVENUE: \$4.5 million

2001 REVENUE: \$4.3 million

2002 REVENUE: \$4.9 million

2003 REVENUE: \$5.1 million

EXPECTED 2004 REVENUE:
\$5.6 million

**AVERAGE GROWTH OVER PAST
FIVE YEARS:** 24 percent

CLIENT MIX: 80 percent residential,
20 percent commercial in installation;
100 percent residential in maintenance

SERVICE MIX: 90 percent installation
(30 percent design/build and 70
percent from landscape architects),
10 percent maintenance

EMPLOYEES: 42 full-time

EQUIPMENT ROUNDUP: Seven ¾-ton utility body trucks, four ¾-ton pick-up trucks, one pick-up truck for the estimator, one 5-yard bobtail dump truck, one large equipment trailer, one maintenance trailer, two rubber-tired skid-steer loaders, one track skid-steer loader, one rubber-tired skid-steer loader with scraper box, one 5,000-pound mini excavator, one 15,000-pound mid-size excavator, one 10,000-pound variable reach forklift and an assortment of skid-steer loader attachments

Nuts

Bolts

by Nicole Wisniewski

Most boys have a set of building blocks at one time or another while growing up, and many use them to create red, yellow, green and blue concoctions. Whether the invention is the tallest building in the living room, a garage to house his prized Match Box cars or even a home that looks something like his own, building is the best part – not to mention knocking the creation down afterward just to build a bigger and better one in its place.

While some boys build, grow up and then move on to something else they enjoy, others are builders for life. Tony Bertotti is that kind of person, and this building desire is what pushed him to enter the landscape market in 1974 when he was just 20 years old.

The majority of Bertotti's work in the beginning was commercial bid work until a recession made the business owner realize that he needed to expand his horizons to residential renovation work to thrive.

Another recession, two wars and a couple of business-affecting droughts later, Bertotti focused on stabilizing the business foundation. First, he responded to hard economic times by changing his business from a 99 percent commercial-focused organization to an 80-percent residential one. Then, he started offering incentive programs to boost productivity and perfect the building process. Finally, he integrated an Employee Stock Ownership Program (ESOP), turning over 30 percent of the company to his employees, and strengthening not only the business' base, but its future as well.

THE BIG BUILDUP. Bertotti has always been a fan of what he calls "the grunt work." He started landscaping to make money at the age of 11.

Then, at 14, Bertotti got a job as a gardener on a general contractor's estate, and shortly afterward joined his construction team. His boss recognized his interest in creating landscapes to enhance new commercial structures, so he encouraged him to team up with a few employees and tackle the task full time, promising to give him work.

Sixty to 70 percent of his jobs during the first six years of business came from this general contractor and a close family friend who was also a general contractor, and it was all commercial – warehouses, office building and condominiums. "We thrived because 1974 was a bad year in construction – there was a severe recession going on and since we had no overhead, we could come in at a lower price than

(continued on page 54)

Bertotti Landscaping

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www.bertotti.com

BUILD



Building a solid foundation is what makes landscapes last – and for Bertotti Landscaping, it has also created a business that's endured two recessions, two wars and a couple of droughts.

Bertotti Landscaping President Tony Bertotti, 50, currently builds 15 to 20 percent of the company's work himself. Photo: Charles Kennard

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Cover Story

(continued from page 51)

other contractors and win the bids," Bertotti says. "We did about \$50,000 our first year and I think I was only charging myself out at \$5 or \$6 an hour. Other than shovels and picks, we rented any larger equipment we needed but mostly worked by hand, so our only cost was labor and materials."

But having a commercial installation focus

quickly changed when a California drought that started in 1978 and lasted until 1980 diminished the amount of work the company received from its two prime work references, forcing them to seek out other types of clients. "In 1980, the economy started turning down and I found that we started getting less and less work and these building contractors

started paying us slower as well – instead of paying us in 30 to 45 days, we were waiting 90 to 120 days," Bertotti shares. "More contractors were going after commercial work, but since the economy was going down, more contractors were going after less work."

So the company started looking at residen-

(continued on page 59)



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When doing bid work, the client contacts the landscape architect for designs before pursuing a landscape contractor.

For that reason, Bertotti Landscaping, Petaluma, Calif., focuses on establishing solid relationships with local landscape architects who focus on residential work so that they are naturally thought of first when bid time nears.

"One way we make landscape architects' jobs easier is by helping them budget jobs before sharing this price information with the client," explains company President Tony Bertotti.

Doing so ensures the company an in on jobs and also ensures that clients don't have their hearts set on certain design features when they have too low of a budget. "I've had bad experiences where landscape architects tell the client they think they can get the job built for \$50,000 but it turns out to be \$100,000 or \$150,000," Bertotti explains. "So now we offer to get involved at the preliminary design stage and aid in building the budget so the landscape architect is on the same page as we are. We work with the design early and get budgets together early so clients' budget expectations are within 10 to 15 percent of the actual job cost. This is especially important where access to the work is difficult. The goal is to get the client the project they can afford with the budget they have and everybody looks good. The hardest thing to overcome is too low a budget."

Of course, regularly referring larger jobs to landscape architects also puts them in your good graces (see *Design on the Side* on page 60 for more information).

— Nicole Wisniewski

Bid- winning Basics

USE READER SERVICE #41

USE READER SERVICE #42

(continued from page 54)

tial renovation work, which other contractors in the area weren't pursuing.

The switch from commercial to residential bid work as Bertotti Landscaping's primary bread and butter took about five years, and the company thrived on the change of pace. "Residential work was more interesting, and the market seemed bigger than commercial, especially in the renovation of existing gardens," Bertotti says. "Cash flow was much better as well – we got a check every two weeks vs. the time we had to wait with commercial."

However, as with any service, there was a



The Bertotti Landscaping management team.
Photo: Charles Kennard

learning curve involved. More client communication became vital to learn about unspecified project challenges, such as hidden sewer lines or other below-ground mysteries, and more specific contract wording was necessary to protect the company from these extra hid-

den costs. "For instance, if we encountered a large rock where we were excavating to put in a pool, we'd have to take it out with a heavy jackhammer, which we'd have to rent, so there are extra equipment and labor costs there," Bertotti explains. "So, instead of incurring those costs on jobs, we started excluding or qualifying this type of information in our contracts by spelling out things that might occur to protect ourselves." (For an example of the company's contract wording, visit this issue at www.lawnandlandscape.com.)

Additionally, foremen started going out

Since bid work is based on time and material costs, boosting crew efficiency is a must to maintain job profitability. Consequently, Bertotti Landscaping, Petaluma, Calif., entices crews to complete work under budgeted hours and stick to job schedules by offering them incentive programs, says company President Tony Bertotti.

For instance, the labor productivity bonus rewards crewmembers with a split of 50 percent of the hours the crew is below budget on a job. For example, if the job was bid at 1,000 hours and it comes in at 800 hours, it is 200 hours under budget. Then, the company takes 50 percent of that, which is 100 hours and divides it up among the crew members by dividing each person's hours by the total hours worked and getting a percentage. For instance, if all four crewmembers worked the same hours – four guys at 25 hours each – they split the money evenly. But if the foreman works more hours, then he gets a larger percentage of the bonus.

Also, to ensure job safety, field workers receive \$1 per day for every day they work without a lost time injury. This is paid out every 100 days.

Because foremen are vital in managing crews and motivating their members to work productively, they also get an additional incentive. "They get \$1 each hour for every job they build," Bertotti explains. "So if a foreman builds a 1,000-hour job, he gets an additional \$1,000 on top of his base pay. They work with a base salary and then this incentive is their commission on top of that."

Similar to foremen, designers and estimators earn an additional 50 cents per hour for each job contract a client signs, so getting the work is as much of an incentive as completing it, Bertotti explains. "So if an estimator gets a signed contract for a 1,000-hour job, he gets a \$500 commis-

sion," he says, adding that an average estimator earns approximately \$10,000 in commission. "Estimators and designers also sell so this encourages them to be aggressive and follow up on bids."

Bertotti says designers and estimators do have targets they are striving to hit. "They know we need to build 40,000 hours of construction work a year to cover our overhead. So since we have two estimators, they each have to sell at least 20,000 hours."

These incentives are line items on the final printout of a job's costs. They are part of the job's profit. They are also a way to pay people more without suffering via increased overhead. "It's a way to reward our people and keep our overhead under control," Bertotti explains. "Since commission comes out of contracted work, they aren't making the money unless they get the work so as a company we can always pay it if we're getting the work. It's not something we would ever cut because it's not affecting the company's performance – rather the company's performance affects the amount people get."

The company's management team also receives bonuses – from \$0 to \$15,000 per year based on the business' profit and each manager's individual contribution.

On top of these incentives, the whole company is part of a profit sharing bonus that is paid equally times the hours each individual worked during the year. Historically, this has ranged from 50 cents to \$2.50 per hour. "The best year we had was when we gave about \$2.75 per hour and some people were getting up to \$5,000 and \$6,000 bonuses," Bertotti shares. "We've always tried to share as much of the profits as possible in the culture we have evolved, which actually flows right through to the ESOP (see *Building a Better Business* on page 63 for more information), which makes employees actual shareholders in the business. – Nicole Wisniewski

Productivity Incentives

Cover Story

into the field and timing how long it takes to do typical job tasks to increase estimating accuracy. They also investigated ways they can use specialized equipment to get work done faster.

Scheduling jobs so that they could finish work in a timely fashion was also a necessity with residential clients, "who always have a party or function they want their landscape

finished before so it looks good," Bertotti explains, so they set up a system to complete a jobs in a more timely fashion. "When a foreman is assigned a new job, he visits the site with a project manager and designer to meet the client and review the scope of the job and become familiar with the site," Bertotti ex-
(continued on page 62)



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Though Bertotti Landscaping, Petaluma, Calif., focuses on residential installation work, the company started a design/build division in 1982 because they saw growth potential in this service.

The business currently employs two designers who also sell work (see *Productivity Incentives* on page 59 to see how Bertotti Landscaping motivates them to increase design/build sales). Besides a good referral base, Bertotti keeps these designers busy year round by marketing its design/build services via a 3-inch-by-4-inch ad in local newspaper business or garden sections once a week for about six months at a time. Each ad costs about \$300 to \$750 depending on size and whether it's color or black and white.

But, how does a company balance the responsibilities of being a key installer working with local landscape architects in the area and a design/build company competing with local landscape architects? It divides the work up into two categories: small and large jobs.

According to Field Superintendent and Water Feature Specialist Brad Stewart, all of the company's work is done on homes ranging in price from \$400,000 to \$14 million.

"But we only do design/build on \$20,000 to \$200,000 landscape jobs - smaller work that most landscape architects aren't as interested in," Kim points out. "Residential installation jobs start at about \$150,000 or \$200,000 and can go up to \$1.5 million."

Plus, it's a necessity to take on additional work while working on year-long projects because of the gaps involved where crews are waiting for subcontractors, such as pool or plastering workers, to get their areas of the job finished, Kim points out. "On larger jobs, there are always gaps in the schedule, so we fill them with small- to medium-sized design/build jobs," she says.

Also, since Bertotti has built up relationships with residentially-focused landscape architects, they refer clients to each other. For instance, if Bertotti comes upon a client who wants a larger, more complicated landscape created and installed, Bertotti will recommend a landscape architect for the job. On the other hand, "landscape architects like to do bigger, fancier jobs so when the client comes in and wants to do a smaller job and they are busy, they will refer them to us," Kim says. - Nicole Wisniewski

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Cover Story

(continued on page 60)

plans. "Plans and a job file are reviewed. This usually happens a week before the job start so the foreman has time to build a project schedule by breaking down the project into various tasks, time and resources. A rough weekly schedule for the proposed duration of the job is done and then a detailed two week schedule is done which is updated weekly. We have a weekly foreman meeting at 5:45 a.m. on Mondays to review schedules and labor and equipment needs. Subcontractors are given the rough schedule so they know when we expect them, and we update them as the job progresses."

MAINTENANCE: SOMETHING TO BUILD ON. Being an installation company, Bertotti Landscaping receives requests from many clients about maintenance after finishing their landscapes, so it was a natural add-on service for the business.

In the beginning, however, when Bertotti Landscaping was still doing commercial bid work, it wasn't interested in offering maintenance. "I had built up a commercial maintenance division in the 1970s," Bertotti says. "But the mistake I made was taking on jobs

Bertotti Landscaping, Petaluma, Calif., uses temporary labor to supplement its labor force when work gets busy throughout the year.

"We can call the temporary labor service and say we need two guys tomorrow and they are there," explains company President, Tony Bertotti. "And we've had luck getting people through

Temporary Help

that we didn't build. The cashflow was steady but we were always getting complaint calls and it was on the jobs that we didn't build."

As a result, the company phased out their maintenance division in 1980 by terminating customer agreements after one-year contracts were up or offering the jobs to other contractors in the area who specialized in that work.

Then, after refocusing the company's efforts on residential in the early 1980s, maintenance reentered the picture in 1991. "The economy had dropped again and we said we have to start offering more services to our current customers to secure recurring revenue," Bertotti explains. "This time, though, we only take maintenance jobs that are from our residential renovation clients in order to

that organization who have landscape experience. We've even hired a few people based on our experiences with them through this temporary labor company."

Although, this process takes some time. The temporary labor service charges a premium if a company hires employees away from them. "They have to have not worked for you for five or six months

control growth, and know what we're maintaining since we built the jobs."

Today, the business has two and one-half, three-man maintenance crews, 40 clients and \$500,000 in revenue in this division.

Selling the service initially was challenging. Since Northern California landscapes include lots of native plants, English gardens and roses, a Mediterranean plant palate and a lack of water on top of that, Bertotti Landscaping originally sold maintenance based on its horticultural expertise on a quarterly or six times a year basis as opposed to the regular mow, blow and go, but this didn't work as well as they hoped. "We realized that people need mow, blow and go. So we start with the basics and then provide monthly or quarterly horticul-

Last year, Tony and Kim Bertotti, president, Bertotti Landscaping, Petaluma, Calif., bought 52 acres to house the business' new facility.

On the property, the company is also using 1 acre as a nursery to grow plants for its design/build and bid installation jobs. The nursery portion of the business is called Buckeye Nursery and it acts as a separate entity from Bertotti Landscaping.

The company just started installing plants in the nursery in December 2003 and currently 1/3 of the acre is full, points out Kim Bertotti, the company's vice president and corporate secretary. "We're focusing on having larger plant material - more big screen plants," she says. "We grow things in boxes so 24-inch-box-sized trees are what we're shooting for. It takes a couple of years. We've got liners and cuttings and some 5-gallon trees in bigger containers and are growing them up."

There are many reasons Bertotti Landscaping incorporated a nursery into its business - one of them being increasing its ability to regularly obtain key plant material.

Through the years, Bertotti Landscaping bought their plants from one or two main nurseries. However, recently

Bertotti noticed that to get the same plant material needed for jobs, he's had to use at least three or four nurseries.

"Nurseries do a good job of supplying materials to us for the most part," Bertotti says. "But with our nursery we're going to specialize in native materials, larger materials and plants we use a lot so that we can ensure we can get enough of them when we need them."

Another benefit of starting the nursery for Bertotti is drawing potential clients to their site via a Sonoma County Farm Trails Program that nurseries can participate in, giving people a trails map so over a period of time during the summer they can visit the various trail sites, Kim explains.

Another benefit to having an on-site nursery is being able to purchase less expensive land to house the business. Because Bertotti included a nursery in his business plan, he was able to buy land that was zoned agriculture vs. just commercial, so it cost much less. "Part of the reason we're doing this is because we can obtain the land for a reasonable price," Bertotti says. "Commercial zoned land goes for \$1 million an acre in Northern California but we were able to obtain 52 acres for half that because of the agricultural zoning." - Nicole Wisniewski

The Nursery Advantage

before you can hire them," he explains.

Temporary employees are paid an hourly rate that includes all payroll taxes, workers' compensation and health insurance costs, etc. "The rate is close enough to our average cost before overhead that it is worth it for short-term labor crunches and, we can let someone go and ask for a different worker if the one they sent doesn't work out," Bertotti says. — **Nicole Wisniewski**

tural services to analyze how their landscapes are doing and what improvements or additions might be necessary to enhance their original investment."

The maintenance division is run by a maintenance supervisor, who oversees the crews and runs the day-to-day duties, and also by Kim Bertotti, the company's vice president and corporate secretary, who helps the maintenance supervisor by providing overall direction and planning advice.

"The largest challenge with residential maintenance is client interaction. "Residential maintenance is tricky because it's so subjective," Kim says. "What might work on one client's property might not work on another. We really have to hone in on what the client expects and focus on their hot buttons. If we deal with their hot button issues right away then a lot of times they aren't worrying about things that are more difficult to control, like weeds cropping up or if the leaves are regularly cleaned from under the deck, which is a big pet peeve."

To ensure clients are satisfied, the maintenance supervisor visits them every six weeks and makes a list of tasks the foreman must complete based on client meetings. Then the supervisor follows up with the foreman and reviews the work.

All of Bertotti Landscaping's maintenance work is billed via a time and materials method with a monthly cap that the company won't exceed unless the client approves. Usually if a budget is going to go over for the month, it is generally because the client may have added some additional work. This also gives clients the option to put off some tasks to the next month if they want to stay on their budget.

BUILDING A BETTER BUSINESS. After Bertotti Landscaping developed a service focus and perfected these niches, it had to turn its eye on the future.

In 2000, the Bertottis decided they wanted to make Bertotti Landscaping an ESOP com-

pany. The decision was motivated by 50-year-old Bertotti realizing that he needed to have a succession plan in place for his business since his daughters may not be interested in pursuing the landscaping field.

To become an ESOP company, they started putting 10 percent of payroll each

year into a low-risk investment account for four years. This enabled them to build some of the capital needed to allow the ESOP to purchase 30 percent of the company and make their employees company shareholders. They wanted to start the program with 30 percent

(continued on page 186)

plan

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USE READER SERVICE #46

by Ali Anderson

Lawn & Landscape Online Message Board users with maintenance contracts for cemetery grounds share details about their unique approaches to this unusual work.

ESTIMATING CEMETERY MAINTENANCE

GRAVEYARD

Guesstimates

One recent thread on the *Lawn & Landscape* Message Board delved into a discussion about maintaining cemeteries – specifically, the need to accurately estimate time spent trimming and mowing around individual headstones. And while the message thread centered on a few specifics, forum participants have more to say about the subject.

Estimating the time required to maintain a property is fairly routine for most landscape professionals. However, man-hours and cost equations can get a little tricky when dealing with the atypical genre of cemetery maintenance.

Figuring the time needed to mow large-acreage cemeteries is not much different from calculating the mowing requirements of a typical commercial property, explains Larry Bump, president, LawnMasters, Lawrenceville, Ga. “Weed around the headstones – count them and figure your time,” Bump outlines. “Estimate the rest of the property as usual.”

But trimming around individual grave markers efficiently is the challenge. The process involves a systematic approach, which can be difficult to quantify in terms of man-hours required to complete the job.

Because of the sensitivities often attached to cemetery grounds, lawn care operators should add extra care – and, thus, extra time – to their work near and around headstones, insists Joe Villines, landscape designer, Harris Lawn and Landscape, Mitchellville, Iowa. “You have to remember that, for better or worse, you’re working around peoples’ dead relatives,” he adds. “You need to have a reverence and respect in mind when working on cemetery grounds.”

Several factors can make cemetery maintenance more tedious for contractors, explains Matt Schattner, owner, Mat’z Snow & Lawn, Kansasville, Wis.

“Everyone who has a loved one at the cemetery can be a possible avenue of complaint,” he says. “People can be very particular when it comes to their gravesites.”

And holidays – especially Memorial Day – are of special importance when cemetery maintenance is concerned, so

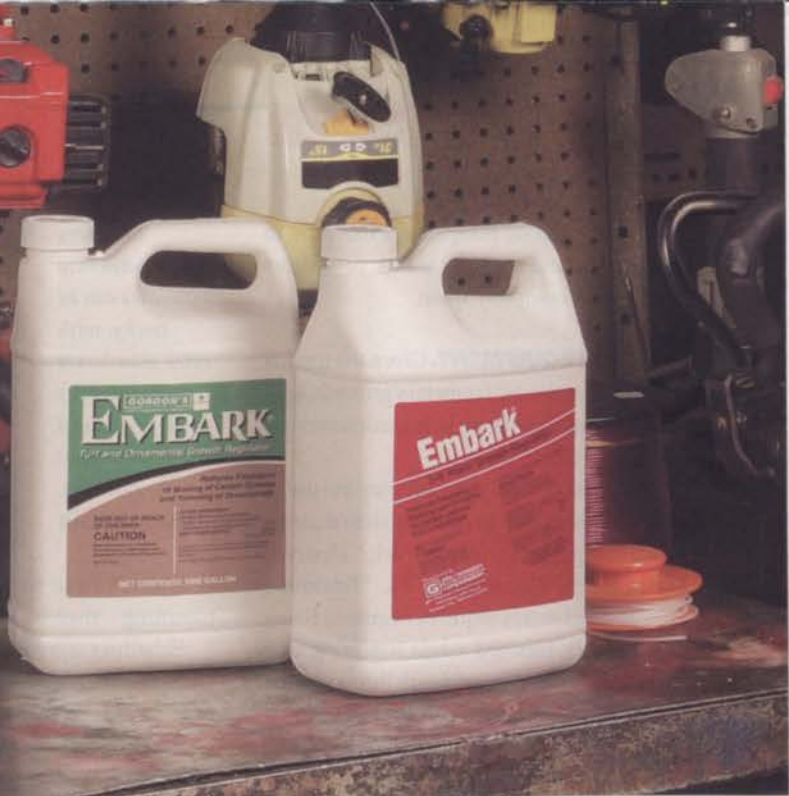
(continued on page 68)

BEST OF THE WEB

The *Lawn & Landscape* Message Board is a hotbed of green industry chatter and professional dialogue. Playing host to a diverse collection of opinions and ideas, the online forum often bounces between detailed discussion and dynamic debate.

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Best of the Web

(continued from page 66)

Schattner suggests budgeting extra time to prepare grounds for the influx of visitors that often accompany them.

EFFECTIVE EQUIPMENT. Given the unique maintenance needs of cemetery grounds, specialized equipment may help contractors use time more efficiently.

"Most large cemeteries employ the use of their trimmer more in one day than maintenance companies do in one week," observes Marty Keith, Wernersville, Pa. "Trimming around headstones requires neatness. Being able to walk forward while trimming in a comfortable fashion without throwing the grass onto the stones is a huge time-saving measure that most large cemeteries doing their own cutting utilize."

This is why Keith recommends a curved-shaft trimmer. "The cutting head turns clockwise," he explains. "It is longer than a homeowner trimmer, although not as long as a straight shaft. With a clockwise-turning head,

Cemetery maintenance estimates can be tricky, with extra man-hours allocated for edging around individual headstones.

Photo: PLCAA



you won't have to walk backward while trimming – thereby increasing efficiency."

Schattner agrees that using a curved-shaft trimmer saves time by reducing the need to re-trim shabby sections.

Smaller mowers also may be a good investment for those taking on cemetery maintenance contracts, asserts Kory Ballard, president, Perficut, Des Moines, Iowa. His company bought a few 44-inch zero-turning radius mowers to improve efficiency in tight areas and reduce operator fatigue.

But regardless of equipment specifications and designs, contractors should consider the extra wear and tear inflicted by the diverse terrain in cemeteries. "Whether a company wants to admit it, every now and then you're going to run over a headstone," Villines asserts, noting that such run-ins mean instant blade damage. "Another favorite enemy is the metal grave markers – the metal

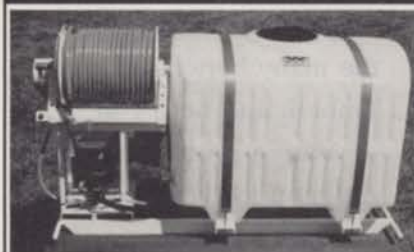
easels people put wreaths on to honor their loved ones. Those can get lodged in tires and cause flats."

Schattner agrees, noting that granite headstones are far from forgiving when they meet up with mower blades. "Also, consider that you will be mowing over plot after plot of sites that have settled over the years, and it gets quite rough," he adds. "Those conditions are hard on the machine and operator alike."

To combat the rough terrain and stony

(continued on page 70)

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Best of the Web

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interferences, Schattner recommends contractors invest in equipment backed by solid warranties and supportive dealers.

CALCULATED APPROACH. Aside from carefully selecting equipment for cemetery maintenance, contractors should make precise plans for trimming, says Andrew Aksar, owner, Outdoor Finishes, Walkersville, Md.

One thing is certain when planning for cemetery care – the trimming trail cannot be disorganized, asserts Erich Heinrich, Avalawn Landscaping, Cincinnati, Ohio. He recommends contractors go as far as planning and diagramming trimmer routes to save time. "Regardless of which way the trimmer spins, you can walk in either direction," he notes. That means contractors who use counterclockwise-spinning trimmers should walk backward and work toward the left – and vice versa, he adds.

For those seeking a more meticulous approach, Heinrich suggests walking forward

around the headstone – keeping the trimmer at a one-o'clock angle. This method forces trimming debris out to the left and in front of the operator.

Aksar insists that routing, not walking forward or backward, is the key to efficiency. "I trim in a manner where there is no backtracking at all," he shares. For Aksar, that means designing a trimming plan that has operators covering ground only once.

"I walk down one side, trimming everything I can get," Villines outlines, sharing his example. "Then I turn around and go back in the opposite direction to get the other side of the stones."

Working in pairs also can help consolidate man-hours and save time.

There is no way to trim around headstones easily, Schattner explains. However, he has found that trimming is much easier when two people are working on a row of stones together. "One trims the front, the other trims the back of the stone," he notes.

"It's more efficient because you're not backtracking to trim the back of the stones and the guys trimming kind of develop a competitive attitude to move along faster."

Assigning specific routes to individual crewmembers also can increase productivity, Schattner advises. "If the same person does one section all the time, they can develop a pattern to get through that area most efficiently."

Grass thickness should be considered when determining which direction or route to take with the trimmer. "I trim both ways (forward and backward), depending on how thick the grass is," Heinrich describes. "If the grass is thick, I will walk backward. If not, walking forward is fine."

Schattner also advises adding fertilizer applications to a cemetery estimate, since mowing and trimming weeds likely will not produce the most attractive results. Leaf collection also should be included in the

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Best of the Web

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maintenance plans, he shares.

And scalping – or removing dormant, straw-colored turf patches with a mower – every other season can help cut down on the follow-up needed to keep the area around headstones looking sharp, suggests Richard Goyette, WP Landscapes, Pawtucket, R.I. “In the spring and fall, the four-season maintenance men would scalp the area around the stone to minimize trimming,” he says.



“This takes longer but might help you skip a trim once a month.”

MAKING ESTIMATES. Once the contractor has devised a time-saving strategy for cemetery maintenance, it's time to put the plan into figures – estimated man-hours multiplied by assumed cost.

“Figure how many man-hours it will take you to mow the place and then put that many man-hours into the trimming of the headstones,” Schattner advises. “You may want to increase the price a little to account for purchasing a new trimmer and extra line since cemetery work

Rough graveyard terrain can be hard on mowers and trimmers, creating the need to add extra cash to a maintenance estimate to cover equipment damage. Photo: LawnCo

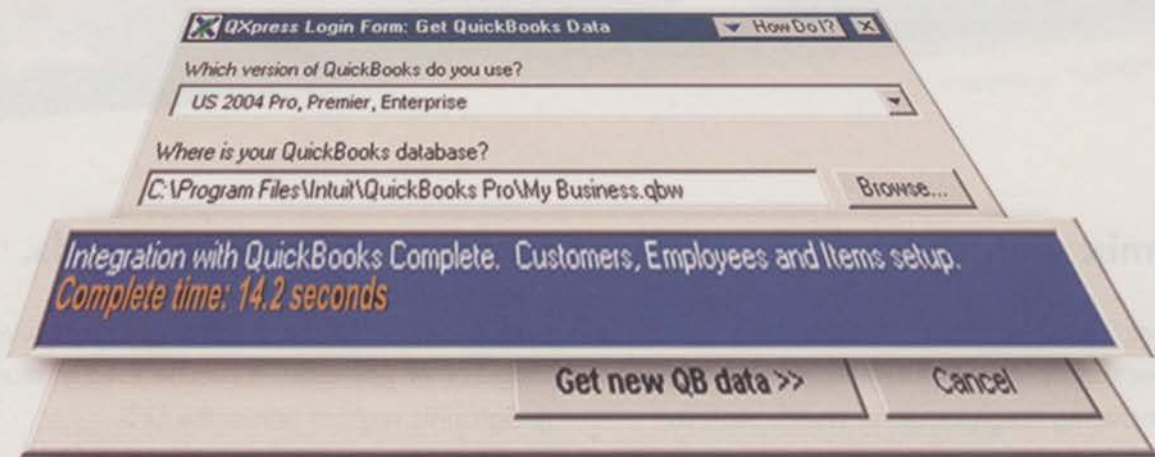
wears the product more quickly.”

And when maintaining an older cemetery, Schattner suggests adding extra cash to the estimate – to cover blades bent by raised roadways, tree stumps, uneven stonework, etc.

But most of all, remember that it takes more time to trim a section of cemetery than it does to mow an area of the same size, Villines urges.

Overall, consider the potential cost of taking on cemetery maintenance work, Ballard suggests. “We found that cemeteries require too much management and were unprofitable for our company,” he says, recalling Percicut's past experiences with cemetery maintenance, which ended up requiring more time than the work was worth. “I would recommend contractors be very cautious when bidding cemeteries.”

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



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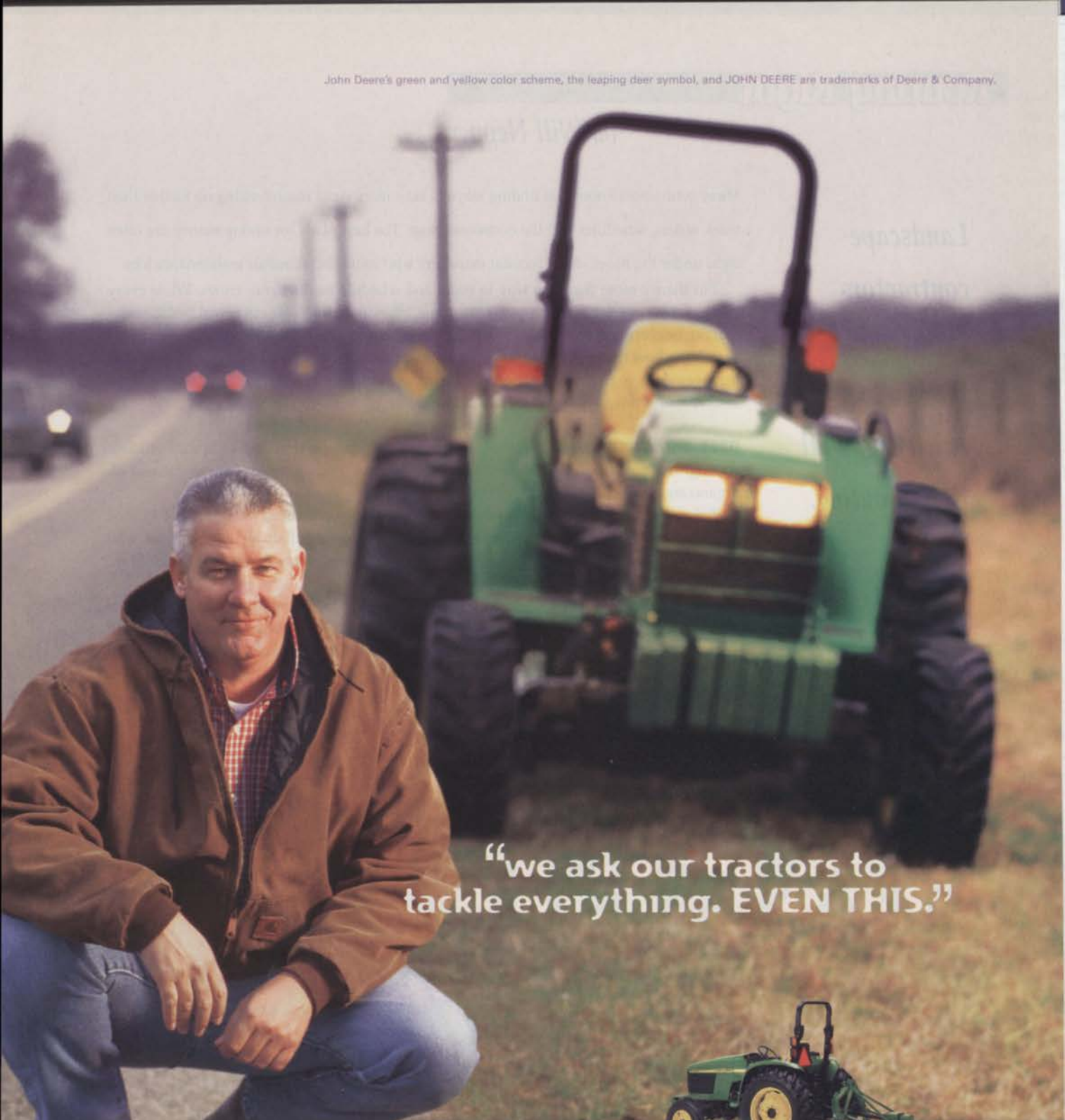
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Routing Right

by Will Nepper

Landscape contractors know that the key to efficiency is all in the routing.

Many contractors know that finding ways to save money can mean looking no further than work orders, schedules and the occasional map. The best plans for saving money are often right under the noses of the account managers who route and schedule maintenance jobs.

But there's more than one way to route and schedule maintenance crews. While every strategy will not work for everyone, a little time, effort and basic logic can reveal inefficiencies that can be corrected, thereby eliminating extra costs and unnecessary travel time. The key is examining how things are done vs. what could be done, especially with regard to crew size, management, geographical location and expertise. With that information, any contractor can resolve minor time-wasting hiccups that could add up to major savings.

BEST PRACTICES. A majority of contractors use specific practices to ensure efficient routing. These include crew structure, superior employee training and empowerment, and job organization.

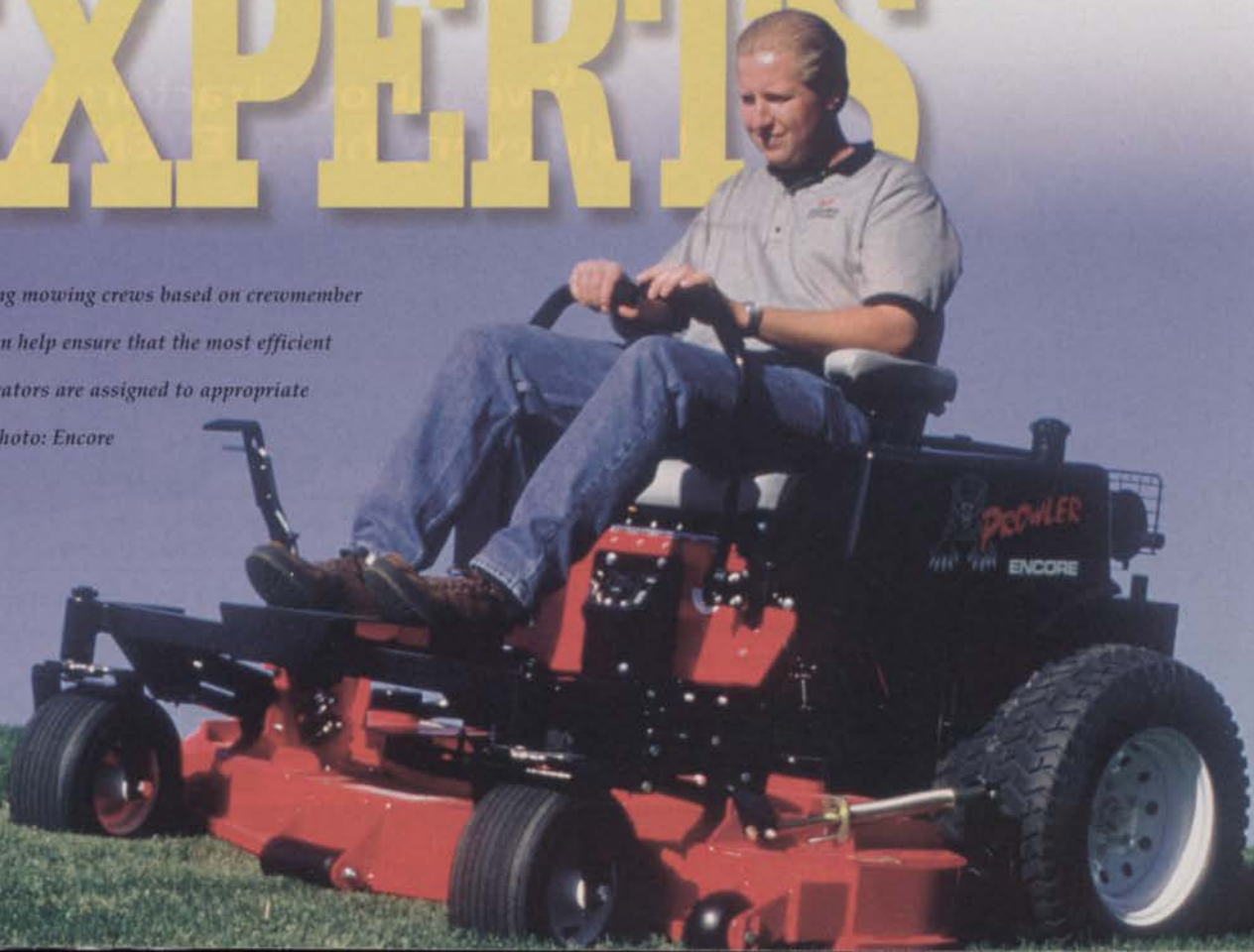
Before a crew can be routed to a job, that crew needs to be organized with foresight. Putting a crew together might seem like the easiest thing a contractor will do all day, but those who throw together crews without considering optimal efficiency may be wasting a significant amount of time and money.

Crew Size. Brad Coolidge, account manager, Servello & Son, Orange City, Fla., finds that it's best to not commit to a standard crew size when the demands of jobs vary from account to account. "The size of the property determines the size of our crews," he says, adding that

(continued on page 76)

Efficiency EXPERTS

Coordinating mowing crews based on crewmember expertise can help ensure that the most efficient mower operators are assigned to appropriate accounts. Photo: Encore



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Routing Right

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Servello & Son services properties from 11,000 square-foot residential sites to 88-acre condominium complexes. Therefore, the size of his 21 maintenance crews can fluctuate from two to six members. "The bigger the property, the more people we use."

Mike Lueders, president, Leuder's Cos., Medfield, Mass., keeps his 10 crews between one and three people, dependant on the job type. "We have a plan for what different types of properties require and the size of crew a particular operation needs," he says. "Highly physical projects with large shade tree pruning or landscaping require a three-person crew. Our fussier jobs, like detailed ornamental pruning usually take a two-person crew."

Two-person crews also work best for Mike Russo, owner, Russo Lawn & Landscape, Windsor Locks, Conn. "We try to keep it down to two technicians, because it's the most efficient way for us," he says. "That way, each crewmember does half the work."

"IT MAKES MORE SENSE TO HAVE FOUR TRUCKS OUT WITH TWO WORKERS IN THEM THAN THREE TRUCKS WITH THREE WORKERS BECAUSE YOU'RE ABLE TO HIT MORE JOBS IN A WORK DAY WITH MORE CREWS." — SCOTT OLDEN

The two-person team size is popular among many contractors because of its proven efficiency. A recent *Lawn & Landscape* poll indicates that approximately 55 percent of contractors rely on the two-person crew structure (three-person crews are a distant second at 28 percent). Among the numerous reasons cited for using two-person crews are that it allows for an easier division of work and helps relieve labor-shortage issues by providing multiple small teams rather than fewer large teams. Little evidence is available to support the fact that adding a third person to a crew significantly increases productivity.

Dan Standley, president, Dan's Landscaping & Lawn Care, Terrytown, La., uses

two-person crews and cites the teamwork that evolves from having a dynamic duo take on a job.

In Standley's crew structure, one worker and one foreman team up for most jobs. "A crew foreman supervises the crews and a crew supervisor oversees all of the crews and goes around to check on them," he explains. "We've learned through consultants and from personally being out in the field doing time management studies, two-person teams give us a synergism and a feeling of teamwork."

Scott Olden, president, The Lawn Mowguls, Dallas, Texas, also uses two-person crews, but says his reasons boil down to simple mathematics. "Three people can do

(continued on page 78)



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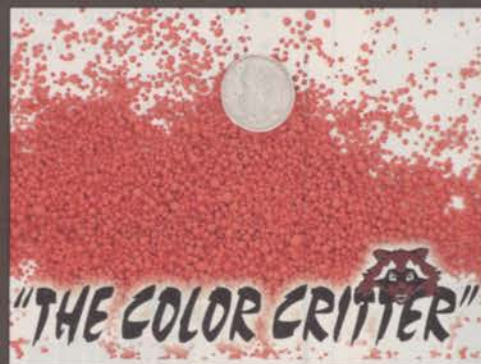
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Routing Right

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more work than two people on one job, but percentage-wise, two-person crews work out better," he says, adding that with a two-person crew companies save money on labor and still get the job done in an amount of time comparable to a three-person crew. "It makes more sense to have four trucks out with two workers in them than three trucks with three workers because you're able to hit more jobs in one day with more crews."

Managing Crews. For most contractors, crew size is very important but means little if the crews are poorly managed. For this reason, many contractors find that the best practice involves using an account manager structure to help make the most of manpower. Account manager roles can vary between companies, but the majority of contractors employ them to keep tabs on each property's specifications and to plot a job's placement on the routing schedule in the most cost- and labor-efficient way.

Many companies also utilize account

managers as liaisons between labor crews and the customer contact. This allows crew leaders and foreman to focus their attention on the job itself - from gathering the proper equipment beforehand to monitoring quality control to keeping other crew members on task and in the range of hours budgeted for the project.

Lueders relates that each of his crews has an account manager assigned to it. In this management structure the account manager becomes an important part of the big efficiency picture because, without an employee dedicated to the task of organizing crews and accounts in a systematic and practical way, money would be lost on "windshield time" as crews spend unnecessary minutes in the truck moving from job to job.

"The account managers start out each week by scheduling one week ahead so every crew knows what they'll be doing each day," Lueders says. "The schedules

will detail where they'll be working by properties, what types of things they'll be doing, what major trucks and equipment they'll be taking and who the crew members will be."

Coolidge acts as one of two of Servello & Son's account managers. "We run the gig as far as all the regular day-to-day operations go," he says. As an account manager, Coolidge and his co-manager decide how many men to put on a crew and where to send that crew.

At Servello & Son, foremen, who also serve as crewmembers, are in charge of site work, but the innovation of the field supervisor ties the company's entire workday together. "Our field supervisors float from property to property and act as quality control and help us stay efficient," Coolidge says. "We have four field supervisors and they're assigned anywhere between four and nine stops to oversee each day."

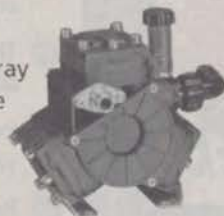
Not all contractors employ a field super-

(continued on page 80)



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Routing Right

(continued from page 78)

visor, so in many cases it is up to a crew's foreman to oversee job efficiency. But the amount of responsibility given to a foreman can vary in degree depending on the contractor. For example, Olden says that his

Nobody's perfect. But by making mistakes and learning from them, many contractors are able to move a little closer to perfection by fine-tuning their routing operations.

Scott Olden, president, The Lawn Mogul, Dallas, Texas, says the biggest error in judgment his company made was continually overbooking areas that his workers couldn't cover efficiently. "The days when we'd try to combine different zones and areas of town were never very productive," he says. "We usually overbook before we turn things down, so often we'd get to the point where we had bit off more than we could chew."

This resulted in The Lawn Mogul having to make apologies to customers for being off of the schedule they had originally promised.

The simple solution was cutting back in the areas that were overbooked. But another solution involves paying crews on a piecemeal system that encourages them to find the shortest, most efficient routes between scheduled jobs. Olden explains that if a crew member looks at their work order and sees a different way to route them, the order will be modified to reflect the worker's suggestion. "Ultimately, they're getting paid for the work they produce, so there's an incentive for them to figure out, 'Does this route make sense?'"

Routing new clients into established schedules posed a problem for Mike Lueders, president, Lueders, Medfield, Mass. "We had run into trouble for not being diligent enough about routing in new clients as we get them, leaving it all to the technician in the field to get them

crew foremen almost completely in charge of their job sites and crews. "There's a general manager who supervises the crews, but ultimately, we put a lot of responsibility on the driver of the truck," he explains. "Each

inserted into the route," he explains.

Lueders found that one way to combat the inefficiency inherent in sloppy scheduling is to have a coded map page printed to accompany work orders. "They'll actually take a general map book of the area with them, but on the work order itself, we'll print the appropriate page number to refer to in the map book and a grid code to locate the street," he says adding that if there are further issues with regard to finding a property, specific step-by-step instructions will also be printed out, in detail, on the work order. "So it might say, 'Go to the dead end and down the gravel driveway,' when someone might not have even realized there was a house down there."

Brad Coolidge, account manager for West Central Fla., Servello & Son, Orange City, Fla., says his biggest learning experience sprung from an attempt at mixing workers of specific expertise with jobs that didn't suit them. For example, mixing workers that excel at small properties with large jobs, and vice versa, in an attempt to broaden workers horizons. "It just doesn't work out," Coolidge says. "You know the smaller properties in residential are much more critical on detail. It's the smaller businesses and homeowners that are really going to pay particular and close attention to the micro-detail aspect of their landscape."

In Coolidge's experience, crewmembers often are better at one than the other. The problems created by mixing and matching in this way were easily solved by Servello & Son. They simply stopped doing it. — **Will Nepper**

Lessons Learned

USE READER SERVICE #62

Routing Right

crew has one foreman and one worker. The foreman tracks complaints and deals with them directly. The next step up in our chain of command is the general manager. Basically, they're the liaison between the office and the crew."

Russo says that foremen for Russo Lawn & Landscape are also given complete responsibility of their crews and job sites. He adds that they receive little help from management in dealing with day-to-day job trials. "If they need extra fuel mix for two-cycle equipment because they're going to be using a lot of hedge trimmers, I'm not going to tell them that," Russo says. "It's the foreman's responsibility. They're in charge of the site's condition and making sure the job is staying within the budgeted hours," he says.

Routing Right. Even though productivity can be increased in numerous ways, picking up the pace on a job can only do so much if a crew's schedule has it routed across gapping expenses. Therefore, it's the scheduling and routing of a crew that can make or break a company's day-to-day efficiency.

Olden plots his crews' routes geographically using a map of the city and an eight-zone structure that's split between commercial and residential. "We have the city divided up into eight zones and each crew is responsible for one zone," he says adding that one strategy that keeps labor hours on budget is that the same crews handle the same areas week after week. He explains that residential jobs are usually left for the latter part of the week so that homes look good for the weekend, while commercial jobs are knocked out on Mondays and Tuesdays so that businesses can look good for the workweek ahead. One benefit of this strategy is that it adheres to most customers' preferences anyway. This means less compromise over scheduling and fewer instances of conflict between customer and account manager.

"We have more zones than we have crews so there are some days that we're not in certain areas," Olden says, adding that he's also careful not to over-sell any of the zones. This means closely monitoring the quality and time spent on a particular zone to assure that the energy, labor and man-hours being expended there are worth the time and effort.

Crews at Leuders also are routed geographically, but only after they've first been sorted by job type. Because similar application

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Routing Right

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jobs usually require much of the same equipment and supplies, grouping by type can help eliminate the time-wasting process of loading and unloading trucks between jobs.

Lueders also explains that crews are routed in an arrangement that starts them at the job furthest from the shop and works them back in toward the main office, so that as they progress through the schedule, they are incrementally moving back toward home base. This eliminates the largest block of driving early in the day and shortens the distance a crew needs to travel should they need to restock their trucks.

When customers specify what day of the week they require service, Lueders' planning strategy allows the routing schedule to be accommodating. A weekly scheduling meeting of account managers recognizes these requests and groups those jobs with other, similar accounts. "Those are our field planning meetings," Lueders says. "They happen on Thursday for the coming week and they're critical."

An alternative to grouping similar jobs is scheduling according to expertise. Coolidge explains why this works for Servello & Son: "You've got people who are stronger than others in some areas. So we first have to define what our employees' capabilities are," he says, adding that smaller commercial jobs are good for employees who excel in detail-oriented edging and trimming, while the larger commercial accounts also require attention to detail, but an eye for the big picture that is less a priority on smaller jobs.

"I don't want to take people who are used to taking care of small commercial jobs like a bank, and stick them out in a 480-unit, 50-acre apartment complex," he says. "We like to keep them in the same niche - so maybe we'll have four or five different bank properties. We'll group those jobs together and route them so they have the least amount of windshield time possible."

One benefit of this technique, Coolidge says, is that it encourages the development of an expertise in crewmembers. That way,

when a new account is added to the schedule, it's easy to decide who will get it, based on the type of job it is. "We like our people to be specialized in the different types of properties that we service," he says.

Russo explains that, like Lueders, his far-away jobs (between 15 and 20 miles away) are routed so that his crews move back toward the office gradually, stop-by-stop.

ADVANCED TECHNIQUES. Once a crew arrives on the scene to perform its service for a customer, management must rely on the tenacity of its workers to be efficient. However, some contractors explore strategies beyond the basic best practices to help drive efficiency.

High-tech industry innovations like the use of global positioning satellite (GPS) systems or routing software have made quantum leaps in their evolution during the last few years. Many contractors have found that scheduling software can eliminate the

(continued on page 177)



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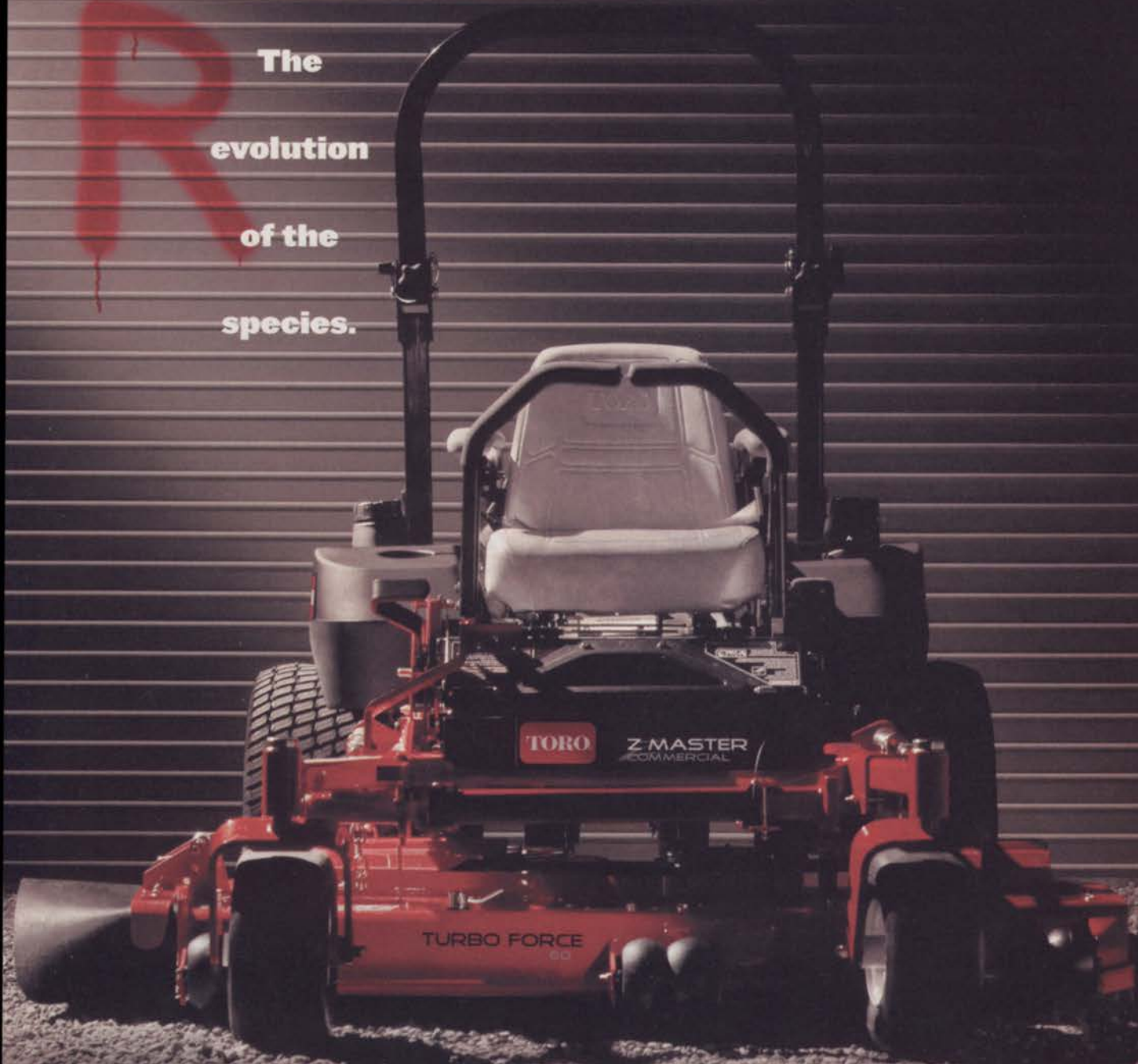


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by Lauren Spiers

Irrigation controllers are highly sophisticated components of irrigation systems. And with knowledge of plant-soil-water relationships, contractors can help their clients save significant amounts of water and money.

Irrigation controllers, usually mounted in easily accessible but out-of-the-way locations, often have operating instructions inside the cover so property managers can easily adjust irrigation settings as needed. Photo: Hunter

Ahh, the remote control.

Gone are the days when television watchers had to drag themselves off the sofa to change the channel. And now with VCRs and high-tech digital products that can be set to record programs while the user is otherwise engaged, no one has to worry about missing their favorite shows. Even kitchen appliances are getting in on the action with ovens that will refrigerate a roast from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m., start cooking it at 375 degrees and have everything perfectly basted when the family gets home from work.

If only it could slice and serve, too.

In the face of widespread laziness, consumers are becoming more technology savvy and manufacturers are developing bigger and better automated systems for just about everything. But the irrigation industry is ahead of the curve, having developed automatic irrigation controllers as early as the 1950s. And unlike television remotes that require the user to stick around to change the channel, irrigation controllers are, for the most part, set-it-and-forget-it products that will effectively water landscapes and leave contractors and customers with time to spare.

LIKE CLOCKWORK. On large residential or commercial properties, an irrigation system can have dozens of spray heads and rotors installed to cover the entire area. But who has the time to manually turn each head on and off? Frankly, no one, which is why that job is left to the irrigation controller. Moreover, controllers are designed to accept data relating to a series of on/off signals. The resulting program, usually covering desired run times for each day of the week, lets the controller activate the irrigation system at predetermined times and intervals.

"Irrigation controllers offer an automatic means to control water application in a landscape," says Jeff Kremicki, residential/commercial product manager, Hunter Industries, San Marcos, Calif. "They offer convenience and water-efficient application if programmed properly."

(continued on page 86)



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Kremicki explains that programming controllers is easy and similar between manufacturers' brands. "First, the contractor determines what the landscape needs as far as water," he notes. "Then, they choose a valve to program and tell that valve its start and run time information. From there, you program the number of days you want that start and run time to occur and the controller will follow that program automatically."

Installation is equally straightforward, requiring knowledge of low-voltage wiring. "When you design an irrigation system, everything gets wired back to the controller," explains Rod Dick, contractor controllers product manager, Rain Bird, San Diego, Calif. "The controller is generally mounted on the side of a building or in the garage – some fixed location that can easily access all the valves. For each valve, you bring a wire back to the controller and, with the system plugged in, the contractor can set the watering program for each valve."

Quick TIP

While wiring an irrigation controller generally requires only a screwdriver, some wire cutters and low-voltage wiring knowledge, some systems call for a little extra power. "If the controller doesn't just plug into a wall outlet and has to be hardwired in to the building's electricity, we always use a licensed electrician for the job," says Bob Dobson, president, Middletown Sprinkler Co., Port Monmouth, N.J. "For one thing, the national electric code doesn't allow installation of hardwiring without a licensed electrician. Also, there's a liability issue. If, heaven forbid, our wiring sparked a fire, but it was installed by an electrician, the damage would be covered vs. if we tried to do it ourselves." – **Lauren Splers**

Aside from occasionally adjusting the watering schedule, irrigation controllers are mostly maintenance-free after installation. "Controllers will last for years," Kremicki says. "You do have to be careful with electronics – making sure everything is installed properly, waterproofed and protected – but

for the most part controllers don't require regular maintenance and should be able to run from 10 to 15 years without a problem."

Dick comments that, in general, controllers range in cost from \$75 to \$400, with the prices reflecting different controller types

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USE READER SERVICE #69

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HOUSEHOLD Hints

In many cases, after contractors install irrigation systems and controllers, the task of regularly adjusting the system is left up to the homeowner. In order to help these clients achieve optimal watering while limiting the amount of water waste, industry professionals suggest that contractors teach their clients to think of the irrigation controller as another seasonal household maintenance item.

"We point out to our client that if you have to readjust the thermostat in your house, you probably also have to readjust your sprinkler schedule," comments Bob Dobson, president, Middletown Sprinkler Co., Port Monmouth, N.J.

Likewise, "letting the battery die on a battery-operated controller is a big mistake," adds Rod Dick, contractor controllers product manager, Rain Bird, San Diego, Calif. "A nine-volt battery can last up to a year depending on the conditions it's subjected to. When you change the batteries in your smoke alarm, that's a good time to refresh the batteries in these controllers as well."

Reminding homeowners to put "adjust the controller" on their household chore lists can ensure that they don't drown their plants in April or let them wilt in August. Still, other contractors know that busy clients are willing to pay for these services to save themselves time and their lawns from drying out. Dobson is currently looking into becoming a water manager for his clients. "We've seen on the west coast that, due to water shortages, there is a large group of commercial and municipal properties that are willing to pay for services to manage their water," he notes, adding that water management services include everything from maintaining the irrigation system to taking soil tests and identifying the environmental exposure of

plant types on the properties.

As an alternative to managing systems through site visits, irrigation contractors who handle commercial sites with multiple controllers per site have the option of implementing central control systems. With central control, contractors can manage up to 100 sites with 100 controllers each from the comfort of their offices. "The capability of central control something that's been done in the industry before, but it's coming down to a level where it's a lot more accessible," says Dave Shoup, product manager, central controls, Hunter Industries, San Marcos, Calif.

Central control systems allow contractors to remotely access controllers via phone lines or radio signals. Complete systems are pricey, costing \$1,500 or more for the software, plus controller interfaces that can range from \$300 to \$350 for each individual controller to about \$1,000 for site interfaces that are necessary for data to be accessed on a given site. Still, these systems are becoming increasingly popular.

"The central control systems are getting simpler, more capable and their cost is decreasing for smaller clocks and systems, so they're really reaching the masses," Shoup says. "Larger systems are a little more exotic and beyond the capabilities of many users. But newer innovations on the market allow the water manager to, for instance, seasonally adjust all the controllers on all of his properties quickly and easily with just a few mouse clicks rather than sending a technician out to manually update hundreds of controllers."

Because water managers are able to offer clients a number of controller adjustment options, landscapes will finally get the attention they deserve. — **Lauren Spiers**

and available features. "Basic mechanical controllers with internal gear operation and no LCD components are generally the least expensive, followed by electromechanical controllers, which are the most popular type," he says. "With electromechanical models, there is a bit more cost involved because of the electronics and the LCD screen that lets the user see the different stations that are being updated. Modular models are usually the most expensive but are extremely convenient because they can be expanded as the irrigation system grows."

FEATURE PRESENTATION. Unlike irrigation components like sprays and rotors, selecting the type of controller to use is less dependent upon size than upon the features contractors need in their designs. "If you have a 20-zone site, a 12-zone controller isn't

going to work for you," remarks Brodie Bruner, vice president of sales and marketing, Weathermatic, Garland, Texas. "It's like buying a truck to haul something that's a certain size. You already know what size bed you need, so you start looking at features like fuel efficiency and four-wheel drive." As a rule, Bruner notes that controllers that accommodate more zones have more features because they're being used to control more areas.

Most contractors look for products that will solve common watering problems they see in their clients' landscapes — primarily, overwatering. "Part of the problem when you have residential and commercial customers adjusting their own controllers is that they tend to make the timing uniform," comments Bob Dobson, president, Middletown Sprinkler Co., Port Monmouth,

N.J. "Also, a lot of contractors may not want to bother coming back out to adjust the system as the weather changes, so in April they input a schedule that will suffice for July and August and they're putting down five times more water in the spring than is necessary."

The excess water applied to landscapes in these situations can drown plants and create waste situations where water runs off the property, unused. However, there are several features available on controllers that can ease this problem, as well as some that make operation even simpler.

Soil moisture and rain sensors are the prime solutions to overwatering. "On most controllers, you can add moisture or rain sensors that will detect the amount of water available to the soil," Dick says. Rain sensors, which are either placed in the land-

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BUSINESS BASICS: Water Management

(continued from page 88)

scape and wired to the controller or mounted wirelessly on the customer's roof, collect water and keep controllers from operating irrigation systems in rainy conditions. Similarly, soil moisture sensors are buried in the ground and collect soil moisture data, disabling the controller when the landscape is already wet. Products like these can run from \$50 to \$100.

"There are also controllers with water budgeting features that allow you to cut back the percentage of water applied at different times of year without changing the basic program," Dick adds. "We're seeing sensors and water budgeting become more popular as more people are becoming aware of the costs related to wasted water."

Dobson uses both sensors and water budgeting on irrigation systems he installs. "We've put rain sensors on every system we've ever installed," he says. "But one of the things we also look for is a controller that has a capability of bypassing the rain sensor.

"WHAT WE'RE DOING WITH THIS NEW TECHNOLOGY IS TAKING OUT THE HUMAN ELEMENT — THE PERSON WHO WOULD HAVE TO MAKE THE CHANGES ON A MONTHLY, WEEKLY OR SEASONAL BASIS. ET SYSTEMS ARE GOING TO MAKE THOSE CHANGES AUTOMATICALLY ON A DAILY BASIS, WHICH RESULTS IN VERY PRECISE MANIPULATION OF THE IRRIGATION CONTROLLER." — JIM LAICHE

If we had ¼ inch of rain yesterday, there may be enough moisture in the rain sensor to keep the system from turning on. However, if the customer is scheduled to receive a fertilizer treatment that needs to be watered in, or if crews need to service the system, you can throw the bypass switch to allow the system to come on again."

In terms of water budgeting, Dobson finds that "seasonal adjust" features let his clients adjust their watering schedules as needed, without disturbing the programs he origi-

nally scheduled. "We tell our customers that if they need more water, dial the program up to 120 percent, and as the season starts to cool off, dial it back to 75 percent. Doing that will just multiply the existing time setting by the percentage they choose. On most controllers, you can go up 150 to 200 percent. So, if we've programmed a 40-minute run time and the customer chooses to run it at 150 percent, that zone will run for 60 minutes."

Another feature manufacturers are see-

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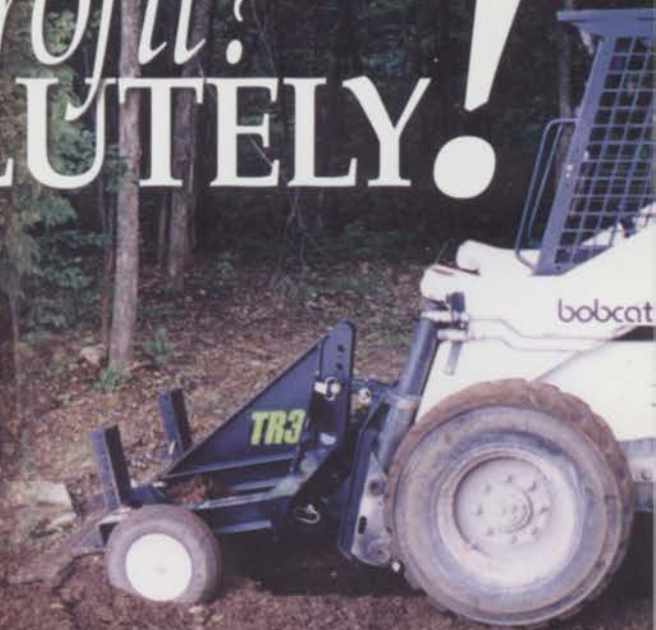
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(continued from page 90)

Simple SOIL BREAKDOWN

Proper irrigation depends on knowing the type of soil in the area being watered. In a presentation at the Green Industry Expo in November 2003, Kurt Thompson, irrigation products manager, Hughes Supply, Orlando, Fla., provided the charts below to determine soil type and how much water to apply.

Step One: Fill a jar half way with a soil sample from the property in question. Fill the jar the remainder of the way with water, shake it up and let the particles settle. Heavy sand particles will rest on the bottom of the jar, with silt and clay settling in layers on top (Figure 1). From there, divide the height, in inches, of each layer by the full height of the settled sample to determine what percent of the soil sample is made up of sand, silt and clay.

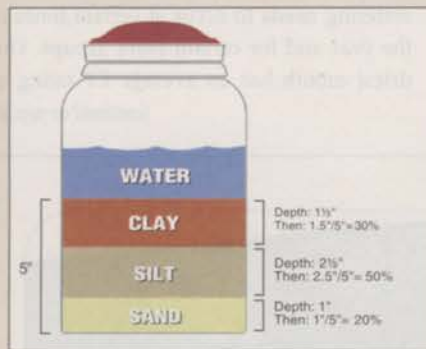


Figure 1

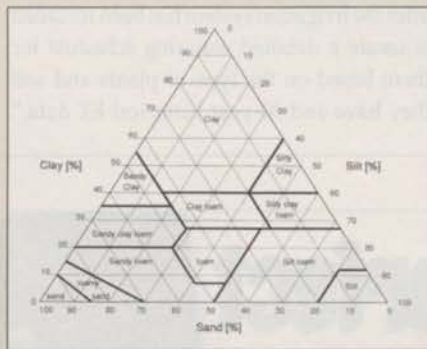


Figure 2

SOIL TEXTURE CLASS	BASIC INFILTRATION RATE (INCHES/HOUR)
Clay	.12
Silty Clay	.18
Clay Loam	.25
Silty Clay Loam	.25
Sandy Clay Loam	.20
Sandy Clay	.12
Silt	.40
Silt Loam	.43
Loam	.54
Sandy Loam	.75
Loamy Sand	.86
Fine Sand	1.25

Figure 3

Step Two: Take the percentages gleaned from Step One and find the corresponding number on the Soil Triangle (Figure 2). Each face of the triangle represents one component of the soil mix, so be sure to apply the percentages with the appropriate triangle side. The point at which these three lines intersect identifies the sample's soil type.

Step Three: The soil type identified in Step Two has a specific infiltration rate, which is listed on the soil infiltration chart (Figure 3). This infiltration rate relates how many inches of water the soil can move per hour. By reminding water managers that clay soils hold water much longer than sandy soils, using this information when setting irrigation schedules can help keep contractors from putting down too much water and risking run-off. — Lauren Spiers

ing become more popular is modularity. "This is one of the features we've seen really take off from a controller design standpoint," Kremicki says. "Modularity offers the contractor several things, and one of them is expandability because the contractor can customize the controller to the site."

Kremicki explains that modular controllers allow contractors to increase an irrigation system in size without purchasing an entirely new controller. For instance, if a contractor installs a six-valve irrigation system on a client's front yard, he can use a six-station controller to run one wire back to the controller from each valve. But what if the client decides to have the contractor install irrigation in the back yard the following year? With the front yard already using all six stations, the contractor would need to purchase a second controller to handle the back yard.

Modular controllers, however, allow contractors to install additional stations on existing controllers to expand irrigation systems. Depending on the number of stations, expansion modules range in cost from \$40 for three stations to \$100 for eight stations.

"Contractors are all looking for controllers with the intelligence to know how much it needs to water so it doesn't water too little or too much," Bruner comments. He cites controller features like flow sensors and weather-based irrigation intelligence to fulfill these wishes (see *Irrigation Innovations on, starting below, for more information*).

Kremicki also notes "non-volatile" memory as a helpful programming feature. Though all controllers are equipped with surge protection, should a power outage occur altogether, non-volatile memory retains controllers' preset programs and saves the contractor from having to reprogram.

"One of the questions we ask when we add features is, 'What can we add to make this controller easier to operate?'" Kremicki explains. "Because of that thinking in the industry, it's very easy to troubleshoot a controller now." For instance, some controllers on the market can be set up to alert contractors when a problem occurs in the system. If a spray head breaks, for instance, flow sensors could tell the controller to shut down the system and send a pager alert to the contractor noting the valve or head causing the problem. From there, the contractor can go to the site, fix the head and, by using hand-held controls available on some models, reset the controller from the field when the problem is cleared up.

IRRIGATION INNOVATIONS. With the number of advanced features available, it's hard to believe that irrigation controller

manufacturers could think of ways to make their products even better. But they have.

One of the biggest advancements in controller technology and water management is the development of ET-based controllers.

"ET" stands for evapotranspiration and that's a recognized and accepted standard for determining how much water is used by a landscape," explains Chris Spain, president, HydroPoint, Petaluma, Calif. "The numbers identify specifically how much water has evaporated and how much is being transpired by the plant itself. The problem with basic ET data is that you need a specialized weather station to acquire the data and not very many people want to install a weather station in their back yard."

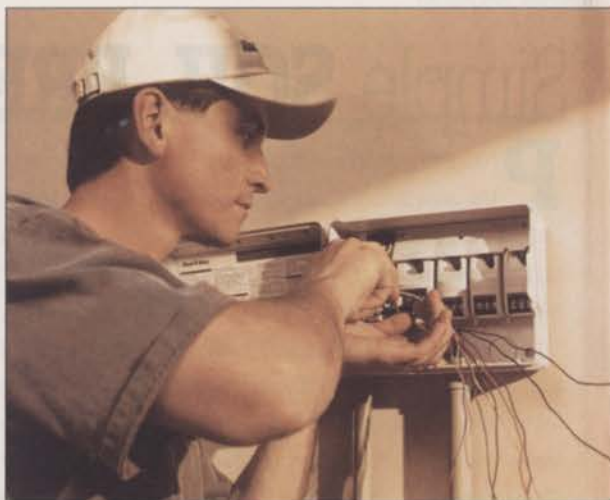
To make ET more accessible, companies like HydroPoint take weather data from several thousand weather stations throughout the United States and wirelessly transfer region-specific information to controllers throughout the country. In many ways, the

Wiring irrigation controllers is an uncomplicated process, but technicians must ensure that all wires are properly attached and protected from the elements. Also, any hardwiring must be done by a licensed electrician.

Photo: Rain Bird

system is similar to the way data is transmitted to computers for GPS vehicle tracking. For contractors like Dobson who don't subscribe to such services (wireless transfer fees can start at about \$4 per month), historical ET data also is useful.

"Part of what we do with our clients after the irrigation system has been installed is create a detailed watering schedule for them based on the type of plants and soil they have and 30-year historical ET data,"



Dobson says. "The ET rates are available online and through other sources and we use that information to determine how much watering needs to occur at certain times of the year and for certain plant groups. Our driest month has an average ET rating of

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THE WORLD LEADER

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Taking on WATER

Everyone learns in elementary school science class that plants need air, water, soil and sunlight to survive – but why? How do plants use those elements and where do they go? Unfortunately, many contractors in the green industry lack knowledge when it comes to plant-soil-water relationships. Without a solid understanding of how these three are linked, contractors risk losing clients over wasteful irrigation systems.

"More than 50 percent of urban water use is going to landscape irrigation, and people estimate that 20 to 80 percent of that is being wasted," says Chris Spain, president, HydroPoint Data Systems, Petaluma, Calif. "The more water that is wasted, the more you have to find water to replace it. What our industry needs to do is find more ways to effectively manage water so less of it is wasted in the first place."

To do this, contractors must think of landscape irrigation in terms of integrated water management (IWM). Similar in theory to integrated pest management, IWM looks at irrigation in terms of site analysis, system design, system installation and water management as inevitably linked to each other. "All of those things blend into one another," says Kurt Thompson, irrigation products manager, Hughes Supply, Orlando, Fla. "You analyze the plants, soil, terrain, etc., on the site so the irrigation system can be properly designed. Once that design is installed, the contractor must manage the water so each plant is receiving no more and no less irrigation than it needs. IWM is an ongoing, interactive process to increase efficiency."

Brodie Bruner adds that a convergence of industry trends is making water management more important, but also more accessible. "On one hand, water is becoming more expensive and sensitivity to water waste is growing," comments the vice president of sales and marketing, Weathermatic, Garland, Texas. "On the other hand, there's a decrease by thousands of dollars in the cost of water management technology, which makes practicing good water management so much easier."

Bruner says that contractors need to have accurate irrigation system designs, properly installed irrigation components and active system management. On the first two counts, he gives contractors grades between C+ and C-, though many professionals receive failing marks on water management as a result of being too reactive to irrigation problems and not proactively managing water use.

"Water management involves knowing that a landscape will use less water in April and a little more in May and a little more in June," Thompson explains. "By slowly ramping up that water use to its peak instead of turning it on in the spring and off in the fall, you're proactively managing water use for the right season."

To begin using an IWM approach, irrigation contractors must get into a mindset of what Thompson calls "aggressive water management." "The first part of the concept is under-

standing how much water the plants need and knowing the precipitation rate of the irrigation system," he says. "From there you divide the need by the precipitation rate and multiply by 60 to determine how many minutes of watering each zone needs. That's a very basic but effective way of scheduling."

Over a series of site visits throughout the year – anywhere from three to 12, depending on how much attention a given system needs – water managers can systematically lessen the amount of water the irrigation system uses, while still maintaining plant health. "Aggressive water management is when the water manager starts dialing back the amount of water being applied to the landscape," Thompson says. "He or she may set up a base program in the irrigation controller and let it run until the landscape looks healthy and green. Then they can back off by 10 percent and see how green it stays. If it still looks healthy, back off by another 10 percent."

If brown areas start to appear in the landscape, Thompson says water managers should adjust the watering in those specific areas. "Alter one or more of the sprinkler heads in the brown area by changing nozzles or making sure the pressure is correct," he says. "Then you might add some water to green it up again and then dial the whole system back again. You keep cutting back until you can't micromanage the system from an equipment standpoint anymore. You've fixed the equipment in a minor way as much as you can and the only way to save more water and more money is through a major renovation, which may or may not be the best option for that site."

Aggressive water management is very effective, but not a speedy process. "It takes two full growing seasons for contractors to fully fine-tune and cut back the system as far as it will go, because it takes a while for stress to show up," Thompson says. "In June, I may send out a signal to cut back the water 10 percent on all my properties and wait a week to see if any stress shows up. Then I cut it back another 10 percent. During the third week I come back and do it again. Pretty soon, the weather is going to change and in July it will become hotter and drier, so cutting back doesn't really help. I have to wait for the next year to fine-tune my data again."

Bruner notes that proactive water management is a business opportunity for irrigation contractors, especially considering that high-quality irrigation controllers are becoming more affordable. "Until recently, only the most expensive irrigation systems were being managed because those customers could afford expensive weather stations and central control systems," he says. "Now, those products that used to be \$15,000 are available in more accessible versions that start out at only \$200 or \$300 and contractors can start selling that 'smart controller' technology. Our industry makes money by saving water and customers will be more willing to work with contractors who can actually help them save money." – **Lauren Spiers**

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(continued from page 96)

about 7 inches, which means that during that period the irrigation system has to replenish 7 inches of water transpired by the plant. At the same time, each plant type has a crop coefficient that indicates whether that particular plant needs more or less water than what the ET rating suggests. We look at all that information and calculate the pre-

cipitation rates of all our spray heads to determine the run times to dial into the controllers."

Spain notes that automated ET-based irrigation systems do Dobson's math automatically and adjust the controller's settings on a daily basis as new ET information comes in. "One of the first things we do,

Check our March Online Extras section for information on how to educate clients about proper use of their irrigation controllers.

instead of having the contractor estimate how much to irrigate or come up with a schedule, is have the controller ask a series of questions about the landscape they're irrigating – what kind of plants are in a certain zone? What's the slope? What's the soil type?," Spain says. "They're easy-to-answer questions and we certify contractors so they're trained on how to install the system, but it's really a simple process."

Jim Laiche also sees ET-based systems becoming more popular in the future. "What we're doing with this new technology is taking out the human element – the person who would have to make the changes on a monthly, weekly or seasonal basis," explains the commercial business development manager, Toro, Richmond, Va. "ET systems are going to make those changes automatically on a daily basis, which results in very precise manipulation of the irrigation controller."

Though ET-based irrigation controllers are more expensive than those without integrated ET technology, the more precise irrigation it affords realizes a quick cost savings for the customers.

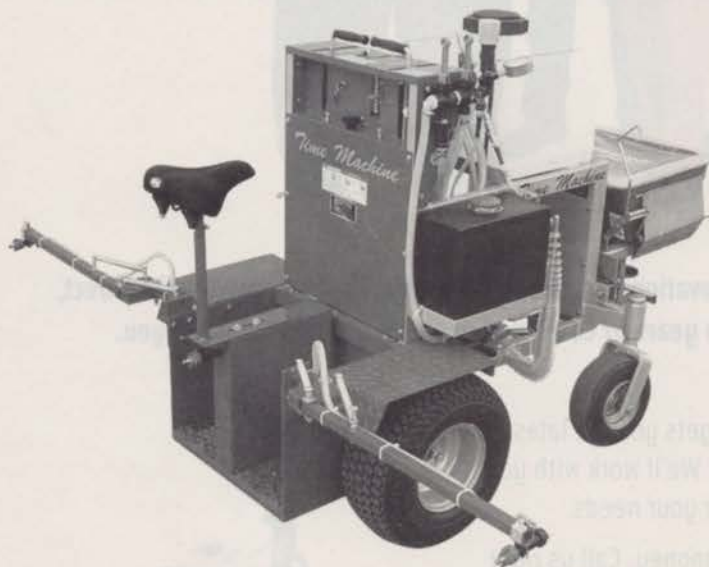
"The ET systems can cost about \$500 for a 12-station controller, but when you factor in the total cost of ownership, the cost to the end user is actually lowered and most users see a return on their investment within a year," Spain says. "If you look at the cost of wasting water or the risks to your landscape when you go on vacation – such as the controller not intelligently adding more water when there's a heat wave – not to mention the environmental and societal costs of introducing polluted run-off into our water supplies, ET-based controllers are actually extraordinarily economical."

Across the industry, most contractors and manufacturers agree that water is becoming a more tenuous resource that must be used sparingly. With such strides being made in irrigation controllers – the brains behind irrigation systems – contractors can easily and economically heighten the efficiency of their landscape watering practices. **LI**

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

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Paver Products

by Will Nepper

Segmental paving installation provides many landscape contractors with a durable, low-maintenance, eye-pleasing add-on to offer customers.

Landscape contractors who offer paver installation as part of their services quickly learn that the add-on is more than just another way to upsell a job. Interlocking pavers can offer both residential and commercial customers a permanent, low maintenance, aesthetically pleasing way to increase curb appeal and property value.

Whether it be a foot path, a driveway or a patio, an interlocking paver surface can offer practical functionality in addition to aesthetic appeal. With

multiple colors, textures, shapes and materials to choose from, the design opportunities for any project can become limitless.

However, to make a paver venture a success, landscape contractors must educate themselves on trends, materials and practical installation before they enter the market.

PAVER BEHAVIOR. By definition, a paver is a segmental unit, usually constructed of either clay or concrete, applied on either a flexible or rigid base in a variety of setting systems to provide a sturdy surface area in a number of applications, according to Ted Corvey, director of pavers, Pine Hall Brick, Winston-Salem, N.C.

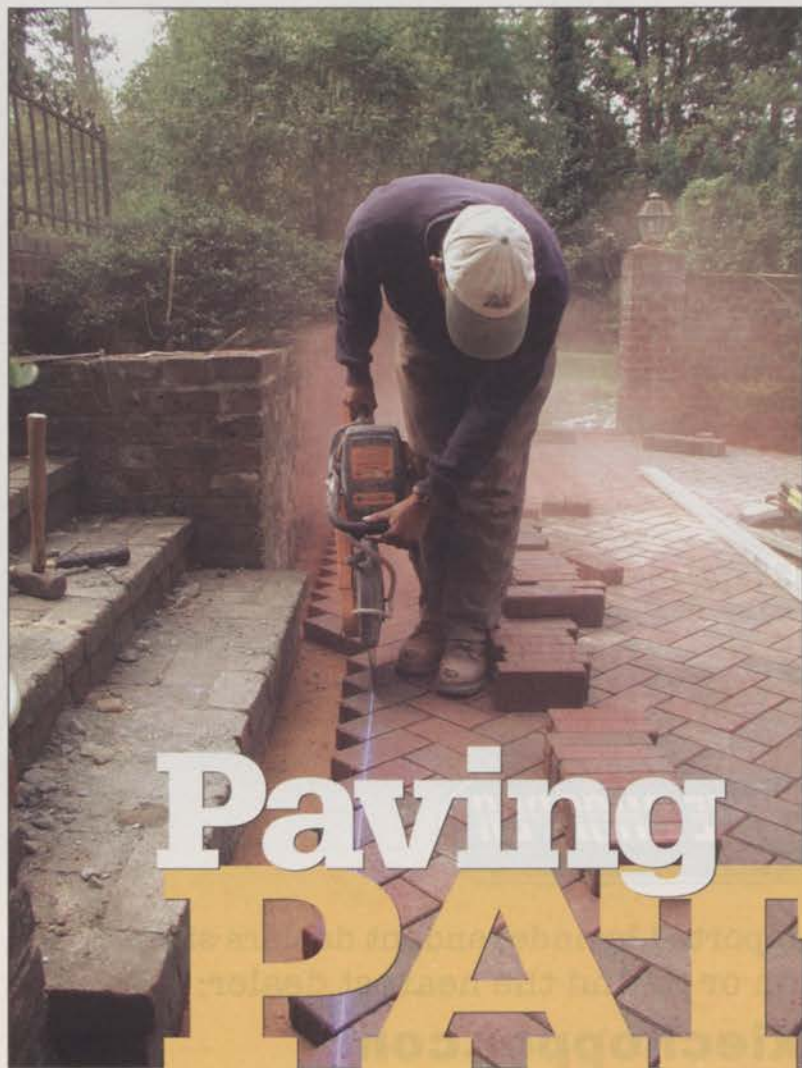
Corvey says that pavers are a growing market and that landscape contractors have a large hand in that growth. "If you look at the statistics about two-thirds of the market is in the residential category, and as big as that market is, by and large it's being installed by landscape contractors," he says. "They might be the smaller jobs of less than 500 square feet, but it's fueling a big part of the market's growth. Primarily because consumers are recognizing the value of landscape expenditures in creating curb appeal that enhances the value of the house and maybe also creates an outdoor room, which increases living space."

In addition to adding value, pavers also come with a slew of practical reasons to employ them over other paving alternatives. Glenn Wiley, assistant general manager, Unilock,

(continued on page 102)



Pavers can turn a property's front walkway (above) into a functional aesthetic eye-catcher. Though labor-intensive, paver service can be a lucrative add-on for landscape contractors with the diligence to learn the ropes (below). Photos: Pine Hall Brick



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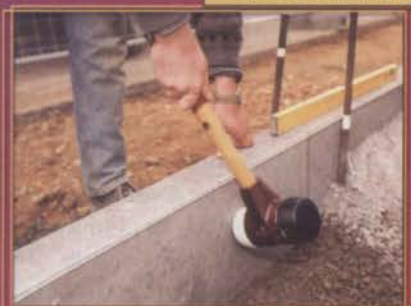
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Paver Products

(continued from page 100)

Rittman, Ohio, says that pavers are often overlooked as residential-exclusive aesthetic products. "That's the biggest misnomer about pavers. People think because it's pretty it can't handle heavy-duty traffic," Wiley says. "But they are a very strong form of pavement. They're used at airports and heavy-duty industrial container terminals because of their strength."

He adds that in addition to strength, pavers offer other benefits, such as flexibility in winter climate conditions, "unlike asphalt and [poured] concrete that are monolithic, one-piece materials that tend to crack." Wiley also mentions that, unlike other types of paving, segmental units can be removed and replaced fairly easily if unrelated sub-surface ground work needs to be done. "If you have a water main break and you have to service something under ground, you can literally lift them up and replace them and no one is the wiser that there has been a repair done," he explains.

MATERIAL ISSUES. While pavers have many advantages, contractors must examine the trade's trends and the different materials before deciding how to position the added service in their market.

Both clay and concrete pavers come with their own lists of pros and cons and deciding on whether to offer one, the other or both materials is often dependant on the circumstances of the individual contractor.

Steve Jones, president, Pave Tech, Prior Lake, Minn. says that, generally, clay pavers are more expensive than concrete pavers, dependant on several factors. For one, in some cases, clay can be more labor intensive than concrete and it is important for a contractor to remember to charge for that appropriately. "You spend a little more time straightening out the bond lines," he says. "It's a fired process - it's ceramic, so it's not dimensionally as true as a concrete paver." Jones adds that some specialty clay pavers, such as sand-molded bricks that require spe-



Paver installation requires a broad range of expertise that includes excavating, grading and compaction practices. Photo: Pine Hall Brick

cial care and delicacy during installation can sometimes cost up to 20 percent more in labor.

Corvey explains that 30 years ago most pavers on the market were clay before being over-shadowed for decades by the introduction of concrete pavers to which he credits much of the industry's growth. "The concrete paving industry took a market that was basically 100 million units sold annually and turned it into the 2.4 billion units sold

(continued on page 104)

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Paver Products

(continued from page 102)

annually that it is today."

Only recently have clay pavers been re-discovered and recognized as fashionable, Corvey says. Though he cites a difference in price between concrete and clay pavers that makes clay up to 35 percent more expensive,

"CONSUMERS ARE RECOGNIZING THE VALUE OF LANDSCAPE EXPENDITURES IN CREATING CURB APPEAL THAT ENHANCES THE VALUE OF THE HOUSE AND MAYBE ALSO CREATES AN OUTDOOR ROOM, WHICH INCREASES LIVING SPACE." — TED CORVEY

he also maintains that price will vary around the country and will depend on where the manufacturer is located and the distance the material has to travel. Clay from Nebraska will look entirely different than the clay from North Carolina, so pavers from Ne-

braska can be sold in North Carolina even though it may have to travel a tremendous distance.

It's this uniqueness combined with clay pavers' color permanence that make it an appealing alternative to concrete pavers, Corvey says. "Most of the time the customer will choose clay pavers because they are looking for a specific color, shape, or look, and clay pavers offer more aesthetic choices," Corvey says.

SURFACE TRENDS. But there are several more choices to be made by the paver customer beyond concrete and clay. As pavers continue to increase their presence in the landscape contracting market, products are being introduced in new colors and textures.

"Once upon a time, there was one style and one texture of paver that you made in a



Pavers can offer a sturdy alternative to asphalt driveways. Photo: Pine Hall Brick

few colors, and it had to be used independently," Wiley says. "So you were only able to change the color of a paving stone within the same job. Today you can change shape, color, texture and size from one paving stone to another within the same project. By mixing shapes, colors, sizes and textures together in the same project – you're quilting these products together to create a very striking paver design."

Wiley adds that the current predominant trend involves larger module size. "When you think of a paving stone, you may think of a 4-by-8-inch rectangular brick shape," he says. "Things are changing into larger-scaled

(continued on page 106)

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USE READER SERVICE #86

U.S. LAWNS IS GROWING GREEN

The idea of franchising isn't necessarily new to the landscape industry, but only one company has figured out a strategy to build a network of more than 100 franchises specializing in commercial landscape maintenance in 25 states across the United States. That company is U.S. Lawns, and the company is ready to capitalize on the momentum of its significant growth to build an even larger network of growing landscape firms nationwide. Here, Ken Hutcheson, president of U.S. Lawns, talks about what makes the organization so successful.

How does being a part of U.S. Lawns help contractors grow their businesses?

Hutcheson: We start out working with the franchisees early in the sales process. We've identified a market niche through our 15 years of experience with more than 100 franchisees. There are certain properties we know are more conducive to how we conduct our business. Then we tele-survey (where we're trying to learn about them and not sell to them) those people looking for answers to certain questions to help prequalify them. We get the relationship to a point and then hand it off to the franchisee so that they can get their hands around the customer's concerns and identify exactly what the customer wants and make sure we deliver the good value proposition.

In addition, we have a series of direct mail programs that we put into place in the spring and fall for various services and we offer sales newsletters to build the relationship.

We also have proprietary contact management software so the franchisee manages the whole process along with help from our staff.

How do you help franchisees manage their businesses?

Hutcheson: The primary tools

we provide are the facilitators we have out in the field helping the franchisees implement the systems, and they're located in every region of the country we're in. That way we can be intimate with our customer — the franchisee. These facilitators set us apart from being a consultant or an association.

People in the system tell us that it works because of the support they get having this person available to them.

Plus, specialists such as our CPA, who does nothing but provide business management support to create a budget, sales action plan and business management plan, back up the franchisee.

In addition, we've gathered a lot of numbers, so we know what the trials and tribulations are, we can anticipate them and tell the franchisee when they need to conserve cash or spend more aggressively.



Ken Hutcheson

them into the USL systems. We continue that training onsite through various training modules we have. We also have an annual conference and regional conferences as well. Because of the market density we have developed, we are able to

take training on the road to the franchisees and get the information deeper into their companies. The facilitator also delivers components as individual franchisees need them, so this isn't just cookie cutter where we're overwhelming the franchisee.

What does the typical U.S. Lawns franchise look like?

Hutcheson: We have three phases of franchises with each franchise being classified based on their time in our system, their business volume and business maturity. Ideally they move through that phasing in three to five years and go from \$0, zero time with us and no systems to \$750,000 to \$1.5 million. Customers are 100 percent commercial, and we like to see each franchise serving 45 to 65 customers to reach that revenue target.

They will have built a team including an operations manager, an office person and several foremen. The franchisee should own the facility or have one that really works well, and he should spend his time working with customers and the operations manager, but not being out in the field himself.

Now, he has created a sustainable business that isn't dependent on his day-to-day presence, and that's an issue in this industry. If your business depends on you physically, then you are exposed.

U.S. LAWNS

What training does U.S. Lawns provide?

Hutcheson: New franchisees start with a week in our new Florida headquarters to totally immerse

Unfortunately, quality paver application is never as easy as dropping heavy slabs into place on a property. Like any other service, paver installation requires a modicum of expertise and more than a little bit of practical training. Steve Jones, president, Pave Tech, Prior Lake, Minn., says that from a manufacturer's perspective, contractors who offer the service thrive – but only when they understand the trade and train thoroughly on application.

Jones knows what can go wrong when contractors don't put in the time to learn the trade before they add it to their service menus. "When you're doing pavers, that in and of itself requires knowledge of many specialties: excavating, understanding proper compaction practices and machinery and knowing how to grade properly," he says. "There are a lot of sub-talents to being able to lay pavers."

Faulty installation can lead to big problems and according to Fred Adams, vice president of Fred Adams Paving Co., Raleigh, N.C., the No. 1 problem is drainage. "You've got to provide some way for the water to get out and away from the paver," he says. "You need a good sub-base, particularly in climates with a lot of moisture. A walkway or a patio has to have at least 4 inches of coarse aggregate base underneath to create a long-term quality project."

Wiley explains that there are now permeable pavers that allow all the water on a site to drain through the paver. "When you interlock the pavers together, there are 2-by-2-inch squares or 'open void areas.' The water percolates through those voids and into the groundwater," he says.

Fred Adams, vice president of Fred Adams Paving Co., Raleigh, N.C. explains that paver installation success often boils

down to the quality of the foundation. "You need to excavate to allow for the sub-base, setting bed and the paver, so you are above the existing ground and the water will run off," he instructs.

The next step, according to Adams, entails developing a sub-base. "You'll want to compact the sub-base and bring in aggregate on top," he explains. Next Adams recommends a 1-inch sand setting bed – ideally made up of coarse angular concrete sand. Remember to compact each layer along the way.

"Your aggregate base coarse should extend 6 to 12 inches beyond the edge of the patio, which is critical to a secure edge restraint," Adams offers. After that is accomplished, it is time to actually lay the pavers.

"You need to vibrate a paver down into the sand," Adams continues. For vibration, Adams recommends a plate compactor – a mower-sized machine that usually can be rented for under \$200 a week – with a 5,000-pound compaction force. The last step is adding sand to the surface to fill the joints."

If installation goes off without a hitch, chances are little maintenance will be required to care for the paver surface after installation.

"Sometimes there are weeds growing between joints in some cases," relates Ted Corvey, director of pavers, Pine Hall Brick, Winston-Salem, N.C. "That can be handled by either pulling them out manually or through the use of a preemergent weed killer at the beginning of the season."

Corvey also says that joint sand stabilization in the installation process can help protect the sand against deterioration while helping to prevent the growth of weeds and anthills. Outside of that he explains that most surface stains can be taken care of with water and a broom. –Will Nepper

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Paver Products

(continued from page 106)

modules where you're getting into 6 by 12 inches. We've seen that 12 by 12 is also very popular and we're actually even getting into larger sizes like 16 by 16."

In addition to choosing larger paver stones to make up their patios or walkways, today's clients prefer pavers that give an antique or aged look. Whether you refer to it

as tumbled or antiqued, there's a lot to be said for a product that can be priced higher after it's been roughed up to look aged. "People want something that looks like it's been there for awhile," Corvey explains. "I think from a concrete paver manufacturer's perspective, it makes their product look more like stone – that cobbled together look

that is extremely popular."

Neutral earth-tones like tans, browns and reds, fall in line with the emerging preference for older looking pavers, Wiley explains. "Generally speaking, with the tumbled products it doesn't really make sense to have a bright vibrant color in a product that you want to look antiqued," he says.

Clay products also offer a smaller palate of color choices – a con that is neutralized by clay's naturally vivid hues and color-permanence, Jones explains, adding that this exposes one of the disadvantages of concrete – the colors they come in often fade as the surface wears over time. "The pigment is a function of the percentage of cement paste that makes the topping of the paver. So as that wears a little bit on the surface, you'll see a visible loss of color," he says.

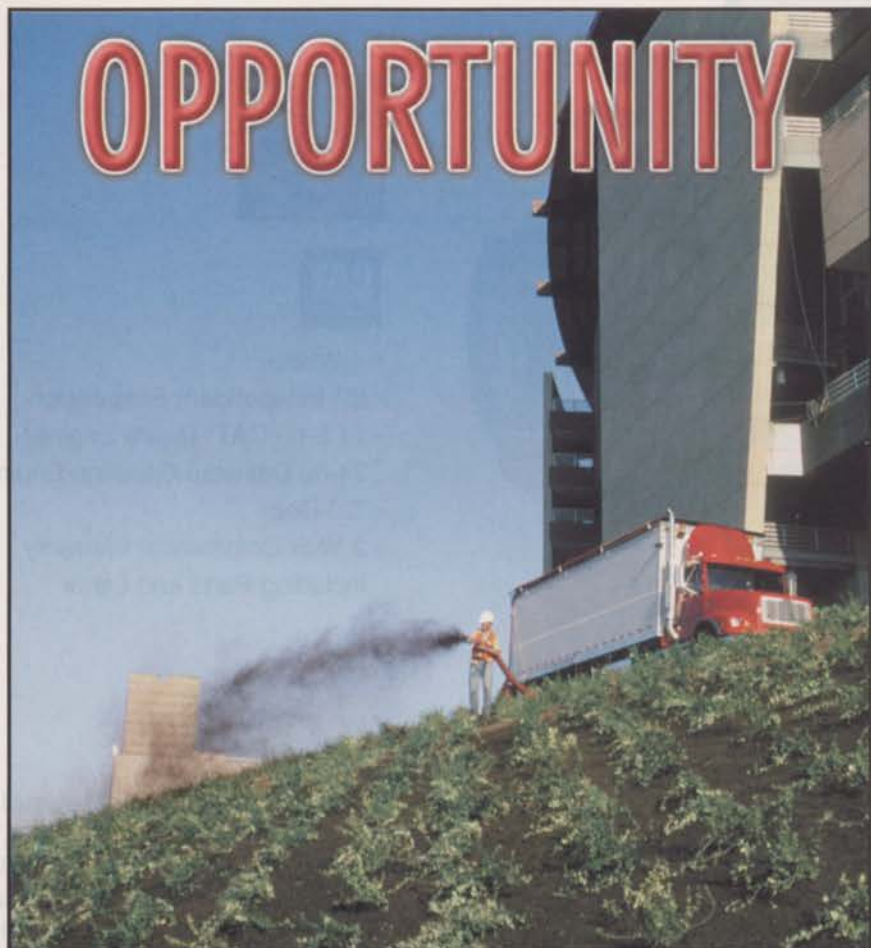
With regard to paver laying styles, Wiley expresses that trends have moved recently towards non-patterns. "Random designs are probably the most popular right now," he explains. "There's a lot of mixing different sizes together so that there's not just one size laid out in the body of the job, but rather a mix of various sizes that work within a module with one another."

Corvey echoes this sentiment. "We're seeing a lot more eclectic use of materials," he says. "You certainly see it on properties where they combine stone, concrete and clay. You may see a light-colored clay brick house, but there will be a cobble-stone-looking, lighter faced, rumbled concrete paver driveway. It looks like stone and it matches up well with the brick."

Jones says that he's observed the average landscaping contractor integrating pavers into their softscape designs. "As pavers grow in the marketplace, we're able to take advantage of that familiarity and expand projects to include driveways," he says.

Corvey agrees, adding that there are great opportunities in segmental paving for contractors because of the growth of the landscaping market. "I think that a contractor can do well with a paver add-on service by offering a choice of materials and by getting trained to provide the best installation for customers." **LL**

The author is assistant editor for Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at wnepper@lawnandlandscape.com.



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USE READER SERVICE #110

by Ali Anderson

MOVING On

Uprooting a large tree and welcoming it to a new home involves careful preparation and detailed risk assessments.

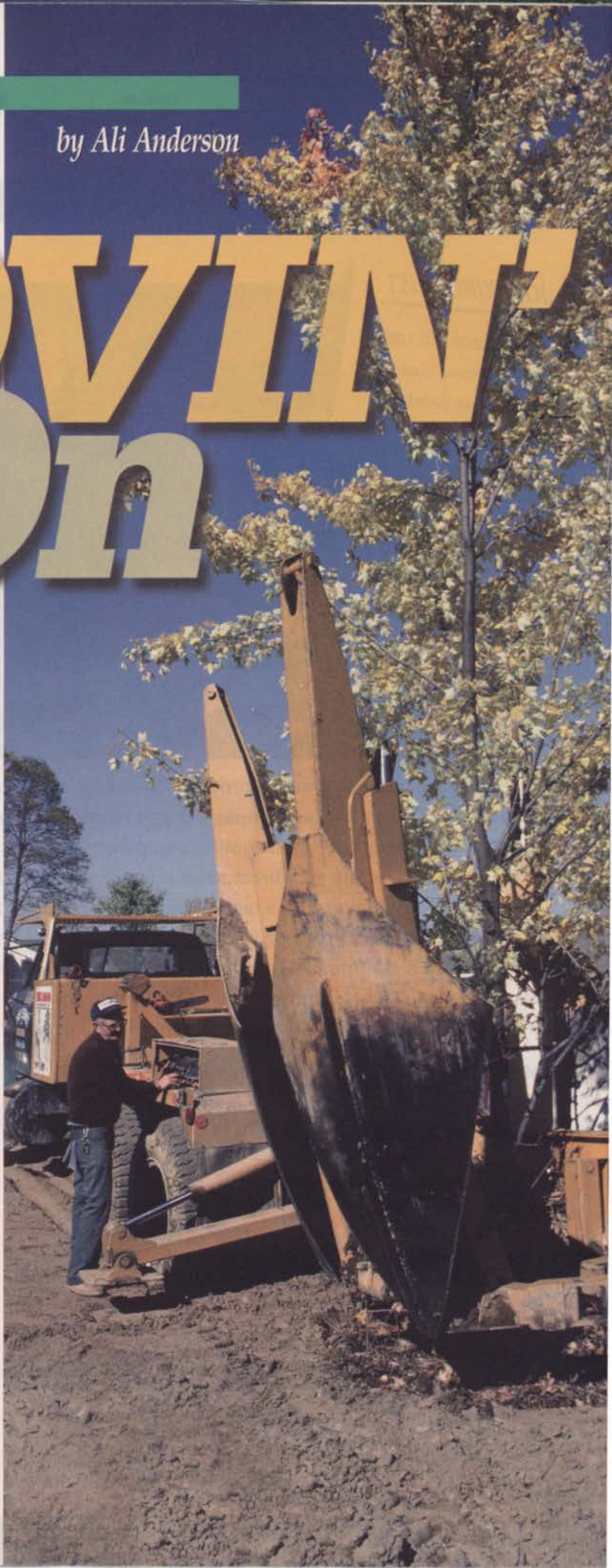
Relocation is never easy.

Regardless of the distance involved, pulling up roots and planting them anew presents a host of stresses – including prepping, packing and planning for the future.

The same is true when it comes to trees, especially those of significant size. And the fact that different tree species mature at varying rates adds to the challenge. Uprooting a leafy giant and moving it to a new home requires close attention to details to get the job done right.

MOVE IT OR LOSE IT. Homeowners and property managers name a variety of motives for relocating trees. However, the most common reason for moving a tree on an established residential property is a building addition, says Bruce Fraedrich, vice president of research, Bartlett Tree Experts, Lebanon, N.J. “With so much tearing down and rebuilding these days, people try to work around existing trees or sometimes move a big tree of historic value in an attempt to salvage a unique specimen,” he says.

Construction projects can force property owners to make a decision between three options – keep the tree where it is and forget the building project, lose the tree and build on the site, or move the tree



Removing a large tree from its growing spot generally requires the help of a tree spade (left) to ensure roots are properly removed and secured for transport. Once the tree's new home is ready (below), a tree spade also can be used to insert the tree in its prepared hole. Photos: Barney Taxel

to a safe spot and move forward with construction.

Often the third option is most attractive. "A homeowner may be adding on to a house and a large tree is in line with where the new driveway would be," Bigham illustrates. "Instead of just chopping it up and grinding it up, the homeowner decides to transplant the tree to the backyard."

The decision to uproot and replant a tree may be driven by emotion as well, Fraedrich notes. Sometimes homeowners opt for a transplant when sentimental value is attached to a tree.

Another motivation for a tree transplant is the desire for a mature structure right away, explains Tim Johnson, consultant, Artistic Arborist, Phoenix, Ariz, and president, American Society of Consulting Arborists. "Customers may be building a house and want to put in a screen to give them privacy from the neighbors," he observes. "They don't want to wait for a small tree to grow up, so they have a more mature one installed."

Property developers also take an interest in large trees, flagging and harvesting those with at least a 10-inch caliper for future landscaping applications, Bigham shares. For appearance purposes, a developer may have a collection of large trees moved or brought in to increase aesthetic appeal on the site and, thus, drive interest from potential purchasers.



CONSIDER RISKS.

Once a property owner decides to investigate the possibility of a tree transplant, the help of a tree care specialist is enlisted. Before scheduling a moving day and discussing relocation expenses, the professional must carefully make assessments to determine if the move should be attempted.

Specifically, professionals should check for insect problems and indications of disease, Bigham advises. "We want to make sure the tree is a good-looking specimen that can absorb the shock of a move."

Internal decay also can present problems. To discern interior issues, look for exterior symptoms such as loose bark and cracks in the trunk, Fraedrich says.

Johnson also advises an inspection of leaf color and density for irregularities to ensure a healthy start to the transplanting procedure. Inconsistent

growth increments also can signal trouble. To discern a tree's growth patterns, look at the elongation between annual buds on branches. If growth in those elongation sections has slowed in the past two years, the tree likely has some internal issues that could prevent a healthy life on a new site.

A tree's overall structure also is a factor to consider, Johnson observes. Older trees rot and often have poor branching structure, which can make for less-than-ideal results following a transplant. Contractors can assess a tree's structure visually and also with the help of hammers, drills and sonic machines – checking for hollowness and internal structural decay.

Professionals also should determine whether a location is appropriate by assessing the condition of the site where the tree will be transplanted, Bigham states. Consider soil grade and possible interference from utilities.

Terrain should be a significant consideration, as well. For instance, a tree living on a flat surface is likely to have struggles if moved to a sloped spot. Adding topsoil can help alleviate the anticipated stress, but sometimes even extensive amendments are not enough to put the tree at ease.

Bigham does not recommend moving trees from sunny to shady spots either. "Whenever you change a tree's climate, it's a big gamble," he says. "You want to keep its environment and climate the same – or at least similar."

The reason: temperatures can vary by 10 degrees or more when comparing shaded and sunlit spots. And although some tree species will adapt to the variation, others will not survive. "Ideally, you want to replant a tree in similar growing conditions," Fraedrich says. "Trees will adapt, but that sudden move from a shady to sunny area could result in some bark scalding, for example. In general, if a tree is growing in full sun, it will not perform as well in a heavily shaded location."

Thus, ensuring consistency from one location to another is top priority. "The success of a tree transplant is dependent on the tree reproducing roots very rapidly," Fraedrich says. "And that root growth is largely dependent on the quality of the soil receiving the tree in its new location."

A check of infiltration and percolation rates – or the pace at which moisture absorbs into the ground – will help contractors distinguish the new soil's compatibility to the original site, Johnson says. He also recommends sending soil samples to a lab for further fertility testing and biological health assessments.

Site evaluations should include considerations

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Transplanting Trees

for equipment as well. Be sure there are no overhead or underground limitations that would prevent work in the specific area. And don't forget to call local utility providers to check the location of buried conduits before digging, Fraedrich says.

Detailed logistics of the move, such as anticipated rootball size and necessary equipment to move that size tree, also should be included in the preparation phase, Johnson adds.

Moving substantial trees typically requires the use of a backhoe for site excavation, a crane with cable rigging for removal and placement on a vehicle, and a flatbed truck or dolly for transportation, Johnson outlines. Smaller trees, with a 10-inch caliper or less, do not necessitate the help of such large equipment. Instead, contractors can move them with tree spades – to properly remove and secure the root system – and backhoes – to backfill the holes left behind.

MOVING DAY. When the anticipated day arrives for a large tree to say goodbye to its lifelong surroundings, planning is crucial.

Specifically, the tree's new home should be primed and ready for the tree's arrival, Fraedrich explains. "You want the tree out of the ground for as little time as possible," he says. "Preparing the receiving hole and amending the soil there first will prevent the tree from sitting around like a fish out of water while you prepare the new spot."

Site preparation often entails tilling and amending the soil in an effort to match the tree's new environment to its former one.

Next, excavate the spot where the tree will be installed. Careful measurement helps professionals figure the precise size of the hole needed to house the tree.

After the hole is prepped, a skilled operator uses a tree spade to extract the tree and its rootball. The time required to move a large tree varies based on terrain, weather, size and location. However, Bigham

(continued on page 114)

Although tree transplants generally cannot be anticipated too far in advance, Bruce Fraedrich, vice president of research, Bartlett Tree Experts, Lebanon, N.J., recommends planning two seasons ahead. This preparation allows the tree care specialist to do some much-needed root pruning – a process of pruning close to the central root structure with the intent of encouraging a stronger, more fibrous root system – before moving day.

"If at all possible, planning ahead and doing some root pruning is the best approach," Fraedrich says. "The tree needs a good growing system so it will be able to grow back in its new home."

Thus, Fraedrich suggests planning at least one growing season ahead – but preferably one full year prior to the transplant. Contractors also may consider soil testing and fertilizing the season before removal to increase the likelihood of success.

— Ali Anderson

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Transplanting Trees

(continued from page 112)

notes that trees moved within a property generally can be removed and reinstalled in 30 minutes or so.

Once the tree has been lifted out of the ground, the tree spade – mounted on the rear of a truck – folds back on top of the truck and tilts backward.

When a tree is too large to be moved with a tree spade, operators must dig the rootball and package it by conventional means. Often the rootball is shaped by hand and then covered with burlap for transport via crane,

bulldozer or flatbed truck.

Removing the tree spade from the hole after planting leaves “void areas” – 2-inch gaps where the spades slide in and out around the circumference, Bigham says. To ensure that air, wind and other elements don't enter those areas and damage the root system, contractors should use soil to fill the gaps.

Once the hole is sufficiently filled, mulching and watering are vital, Bigham says. Contractors may need to stake extremely large trees for added stability as well.

Check our March Online Extras for more information about determining the caliper of mature trees before transplanting them.

TRANSPLANT TRAUMAS. Tree specialists bring a variety of perspectives and approaches to the task of tree relocation. However, regardless of the chosen method, there are a handful of mistakes to avoid.

Underspading a tree is one frequent error, according to Bigham. “If you underspade a tree, that means you're trying to dig a tree that's too large for your equipment. The general rule of thumb says you need 10 inches of spade for 1 inch of caliper.”

So Rocky Fork's 80-inch tree spade can move trees up to 8 inches in caliper, and a 66-inch spade could move trees up to 6½ inches. “If you try to move a tree that's too big for your spade, you're taking off too much of that root system,” Bigham advises.

Centering the root system within the spade also is key, Bigham notes. “If you have it shifted to the right, you're chopping off the whole left side of the rootball,” he says.

An inadequate assessment of the tree or relocation spot also can cause problems for the tree in the end, Johnson says. Another concern is the tendency of some contractors to treat every tree the same, he notes.

But perhaps the biggest mistake Johnson has seen is planting trees too deep. “Probably 95 percent of them are planted too deep,” Johnson says. “When that happens, it creates problems with the moisture-oxygen ratio. Basically, the tree doesn't absorb enough moisture or take in enough oxygen.”

Planting depth is the most important factor of relocation, Johnson says. “A tree should be planted at the same depth where it was taken from the ground – at the root flair.”

A tree's root flair is the area where the roots start spreading out from the trunk and often is covered by the dirt ball in which the tree was packaged. Once the root flair is found, the planting hole should be just deep enough to keep the flair above ground level.

WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

Once a tree has been successfully relocated, the work is far from over. In fact, the follow-up care of a transplanted tree is vital to survival – and the customer accepts responsibility for its welfare. That means paying close attention to the tree's increased vulner-

(continued on page 116)

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Transplanting Trees

(continued from page 114)

ability and taking necessary steps to make the new arrival feel comfortable.

Consistent maintenance and irrigation can help ensure the tree's longevity. Most significantly, perpetual irrigation will help the tree embrace its new home and strengthen its roots, Fraedrich recognizes.

Johnson recommends property owners turn the watering and tree maintenance responsibilities over to professionals for the best results. Otherwise, educating customers about follow-up care is a must.

"The first year after the installation is very critical," Fraedrich says. "The tree is going to be more sensitive to dry soils and be prone to dry out much more quickly than the roots of an established tree. Fertilizing six months after transplanting also can improve a tree's health." ll

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

Can anyone really guarantee the survival of a relocated tree?

"No one in the industry can guarantee the life of trees that are transplanted," says Rodney Bigham, director of sales, Rocky Fork Co., New Albany, Ohio. "When we're not there to maintain the tree after moving, it's not our responsibility to keep the tree alive."

Since Bigham and his crew generally do not assume follow-up care for transplanted trees, they cannot assure proper steps are taken to improve root structure and encourage growth. Instead, a local lawn care company with tree care capabilities takes over the maintenance and, thus, the liability.

However, most contracts call for guarantees, says Tim Johnson, consultant, Artistic Arborist, Phoenix, Ariz. "If the customer wants a guarantee, then obviously the cost of the project has to be increased to handle that risk."

Although specific figures vary from

tree to tree, Johnson explains that contractors who offer guarantees should build cash cushions into their bids to cover potential replacements. For instance, when Johnson is compiling an estimate for a tree worth \$40,000, he may add \$10,000 to the bid if the customer requests a guarantee. Still, even with the built-in insurance coverage, the tree's future remains uncertain.

"Even if a job is done perfectly, there is a chance the tree will not survive," Johnson acknowledges. "There's no way to guarantee life - I don't care if the size is right or if the tree is in perfect health before the move. It's a gamble."

So, rather than guaranteeing absolute survival of a transplanted tree, Artistic Arborist promises to do everything possible to make the move a successful one. Johnson also includes a maintenance stipulation in his guarantees because follow-up care is vital to the longevity of a transplanted tree. Such provisions would include watering requirements and maintenance demands. - **Ali Anderson**

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by Nicole Wisniewski



LAWN CARE

Low Down

A Lawn & Landscape research report reveals the trends in the lawn care industry.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Do you offer chemical lawn care services?

RESPONSE	% OF CONTRACTORS
Yes	70.6%
No, but we subcontract this work as part of our services	7.1%
No, but we refer clients to companies that specialize in this service	9.3%
No, we do not subcontract or make referrals for pesticide applications	13%

Average Annual 2003 Revenue of Surveyed Contractors:	\$576,210
Average Number of Full-Time Employees:	16.5
Average Number of Part-Time Employees:	7.1
Average Sales Per Full-Time Employees:	\$35,007
Average Hourly Rate for Chemical Lawn Care per 1,000 sq. ft. in 2003:	\$46.77
Average Hourly Rate for Chemical Lawn Care per 1,000 sq. ft. in 2004:	\$51.00
Average Percent Profit in Chemical Care Services:	33.57%

Of your total pesticide application sales revenue, what percent is generated from pesticide applications made on residential vs. commercial accounts?

ACCOUNT TYPE	% OF CONTRACTORS
Residential (single-family residential units)	59.6%
Commercial (offices, institutions, multi-family units)	30.7%
Other	9.7%

More than 50 percent of landscape contractors said their profits in their lawn care division are greater than or the same as their profits in other services, and more than 80 percent said their chemical lawn care business increased or stayed the same in 2003 – both are facts *Lawn & Landscape* magazine is hearing quite often from its readers.

So, to truly understand this key service division, we decided to survey readers to find out exactly how profitable lawn care is, delve into the expenses this business offering carries, investigate which area within this division is growing the fastest, and decipher business challenges facing this service in 2004.

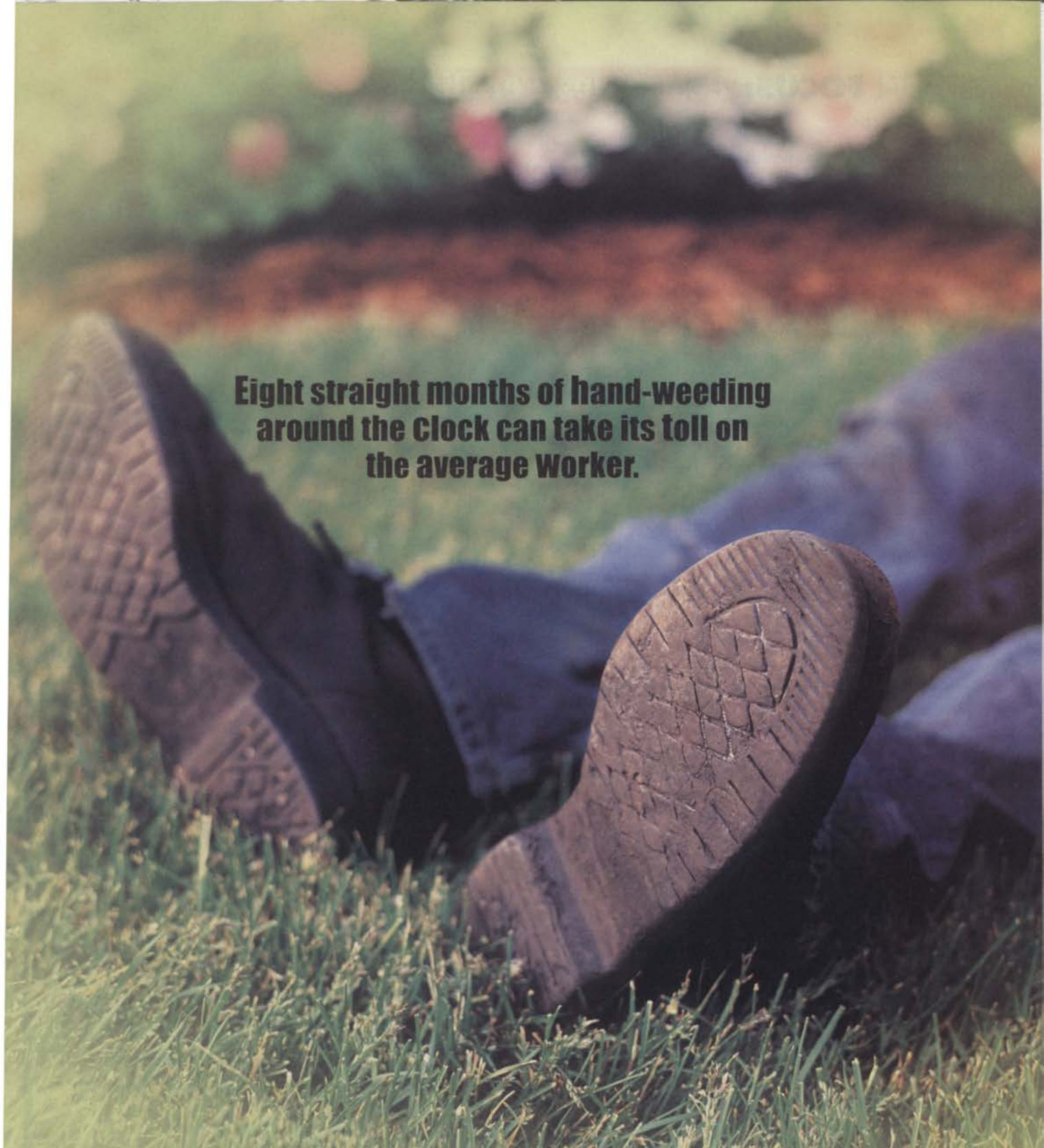
THE FACTS. Seventy percent of contractors offer chemical lawn care services, including fertilization, and weed, insect and disease management through pesticide applications on turf, trees and ornamentals. Another 7.1 percent subcontract the service and 9.3 percent refer clients to companies who specialize in lawn care services.

Of those contractors who offered the service, 41 percent said this offering increased in 2003 by an average of 24.2 percent, and only 6.5 percent reported a decrease in chemical lawn care business – the average drop being 21.14 percent. And most contractors surveyed – 59.6 percent – have residential lawn care clients vs. commercial customers.

Turf makes up the bulk of the work with 73.4 percent of contractors using pesticides

(continued on page 120)

Source: Lawn & Landscape Survey



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(continued from page 118)

to maintain turf, while ornamentals and trees make up only 23.3 percent of contractors' businesses.

PRODUCT PUNCH. When it came to expenditures, 29 percent of contractors spent less than \$2,000 in 2003 on pesticides, showing that it is a low-cost-to-entry business. Twenty-one percent spent between \$2,000 and \$5,000, 11 percent spent more than \$50,000 and 10 percent spent between \$10,000 and \$20,000.

Forty-two percent of contractors said their 2003 expenditures were similar to 2002 levels and 38.3 percent increased their expenditures in 2003 by an average of 18.72 percent. This year, 45.9 percent of contractors plan to increase their pesticide expenditures by an average of 19.48 percent.

When purchasing products, cost, efficacy, safety and supplier location top the list of buying decision influences.

When making pesticide purchases, the

SERVICE STATISTICS

Which one of your chemical lawn care services grew the fastest in 2003?

SERVICE	% OF CONTRACTORS
Fertilization plus insecticide/herbicide treatments	38%
Fertilization only	25.1%
Weed Control	16.6%
Insect Control	6.8%
Fungicide treatments	3.1%
PGR Applications	8%
No Answer	9.6%

Service grew by what percent in 2003 over 2002?

SERVICE	AVERAGE GROWTH %
Fertilization plus insecticide/herbicide treatments	23.9%
Fertilization only	17.37%
Weed Control	14.21%
Insect Control	16.5%
Fungicide treatments	21.09%
PGR Applications	11.72%

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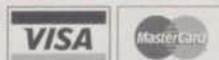
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USE READER SERVICE #99

SPECIAL FOCUS: Pesticides/Fertilizers

Source: Lawn & Landscape Survey

Which chemical lawn care service do you expect to grow the fastest in 2004?

SERVICE	% OF CONTRACTORS
Fertilization plus insecticide/herbicide treatments	51%
Fertilization only	17.7%
Weed Control	15.2%
Insect Control	7.3%
Fungicide treatments	2.3%
PGR Applications	1.1%
No Answer	5.4%

Service expected to grow by what percent in 2004 over 2003?

SERVICE	AVERAGE GROWTH %
Fertilization plus insecticide/herbicide treatments	18.22%
Fertilization only	17.12%
Weed Control	17.89%
Insect Control	18.91%
Fungicide treatments	15.87%
PGR Applications	15%

majority of contractors do so all year-round on an as-needed basis (44.8 percent), while 30.4 percent prefer to buy their products April through June.

Granular products are preferred over liquid with 22.8 percent of contractors offering all-granular services and 34.1 percent using both products but more granular than liquid in their service offerings. Only 6.8 percent of contractors offer all-liquid programs.

Combination or blended products, such as fertilizers and herbicides or insecticides, was the application that grew the fastest in 2003 and is expected to grow the fastest in 2004 with the average growth at 23.9 percent in 2003 and an expected 18.22 percent in 2004.

When asked about generic vs. brand name products, almost as many contractors used generics, claiming they work just as well as brand name pesticides, as those who don't—43.9 percent and 48.7 percent, respectively.

(continued on page 124)

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USE READER SERVICE #102

SPECIAL FOCUS: Pesticides/Fertilizers

(continued from page 121)

However, a majority of contractors (43.4 percent) said they feel that brand name product manufacturers offer better service and support for their products than generic manufacturers.

SALES & SERVICES. A majority of contractors – 56.3 percent – use some form of advertising, whether it's in the *Yellow Pages* or local newspaper, to promote their chemical lawn care services.

The top three most challenging issues facing lawn care operators in 2004 are pesticide restriction/government regulations, lack of qualified technicians and the economy.

Though it ranked No. 1 as a challenge, 38.3 percent of contractors said their clients express the same amount of concern over environmental risks associated with pesticides than in the past. **LL**

The author is managing editor of *Lawn & Landscape* magazine and can be reached at twisniewski@lawnandlandscape.com.

EXPENDITURE EQUATIONS

What were your approximate pesticide expenditures for 2003?

RESPONSE	% OF CONTRACTORS
Less than \$2,000	29%
\$2,001 to \$5,000	21.7%
\$5,001 to \$7,500	8.2%
\$7,501 to \$10,000	6.2%
\$10,001 to \$20,000	10.7%
\$20,001 to \$50,000	8.5%
More than \$50,000	11%
No Answer	4.7%

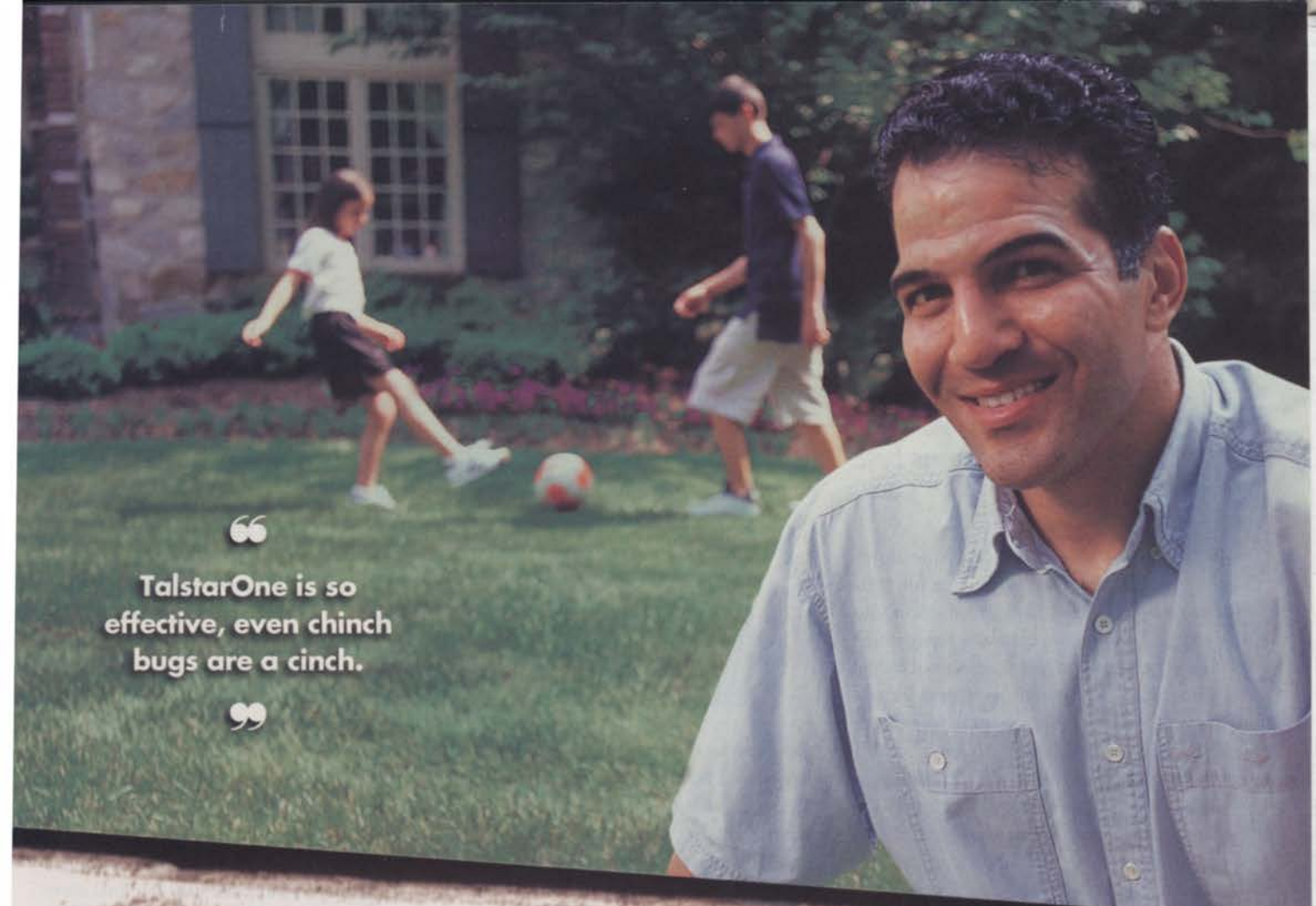
Did your pesticide expenditures increase, decrease or stay the same from 2002 to 2003?

RESPONSE	% OF CONTRACTORS
Increase	38.3%
Stay the Same	42.5%
Decrease	4.2%
No Answer	14.9%
Average Increase:	18.72%
Average Decrease:	21.38%

Do you expect pesticide expenditures to increase, decrease or stay the same for 2004?

RESPONSE	% OF CONTRACTORS
Increase	45.9%
Stay the Same	32.4%
Decrease	2.3%
No Answer	19.4%
Average Increase:	19.48%
Average Decrease:	16.63%

Source: Lawn & Landscape Survey



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USE READER SERVICE #103

by Zac Reicher

A Little GOES A LONG WAY

When it comes to early spring fertilization, less is best.

As snow starts to melt and temperatures slowly rise above freezing, we all start chomping at the bit to start production. Obviously, early spring contracts bring much needed capital and get workers out of the shop. Most professional lawn care companies opt for spring fertilization in some form, but moderation is the key.

The benefit of spring nitrogen is to provide a quick green-up and increase customer satisfaction. However, there is almost no agronomic benefit of early spring-applied nitrogen to the turf plant except, perhaps, on starved or very neglected lawns. Conversely, there are many potential disadvantages to early spring nitrogen. Early spring nitrogen encourages shoot growth at



the expense of root growth, creating shallow-rooted turf for summer. Moreover, increased shoot growth depletes energy reserves that the plant may need during a stressful summer or on lawns that will not receive irrigation. Furthermore, the increased shoot growth from early spring nitrogen increases mowing requirements and likely increases scalping on infrequently mowed lawns, which also depletes energy

reserves for summer. This is especially problematic on lawns that are mowed by professionals on a weekly schedule during the spring. The bottom line is that early spring nitrogen should be minimized, if not eliminated, on cool-season lawns.

In the most successful fertilization programs on cool-season turf, 60 percent or more of the annual nitrogen is applied in the fall. Generally, at least two applications are made – one

in early September and the other near the final mowing. The late fall application, in particular, is critical because it increases root growth and energy storage, creating a healthy plant for next summer. This application should be applied near the final mowing and it must be applied while the plant is still green and photosynthesizing.

If this application is missed, it cannot be made up by a winter application or an early spring application. So, applying nitrogen to dormant lawns wastes time and money and is environmentally irresponsible. The late fall application will largely determine how you should fertilize the following spring. Late fall nitrogen will enhance spring green-up tremendously, which makes an early spring nitrogen application unneeded or, if it is applied, only marginally effective for speeding green-up. Therefore, no early spring nitrogen is needed on late fall fertilized lawns.

WHERE IS EARLY SPRING NITROGEN JUSTIFIED?

Early spring nitrogen can be justified on lawns where no late fall nitrogen was applied and 0.5 pounds of fast-release nitrogen per 1,000 square feet should improve green-up. Neglected, extremely thin, winter-damaged or newly seeded lawns may benefit from small doses of nitrogen starting in early spring and continuing into early summer. Frequent applications of low rates (around 0.5 pounds of nitrogen per

(continued on page 128)



When applying fertilizer, even applications are crucial for intended results – a lush blanket of green turf. These photographs show how poorly applied fertilizer can result in dark and light stripes and spots. Photos: Zac Reicher

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SPECIAL FOCUS: Pesticides/Fertilizers

(continued from page 126)

1,000 square feet) every four weeks in early spring through early summer may help the turf fill in. Realize, though, that this fertilization schedule will also likely increase shoot growth and, thus, mowing frequency.

The next situation that justifies early spring nitrogen is on a lawn where crabgrass is a threat and preemergence herbicides are required. Preemergence herbicides for crabgrass must be applied early in spring, shortly after turf greens up and is in the middle of the spring growth flush (see *Weed Out Weeds* on page 138). Since granular preemergence herbicides are almost always formulated on a fertilizer carrier, applying a preemergence herbicide virtually mandates that fertilizer also will be applied. Select a fertilizer/herbicide combination containing a low percentage of nitrogen so only 0.5 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet or less is applied. An alternative to this is selecting a product with a high percentage of slow release nitrogen to delay the nitrogen release until later in the spring when it has fewer potentially detrimental effects.

STARTING SPRING FERTILIZATION.

Nitrogen application can be picked up later in the spring after the primary growth flush. Nitrogen later in the spring can help extend green color into summer and minimize low-nitrogen diseases like red thread, pink patch and dollar spot. These diseases are especially problematic on perennial ryegrass, which has become very popular in contractor seeding mixes. If you maintain a lot of perennial ryegrass lawns in the relatively warm humid areas of the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic regions, late spring nitrogen could help to minimize these diseases.

Late spring nitrogen applications should be applied after the primary growth flush of cool-season turfgrasses. Generally 0.75 to 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet can be applied using a fertilizer with both slow and fast release nitrogen in early to late May depending on the region.

There are many situations that require slightly different fertilization techniques. For instance, if you applied the preemergence



A late fall nitrogen application is critical for turf because it increases root growth and energy storage for the following spring and summer. This photograph shows how a November application of nitrogen (in rows) can enhance green-up, making another early spring nitrogen application unnecessary. Photo: Zac Reicher

herbicide with nitrogen in early spring, less nitrogen should be applied later in the spring. Or if you are making frequent applications to the lawn, lower rates could be used with little or no slow-release nitrogen. If clippings are bagged on a specific lawn, the nitrogen rate should be increased by up to 25 percent. The take-home message is that late spring fertilizer is beneficial to cool-season turf, but the exact fertilization regimen can be slightly different on each lawn.

NUTRIENTS BESIDE NITROGEN.

There are a few nutrients that can successfully be used in the spring. Iron at low rates (around 0.025 pounds actual iron per 1,000 square feet) will deliver extremely quick green-up of cool-season turf plants without increasing shoot growth. Iron can be useful when dealing with clients who require the fastest green-up on the block. However, iron often becomes limiting in the spring on high pH soils when air temperatures tend to warm up quickly, but cool, wet soils limit iron uptake. Symptoms of this are mottled patches of chlorotic turf and if you look closer, the younger actively growing leaves are yellow. LCOs can compensate for this by applying a low rate of iron. Iron also can be used throughout the summer to maintain color with-

out encouraging growth, but it should be used as a supplement to regular nitrogen applications and not as a replacement for nitrogen. But be careful with iron applications because they can stain sidewalks, siding, decks, etc.

Spring also is a great time to apply phosphorus- and potassium-containing fertilizers, though these fertilizers tend to have elevated burn potential (especially potassium-containing fertilizers). Cool spring temperatures and frequent rains should limit potential burn. Because grass plants contain about 4 percent nitrogen, 1 percent phosphorus and 2 percent potassium, we often recommend applying four parts nitrogen, one part phosphorus and two parts potassium over the course of the year. However, this is a drastic oversimplification and could lead to applying too much phosphorus and/or potassium. Soil tests are still the best and only way to determine needs of phosphorus and potassium.

Nitrogen applications should be minimized in the early spring, but can be applied judiciously after the spring growth flush is over. If you must apply early spring nitrogen, try to apply it at rates less than 0.5 pounds per 1,000 square feet. **LL**

The author is associate professor and extension turfgrass specialist, Department of Agronomy, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Ind., and can be reached at 765/494-9737 or zreicher@purdue.edu.



Low rates of iron deliver quick green-up of cool-season turf in the spring, but lawn care operators should be careful when applying iron since it stains hardscapes easily. Photo: Zac Reicher

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USE READER SERVICE #105

by Lauren Spiers

2 TRIPS in One

Travel time can be one of a lawn care company's biggest expenses, with technicians' precious application minutes wasted while they're stuck in traffic or driving from one jobsite to the next.

In many cases, lawn care operators (LCOs) remedy this problem by selling more service programs and increasing route density in areas where their crews work. Likewise, preparing trucks the night before for the next day's service stops can ensure that crews hit the road early.

But many LCOs also take advantage of lawn care application materials that can eliminate many of a technician's trips to a given site. Blended products like herbicide-coated fertilizer are just as easy to apply as straight fertilizer or herbicide treatments, and their two-for-one talents keep LCOs from having to make multiple passes over a lawn when just one will do.

MULTIPLIED PERKS. "By using a fertilizer plus a preemergent rather than just the

preemergent alone, LCOs can save significant amounts of application time because they're putting two visits worth of material down at once," explains Kyle Miller, senior technical specialist, BASF, Raleigh, N.C.

As an example, Miller explained that if a spray gun is calibrated to yield 2 gallons of material per minute over 1,000 square feet, a 10,000-square-foot lawn would take 10 minutes to treat. Adding in the time it takes to pull out and recoil a hose, the full weed control application can be as long as 20 minutes. "Eliminating the separate weed control application can save LCOs that 15 or 20 minutes per lawn," Miller says. "Altogether, that can add up to enough time to treat two or three more lawns in a day." This efficiency boost is the most obvious benefit of using blended products, but this type of application offers other perks, as well.

"Blended formulations certainly save time, but formulators also have to put these products together so they're easy to use," says Ray Buckwalter, product manager, Leba-

Using fertilizer/herbicide blends can increase lawn care operators' efficiency by eliminating multiple passes over the same properties.

non Turf, Lebanon, Pa. "All these products are synchronized so that the LCOs apply the proper amounts of both fertilizer and herbicide at the same time."

Buckwalter adds that this doesn't get technicians off of the hook when it comes to proper equipment calibration and label reading. "The contractor still has to know what rate of pesticide they want to put down before they go shopping," he comments. "Almost every analysis of fertilizer is available with a herbicide or other pesticide already on it, so the key is to study the label and find the right pesticide rate with the proper fertilizer. From there, the technicians also need to make sure that their equipment is calibrated correctly so their actual application rates match the recommendations on the label."

With such versatility and a wide range of combination products from which to choose, it's no surprise that many LCOs wouldn't dream of using anything but blended lawn care products in one form or another.

"We've always used blended products in either liquid or granular form," comments Tim Doppel, president, Atwood LawnCare, Sterling Heights, Mich. "Especially with preemergents and fertilizers, it's one of those things we'd hardly consider doing any other way." Many other contractors feel the same way. In fact, 38 percent of respondents to a recent *Lawn & Landscape* survey said applications of blended products were their fastest growing service in 2003. Moreover, 51 percent expect the same service to be their fastest-growing segment this year.

(continued on page 132)



Many lawn care operators who apply blended fertilizer/herbicide products prefer using liquid formulations because the specific blend is easy to adjust when weather conditions warrant it, and sprays also offer greater application accuracy. Photo: The Davey Tree Expert Co.

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USE READER SERVICE #106

(continued from page 130)

Gary LaScalea, president, GroGreen, Plano, Texas, also prefers using blended products and both his and Doppel's experiences have led them to prefer liquid blends to granular products due to the greater application accuracy and efficacy of liquid products.

"We buy our crabgrass control one of two ways," Doppel says. "It's either a material we mix with the liquid fertilizer in a spray tank and apply as a spray, or we buy it already on the granular fertilizer. We don't do any formulating ourselves."

With liquid blends, weed control improves, particularly at the edges of the lawn because accuracy with sprays is often better than with granular materials. Still, "you can't go just one way," Doppel notes. "You need a lot of options to properly service the customer, so for our customers who are uncomfortable with spray treatments and insist on granular applications, we'll have those materials available and still use a blended product."

Also, contractors like LaScalea, who mix their own fertilizer-herbicide blends, must use liquid products due to some pesticide regulations. "In many cases, LCOs are prohibited by law from applying a sprayable preemergent to granular fertilizer," Miller notes. "Tank mixing liquids is permissible because those concentrate products already are labeled as to what they can be mixed with and it's much safer and easier to do. Most of the preemergents today are compatible with most liquid fertilizers, so that's widely done in companies that spray pesticides."

Manufacturers note that, as with nonblended products, preferences toward liquid or granular blends can depend on client concerns and the type of pesticide that LCOs want to mix with their fertilizers.



Herbicide-coated granular fertilizers can be more expensive than their liquid counterparts, but are necessary to keep on hand for customers who dislike spray applications.

Photo: The Motz Group

The Right Rates

Using blended fertilizer/herbicide applications can help lawn care operators (LCOs) become highly efficient applicators, but they may need to do a little more research before purchasing products to treat clients' lawns.

One such bit of research is figuring proper product application rates, especially when it comes to products with multiple ingredients that must be applied at specific rates. "With blended formulations, the lawn care operator needs to know what rate of pesticide he or she wants to put down before shopping," says Ray Buckwalter, product manager, Lebanon Turf, Lebanon, Pa. "There are hundreds of analyses of fertilizer available with different rates of certain herbicides, so once you find the fertilizer you want to use, making sure that it has the proper herbicide rate along with it is essential."

For example, Buckwalter explains that an LCO could purchase granular fertilizer coated with a preemergence herbicide with .13-percent active ingredient. This product may be properly applied at a rate of 4 pounds per 1,000 square feet. However, if the fertilizer included the same herbicide with .2-percent active ingredient, the application rate may be reduced to only 2½ pounds per 1,000 square feet.

"At the lower application rate, it becomes difficult to spread the product evenly," Buckwalter says. "The blended formulations are designed to put down the correct amount of each ingredient, but this is contingent upon the applicator using the correct rates in the first place."

To determine correct rates, LCOs should read product labels thoroughly. As Buckwalter shares, "With blended products, good coverage and control comes from carefully reading labels." — **Lauren Spiers**

"For a preemergence application, liquid products may get stuck in the canopy of the plant, whereas coated granular products are heavy enough to get to the soil," notes Rich Baker, turf and ornamental sales manager, United Horticultural Supply, North Brunswick, N.J. "That same liquid in a fungicide or postemergent application gets stuck on the leaves, making liquid the preferred method." Also, Baker notes that many clients perceive granular products as being safer than liquids because the technician doesn't have to wear a suit or mask to apply the product.

LaScalea notes that weather also can play a part in an LCO's choice of liquid or granular blended applications. "For instance, you don't want to apply blended liquid materials in January in Texas when the temperatures are still freezing because you won't get as much control," he says. "Also, we find that granular materials are convenient to keep on stand-by for use in the spring when the weather can be windy. In that case, we'll use the preemergent on granular fertilizer until the winds die down and we'll come back

and use a postemergent to spot treat any weeds that have already come up."

Though this type of situation would require LaScalea to make a second pass over the lawn to treat for broadleaf weeds, being able to apply two out of three materials at once still saves time.

COST CONSCIOUSNESS. Because making multiple lawn care applications at once increases LCOs' efficiency and, therefore, their bottom lines, the slightly higher prices of blended materials are negligible for most contractors.

"Typically, granular blends are going to be a little bit more expensive to use than if we were to buy the materials separately or make a liquid application," Doppel says. "But because some of our customers would rather we not spray on their properties, we do what we need to do for customer satisfaction, so we always can switch to blended granular products."

Miller comments that the price difference between granular products and liquid prod-

(continued on page 134)

Primo MAXX™ Grows Business, Slows Turf Growth

Over the years, Carl Clifton has grown his business, Lawnscape Systems, Inc., into one of the premier lawn care service providers in Southern California. The addition of Riverside National Cemetery, the largest memorial park managed by the National Cemetery Administration, to his client list in 2002 helped to advance the scope of services offered by the company.

Maintaining the 300-acre Riverside National Cemetery is a rather large task for any landscape company. Lawnscape Systems recognized that the meticulous attention required for the cemetery, especially around the markers, could mean additional costs. Cemeteries everywhere have the universal problem of keeping the markers clean, usually relying on string trimmers to get the job done. Depending on growing conditions, this task must be repeated in three- to four-week cycles.

The tremendous amount of manpower, equipment, and the cost associated with this task led Clifton and his associates to seek a more efficient alternative. Lawnscape Systems turned to Primo MAXX, a key component of its lawn care operations for eight years.

Primo MAXX applications help to keep the cemetery markers clean and the surrounding turf green and healthy. According to Clifton, using Primo MAXX to slow the growth and enhance the appearance of the turf around the cemetery markers has provided immediate benefits to his business.

Clifton also uses Primo MAXX with home lawn care customers. "It's important that landscape maintenance people sell the product's benefits correctly to customers," said Clifton. "They may think that their customers won't be happy since they are on the lawn less, but Primo MAXX delivers a better lawn with less effort."

"The Primo MAXX applications are 'manpower' that always shows up for work. By using Primo MAXX, you are trading the issues and costs attached to traditional manpower, as well as gaining savings in water, gas, and equipment maintenance," said Clifton.

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To learn more about how Primo MAXX can build your lawn care business, please contact your local Syngenta sales representative, visit www.syngenta-professionalproducts.com or call 1-800-395-8873.

USE READER SERVICE #107



(continued from page 132)

ucts is only a few dollars but can add up quickly. "If you were to apply a granular fertilizer plus a preemergent to a 10,000-square-foot lawn, that might cost you \$15," he says. "However, if you were mixing a sprayable preemergent and a liquid fertilizer,

the preemergent might only cost \$5 and the liquid fertilizer might be \$5 to \$7. It's not a huge difference, but if you treat 20 lawns in a day and you save \$5 per lawn, that's \$100 right there. Over the course of the week you're saving \$500 and if you have 10 tech-

nicians doing the same thing, it adds up."

Buckwalter adds that formulators must put more time and labor into manufacturing granular blends because the process is more complicated than blending several liquid

(continued on page 136)

In the Mix

While premeasured and premixed blended products make for highly convenient lawn care applications, some contractors find that tank mixing their own materials – combining liquid fertilizers, pesticides and water in one tank – offers even greater flexibility.

"We buy concentrates and make our own formulations," says Gary LaScalea, president, GroGreen, Plano, Texas. "This lets us adjust our rates more. If we're having a bad crabgrass season, we can increase the amount of preemergent in the mix. Or, if we start out in the spring and it's still a little cold, our broadleaf herbicide rate might have to be a little higher."

LaScalea says it takes some trial and error and a lot of experience to determine the right blend for the right time of year, but patience pays off. "I've been doing this for 27 years and over that time I've learned what different compounds work well together and what the results are," he says. "You really have to pay attention and talk to your technicians to find out what they're seeing and what's working on certain properties."

In addition to being able to adjust rates and determine just the right product blend for his customers' properties, LaScalea notes that doing his own tank mixing presents his company with a significant cost savings. "By mixing our own liquids, we probably spend 40 to 50 percent less on materials than we would if we purchased them preblended," he notes. "When you buy concentrates, there are fewer packaging costs built into the price and you're not paying for a trademark."

For example, LaScalea explains that a contractor may buy a \$20 bottle of a premixed nonselective herbicide off the shelf to use on a property. That \$20 includes only an ounce or two of the active ingredient, plus labor to mix the active ingredient with water, packaging and labeling costs for the spray bottle, and shipping to get the bottles from the manufacturer to the distributor. "In that kind of situation, the 1 or 2 percent active ingredient in that product may cost less than \$1, but you're paying for all the extras," he comments. "When we buy a quart of that concentrated active ingredient, we may still only pay \$20, but all we're getting is the active ingredient."

Because some products are used more frequently than others, LaScalea purchases materials in 55-gallon drums, 5-gallon containers or quart bottles. With a range of products on hand, LaScalea and his employees discuss each product before tank mixing any of their sprayable materials. "First, we make sure everyone reads and understand the labels of the products we're using for a certain application," he says. "Everyone gets copies

of the labels and we talk about any precautionary issues, such as protective clothing they need to wear or dealing with wind conditions or temperature changes. After that, we give them our chart to show how much to mix for their different needs, whether they're mixing 100 or 200 gallons or just a small amount for a backpack or hand sprayer."

LaScalea's experience has helped him create charts of the dozens of mixes the company uses depending on time of year and the weather. The charts outline how much of each specific ingredient to include in the blend, according to the area to which the product will be applied. "How much of each product to use is dependent on a lot of factors," LaScalea notes. "You have to look at what the label says because that's the law, but you also need to know how much product you're putting out per 1,000 square feet or per acre. Some people might spray 100 gallons over an acre and some may only use 25 gallons an acre. You're certainly not going to use the same amount of material in each of those scenarios."

For the most part, tank mixing is done in large quantities at GroGreen's shop. However, LaScalea notes that some on-site tank mixing may take place on large commercial properties where spray tanks must be refilled or if technicians encounter unexpected problems on smaller sites. The company carefully stores the concentrates during transport. "We always make sure the products are labeled and in their original containers," LaScalea says. "We have boxes on our trucks with locks on them to keep them secure. We wouldn't want to be in a situation where something is spilled or lost off of a truck and no one knows what's in it or what to do with it. Technicians also carry all of the labels and material safety data sheets in case there is a spill, so no one has to go searching to find out how to take care of it."

LaScalea's best advice when it comes to tank mixing liquids is to be patient and do a lot of label reading before getting started. "Use the information on the labels as far as how much product to use over a certain area, but pay attention to see what amount in that range works best for you – you don't always have to go with the highest rates," he says. "When you find something that does a good job, learn that product inside and out so you get to know how it works in situations that aren't ideal." LaScalea insists there's no such thing as a cure-all blend, but paying attention to the materials being used and their results can help contractors get closer to concocting their own tank-mixed miracle products. – **Lauren Spiers**

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SPECIAL FOCUS: Pesticides/Fertilizers

(continued from page 134)

concentrate products. This extra labor drives the cost up, and for fertilizers coated with specific pesticides, he notes that formulators must take the time and money to ensure that the pesticides are properly registered in every state in which the product will be sold.

LaScalea also mentions that tank mixing liquid products on his own eliminates the significant labor costs associated with granular materials.

"Liquids are always less expensive than granular products," Baker agrees, "but to be efficient, you might need a 500- or 1000-gallon tank or a spray truck for applications. If you don't already have them, these cost a lot more money than a pickup truck and a spreader."

Also, fluctuations in fertilizer prices throughout the year can influence the prices of both liquid and granular blends. "There has been a bit of a spike in fertilizer prices the last couple of years, but we've seen pricing stay in line with what LCOs would have to pay to put preemergent on an inert carrier like sand or corn cob," Miller says. "Fertilizer is a relatively inexpensive carrier and you really get the most from your investment by making multiple applications at once."

Most manufacturers report that blended products will cost \$10 to \$20 per quarter acre – about 11,000 square feet – and that timing of the applications remains the same as with regular fertilizer applications, with few exceptions.

"Of the fertilizer products available that are blended with some sort of pesticide, 60 to 70 percent of those are fertilizer/preemergence herbicide blends," Buckwalter says. "Because preemergents are preventive treatments, they can easily be used during the first early spring fertilizer application. There are fewer blends with postemergent herbicides or fungicides because these are mostly spot-treatment applications. In those cases, the fertilizer component would be less effective because the technician wouldn't necessarily be treating the entire lawn."

LaScalea and Doppel note that using blended products does not cause them to change their pricing strategies. Doppel reports that his residential clients will spend about \$280 per year on their lawn care service for programs between four and six applications – averaging \$45 to \$70 per visit. Most of Doppel's early spring applications include a blend of fertilizer and preemergent crabgrass control, which is charged as a single application.

With just one pass over a lawn and one charge to the customer, liquid and granular applications of blended fertilizer/pesticide products are quick and easy, actually increasing LCOs' efficiency. Because of their benefits and little extra cost to contractors, it's no wonder the service is becoming increasingly popular. **LL**

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

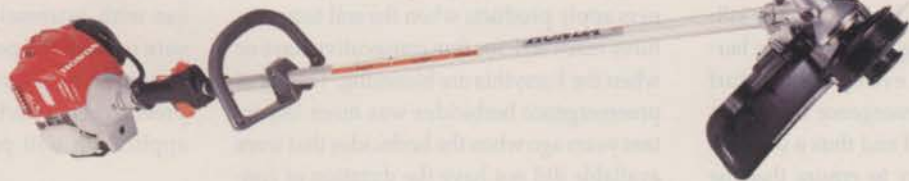
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USE READER SERVICE #109

by Zac Reicher

Use herbicides to manage weeds like crabgrass that get in the way of perfectly lush turf.



When using postemergence products to control weeds, applying them after the flowering of the dandelion (left) is more effective than earlier applications.

Photo: Zac Reicher

Early spring is a great time to control summer annual grass weeds like crabgrass. The most effective way to minimize crabgrass is through good cultural management practices, such as proper mowing, adequate fertilization and weed control. However, in spite of our best efforts, herbicides will be needed, especially in high pressure areas next to drives and sidewalks, south facing slopes, and heavily trafficked areas.

PREEMERGENCE PRODUCTS. Preemergence herbicides must be applied prior to crabgrass germination. As the crabgrass germinates, it absorbs the herbicide, thus killing the plant. Applying preemergence herbicides accurately and evenly across a turf site is important. Preemergence herbicides are immobile in the soil and thus a uniform application is necessary to ensure that the

germinating crabgrass will come into contact with the herbicide. Using a preemergence herbicide incorporated on a large fertilizer granule might make applications easier, but they might not provide a dense enough pattern to insure consistent herbicide application.

TIMING TIPS. There are many rules of thumb concerning the ideal time to apply a preemergence herbicide in the spring. Most labels say the product should be applied two weeks prior to the expected germination period for crabgrass, while practitioners apply products when the soil temperatures reach 50 F for five consecutive days or when the Forsythia are blooming. Timing of preemergence herbicides was more important years ago when the herbicides that were available did not have the duration of con-

trol like today's products. Research at Purdue University and other universities across the Midwest has shown preemergence herbicides applied in March still provide season-long control. Many turf managers have even started applying preemergence herbicides with the final fertilizer application in November and

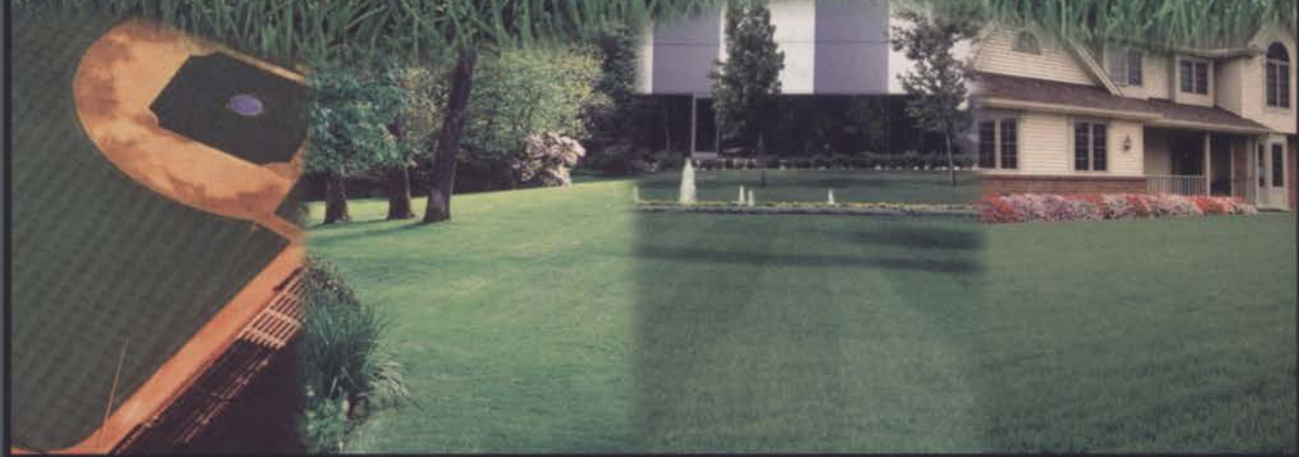
have had excellent success. Late fall and early spring applications work because low soil temperatures minimize microbial breakdown of the herbicide, which is the primary method of degradation. A side-benefit of applying preemergence herbicides early in spring is that LCOs have a better chance of controlling early-emerging summer annual broadleaf weeds like prostrate spurge or knotweed. A tip to remember is that being too early with preemergence herbicide product applications is better than being too late.

SEQUENTIAL APPLICATIONS. For areas with extremely high crabgrass pressure or with the possibility of goosegrass, consider a sequential application of preemergence herbicides. An early spring application will provide acceptable con-

(continued on page 140)

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SPECIAL FOCUS: Pesticides/Fertilizers

(continued from page 138)

trol into early summer, but a second application will boost the activity of the herbicide in the soil to extend the duration of control throughout the growing season. Most labels will recommend $\frac{2}{3}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the high label rate in the first application followed by second application of $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total label rate in late May or early June. Purdue research showed that using sequential applications of an active ingredient different than what was used in initial applications will not give satisfactory results, appearing that concentrations of different herbicides are not additives in the soil. So, instead of boosting concentration of the initial herbicide in the soil with a second application, LCOs are merely adding a second herbicide at a concentration that will probably not give season long control. As stated earlier, research has shown that early spring-approved preemergence herbicides or even those applied in very late fall can provide sea-



LCOs have a better chance of controlling early-emerging annual broadleaf weeds like spurge (above) when they apply preemergents in early spring. Photo: Zac Reicher

son-long control of crabgrass when used at higher rates.

BROADLEAF WEED AWARENESS.

Postemergence broadleaf herbicides are just the opposite of preemergence herbicides and it's better to apply these later in

the spring. Applications at or after flowering of dandelion are more effective than earlier applications. Ester formulations are more effective than amines in cold weather. Our data show that ester formulations of 2,4-D become effective on dandelion at 100 GDD (base: 50 F) whereas amine formulations become effective at 150 GDD (base: 50 F). Early spring applications simply burn off the leaves, and dandelions quickly regerminate. However, the new herbicide ingredient carfentrazone has shown improved early spring control of broadleaf weeds, according to Purdue University research. **LL**

The author is associate professor, extension turfgrass specialist, Department of Agronomy, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Ind., and can be reached at 765/494-9737 or zreicher@purdue.edu.

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USE READER SERVICE #112

by Lauren Spiers

Using degree-day information can help lawn care operators predict pest cycles and time pest management decisions more effectively.

While many lawn care operators (LCOs) and landscape contractors know that degree-day information and biological calendars can help them proactively manage plant care by tracking certain environmental conditions' effects on landscape plants and pests, the majority of contractors do not know how to use this helpful information.

In his presentation at the Central Environmental Nursery Trade show held in Columbus, Ohio, Jan. 26-28, Dan Herms associate professor of entomology, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, remedied that problem in his informative session "Clearing the Mystery of Degree-Days and Biological Calendars."

DEGREE-DAYS DEFINED. "Pest management is tied directly to pest life cycles," Herms says. "Because of this, properly timing pest management efforts is everything. Degree-day information can help us predict pest development so we can make more culturally-based pest management decisions and make those decisions sooner."

By definition, a degree-day (also known



Degree-day data and biological calendars can identify when pests like this Eastern Tent Caterpillar will emerge, allowing contractors to implement pest management practices before the pest damages the landscape. Photo: Clemson University - USDA Cooperative Extension.

as growing degree-days, thermal units or heating units) is the amount of heat accumulated above a specified base temperature over a 24-hour day. Tracking temperatures is key when it comes to pest life cycles because of what Herms calls "temperature-dependent development." "Because insects emerge and plants bloom sooner in warmer seasons than they do in cooler seasons, tracking temperature and

weather patterns is the first step in accumulating degree-day information," he says.

But how is that data calculated? Herms explains that first specifying a base temperature is necessary for degree-days to have meaning. Ideally, this temperature is lower than the "lower temperature threshold," or LTT, required for specific pests to develop. For example, entomologists know that gypsy moths hatch in mid-April with an LTT of 48 F. From that point, gypsy moth development occurs as the temperature rises. "The LTT is known for a small number of species," Herms notes, "but we know that 50 F is a good approximation, so we often use that as our base temperature."

CRUNCHING NUMBERS. Herms explains three different methods of calculating degree-days, using the base temperature (50 F), as well as the maximum and minimum temperatures for a given day.

1. *Average Method.* This method simply subtracts the base temperature from the day's

(continued on page 144)

Deciphering DEGREE DAYS

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USE READER SERVICE #113

SPECIAL FOCUS: Pesticides/Fertilizers

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average temperature. On a day with a high of 65 F and a low of 45 F, the average temperature would be 55 F. Subtracting the base temperature (50 F) leaves five degree-days.

2. *Modified Average Method.* When the minimum temperature drops below the base temperature, substitute the base temperature for the minimum temperature. "This method

is generally more accurate than the Average Method because pests don't get younger as the temperature drops," Herms says. "In our first example, the base temperature is 50 F, but the minimum temperature is 45 F. In that five-degree difference, there is no development occurring, so we can substitute the base temperature in the equation." In

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Find an extended version of this article, including a biological calendar, at www.lawnandlandscape.com/news/news.asp?ID=2048.


that case, the average temperature would be 57.5 F, leaving 7.5 degree-days.

3. *Sine Wave Method.* This method uses a sine equation to calculate the number of degree-days above the base temperature. While this slightly increases accuracy, Herms notes that the results from this method often are very similar to those achieved with the Average Method when the minimum temperature stays above the base temperature.

DAY BY DAY. Degree-days often are counted cumulatively, meaning that the data for a given day is added to the total from all the previous days. This usually is done over the course of a year, beginning on Jan. 1, but Herms notes that LCOs should identify both the base temperature and the accumulation starting date for cumulative degree-days when looking up established data.

Still, degree-day numbers mean nothing unless they are assigned to something. This is where biological calendars come into play. "Because plant and insect development is temperature dependent, the flowering sequence of plants can be used as a biological calendar to time pest management decisions," Herms says.

Phenological events follow a distinct calendar depending on the region. For instance, in Herms' state of Ohio, the Eastern Tent Caterpillar always reaches egg hatch just before the Norway Maple reaches first bloom but after the Border Forsythia first blooms. By comparing cumulative degree-day data to these phenological indicators, LCOs can identify what events coincide with certain degree-days. For instance, when the degree-day data reaches Fahrenheit temperatures in the high 80s, LCOs will know that the Eastern Tent Caterpillar will soon emerge.

While the actual dates of certain events will change slightly from year to year, "if you simply note what is blooming when you observe a pest, you can duplicate that timing in future years," Herms says. "Additionally, you can customize the calendar to include pests and plants that are specific to your area. Even one year of observations can be useful." 

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



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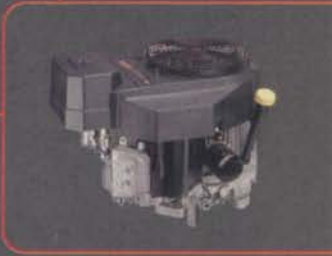
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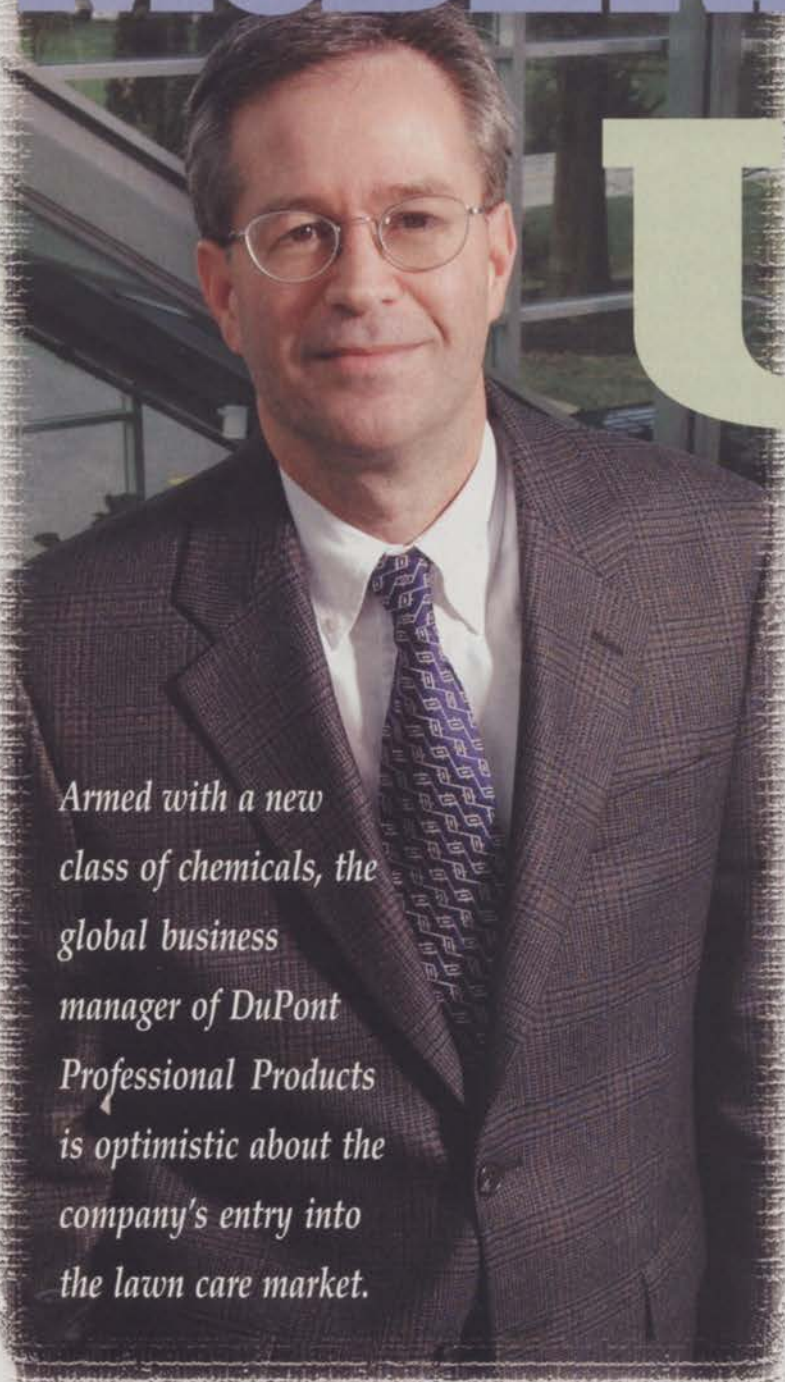
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USE READER SERVICE #115

by Dan Moreland

CONVERSATION with **MIKE McDERMOTT**



Armed with a new class of chemicals, the global business manager of DuPont Professional Products is optimistic about the company's entry into the lawn care market.

Unassuming by nature, Mike McDermott, global business manager of DuPont Professional Products, is a classic "numbers guy." Fascinated by facts and figures, the New Jersey native graduated from Montclair State University with a degree in accounting in 1977, quickly rising through the ranks at several companies before returning to school to earn his MBA at Fairleigh Dickinson University.

For those who have followed his career, what has set McDermott apart from his colleagues in the heady world of high finance are his people skills. It's a rare combination in business, but a combination that has served McDermott well throughout his 20 years in the specialty chemical industry, where he first made a name for himself at Wellcome in the late 1980s and then with Aventis Environmental Science, where he played a key role in the successful launch of fipronil in 2000.

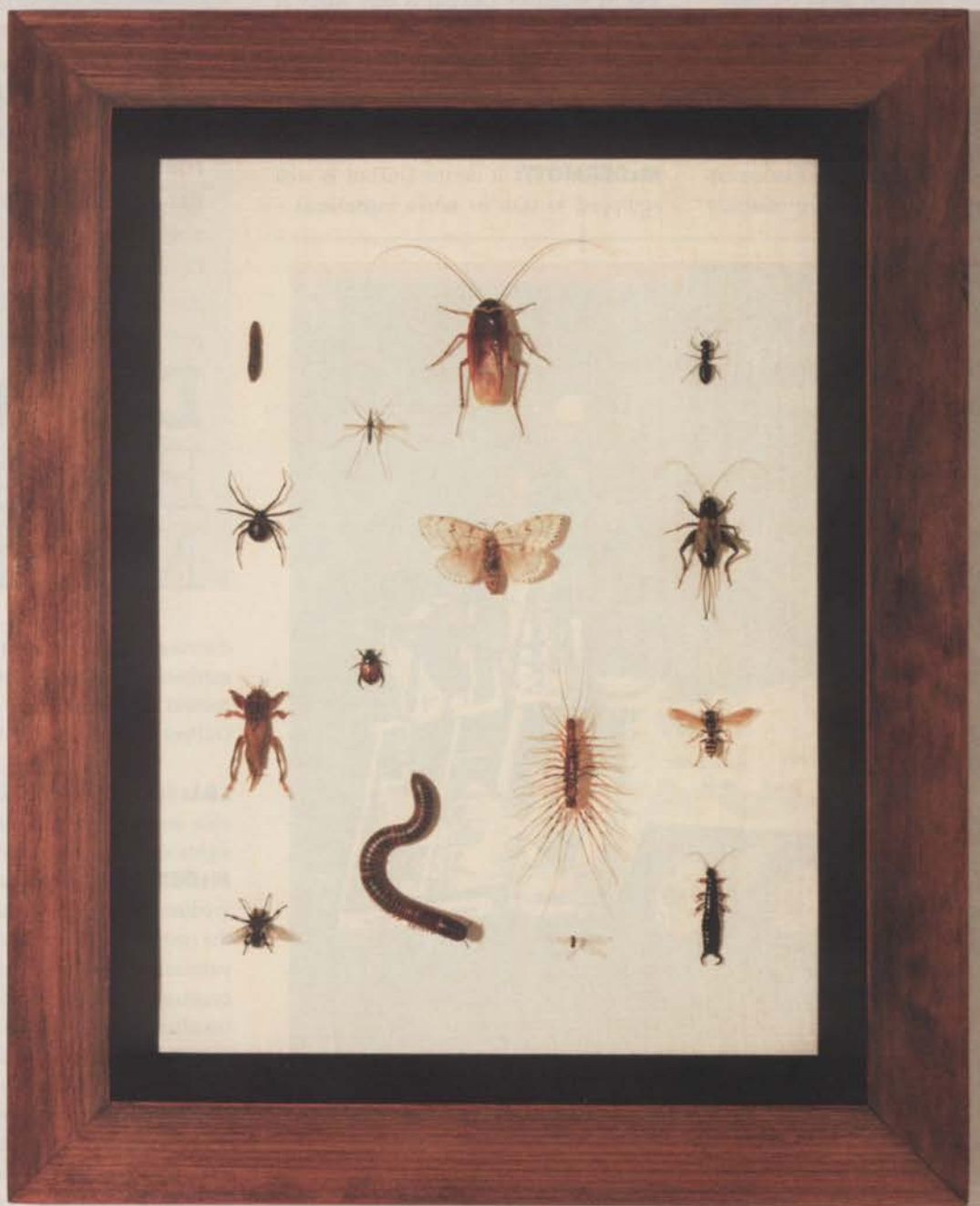
McDermott says the most gratifying thing about his years at Wellcome and Aventis were the professional relationships he developed during that period. "I've had the good fortune to work with a lot of great people over the years," he says. "We built some wonderful businesses and in the process contributed to the growth of the pest control industry. I wouldn't trade those years for anything."

It's an experience he hopes to replicate at DuPont Professional Products, which will introduce Advion™ Fire Ant Bait – featuring a new class of chemistry – to the pest control market in early April.

Lawn & Landscape recently caught up with McDermott as he prepared to unveil the company's sales and marketing effort in the lawn care industry. Excerpts of the interview follow. A complete transcript appears at www.lawnandlandscape.com.

L&L: As someone who has worked for a number of major chemical manufacturers serving the lawn care industry
(continued on page 148)

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USE READER SERVICE #116

Conversation Series

(continued from page 146)

what impresses you most about DuPont?

McDERMOTT: DuPont is a company that knows how to discover, develop and bring cutting-edge technology to market (i.e. Lycra fiber, Stainmaster carpets, Mylar polyester film). And once we bring a product to market we know how to maximize that investment for the benefit of both the company

and its investors. DuPont is very adept at taking existing technology and extending its reach into multiple markets.

L&L: Why is that relevant to lawn care professionals?

McDERMOTT: It means DuPont is well equipped to take its active ingredients –

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ANNUAL 2003 REVENUE: \$24 billion

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NUMBER OF COUNTRIES WITH DUPONT OPERATIONS: 77

NUMBER OF MANUFACTURING/ PROCESSING FACILITIES: 135

FORTUNE 500 RANKING: 67

KEY BRANDS: Teflon® resins, Lycra® spandex fiber, Stainmaster carpet, Dacron® polyester fiber, Corian® solid surface material, Kevlar® brand fiber and Tyvek® brand protective material.

DuPont By the Numbers

chemicals like indoxacarb – to a number of markets, including the lawn care and pest control industries, two key markets for DuPont Professional Products.

L&L: Speaking of indoxacarb, can you provide our readers with some additional insights about this new chemistry?

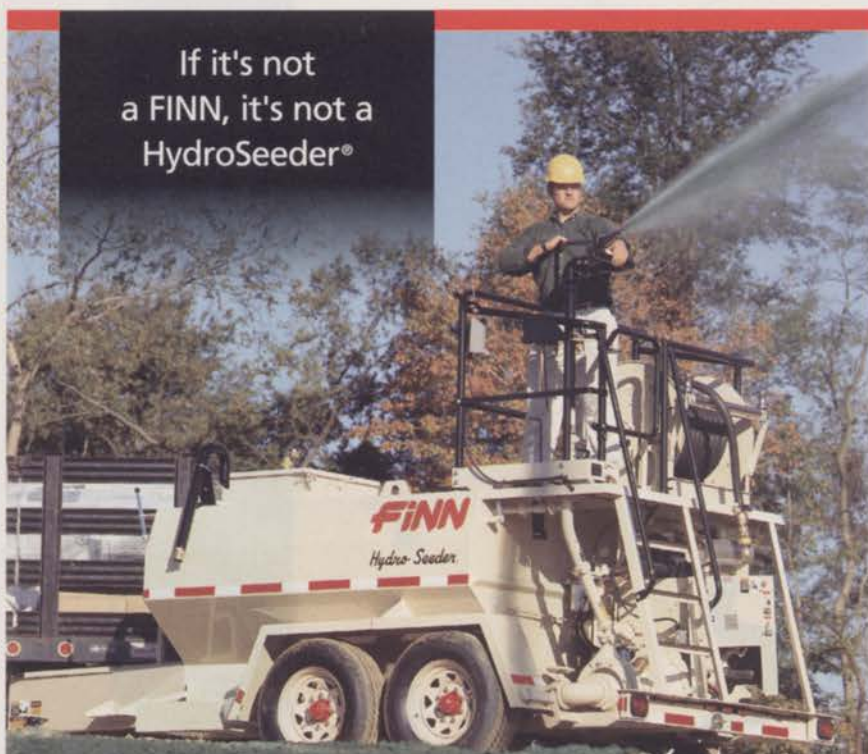
McDERMOTT: Indoxacarb is an active ingredient developed by DuPont that will be the centerpiece of our product line for many years to come. We're excited about indoxacarb because it's a new class of chemistry (oxadiazines) that has been awarded reduced risk status by the EPA. It provides broad spectrum-control of a variety of insects, is fast acting and has a novel mode of action. It's also effective at low use rates, which is another reason it's well suited for the lawn care market. For lawn care professionals, what's most impressive about the active ingredient is its efficacy and residual control against fire ants and other pests.

You'll also be seeing a variety of liquid turf products from DuPont. In fact, we have a number of initiatives planned for our herbicide portfolio, which is the centerpiece of our lawn care business.

L&L: In all, how many new products does DuPont plan to introduce in the coming years?

(continued on page 150)

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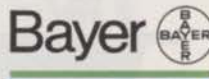
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Conversation Series

(continued from page 148)

McDERMOTT: The plan is to introduce one or two new products annually beginning in 2004 and for five years thereafter. Some products will have applications in both the turf and pest control markets, with the vast majority of those products based on our indoxacarb chemistry. Our first product introduction will be Advion™ Fire Ant Bait, followed by a series of cockroach products, including bait stations and gels. We'll also be developing various ant products in liquid, bait station and gel formulations. In addition, we'll be introducing several new herbicides. We already offer a number of herbicides to the lawn care market through Griffin Chemical Co. We'll continue to offer those products to lawn care operators, while introducing several new products in the turf market in the years ahead.

L&L: Speaking of Griffin Chemical Co., DuPont announced it had acquired the firm. What were the reasons behind the acquisition?

*Mike McDermott
has spent more
than 20 years in
the specialty
chemical
business.*

McDERMOTT: DuPont had acquired 51 percent of Griffin Chemical a number of years ago, so we already had a significant interest in the company. Now it's 100 percent owned by DuPont, so we're currently in the process of integrating the company it into the DuPont organization. The company has done a nice job of building its lawn care business and we expect that to continue in the years ahead. We don't see any significant changes for Griffin Chemical in 2004. CEO Owen

Town will continue to manage the business.

L&L: You say that Griffin has been a strong player in the green industry. Griffin does have some proprietary products, but they also have a lot of generic products. How will DuPont manage proprietary products vs. generic products? How will they market them? Does this give DuPont an advantage over other pesticide suppliers?

McDERMOTT: Griffin has predominately



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marketed and sold post patent products and that will continue to be Griffin's primary focus but only where we can provide additional value through formulation enhancement and improvement as well as product and market support. Griffin has always been very involved and supported industry initiatives such as RISE and GCSAA and will continue to do so in the future.

DuPont Professional Products will focus on bringing our proprietary products and technology to the green industry. The approach to the market, the level of investment and marketing as well as our channel partners will be different than the approach taken by Griffin.

L&L: What prompted DuPont to enter the lawn care market?

McDERMOTT: DuPont made the strategic decision several years ago to expand its specialty chemical business. The company didn't see a great deal of growth in

the herbicide market, where it already had a presence, so they decided to invest in the discovery process in an attempt to develop several new classes of chemistry. Indoxacarb – as well as several other novel active ingredients – is a by-product of that investment. Indoxacarb was first launched in 1999 in the agricultural market. Right now there are products containing indoxacarb registered in 77 different countries around the globe. Our plan is to introduce and develop a full line of indoxacarb-based products in a number of specialty markets.

L&L: Why is it so important for DuPont to gain access to specialty markets like the lawn care industry?

McDERMOTT: If you look at the cost of doing business today, it's a challenging world for the basic manufacturers. A new compound typically will cost a manufacturer \$100 to \$150 million to develop. That's

a significant investment for any company – even one as large as DuPont – so you better make sure you're going to get a substantial return on that investment. When you consider the high cost of developing a new active ingredient, it becomes even more important to access as many different markets as possible, so you can generate the necessary financial returns to support your investment. By only looking at the agricultural market, Dupont was doing itself a disservice.

L&L: Earlier, you mentioned that DuPont has several new active ingredients in the pipeline. When do you anticipate these new chemistries will enter the marketplace?

McDERMOTT: If all goes well, the next new class of chemistry from DuPont could be introduced in four years. The timing of these introductions will be critical since we won't want to cannibalize our existing chemistry (indoxacarb).

(continued on page 154)

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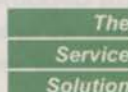
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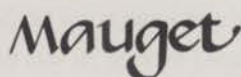
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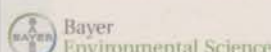
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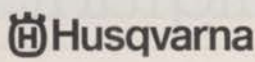
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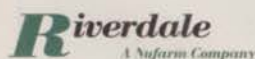
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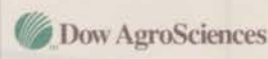
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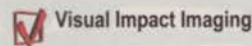
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Conversation Series

(continued from page 151)

L&L: Other than new active ingredients, what do you think DuPont brings to the lawn care market?

McDERMOTT: We're going to focus on developing quality products and business solutions for the lawn care industry, products that allow *all* of our partners – distributors, end-users and others – to succeed. It's important for the industry to realize, however, that we're starting slow. Once we launch Advion™ Fire Ant Bait, we'll introduce additional products, but we're going to be methodical in our approach to the market. DuPont has spent a long time developing a reputation for quality and integrity, and we don't want to do anything that would damage that reputation. Therefore, our initial launch must be flawless.

L&L: In addition to the launch of Advion™, what are some of the other challenges facing DuPont as it enters the lawn care market?

(continued on page 156)

Given his family background, it's not too surprising that Mike McDermott comes by his accounting and people skills naturally. His father, Walter, was an auditor for the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company (A&P) for 43 years, while his mother, Grace, was as warm and welcoming a personality as her name implies, a woman who put everyone at ease in her presence.

"I was the youngest of three children born 18 months apart – Irish triplets," McDermott says with a wry smile. "We went to church on Sunday and attended bat day at Yankee Stadium. It was a typical childhood."

McDermott's childhood was shaped, in a large part, by his family's Irish immigrant roots. "My father's parents came over from Ireland in the late 1800s, and like a lot of immigrants they came with nothing," he says. With few financial resources at their disposal, his father went to work at an early age, a tradition passed on to his own children a generation later. "It was a rule in our family that at the age of 12 we no longer would receive an allowance," he says. "It was time to start earning money on your own outside the family, so I went to work part-time at a local bakery to earn extra money. I earned minimum wage, but it taught me the importance of hard work."

It's a lesson that resonates with McDermott to this very day. – **Dan Moreland**

Irish Immigrant **Roots**



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Conversation Series

(continued from page 154)

McDERMOTT: First of all, there are some very strong competitors in the lawn care market. A number of the basics have extensive product portfolios, so we'll be competing against companies that are not only well established in their respective marketplaces, but with strong brands. The challenge for us will be to get the industry to try our products given the product options currently at their disposal. Fortunately, lawn care professionals have always been interested in new technology, so I think we'll be able to overcome that challenge without too much trouble.

L&L: Given the competitive nature of the marketplace, how do you plan to differentiate DuPont from the other basic manufacturers serving the lawn care industry?

McDERMOTT: As the number of active ingredients introduced to the marketplace has slowed in recent years, it's become more difficult for basic manufacturers to differentiate themselves from one another. Certainly, with

DuPont is a science company, delivering science-based solutions in markets such as chemicals, food and nutrition, health care, apparel, electronics and transportation. The company was founded in 1802 near Wilmington, Delaware, by a French immigrant, Eleuthere Irenee du Pont de Nemours. Today, the company operates in approximately 70 countries worldwide and has more than 78,000 employees, about half of whom work in the United States.

In the 19th century, DuPont primarily was an explosives company. In the 20th century, it became a global chemicals, materials and energy company. Its future will be as a broad-based science company drawing on strengths in chemistry, biology, physics, engineering and information technology, according to Mike McDermott, global business

DuPont: Reinventing

a new class of chemistry (oxadiazines), we'll be able to differentiate ourselves from a purely technical perspective, which is very positive for DuPont. In recent years, a number of the basics have chosen to differentiate themselves by becoming *service solutions providers*. The theory is that as a solutions provider your "value capture" with the customer increases over time because you become more than simply a supplier of chemicals. You become a

business partner. The introduction of Sentricon by Dow AgroSciences is representative of the latter strategy. The introduction of Termidor, which I helped launch while at Aventis Environmental Science, was a more traditional product introduction, an older business model many thought was dead. Despite their differences, each was a successful product launch. The verdict is still out on which strategy is more sustainable, but I think it all comes down to

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manager of Dupont Professional Products. "Constant innovation, that's always been the key to DuPont's success," he says, "and it will continue to be the key to its success in the future."

What sets DuPont apart from the rest of the corporate world is not only its longevity, but its unique ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Perhaps because of its foundation in science – with an emphasis on discovery – change is very much a part of the DuPont culture. The ability to transform and reinvent itself several times during its history is an important reason why DuPont continues to be a competitive global company two centuries after its founding. "We're proud of our past," McDermott says, "and very excited about our future." – **Dan Moreland**

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product performance. If a product performs well over time, it's going to command the dominant share of market. If it doesn't, it won't.

L&L: So you're not convinced becoming a "solutions provider" is the way to go when developing market relationships?

McDERMOTT: I think it's an approach that can be successful, but it's not the only approach. The reality is you have some people

who want you to be very involved in their businesses, while others don't want anything to do with a basic manufacturer. They want your chemistry and that's it. As a company, I believe you need to be sensitive to both approaches to business; otherwise you're only going to appeal to one segment of the industry.

L&L: What are your plans for the future as it relates to the DuPont team?

McDERMOTT: We plan to ramp up rather quickly, assuming we hit all of our product registration timelines. It's a fine line. You want to invest in the people who will give you the best chance of success, but you don't want to over commit since you have an obligation to the corporation and its shareholders to deliver on your promises. Ultimately, our success or failure will be determined by how well the team I've put together reflects the historical ideals of DuPont. We want to introduce the lawn care market to Dupont's ideals, than reinforce those ideals on a daily basis so it becomes part of the lawn care industry's image of the company. We can talk about DuPont's ideals all we want, but it won't mean anything unless we walk the talk. Now that we're involved in this market, that's our job ... to walk the talk. **L**

The author is executive vice president, GIE Media, and can be reached via nwisniewski@lawnandlandscape.com.

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by Ali Anderson

Check out this collection of recent product introductions in the construction category.

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Construction CONSIDERATIONS

Landscape professionals tackle a variety of tasks throughout a typical day – jobs that require more than the basic mowing and trimming equipment. Often, larger tools are necessary to excavate properties and create new landscape features.

Skid steers, loaders, excavators, augers, backhoes, tractors, trenchers and their associated attachments are a few essentials for successful construction projects. Following is a listing of recent new products that fit in this category.



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PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Lawn & Landscape receives daily inquiries from landscape contractors looking for more information on various products, proving there is a need for more education on these new developments. In this monthly section, we pinpoint key product areas in which readers need insight.

- Cushioned operator platform
- Independent all-wheel drive feature available with skid steer, turf tire and rubber track options

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KOMATSU COMPACT HYDRAULIC EXCAVATOR

- Near-zero tight tail swing for increased production in confined areas
- HydraMind Hydraulic System improves power and performance
- Upgraded operator environment for maximum comfort
- PC40MR-2 Model
- 39.4-hp engine
- Compatible with Komatsu's Road Liner track option

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(continued on page 160)

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Product Spotlight

(continued from page 158)

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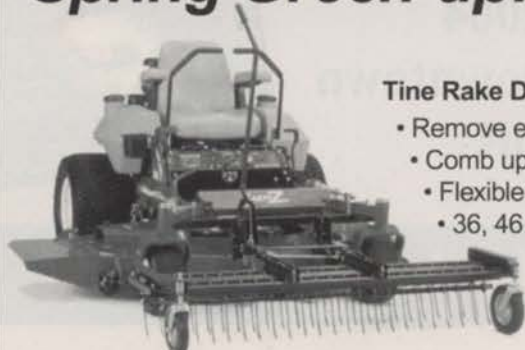


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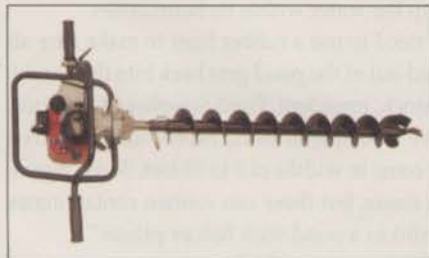
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by Lauren Spiers

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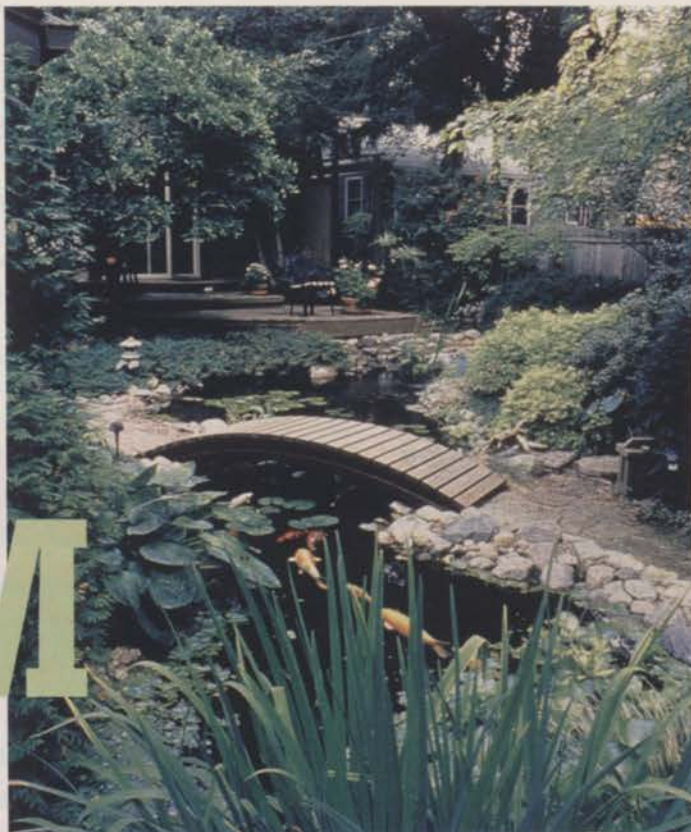
A little attention goes a long way toward keeping landscape ponds crystal clear.

Science project: Cut one 2-liter bottle in half and poke several holes around the open end of the bottle. Fill the bottle a quarter of the way with fish tank gravel and add the aquatic plants, water and a guppy or two. Next, soak a piece of string in water for several minutes, then tie a knot in the middle of the string. Poke a hole in the bottle cap and run the wet string through the hole until the knot catches. Holding the top half of the bottle upside down, fill it with soil and small, leafy plants. Set the top half of the bottle inside the bottom so the string dangles in the water, then seal the seam between the two bottles with the tape without blocking the holes that will let air into the bottom half.

Voila! You've just created an ecosystem. The fish in the lower half of the bottle will be able to breathe through the air holes and eat the aquatic plants. The water and nutrients from the fish waste will be pulled up through the string, which will water and fertilize the plants growing on top.

PRODUCT TRENDS

Lawn & Landscape constantly collects details about the latest product trends. In this monthly, in-depth section, we highlight these developments to bring you up-to-date on emerging issues concerning your third greatest asset behind your employees and clients – equipment.



Clear water and healthy fish and plants are signs of well maintained ponds. Occasionally adding beneficial bacteria can keep the water in proper balance. Photo: Aquascape Designs

Alas, for many eighth graders, this fun experiment – which happens to recreate the ecosystems formed from well-designed landscape water features – often results in dead guppies. However, with the proper installation and maintenance techniques, landscape contractors can create healthy, sustainable environments in their clients' backyard ponds, complete with colorful Koi and thriving aquatic plants.

WATERTIGHT INSIGHT. To create a low-maintenance pond, industry veterans recommend starting at the bottom – that is, with the proper pond liners and installation techniques. Liners are the first component to proper installation because, after excavating the pond site, liners hold the pond together and keep the water within its boundaries.

"You always need to use a rubber liner to make sure all the water pumped out of the pond gets back into the pond," notes Gary Wittstock, president, Pond Supplies of America, Yorkville, Ill. "We recommend using rubber liners referred to as EPDM that come in widths of 5 to 50 feet. Some people may use roofing liners, but those can contain contaminants that can be harmful in a pond with fish or plants."

Sheets of EPDM rubber, a high-performance material that withstands the elements, are often used in pond liners because they do not introduce contaminants into the pond environment and conform well to the plant shelves and sides of pond designs. Wittstock recommends using 45 mil liners, reporting that this weight is plenty sturdy for large

(continued on page 164)

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Product Trends

(continued from page 162)

and small ponds and that heavier liners are too stiff to mold to curvy pond edges.

After installing the liner, Wittstock suggests covering the liner's surface with large rocks and stones, as well as some ¼- to 2-inch gravel to fill in the gaps. According to Wittstock, this bottom layer protects the liner from being punctured by bird and animal life and also provides nooks and crannies where beneficial bacteria can grow and help

out later in the maintenance program.

Other contractors have different pond-lining preferences. For instance, Barry Fox, owner, Falls by Fox, Littleton, Colo., prefers to veneer stones to the liner using concrete, rather than simply letting stones sit on the liner. Likewise, Darren Lucas, owner, Nature's Touch Ponds & Supplies, Paramus, N.J., uses concrete when he builds ponds on sandy soil because it strengthens the pond's structure.

However, simply filling a pond base with a layer of concrete is not enough, Fox adds. "The concrete is strictly ornamental," he says. "Because it's porous, concrete won't hold water – you could have concrete 1 foot thick and water would still find its way through the air pockets and cause damage to the structure of the pond. With a liner underneath, the concrete just becomes a better way

(continued on page 166)

Water features can be beautiful, soothing additions to landscapes, but not if they turn green with algae. Because many homeowners or property managers are too busy or don't know how to care for water features themselves, contractors can offer pond maintenance services to keep their clients happy and increase their bottom lines. Moreover, offering pond maintenance can show clients that their contractor isn't going to disappear should a problem arise.

"Offering pond maintenance as an option when selling the initial pond installation can help make the service profitable for contractors," comments Don Schnoor, vice president, Aquatic Gardens & Koi Co., Jobstown, N.J. "The customer will view your company as a professional pond installation company since you're offering them a complete program even if they opt not to buy the maintenance contract."

Depending on the size of the pond and what the market will bear, most contractors earn \$75 to \$500 for pond maintenance services, including opening and closing ponds at the beginning and end of the season. "Our average customer spends between \$200 and \$250 for a pond start-up in the spring and then \$75 to \$100 to close the pond down in November," says Shane Wagner, president, Wisconsin Pondscapes, Jefferson, Wis. "In the long run, pond service and maintenance is significantly more profitable than pond construction. We have about a 35- to 40-percent profit margin on maintenance, compared to 15 to 20 percent for construction. An average maintenance visit every two weeks only takes about 10 or 15 minutes, but we're able to charge \$55 to \$65 per visit."

But even with solid pricing structures set up to cover pond maintenance labor, industry professionals note another necessity to making the service profitable: owning a pond. "The most important thing a contractor can do to sell ponds and be profitable is to own his or her own pond," says Gary Wittstock, president, Pond Supplies of America, Yorkville, Ill.

"When a contractor has his or her own pond, it teaches them the day to day, hour to hour, season by season variation that a pond experiences and how to maintain it and see what works. More than that, it offers a showplace so customers can see a working, living pond and consider it as a prospective add-on to their own landscapes. If a customer sees how well built and well maintained the contractor's pond is, they're much more likely to request a design by that contractor than by someone without a living example."

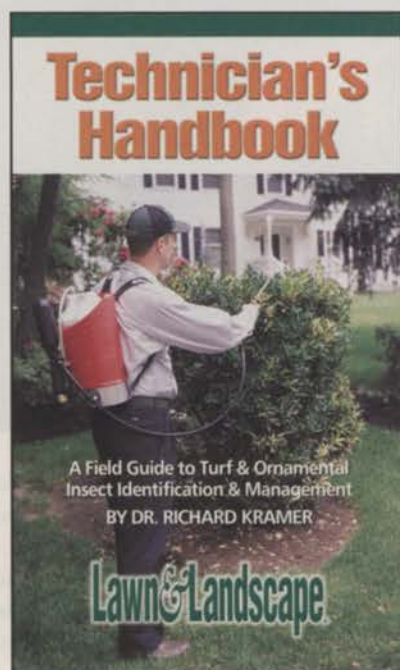
Wagner agrees, noting that Wisconsin Pondscapes always has several demonstration ponds set up at their site. Not only does this help sell the idea and design of a pond to a customer, but existing clients are invited back regularly to see what new features or add-ons are available. "Keeping in contact with customers is really important," Wagner says. "We send out newsletter once a month or bimonthly to invite our customers in and show them what else we can offer to enhance their ponds. Maybe it's adding another stream or waterfall, buying more fish or plants if there's room available in the pond, or even showing off the fountains, sculptures or bridges we have available."

Wagner recommends stocking aquatic plants and Koi, the most common fish for water gardens, to increase sales and keep customers coming back. In fact, he finds the fish to be a fun selling point. "We give our clients five free fish when we install their pond," he says, noting that the 6- to 8-inch Koi are about \$8 each, the price of which is built into the cost of the construction. "After we install the pond, then we give them another coupon for a discount off of additional fish so they come back to our shop."

By enticing clients with new pond "toys" and charging the right prices for regular, thorough pond care visits, Wagner and other contractors make pond maintenance a profitable service. — **Lauren Spiers**

Pond Profitability

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Product Trends

(continued from page 164)

to make sure the rocks we use stay in place.”

DON'T SKIM THIS SECTION. With a watertight pond construction in place, contractors can install the most important pond components to keep water features crystal clear: skimmers and filters.

“I see a lot of underfiltration in ponds that I restore,” Lucas says. “If your filter isn’t strong enough and you have a lot of rocks there can be a huge anaerobic bacteria problem that can kill the fish.”

Wittstock agrees. “Because contractors want to win their bids, they may go with the least expensive filter that will still work for the pond to keep the overall price down,” he comments. “I’ve seen this in combination with using too large a pump that then overpowers the filter. Because the pump is pulling too much water through, the filter gets dirty too fast and the system needs more maintenance.”

Wittstock’s rule of thumb is to use a pump that moves 10 times the surface area of the pond, per hour. For a 10-foot by 10-foot pond

By pushing water through extra filtration media and into fresh air, waterfalls make excellent biological pond filters and bring cleaner oxygenated water back to the pond.

Photo: Aquascape Designs

identify what type of filtration the pond needs. “It’s important to know whether your customer wants fish or not,” Fox says. “Some customers never want fish, but the contractor will use the same filtration for fish ponds and non-fish ponds.”

In a non-fish pond, Fox uses a high-pressure sand-based filter similar to those used in swimming pools. Ponds like these require only a chlorine tab once a week for maintenance, Fox says, since there is no animal life to worry about.



Additionally, aquatic plants also provide a type of biological filtration that keeps ponds clean – especially when fish are involved.

“A key maintenance point on fish ponds is having an even balance between your fish and your plants,” Fox says. “Most people will say that you should cover 60 percent of the surface of the pond with plants. I’m a little more lenient than that and usually suggest a minimum of 40 percent. This leaves the pond with an appropriate ratio of fish to plants, but doesn’t obscure as much of the pond’s surface.”

Fox explains that a pond without the proper fish/plant ratio can easily turn green with algae and make for an uninviting water feature. “It’s the sun that creates algae, which feeds on nitrogen,” he says. “If you block out a good portion of the sun with the plants, that’s the start of a healthy ecosystem. From there, the fish poop and the poop turns into nitrogen, which is absorbed by the plants. If the plants aren’t there to absorb the nitrogen, the algae will continue to grow because you’re essentially fertilizing it.”

Another source of nitrogen is debris that sinks to the pond floor before it can be removed by the skimmer. To solve this problem, Lucas installs bottom drains in his ponds. “We use a bottom drain that collects all the debris and fish waste from the bottom of the pond and that’s gravity fed into a big filter system,” he says. “It’s much easier to install these at the start of the project than to have to

(continued on page 168)

“A KEY MAINTENANCE POINT ON FISH PONDS IS HAVING AN EVEN BALANCE BETWEEN YOUR FISH AND YOUR PLANTS. MOST PEOPLE WILL SAY THAT YOU SHOULD COVER 60 PERCENT OF THE SURFACE OF THE POND WITH PLANTS. I’M A LITTLE MORE LENIENT THAN THAT AND USUALLY SUGGEST A MINIMUM OF 40 PERCENT. THIS LEAVES THE POND WITH AN APPROPRIATE RATIO OF FISH TO PLANTS, BUT DOESN’T OBSCURE AS MUCH OF THE POND’S SURFACE.” — BARRY FOX

a 1,000-gallon-per-hour (gph) pump is the minimum size. He notes that waterfall size also will be dependent on the pump, yielding about a 1-foot-wide waterfall for every 1,000 gph. “If the customer wants a 3-foot-wide waterfall, they’ll need a 3,000 gph pump in order to push more water. There may be a bit more skimmer maintenance necessary, but this size pump is the most popular and provides the contractor with some flexibility because he can split up the waterfall streams into one that’s 1 foot wide and one that’s 2 feet wide, for example.”

In addition to choosing the proper pump to pull water through the pond’s skimmer box and into the filters, the contractor must

However, chlorine is harmful to fish, so for fish ponds, Wittstock recommends biological filters for purification and mechanical filtration via skimmers. Skimmers cost as little as \$100 to \$150 and remove leaves, insects and debris from the surface of the water. “A biological waterfall filtration system takes the water cleaned by the skimmer and moves it through a second set of filter pads,” he explains. “From there you can include media, such as lava rocks that are very porous and have a lot of surface area where good bacteria can live, like the kind in a septic tank. As the water moves through the second series of filters, the waterfall ejects the clean water back into the pond.”

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Product Trends

(continued from page 166)

go in with a net and pull up everything that's settled on the bottom." These effective products can range from \$50 to \$100.

With adequate filtration, contractors note that most fish ponds won't require many chemicals to keep the water levels in line. Still, Wittstock and Lucas both note that adding beneficial bacteria to the water on about a monthly basis – about 1 teaspoon per 1000 gallons of water – helps with the natural, biological filtration of the pond. Also, Fox uses muriatic acid to bring down high pH levels back to the normal 7.5 to 8.

10-MINUTE DRILL. While the skimmers, filters and overall ecosystem in a pond seem to do all the necessary work to keep the pond fresh, contractors still must make at least monthly visits to check on water features and clean the cleaners. Unfortunately, some contractors have reputations of skipping this step. "Among homeowners, too many contractors have the image of disappearing after they finish installing a pond," says Don Schnoor, vice president, Aquatic Gardens & Koi Co., Jobstown, N.J.

What makes that comment so curious is the fact that maintenance for a properly installed pond is small, costing contractors time and money that can be easily recouped in maintenance sales. Most contractors note that they generally charge between \$75 and \$500 a month for maintenance of ponds starting at 5-foot-by-10-foot. "When we did pond installation and maintenance we were able to charge a base price of about \$250 for ponds this size," Schnoor says, adding that offering complete maintenance services helps contractors appear professional to their clients. "A contractor should be able to make a good hourly rate by charging this much for a pond cleaning and they will also weed out customers who are not willing to spend money for maintenance services."

According to Schnoor and other pond maintenance professionals, monthly maintenance visits should include checking the pond's pump to make sure the intake is not clogged in any way; cleaning out the filtration system and the skimmer; fertilizing and trimming aquatic plants as needed; and testing the water for pH, ammonia, nitrates, nitrites and salt levels. Contractors also should have on hand any chemicals necessary to adjust water quality.

Though most pond maintenance only takes a few minutes per visit, closing a pond for the season can be an involved process. Oftentimes, the trickiest part of the process is removing the fish from the pond.

"To remove the fish and completely drain and clean a pond, the contractor will need some specific equipment," comments Don Schnoor, vice president, Aquatic Gardens & Koi Co., Jobstown, N.J. The toolbox for this process contains:

- 100- to 150-gallon holding tanks. More than one may be necessary for large numbers of fish (exceeding the ratio of 2½ inches of fish per square foot of surface water).
- A small air pump to aerate the water in the holding tank
- A pump and pond hose for draining the pond
- A net for catching the fish
- Nets to cover the tanks

Schnoor's first step in transferring fish from the pond to the holding tanks is to use the draining hose to move water that the fish are familiar with directly from the pond to the tanks. "It is important to use the pond water to fill the holding tank because the fish will soon be put into this tank and it needs to be the same temperature as the water in the pond," he explains. "Then, before catching the fish and putting them into the tank, drain the pond down to a low level so that the fish can still swim. By lowering the water level, it will make the task of catching the fish much easier than if the pond was full."

From that point, the technician can catch the fish with a net and place them safely in the holding tanks. After transferring all the fish, covering the tanks securely with nets will keep the Koi from turning into flying fish.

Cleaning the pond is, obviously, much easier without the fish to work around. However, once the pond is clean, the fish must adjust to the new water going into the pond. First, Schnoor recommends neutralizing any chlorine in the water with a dechlorination product. Then, "to acclimate the fish back to the pond, drain the water in the holding tanks back by ¼ and refill the tank with water from the source that is filling the pond," he says. "Repeat this process at least three or four times over a 30-minute period. This will make the temperature and pH of the water in the tank identical to that of the pond."

Again, moving the fish back to the pond using a net will get them safely back to their happy, clean homes. – **Lauren Spiers**

A Fishy Situation

Of all of these steps, cleaning the filter pads takes the most time – about five minutes. Lucas explains the easy process: "To clean the filter pads, you just need to shut off the flow to the filter temporarily and allow it to drain," he says. "From there, the technician can remove the skimmer bag and clean out any leaves and



Photos: Nature's Touch Ponds & Supplies

debris that have been trapped there and remove and hose down the filter pads to clean off any excess build up." Some manufacturers report that filter pads can hold as much as 4 pounds of dirt before cleaning is necessary, but that the pads should not be cleaned too often because they work better as they collect more debris.

Altogether, most pond maintenance takes only 10 or 15 minutes for each monthly visit. However, most contractors and manufacturers note that ponds may require maintenance as often as every week during the fall when trees drop their leaves and skimmers must work overtime. However, quick cleaning drills allow contractors to make numerous pond maintenance visits in a day. For full-service companies who install and maintain ponds, the work also may be left to regular lawn maintenance crews to handle on their weekly routes, creating a highly efficient maintenance service.

However, there are maintenance visits that take significantly more time. For instance, opening and closing a pond at the beginning and end of a season can take a couple of hours when done properly. "The fall is considered the best time of year to clean the pond because you need to make sure the pond is clear of debris before winter sets in," Schnoor says. Otherwise, decaying

material that gets trapped beneath iced-over ponds can produce harmful gases and asphyxiate the fish. For this same reason, Fox adds that fish should not be fed during the winter months.

To clean the pond completely and close it for the season, Schnoor suggests the following steps:

1. Move the pond fish to 100-gallon holding tanks (see A Fishy Situation on page 168 for more information).
2. Remove all tropical plants and either discard or store them properly for the winter. Hardy plants

Removing leaves and debris from ponds is essential. Decaying matter can produce harmful gases that can lead to an imbalance in a pond's ecosystem and be harmful to fish.
Photo: Pond Supplies of America



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pond area and remove it with a large dustpan and brush or a pond vacuum.

4. Clean and winterize the filtration system as necessary.

5. Place hardy plants back in the bottom of the pond and refill the pond with water. If the water is from a city water source that contains chlorine, dechlorinator may be needed to neutralize the water for fish and plant safety.

6. Acclimate the fish to the new water temperature and replace them in the pond.

7. Place a pond net over the pond to catch any debris that may fall during the course of the winter.

Opening the pond again for the spring requires similar steps, though removing the fish and draining the pond completely may not be necessary if the pond was closed properly the previous winter. Schnoor notes that plants can be removed from the bottom of the pond and replaced into their proper locations for the season, and clients should

be advised to begin feeding the fish again when the water reaches 45 to 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

While the plants and fish will be perfectly safe in a cold pond during the winter, contractors and manufacturers recommend that a small amount of pond surface area remain free of ice to allow for the exchange of gases. Fox's clients keep their waterfalls running during the winter so ice stays broken up, though there are several other methods available.

"Rather than running the waterfall all winter, which can artificially chill the pond, some pond customers may choose to install a "tee" in their systems which would take the water from the skimmer box and put it directly back into the pond instead of routing it through the waterfall," Wittstock says. "This will still keep ice from forming in that area of the pond. Also, you can install a floating heater to keep the ice broken up, though a heater alone may be inadequate in

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Check our March Online Extras section to find out why Gary Wittstock's spells pond maintenance "P.F.B.O.G."

ponds with many fish. A single small hole won't exchange enough gas to keep the fish healthy."

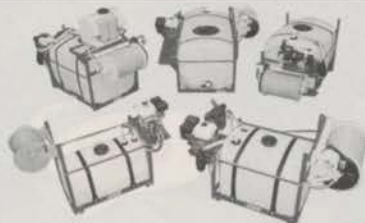
And, of course, healthy fish are essential for strong ecosystems like landscape ponds. In order to keep water features like these robust and attractive, contractors must follow thorough monthly maintenance schedules. Taking just a few minutes a month and a couple hours a year to service clients' ponds can help contractors keep these water features from becoming trial-and-error science experiments. **LL**

The author is associate editor of *Lawn & Landscape* magazine and can be reached at lspiers@lawncandlandscape.com.

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- Offers protective coat to prevent corrosion
- Keeps grass from sticking to mower blades

Circle 200 on reader service form

Abbott Enterprises BOLT Tachometer

- Allows operator to see an engine's exact RPM at a glance



- Uses a graphic, 8-inch viewing display
- Connects to the ignition coil
- Functions by counting the spark impulses and converting the information electronically to a band of light proportional in length to the engine speed

Circle 201 on reader service form



Echo CS-341 Chain Saw

- 33.4-cc top-handle saw for landscape professionals and arborists
- Features a Slope Advance Ignition System that

matches the ignition timing of the engine to the operating rpm

- Side-access chain tensioner makes on-site chain adjustment easy
- Comes standard with a 14-inch bar and chain
- Weighs 7.8 pounds

Circle 202 on reader service form

Husqvarna Trio-balance Harness System



- Distributes weight across a large area for improved operator comfort and reduced fatigue
- Reduces the risk of back and neck strain and enhances safe operation
- Allows a customized fit for each operator
- Easy to adjust

Circle 203 on reader service form

Bayer ES Bayleton Fungicide

- Fights turf and ornamental disease problems in the spring, summer and fall
- Combines long-term control with both granular and sprayable options
- Offers long-lasting dollar spot control
- Provides broad-spectrum, long-lasting control of 12 turf diseases, including take-all patch
- Granular or sprayable applications allow user flexibility
- Available in convenient pack sizes

Circle 204 on reader service form



You can now request product information online and receive a response immediately! Just visit www.lawnandlandscape.com and click on the "free product information" logo on the front page. There, you can submit your product information requests directly to manufacturers. Or, simply circle the numbers on the reader service card in this month's issue and fax the form to 216/961-0504.

EZ Dumper Kwik Dump

- Mechanical dump trailer
- Can be unloaded in one minute or less
- Powder-coated finish prevents corrosion from and fading
- Two-year warranty

Circle 205 on reader service form

Glenmac Roll Back Barrier

- Allows improved tilling efforts with a tractor power box rake
- Can be adjusted to five positions
- Diverse settings allow operator to produce an ideal size of material for landscaping or seed-bed prep



- Useful for grading, leveling, opening up or drying out ground
- Adjustment takes less than one minute

Circle 206 on reader service form

Products

Flomatic Ball Check Valve

- 3-inch model for irrigation pumping applications
- Corrosion-resistant PVC body and E-Z access port
- Rated for a maximum temperature of 150 degrees Fahrenheit and a maximum pressure of 100 psi
- Requires little maintenance
- Flow efficient

Circle 207 on reader service form

Rayco Log Splitter

- Model LS2526
- Gas-powered, tow-behind machine with 25 tons of splitting force



- 13-hp Honda engine
- Standard four-way wedge
- 600-pound log lift, auto cycle and hydraulic wedge lift

Circle 208 on reader service form

Ball Horticultural's Pixie Double Sparkler Burgandy

- Double-flowering mini-impatiens
- Masses of petite, fully double burgandy and white blooms on free-flowering, well-branched plants
- Dark green foliage provides color contrast
- Performs best in full- to partial-shade areas
- Requires all-purpose fertilizer and frequent watering

Circle 209 on reader service form

Amerityre Flatfree Tires

- Closed cell polyurethane foam tires for lawn care equipment
- Can be used for riding lawn mowers, mower decks and wheelbarrows
- Will not dry, rot, crack or absorb water
- Oil- and chemical-resistant
- 100-percent recyclable

Circle 210 on reader service form



Allscape Lighting Catalog on CD-ROM

- Includes the entire ALLSCAPE product catalog in electronic format
- Interactive CD runs on a Web browser and features a highly visual homepage
- Features detailed company information, product specifications and photometric data
- Photographs available in each product category
- Allows access to printable versions of product specification sheets
- Includes e-mail link for questions, comments and requests
- Available for no charge

Circle 211 on reader service form

SnapperPro Turf Cruiser

- Zero-turn riding mower with out-front mowing deck
- Available with 21-, 23- and 25-hp engine models
- 52-, 61- and 73-inch decks available
- Single-lever joystick operates twin-hydrostatic transmission with integrated gear reduction
- Dual-path hydrostatic drive
- Includes Quik-O-Nect attachment system

Circle 212 on reader service form

Fostco Intake Screens

- Self-cleaning screens for use in any body or stream of water
- Retractable drum intake screens



- and conical intake screens available
- Proficient in areas of low sweep velocity or high debris conditions
- Constructed in compliance with state and federal government water intake standards

Circle 213 on reader service form

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WeatherTRAK ET Controller

- Designed for residential and commercial applications
- Can be configured for four to 12 watering stations
- Compatible with most standard irrigation systems
- Automatically creates the most intelligent irrigation plan for the designated property based on changes in local weather
- Simple three-knob interface and large LCD display for easy setup

Circle 214 on reader service form

Norma Pac Actuator

- Pressurized air control actuator enables immediate compliance with "no cut in reverse" government regulations
- Reduces electrical load to engine
- Single-button engagement does not require special engine modifications
- Stand-alone configuration can be used in multiple applications



Circle 216 on reader service form

Hyde Park Products Control-Gro Perennial Mix 4

- Multi-purpose media for flowering plants, bedding plants, hanging baskets and containers
- Includes composted southern pine bark fines and long-fibered Canadian sphagnum peat moss
- Encourages healthy root development for excellent drainage, aeration and nutrient-transfer characteristics

Circle 219 on reader service form

Dosatron Fertilizer Injectors

- Technology for residential and commercial fertigation
- Water-driven system is installed directly into new or existing irrigation lines
- Designed to provide a consistent, homogeneous blend of water and fertilizer
- Positive-displacement



ment adjusts to flow fluctuations, allowing function with all irrigation system types and sizes

- Solution is blended in unit's internal mixing chamber

Circle 215 on reader service form

Biosafe Systems GreenClean Granular Algaecide

- Non-copper, EPA-registered formulation for the control of algae in water gardens, ornamental ponds and fountains
- Also effectively treats algae on various hard surfaces
- Can be applied to water bodies containing fish, plants and other aquatic life
- Safe for application on brick, gravel, concrete and other surfaces

Circle 217 on reader service form

RedMax Flex-Shaft Edger

- Powered by Pro-G24LS engine with 22.5cc displacement
- Curved-flex driveshaft with square ends
- Weighs 13.1 pounds and holds 1.27 pints of fuel
- Features 9-inch steel blade
- One-year commercial warranty

Circle 218 on reader service form

Hunter PGJ Mid-range Rotors

- Available as shrub heads and 4-, 6- and 12-inch pop-ups
- Can be used as an alternative to spray heads on small turf and landscaped areas
- Designed for use in 15- and 30-foot sites
- Features through-the-top radius adjustment and a water-lubricated gear-drive
- Selection of interchangeable nozzles available

Circle 220 on reader service form



Syngenta Flagship Insecticide

- Flexible insect control for soil and foliar applications
- Contains the active ingredient thiamethoxam for control of many sucking and chewing pests
- Offers protection against aphids, whiteflies and mealybugs
- Dial-in rate can be used for foliar applications

Circle 221 on reader service form

Perficut Mini Jack

- Allows safe and easy access under deck
- Stable two-arm design
- Universal design works in the front and back of all walk-behind mowers
- Heavy-duty folding mechanism means easy storage
- Powder-coated finish

Circle 222 on reader service form



Wellmaster 4WS Tracking Dump Wagon

- Features 5- by 10-foot deck
- 18-inch removable sides and tailgate for conversion to flat deck
- Primed and painted in various color combinations
- Two 3.5-inch bore hydraulic cylinders
- 4,000-pound capacity
- Designed for use in various commercial and residential applications

Circle 223 on reader service form

Organic-Gro PRO Fertilizer

- 20-2-6 commercial grade fertilizer formulated for turf grasses
- Environmentally friendly, non-toxic, odor-free blend
- 80-percent organic, 20-percent synthetic organics
- Requires no wait time after application
- Restores proper microbial and earthworm activity for more colorful, healthier, stronger lawn

Circle 224 on reader service form

DeepRoot Partners ArborTie

- Tree-staking and -guying materials
- Designed to replace traditional methods such as wire and hose
- Soft polypropylene materials have a unique weave that ensures a rounded edge at all times
- Available in 250-, 500- and 3,000-foot rolled packages
- Promotes stem growth but has a break strength of 900 pounds
- Available in olive green and white

Circle 225 on reader service form

Vermeer SC252 Stump Cutter

- Self-propelled unit
- Has an optional AutoSweep system to increase productivity while reducing wear and tear
- Eliminates guesswork
- Available with either a 25-hp Kohler or 20-hp Honda engine
- Can put the toughest stumps to rest
- Slim 35-inch width allows easy maneuvering of the unit

Circle 226 on reader service form

Classen TA-26D Turf Aerator

- Model TA-26D roll type aerator
- Full-time, self-propelled coring machine can be maneuvered even in the tightest areas
- User-friendly handle and controls put less fatigue on the operator
- Rugged, one-piece frame
- 4-cycle, 4-hp Honda engine

Circle 227 on reader service form

Yazoo/Kees Floating Deck Cutter Hydro



- Intermediate walk-behind mower

- Rear-engine design allows the unit to be very compact

- Only 70 inches
- Wide wheelbase and low center of gravity increase stability
- 48- and 52-inch decks available
- Patent-pending, foot-activated height adjustment system allows for varied cutting range without moving wheel motors or adjusting casters

Circle 228 on reader service form

Bluebird ClamShell 533CV

- Combines vacuuming and chipper-shredding operations into one powerful unit
- Four-blade impeller with 16 free swinging flails
- Reduces collected material into a finely ground mulch
- Two 4-inch, high-carbide chipping blades
- Devours limbs up to 2 inches

Circle 229 on reader service form

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Products

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- Engineered especially for the MidMount Series
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- Can vacuum, mulch or side discharge using the same deck for high-quality results
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- One person can easily remove the entire collection system in minutes

Circle 230 on reader service form

EZ-Trench EZ8000 Bedscaper

- Can create beautifully curved landscape beds or be used as a mini-trencher
- Caster steering offers maneuverability
- Progressive cutting blade cuts hard soils
- Adjustable depth allows trenching from 0 to 8 inches deep or height adjustment for refreshing beds

Circle 232 on reader service form

Cub Cadet Commercial Backpack Blower

- 2.5-hp engine with 44.8cc engine displacement
- 180 mph air speed
- Flywheel magneto ignition system



- Diaphragm with purge pump carburetor
 - Weighs 19.6 pounds
- Circle 231 on reader service form

RedMax G2500TS Chain Saw

- Lightweight top-handle chain saw
- Chain brake is dual-activated
- Weighs 6.4 pounds
- Dust-free air intake

Circle 233 on reader service form

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(continued from page 82)

frustration of routing by doing a lot of the number crunching and planning for them, while GPS systems improve a manager's ability to keep tabs on crews with less driving between jobs.

Even though Dan's Landscaping uses scheduling software to plot its routes, it still employs the decidedly low-tech dry-erase approach to one aspect of crew management, Standley says. "Instead of buying the little dry erase boards that are super expensive, we've bought a whole sheet of the stuff, that is almost like paneling," he explains. "We divide it up like a database sheet with a roll-out line maker." Standley then designates a column for each crew, listing their jobs, by day, through the end of that week. It includes their time in and time out on a job, as well as the budgeted time and actual time spent on site. "The key is that we use different colored markers. Green means that you were within budget and red means you were over budget."

It's a strategy that provides Standley with a fair indicator on which to base raises and bonuses. "I can point to it and say, 'Well look, you've done a great job here.' It gives them a benchmark and helps them keep track of how they're doing," he says.

The use of a dry erase scheduling board is common among contractors because it makes color-coding a snap, and charts written in dry-erase ink are easily changeable. The other intrinsic benefit of posting performance evaluations in this way is that it provides a competitive incentive among crew members to step up their efficiency while keeping a keen focus on quality control.

Lueders also knows the power of employee efficiency incentives that don't cost the customer the quality they expect. "It can be a double-edged sword," he says. "The workers all have a financial reward incentive tied to how well they perform relative to budgeted time, but at the same time they also have a responsibility to call-backs tied into that plan."

In addition to incentives, Lueders has also made use of a satellite office, off the main company site was established by Lueders to help eliminate down time between jobs that are further out in the field and provide a sort of bridge for crews between home-base and some of the more remote properties. "We service jobs as far as 50 miles away from our headquarters, so we installed a satellite office about 30 miles out," he says. "All of the administration stuff still works out of the main office," Lueders explains. "The satellite is similar to a branch. It's a location where materials are stock-piled and delivered to and there's a lead person in the field who works out of the satellite daily, handling the paperwork of any crew that is working from the satellite or working in a region the satellite serves." ■

The author is assistant editor for Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at wnepper@lawnandlandscape.com.

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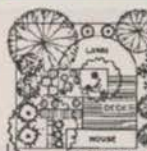
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For career opportunity and confidential consideration, send or fax resume, including geographic preferences and willingness to relocate to: DeAngelo Brothers, Inc., Attention: Paul D. DeAngelo, 100 North Conahan Drive, Hazleton, PA 18201. Phone: 800/360-9333. Fax: 570/459-2690.

EOE/AAP M/F/D/DV

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Email jdelaosa@hulc.com
Phone 505-898-5510 Fax 505-898-2105

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- Estimators to bid landscape, irrigation, revegetation, and erosion control projects ranging from \$1K to \$4M.

- Landscape & Irrigation Superintendents with large commercial project exp.

- Reclamation Project Manager (Revegetation and Erosion Control Projects).

- Revegetation Superintendents & Foremen.

See our website @ www.wsreclamation.com; e-mail wsrieac@aol.com; Fax 303/833-4447 attn: Liz.

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For more information contact:

Elisabeth Stimson, Human Resources Director

Email: estimson@gothiclandscape.com

Ph: 661/257-1266 x 204

Fax: 661/257-7749

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A dynamic, growing and full service landscaping company in Northern Virginia is looking for an experienced landscape designer to assist in the rapid growth of the company. The responsibilities of this position include meeting with clients to develop a landscaping design and effectively managing the client-company relationship. Using your expertise to make suggestions for both hardscape, softscape, lighting and water feature solutions. Excellent graphical skills required. A team player with a great attitude is required for this position. Now is the time to bring you on the team, before the busiest time of the year. Please fax your resume to 703/734-1438.

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Enviroscapes

7727 Paris Ave.

Louisville, OH 44641

e-mail resume to:

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Sales Arborist: A recognized leader in the arboriculture industry is seeking qualified Sales professionals to grow & maintain an established sales territory in Westchester County, NY or Bergen County, NJ. Ideal candidate will have a passion for caring for clients & their trees, & possess a 2 or 4 year business or green industry related degree. A minimum of 2 years sales experience with established skills. A desire to network and prospect for new business. Candidate must be highly motivated, well organized & enjoy a fast paced work environment. Excellent people/communication skills combined with a positive "can do attitude" a must. This employee owned company will provide the framework, structure & on-going training for your success. Comprehensive compensation package including: 401K with company match, profit sharing, medical, dental & much more.

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Call, mail or fax your resume to:
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850 Featherstone,
Pontiac, MI 48342
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Cover Story

(continued from page 63)

because of the tax deferral advantages.

The individual employees don't hold the stock – the trust holds it for them. And if employees leave the company, they can't take it with them. "This is a way for us to get equity out of the business and give those who want to be more of a part of the company a vested share in it," Bertotti says. "It's also a way for Kim and I to slowly start planning for the time when we move onto other interests. Our employees have helped us build this company so they deserve a piece of the pie."

The Bertottis could have borrowed money from the bank to start an ESOP earlier but as Kim says, "having that debt and paying back the bank is a heavy burden for a company to bear. To us, doing this the right way without incurring debt was better than doing it the quick way."

To make this work, the company had to continue its open-book management style, explaining to employees during monthly company meetings how to be aware of profits and how they affect the stock price, and be disciplined in the way they run their area of the business daily, Kim says. "The profits they help generate determine the retirement income people get when they retire and have to sell their stock back to the company," she explains.

In addition to their plans in forming an ESOP, Bertotti realized that another key to building a solid company future was for him to focus on changing his own responsibilities.

Despite his 30 years with the business, Bertotti still has a hard time letting go of his first love – building. "I'm at the point now where I still want to work in the field but have to let that go more and more to run the company," he says.

Today, Bertotti still builds 15 to 20 percent of the company's work, despite the fact that he now has foremen in place handling most of it.

Though he has cut back his time in the field, sometimes a business owner can't give up his first love, and maybe that's OK. "I still can't resist that feeling of seeing a project start with nothing and then end up as something great. I want to be in the field generating sales – I don't want to be overhead in the office. I'll probably always spend some time building jobs – it's why I'm in this business." **LL**

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

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Dimex Corp.	www.edgepro.com	26	22	PBI Gordon	www.pbigordon.com	67,129	47,105
Ditch Witch	www.ditchwitch.com	24	19	Perma Green	www.ride-onspreader.com	64-65	46
Dixie Chopper	www.dixiechopper.com	99	80	Pine Hall Brick	www.pinehallbrick.com	104	85
Dow AgroSciences	www.dowagro.com/turf	52-53*,119		Plant Health Care	www.planthealthcare.com	34	33
Drafix	www.drafix.com	63,175	45,134	Porter Ferguson	www.lowellcorp.com	80	62
DuPont	www.proproducts.dupont.com	147	116	Rain Bird	www.rainbird.com	19,85	16,66
Easy Lawn	www.easylawn.com	150	119	Ramrod Equipment	www.ramrodequip.com	144	114
Echo	www.echo-usa.com	189	132	Real Green Systems	www.realgreen.com	156	124
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How We Do It

Accepting Credit Cards at Greenworld Irrigation Specialists

There are several advantages to accepting credit cards. However, there was a learning curve involved when we first implemented the system here at Greenworld Irrigation Specialists, West Nyack, N.Y.

To begin accepting credit cards, we first had to contact a credit card service company to acquire the data service and equipment. The machines usually sell for \$200 to \$300 outright or rent for \$5 to \$20 per month. However, our co-founder already owned a machine, so our cost was nothing. Also, because it is possible to purchase the equipment from one company and the data service from another, we shopped around until we found a second service company with better transaction rates and service charges to keep fees down.

All of this setup was easily done over the phone and installing our hardware was also straightforward. The type of machine we use has us punch in the client's credit card number rather than swipe their card. This works well for us because not many of our clients come into the office to pay their bills. They enter their credit card information on their service contact or bill.

When we began offering payment by credit card, only about 5 percent of our client base chose that option. More of our customers are taking advantage of this form of payment and some clients have even mentioned that they purchased an irrigation system just because they could charge it. However, we do incur a small, 2.47-percent service charge for each transaction.

For instance, if we installed an irrigation system that cost our client \$1,000, after running charging the card, our business account would only be credited \$975. The other \$25 would be paid to the credit card service company. To

combat this charge, we try to mark up our work by 3 percent, which our customers hardly notice.

While working with credit card machines and services is easy, we did learn the hard way that finding an organized, trustworthy person to handle credit card payments is a must. Originally, we hired an office person who claimed to be familiar with credit card systems, but who made several mistakes like charging a client's credit card twice. Though that kind of mistake is easy to correct and the client usually understands, there is a charge to our company to credit the amount back to the client's card. For us, the charge was \$25 per occurrence, which can add up quickly.

To stop overcharging clients and avoid penalty fees, we hired a new office manager, who has a background in accounting, to handle all credit card transactions. Her accounting knowledge also comes in handy because we store credit card information in QuickBooks. This system made accessing the information easy, but we also made sure to install several levels of security on our computers to safeguard our clients' personal information. Three different passwords are required to access our network, QuickBooks and sensitive account information. Also, to keep our clients' information secure, we have a computer technician regularly update our computers with antivirus protection. Additionally, we do not allow our employees to take credit card information on-site. We don't want to give our employees an opportunity to be anything but honest, so clients must come in or call the office with their credit information or put it on their bill.

With credit cards, clients benefit from having 28 days to pay their bills and they have the convenience of being able to finance expenses like irrigation systems. And once they provide us with their card information, they never have to submit it again. It's all on record.

For our company, there are also many benefits. The primary advantage is that our account is credited within 24 hours of charging the card, rather than having to wait for a check from the client, depositing it, clearing it and then reconciling the checking account at the month's end. Because payments are made when the job is complete, our cash flow is better. We proudly display all accepted credit cards on our invoices and we expect to increase our charging client base to 75 percent within the next two seasons. Also, we know our professional image and competitive advantage strengthen with each swipe. — Brian Klinek

The author is president, Greenworld Irrigation Specialists, West Nyack, N.Y., and can be reached at 847/721-5055.

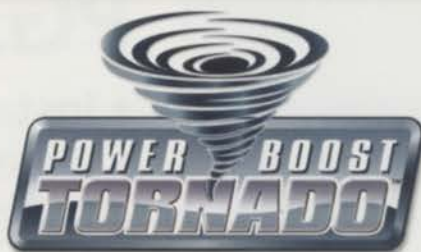
5 KEYS TO *Accepting Credit Cards*

1. Decide whether purchasing or renting card reading equipment is the best option for your company. Shop around to find a service company with the best transaction rates.
2. Designate or hire a knowledgeable, trustworthy staff member to handle credit card transactions.
3. Install safety measures on computers and within the company to ensure that all client credit card information is secure.
4. Mark-up job bids to include the cost of any credit transaction fees you may incur.
5. Promote credit card payment to all clients and display the types of cards your business accepts on invoices, promotional materials, etc.



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