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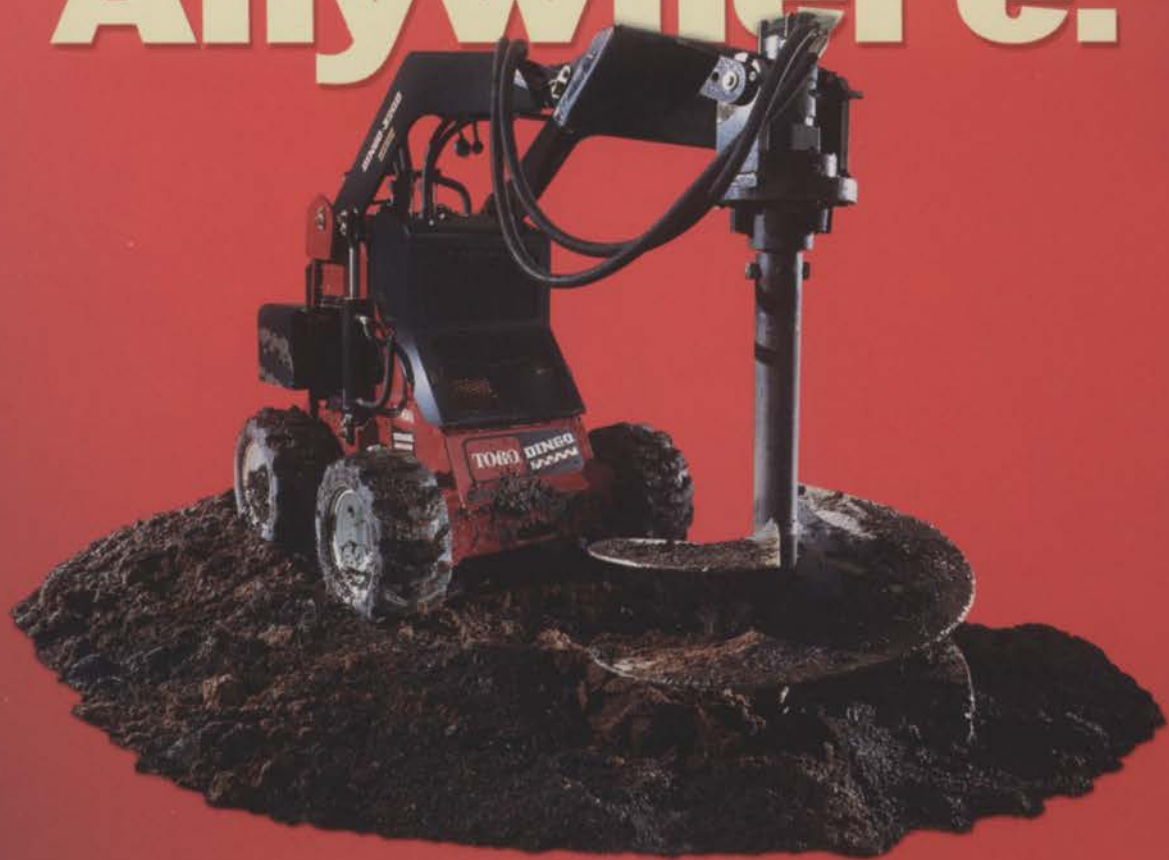
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Lawn & Landscape



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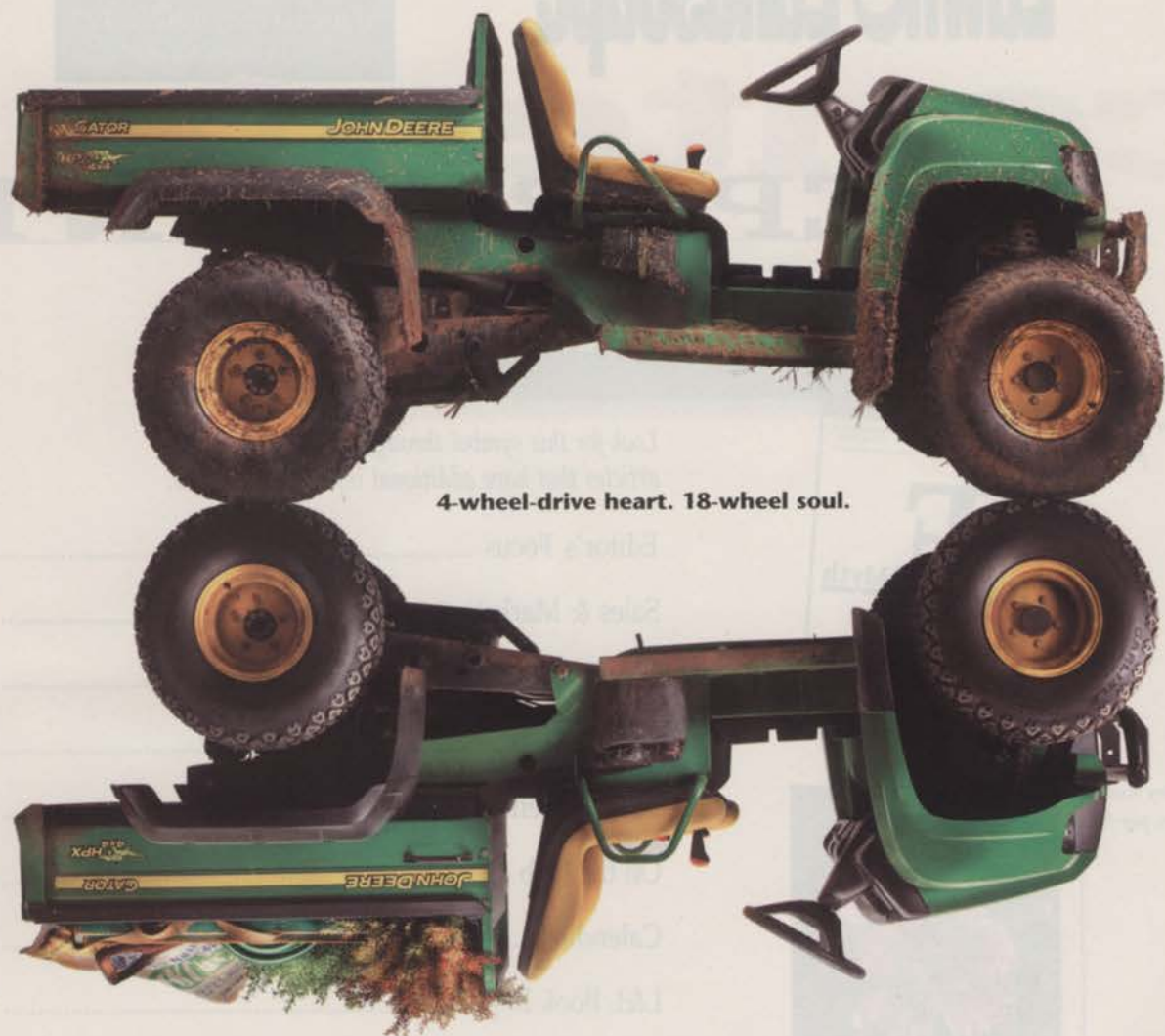
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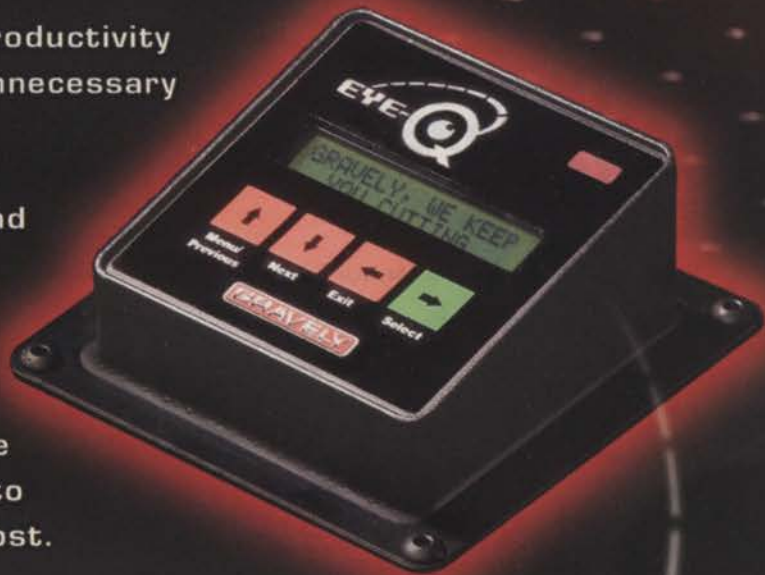
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Best of the Web

Check out the "Best of the Web" section of *Lawn & Landscape* on page 54. This article, based on a recent Message Board discussion, examines a collection of tips to help new businesses avoid common pitfalls that can thwart profitability.

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 for a list of pruning terms and definitions, as well as information on when and how to prune certain shrubs.
- For more information on news relating to this month's cover story on H-2B, please visit the *Lawn & Landscape* Online News section.
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Consumer Guidelines

Roger Stanley is editor-in-chief/associate publisher of *Lawn & Landscape*. He can be reached at 800/456-0707 or rstanley@lawnandlandscape.com.



Developing "Environmental Guidelines for Responsible Lawn Care and Landscaping" was the objective of a three-day meeting in San Antonio, Texas, March 14-17. Discussions centered on a 28-page draft document covering landscape design and installation, maintenance, community issues and where to go for help.

While homeowners are the intended audience, any finalized document would certainly affect professionals, not so much because of any new science or management practices in the document, but rather because anything that ends up in the approved guidelines – designing landscapes to conserve water, using native vegetation to reduce maintenance costs, considering having smaller yards to mow, and taking soil tests before fertilization – would carry a powerful coalition's stamp of approval.

The more than 100 people in the room represented local and federal governments, universities, environmental groups, major industry suppliers, industry service companies, the gardening industry and industry media. Professional trade organizations participating included Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE), the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA) and the American Nursery and Landscape Association (ANLA).

My personal take on the meeting is that its goal is noble – homeowners (and professionals) should consider environmental factors when designing, installing or maintaining a landscape. And as long as guidelines remain guidelines, I have no problem with them. My concern is that today's guidelines can become tomorrow's regulations, especially at the local government level. For that reason alone, what's being hammered out by the coalition matters and deserves your attention.

One would not expect that any meeting of industry representatives and environmental activists would result in harmony, and that certainly was the case in San Antonio. Disagreements were voiced but with diplomatic understatement. Environmental activists want the

potential harm of pesticides emphasized, even potential secondary hazards. Industry representatives want pesticides to be evaluated with a consideration of potential hazard, cost and efficacy.

Discussion raised other issues that will need more work before any final document can be approved, such as defining words and phrases that get thrown around all the time. For example, recommending the use of slow-release fertilizers, raises the question of what "slow-release" means. Similarly, creating a buffer zone between a lawn and a body of water requires some understanding of what constitutes a "buffer" – what is it made up of and how wide does it need to be?

Recommending the use of "native plants" generated a comment that there should be no bias for or against any plants based on their origin. And some plants now considered "native" in an area actually are exotic based on their place of origin. Plant selection questions came up often in the discussions – the use of native plants vs. non-native to reduce maintenance, the use of drought-resistant plants to conserve water, and the selection of plants that deer do not like to eat as a means to deal with deer problems in residential areas. Combine all three options and you might end up with a landscape consisting of prickly pear cacti.

The biggest issue that needs to be dealt with is what the final guidelines should be – a lengthy document with both simple guidelines and important background information, a simple numbered list of consumer guidelines, or some combination of the two.

The next step in the process is to put together a revised draft for a second meeting. Your's truly plans to be there and will keep you posted. In the meantime, I suggest you visit www.crm.org to read the draft guidelines. Let me know what you think. **ll**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roger Stanley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

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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.



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Think for a moment about some of the purchases you have made in the last year or so. What buying experiences do you recall being pleasant? What experiences weren't so pleasant? Chances are, you remember the unpleasant experiences more readily than the pleasant ones. That is why it is so important to have well-trained, enthusiastic employees caring for your clients.


While great service may not always be recognized, bad service is remembered for years, and bad service results in clients taking their money someplace else. They will also tell anyone who will listen about their bad experience with your firm and this is dangerous.

For instance, a few months ago, I was returning from speaking to a group of entrepreneurs for a few days in Las Vegas. On my way home from the airport, I called my wife at home at around 8:30 p.m. She sounded very tired and said the kids just went to bed and she still had not eaten dinner. I told her that I hadn't eaten either and would stop by this sub sandwich place and bring home dinner.

I went in the store and walked up to the counter. The young man behind the counter was not well dressed. I should have walked out then, but I was hungry, had eaten there many times before and was just too tired to take a stand this time. While at the counter, he did not say anything – no greeting, no smile, no nothing, just standing there like I was bothering him. So I just ordered what

I wanted. He rang it up and pointed to the total on the cash register. Thinking he might have been deaf, I didn't get that stirred up about his rudeness. I handed him the \$8.36 for two subs and went to sit down and wait for my food. He turned around and yelled into the kitchen in an assertive voice, "Two turkey-pastrami subs and a chili to go." I guess this young man was not deaf. Minutes later I saw out of the corner of my eye two sandwiches and a bowl of chili placed on the counter from the kitchen. Instead of walking up to the counter, I waited to see what would happen. After more than two minutes, I finally walked up to the counter, took my food, told the young man to have a great day and went home.

This whole transaction occurred without the employee saying one word to me. He was a miserable salesperson for his company. As I drove home, I wondered who the poor people were who owned that store. They have their capital at risk, their future in the hands of a person who just does not care. However, even though a small part of me feels sorry for the owners of that store, a bigger part of me says that the owners are completely to blame. They hired a person with a bad attitude; it is their fault this young man works at their store. And I can assure you I will never go back to that place. There are too many options for my money for food than to spend it someplace where the employees make you feel like you are bothering them by coming to their store.

Too many entrepreneurs don't train their people on how to treat clients and prospects. They hire fast and fire slow, when they should do the exact opposite. The way your clients are treated determines your future, probably more than anything else. Happy clients tell others about their experience, and referrals are the best advertising. As you're looking for new people to hire, look for the ones with a good attitude. They are the ones who will impress your clients and sell your company to others. Every single person in your company is a salesperson in and for your company and the sooner you get your team to believe that, the sooner you will see your business make the profits you deserve. Happy Selling. 

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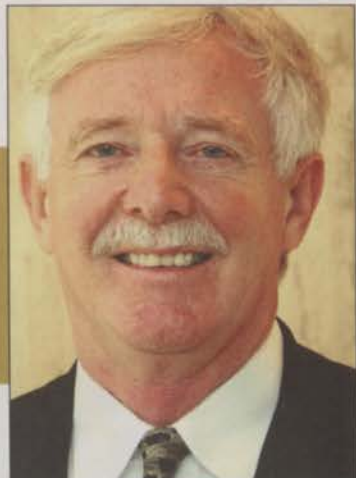


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The Operating Room

Pick Up the Phone

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.



The year is off and running and hopefully you survived the spring in high fashion with your income statement showing double-digit profit. If not, here is an area you may want to review: client communication.

What do your customers think of your operations right now? You have had a fair chance to either wow them or cause them to question their choice in hiring you. As the summer begins, take this chance to show your customers the caliber of your services before they decide to cancel their contracts.

To keep from losing clients, act fast. Begin by picking up the phone and calling your customers to get communication back on track. Produce a list of your clients, their telephone numbers and other important information and keep it with you at all times. This list allows you to check off the client once you have spoken with them, giving you a quick look at where you stand on your commitment to calling all your customers.

Next, advise your operations staff that you will be calling all of your clients to see if their perceptions are in line with the quality of work your company wants to provide. Everyone in the company is involved with client satisfaction and should be informed of what you learn from your customers.

When you start calling your customers, the conversation might include some phrases like these:

- "Hi, Bill. This is Jack Mattingly with Mattingly Associates. I'm calling to see how you are and to check on the performance of the services we are providing."
- "Is there anything else we can do for you?"
- "Bill, I noticed on the right side of your entrance that there are some open areas in the plant beds. Would you mind if I gave you a proposal for filling that in?"

Client calls accomplish two tasks: First, by developing a script to use when making calls, you will develop your own style and flow for effective communication. This will make your clients comfortable and help them share their concerns and ideas. Also, these conversations


give you the opportunity to sell additional work, which is highly profitable because you are not bidding against other contractors. By searching for and proposing additional billable work, your clients will see your attention and commitment to their landscapes.

As you speak with your clients, make some notes. After a few calls, you will get an idea of the level of your services and how your clients perceive you and your company's work. Client perception is what counts, so pay attention. Tracking these notes is beneficial, as is sharing them with everyone in your organization. Share all comments, whether they are good, bad or ugly, with employees. As a group, discuss them and identify how you can turn around an unhappy client.

Response to a client's unhappiness or request is critical. Be sure that you have a game plan in place to handle concerns or work requests. The plan needs to be oriented around how quickly crews can visit the sites and make the corrections and additions. Seven days usually is an acceptable time frame. If the work cannot be completed during a regular weekly visit, the company may incur some unexpected overtime or the need to add a crewmember to complete the work. Still, authorize your employees to do anything necessary to please the client.

An unhappy client presents a great opportunity for you to become a superstar. If you immediately perform the necessary work in a quality fashion, your client will be very appreciative as long as you do not let the work to slip again. Allowing work to fall behind again will force you to spend many dollars in sales and marketing to replace that client next year.

The time it takes to make phone calls to all of your clients will be the most valuable time you spend all year. The telephone is a powerful tool and I am surprised at how many contractors send form letters or surveys rather than speaking with customers directly. Remember, it's not the customer's job to fill out a form. It is your job to ask the questions, write down the answers and respond quickly to client requests.

Now is your chance to wow your customers. 

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Making the Right HR Decision

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



For years I have watched business owners and CEOs make "people" decisions. Often, I have been privileged to participate in their decision-making by providing advice and counsel to these executives. In some cases, I learned of the decision and outcome too late to impact the results. While most leaders can recall the painfulness of their bad choices, many have never taken the time to analyze where their HR decisions went wrong. After much analysis of good and bad HR decisions, I have some insight to share.

First, let's define a "people" decision. Simply put, it is any executed choice made by a leader that impacts the organization's human resources. The most obvious people decisions are those that involve hiring and firing. Those that are not so obvious – such as the decision to coach a 20-year employee with declining performance, the decision to change a significant policy or benefit that impacts morale or the multiple decisions involved with a harassment investigation – are often more complicated.

I have found over the years that every business problem has, at its core, a human resource problem. Once you realize this, it becomes obvious that leaders make a multitude of complex HR decisions every day. And let's face it, when it comes to dealing with people issues, most of the time, you're operating in the "gray" zone. Rarely are decisions involving your human resources black or white.

What I have found is that good HR decision-making is dependent upon some simple, practical components or principles. These principles may not apply to financial or operational decisions – but I do believe, if applied properly, they can impact the quality and outcome of your HR decisions. Also, although it may seem obvious, it's worth pointing out: Before you apply these principles, you must first have viable knowledge and concrete facts about the particular matter. In the absence of relevant details, one can never make a good decision.

There are four components of effective human resources decision-making. Two of them, we will cover this month.

1. THE RIGHT CHOICE. – None of the other components will matter if you can't get this one down first.

Making the right HR decision is absolutely dependent upon choosing the right option for action. Example: One of your employees gets injured outside of work and presents you with a doctor's note that includes some vague limitations. The employee says he's fine to work. Do you (a) let the employee go back to work because he says he is fine, (b) send the employee back to the doctor with a copy of your job description, the physical requirements for the position and a letter requesting more details, (c) let the employee go because you have no "light duty," or (d) place the employee on a leave of absence until he is ready to return to work? Answer: It depends! The right choice hinges on a host of considerations, like coverage under state and federal employment regulations, the precise situation, number of employees, company policies, past precedent and others. What should you do? Get professional advice! Today in business, the wrong choice will cost you much more than getting the right advice. If you don't have the experience or knowledge in human resource decision-making, be wise and ask for help.

2. THE RIGHT WORDS. This is a biggie. When it comes to executing a decision involving your people, you must choose the right words to communicate your message. To select the right words, you must consider the personality of the individual you are communicating with and you must take the time to determine how to communicate your message clearly, directly, with confidence and with respect. Stick with the facts and don't beat around the bush, make excuses or blame yourself for something that has nothing to do with you. The best communicators have learned how to convey even bad news with honesty and sincerity and without delay. (Hint: Unless you're one of the few gifted people who always seems to have the right words at any given moment, you'll find that it takes time to prepare your communication.)

In June, we will cover two more key considerations employers should keep in mind when making human resources decisions. **LL**

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Market Trends

MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS

Davey Tree Acquires Trio

KENT, Ohio – The Davey Tree Expert Co. continues its expansion initiative with acquisitions of Pagura Landscape, Columbus, Ohio; Melton's Tree Service, Bettendorf, Iowa; and Sean McCarthy Tree Care Service, Richmond, Va.

The trio of acquisitions bring Davey's total to 16 in the past two years.

"When it comes to acquisitions, our primary objective has always been to find companies that fit Davey's ideas and goals," said Karl Warnke, president and COO for Davey. "Pagura, Melton and McCarthy do just that."



The Pagura organization has merged with Davey's Columbus-area commercial grounds management office. Melton has joined Davey's Quad Cities residential office, and McCarthy has joined the Richmond residential office.

Founder Steve Pagura has joined Davey as a sales representative.

"Independently, Pagura and Davey have been providing Columbus with excellent service," Pagura acknowledged. "By combining the resources of both companies, we can offer a wider range of services to all our customers. We are very excited about this merger."

(continued on page 22)

Brickman Group Purchases Urban Environments

COLUMBUS, Ohio – The Brickman Group, Gaithersburg, Md., recently acquired Columbus, Ohio-based Urban Environments, Inc. (UEI).

Founded in 1939, Brickman serves commercial clients in 23 states, offering maintenance, landscape architecture and construction services. Posting annual revenue of approximately \$10 million, UEI is one of the Columbus area's providers of landscape and irrigation design, installation and maintenance services for commercial properties and residential estates.

Both Brickman and UEI are family-run businesses with similar visions and goals, making the acquisition a comfort-

(continued on page 26)



Scott Brickman

TruGreen Buys FirstService Lawn Entity

TORONTO – FirstService Corp. completed the sale of its Canadian lawn care business, Greenspace Services, to TruGreen ChemLawn, a subsidiary of The ServiceMaster Co.

Greenspace Services is headquartered in Toronto, Canada, and has branches operating in Ontario, Quebec and Alberta. The sale price was approximately \$12.9 million (in U.S. dollars) including cash proceeds and the assumption of certain liabilities on closing of \$9.1 million and a note receivable of \$3.8 million payable over five years.

The company expects to record a one-time gain on the sale of approximately \$0.18 per share on a fully diluted basis in its fiscal 2005 first quarter ending June 30.

FirstService Corp. is a North American leader in the rapidly growing service sector, providing services to commercial and residential customers in the following four areas: residential property management, integrated security services, consumer services and business services.

TURFGRASS TRENDS

TPI President Offers Industry Insights

Turfgrass producers have their sights set on a bright future and will continue to find success as they address significant issues facing the green industry, notes Ed Zuckerman, president of Turfgrass Producers International (TPI), during his annual state of the industry report.

Water and artificial turf are a few hot buttons for the industry, Zuckerman observes. "We in the turfgrass industry must deal with water shortage issues beginning with local and national coalition building to combat repercussions from drought," he notes. "An influx of artificial turf, along with the continuing water shortage are two large and expanding issues TPI is addressing on behalf of the entire turfgrass industry," he says.

Zuckerman predicts the pervasiveness of these issues, combined with real estate interest rate levels and high insurance costs, will force turf producers to reevaluate how they do business, making adjustments when necessary.

But despite issues and struggles, Zuckerman sees success in the future for his colleagues. "Even though there are challenges facing the industry, there are also opportunities to differentiate yourself from the rest of the world," he acknowledges. "These challenges present tremendous potential to grow businesses."



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USE READER SERVICE #20

Market Trends

A LOOK AT LAWN CARE

Growth Goals

When it comes to growth, lawn care operators (LCOs) know which services sell and which ones don't.

According to a recent survey, 51 percent of LCOs expect their fertilization plus insecticide/herbicide treatments to be their fastest growing chemical lawn care service in 2004 at an average growth percentage of 18.22.

After this service, there's a large gap with fertilization ranked as the second service expecting quick growth in 2004 (17.7 percent of LCOs reporting). Weed control is in third place with 15.2 percent of LCOs choosing this service as their speediest growth area in 2004. The report also shares that LCOs expect their fertilization services to

What percent do you expect your lawn care services to grow in 2004?

SERVICE GROWTH	PERCENT
Insect control	19%
Fertilization plus insecticide /herbicide treatments	18%
Weed control	18%
Fertilization only	17%
Fungicide treatments	16%
PGR applications	15%

Source: Lawn & Landscape

grow an average of 17.12 percent, and their weed control services to grow an average of 17.89 percent.

Though insect control will bring in the highest percent growth – 18.91 percent – according to LCOs, it will be the fourth fastest growing service of 2004 with only 7.3 percent of contractors reporting this as a rapid growth area.

BRANCHING OUT

Ruppert Reenters Virginia Market

CHANTILLY, Va. – Ruppert Nurseries reentered the Virginia market by opening a landscape installation branch in Chantilly, Va. – just west of Dulles International Airport.

"Re-entering the Virginia market was a natural step for us to take," says President Chris Davitt. "We had already been serving the Virginia area from our Maryland branch and we



Chris Davitt, President, Ruppert Nurseries

(continued on page 26)

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USE READER SERVICE #21

Market Trends

(DAVEY continued from page 20)

In the Quad Cities area, founder Rick Melton and owner Michelle Tinman both have joined Davey. "We will now be able to offer our clients spray and feed services, which we couldn't do previously." The educational opportunities available to the Davey staff far exceed the resources available to the Melton's small-business staff, she adds.

Richmond Manager Mark Bennett expects the addition of McCarthy's staff will help grow his region of Davey's business. "This move will provide former McCarthy clients with access to Davey's integrated service approach," he says. Founder Sean McCarthy has joined the Richmond-area Davey staff.

"In our diverse and fragmented industry, there are literally thousands of opportunities to bring other companies on board," Warnke notes. "But those opportunities must be explored selectively. Each acquisition is a careful and deliberate step. An incredible amount of consideration and study is given to each possibility."

Davey's other acquisitions in the past two years include:

- Action Tree Expert Do., Naples, Fla.
- Boulder Tree and Landscape Co., Boulder, Colo.
- Charette Tree Service, Boston, Mass.
- Denver Tree Specialists, Denver, Colo.
- Environmental Turf Services, Pontiac, Mich.

- Horrigan Tree Industries, Chicago, Ill.
- Key's Tree Service, Hicksville, N.Y.
- National Shade L.P., Houston, Texas
- Perennial Landscape, Indianapolis, Ind.
- Quality Tree Care, Orlando, Fla.
- Thornton Grounds Care, Cincinnati, Ohio
- Top Gun Landscape, Tampa, Fla.
- Tree Care by Professionals, Houston, Texas

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Market Trends

(BRICKMAN continued from page 20)

able fit for both sides, notes Margie Holly, communications manager, The Brickman Group. "A solid presence in the Columbus market, their reputation for quality work, and a talented leadership team are what attracted Brickman to UEI," Holly says. "Culturally we are a match, in that UEI places the same value on quality, service and career growth for team members that is at the heart of Brickman's success. The UEI team, combined with Brickman's existing Columbus operations will enable us to offer enhanced service to all of our clients in that area, local, regional and national."

A veteran of industry acquisitions, The Brickman Group plans to pursue similar deals in the future. "Brickman's past, present and future strategy is to grow through our existing teams by providing consistent, value-oriented service," Holly observes. "Although this is our core strategy, we have always been interested in acquiring quality companies that have a strong talent pool of man-

agement and staff, are geographically compatible with our growth goals and match Brickman's culture and core values. We are a service-oriented company, and we look to partner with others of like mind, whether clients, business partners or vendors, so that we can continue delivering excellent service in a cost efficient manner."

UEI President, Joel Korte, will remain with the company, as regional manager of Brickman's Columbus Region, as will his management team. "Becoming part of Brickman will present on-going career growth for my team, and enhance our service to clients with the strength, experience and resources of a national leader behind our team here in Columbus," Korte says.

Other UEI staff members also will be retained. "We have known and admired Joel Korte and his team at UEI for many years," says Brickman President and CEO Scott Brickman. "We are excited to have this talented team join our organization."

(RUPPERT continued from page 22)

are excited about the opportunity to open a branch that will accommodate our Virginia customers."

Ken Thompson, who has been with Ruppert companies more than 18 years and has managed three branches, will lead the new branch alongside a staff of Ruppert veterans.

Joining Thompson are Mike Marshall (estimating and sales), Frederick, Md.; Kurt Siemon (contract administrator), Herndon, Va.; and Shaun Snodgrass (production manager), Deale, Md. Marshall, Siemon and Snodgrass have worked for Ruppert companies for 10 years, six years and one year, respectively.

Ruppert Nurseries, a commercial landscape installation and maintenance services company, also has branch offices in Laytonsville, Md., Philadelphia, Pa., and Atlanta, Ga., as well as a 475-acre wholesale tree nursery in Montgomery County, Md.

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Market Trends

COMPANY EXPANSION

Middleton Expands Into Florida

ORLANDO, Fla. – Middleton Lawn & Pest Control grew its list of target service areas to Clearwater, Ft. Pierce, Gainesville and St. Augustine – all in Florida – because of increasing population growth in these areas.

"Our long-term goal is to become the largest pest control and lawn care company in these new markets, just as we are in other parts of Florida like Daytona, Orlando and Tampa," says Greg Clendenin, president and CEO, Middleton Lawn & Pest Control, based in Orlando. "In our industry, you have to go where the people are. The new markets are located in either forest or coastal water areas where pests will fester, especially as residential communities continue to develop."

(continued on page 31)

National NEWS

Bush Budget Could Hurt Small Businesses

Members of the U.S. House of Representatives recently released a detailed report on President Bush's fiscal year 2005 budget and its effect on small business programs.

The report, compiled by the Minority staff of the House Small Business Committee, reveals that programs aimed at helping small businesses would see more than a 70-percent cut. The report argues that while small businesses everywhere empathize with the mounting federal deficit, some say a 70-percent reduction in funding for small business programs seems too high a price to ask of the nation's small business owners.

The report identifies 36 distinct programs serving the small business community that either are cut or terminated in the administration's FY2005 budget proposal. Among the affected programs are: 1) those used to secure capital, 2) direct government contracts to small businesses, 3) those that provide training for small business workers and 4) those reducing energy costs.

The report also examines a number of tax measures that would have significantly helped small businesses if they were not excluded from the Bush budget.



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USE READER SERVICE #28

U.S. Employers Optimistic About Hiring

Strong demand for their products and services is prompting U.S. employers nationwide to say they will soon hire more workers than they have in the past three years.

That's the word from the Employer Outlook Survey by Manpower International, a Chicago-based staffing company. The quarterly survey notes that 28 percent of employers expect to hire more workers from April to June.

That's the highest level since the first quarter of 2001 and it's the third consecutive quarter in which U.S. employers have increased hiring.

Moreover, recruiting and hiring efforts will be targeted at job-seekers in all 10 sectors that Manpower tracks. Those fields encompass construction, education, the wholesale and retail trade, public administration, service jobs, transportation and public utilities, durable and non-durable manufacturing, mining and finance.

"It is clear that demand for their products and services has finally surpassed the capacity and productivity of the current workforce," says Manpower Chairman and CEO Jeffrey Joerres in a written statement.

Of some 16,000 employers polled, 28 percent expect to increase hiring from April to June while six percent will cut the number of workers they hire. Most employers - some 62 percent - will maintain their current staffing levels. This is the third consecutive quarter that employers reported an uptick in hiring.

Adjusted regionally, employers down South expect to offer job-seekers

the most abundant opportunities, with 24 percent planning to hire. The Northeast, which is lagging well behind other regions, will have the fewest opportunities. Only 18 percent of employers plan on adding to their payrolls in coming months.

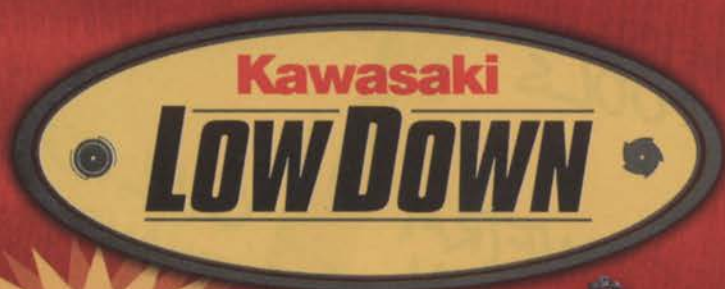
Hiring will be strongest among construction employers, who have not been as optimistic about adding to their payrolls since 1978. Forty-two percent of construction firms expect to increase hiring in the second quarter of the year.

Makers of durable goods, such as cars and refrigerators, also are bullish about their need for new employees. Thirty-one percent expect to increase hiring.

Meanwhile, manufacturers of non-durable items will also increase staffs, but not as quickly. Only 27 percent expect to hire more workers. Nevertheless, that's the highest level in three years, says Joerres, who called the increased hiring among manufacturers "notable."

Job seekers in the services sector will find more opportunities, too. Three out of 10 employers plan to increase staffing in coming months, with most new jobs being available out West. That's where 36 percent of employers expect to hire more workers - just about 10 percent more than in the Midwest and Northeast expect the fewest job openings.

Jobs in the public sector, which have been cut as governments bridge budget gaps of their own, also should start re-appearing. *Source: CNN/Money*



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Calendar of Events

(MIDDLETON continued from page 28)

In planning its growth strategy, Middleton chose to expand its offerings into the designated areas for several reasons, including the areas' sub-tropical climates, which support a year-round business; legislation that is industry-friendly yet environmentally sound and favorable economic conditions surrounding a recession-resistant industry, the company reports.

Extending services into these new areas is part of Middleton's overall expansion plan. In 2003, the company grew into Clermont, Ocala, Tampa and Vero Beach, generating a 7-percent revenue increase due to this new expansion alone. In addition, Middleton recorded the company's first-ever record sales month of \$2.5 million in the company's 50-year history during October 2003. Overall, the company's goal is to become the largest lawn care and pest control company in Florida. Currently, Middleton is fifth largest in the state, and the 25th largest in the United States.

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.

MAY 26-28 Grandy & Associate's 2004 Basic Business Boot Camp, Owensboro, Ky. Contact: 800/432-7963 or www.grandyassociates.com

JUNE 2-3 International Erosion Control Association Training Courses, Gulfport, Miss. Contact: 970/879-3010 or www.ieca.org

JUNE 10-12 Snow & Ice Symposium, Minneapolis, Minn. Contact: 814/835-3577 or www.sima.org

AUG. 18-20 Lawn & Landscape Weed & Insect Management Summit, Chicago, Ill. Contact: 800/456-0707 or www.weedandinsectsummit.com

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

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USE READER SERVICE #34

Book Report

DICK BARE RECOMMENDS...

The E-Myth Revisited: Why Most Small Businesses Don't Work and What to Do About It, by Michael Gerber

by Will Nepper

Dick Bare, owner, Arbormomics, Norcross, Ga., makes the bold claim that *The E-Myth Revisited: Why Most Small Businesses Don't Work and What to Do About It*, by Michael Gerber, changed the way he conducts business. "The E-Myth changed my modus operandi more than anything else I've ever read," he says.

What on earth could be between the covers of a book that would inspire such a change? The answers are less complicated than most people want to make them, and that, in part, is the point of *The E-Myth Revisited*.

Originally published as *The E-Myth*, *The E-Myth Revisited* provides additional business case studies to drive the book's message home: Most successful businesses are *not* run by entrepreneurs, but rather by a turnkey franchise model that the owner of the company has thoughtfully put into place.

"It taught me that as the owner of a company, there's no reason for me to be working extra hours and staying late," Bare says. "I should be monitoring my business structure and creating an environment of uniformity for my employees."

Bare says that what initially struck him about *The E-Myth Revisited* is its assertion that company owners should eventually find themselves not working in their companies at all. "All the people I know who own companies work night and day at them," he explains. "They think, 'The harder I work, the further ahead I'll get.'"

Bare says *The E-Myth Revisited* challenges this premise. "It says that what is far more important is how smart you are about

how you're running your business," he explains. "It's about working *on* the business, rather than working *in* it." And working on a business means setting up systems and organizing the company so that it can run smoothly without the owner."

But Bare confesses that this has not always been his schematic for success. In fact, before reading the *E-Myth Revisited* his business philosophy was quite different. "It was basically a 1950s model for business, where the philosophy is if you own the company you're there every day – the first one there in the morning and the last one to go home at night," Bare explains. "What you really need to do is simply own your business. When you are the owner you have to start thinking as an owner rather than a manager."

Bare says this is clarified in the book by the distinction Gerber makes between three different personality types: the entrepreneur, the manager and the technician. The book helps distinguish between them for application in hiring practices. "If you have a more sales-oriented personality on your truck working as a technician it could be disastrous and you'll lose money," he says. "But if you can find the right person to fit the right job you'll do fantastic."

"The book explains that as the entrepreneur your job is managing the dream and being the planner of the company's future – the idea guy," Bare says.

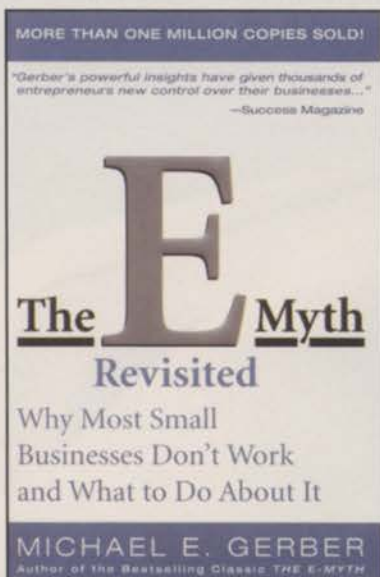
"The book kept me from selling my business when things got hard," he adds.

Bare points out that small-business owners who currently employ only a few people would be wise to read the book now, before they begin to grow. "We've been trying to go back and systemize everything on paper and it's a killer if you try to do that after you've already spent years establishing things," he

says. "Whereas if you're just getting started, you can document everything and set up your systems from the beginning."

Bare adds: "Eventually you'll develop a company that can function as an entity independent of you." – Will Nepper

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



Give us your best book recommendation and we'll enter your name in a drawing to win a copy of *The E-Myth Revisited: Why Most Small Businesses Don't Work and What to Do About It*. Simply e-mail your book suggestion

(including 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 this information. The deadline for entries is June 1.

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USE READER SERVICE #35

Nursery Market Report

NEW PLANTS

Variety Show

A new wave of varieties for 2004 has hit the market, with varied colors and landscape applications. Read on for the 'A to L' look at the latest in landscape material from the National Garden Bureau. For M through Z, check out *Nursery Market Report* in the June issue of *Lawn & Landscape* magazine.

Hollyhock 'Queen Purple' (right) is a dwarf hollyhock with frilly, 3- to 4-inch purple blooms on compact plants. Photo: National Garden Bureau

A

Alyssum 'Wonderland Citron.' *Lobularia maritime* offers fragrant, pastel yellow flowers on uniform plants 4 inches tall with a 6-inch spread. Plants tolerate cold and rain and prefer full sun. They thrive in rock gardens, borders, containers and baskets.

Aster 'Chinese Mixed.' *Callistephus chinensis* is available in single, double and pincushion mum flower forms in a range of colors and sizes. The 12- to 26-inch-tall plants have pink, purple, white, red and bicolor 1- to 2-inch blooms.

B

Begonia F₁ 'Bayou Pink.' Large, 14- to 16-inch upright begonias have a vigorous habit that quickly fills in beds, crowding out weeds. This begonia provides nonstop color from spring to frost in containers and mass plantings.

Begonia 'Go-Go Appleblossom.' *Begonia tuberosa* was created for long-lasting landscape performance. Large, double blooms on sturdy, 10- to 12-inch plants stand out among the shadows of a shady bed or container. The series includes seven bold colors.

Begonia F₁ 'Prelude Mix.' *Begonia semperflorens* are compact, uniform 6- to 8-inch plants that hold masses of ¾- to 1-inch white, pink, rose, coral, scarlet and bicolor blooms above green foliage. Use in mass plantings or containers.

C

Calendula 'Pink Surprise.' *Calendula officinalis* produces frilly, double orange/apricot 3-inch flowers tinged with pink. This cottage garden flower grows 18 to 24 inches and is suitable for containers and landscape beds. Flowers are edible when used as herbs.

Carex 'Frosted Curls.' This hardy grass-like plant is ideal for containers and landscaping. Rounded tussocks of soft gray foliage have distinctive curling twists at leaf tips. Clumps mature at 8 to 12 inches in diameter.



Celosia 'Fresh Look Red' & 'Fresh Look Yellow.' The tall, rosy red celosia is an All-America Selections Gold Medal winner for outstanding landscape performance. An abundance of feathery yellow plumes characterizes the vigorous, 14-inch 'Fresh Look Yellow' plants. These plants exhibit heat, humidity and severe weather tolerance.

Celosia 'Spiky Pink.' *Celosia spicata* has clusters of hot pink, wheat-like flower spikes 3 inches long with red stems. Plants are 15 to 18 inches tall. They are heat-tolerant, full-sun annuals for containers and landscaping in hot climates.

D

Delphinium 'Guardian.' *Delphinium elatum* is a uniform bloomer. This stately 24- to 36-inch-tall perennial is hardy in U.S. Department of Agriculture zones 4 to 7 and has thin but strong stems. The series includes Blue, Early Blue, Lavender and White.

Dianthus 'Amazon Rose Magic.' *Dianthus barbatus interspecific* features dark green, glossy foliage and vibrant blooms that start white, age to pink, rose, then to deep rose, offering a stunning visual impact. This late-season performer grows 18 to 24 inches tall.

Dianthus F₁ 'Chiba Auricula Mix.' *Dianthus chinensis x barbatus* is early flowering with 1¼-inch blooms in a mix of purple and rose picotee shades. This compact, 8- to 10-inch-tall, basal-branching plant is suitable for containers or mass plantings. It tolerates heat, cold and rain.

Dianthus F₁ 'Diana Red Centered White.' *Dianthus chinensis* is a vigorous, low-growing, 8- to 10-inch plant with a compact and branching habit. It produces large, 2- to 2½-inch blooms and prefers full to partial sun in the landscape and containers. The series offers nine additional colors.

Dianthus F₁ 'Dynasty.' *Dianthus barbatus interspecific* has double-flowered blooms that look like mini-carnations. Lightly scented, 1- to 1¼-inch purple, red or white flowers bloom on upright 16- to 20-inch perennial plants that are hardy to zone 6.

G
Gaillardia 'Yellow Flame.' *Gaillardia pulchella aureus* has solid yellow, 2-inch blooms that tolerate heat and drought. The 30-inch-tall plants spread 24 inches and are ideal for containers or full-sun landscapes.

Gypsophila 'Gypsy Deep Rose.' *Gypsophila muralis* has dainty double and semi-double blooms that cover the 8- to 10-inch diminutive mounded plant with deep rosy color. It prefers sun and requires little maintenance.

H
Hibiscus 'Luna Red.' *Hibiscus moschuetos* has 7- to 8-inch showy blooms on big, bushy, well-branched, 2- to 3-foot-tall plants. These plants are perennial in zones 5 to 9, and they are heat, cold and drought tolerant. Provide this hibiscus full sun in containers or the landscape.

Hollyhock 'Queeny Purple.' *Alcea rosea* is a dwarf purple hollyhock that flowers prolifically. Frilly edged, 3- to 4-inch "powder-puff" blooms are abundant on compact, branching plants with a mature height of 20 to 30 inches.

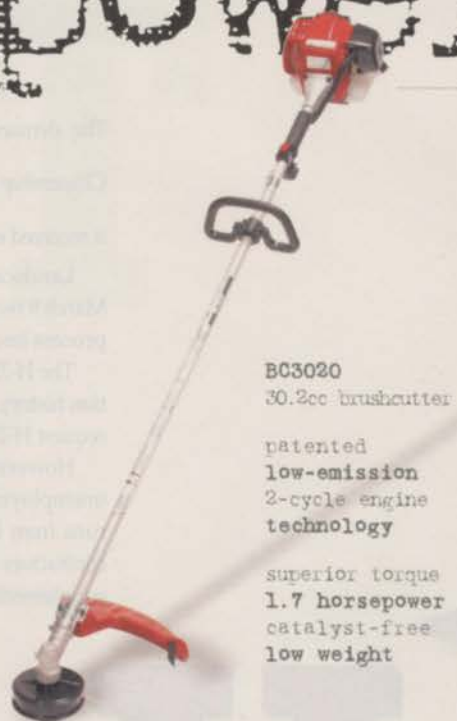
L
Lavatera 'Novella Rose.' *Lavatera trimestris* is compact, early to flower and well branched. The 23-inch-tall plants provide strong spring and early summer performance with 3- to 4-inch rose-colored blooms for sunny beds, mass plantings or containers.

Lavender 'Sancho Panza.' *Lavandula stoechas* produces dark purple, 1-inch flower spikes in early spring and summer on dense, rounded bushes of aromatic, grayish foliage. Plants reach 12 to 18 inches after a year's growth and are ideal for warm, well-drained conditions.

Lobelia 'Aqua White.' *Lobelia erinus compacta* blooms two weeks earlier than standard lobelia varieties. Ideal for pots, baskets and borders in part-sun locations, this lobelia grows 4 to 6 inches tall and 8 to 12 inches wide. White joins four other Aqua series colors. — Ali Cybulski

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

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USE READER SERVICE #36

by Nicole Wisniewski

The demand for supplemental labor quickly exceeded the supply on March 10, when U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) kept its promise and closed the H-2B program after it received enough petitions to meet this year's congressionally mandated cap of 66,000 workers.

Landscape contractors who were lucky enough to get their H-2B visa petitions in by March 9 received their workers on time. Others, who were at various stages of the application process and received no advance notice of the impending cap, are out of luck.

The H-2B program hasn't always been such a hot topic though. In fact, throughout immigration history, the H-2B program has remained a non-issue. The program permits an employer to request H-2B workers when American workers aren't available for the same jobs.

However, this year, perhaps as a sign of the economy's increasing vitality and shrinking unemployment rate, the H-2B cap was reached not even halfway into the federal fiscal year, which runs from Oct. 1 to Sept. 30. Industry associations, H-2B provider companies and landscape contractors are left wondering what will become of the only legal and safe method of hiring supplemental immigrant labor.

H-2B

*It's spring clean-up time
for this federal program.*

Immigration Control and Reform Act creates the seasonal nonagricultural visa program to help distressed industries find legal workers and provide amnesty for millions of illegal foreign workers.

1986

1990

Congress establishes the H-2B program for labor shortages in nonagricultural seasonal employment, allotting 66,000 visas for workers.

14,300 H-2B visas issued.

1996

1997

15,706 H-2B visas issued.

20,192 H-2B visas issued.

1998

1999

30,642 H-2B visas issued.

H-2B'S HARD TIMES. Acquiring labor has always been a challenge for landscape contractors. In 2003, 48 percent of contractors said finding labor was their largest obstacle, and another 23 percent said retaining that labor was just as difficult, according to *Lawn & Landscape* research. As a result, more contractors rely on supplemental labor to increase business growth during the busy spring and summer seasons.

Contractors say the near-perfect solution has been the H-2B program. Not only are the workers available, but they also tend to return annually, solving both hiring and retention problems. It's caught on like wildfire in the industry. A *Lawn & Landscape* survey reports that 19 percent of contractors employed H-2B workers in 2003. And according to the Department of Labor, landscape industry jobs made up 42,000 of the 165,000 petitions for H-2B workers in 2003 (25.45 percent), making it the No. 1 industry utilizing the program. The next largest users are in the forestry and tree industries, petitioning 19,000 workers in 2003.

"For the landscape industry, which relies on seasonal workers, the program is a perfect solution to the labor crisis," says Maria Candler, who heads the Associated Landscape Contractors of America's (ALCA) legislative committee and is vice president of James River Grounds Management, Glen Allen, Va. Eighty-five percent of James River's labor force is made up of H-2B workers – the company brought in approximately 140 workers this year.

Despite the industry's increasing reliance on H-2B workers, the program is bureaucratic, due to the \$1,000 premium processing fee, the

disparity in timely processing from state to state and the visa cap. "For instance, my company in Virginia and another company in Maryland, which has similar revenue, needs about the same number of workers that I do and requested the same date of need (mid-February), started the H-2B process the same time that I did – October 2003 – yet I got my workers on time because my state labor department is on top of things," Candler explains. "Her form didn't reach USCIS by March 9 because Maryland is notorious for delaying the process, so they're not getting their workers this year."

"For a couple of years now, we've been addressing these issues with legislators, trying to initiate improvements in the program," Candler adds. "We saw the number of visas rise each year – we knew the cap would be surpassed at some point."

Though the number of H-2B visas increases each year – since 1998, the government has tripled the number of temporary visas issued to unskilled foreign laborers (see *H-2B Time Line* below) – the total amount is small compared to the estimated 8 million foreigners working illegally in the United States. And while there is a large pool of illegal immigrants from which contractors can hire, the risks, including government raids that result in fines and lost workers, are too great for some.

"I can fill out the I-9 forms and make sure they have Green Cards, but I still don't know if one day I'll come in to find half my workforce gone because the government raided my office and took my workers because the Green Cards they showed me weren't legit," says Bruce Bachand, vice president, Carol King Landscape Maintenance, Orlando, Fla.

Candler agrees. "Our company is too big to run that risk," she says.

Consequently, more contractors apply for H-2B workers each year and, in 2003, the number of H-2B visas issued (78,955) exceeded the cap. So, this year, with 90,000 petitions received by March 9, USCIS believed that would translate to enough visas to meet or exceed the cap once again. Many industry observers say that USCIS was criticized by anti-immigrant government officials for not confirming the numbers sooner and preventing this 2003 accidental cap extension, meaning this year they were put on a strict numbers watch, shocking the landscape industry, as well as other industries using the program, with their unexpected announcement.

"By making this announcement five months into the fiscal year and having only officially issued 33,000 visas, USCIS crippled summer seasonal employers," says Hank Lavery, co-owner of Century Pool, Kensington, Md., and founder of www.raisethecap.org – a Web site aimed at garnering support for H-2B reform. "In the midst of a labor shortage, USCIS stripped summer employers of their ability to hire legal foreign nationals to fill certified job shortages."

"Contractors were screwed out of the only program that works," adds Bob Wingfield, president, Amigos Labor Solutions, Dallas, Texas. "They are now at the mercy of bureaucrats."

Much of the anger resulting from the USCIS's decision relates to what many call inconsistent number crunching. Some say that since there was so much pressure on the USCIS not to exceed the cap, there wasn't a sufficient effort by the organization to tally the actual

*(story continued on page 44)
(additional sidebar and time line on page 42)*

H-2B TIME LINE

45,037 H-2B
visas issued.

2000

58,215 H-2B
visas issued.

2001

On June 1, INS' Premium
Processing Service guarantees
15-day processing of H-2B visas
for a \$1,000 fee.

62,591 H-2B
visas issued.

2002

In late May, the Associated Landscape Contractors of America lobbies Congress to eliminate the H-2B visa cap, and the Professional Lawn Care Association of America meets in Washington to encourage a decrease in the program's costs and red tape.

2003

78,955 H-2B
visas issued.

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Second Prize

Tickets for two to a NASCAR race of your choice in Charlotte in 2005 (including travel and accommodations).

Third Prize

Tickets for two for a King's Experience at Richard Petty Driving Experience available at various tracks around the country.

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USE READER SERVICE #38

Cover Story

(continued from page 39)

U.S. senators and representatives have drafted the following bills with hopes to solve this summer's labor shortage, resulting from the premature H-2B program shutdown. Though there are three forms of legislation in the works, industry observers say only one has any real hope for passage.

1. Reps. William Delahunt (D-Mass.) and Don Young (R-Ark.) and Sens. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Judd Gregg (R-N.H.) introduced the Save the Summer Acts of 2004 (H.R. 4052 and S. 2252) on March 29 to increase the 2004 H-2B cap from 66,000 to 106,000 workers.

The bill is currently in the Senate, but according to PLCAA's Vice President of Government Affairs Tom Delaney, "Too many legislators are opposed to raising the cap, so these bills aren't going to go anywhere. The bill has some good bipartisan support (18 co-sponsors in the Senate and 13 in the House of Representatives) but there are too many republicans adamant about not raising the cap. This might have had a chance during a different year when there isn't a presidential election going on. Because of the politics surrounding the immigration debate, this bill is unlikely to move quickly through

the House and Senate."

To make matters worse for this bill, "Kennedy hasn't done anything to push it forward, and no one's looking at it," shares Maria Candler, who heads ALCA's legislative committee and is vice president of James River Grounds Management, Glen Allen, Va.

2. The Summer Operations and Services, or "SOS" Relief and Reform Act S. 2258, introduced by Sens. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.) on March 30, states that any alien who has already been counted within the past two years won't be counted again during fiscal year 2004.

According to Delaney, this bill, which is currently in the Senate, has the greatest chance of passing the Senate and House because it helps the industry obtain more workers without raising the cap and rewards workers who came to the United States legally, worked and went home, portraying the type of workers the H-2B program is meant to attract. "While a more complicated approach than the Save the Summer Acts, the bill's authors expect the net result to be similar," Delaney says, citing an addition of approximately 30,000 workers to the year's cap if this bill passes.

The Senate discussed this act during the week of April 5, and decided to reword some

Temporary Solutions

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) reports that it received enough H-2B applications to meet the congressionally mandated limit of 66,000 workers. As of March 9, no new H-2B applications were accepted — USCIS returns all petitions received after that, along with related fees. Petitioners may resubmit or file new petitions when they have received labor certification approval for work to start on or before Oct. 1.

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March 10, 2004

March 25, 2004

March 29, 2004

Congressman Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.) introduces H.R. 4041 into the House of Representatives. The bill's goal is to waive, in fiscal year 2004, the numerical limitation applicable to H-2B workers if the employer petitioning on behalf of the workers employed such workers in fiscal year 2003.

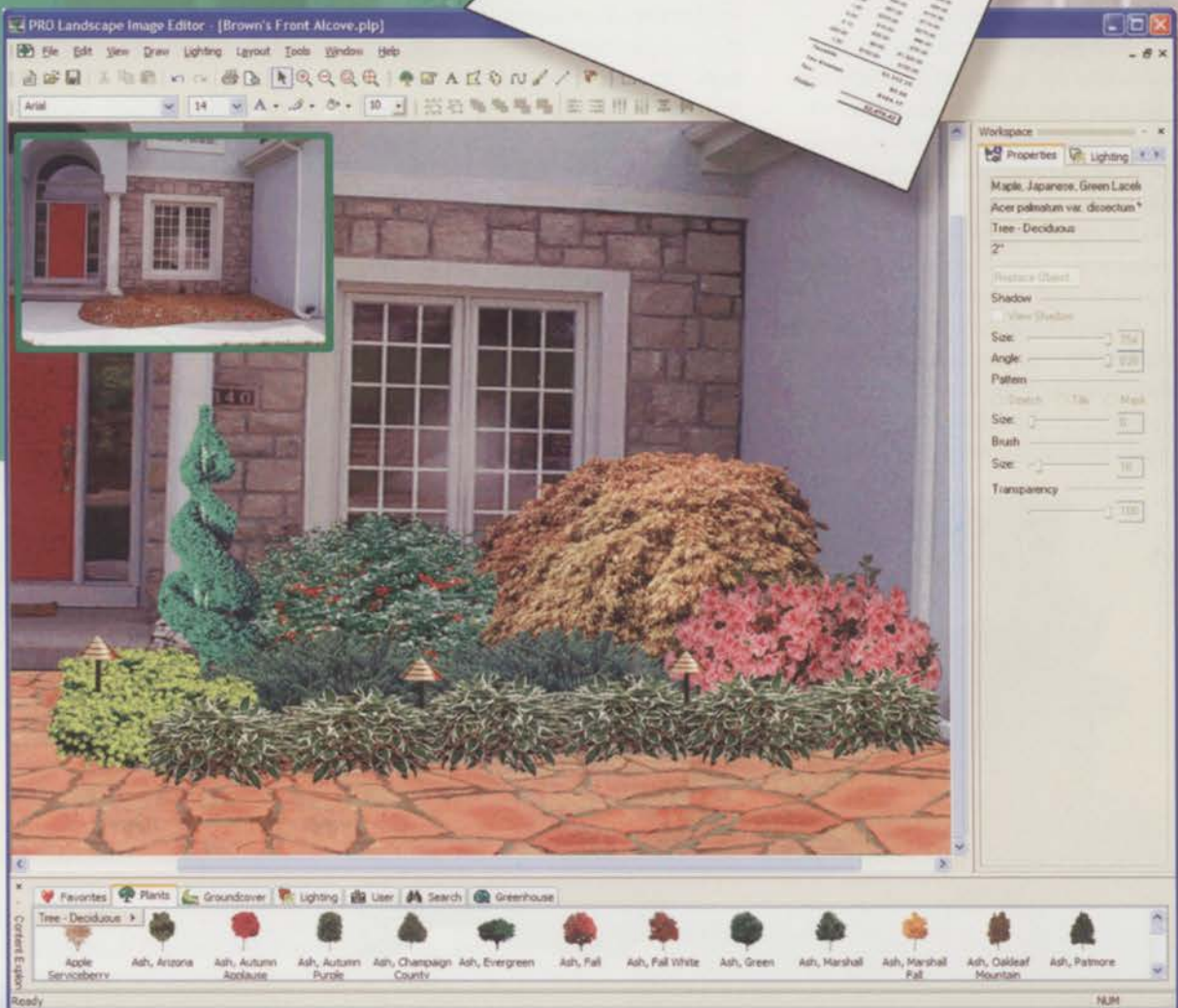
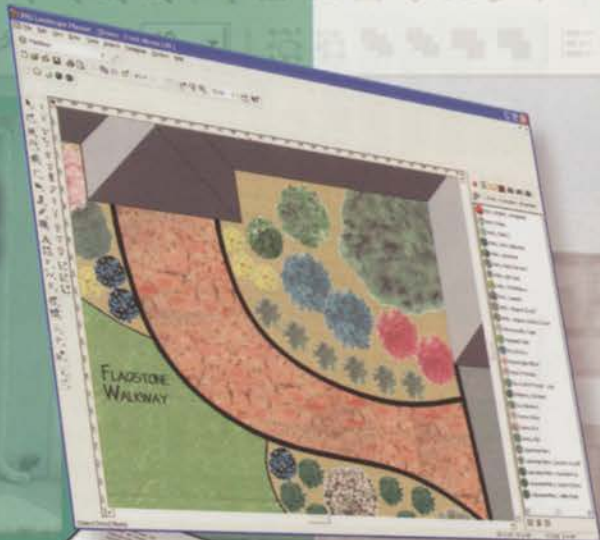
USE READER SERVICE #39

PRO Landscape Software

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PRO Landscape Image Editor - [Brown's Front Alcove.plp]

File Edit View Draw Lighting Layout Tools Window Help



Efficiency Boost

PRO Landscape Software saves landscape contractors time and improves job productivity.

IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, software companies have tried to convince landscape contractors that they need to implement technology in their businesses.

"But we know we don't need to clue you in to technology," says Pete Lord, president, Drafix Software, Kansas City, Mo. "You are implementing technology in your businesses naturally everyday and it's been making your lives easier and more efficient."

And when it comes to efficiency, PRO Landscape delivers, according to landscape contractors who use it.

"This program has helped me sell more jobs due to the fact that clients can visualize what I'm going to do before I do it," explains Bob Konigsmark, president, Accent Landscapes, Lincoln, Neb., describing the Imaging feature that shows clients images of their finished landscapes. "After I bought the software, it paid for itself in one month."

PRO Landscape has three integrated modules to meet landscape contractors' design needs. First, the Image Editor creates a life-like before and after landscape picture, including growth projec-

tions, shadows, perspectives and lighting. Second, the Planner lets contractors design a 2-D site plan that accurately represents plant, irrigation system and hardscape placement, giving the installation team the information they need to get the job done. Finally, the Proposal feature automatically generates accurate estimates from the landscape image or CAD plan, simplifying the process of going from a completed design to a customer-ready proposal.

"Our extensive research into this market told us contractors faced a lot of inefficiencies and frustrations," Lord says. "First, and foremost, their close rate was much too low. They could literally spend eight to 20 to 40 hours working on a proposal only to find out they didn't get the job. So, we created a software product that could both dramatically increase the close rate as well as save the designer time in putting together a proposal."

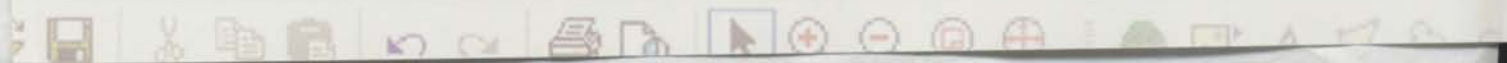
And PRO Landscape has saved contractors a lot of drawing time.

"A to-scale drawing by hand on one of our typical residential properties

takes me about a good seven to 10 hours," explains Marcos Barrera, president, A&M Lawn Care, Evansville, Ind. "But I can do the same thing with the digital design feature of PRO Landscape software in about an hour."

The software saves Michael Sarowsky, president, Michael Sarowsky Horticulturist, Harwich, Mass., an average of two hours of drawing time on each job, and it's also helped him grow his business to four or five times the size of what it was just two years ago. "It brought my business five fold from what I used to gross," he says, adding that jobs he's sold using the software range in price from \$300 to \$20,000. "Clients can see their house and what it looks like with new plants and flowers and mulch and even brick or flagstone walkways. I bought the program in June and by August it was paid for."

Many PRO Landscape users report saving more than 75 percent of the time that they had previously spent with antiquated design processes after purchasing and using the software. "Not only is the actual design process much faster, but also any inevitable editing that must be done is just a mouse click away," Lord shares. "Projects that used to take more than five hours to design are now being finished in less than one hour. Many of our customers have found that the time savings and increased revenue per job have allowed them to grow their businesses, or in some cases to not increase their number of customers but rather increase their revenue per customer and, therefore, their bottom line."





Most contractors don't put a reasonable value on their own time and are therefore shocked to find out how much time and money they can save using PRO Landscape Software.

"ONCE YOU OWN THE TOOLS, you have the flexibility to use the appropriate tool or tools for a specific job," says Pete Lord, president, Drafix Software, Kansas City, Mo. "The result is a professional looking sales presentation that can include pictures of the job before and after the landscaping, a scaled drawing that can be printed to any size, and a professional, accurate estimate of the work you are going to perform."

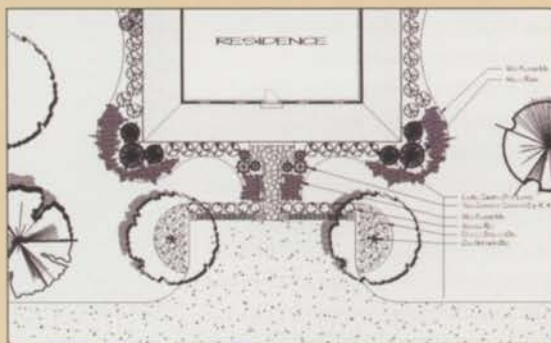
The following three modules – or PRO Landscape tools – are fully integratable and come standard with the software. As Lord explains, "for

a given project, you decide which tool or tools are needed to increase your chances of closing the job, maximizing the revenue and saving you the most time."

• **IMAGE EDITOR** – This module allows you to show your customer exactly what their landscape project will look like when it is finished. This can include not only plants, but also hardscapes, water features, night lighting and even holiday lighting. The design can be completed in your office or even at the client's home on a laptop computer. This eliminates all of the guesswork for your customers.

• **PLANNER** – This module allows you to quickly and easily create a scaled (or CAD) drawing of the landscape plan. One of the unique features in PRO Landscape is the ability to go automatically from the Imaging to CAD. If you have created one or more image files, PRO Landscape will automatically lay out all of the plant material. This improves your accuracy as well as saves time. The Planner Module also has huge advantages over hand-drawn plans. The software will automatically calculate the square footage areas and even the volume of specific areas, such as a mulch beds. In addition, callouts, dimensions, and even a legend can be added in seconds.

• **PROPOSAL** – This module allows you to quickly create accurate, professional looking bids. No more hand written estimates or duplicating efforts by creating a plan and then re-entering all of the material into a spreadsheet or bidding program. Simply go through a wizard and your bid is created. Once it is finished you can export the bid to programs like QuickBooks or CLIP software.



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contractors
have become
proficient using
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software
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few days of
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PRO LANDSCAPE SOFTWARE offers superior functionality along with what many landscape contractors desire: ease of use.

"Couple our learning facilities with a program that was designed for the technical novice, and it makes for a very quick learning curve," explains Pete Lord, president, Drafix Software, Kansas City, Mo.

In fact, most PRO Landscape users utilize the imaging module within the first hour of installation and are proficient using the entire package within a few days.

"I learned it almost immediately," shares Michael Sarowsky, president, Michael Sarowsky Horticulturist, Harwich, Mass. "Once

you get into moving plants around and finding them in the plant library and then learning how to give contours to beds and walkways, it just comes naturally."

It took Bob Konigsmark, president, Accent Landscapes, Lincoln, Neb., only 10 to 15 hours to get proficient using PRO Landscape. "In that amount of time, I could perform all of the basic tasks," he says. "And in another couple of days, I was able to crop, edit and pull plant images off of other Web sites and add them to the plant database."

The software is so simple to master that a large number of users, like Marcos Barerra, president, A&M Lawn Care, Evansville, Ind., have in fact never used a computer before learning PRO Landscape. "I didn't have any real software experience, but I learned it in about one week," he says. "You don't have to be a rocket scientist to work with this program."

To get a user started, PRO Landscape comes with self-paced training in the form of a Tutorial CD, which takes a contractor through a sample project from start to finish. "The user simply watches a series of one- to three-minute videos right on their computer screen," Lord explains. "After watching a video, the user can immediately switch to the software and mimic the steps covered in the tutorial. If they struggle with any part of it, they can watch any or all of the video again. When they are comfortable with that step, they move on to the next one. In just a few hours, they can be to the point where they are ready to start using the software on their own jobs."

Additionally, a 300-plus page User Manual accompanies the software, providing users with a tutorial and illustrated examples, not to mention the prolandscape.com Web site, which has a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section providing tips and tricks to getting the most out of the program. PRO Landscape also comes with free technical support by phone, e-mail or fax – there is no limit to the number of questions users have.

Easy as 1-2-3

ONE OF THE HUGE ADVANTAGES to being able to show a customer exactly what the finished landscape will look like with PRO Landscape is the opportunity it provides for upselling services to clients.

"A customer might ask for black plastic edging, but the contractor can say, 'Let me show you what brick edging or a rock wall will look like,'" says Pete Lord, president, Drafix Software, Kansas City, Mo. "The customer will almost always like the improvement. The result is a more satisfied customer and also more money in your pocket."

One such add-on service is landscape lighting. "We've heard from contractors who have doubled their revenue in less than a year and attribute much of their success to the implementation of the PRO Landscape software package into their businesses," Lord shares. "One contractor recently reported that he added more than \$30,000 to his business by offering lighting services. This idea was spawned because with PRO Landscape he could show his potential customers what their projects might look like with light fixtures and spot-lights turned on and off – thus a lighting division was added."

This scenario also happened for Bob Konigsmark, president, Accent Landscapes, Lincoln, Neb. "I increased my lighting business 150 percent since I got PRO Landscape," he says. "I drive to houses that I think would benefit from landscape lighting and do a quick drawing of their house with the lighting and mail it to them with an estimate. I would say out of every 10 of these I mail, four customers call me back and say they want me to do the job."

For customers who have the money to spend on cosmetic improvements to their homes or commercial locations but just can't visualize the end result, PRO Landscape software makes it easy. "A customer needs no convincing when they see their project with water features, paver patio patterns and even light fixtures turned on and off," Lord says. "The process might take an extra two minutes to layout with PRO Landscape, but it pays for the software twice over. Upselling means more money for every project, which increases your efficiency. The glory days of the low-bidder are no

Upselling Advantages

Why sell only landscape plantings when PRO Landscape software allows you to upgrade clients to hardscapes, as well as night and Holiday lighting.



On a typical job, a landscape designer can spend one hour on-site and end up with a signed contract using PRO Landscape, while the traditional approach might require two to three meetings and a few hours at the drawing board. Plus, additional services, such as night or holiday lighting, can be added to the plan and sold in minutes.

longer – persuasive selling is definitely the new mantra."

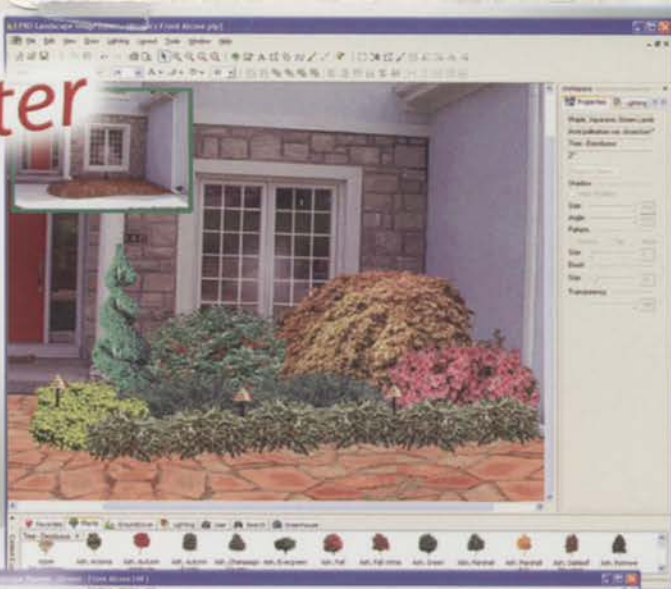
This year, Drafix Software released Version 10 of PRO Landscape Software – the Anniversary Edition, which has the same key features PRO Landscape users have grown to love, but also includes holiday lighting capabilities, new cloning tools and more high-quality images.

"We have found that many landscape contractors are selling and installing holiday lighting to keep their crews busy through the winter months," Lord says. "The holiday lighting features allow users

the same efficiencies they currently have with their landscape designs or the night lighting – that is, a higher close rate, shorter sales cycle and more satisfied customers because they know exactly what you are going to deliver."

All in all, PRO Landscape offers efficiency and growth in a practical and simple way. "Contractors are growing their businesses because of the functionality that we provide," Lord says. "For anyone looking to save design time and become better sales people, PRO Landscape is the answer."

Sell Better



Plan Better



Bid Better

Customer: 4113 Street, 2100 So 9th St, Crystal, OH 45215, F3382340

Customer Number: 1077
 Quote Date: November 20, 2010
 Sales Person: Lisa
 Expiration Date: December 30, 2010
 Terms:
 Proposal Name: Service Start Home
 Project Name: Sherry from Home
 Proposal #: 204-01

Vendor Number: 1

Item	Year	Description	Quantity	Unit Price	Estimated Price
80200	2.00	1/2" Mulch	1.00	\$85.00	\$85.00
91200	3.00	1/2" Mulch	3.00	\$70.00	\$210.00
70800	2.00	1/2" Mulch	2.00	\$95.00	\$190.00
30410	2.00	1/2" Mulch	2.00	\$95.00	\$190.00
30410	2.00	1/2" Mulch	2.00	\$95.00	\$190.00
70800	2.00	1/2" Mulch	2.00	\$95.00	\$190.00
91200	4.00	1/2" Mulch	4.00	\$22.50	\$90.00
91210	2.00	1/2" Mulch	2.00	\$22.50	\$45.00
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		Flag Stone	1.00	\$100.00	\$100.00

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language in the bill to appease Sens. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) and Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.), who had reservations about supporting any H-2B emergency legislation, Delaney says.

"But every day they wait hurts us more," Delaney explains. "The partisan issues get worse as we get closer to election. It delays getting things done since they aren't working together and are worried about getting reelected. So, just because this bill gets through the Senate doesn't mean it'll pass the House since the House has been a problem with immigration legislation in the past. In higher numbers, it has a better chance, which is why the bill's authors are working closely with Sessions and Kyl to find wording that everyone can agree with."

However, recent news has created additional concern. "We have heard disturbing reports that the negotiations with Sens. Kyl and Sessions included discussions about new sanctions against employers, new rules for H-2B workers and other additions to our country's immigration laws," points out Hank Lavery, co-owner of Century Pool, Kensington, Md., and founder of www.raisethecap.org — a Web site aimed at garnering support for H-2B reform. "If this is the case, then there may be absolutely no chance for any H-2B legislation to pass the Congress this year. Any

substantive changes to the law must go through a formal committee review process and extensive discussions with the executive branch, interest groups, employers and others, especially given the fact that the president announced earlier this year his intent to reform immigration law to help America's employers."

What Lavery calls "disturbing reports" proved true on April 8, when the Senate finally revised this bill's wording. The new legislation states that for every two returning workers, employers can only request one new worker, cutting the 30,000 additional workers to about 15,000, Candler explains. The new wording also details penalties on employers for not following program rules (including fines up to \$10,000 and bans from the H-2B program for up to five years) and forces employers who request more than 10 H-2B workers to put all their new hires through the Employment Eligibility Verification Pilot Program, where their Social Security numbers are verified. Finally, the bill states that before H-2B workers return home they must contact the Department of Homeland Security to report their departure, and the Secretary of Homeland Security must issue a report giving statistics on the usage of H-2B visas.

"The bill was cleaner before — this new wording complicates the process further," Candler says. "Chambliss asked various industry groups to digest the new language and provide feedback. We're trying to figure out our new position — we obviously don't think the changes are great, but we don't want to be blamed for the Senate killing the deal. We want to be able to work with them to come up with a solution."

Overall, "there continues to be a great deal of misunderstanding surrounding the H-2B cap issue among members of both pro- and anti-immigrant groups across America," Lavery adds. "The issue for Congress and the president is simple: Either they will choose to save the summer or, by their inaction, they will choose to ruin the summer for seasonal businesses."

3. Congressman Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.) introduced H.R. 4041 into the House of Representatives, a bill that would exempt 2003 H-2B employers from the 2004 cap but would restrict the number of H-2B visas to the same number as they received in 2003. Many industry observers say this bill was just an attempt by Goodlatte to jump on the H-2B bandwagon and that it hasn't received much attention from Congress. — **Nicole Wisniewski**

Sens. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.) introduce The Summer Operations and Services, or "SOS" Relief and Reform Act S. 2258, into legislation. This bill requests that any alien who has already been counted within the two years prior to the approval of a petition for a temporary worker in 2004 shall not again be counted toward those limitations this year. The bill is currently in the Senate.

A group of senators and representatives address a letter to President George W. Bush asking for his assistance in getting timely passage of a bill to solve the H-2B cap crisis this year.

The Senate and House reconvene after a recess from April 12 to 16.

March 30, 2004

April 5, 2004

April 6, 2004

April 8, 2004

April 19, 2004

During the week of April 5, the Senate discusses The Summer Operations and Services Relief and Reform Act S. 2258, deciding to reword some language in the bill to appease Sens. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) and Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.), who currently oppose the bill.

The Senate revises the wording of The Summer Operations and Services Relief and Reform Act S. 2258. The amended bill states that for every two returning workers, employers can only request one new worker. It outlines new penalties for employers who don't follow program rules. It forces employers to put all new hires (including those not gained via the H-2B program) through an Employment Eligibility Verification Pilot Program, confirming all worker Social Security numbers. And it requires H-2B workers to contact the Department of Homeland Security before returning home.

Cover Story

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petitions and visas – instead, it just made what its representatives felt was a “safe” decision in the midst of immigration controversy.

“First of all, many people say there is a complete lack of cooperation between the USCIS and the different state labor departments, so the ability to accurately count the numbers was hindered because of this friction between agencies,” points out Tom Delaney, vice president of government affairs, The Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA), Atlanta, Ga.

Second, employers usually request more visas than they actually end up receiving. “If I need 10, I’ll apply for 15 or 18 just in case my business growth projections change and I end up needing more workers,” explains Chuck Twist, president of TNT Landscaping and H.O.L.A. Labor Consultants, Stillwater, Okla. “Since you have to apply for the workers 120 days before you need them, you don’t want to apply for 10 and then wish you had

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Contractors who didn’t receive their H-2B workers this year as a result of the closed cap shouldn’t seek reckless resolutions to their labor shortage setbacks, advises Bob Wingfield, president, Amigos Labor Solutions, Dallas Texas.

“There are many people out there who know contractors are desperate and they may offer solutions that look good but can get them into big trouble with the government,” he says.

For instance, an employer’s Department of Labor certification is not transferable from one employer to another. But, in most cases, an employer will request and be approved for more workers than he actually needs. Following H-2B approval from the USCIS, the worker then sends his paperwork to the U.S. Consulate to obtain the actual worker visas. At this stage, many contractors reproject their growth and find they only need 10 instead of the original 15 workers for which they petitioned.

However, those five approved petitions remain available for the employer to tap into later in the year in case they need additional workers and the cap has not yet been reached. “If employers don’t need these already approved workers, they are *not* allowed to transfer them to another employer without going through the process again and obtaining new paperwork with the new employer’s name attached,” Wingfield warns. “I already had a contractor, who didn’t get his final application to the USCIS in time, call me and ask if I can get him visas from other companies. This is a \$20-million company that requested 200 H-2B workers and didn’t get any of them. That’s what desperate people do, but it’s not worth the risk.”

Contractors in need also should be wary of anyone offering to swap, sell or trade visas, Wingfield advises. “Partaking in any of these things could be a serious criminal offense that results in major fines and potential harm to your business, possibly even jail time,” he says. “No one wants to risk that.” – **Nicole Wisniewski**

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Cover Story

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applied for 20 when the time actually comes."

For instance, one of Wingfield's clients applied for 50 visas this year, but only ended up needing nine by early spring. "There are 41 visas being counted that shouldn't be in the final numbers," he explains.

Meanwhile, Wingfield has taken his passion and turned it into action. Before various bills were written to help solve the H-2B cap crisis in late March and early April, Wingfield and others were going to take legal action against the government to reopen the process and prove that the number had truly

been reached. "We believe they miscounted," Wingfield explains. But the group delayed its actions once U.S. senators and representatives started drafting bills to "save the summer," Delaney says.

Still, gauging how many contractors are affected by the cap crunch is difficult. Obviously, "the news is just as devastating to the contractor who petitioned for three workers as it is to the one who petitioned for 60 workers," says Terry Foley, an H-2B application processor at Foley Enterprises, Austin, Texas.

ALCA conducted a survey of its mem-

bers a couple of weeks following the H-2B close date to monitor industry reaction, with surprising results. Twenty-two percent of contractors said their visas were not approved and issued by the USCIS, and 41 percent of those people believe their petitions are still at the USCIS office. Another 41 percent haven't been able to pinpoint the exact location of their petitions. An overwhelming 64 percent of contractors who answered the survey started the process in October or November 2003, yet some re-

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The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' (USCIS) H-2B program permits employers to hire foreign workers to come to the United States and perform temporary nonagricultural work. Currently, there is a 66,000 annual limit on the number of foreign workers who may receive H-2B status during each USCIS fiscal year (Oct. 1 through Sept. 30). The process for obtaining H-2B certification is similar to but less extensive and time consuming than permanent certification.

To qualify for the H-2B program, an employer's need must be one-time, seasonal, peak load or intermittent in nature; the job must be for less than one year; and there must be no qualified and willing U.S. workers available for the job.

Though the H-2B program is a coordinated effort between three government agencies (the employer's local state workforce agency, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the USCIS), the state workforce agency and DOL are only advisors to the USCIS. Therefore, there is no appeal process within the DOL for H-2B application denials - employers must file such appeals with the USCIS.

Employers must wait 120 days before the date on which they need temporary workers to start the process but should wait no more than 60 days prior to need to allow for processing delays and any correction of application errors. If landscape contractors start filling out initial

forms in October or November, they can receive workers by March or April and keep them until December. If landscape contractors use an H-2B provider company to help with the process, they need to contact the company preferably by September.

Sixty to 120 days before the first day workers are needed, the employer files a labor certification application (Form ETA 750) with the local state workforce agency serving his or her area of proposed employment. Multiple openings for the same job and pay rate may be included on the same application. The state workforce agency supervises an employer's efforts to recruit U.S. workers (including publishing three days of advertisements in one local metropolitan newspaper), completes the processing and sends the case to the DOL for completion of the actual certification, which is issued to the employer, not the worker, and is not transferable from one employer to another.

The DOL reviews the labor certification application to determine whether sufficient efforts were made to attract potential U.S. workers and whether the wages the employer plans to pay the temporary workers are fair. According to the H-2B program, employers must pay workers comparable wages to what they pay non-H-2B employees (which is typically around \$7 an hour), overtime and take taxes out of their paychecks. This puts H-2B workers on an even playing field with American workers. If sat-

isfied, DOL certifies the application and returns it to the employer.

Next, the employer files an H-2B petition (CIS Form I-129, Petition for Nonimmigrant Worker) with the USCIS, enclosing the DOL-approved labor certification and any filing fees. The H-2B petition details the company's recruitment efforts, reasons why the company needs these temporary workers and how the company will pay the workers. The USCIS often requests additional information about the temporary nature of the position and/or the temporary nature of the employer's need for foreign workers. If satisfied, the USCIS approves the petition and sends it to the employer.

Following the approval of the H-2B petition, each temporary worker then files an H-2B worker visa application with the appropriate U.S. consulate. The consulate conducts a thorough security background check of the temporary workers and determines whether the individuals have sufficient ties to their home countries so they will return home rather than stay in the United States once their temporary work visas expire. If satisfied, the consulate issues the visas, and the H-2B temporary workers come to the United States.

Though not required, employers also are encouraged to provide H-2B workers with housing options, transportation assistance and language lessons once they arrive in the United States. - *Nicole Wisniewski*

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Cover Story

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ceived workers and others didn't.

The economic fallout could be equally drastic. Twenty-nine percent of contractors estimated a loss of \$100,000 to \$500,000 this year and another 29 percent said this could mean the loss of their businesses, according to the ALCA study.

DESPERATE MEASURES. For contractors who didn't receive their H-2B workers, each day that goes by without a legislative solution negatively affects their summer schedules. For instance, if legislation to raise the cap passes in early May, then it will take until the end of June for visa approval and before H-2B workers can actually cross the border, Foley points out.

For many, this is too late. Contractors stuck in this predicament aren't waiting around for government solutions. Instead, they are starting aggressive advertising campaigns to quickly attract workers.

Bachand sought replacement help the week of March 22, after he found out his workers weren't issued the temporary visas required to enter the United States. His season officially kicked off March 15, and he was supposed to receive 20 H-2B workers on April 1 and another 20 workers on April 15, but his final petition didn't reach the USCIS office by March 9. Since his season started early, Bachand was already understaffed. "We were just going to tread water until our H-2B guys got here," he says.

Thirty-four of Bachand's 40 H-2B workers were returning from previous years – many were coming back for a third or fourth year, and a few had even moved up in the ranks from crewmembers to crew leaders and foremen. "These guys are already trained, they run our crews, and they know the customers and the customers know them," Bachand says.

Starting the hiring process again so late in the season means Bachand can't benefit from fall college career fairs or contact employment agencies – most college students already have summer jobs lined up and employment agencies only seek skilled technicians vs. unskilled laborers. Instead, Bachand is doing exactly what he did when he first applied for H-2B workers to prove that American workers didn't want the jobs he had available – placing a \$775 help-wanted ad in

the local paper for the required seven days.

His responses have been similar to those he received nearly 120 days ago. Many potential employees apply and then don't show up for work their first day "only to keep their unemployment checks coming," Bachand says. Other possible candidates arrive to work late smelling of alcohol or are unable to pass a drug test. "The question isn't whether or not we'll put 40 people out there – we will certainly find 40 bodies to fill the holes, but the real questions will be, 'Are they competent?' 'Can they do the same level and quality of work?' The answers will be 'No,' but we have no choice."

Besides traditional recruiting methods like newspaper ads, some contractors opt to use temporary labor staffing services to fill voids. "They help solve our problems very temporarily, but the people we get from these companies usually aren't the best employees – they don't follow dress code or

represent the professional image we want to project to clients," Bachand explains, adding that these people usually don't have landscaping experience. As a result, he's forced to conduct quick on-the-job training sessions. "The choices I'm left with are costly in many ways. We're wasting time training people and these people aren't as productive. They don't know my customers, and the result could be a decrease in my client retention rate. I also expect to face a lot of employee turnover this summer, which means I'll be constantly rehiring and retraining new people. Not to mention, what does this do to our sales projections for the rest of spring and summer? This year, we wanted to push our renovation and enhancement sales – but how far can we stretch that now without the people to do the work?"

Still, there is one other place Bachand

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Despite delays in Congress passing legislation, landscape contractors must continue sending letters to encourage their local senators and representatives to solve the H-2B problem for 2004 and future years.

According to PLCAA's Vice President of Government Affairs Tom Delaney, 200 landscape companies have already sent upwards of 600 letters to their state senators and representatives, but he says the industry can do better than that. "If we don't start planning and working toward next year, we're going to be in the same situation again and it will be too late to do anything about it," he says.

First, to lobby their local lawmakers, contractors can visit the U.S. Senate at www.senate.gov, the U.S. House of Representatives at www.house.gov, or the House Judiciary Committee at www.raisethecap.org/senatebill.html, scroll down to their state and locate their officials' names and contact information. Then, they can go to one of the form letters that many industry associations have provided online to make it easy for contractors to fill in their information and e-mail their elected officials. ALCA and PLCAA provide such a letter at www.congressweb.com/cweb4/index.cfm?orgcode=ALCA&hotissue=8. The American Nursery & Landscape Association also provides a form letter at capwiz.com/anla/mail/oneclick_compose/?alertid=5472156.

Delaney encourages contractors to call or e-mail their requests vs. using regular mail because the process is much quicker and these types of correspondence have a much greater chance of being heard or read.

For more information on H-2B legislation or to find out the best way to reach legislators, call Delaney at 866/831-1109. – *Nicole Wisniewski*

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Cover Story

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finds people – local Hispanic communities near Orlando. Bachand posted fliers advertising his need and company benefits – including his company's above-average wages – in these communities to attract people looking for work. He expects to get his best replacement workers from this labor

pool, but this option presents additional challenges and worries. "With the H-2B program, we were doing it the 100-percent legal way," he says. "But if the government shuts off the spigot, what alternatives do I have? As people come in the door, including foreigners, and I hire them, do I really know that their Green Card is good? What else can I do?"

Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.) believes that "employers must share the burden to facilitate a workable program and stop hiring illegal aliens." But without ample American workers or H-2B temporary laborers to do the work, sometimes the only option is trusting supposedly legal immigrants. "If the federal government forces contractors into a corner of paying their employees and feeding their families vs. not hiring immigrant workers, that's really not a fair spot to put them in," Delaney says, adding that capping the H-2B program just encourages the hiring of potentially illegal immigrants, something the government is trying to prevent.

Also, the H-2B program has had a good history of temporary workers returning to their home countries after their visas expire. However, H-2B workers may get scared this year and hide out for a couple of months until their jobs open up again instead of returning home, in essence "screwing up the program," Delaney says. Many of them are so comfortable with the H-2B program that they've left their cars and personal belongings in America awaiting their return only to find out they aren't coming back. "My workers called me from Mexico asking where their visas were," Bachand says.

This brings up another contractor fear – they've secured H-2B workers, trained them and increased employee retention by getting them to return to work each year. But now contractors like Bachand worry that by 2005, when he has another chance to obtain his H-2B workers, they will have already found other jobs and he'll have to start the training process all over again with new workers. "Right now, my H-2B workers are dead in the water – they were committed to my company, but the government won't let me have them, so they have no where to go unless they hook up with another contractor," he says. "Who's to say they'll trust me in 2005 if I didn't come through for them in 2004?"

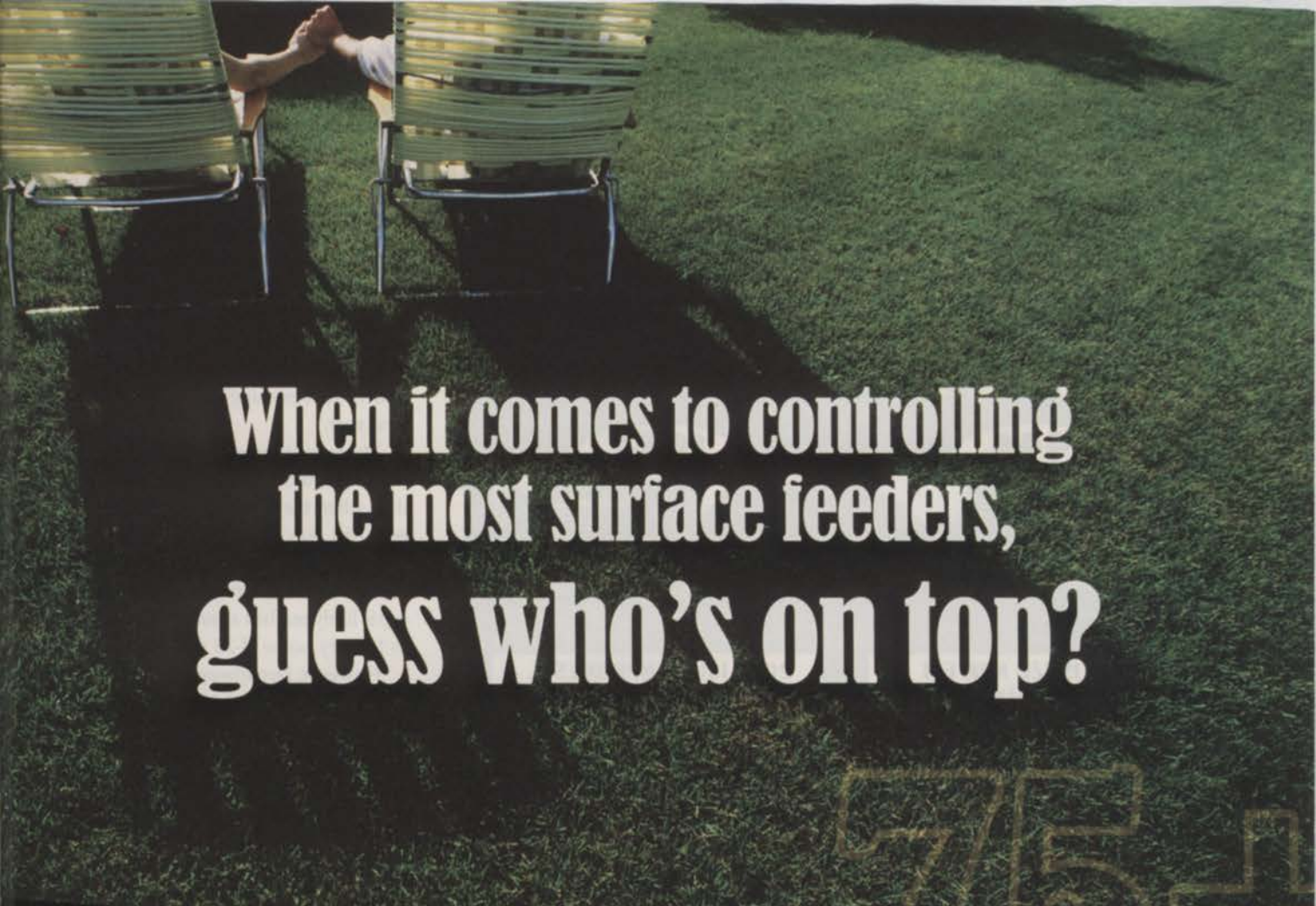
H-2B IN 2005. Although President George W. Bush put immigration reform on the table this year, this actually clouds an already cumbersome H-2B process, dimming the chances for successful 2004 legislation. "Having immigration reform as a topic that's getting attention is good because it can bring about a better, easier-to-use program, but it's also bad because it further confuses the issue," Candler points out. "That, combined with the fact that it's an election year, means it's near impossible for us to expect any H-2B legislation to pass this year. The longer this drags on, the worse our chances get."

Though Congress is currently discussing several bills introduced into legislation in late March and early April (see *Temporary Solutions* on



(continued on page 52)

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Cover Story

(continued from page 50)

page 42), this issue will remain a problem in 2005 and years beyond as the demand for service industry labor increases. "Even if we get temporary legislation to pass this year, we know we'll have to deal with this issue again," Delaney says. "Once we fix this summer's problem, we'll have to immediately start pushing for similar legislation next year."

Many contractors think they will find success in 2005 by indicating an earlier need date when they petition for H-2B employees. This way, the USCIS will file paperwork sooner and contractors will have less of a chance of being left without help once the cap is likely reached again, this time as early as January, some H-2B providers predict.

However, Department of Labor officials have already warned H-2B program users that they are going to base worker need dates on previous years' applications, meaning that if a contractor has always requested workers for March 15, he will not be able to request them for Feb. 15 or March 1. "They make up these rules as they go along," Candler says. "It isn't written anywhere that you can't change your date of need, but who can we complain to about this? Without rules and structure set in stone, these agencies can do what they wish, but if we ask for rules and structure, I'm afraid they'll make it impossible for us to obtain H-2B workers."

H-2B certainly isn't the top priority for Congress, Delaney says, adding that since 9/11 it has become another controversial issue on a table full of already controversial issues. As a result, contractors must continue to educate their senators and representatives on the industry's labor needs and urge them to support H-2B reform.

"Just because it worked out for you and you got your workers this year, don't kid yourself into thinking you'll have the same luck next year," Candler warns. "H-2B always was a first-come, first-served program, but that wasn't always so evident until the numbers continued to increase to the point of shutting down the program. We have to continue to write letters to our elected officials to ensure that H-2B workers remain a labor resource for our industry in the future." **L**

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

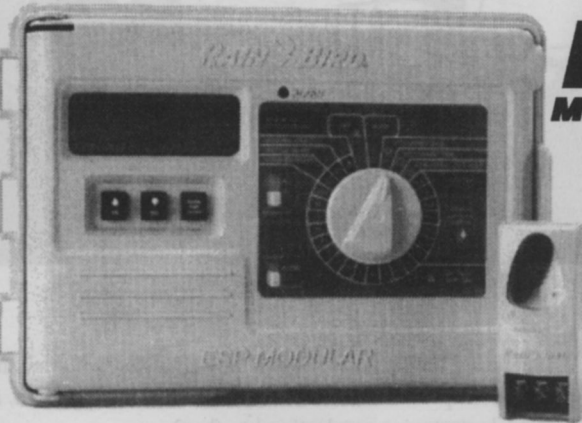
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Best of the Web

by Ali Anderson

In the second segment of this two-part feature, Lawn & Landscape Online Message Board users offer money management suggestions for companies floundering to keep their financial statements out of the red.



PROFITABILITY POINTERS

Controlling CASH

EDITOR'S NOTE: Last month's Best of the Web featured the first part of a discussion about profit-boosting practices. This month, read part two for more cash-conscious business tips.

Many snares can thwart a fledgling lawn care company's attempts to post pleasing profits. In some cases, unbridled cash flow – thrown carelessly at equipment, goods and services – may be reduced to a destitute drip.

Such scenarios call for a serious review of a company's

spending habits and at least a few changes in money management procedures. But where to start? What works, and which strategies are destined to flop?

Lawn & Landscape readers who turn to the Online Message Board for green industry discussion may have a better avenue for honest advice than they realize. For instance, a recent post on the forum delved into the topic of floundering revenue – and a handful of experienced contractors shared detailed tips for rescuing a meager bottom line.

Joel Swisher, owner, All in One Lawn and Landscape, Plymouth, Mich., started the conversation by asking if any other contractors felt like they were just making enough money to pay their bills no matter how hard they worked.

Although Swisher and his partner have grown their lawn business significantly since entering the industry about eight years ago, they always feel as if they are just breaking even. In fact, no matter how hard Swisher and his employees work – and even when they secure high-dollar jobs – their financials idle in the same rut.

SAVE FOR A SLOW DAY. Just as cash in the pocket has a tendency to burn its way toward frivolous purchases, profits stashed in a basic bank account can become an accomplice to imprudent spending.

But while keeping cash out of mind is no simple endeavor, keeping it out of reach may be as easy as 1-2-3 – that is, three decisions that can translate into a smart savings plan.

Business owners who, like Swisher, are just scraping by should think seriously about the benefits of a planned savings program, advises John Allin, president, Allin Cos., Erie, Pa. And while instituting even a vague strategy to set aside

(continued on page 56)

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.

To better educate readers, Lawn & Landscape expands upon a Message Board discussion each month and offers forum-related insights from professionals in the Best of the Web.

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USE READER SERVICE #52

Best of the Web

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money is a smart start, Allin recommends setting up a stringent system based on the following three decisions:

1. How often to save
2. How much to save
3. How long to save

Once a landscape contractor resolves

to get serious about setting aside money against future hardship, the success is in the details, Allin observes. First, decide how often the company can afford to put away money in an untouchable account. Perhaps weekly or monthly contributions to a savings plan are feasible. Or maybe a

portion of each check can be set aside.

Next, determine how much to save each time. The answer could be a set dollar amount or a percentage of income. Regardless, that figure should be set in stone so the company can plan ahead for the expense.

Third, decide how long – as in months or years – the company will stick with the prescribed savings plan. Depending on how much and how often funds are stashed each week or month, the company may choose to continue the system even beyond the designated deadline. However, Allin notes that having a predetermined savings period is a smart part of a disciplined plan.

By adopting this three-part system, a company can create a financial safety net by putting away a little cash on a regular basis, Allin continues. This planned-savings system ensures the consistent addition of money to a slush fund – each Friday, in Allin's case – which eventually can add up to a comfortable cash cushion.

Allin discovered firsthand the benefits of creating and sticking with a savings plan. "For years, we never seemed to get ahead," he recalls. "I started to wonder if we'd ever be able to have anything left over at the end of the year."

One of Allin's friends, a business owner in a different industry, recommended he set aside 3 percent of his gross revenues in a separate interest-bearing savings account each time he made a deposit. The account initially was intended as a temporary stockpile for future emergencies, but as the business became more profitable that 3-percent plan continued.

Throughout the years, Allin Cos. has tried not to touch the growing account. However, Allin did pull a substantial chunk from the balance in the summer of 2003 for an investment in his company's new facility.

"However, we view it as a loan," he explains. "And we have set up a plan to pay it back over time, with interest. We view it as a term loan that must be repaid, and we are doing just that. But since it's our own money we don't have to list it as a loan on our financials – and we have a depreciable asset listed on our financial statements."

Knowing that the 3-percent savings account would sit on the company's balance sheet as a cash asset has bolstered Allin's

(continued on page 58)

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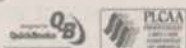
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USE READER SERVICE #57

Best of the Web

(continued from page 56)

determination to stick with his regimented savings plan. "Over the years, this reserve account has built up steadily," Allin says. "It makes us look good on the financial statement, as well as with the bank."

The company doesn't even miss that chunk of cash, Allin explains. "It's not enough to affect our cash flow, but after a while it really adds up." And Allin admits that although the slush fund may appear to be a business asset, it really spells eventual retirement for him. Since he owns the company and its assets, Allin can allocate revenue however he desires. In the case of the 3-percent savings plan, those dollar signs will ensure financial security for him as a retired entrepreneur in the future.

John Palasek, JonKar Design Group, Yaphank, N.Y., adopted Allin's savings plan recently and began setting aside 4 to 5 percent of each deposit. In a matter of months, Palasek has seen those seemingly small checks add up to a nice nest egg as well.

Both Allin and Palasek advise companies that are just "getting by" – like All in One Lawn and Landscape – to consider a planned savings account for future security and a stronger balance sheet.

NARROW INTO A NICHE. Oftentimes, new landscape companies doom themselves before day one of business because they fail to narrow their sights on a specialized collection of offerings, explains Scott Grimm, president, Agralawn, Lakeland, Fla. Although the idea of providing every industry service under the sun may be tempting, Grimm says filling a needed niche is more likely to reap profits.

"Find a special little niche in this business that will allow you to make the money you want," Grimm advises. "Become a grower or fountain guy or night lighting guy, and work the hell out of that niche."

Focusing on only a few specialized service offerings may seem like a step backward in terms of overall success, but doing so actually should boost revenue, Grimm continues. The reason? A company that establishes itself as a professional leader in a given area of expertise can more successfully pursue specific clients who will be inclined to buy services – and spend more than the average consumer. Serious customers are likely to surrender more cash to a profes-

sional who is deemed a specialist than to a fly-by-night operation that prides itself on all-in-one offerings, Grimm describes.

Also, focusing intently on a few landscape service areas can reduce a company's equipment costs and improve job quality by helping employees sharpen their skills through focused repetition.

In a nutshell, offering too much costs too much – and Swisher has discovered that by experience. His company's financial problems stem from his company's lack of specialized concentration, observes Andrew Aksar, owner, Outdoor Finishes, Walkersville, Md. "You are offering way too much," he warns. "Tree removal and hardscaping are two different worlds."

Swisher agrees, acknowledging that one of his company's most significant problems is its lack of a specialty. When Swisher and his partner started out, they decided their niche would be complete service – hence, the name All in One. However, that approach proved unfruitful over time. "We do almost everything – maintenance, fertilizing, residential and commercial landscaping, pavers and retaining walls and a lot of tree removal work."

Focusing on too many services wrecks havoc on overhead recovery and keeps employees from developing efficiency on routine tasks, Aksar continues. "You need to find the services you offer that are most profitable for your company, and you need to focus on strictly those services."

But how to cut back on services offered? What stays? And what gets the ax?

Tracking time, budgets and production hours – down to the last minute – can be beneficial in discovering which services to cut and which to continue, Aksar notes. "Once you find that you are spending lots of time trying to sell one service and getting very few sales, you need to stop offering that service and start focusing on what you do best," he says.

The local market and its offerings also should be considered when deciding what niche to pursue. For instance, a metropolitan area that is drowning in arbor care companies, hardscape specialists and irrigation contractors probably is not the best place to open a shop focused on trees, pavers or irrigation systems. Instead, a company that boasts a landscape lighting specialty may

fare well against the competition.

Sticking with one or two services is not a must, but a company should only add extra offerings after perfecting its chosen specialty, Aksar warns. "You have to crawl before you can walk, and you have to walk before you can run."

In the months following Swisher's appeal for help on the Message Board, his company has heeded the advice of Aksar and others to cut down on service offerings. But rather than just cutting its list of services, All in One Lawn and Landscape has resorted to subcontracting some of its jobs.

"Subcontracting is great if you can fall in with a professional company that you can trust," he describes. "You can still make a little money on the project and not have to specialize in the work."

DITCH EXTRA EQUIPMENT. Equipment redundancy also can eat its way through profitability, notes Matthew Morgan, owner, Emerald Landscape Management, Danville, Ill. Although expensive mowers, trimmers and other gear are central to the workings of every landscape company, it is possible to have too much of a good thing.

For instance, a company should make sure each piece of equipment is paying for itself by proving useful on a daily basis. An innovative chipper or pressure washer that sits in a shed most days may not be a wise investment – especially for a company that does little work with such unique machines. Investing too much cash in back-up machinery and unnecessary gear can spell extreme waste, as well.

And that's exactly the scenario Swisher and his partner have been facing. "We have equipment to do all of these jobs, but not always the jobs for the equipment," he explains. That's where narrowing into a service niche can be beneficial, since abandoning unprofitable services often translates into shedding extra equipment – and that can return some significant cash to a company's bottom line.

To remedy an equipment excess, Morgan suggests making each area of service as efficient as possible. "A suggestion is to possibly eliminate some services that are rarely performed, sell the equipment and subcontract the work when you get a call for jobs like this," he says. "Another possibility is

renting the equipment."

While equipment rental may seem like throwing away cash, the cost comparison between renting and buying a specialized piece of machinery clearly favors rental, Morgan says. For instance, a lawn care company could spend little more than \$100 renting a tree

spade for the occasional tree-transplanting job, but buying the same spade could run the company at least 60 times that. **LL**

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

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by Ali Anderson

The HOOK-UPS



Photo: Walker

Lawn care companies often depend on specialized equipment – namely, a diversity of mower-transforming attachments – to offer add-on services and create eye-catching results.

Could you open and operate a successful restaurant with just two pans?

Perhaps, with some ingenuity, your understocked kitchen could offer minimal meal selections and super-slow service. More than likely, such a restaurant would experience take-off trouble and crash to an early close.

The same might be true for a landscape company. While a typical landscape contractor does not rely on a vast array of cooking ware to stay in business, the company's bottom line depends on service offerings – which generally require a broad range of specialized equipment. Without

the help of diverse tools and multiple machines, a company may struggle to adequately serve clients and, thus, lose revenue in the process.

"If you have a landscape business, you need to be at least somewhat diverse, and that is reflected in the equipment you have," explains Jeff Hile, president, JBH Innovations, Wexford, Pa. "In the same way you need a variety of appliances, strainers, frying pans and other things to successfully cook an assortment of meals, you need variety in your maintenance equipment if you want to offer more than just mowing."

Just as the functioning kitchen of an up-scale restaurant requires unique utensils to produce palatable entrees, a landscape company relies on

(continued on page 64)


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(continued from page 62)

specialized equipment – like dethatchers, aerators, power blowers, snowplows, rotor tillers, yard rollers, dump carts, fertilizer units, spreaders, loader buckets, rotary brooms, collection systems and bulldozer blades – to produce pleasing properties.

However, most companies do not need

to invest heavily in machines dedicated solely to specialized functions in order to achieve the desired results. Instead, a better option may be attachments – tools that can be secured to a lawn mower and run on the machine's power source.

(continued on page 66)

SMART Storage

Maintenance considerations also are essential in the initial buying process of mower attachments, notes Jeff Hile, president, JBH Innovations, Wexford, Pa. Contractors must be prepared to care for attachments just as they would a dedicated piece of power equipment.

"Take care of your attachments to maximize the initial investment," Hile says. "Keep them clean and service them regularly just as you would any other piece of equipment." That means cleaning all parts – especially moving pieces – along with other shop gear, sharpening blades, replacing broken drill bits, etc.

Notably, storage considerations should be top of mind for contractors when seeking to protect their attachment investments. "One of the big things is making sure they're stored properly," comments Tim Cromley, marketing manager, Walker Mfg., Fort Collins, Colo. "Attachments can sit and rust if they're left in the wrong conditions during their off season."

The right storage spot for most attachments would be a dry, protected area inside a company facility – away from potentially damaging weather conditions. For instance, a power broom should not be tossed in a corner where bristles can become deformed and, ultimately, destroyed over time. Rather, the attachment could be hung on a wall in a designated area of the shop. Cromley recommends contractors dedicate equally specific guidelines for storage of their other company equipment.

To avoid rusting, Cromley suggests that contractors grease and lubricate the metal portions of attachments weekly. Repainting annually also can help protect against the elements.

When maintained and stored wisely, mower attachments can represent a smart investment for landscape contractors offering add-on services, emphasizes Peter Andnoian, president, Accelerator Industries, Mercer Island, Wash.

– Ali Anderson

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Mower Attachments

(continued from page 64)

"It's nice to be able to maintain your properties with the same power source all year round," says Tim Cromley, marketing manager, Walker Mfg., Fort Collins, Colo. "You can take the deck off of your mower at the end of the year and put on a dozer blade for snow removal. That illustrates the practical usability of mower attachments."

Similarly, a dethatcher attachment could maximize an otherwise seasonal mower during early spring and fall – when the machine

generally would not be making money.

Attachment options vary based on the mower designated as the power source, Cromley notes. Typically, he says, riding lawn mowers are more versatile than walk-behind models when it comes to accommodating attachments.

"A riding mower offers a better platform for use of attachments," Cromley states. "Most walk-behinds are not really made to take implements – at least, very few walk-behind mowers are attachment-friendly."

Generally, riding mowers are viewed as the best option when considering attachment use because they have larger engines with power to spare, says Paul Gamaldi, owner, All Seasons CLS, Mount Gambier, Australia. "They are geared to be faster than walk-behind systems, so an operator could tend to do a lot of work quickly with less fatigue," he explains. "However, some walk-behind attachment systems are creative labor savers and can



be quite extensive in their offerings."

Beyond the differentiation between riding and walk-behind models, Cromley suggests out-front-cut mowers as a better bet than mid-mount models when it comes to utilizing attachments. The reason is that front-cut mowers – or those with mower decks placed out in front of the machine – generally offer a more practical attachment method than the mid-mount machines – or those with blades secured under the machine's center. Typically, front-cut mower blades can be replaced quickly with various attachments, while mid-mount mowers utilize attachments through ancillary connections.

(continued on page 68)

BEFORE BUYING ANY MOWER ATTACHMENTS, LANDSCAPE CONTRACTORS MUST ASSESS THEIR UNIQUE NEEDS AND DETERMINE WHICH SPECIFIC TOOLS WOULD BEST COMPLEMENT THEIR CURRENT EQUIPMENT. —TIM CROMLEY

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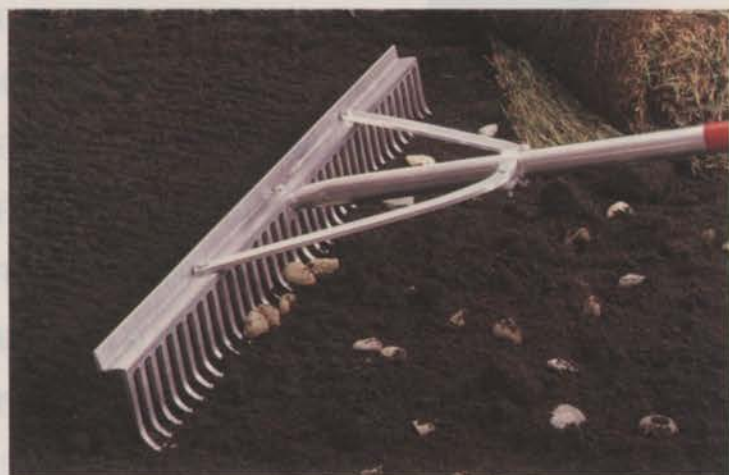
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Mower Attachments

(continued from page 66)

However, Cromley recognizes that contractors have individual preferences and will gravitate toward attachment styles best suited for their specific needs. Hile agrees, noting that since the lawn mower market is packed with an assortment of machines offering various mowing deck

locations and shapes, contractors can choose from various attachment styles – including front-mounted products, pull-behind tools and side-mounted gear. But regardless of a given attachment's style or function, installment generally takes only a few minutes, Cromley observes.

PURCHASING POINTERS. Before buying mower attachments, contractors must assess their unique needs and determine which specific tools would best complement current equipment, Cromley explains.

"You have to know what your needs are," he adds. "Ask yourself if you really want to convert that \$9,000 mower into a blower or if

"IF YOU HAVE A LANDSCAPE BUSINESS, YOU NEED TO BE AT LEAST SOMEWHAT DIVERSE — AND THAT IS REFLECTED IN THE EQUIPMENT YOU HAVE. IN THE SAME WAY YOU NEED A VARIETY OF APPLIANCES, STRAINERS, FRYING PANS AND OTHER THINGS TO SUCCESSFULLY COOK AN ASSORTMENT OF MEALS, YOU NEED VARIETY IN YOUR MAINTENANCE EQUIPMENT IF YOU WANT TO OFFER MORE THAN JUST MOWING." — JEFF HILE

you would be better off using the mower for its primary purpose. Depending on the services you offer and the properties you maintain, the better plan might be to buy a few backpack blowers."

Basically, Cromley states, attachments serve contractors best when they are used only for occasional add-on services – not to fulfill high-demand functions on a daily basis. For such recurring needs, companies may consider purchasing specialized, dedicated equipment as a smart alternative.

"Good business sense says make sure the equipment you purchase can give the business a quick return on the investment and then have a reasonable profit-generating period of several years," Gamaldi says.

Companies should consider their specialized needs seriously before purchasing attachments, Cromley shares. "You can over purchase pretty quickly," he warns, referring to some contractors' tendency to invest heavily in mower attachments that don't offer enough of a return in terms of profit-

(continued on page 70)

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PL2401	5.00	1/2" x 1/2" x 1/2" x 1/2"	5.00	\$180.00	\$900.00
100000	1.00	1/2" x 1/2" x 1/2" x 1/2"	1.00	\$300.00	\$300.00
000014	2.00	1/2" x 1/2" x 1/2" x 1/2"	2.00	\$450.00	\$900.00
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000010	3.12	1/2" x 1/2" x 1/2" x 1/2"	3.12	\$28.00	\$87.36
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Mower Attachments

(continued from page 68)

ability to merit the initial cash spent. "One of the things I would recommend to someone

who is buying a commercial mower is that you look at all of your needs. Give careful consideration to the crossover that mower could have for snow-removal work, leaf blowing and aeration. Look at the bigger picture."

Deciding which specific attachments to purchase can depend on the local conditions and the accounts serviced by individual contractors. "You have to be familiar with your surroundings and the needs of the properties you maintain," Cromley states.

For instance, a contractor who offers snow removal during wintry months should consider the amount of snowfall in the targeted service area. A region that typically faces more than 6 inches of snow at one time may necessitate the use of a two-stage snow blower for adequate cleanup. In contrast, lighter snowfall areas could be satisfied with basic dozer blades, Cromley notes.

Once a contractor has decided to invest in attachments, there are many factors to consider in the purchasing process. One is the overall quality of the tool, Hile observes. "You have to remember that you're buying quality," he continues. "Look at the way the attachment is made and who makes it. What you put in, in terms of cost, is what you'll get out of the purchase quality-wise."

Hile suggests contractors not always gravitate toward the least expensive attachment on the market – since the more costly products may equal increased durability in the long run.

(continued on page 160)



Photo: Walker



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Grub Down

Knowledge is the key to effective white grub management

White grubs are the most serious turfgrass pests found in residential and commercial lawns. They are menacing to both cool- and warm-season turfgrasses and can be found virtually everywhere in the United States. A large number of white grub species, many of them quite diverse, are responsible for millions of dollars in control expenditures and untold acres of damaged turfgrass every year.

For these reasons, lawn care operators should learn and understand the basics of effective grub management.

THE FACTS. Many of the most common white grub species, such as the Japanese beetle, the Oriental beetle and the green June beetle, consist of a single species. Other "groups" of white grubs such as the May/June beetles and the masked chafer are composed of a number of different species although only one species may occur in a single location. In some instances, several species can coexist.

The challenges of grub control are numerous, starting with the fact that white grubs live in the soil and their presence is not obvious. There is often no indication that grubs are present until the turf begins to show signs of stress from grubs feeding on the turf's root system. Signs of drought stress are often the most common early indicator that something isn't right under the soil surface. Once these symptoms occur, grubs have usually been feeding for quite some time and are large and difficult to control.

Grubs' subterranean nature also makes control more difficult in that the control agent or insecticide must move past the turf, through the thatch, and into the soil. This is typically a difficult task for products to accomplish. Organic matter can act as a magnet to trap and hold insecticide and prevent it from getting to the target site. Pesticides that bind fast to soil particles may still provide control in that as grubs feed they literally ingest anything that is in front of them, including soil particles.

Grubs are also a favorite food of a number of animals. Since the grubs are under the soil, these animals, such as

raccoons, skunks, javelinas, armadillos, moles, crows and other birds, must dig up the turfgrass to get access to the grubs. The impact of this feeding can result in much more serious damage than that caused by the grubs themselves.

CHEMISTRY CHALLENGES. The challenge of effective white grub management is further enhanced by the change in the chemistries of the products we are currently using for white grub control. The impact of the Food Quality Protection Act signed in 1996 had a significant long-term impact on the availability of certain products for use on turfgrass. Many of the old standards were eliminated or phased out. Fortunately, there are new products in the market that provide outstanding control of white grubs, but the approach to using these products is a bit different than for some of the older ones.

Several of the newer insecticide chemistries (Merit®(imidacloprid) and MACH 2® (halofenozide)) work most effectively against white grubs when the white grubs are small. In other words they should be applied right after egg hatch. In reality this has always been true for grub control as there is a size-dose relationship and the smaller ones are easier to kill. However, the newer chemistries appear to be even more sensitive to this and control recommendations encourage an early or "preventive" application rather than a later season or "curative" approach. There has been some debate on this as claims have been made that these products can be used later in the season with good success. I do know

(continued on page 74)



White grubs often feed for several months and do serious damage to turfgrass roots before they are discovered. Photos: Destructive Turf Insects

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GRUB CONTROL Tips

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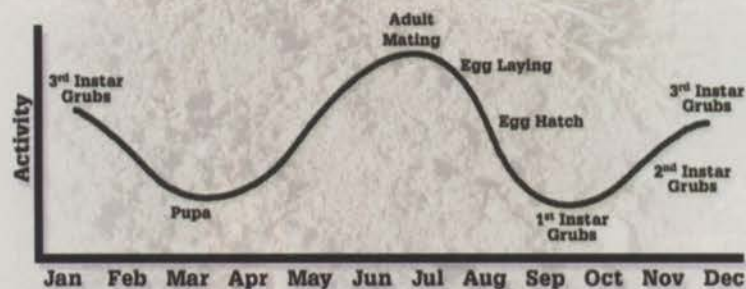
that effective grub control can often be obtained with the newer products when applied later in the summer, but I also know that you are taking a greater risk that control will be sub par. A couple of older products (Dylox® (trichlorfon) and Sevin® (carbaryl) that have been around for a number of years

can still be useful to clean up an existing problem. Carbaryl, however, has been relatively erratic in the level of control it provides against many grubs, but is very effective when used against green June beetle grubs. Dylox® (trichlorfon) has a very limited residual activity, but it is very water-

soluble, moves down to the site of the grubs very quickly, and is capable of cleaning up an existing population of larger grubs with relatively good results. It should not be used during egg hatch as a preventive application due to its short residual life. While some other products are also labeled for white grub control, the consistency of their performance usually doesn't match the above compounds.

This approach for a preventive application brings about a whole new concern in white grub management. Where are the most likely locations where grubs will occur in the turf and when will the egg hatch begin? Within those two questions is a third question. What species of white grubs are you dealing with? These are all very important questions, but not always easily answered. Let's take the last one first. Have you obtained a positive identification of the grubs you are trying to control? This goes beyond

(continued on page 76)



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GRUB CONTROL Tips

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just noticing the beetles that might have been flying around earlier in the summer. While Japanese beetles might be quite noticeable, it may be that several other species of night flying beetles that went unnoticed are more responsible for the grubs that are found under the turf.

While there are a good many reasons to know exactly what you are working with, the proper identification of grubs is critical if one is to properly time and target the insecticide application. Some species, such as the Oriental beetle grub, may occur a whole month or two ahead of others, such as the green June beetle. A knowledge of the species can help you immediately define the optimal window of time when egg hatch is going to occur based upon locally generated research data. It is also possible you might have more than one species occurring in the same location. This is common with Oriental beetle, masked chafer and Japanese beetle grubs occurring in the same location in areas

Secondary damage from animals, such as armadillos, skunks and birds, feeding on grubs can be quite serious.

Photo: Rick Brandenburg



in the eastern United States, and two separate species of masked chafers occurring almost two months apart in the southwestern United States. These situations with more than one species can be challenging because we want to apply the product early enough to control the early hatching of the species that occurs first, yet still have the residual activity to control the species that hatches later. If there are more than two months between the two species, this can become more difficult as residual control from most of the newer products usually doesn't last past 60

days. In some parts of the country, May and June beetle grubs can cause turf damage and, rather than the typical one-year life cycle some of these species require two or three years to complete their development. Proper identification of grubs (usually based on bristle patterns on the tail end of the grub) is often difficult and best left to experts.

If you know which species you are working with, you should already have a ballpark figure for when beetles will lay eggs and when the eggs will hatch. Local information

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GRUB CONTROL Tips

(continued from page 76)

is usually available through state universities and extension services. There can be, however, considerable variation from one year to the next on exactly when this egg hatch will take place. This is easy to monitor for some species, such as the Japanese beetle. This beetle can be captured in large numbers

in the commercially available Japanese beetle traps. One can keep track of the weekly trap catches (often easier to measure volume than to actually count the large number of beetles) and once the numbers start to decline it is appropriate to treat in two to three weeks. Most beetles will begin laying eggs shortly

after mating, and eggs often begin hatching two to three weeks after the peak flight. By August grubs can already be in the third (final stage) instar and be more difficult to kill. Pheromone traps are available for Oriental beetles and light traps often work well on masked chafers and May/June beetles. The problem with light traps is they capture all kinds of night flying insects and it is often quite a task to sort through the menagerie of creatures to find what you are looking for. Scouting for eggs or newly-hatched grubs is very difficult due to their small size.

The final question we need to answer is regarding where the white grubs are most likely to occur. This varies considerably with your location. One thing is obvious, irrigated turfgrass is at a much greater risk than non-irrigated turf. The main reason for this is that when the beetles lay eggs in the soil, it is critical for sufficient soil moisture to ensure the survival of the egg. This usually means soil moisture in the range of 10 percent. Drier conditions may cause the eggs to desiccate and, thus, not hatch. The moisture principle helps point out areas that are higher risk in non-irrigated turfgrass. Without irrigation white grubs will be found more commonly in areas that have a greater chance of maintaining sufficient soil moisture. These would include low spots, poorly drained areas and areas with northern exposures or modest shade that might reduce the intensity of the summer sun drying out the soil. If rainfall is well above normal for some areas, then any and all non-irrigated turfgrass may be at risk. In low rainfall summers or in low rainfall areas, irrigated turf areas may be the only sites at risk.

One thing we do know about most species of white grubs is that they are indeed creatures of habit. They have strong tendencies to occur in the same areas over and over. This is a valuable tool as you plan your grub management strategies. This does not mean that grub problems do not spread or show up in new areas nor does it mean that you will always have a grub problem every year in the same location. It does mean, however, that the odds are in your favor that problems will be consistent in the locations where they occur. It is good, practical advice to take advantage of this consistency that white grubs tend to exhibit. Good record keeping

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GRUB CONTROL Tips

(continued from page 78)

and mapping can help ensure that you treat those areas most likely to be hit with a white grub problem and avoid treating those areas that are less likely to have problems.

Some lawn maintenance companies in areas where grubs are more consistent threats may opt for treating "wall to wall" as this may be the most cost effective means of grub management. If this is determined to be the best approach, it is still very important to know the species and have a good working knowledge of the pest biology, particularly the timing of egg hatch. All of the above tells us that local information and the advice of local experts, whether they are specialists from your nearest state university or consultants, may be critical for making sure you are on track with your approach. In certain regions, there is a considerable database on white grub ecology and studies have helped define certain characteristics about lawns that put them at a higher or lower risk for

grubs. For instance, a study was completed several years ago at Cornell that helps identify "high risk" lawns.

Whatever approach you decide on, look carefully at any insecticide reported failure. Today's newer products rarely fail. It does happen on occasion, but poor performance usually goes back to calibration, timing of application, unusual environmental conditions, improper identification of the target pest and so on. A pesticide failure should be investigated immediately and thoroughly as the problem may be linked to something you are or aren't doing.

White grubs can be effectively managed in lawns and can be done so in a cost effective fashion. It requires: 1) proper identification of the grub species, 2) an understanding of pest biology, 3) local information on the timing of pest events (i.e. egg laying), 4) good record keeping and pest monitoring, and 5) timely responses for treatment tim-

ing. Don't let the secretive nature of grubs catch you by surprise. Learn all you can about the species in your area and plan accordingly. Keep good records to make your applications as efficient and effective as possible. Even though you may not be able to see grubs, you can have a good enough understanding of their biology to stay one step ahead of them. **LL**

The author is turfgrass entomologist, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, N.C., and can be reached at 919/515-8876 or rick_brandenburg@ncsu.edu.

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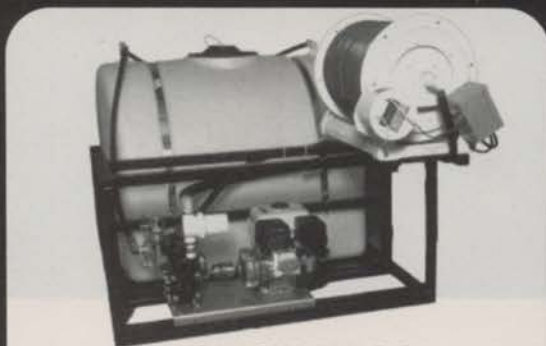
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Drip Irrigation

by Lauren Spiers



The Great Aqualizer

When water budgets are tight, easy-to-use drip irrigation can keep landscapes healthy without breaking watering laws.

Not all drip irrigation is hidden from view. Low-volume "microsprays" provide just the right amounts of water to plants that prefer to be irrigated from above, rather than below. Photo: Orbit Irrigation

No one likes a leak.

Diaper companies continually promote their newest solutions to keeping babies dry. A pinhole in a car tire can turn a Sunday drive into a maintenance hassle with the local mechanic. And how many times have exhausted homeowners had to drag themselves out of bed to deal with a leaky bathroom faucet's drip...drip...drip...?

But there is at least one situation where a slow leak is the best way to achieve great results. In the irrigation industry, low-volume, low-pressure "drip" irrigation products are becoming more popular in both commercial and residential settings in terms of their abilities to keep landscapes green and healthy in the face of heightened water restrictions nationwide.

Because drip irrigation is easy for contractors to learn to install, manufacturers are touting the concept's abilities even more and encouraging contractors to add these products and techniques to their arsenal of irrigation solutions.

COMPARATIVELY SPEAKING. In a recent *Lawn & Landscape Online* poll, 67 percent of respondents said they use drip irrigation in their system designs. Indeed, manufacturers and contractors both report that interest in these systems, which are

designed to apply water directly to plants' root areas, is increasing every year.

"Low volume irrigation is definitely becoming more popular," comments Janet Reilly, marketing manager, Rain Bird, Azusa, Calif. "A lot of the reason is that there's a lot more awareness of water shortages and increased attention to water conservation issues. There are a lot of cities with water restrictions and a lot more education about drip is coming out because of that."

In many regions, these water restrictions are pushing the concept of drip irrigation forward more than other water management issues. "We're seeing the largest growth in products oriented toward retrofit," notes Tom Rivers, southeastern turf sales manager, Orbit Irrigation, Salt Lake City, Utah. "For instance, in parts of Arizona and Colorado, there are government rebates offered to homeowners who are replacing sod with native plant material. The segment of products designed to fit directly onto existing underground sprinkler systems has just exploded. Our customer base in this area has doubled every year for the last three years."

Because drip irrigation systems are highly efficient - 90 to 95 percent, according to Reilly, compared to 30 to 70 percent with traditional spray

(continued on page 84)

Contractor Finds Rain Bird® Landscape Drip Products Have Unmatched Support

By Nathan Odgaard



Confidence. It's what keeps David Coleman coming back to Rain Bird® time and time again. Having worked in the irrigation industry 25 years, Coleman knows he can turn to Rain Bird for all of his landscape drip irrigation needs, whether it be for steadfast support or job-specific, cutting-edge products.

Coleman is president of DFW Sprinkler Systems in Dallas, TX. His customers, both commercial and residential, rely on him for exceptional service and installation of the best landscape drip irrigation system components. That's why Coleman relies on Rain Bird.



Rain Bird is at the forefront of product development. Rain Bird's product development is shaped by those whose input matters most – contractors. This helps eliminate costly callbacks and allows them to get it right the first time. "Rain Bird's product development sets them apart from the competition," says Coleman. "They concept and test all new products, then they get feedback based on real-world field tests. With Rain Bird Landscape Drip products, contractors can be assured that they are installing a great product that will reward them monetarily, professionally and help them maintain a solid reputation. Plus, as a Rain Bird Rewards member, I earn Rain Bird Points for all landscape drip purchases."

Rain Bird addresses a contractor's needs – per project. Rain Bird offers immediate and long-term solutions to daily problems that contractors face. "Through a distributor or hotline, you can talk about a specific problem you are having and Rain Bird will respond directly via a product technician and assist you," says Coleman.

"I appreciate Rain Bird's responsiveness and the value it places on our feedback. Rain Bird addresses my needs by answering my questions and by offering the most complete product line in the industry."

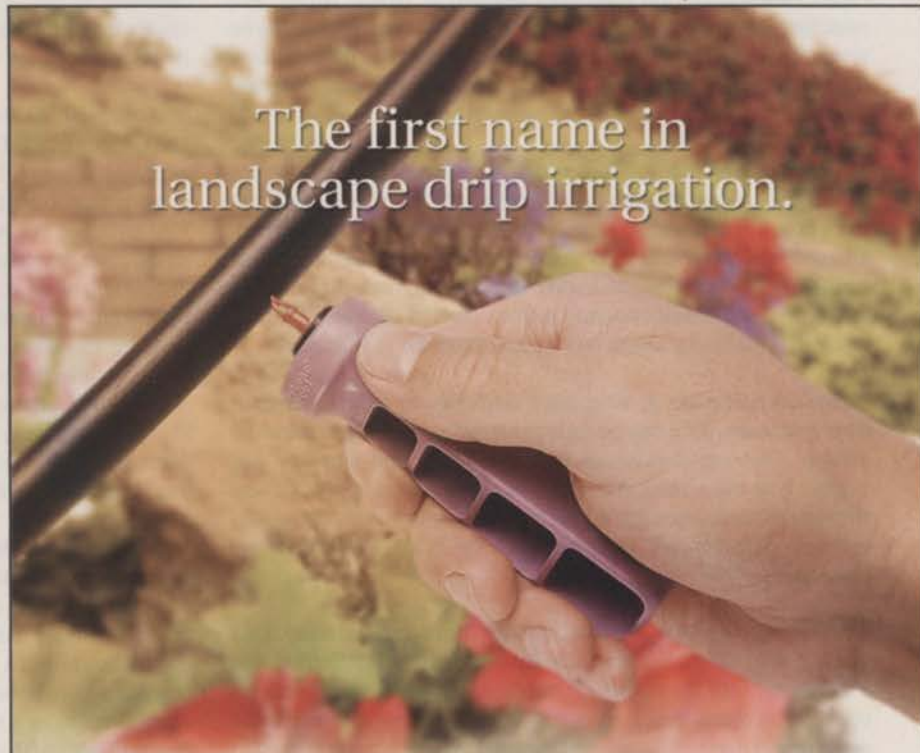
Rain Bird allows contractors to do the same job with fewer parts. Rain Bird Landscape Drip products are easier and quicker to install because there are fewer components. Fewer parts reduce the likelihood for problems and callbacks. For example, the Rain Bird Easy Fit Compression Fittings system design – three fittings, five adapters and a flush cap – accepts multiple sizes of outside diameter tubing, from .630" to .710" (16 mm to 18 mm), simplifying and expediting installation. Says Coleman: "This system works great for existing applications that need revamping. It also helps save time with maintenance, which helps greatly expand business opportunities."

Coleman depends on the Rain Bird name like so many other turf professionals. In addition to



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RAIN BIRD

Drip Irrigation

(continued from page 82)

heads or rotors – irrigation clients in these drought-ridden states, as well as in other portions of the country are turning to low-volume irrigation as a watering solution.

"When you have drip, that's the most efficient system if there are any regulatory issues to deal with," says Walter Mugavin, owner, Aqua Mist Irrigation, South Hackensack, N.J. "Drip will probably be the

last system any municipality would tell you to shut down during water restrictions." As a result of regulations in his area, about 15 percent of Mugavin's clients sign on for drip irrigation to save their plants and shrubs. "Turf will go dormant during the dry season, but it will always come back with a little extra care," he says. "But if your shrubs start dying, you'll probably end up having to

replace them. However, our state legislature and the New Jersey Irrigation Association are working on having an exemption for drip even when all other watering is shut down because they're highly efficient."

In addition to being more efficient than traditional irrigation systems, many users find that drip irrigation systems often are easier to install, as well. "All the hydraulics

Irrigation contractors, distributors and manufacturers are beginning to accept the fact that maximizing efficiency in design is not an either-or proposition. What is required is an integrated approach that will preserve both conventional and new technology.

Now is the time to integrate subsurface drip irrigation (SSDI) with conventional sprinkler irrigation. Virtually every objection and criticism of subsurface drip have been resolved or proven wrong. The reliability of SSDI is as great or greater than sprinklers. Repairs are no worse for subsurface drip than for damaged sprinkler risers. A new spirit of mixing technologies is needed to meet water limitations facing the industry. The facts contradict common belief.

Misconception No. 1: They plug. Some buried drip line systems have a track record of more than 10 years without plugging by plant roots or soil debris. Advancements in emitters, pressure regulation, filtration and water treatment make buried drip line as reliable as sprinklers. The benefits of buried drip line fit perfectly into the limitations of sprinkler systems, such as curving borders, drift onto walkways and roads, slopes and surface exposure to vandalism.

Misconception No. 2: You can't add drip to existing sprinkler systems. SSDI can be added to existing sprinkler systems by making a few adaptations for pressure control and filtration. Ask yourself how many times your sprinklers have been plugged because they lacked filtration or how many repairs were made without flushing the lines. Filtration will be standard in the future for all irrigation systems.

Misconception No. 3: Cultivation equipment damages buried drip lines. Not when the lines are installed properly at 4 to 5 inches beneath the surface. Subsurface drip alone won't work for establishing plants from seed or sod-like turf, however. But installed at the proper depth, SSDI will wet the surface. Run times may need to be longer for two to three weeks until the seed has germinated or sod has knitted, but there is no moisture lost to drift and less lost to evaporation.

Used in an integrated system to take maximum advantage of the benefits of both drip and traditional irrigation, SSDI-irrigated areas will benefit from overspray and drift. For those areas where SSDI is the primary method of irrigation, temporary portable sprinklers can also be used for a couple of weeks in order to satisfy doubting customers. The contractor can include tees for sprinklers during installation and remove the sprinklers following establishment.

Misconception No. 4: Calculations for spacing and flow rates are too complicated.

Manufacturers have taken nearly all the guesswork out of calculating spacing and flow. Usually, they offer a choice of four flow rates and three spacings, ranging anywhere from 1 to 2 feet. The goal then is to arrange the tubing so emitters form triangles from row to row. Be aware, however, that capillary action does vary by soil type. For example, emitters should be spaced more closely together in sandy soils than for loam or clay. Flow rates should be higher for sandy soils and lower for clay soils.

Misconception No. 5: Installation is a nightmare with all those trenches.

Irrigation contractors who install conventional sprinkler systems have found that a vibratory plow can place polyethylene tubing much faster than they can dig trenches for PVC pipe. But you won't be going that deep. A less expensive and equally fast device is the disk trencher. Carbide teeth on a spinning disk, much like a stump grinder, cut a narrow (less than 1 inch) slit for the tubing. Landscape architects usually set the soil specifications for turf areas at 4 inches of topsoil. When topsoil is spread across a subsoil, you can see that the tubing needs to be approximately at the subsoil/topsoil interface. Of course, it's always a good idea to provide your customer with a copy of your as-built plan and photographs of the actual installation. This is true of sprinkler installations, as well.

Misconception No. 6: Run times are longer and, therefore, incompatible with sprinkler zone run times.

Not by much. At a triangular spacing of 12 inches by 12 inches with emitters putting out 0.9 gallons per hour (gph), you are nearly matching the application rate of a conventional 15-foot-radius spray head. Rotary sprinklers have lower precipitation rates. Consequently, you would want to consider a wider spacing (perhaps 18 inches) with a lower flow rate (about 0.6 gph).

There is no contest. The most efficient irrigation system on any site that isn't perfectly rectangular is a combination of sprinklers and drip. Edges, slopes, windy areas and irregularly shaped turf areas are not as well suited to sprinkler irrigation. Drift from sprinklers is not only potentially dangerous from the standpoint of liability, it is wasteful. That waste will not be tolerated much longer. — **Bruce Shank**

The author is owner, IrriCom/BioCom, Palmdale, Calif. This information was excerpted from his article An Integrated Approach to Irrigation Calls for Mixing Irrigation Technologies that appeared in IBT.

Drip Myths **DEBUNKED**

are the same on a drip system as on a conventional system, but you can run a lot more drip on one zone than you can when you're using rotors and sprays," Mugavin says. "One of our accounts has about 12,000 feet of drip going in and in one day three of us installed about 6,000 feet. It's definitely a time saver as opposed to conventional sprinklers."

NO "NEW MATH." Compared to traditional systems, low-volume irrigation has several advantages, but incorporating drip technology into irrigation designs doesn't mean contractors have to go back to Irrigation 101.

"Contractors don't need a lot of special tools or advanced training to use drip irrigation," Reilly says. "The basics of hydraulics and flow are the same in the drip system as in a traditional system. It is low volume, so you have to be aware of that when you do the calculations, but the principles are the same."

The volume of water and pressure needed to properly operate a drip irrigation system are the characteristics that most separate drip from traditional systems. Reilly notes that many low-volume systems can operate at as low as 15 psi, while other manufacturers note that some systems will require 35 psi. Still, this is much lower than traditional irrigation that often needs upwards of 40 psi to push water to the end of an irrigation line and maintain flow. In fact, one critical part that contractors must use when installing drip irrigation is a pressure regulator. This element lowers the pressure of water flowing through the tubing so drip emitters aren't forced out and flow stays consistent to the end of the line.

Quick TIP

Drip irrigation can be a great approach to reducing water waste and keeping plants healthy - but it may not be ideal in all situations. "We don't like to use drip in situations where there will be a lot of turnover in planting material like annuals where the drip line can get cut or damaged," says Bill Gallagher, owner, Summer Rain, Cos Cob, Conn. "It can be repaired, but the homeowner gets very upset and it's a nuisance to go out and have to repair the system when they generally need little maintenance whatsoever."

- Lauren Spiers

Another vital element that all drip irrigation systems require is filtration. "It's imperative that contractors filter the water because the orifice sizes are much smaller," Rivers says. "Rotor nozzles have openings of about 1/4 inch, whereas the drip hole is the size of a pinhead, so the smallest grain of

sand can mess things up. To make things easier, there are kits available with everything you would need - including pressure regulators and filters - or you can buy individual components and build your own system specific to your application."

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Drip Irrigation

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Prices for drip irrigation parts and pieces can vary across manufacturers but, generally, these elements are less expensive than traditional irrigation materials. Filters range from \$10 to \$20 and pressure regulators are about half that cost at \$5 to \$10. For emitters, contractors can choose inline emitter tubing or "drip line" in which emitters ranging from 0.2 to 1 gallon per hour (gph) are preinstalled at 12-, 18- or 24-inch spacings into ¼- to ½-inch tubing. Otherwise, contractors may opt to purchase individual emitters that can be installed as necessary in blank tubing. Drip line pricing can range from 10 to 35 cents per foot and is usually sold in 100-foot rolls. Individual emitters are often less than \$1 each and assorted tees and other fittings cost only a few pennies each.

When irrigation clients ask for "one good reason" to use drip irrigation, in-the-know contractors can give them seven. Drip irrigation produces significantly less waste water than sprays or rotors, can be operated at any time of the day without interfering with goings on in the area and won't cause liability problems in terms of slippery sidewalks. Additionally, Mike Stoll, market segment leader, Netafim USA landscape and turf division, Fresno, Calif., offered the following list of areas where drip irrigation can be considered preferable to traditional irrigation methods.

- ✓ Areas where water waste is publicly regulated
- ✓ Areas where spray heads or rotors wet surrounding hardscapes
- ✓ Areas where slipping or tripping is an issue
- ✓ Areas where "watering windows" exist
- ✓ Areas where wet turf or foliage is a problem
- ✓ Areas like sports fields where softening hard soil is important before play to reduce impact injuries
- ✓ Areas where the availability, pressure or volume of water are low or regulated.

— **Lauren Spiers**

Gimme **One Good Reason**

To choose the right materials for the job, contractors need to make the same kinds of considerations that they would for spray heads or rotors. "The designer or installer simply needs to answer three questions: 'What am I irrigating – garden or turf?' 'What type of soil do I have?' and 'How many square feet of area am I irrigating?'" says Mike Stoll, market segment leader, Netafim USA landscape and turf division, Fresno, Calif. "From there, we use three simple charts to identify the proper dripper flow rate and spacing, how far a lateral of tubing can go and how many gallons per minute every 100 feet uses."

Stoll explains that calculating the necessary amount of drip line for an application is derived by multiplying the area to be irrigated by 12 and then dividing by the manufacturer's recommended row spacing – usually between 12 and 24 inches. From there, many manufacturers will provide contractors with charts that outline the necessary pressure and gallonage of the proposed system, converting low-volume gallons-per-hour measurements into gallons per minute to make scheduling system run times easier. With these steps taken care of, setup is easy.

A LITTLE DRIP'LL DO. "When they're installing drip irrigation, contractors are still counting the demand of all the emitters and making the pipe size fit the demand for the zone," Rivers says. "In that aspect, there's no difference between underground systems and drip. It's just that a contractor who's used to trenching a ditch, burying pipe and having sprinklers run off of it, thinks drip the pieces look like Tinkertoys when he first looks at them."

Once contractors get used to handling smaller pieces, Stoll says it only takes a couple of installations to get the hang of drip systems and that maintenance is minimal with proper installation. "We've always recommended having some kind of flushing mechanism on the pipe at the point farthest away from the source," he says. "That will come on every time the zone comes on and will purge about ½ gallon of water into a small gravel area. Other than that, as long as the filter is installed to keep dirt and debris out of the line, the ongoing maintenance is much less than a system with sprays or rotors."

For installation, manufacturers explain that the system's filter is attached to the valve, followed by the pressure regulator and drip line. While many applications allow drip tubing to remain on top of the soil and be covered with mulch, such as in many landscape beds, applications like large turf areas, require the use of tools or heavier equipment. "Any dripperline product can be laid out on the surface and either left exposed or covered with mulch," Stoll says. "But depending on the type being used and the application the dripperline may be able to be buried in the ground. Normally the depth ranges from just below the surface to about 6 inches."

To bury the tubing, Stoll notes that contractors can use a narrow-bladed trencher, a vibratory plow, a shanking tool or hand-digging techniques. In smaller applications,


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"WHEN YOU HAVE DRIP, THAT'S THE MOST EFFICIENT SYSTEM IF THERE ARE ANY REGULATORY ISSUES TO DEAL WITH. DRIP WILL PROBABLY BE THE LAST SYSTEM ANY MUNICIPALITY WOULD TELL YOU TO SHUT DOWN DURING WATER RESTRICTIONS."
— **WALTER MUGAVIN**

Instead of letting water leak out of one hole, many drip emitters can water 360 degrees.

Photo: Orbit Irrigation





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USE READER SERVICE #83

Drip Irrigation

(continued from page 88)

such as in and around planting beds or hedgerows, the drip line can run on either side of the plants' root balls or may be laid down in a grid pattern throughout the area. In larger areas, certain products are best used with a PVC or polyethylene mainline of off which several lines of drip tubing will run perpendicularly.

Some contractors like to use other techniques as well. "For bigger materials like new pines on the perimeter of a property, instead of going one row of drip line in front and one row behind, we actually loop the material in a spiral fashion so there are several emitters in one area," explains Bill Gallagher, owner, Summer Rain, Cos Cob, Conn. "For example, if we have nine 1-gallon-per-hour emitters around one root ball, we're getting 9 gallons per hour right where we need it."

So why not use spray heads for such a comparatively large amount of water? Though 9 gph may seem high in a "low volume" application, it is still only 0.1 gallons per minute and Gallagher explains that this setup is preferable in certain situations. "If we're talking about pine trees and you put sprayheads outside the pines, the density of the pines will sometimes interfere with the root ball getting wet," he says. "But there's no waste with drip – it goes right to the root ball and you don't lose anything to the atmosphere or wind."

Reilly agrees that contractors should take advantage of drip irrigation's uniqueness and the range of products available. "With landscape drip, a lot of people think of just one product," she says. "They may think of

"WE STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SYSTEM'S EFFICIENCY IN TERMS OF GETTING EQUAL PARTS OF WATER TO EVERY PLANT AND NOT HAVING TO CHANGE IT BECAUSE OF PLANT GROWTH AND THINGS OF THAT NATURE. WE PUSH THE IDEA THAT THEY'RE ACTUALLY GOING TO SAVE MONEY ON WATER BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT GOING TO WASTE ANY WATER." – BILL GALLAGHER

Drip may be landscape irrigation's most efficient watering solution, but uninformed homeowners may be skeptical.

"Sometimes clients can be unsure about how effective the drip tubing is when there are such small amounts of water coming out and they can't see it working like with a regular sprinkler," says Walter Mugavin, owner, Aqua Mist Irrigation, South Hackensack, N.J. Manufacturers have solved that problem with modified drippers that contractors can include on the irrigation line.

"We've modified a dripper and put it on a regular spray stake and there's a piece of plastic that stands upright when the line is on," says Mike Stoll, market segment leader, Netafim USA landscape and turf division, Fresno, Calif. "We tell contractors to put that on the end of the zone and if a homeowner has a question you can have him or her check to see if the little orange flag is standing up and avoid wasting time with a service call."

"As opposed to telling someone, 'You'll know it's not working when you're shrubs are dead,' we tell our customers to first check the flag if they have a question about whether their system is operating," Mugavin says. "They can also just check the controller to see if it's functioning properly or they can go out to the shrub bed and feel the mulch and soil for dampness, which lets them know that there's water coming out." – **Lauren Spiers**

Capture The Flag

one emitter or inline emitter tubing, but there are several different products and choosing the right product and flow for the plant you have is one of the most important things that sometimes gets overlooked."

For instance, Reilly recommends using products known as "microsprays" – pop-up spray heads with very low flow nozzles – to irrigate around annuals and perennials in a flower bed. "In that way, you're meeting the low requirements of the flower bed and a lot of annuals like getting water from the top," she says. Likewise, many of these types of emitters move out of the way easily so seasonal color can be rotated without much hassle. With such a flexible irrigation option – both literally and figuratively – contractors find that they rarely have to push very hard to sell the service.

SELLING SAVINGS. Because both residential and commercial areas are impacted by water restrictions and the need to reduce runoff, contractors find that individuals on both sides of the industry are potential drip irrigation clients.

"Over the past few years we've been getting more calls for drip irrigation and



"Teas" like this one allow contractors to extend a drip line into out-of-the-way areas off of the main line. Photo: Orbit Irrigation

I've been adding that in on some design/build projects myself," Mugavin says. Most of his drip irrigation clients – 90 percent – are on the commercial side. "For these clients – especially in areas with a lot of parking lots or around big warehouses or corporate headquarters, it's becoming economical as opposed to using regular sprinklers," he says.

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by Lauren Spiers



A Little off the Sides

Lopping off an offending tree branch may be tempting, but be sure to follow correct pruning practices before you act.

Contractors must ensure they have the right equipment available when handling pruning jobs. Pole pruners like the one in use above may not always be necessary but could be handy on some jobs. Photo: The Davey Tree Expert Co.

If "weekend warrior" homeowners defined proper tree and shrub pruning, indiscriminate shearing and haphazard removal of low-slung tree limbs would be the industry norms – as would disease and insect infestations, dead plants and uncontrollable regrowth.

Indeed, if homeowners had their ways, many pruning subjects would end up worse off than when they started. For this reason, trained arborists and tree care workers must step in with appropriate tools and techniques for tree and shrub pruning. For a refresher course on proper pruning, several tree care professionals offer their knowledge and information on pruning practices that work.


KNOW THE GOAL. "I've always told everyone that anytime you make a pruning cut you need to consider it a wound and you want to try and minimize the amount of wounding that you're doing when you're pruning a tree," notes Keith Francies, southeast operations manager, The Davey Tree Expert Co., Greensboro, N.C., adding that tree care workers should have a reason for every pruning cut they make and should always keep in mind the goal of a particular pruning session.

According to Francies, most pruning goals will fall into a few main categories: structural character, safety, aesthetic enhancement and weight reduction. Likewise, Laura Jull, professor of horticulture, University of Wisconsin,

Madison, Wis., adds that corrective pruning, such as eliminating crossing branches, double leaders or damaged, diseased, dead and dying limbs also are main motivations for pruning.

Each of these categories requires different approaches and pruning cuts, but whatever the reason for pruning, tree care workers must remember one overarching goal – structure. "Anywhere you want to have a strong tree, you need to create a strong structure," comments Jeff Oxley, director of operations, Swingle Tree & Lawn Care, Denver, Colo. "Our job is to create a structure that will be healthy for the tree and to maintain that structure over time. It's like

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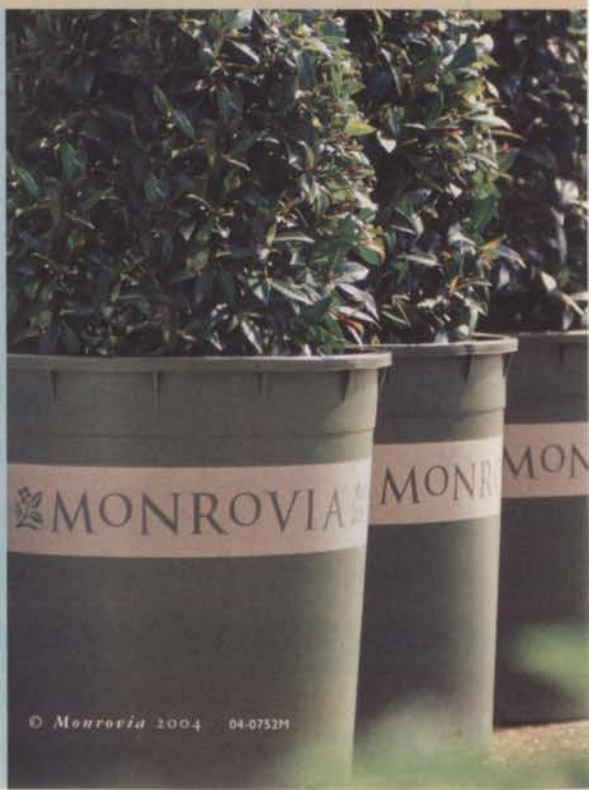
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Proper Pruning

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having the oil in your car changed to keep the vehicle running smoothly. With trees and shrubs, we need to go in on a regular basis to get the deadwood out and reduce the long ends to keep the plant from being exposed to insects, disease and damage."

In order to create that sound structure, tree care workers need to be familiar with a few common pruning approaches.

Thinning. "Thinning is the most common and best way to renew a shrub," Jull says. "It preserves the overall plant shape and is particularly useful for shrubs that sucker from the base." Jull explains that proper thinning means removing one-third of a shrub's interior branches at their points of origin. "This can be done on a yearly basis depending on the species," she says. "This type of pruning – also known as renewal pruning – can lead to increased flower production on old, overgrown shrubs, such as lilacs. Some shrubs that commonly require thinning are forsythia, hybrid lilacs, redbud dogwood and some viburnums."

Heading Back. Similar to thinning, heading back or "tipping back" is an approach to thinning trees and shrubs by removing a terminal branch back to a larger lateral branch or bud. This can effectively reduce the height of a plant when done correctly. "We have a term called 'prune overall,' where we go in and reduce the interior of a tree by one-third," Oxley says. "We're basically heading back the tree for a couple of reasons. In our region, we have trees that grow really fast, but the wood isn't strong enough so you have to tip back or reduce the long ends. That way, when we have a heavy snow, there's no breakage. It becomes a safety matter at that point. Not all trees will have that kind of structure on their own."

Jull adds that heading back can cause several lateral buds to break, so cutting back to an outside-facing bud is best because its growth will be directed away from the plant rather than toward the center. However, "heading back does not mean cutting all the branches back to the same height," she notes. "This will lead to massive regrowth all at one point, which is prone to breakage from snow or ice."

Deadwooding. Another technique to reduce the bulk of branches in a tree or shrub is called deadwooding. "With this technique

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Proper Pruning

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you're usually going to define a size of branch that will remain within the canopy of the tree," Francies says. "You may go down to as fine as 1/2-inch diameter deadwood, or a more standard size might be 1 to 2 inches. In other words, if you're doing 1-inch deadwooding, any branches larger than 1 inch in diameter would be removed from the tree and anything smaller would stay in."

Francies says that the motivation for deadwooding is really an assessment of hazards. "If you have a tree growing over a deck, you might want to keep branches larger than 1/2 inch out of the tree at all times because a 1/2-inch-diameter limb falling onto the deck or a tabletop could be dangerous," he explains. "If the same tree is in the middle of a backyard where kids or pets are playing, there's still a risk, but you may be safe with branches up to 1 inch in diameter."

Shearing. Jull notes that shearing, which allows technicians to maintain the geomet-

(continued on page 98)

Resist the urge to give trees flattops if their height becomes a problem. Not only is topping aesthetically unpleasing, but this practice of cutting off all tree or shrub branches at a specified height can cause more problems than it solves.

"Topping cuts are not proper pruning cuts and these trees are more likely to fail structurally," explains Laura Jull, professor of horticulture, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis. "There are undesirable results like witches brooming of new foliage (see photo above). New sprouts that result from these cuts also are very weakly attached to the trees and are more prone to breakage."

Instead of topping trees that may be contending with power lines or other height restrictions, tree care professionals recommend a technique called "drop crotch pruning," which reduces plant height by removing limbs at their points of attachment. This is a technique that takes a lot of skill to be done properly, and maintenance workers who are unfamiliar with it should partner with a dedicated tree care company whose workers are trained in this technique and can provide the best results. — **Lauren Spiers**



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Proper Pruning

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ric form of a hedge or shrub, should be reserved for formal hedges only. "Shearing produces dense growth and loss of the natural form of the shrub," she notes. "If done improperly, the top of the shrub will shade out the bottom," she notes. "Hence, the bottom of a sheared hedge should be wider than the top."

Specifically, Jull recommends leaving at least 1 inch of the previous season's growth to allow the plant to regrow and hide cuts more quickly. Cutting back to the original

point of the previous year's cut can cause unsightly witches brooming where bunches of small twigs begin to grow from a single point (see *Stop Topping* on page 96). Shrubs that are sheared most successfully are yews, boxwood, arborvitae and barberry. However, most flowering shrubs should not be pruned with hedge shears as this will ruin the plant's form and cut off flower buds.

Rejuvenation Pruning. A drastic pruning technique, rejuvenation pruning is ef-

(continued on page 100)

Sawing off a tree branch seems simple enough. Grasp the branch firmly and use a sharp saw to eliminate the offending limb from the tree, right? Not exactly.

"You always want to try and minimize the amount of wounding that you're doing when you're pruning a tree," explains Keith Francies, southeast operations manager, The Davey Tree Expert Co., Greensboro, N.C. "This means you need a reason for every pruning cut you're going to make. We use the three-step pruning process

when we're pruning trees, and each cut is made for a specific reason."

To begin the proper three-step pruning method, make an undercut first (A). "On large limbs, the first cut should be 12 to 18 inches from the limb's point of attachment," says Laura Jull, professor of horticulture, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis. "The pruning cut should be an undercut made halfway through the branch."

"What the undercut does is keep the weight of the limb from ripping the bark," Francies explains. "If you didn't make an undercut and just started cutting the branch from the top down, a heavy limb will start dropping before it breaks off and will tear a piece of bark along with it." In

some cases, the branch can rip the bark all the way down the tree, leaving a massive wound that is susceptible to disease and insect attacks.

But by making a proper undercut, tree care technicians can move onto step two (B), which actually removes the limb from the tree. "The second pruning cut should be made outside of the first cut, i.e., farther from the trunk," Jull says. "Cut all the way through the limb from the top down, thus removing the weight of the branch."

Step three (C) removes the stub left from the first two cuts. Not removing this stub can cause the tree to heal improperly, Francies says. "You always want to make cuts at points of attachment," he notes. "If you leave the stub sticking out past the branch collar, the collar has to grow out and over that stub in order to close up the wound, which is when you get protruding limb scars that make good homes for squirrels. At the other extreme are flush cuts made directly into the collar, which will make a larger wound and cut more deeply into the wood of the tree, inhibiting the healing process." — *Lauren Spiers*

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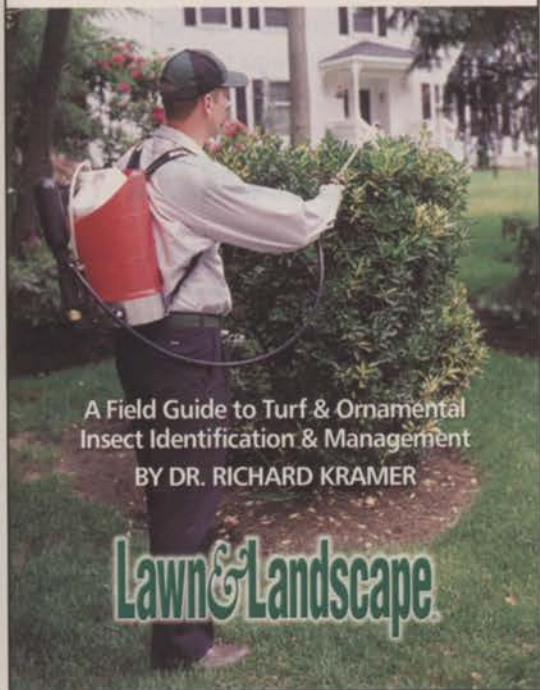
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Proper Pruning

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Keith Francies, southeast operations manager, The Davey Tree Expert Co., Greensboro, N.C., notes that, aside from the tools being used, tree pruning and shrub pruning are quite similar. "The basic idea when you're making any kind of thinning cut on a tree or shrub is that you want to take the limb back to a point of attachment, whether it's a lateral, a main limb or the trunk" says Francies. "With a shrub, you just happen to be using a pair of hand snips instead of a chainsaw."

Because of these similarities, Francies often uses easy-to-access shrubs to educate clients about the techniques he'll be using in their 50-foot-tall trees. "Sometimes I'll use a shrub beside me to explain to a homeowner the principle of what we're doing in the canopy of the tree," he says. "It seems to make more sense to people when they can visualize the cuts on a shrub while I'm explaining it. It's nice when they can see what they're getting, and then their expectations are in line with the work that's being done."

— Lauren Spiers

Ground-Level Education

fective on shrubs like pussy willow, potentilla, Japanese spirea, butterfly bush and hydrangea. During dormancy (late winter to early spring), shrubs like these, which are fast-growing and have multiple growing points, can be completely cut back to a height of 4 to 6 inches from the ground. New shoots will begin to grow and up to ¾ of this growth can be thinned to prevent crowding. Rejuvenation pruning is not necessary every year.

TIMING YOUR TRIMMING. Simply knowing the right pruning methods to use in certain situations or on certain plants is not enough to do the job right. Just as there is a proper time of year to plant trees or fertilize a lawn, there are correct and incorrect times to prune trees and shrubs

— especially those with flowers or fruit.

"In general, pruning prior to budbreak will stimulate shoot growth, while pruning just after leaf expansion will retard shoot growth," Jull explains. "Also, it's best to prune only during dry weather to minimize disease transmission."

In fact, not only is dry weather important for pruning, but pruning during dormancy — usually late fall to very early spring — is considered the ideal time to prune plants, especially just prior to new growth, Jull says. "Dormant pruning is crucial for tree species, such as oaks and elms, to prevent the spread of oak wilt and Dutch elm diseases," she notes. "It is also a good time to prune shrubs that will produce flowers on the current seasons growth, as long as you prune before the flower buds develop."

In terms of timing pruning sessions on flowering trees and shrubs, Francies offered a good rule of thumb. "You can prune plants that bloom late in the season before bloom and you should prune those that bloom early in the season after bloom," he explains. "For instance, azaleas bloom early and will have buds present in the spring, so you need to let them bloom first and then prune. But crepe myrtles that will bloom from the late summer into fall will actually produce their flowers in the summer and will first put out new leaves with no flower buds. With those, you wouldn't want to prune in May or June and lose the flowers, so crepe myrtles are usually



To keep trees safe for passersby, tree care workers should remove deadwood on a regular basis. Photo: The Davey Tree Expert Co.

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MAKE THE CUT

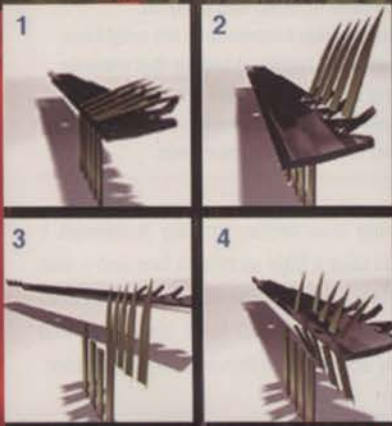
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(continued from page 100)

pruned in late winter to early spring before new growth."

In addition to properly timing pruning sessions, revisiting trees and shrubs on a regular basis will allow tree care workers to maintain the strong structure they're helping the tree develop over time. At Swingle, Oxley explains that the tree care division has two departments – one for pruning ever-

greens and trees that are less than 30 feet tall, and a second department for shade trees that are more than 30 feet tall. These different types and sizes of plants are maintained on different schedules by separate crews.

"For anything more than 30 feet, we try to approach our customers on a three-year basis," Oxley says, explaining that pruning every three to five years should work well

for large trees. "Smaller, developing trees need to be pruned every two to three years for structure because you want to train that main leader to stay strong and make sure there's shape and balance to the tree early on. You have to use some young tree standards to develop that tree from the bottom up."

Jull agrees, but reminds that pruning at the time of planting is counterproductive.

As with any other maintenance service, pricing commercial or residential pruning jobs means accounting for time, labor, equipment and the types of trees and shrubs being maintained. *Lawn & Landscape* asked tree care contractors in different areas of the country to take a look at a specified set of criteria (right) and share their theories behind pricing this type of pruning job. Here's what they had to say:

"For this job, I came up with a price range of \$1,000 to \$4,000 and I made several assumptions as to what could be estimated depending on the condition of the plant material and how much work needed to be done," says David Trantham, trim field supervisor, Swingle Tree & Lawn Care, Denver, Colo. "The main consideration I would have going into this job is what the health and condition of the plant material is and if it's been maintained in the past or neglected." For example, Trantham explained that labor to prune the locust tree in the front yard could range from \$65 to \$250, depending on the amount of work required.

Keith Francies agrees. "The type of tree makes a lot of difference, as does how often it's been worked on in the past," says the southeast operations manager of The Davey Tree Expert Co., Greensboro, N.C. "Some trees, like willows, have a tendency to grow thick inside, but a thick canopy causes a lot of dieback on the interior. On a large tree that's never been touched, you can spend a tremendous amount of time cleaning it up, but if it's been cleaned up four or five times in the past, it may not take as long to maintain."

"Likewise, Francies adds that the same tree in a different spot on the property or under a different set of circumstances can cause the amount of work on that tree to change drastically. "The same tree on two different properties could have a completely different prices because of higher general labor costs, higher average wages, higher workers' compensation rates or higher taxes and licensing in that area," he says. "All of those factors go into the pricing process, so it could cost \$200 to prune a tree in one spot or \$600 in another spot." Additionally, properly staging the project and removing debris can affect the price of a job. "The location of the plant material, the amount of access our crews have and the type of terrain surrounding the property are other considerations," Trantham says. "Our crews would most likely start on the larger trees and begin in the rear yard. This prevents having to re-trim smaller plantings underneath, and doing the rear-yard clean up first is much more efficient."

PROJECT SPECS:

Basics:

- The property is a ½-acre residential lot.
- There are no power lines to contend with.

Front yard:

- There is one 25-foot honey locust along the treelawn. The lowest branches are only 5 feet off of the ground and are problematic for the mowing crew.
- There is one 40-foot spruce improperly planted too close to the house. Some higher branches knock against the second-floor windows and get stuck in the rain gutter.
- There is one 30-foot maple tree in center of lawn.
- There are three 4-foot tall burning bushes.
- The property has 20 linear feet of 3-foot-tall evergreen hedges that must be well manicured.

Back yard:

- There are two 50-foot oaks with several low branches – about 4 feet from the ground – that are problematic for the mowing crew and tempting for neighborhood children to climb and hang on.
- There are four 20-foot pines that provide a screen from the neighbors.
- This area includes 30 feet of 6-foot-tall boxwood hedges that separate the property from an adjoining lot. These hedges should be clean-looking, but a highly manicured look is not necessary.
- Four 3-foot azaleas are planted in front of the pine trees.

In terms of clean-up, removing tree debris, running it through a chipper and hauling it away could take a little as two to two-and-a-half hours in some cases, Francies explains. But if a crew is one hour away from the nearest dumping site and still has a lot of work to do, travel time and recycling rates can add up quickly and must be factored into a bid price, he adds.

Undoubtedly, tree care professionals have a number of important decisions to make when developing a pricing structure or even a single bid for a pruning job. "A job with as many different tasks involved as in this example will take a high level of job organization so that the proper crew size, equipment and personnel are present in order to be as efficient as possible," Francies says. "That is the challenges and art of a good sales arborist. He or she must look at the entire job and evaluate and coordinate each aspect for efficiency, safety and customer satisfaction." – *Lauren Spiers*

Pricing Pruning

Check our May Online Extras for a list of pruning terms and definitions, as well as information on when and how to prune certain shrubs.

"Pruning during planting is not recommended and does not compensate for any root loss at the time of planting," she explains. "Carbohydrates are produced by the foliage and are then transported to the root system, which allows for more root production and restores the ratio."

Unlike large trees that only need to be pruned every few years, Oxley notes that evergreens can be pruned a couple of times per year, depending on the amount of available moisture. "We'll shear evergreens in late March and early April, but if we get a lot of moisture in July, we can trim them again then, and the same goes if we get a lot of moisture by September," he explains. "Wetter seasons will have more growth for any tree or shrub."

SHARPEN YOUR SHEARS. Though a tree care worker's pruning toolbox will contain different equipment depending on their job or region of the country, Jull lists several must-haves, including:

- ✓ Pruners
- ✓ Loppers
- ✓ Pruning saw
- ✓ Chainsaw
- ✓ Electric hedge shears for formal hedges
- ✓ Disinfectant

Tree care workers should sharpen their cutting tools regularly so as not to leave jagged edges, torn, bruised or otherwise damaged tissue. Also, Jull notes that using bypass-style pruners where the blades move past one another is preferable to anvil-style pruners where the blades clamp down onto each other and can damage the remaining wood.

For technicians whose jobs require climbing, Francies adds that an arsenal of safety gear, including a saddle, rope, buckstrap and hardhat are necessary, as well as eye and ear protection for any technicians using saws or power tools. Oxley notes also that ladders in several heights, as well as bucket trucks for certain jobs, may be necessary for companies with full-fledged arbor care divisions.

Having the wrong equipment or using equipment improperly are mistakes professionals see contractors make most often. Sterilizing equipment is one that Jull sees in particular. "I always put disinfectant on my tool list – whether it's bleach, alcohol or even Lysol spray," she says. "If you're pruning anything that's diseased or if you question that it's diseased, you must sterilize your equipment or you're going to transfer that pathogen to the next plants you prune."

Not sterilizing equipment can cause serious damage to trees, as can the wrong

Proper Pruning

climbing gear, Francies says. "One of the biggest mistakes we see is climbing with spikes, where you have climbing spurs on your boots and climb the tree like a telephone pole," he notes. "It may be an easy way to get up and around in the tree, but you're making hundreds of wounds that are susceptible to insect and disease damage." Francies adds that wearing spikes is fine if the job is removing the tree, but that spikes should not be used as a way to get jobs done faster or cheaper. Instead, use proper climbing techniques with a rope and saddle.

With the right equipment to use on the ground or safely move up in a tree, tree care workers simply need to use correct pruning techniques to do their jobs right. Though Jull comments that most maintenance contractors can learn basic tree pruning quite easily through local universities or extension agencies, Oxley notes that contractors need to dedicate themselves to this type of maintenance to ensure quality control.

"A lot of maintenance companies have dedicated arbor care divisions, but if a company isn't in a position to develop that, they need to partner with a tree care company that is insured, has the right setup and can do the jobs more efficiently," Oxley says. "The ultimate goal is taking care of the tree, so you have to have the right people and techniques in place to do that." **LL**

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



by Kit Vernon

From Start To Finish

A Touch of Class Landscapes installs a segmented retaining wall to boost soil stabilization, improve drainage and support an in-ground pool on one client's property.

One sunny day in February 2003, Vickie Hayter of Northumberland, Pa., told her husband Joe she'd like an in-ground pool in their yard similar to the one they had in their previous home landscape. Joe agreed – a decision he later came to regret.

When the pool was installed, unforeseen issues arose. A steep 8-foot by 10-foot slope in their back yard and problems with stormwater run-off from a street and vacant property above hadn't been adequately planned for by the pool installer. The pool was supposed to be in-ground with a generous apron and patio. Instead, the Hayters found much of the pool would be 3 feet above grade, without support for the patio, making the Hayters wonder if the whole thing was a safety hazard and would just collapse one day.

Then, a couple of months later, A Touch of Class Landscapes, Northumberland, Pa., began building a retaining wall across the street from the Hayters. Joe Hayter walked over and invited A Touch of Class President Jim Kadryna to look at their landscape problem. A Touch of Class had worked on a similar project and offered the Hayters a contract to fix the problem.

A few days later, Vickie and Joe approved what Kadryna promised as "a plan that would work," which included grading and terracing, tied into a series of segmental

retaining walls (SRWs), with "details down to indicated plantings." According to Kadryna, the Hayters' goal was simple: To obtain more usable yard space.

Kadryna presented the Hayters with different choices of SRW systems that could do the job. Despite limited previous experience with the product, he chose the StoneWall® SELECT® retaining wall system, from ICD Corp., Milwaukee, Wis.

By mid-June, the project began.

While the Hayters' untrained eyes were on the surface, Kadryna was concerned with underlying issues of soil stabilization and soil mechanics. The job wasn't quite as simple as it looked. Clay-based soils around the pool site were weak and raised questions about the stability of wet, saturated soils and the possible future effects of lateral water pressure on the pool's structure.

Another issue was a 6-foot elevation drop from the pool grade to the house. Kadryna knew the job could be handled mechanically with a single wall, but knew a more gradual series of terraces, steps and walls would be "a lot less hefty-looking and a lot more gracious-looking."

Kadryna's plan called for terracing the large patio area around the pool and using three different strata of retaining walls connected with walkways and steps. Walls were from 24 inches to 48 inches high, depending

upon where they were located on the slope. Steps were integral to the structure of the walls, using wall blocks for risers and wall caps for treads.

Where run-off threatened the pool's stability and the water's cleanliness, Kadryna designed a swale and a 24-inch wall. The wall and associated grading were highly functional, directing run-off away from the pool. At the same time, the wall provided attractive poolside seating.

The most challenging issue was creating strong support for the pool's apron and the paver-lined patio without compacting weak clay soils close to the pool. Compaction had to be avoided for fear of damage to the pool's liner. But Kadryna knew that the uncompacted soils would settle over time and would almost certainly damage the apron and patio and also create lateral pressure on both the pool liner and the retaining wall.

Kadryna's plan called for removing poor quality soils and backfilling and compacting areas near the pool with selected soil materials, including crushed stone.

In areas nearest the pool, where water pressure and compaction issues were of most concern, Kadryna created innovative ways to ensure stability by tying a layer of geogrid into the retaining wall

(continued on page 106)

RANDOM FACE PATTERNS

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CASE STUDY: Retaining Walls

(continued from page 104)

and also into pool deck supports. Fifteen 4-inch concrete pipes were sunk 5 feet into the ground through the geogrid at 4-foot intervals and filled with concrete to provide rigidity and stability. "That wall wasn't going anywhere," says Kadryna.

Kadryna says function always comes before aesthetics with retaining walls: a weak wall is never an option. But he adds, "A wall that doesn't combine functionality and good looks serves neither the landscaper nor the homeowner. This wall had a nice, clean appearance and was low maintenance. We used warm brown blocks because they looked natural and blended with the mature trees nearby."

A Touch of Class's Kadryna also liked the strength and flexibility the stackable mortarless retaining wall construction provided in the face of frost-heaving in cold Pennsylvania winters.

The project, which was started in mid-

June, was finished by early August 2003. It involved installation of almost five pallets of StoneWall SELECT blocks, providing 550 square feet of wall surface supplied by Central Builders Supply Co., Sunbury, Pa.

Shortly after the initial project was completed, A Touch of Class was called back to the Hayters' yard. It wasn't because they had a problem; it was an opportunity to solve a previously unresolved issue. The Hayters had been able to acquire a parcel of land just above their property, allowing A Touch of Class to re-grade the area above the pool, directing groundwater runoff into a stormwater catch basin, further reducing saturated soils and water pressure problems. Another week on the job "allowed us to cap off the project perfectly," Kadryna says.

Did the project work for the Hayters?



Vickie says: "Every day I feel as though I'm walking into Disney World." Joe, a self-proclaimed "fussy guy" describes it as "terrific" and "100 percent worth the effort."

Since completion of the project, the attractive natural look of the retaining walls and the groundwater drainage control and soil stabilization that were achieved have "sold" A Touch of Class Landscapes to neighbors, leading to the design and construction of six to eight more retaining wall projects nearby. **LL**

The author is president, Kit & Co. Intelligent Marketing, Milwaukee, Wis., and can be reached at 414/224-5387 or kitandco@ameritech.net.

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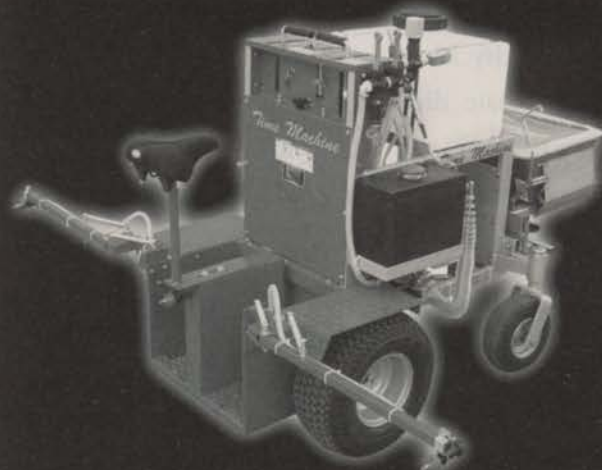
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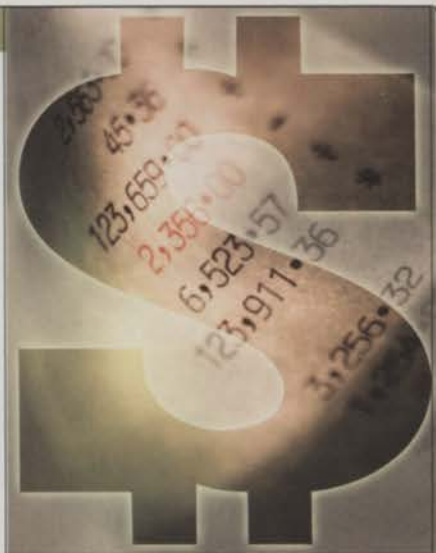
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USE READER SERVICE #97

by Nicole Wisniewski

Pricing Wall Work



A Touch of Class Landscapes' Jim Kadryna shares retaining wall pricing pointers.

Pricing retaining wall jobs profitably is just as crucial to a landscape contractor's business and reputation as is designing a sturdy and aesthetically pleasing structure.

"Pricing jobs fairly yet profitably is essential to satisfying the customer and to staying in business," points out Jim Kadryna, president, A Touch of Class Landscapes, Northumberland, Pa.

Kadryna should know. His business, A Touch of Class Landscapes, was founded in 1995, and the company completed 57 landscape design/build projects in 2003, including 12 to 15 jobs that included retaining walls.

Though a designer's eye is crucial to a client-pleasing retaining wall, a businessman's mind is vital when it comes to estimating and pricing these jobs for profit. "A lot of landscapers are artists, but they don't always know their costs or how to accurately estimate the number of hours different activities take," Kadryna explains.

The first rule of thumb in retaining wall job pricing is that a long, low wall is relatively costly. "Getting in the first course of blocks is expensive," Kadryna says. "There's more excavation and leveling per foot in the base of a wall, and not much height to make up for it. However, narrower, taller walls are usually less expensive per square foot since there's less foundation work involved and the higher courses go up faster. That works until you

get to about 4 feet or higher – then geogrid comes into the picture, and that's always more expensive."

Generally, Kadryna charges \$15 per square foot for retaining walls, including materials and labor. That price equates to approximately 20 to 30 percent each for the blocks, labor, overhead/profit and other materials, such as crushed stone and drain tile. "Some work like building stairs is slower and involves additional cutting and fitting, taking about 40 percent more time, so I charge about \$21 per square foot for stairs," Kadryna shares.

Labor is the cost built into the per-square-foot price that fluctuates the most, so knowing how many men it takes to complete a retaining wall job is essential. For Kadryna, "once excavation and compaction are completed, and the first course of blocks are in, an experienced, skilled, two-man crew can build about 600 square feet of retaining wall in on day."

Obviously, some costs, such as excavation and soil replacement and compaction, have to be separated from the direct cost of building the wall, Kadryna adds. "For instance, on Joe and Vickie Hayter's job (see *From Start to Finish* on page 104), we excavated an area about 10 feet wide by 80 feet long by 3 feet deep, and replaced clay soil with select soils. That's 88 to 89 cubic yards at \$15 per cubic yard

for excavation, cost of select soil, trucking, compaction, etc."

Kadryna estimated the Hayter's total job hours at 270, including 100 hours for excavating, compaction and actual wall construction. "We came in at 101 hours on that part of the job," Kadryna says. "What were the other 170 hours for? Like most jobs, this job was about more than just retaining walls. We installed the patio, fences, lighting, paver walkways and plantings. And there are always things like final grading, turf and clean-up needed for every job."

That's good news for Kadryna, who tries to ensure that every retaining wall job leads to additional services. As he explains: "If you're a full-service landscape contractor, the retaining wall may be the impetus to the homeowner, but there's usually much more to the job than just a wall." ■

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

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SPECIAL FOCUS: Compact Equipment

by Will Nepper

On job sites where large equipment is a liability, more landscape contractors are calling in the mighty minis.

What may seem like the perfect machine for a job can diminish in value the moment a contractor arrives on the property to find the work site inaccessible for a full-size skid-steer loader. Large equipment can throw its weight around in wide open areas, but sometimes it takes a smaller machine to make it past the trees, fences or other unmovable objects that stand between a contractor and his work.

Not only are mini skid-steer loaders and compact utility loaders performing many of the same tasks tackled by their full-size counterparts, but they are also keeping crew sizes down by replacing labor, saving time on jobs and getting in those hard-to-reach places. The growing market for compact utility loaders and mini skid-steer loaders reveals that compact equipment is becoming more appreciated and more depended upon every year.



Micro MACHINES

WHY GO COMPACT? "Bigger is better" may be true in many cases, but each individual landscaping job comes with its own specific set of factors. Occasionally, a full-size piece of equipment can't get between a tree and a house or through the gate of a privacy fence, meaning one of two things: Those jobs will have to be done by hand or fences, trees or other miscellaneous obstacles have to come down. This reveals the primary appeal of compact equipment.

John Malinowski, vice president, Ramrod Equipment, Yorkton, Saskatchewan, Canada, explains how size makes a difference. "Mini skid loaders are generally 42 to 48 inches in width and fit through a doorway, around a fencepost or through an alley. A full-size skid steer can't do that," he says. "There's a continuing need for compact utility equipment that doesn't sacri-

fice any of the power that you'd find in a big skid."

The smaller size of compact equipment can make its value evident in several ways. Brad Paine, associate marketing manager, Toro, Bloomington, Minn., recognizes that forcing a full-size skid steer onto a property can be a liability. "For landscape contractors who work in confined areas, there are some major benefits of compact equipment," he explains. "First of all, on established turf, you don't cause any of the collateral damage that you might cause with larger machines."

Smaller equipment also is easier to transport, points out Brad Lemke, director of product development, ASV, Grand Rapids, Minn. "You can use small trucks or trailers to tow them, and for people renting compact equipment, that's a big benefit," he says. "Also, many new

(continued on page 112)

Compact utility loaders combine small stature with enough power for heavy-duty auguring jobs. Photo: Toro

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SPECIAL FOCUS: Compact Equipment

(continued from page 110)

operators find the size of compact units far less intimidating than larger construction machines."

LABOR SAVINGS. In addition to being able to squeeze into tighter spaces to take on construction-related landscape tasks, compact utility loaders and mini skid-steer loaders have also been known to replace needed laborers on a job.

"Compact utility loaders replace a ton of labor and they eliminate those situations where a traditional skid-steer loader is overkill and can damage a smaller property's terrain," says Roger Braswell, chief executive officer, Compact Power, Fort Mill, S.C. "In comparison to a hand tiller, these units have so much hydraulic power that they can out-till those machines by a margin of five to one, so you are really able to speed that tilling and prep process up. And if you can run a 36-inch auger with a machine that weighs under 200 pounds, why in the world would you want to bring a bigger machine to the job?"

A properly equipped compact unit can eliminate having to hand-dig holes or manually remove or transplant trees and shrubs. In

total, one of these machines can do the work of two or three people, Braswell explains.

Paine agrees that tree transplanting is a perfect example of the type of job a mini skid-steer loader can conquer. "If you have to plant a tree, compact equipment is a no-brainer," he says. "In that case, you could do the job five to seven times faster than you could by hand."

"If you're going to move dirt with a compact unit from point A to point B, which is 100 yards away, you would probably move 10 times faster with a mini skid-steer loader than you would with 20 guys," Lemke asserts, adding that this kind of efficiency can't be expected from every type of job. "But in general, I'd say that the machine would be three times faster than three or four guys working on a job."

Paine says he's observed landscape contractors using the equipment for everything from trenching and augering to tilling and soil cultivation. Lemke, meanwhile has observed compact machines being employed for material hauling and other types of lifting.

The capabilities of most compact equipment are limited only by the number of attachments available. With new attachments

hitting the market every year, many contractors are discovering new ways to gain more value from mini skid-steers and utility loaders.

Malinowski explains that with the right trenching attachment a compact machine can become indispensable. Gerald Zastrow, mini loader product specialist, Bobcat, West Fargo, N.D. explains how: "There are vibratory plows if you are doing underground irrigation," he explains. "There are soil conditioners to pulverize and level out the soil prior to sodding. For winter, you can attach a utility blade that functions as a snow blade and you could use an angle-broom for cleaning dirt and debris off of the sidewalk."

"The alternative is a dedicated machine for each task," Paine adds. "Those machines might just sit around wasting money when you're not doing that kind of job."

FEATURED ATTRACTIONS. As mini skid-steer loaders and compact utility loaders become more popular, new trends have begun to surface in the marketplace that represent advances in the units' ergonomics, handling and versatility.

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Despite their versatility, compact utility loaders and mini skid-steer loaders cannot be employed for every job. Some tasks should still be left to bigger machines with more power and greater lift capacities.

"For example, compact machines are not appropriate for large grading operations or for loading large dump trucks because they can't carry as much at one time as non-compact equipment," explains Roger Braswell, chief executive officer, Compact Power, Fort Mill, S.C.

"Also, it's really unproductive to move large quantities of soil of over 2,000 pounds with compact equipment - it would be a waste of time because you could be far more

efficient with larger equipment," adds Brad Paine, associate marketing manager, Toro, Bloomington, Minn. "These types of machines are not designed for that."

However, contractors who are blindsided by the price difference between a compact and a regular-sized unit often end up purchasing the compact unit because it's less expensive and then over-tax it on a job that requires something bigger. "People see that the rental rates are lower with compact equipment than with a big skid steer, so people are buying them thinking they're going to save a dime," he explains. "Then they use the compact machine to move material that is too heavy or a rock that is too large. But there are limits to what these machines can do. By utilizing these ma-

chines for work they aren't intended to do, contractors can end up tipping the machine or damaging it in another way - so a compact's size is its biggest advantage and disadvantage."

To avoid these problems fitting the machine to the right tasks, contractors should never view a compact utility loader as a traditional-sized skid-steer loader replacement. Despite the fact that compact equipment lift capacities have increased to as much as 700 pounds, Braswell reminds contractors that this is not true of all models, which generally have lift capacities between 200 and 500 pounds. He explains: "Noting a unit's lift and tip capacities and weighing that against the machine's intended application is always important." - **Will Nepper**

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SPECIAL FOCUS: Compact Equipment

(continued from page 112)

Though rubber track systems for compact units have only been on the market for the past four years, dedicated rubber track machines are just now beginning to take hold as a popular trend.

Lemke says the advantage of rubber tracks is versatility in wet areas. "If it's been raining a lot, you can go across the lawn and you're not going to leave ruts or tear up the ground as much because of the floatation," he explains. "Plus, it increases your traction and stability because you're putting a larger percent of the vehicle's weight close to the ground."

Some rubber track systems offer variable track width as a feature, Braswell says. "By hitting a lever to a hydraulic valve, you can draw those tracks in so that the entire machine is less than 30-inches wide," he explains. "You're getting the best of both worlds – narrow for accessibility and wide for stability."

Other new compact loader features have to do with operator controls, Paine says, adding that many of the new directional controls use hydrostatic pumps for variable speed and joystick controls for loader functions.

Another operator-friendly feature is a design that gives the user the choice between riding in or standing on the machines, according to Zastrow. "If you don't want to

ride on, you disengage two pins, pull the platform away and roll it off to the side," he explains. "Now it's a walk-behind."

"Users are also getting better ergonomics overall because more machines are coming out with a nicer control layout and easy-to-see board gauges," Lemke adds. "Also, more gallon-per-minute fuel flow, which means more attachment power, is another operator benefit that increases attachment possibilities."

Along these same lines, a trend that reflects a desire for more efficiency is larger fuel tank and flow capacity, Malinowski says, adding that some fuel tanks on these machines can hold more than 10 gallons. "When contractors take their machines out for a full day on a job site, they want to have a full tank of gas so they don't have to run back to constantly refill," he adds.

Additionally, manufacturers are boosting compact machines to meet operators' continued demands, particularly in areas like lift capacity. Braswell reports that lift capacity on most machines ranges from 200 to 750 pounds. He's careful to point out, however, that operating lift capacity is different than a vehicle's tip capacity (generally calculated as half of lift capacity) – the weight at which a vehicle's back wheels begin to come off the ground.

PRICE CHECK. The cost of investing in compact equipment cannot be calculated without figuring in attachment costs, which can vary between manufacturers. A machine's total price generally boils down to a handful of factors, including horsepower, hydraulic flow, lift capacity, wheels or rubber track features and attachment options, Malinowski says.

Paine says that an average price for a compact package that includes three to five attachments is about \$21,000. "The range then, is anywhere between \$10,000 and \$12,000 to as high as about \$35,000," he explains.

The primary appeal of compact equipment is that it can reach jobs that larger machines can't, without collateral damage to repair. Photo: Toro



Manual labor used to be the only way to transplant a tree, but compact equipment can make the same job less strenuous and more efficient. Photo: Toro

Minus attachment prices, many factors influence product prices. Braswell cites horsepower as an indicator that could add a \$1,000 jump in price when going from 20 to 24 horsepower. "Also, increased hydraulic flow capacity can add to a machine's cost," he adds, explaining that the amount of fuel being pumped to the machine affects the power of the hydraulic parts, and the more gallons per minute (gpm) being pumped to the hydraulics, the higher the cost. A compact machine's average gpm is typically between 8 and 11, though some higher-end units may go as high as 14 gpm, Braswell says.


Renting has been an increasingly popular option, Lemke points out, adding that his compact equipment sales grew 118 percent last year as a result of boosted requests from rental stores to carry more compact equipment to meet high demands.

Drive units with one attachment can usually be rented for \$100 to \$150 a day, according to Braswell. He adds that separate non-hydraulic attachments usually rent for about \$15 to \$25 a day, while hydraulic tools usually go for \$25 to \$90 a day. The difference there usually amounts to moving parts and complexity of the equipment.

Lemke concludes: "Compact machines' popularity is still in its infancy, and I think it will just continue to go up." **□**

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





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SPECIAL FOCUS: Compact Equipment

by Will Nepper

A compact utility machine without an attachment is like an empty toolbox. The versatility of these machines is largely dependant on the type of work tools a contractor keeps in his arsenal. Consequently, familiarity with the available options could prove valuable to contractors looking to reduce labor and save time and money.

Every year more attachments are introduced to the market and each one represents an important investment for contractors. And like any investment, choosing and purchasing an attachment should occur only after all of the factors are considered.

Among these factors are price, compatibility and perhaps most importantly, what tasks the contractor hopes to accomplish with his compact equipment.

"Contractors have to consider the type of work they are doing and then they have to decide how often they'd be able to use that attachment," says Brad Paine, associate marketing manager, Toro, Bloomington, Minn., add-

ing that these are the conditions for a good investment. "A contractor should be sure that they'll get enough utilization out of the attachment, and that they're making money on it."

TOOL TYPES. Attachments can be separated in to two categories: hydraulic and non-hydraulic. Hydraulic at-

(continued on page 118)

Compact utility loaders are only as indispensable as the attachment tools they carry.



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SPECIAL FOCUS: Compact Equipment

(continued from page 116)

tachments include tools, such as augers, trenchers and tillers, whereas non-hydraulic attachments include forks and buckets, which are among the most standard. Numerous variations on the basic bucket are available and they generally perform variations of the same task: moving and removing soil, sand, rock or other work site debris.

The four-in-one buckets, however, offer the ability to manipulate debris more articulately, lift heavier loads and dump materials through an opening into containers. "So a bucket would fall into the non-hydraulic category unless it was a four-in-one attachment - then, it's hydraulic," explains Roger Braswell, chief executive officer, Compact Power, Fort Mill, S.C.

Braswell says that auger drives, trenchers and tillers are the three most popular hydraulic attachments in the landscape market. "Tillers are a broad category that include tools like soil cultivators and rotary hoes."

Paine agrees with this "top three," adding that these tools best compliment the tasks performed by most landscape contractors. "It has to do with the nature of work people are doing," he says. "The auger is especially helpful for tree planting because there aren't other good solutions on the market for that. And, in many cases, attachments are replacing dedicated trenchers because that's the kind of work many contractors do."

Brad Lemke, director of product development, ASV, Grand Rapids, Minn., says the distinction between hydraulic and non-hydraulic sometimes signifies the difference



A bucket, like the one above, is one of the most popular compact utility loader attachments among landscape contractors. Choosing between walk-behind models and ride-on models is a choice as dependant on site specifications as it is personal preference. Photos: Bobcat (above), Toro (below)

between low-end and high-end attachments. "You can get an inexpensive rotary broom that has a manual angle where you'd get out of the machine to pull a pin so that you can move the broom either left or right," he explains. "More sophisticated brooms might have a hydraulic or electric angle so that you can make those adjustments from the cab."

Lemke adds that there are other tools that have the distinction between manual control over electronic or hydraulic control, and in virtually all instances the hydraulic tools will cost more.

ATTACHING PRICE TAGS.

"Non-hydraulic attachments are going to run anywhere from \$300 to \$1,000," Braswell says, adding that hydraulic attachments are more expensive due to the nature of their construction and moving parts. "Hydraulic attachments are typically going to cost a contractor anywhere between \$1,500 to \$5,000."

The range of price for attachment tools is dependant on many factors. "There are some buckets for a couple hundred dollars and then more extravagant backhoes that cost from \$6,000 to \$7,000," asserts John Malinowski, vice

president, Ramrod Equipment, Yorkton, Saskatchewan, Canada. "You have to look at quality and how well built it is, particularly with ground-engaging equipment that sees a lot of wear. Contractors should look for something that is built heavy."

Lemke recognizes the wide range of attachment prices, but explains why even high-end attachments deliver solid returns on investment. "The wide range is not surprising when you consider that the machine by itself, is practically nothing," he points out. "Put a backhoe on it and it's quite a machine. So if you pay up to \$16,000 for a machine that will do nothing without an attachment, the price of the attachment isn't so bad."

"The machine itself is, first and foremost, just a tool-carrying driving unit," Braswell says. "The attachment is the tool. If you go out and buy the best hydraulic components, you're going to spend more money, but you're going to get better longevity, productivity and smoother control."

Braswell adds that a contractor struggling with price should also consider the amount of labor a compact unit with an attachment can replace. "I've rarely seen an instance where you could not replace at least one person," he says. "And I've seen plenty of instances where a unit could replace two people. All you have to do is replace one person to get a huge return on investment with the equipment."



COMPATIBILITY ISSUES. There are a few other factors to consider before purchasing an attachment that go beyond the scope of price and quality of construction. One of these factors is machine/attachment compatibility, and Lemke asserts that it may be the most important consideration of all.

"Not all mini skid steers are necessarily compatible," Lemke says. "Contractors need to investigate that before buying an attachment, taking it back to the machine and finding out that it doesn't fit."

Lemke adds that compatibility can refer to specific hydraulic mechanisms, as well. "It's the same with quick couplers," he explains. "An attachment's hydraulic lines have a coupler on the end that hooks up to the machine and sometimes those aren't necessarily compatible." He adds that matching brand names between units and components is a good way to play it safe. "But if you can't do that you should make sure that the two different products are compatible."

"There are many third party attachment manufacturers out there building attachments for everybody – not necessarily designed around any company's certain loader," says Gerald Zastrow, mini loader product specialist, Bobcat, West Fargo, N.D. "But the attachment has to live up to the loader," he says, adding that many manufacturers design their attachments with their specific loaders' strengths, such as hydraulic flow and power, in mind.

"You have to match the power of your machine to the attachment," Lemke adds. "The smallest compact skid steer could probably not handle an attachment from a larger compact skid steer because it might be too heavy or the machine might not have enough power to run it."

Braswell says that one way to ensure compatibility is to look for attachments with a universal quick-attach system. He explains that a universal attachment plate is recognized by most manufacturers of larger skid steers as the standard means of attachment. "There is now a universal quick attach in development for mini skid steers and compact utility loaders, as well," he adds. "I would encourage contractors to buy a drive unit that has a universal quick attach so that they can use the attachments of various manufacturers on their units," he says. "If you have it, you have more options when

buying attachments."

Malinowski asserts that a quick-attach system should be a top consideration for contractors because it has such a significant impact on the efficiency of the tool. "You have to ask yourself, 'Can I drop and reattach this tool quickly?'" he says.

Lemke explains the simplicity of the quick-attach process. "You drive your unit up to the attachment, which has female plates," he says. "There are two levers or pins on the machine that go down through the attachment and that secures it to the machine. If it's a hydraulically-driven attachment, then you'd also hook your hoses up, which is usually done with quick couplers that snap into place."

Some manufacturers have more ways of easing the processes of connecting compact equipment to their tools. Zastrow describes a "wear-compensating system, where there are two levers that continually drive the attachment pins down." This allows for expedient sharing of attachments between different loaders.

MAINTENANCE MUSTS. Different attachments require different degrees of maintenance. Some tools, particularly non-hydraulics like buckets and forks, are practically maintenance free. But even simple tools require some looking after if they are expected to last beyond a few years.

"You should follow the recommended service schedules as you would with any other piece of equipment," Zastrow says. "That means if you're supposed to change the oil after every 250 hours, do that. You'll get longer life out of your components and your machine if you follow that service schedule." He adds that greasing an attachment's moving parts should be done after every 10 hours of use. "If you do that, components will last longer."

Paine adds that trenchers require clean and debris-free chains. "Also, any ground-engaging parts or wear items need to be replaced at some point. How often would depend on how often you use the attachments," he notes.



Photo: Toro


Braswell points to the replacement of teeth on attachments like augers, trenchers and tillers. Replacement schedules vary with the amount of work that attachment is doing and the conditions in which it's performing. But Braswell asserts that generally once-a-season maintenance is more than enough for regularly-used attachments and once-a-year maintenance is recommended for attachments that are not among a contractor's primary tools. "They all require teeth replacement," he adds. "And you could check for it daily because it's simple and not very time consuming."

Paine agrees that a daily check is simple and worth the time. "A visual inspection at the beginning and end of the day is usually all it takes," he says.

"Most of it is common sense," Malinowski adds. "Whatever the owner's manual says – follow that and you'll be good."

Finally Malinowski recommends checking for a warranty when considering an attachment purchase. Contractors should put as much thought into the attachments they purchase as they do when they buy the main machine because without the tools, a compact utility loader can become virtually worthless. As Malinowski says: "The machines themselves are great, but it's the attachments that make them dance." **■**

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



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by Ali Anderson

Compact & Convenient

While some lawn care companies offer only maintenance services, green industry work also includes digging, trenching and hauling materials. For such specialized tasks, landscape professionals must turn to compact equipment – including compact utility loaders, mini skid-steer loaders and their collection of attachments. Take a look at the variety of new products in this category designed to boost productivity on a variety of job types and sizes.

Vermeer S600 Compact Skid-Steer

- Compact skid-steer designed for landscape professionals
- Versatile ride-on unit can be mounted on rubber tires or rubber tracks over tires
- Accommodates a multitude of attachments
- Two engine options available – 24-hp and 25-hp models
- Multi-functional controls allow the operator to operate the machine and attachment with both hands still holding onto the handlebars
- Has an oil cooler and offers easy battery access through a hinged door in front of the machine

Circle 235 on reader service form

Toro Dingo TX413 Compact Utility Loader

- Alternative to larger tracked compact utility loaders
- Ideal for landscaping, deck footings, post holes, two-

foot trenching, grading and bucket work

- 13-hp Honda gasoline engine
- Joystick operation
- Attachments include bucket, auger power head and two-foot trencher

Circle 236 on reader service form

General Equipment Company's DIG-R-TACH Series 16 Drilling Attachment

- For use with both small and large hydraulic systems
- Designed for use with mini and large skid-steer loaders, excavators, knuckleboom cranes and small backhoes
- Features a two-speed chain/sprocket drive
- Balances smaller flow volumes in proportion to auger diameters
- Results in cleaner holes with less loose soil and debris

Circle 237 on reader service form

Thomas 25G Mini Skid Steer

- Features universal attachment mounting system for various applications
- Offers two-speed travel and high-pressure hydraulic output
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Circle 238 on reader service form



(continued on page 124)

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SPECIAL FOCUS: Compact Equipment

(continued from page 122)

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- Powered by 140-hp engines
- Optional manual gearshift package is available

Circle 239 on reader service form

ASV RC-60 All Surface Loader

- Provides contractors with a mid-size loader that achieves maximum traction and stability for more productivity in a wide range of conditions
- Powered by a Caterpillar 3024CT 60-hp turbocharged diesel engine
- Designed to lift and place large loads, with an operating capacity of 1,900 pounds
- Comes standard with selectable self-leveling
- Features 15-inch-wide tracks and only 3.1 psi ground pressure

Circle 240 on reader service form

Allmand Four-Wheel Drive Compact Utility Loaders

- Model 8435
- Powered by a 36-hp Mitsubishi S4L2 diesel engine
- Synchro-shuttle shift transmission allows easy forward and reverse operation
- Multiple gear range selections are available to manage a variety of applications

Circle 241 on reader service form

Caterpillar 287 Compact Multi-Terrain Loader

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

Circle 242 on reader service form

Snow Wolf Plow Attachments for Skid Steers

- Two series of specially designed attachments for moving heavy snow with skid steers
- Blade features and frame construction are built to move heavy snow load. Various widths available
- Designed to scoop snow rather than push it, then send the snow rolling, moving it off the blade quickly to keep the skid steer in control of heavy snow load

Circle 246 on reader service form

John Deere Series II Compact Skid-Steers

- 60-40 weight distribution provides the best overall balance
- Long wheelbase allows for travel at higher speeds over rough terrain
- Steep 45-degree dump angle sheds wet or sticky material with ease
- Load carrying efficiency is maximized by high 35-degree bucket rollback at ground level, which reduces material spillage
- Large standard tires and low, integrated boom stops enhance traction and leverage, allowing the Series II machines to dig in rather than spin
- Bucket breakout force ranges from 5,500 pounds on the 240 model up to 11,600 pounds on the 280
- Can be equipped with 54 easy-to-use attachments
- Powered by a John Deere PowerTech[®] engine that incorporates a direct-injection fuel system and long-life wet-sleeve cylinder linings commonly found on larger equipment

Circle 243 on reader service form



ProLine GRABBER Attachment

- Rootball handler attachment for mini skid steers
- Paddles cradle the rootball gently and firmly for complete control without distortion or damage
- Useful for balled-and-burlapped material with a rootball measuring up to 32-inches

Circle 244 on reader service form

Bobcat MT52 Mini Track Loader

- Designed for projects that are too big for shovels and wheelbarrows in areas too small for full-size skid-steer loaders



Compact Equipment

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- Turf-friendly lug track distributes machine's weight over large area to minimize damage

Circle 245 on reader service form

Toro Soil Cultivator Attachment

- For use on Toro Dingo compact utility loaders
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Circle 247 on reader service form



John Deere C-ZTS Compact Excavators

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Wednesday, August 18, 2004

- 1:00 – 6:00 p.m. Registration
2:00 – 3:30 p.m. **Trends and Impact of Weed & Insect Management**
Moderator: Roger Stanley, Lawn & Landscape
Panelists: John Buechner, Lawn Doctor
Jim Campanella, The Lawn Dawg
Barry Troutman, Valley Crest
- 3:30 – 4:30 p.m. **The Economic Value of Landscapes**
Speaker: Dr. Parwinder Grewal, The Ohio State University
- 4:30 – 5:30 p.m. **Invasive Insect Pests In Trees and Ornamentals**
Speaker: Dr. Deb McCullough, Michigan State University (invited)
- 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. Welcome Reception

Thursday, August 19, 2004

- 7:30 a.m. Registration
7:30 – 8:00 a.m. Continental Breakfast
8:00 – 8:30 a.m. **Market Report: Lawn Care By The Numbers**
Speaker: Gary Curl, Specialty Products Consultants
- 8:30 – 9:45 a.m. **What's New In Research**
Speakers: Dr. Rick Brandenburg, North Carolina State University
Dr. Karl Danneberger, The Ohio State University
Dr. Dave Shetlar, The Ohio State University
- 9:45 – 10:15 a.m. Break
10:15 – 11:15 a.m. **Teaching Proper Insect Identification To Field Staff**
Speaker: Dr. Richard Kramer, American Pest Management
- 11:15 – 12:00 noon **Tips For Subcontracting Tree Work**
Speaker: Chris Klimas, The Davey Tree Expert Co.
- 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. Group Lunch
1:15 – 2:00 p.m. **Effective Pre- and Post-Emergent Treatment Strategies**
Speaker: Dr. Karl Danneberger, The Ohio State University
- 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. **Delivering Effective Perimeter Insect Treatments**
Speaker: Joe Welch, Middleton Lawn & Pest Control
- 3:00 – 3:15 p.m. Break
3:15 – 4:00 p.m. **How To Maximize Grub Control Profits**
Speaker: Jack Robertson, Robertson Lawn Care
- 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. **Packaging Lawn Care Programs For Maximum Profit**
Moderator: Roger Stanley, Lawn & Landscape
Panelists: Chris Lemcke, Weed Man
Lee Schaber, Scotts Lawn Care
- 5:00 – 6:00 p.m. Networking Reception

Friday, August 20, 2004

- 7:30 a.m. Registration
7:30 – 8:00 a.m. Continental Breakfast
8:00 – 9:00 a.m. **Generic Products: Pros and Cons**
Moderator: Roger Stanley, Lawn & Landscape
Panelists: Leading Product Distributors
- 9:00 – 10:00 a.m. **Target Marketing Strategies Of Lawn Care Services**
Break
10:00 – 10:15 a.m. **Keeping Up With Safety & Pesticide Compliance**
Speaker: Dr. Fred Whitford, Purdue University
- 10:15 – 11:30 a.m.

by Lauren Spiers

STRING TRIMMERS

BUZZ Cut

Sometimes you need a cut and sometimes you just need a little off the ends. And after lawn maintenance contractors visit the barber, they can take some time to trim up a few areas around their clients' lawns.

Though string trimmers are straightforward and easy to use, there are differences among the models available. To choose the right one, contractors must consider the types of trimming jobs they take on and look for features that will keep operators safe and comfortable. Also, keeping maintenance in mind will help keep trimmers cutting well for hours on end.

TRIM DOWN YOUR CHOICES. Needless to say, current industrial-strength string trimmers have come a long way from the "weed whackers" of years ago.

"String trimmers have experienced vast technological changes over the years," says Matt Wilson, product manager, Tanaka, Auburn, Wash. "Models available today are half the weight, twice the power and feature exceptional fuel economy. Types of trimmers range from lightweight curved-shaft units to a multitude of straight-shaft configurations including standard string trimmers and heavy-duty brush cutters."

With so many options, manufacturers recommend that contractors first consider the type and amount of trimming they do on a regularly. "The trimmer you choose depends on how heavy the load of trimming or brush cutting is," explains Tommy Tanaka, marketing manager, RedMax, Norcross, Ga. "If the contractor is using the trimmer just for light grass or lawn areas, a 22.5-cc or 26-cc trimmer is good. If they cut bushes occasionally, they might want a 33.6-cc and if it's mainly used for brush cutting, a 40-cc or higher engine is best."

Even small engines have emissions. String trimmer manufacturers are reworking engines to reduce emissions and comply with EPA regulations by 2007. Photo: Husqvarna



They're easy to use, but not always easy to choose. String trimmer manufacturers offer tips for finding the right machine for the job.

Tanaka also notes that string trimmers must meet certain emission durability hours to get EPA certification. "This can be 300, 125 or 50 hours," he explains. "Machines rated at 50 hours are usually for home users, while 300 is for professionals using the machines every day and 125 is for medium use." In the EPA test cycle, trimmers are run continuously for a designated number of hours in order to achieve their certification. In actuality, professional trimmers certified for 300 hours usually can be used for up to 2,000 hours before they need to be replaced, according to Tanaka.

Wilson says these guidelines can help contractors narrow down their trimmer choices. But if contractors still have questions, their power equipment dealers will have the answers and opportunities to test-drive a few models. "It can be very difficult to decide between all the different trimmer models on display in a dealership showroom," comments Jay Larsen, product marketing and communications manager, Shindaiwa, Tualatin, Ore. "To help with the decision process, the potential buyer should take the time to operate several different demonstration models."

A HANDLE ON FEATURES. Though string trimmers tend to look alike when they're hanging in the showroom, features like the handle and shaft configuration can set some models apart for specific tasks.

"Specific configurations may have significant advantages over others," Wilson says. "For example, when trimming grass in a residential setting, having a trimmer with split dual handles may not be necessary. A simple loop or "D" handle

(continued on page 130)



— Coleman Burnett, V.P., Contemporary Landscapes, Charlotte, NC

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Product Spotlight

(continued from page 128)

configuration is preferred. Conversely, when the contractor needs to clear heavy vegetation, the split dual handle style provides superior control and will reduce fatigue."

The split handles, also called bike handles, allow the operator to control larger trimmers or brush cutters with both hands and guide them more easily through heavy grass or brush.

Trimmer handles also offer some ergonomic support for contractors who buzz around with trimmers in their hands all day. "Vibration can make the trimmers difficult to hold on to, and can also be a source of fatigue for contractors," Larsen says. "For

smooth operation, contractors should look for trimmers with an anti-vibration system, hand-friendly controls and grips and easy-on-the-back straps."

A trimmer's shape also can be a defining characteristic. "Contractors should consider what kind of main shaft the trimmer employs," Larsen says. "Is it solid steel or flexible cable? A solid steel straight mainshaft provides smoother operation with less vibration compared to a flexible cable-and-liner system in a curved-shaft trimmer. And even with proper lubrication of the cable, the liner in the outer tube tends to wear out after many hours of trimmer use."

PROPER USE & SAFETY. With an investment of \$200 to \$500, contractors can find the right trimmer for their work and shouldn't have a problem operating their new machines. Of course, they first need to load the proper type of trimmer line.

"There are inexpensive types of nylon line available, but contractors should really use copolymer trimmer line that is designed to cut grass," Wilson says. "A 3-pound to 5-pound spool of trimmer line is probably the most popular size and can cost about \$14 or \$15 depending on the brand, though some types are available for as little as \$6."

(continued on page 132)

String trimmers help maintenance contractors put the finishing touches on their clients' manicured landscapes, but worn-out machines won't get the job done. Likewise, "today's leaner-burning engines are designed and built for dramatically lower emission levels and are simply not as forgiving as the older pre-EPA-regulated units," explains Jay Larsen, product marketing & communications manager, Shindaiwa, Tualatin, Ore. "For that reason, the concept of basic maintenance has become vitally important to prolonging the life of your high-performance equipment."

Larsen offered the following string trimmer maintenance tips to help keep equipment running in top condition.

1. Cooling System. The typical small engine is air-cooled and relies on its air passages to be free and clear of dirt and debris that tend to collect in these areas, particularly if spilled fuel residue is present. This also is true for cooling surfaces like flywheel and cylinder fans. It is very important that the fins on the flywheel and cylinder are clean and free of any foreign material that can restrict air flow.

2. Fuel Filter. Inspect, clean or replace the fuel filter every 10 to 15 hours of use. Debris in the fuel tank will necessitate more frequent filter replacement. Some commercial contractors actually will carry a spare fuel filter assembly in their pockets in case

the filter becomes semi-clogged with debris and starts to effect engine performance.

3. Air Filter. A partially clogged air filter can cause an engine to run too rich. Contractors should have plenty of replacement air filters on hand and replace them periodically.

4. Muffler & Spark Arresters. A plugged muffler or spark arrester screen will dramatically change the way an engine operates and performs. Never let debris accumulate around the muffler. This may prevent proper engine cooling and even become a fire hazard. In most areas, mufflers are required to be equipped with a spark arrester and a spark arrester that is dirty or improperly installed is a hazard.

5. Fuel & 2-Cycle Oil Mix. Contractors should use fresh, clean, brand-name gasoline in their handheld equipment and avoid gasoline that is less expensive because it may not have quality components. Some gasolines contain oxygenates like alcohol for cleaner combustion and reduced exhaust gas emissions. However, oxygenated fuels, such as methanol or ethanol, may cause increased engine operating temperatures, especially if maintenance isn't performed on a regular basis. Also, under certain conditions, alcohol-based fuels may reduce the lubricating qualities of some mixing oils. Never use any fuel containing more than 10 percent alcohol by volume. An octane rating of 87 or higher is preferred.

Also, mix fuel with a brand-name 2-cycle engine oil at either a 40-to-1 or 50-to-1 ratio, depending on the manufacturer's recommendation, which can be found in the owner's manual. Avoid generic, multi-purpose oils and high-ratio oils. These mixing oils are not suitable for today's leaner-running, high-performance small engines.

Be sure to mix only enough fuel for your immediate needs. If fuel must be stored longer than 30 days, treat it first with a quality fuel stabilizer. Check fuel storage containers for contaminants and rust, especially in older, metal fuel cans. Also, keep the power head fuel tank clean. Carefully rinse and clean the fuel tank if signs of contaminants are present. Always clean off any dirt or debris around the fuel tank before removing the fuel cap. Check to see that the fuel cap is sealing properly and not leaking.

6. Spark Plug. Always use the recommended spark plug with the correct heat range for that particular unit. Again, refer to the operator's manual for each model to verify the correct spark plug. Spark plugs that are considered "hot" may take a unit past its heat limits and cause major engine damage.

7. Fasteners. Periodically check to ensure that all fasteners are secure and tight. A leaner-running engine will operate at a slightly higher RPM. This may cause some vibration-related problems like loosening bolts, mufflers, etc. — **Lauren Spiers**

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Product Spotlight

(continued from page 130)

Also, how often contractors have to replace trimmer line depends on how often the trimmer is used and what type of surface it is cutting against. "If you're trimming against fencing or hard surfaces, that can wear out the string a lot faster than if you're just going over grass," Wilson says. Beyond replacing trimmer line on a regular basis, manufacturers agree that trimmer use is uncomplicated.

"Trimmers are very easy to use, but the way the cutting head turns is opposite between straight-shaft and curved-shaft trimmers," Tanaka comments, noting that this point may affect how an operator holds or moves with the trimmer. "From the operator's point of view, the curved-shaft trimmer's cutting head rotates counter-clockwise. The straight-shaft rotates clockwise. Usually, when you use a trimmer, you need to use the right side of the cutting head for the curved shaft and the left side of the cutting head for the straight shaft."

From there, proper trimmer use comes down to safety. "Operators should always wear American National Standards Institute-approved eye and ear protection, as well as avoid loose-fitting clothing and contain long hair," Wilson notes. Also, Larsen recommends wearing non-skid boots, long pants and long-sleeved shirts to protect operators from both debris and sun exposure.

By following these practices, contractors can expect to keep their trimmers in working order for several years.



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

Spring is officially here: The sun is shining and the grass is green – but the sky is hazy ... there's something wrong with this picture.

Though contractors revel in their outdoorsy work during the spring and summer, smog and haze often become more apparent as the weather warms. And while automobiles are the major contributors to these clouds of wheeze-inducing gas, handheld power equipment carries some of the blame, as well.

"Engine emissions contain two things – hydrocarbon and nitrogen oxide – that pollute the air," explains Tommy Tanaka, marketing manager, RedMax, Norcross, Ga. "The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has started very stringent new regulations for our kinds of machines, so handheld equipment manufacturers have to update their machines."

According to the EPA, nitrogen oxides, or NOx, is the generic term for a group of

highly reactive gases that form when fuel is burned at high temperatures. Similarly, total hydrocarbon (THC) emissions result from incomplete fuel combustion and fuel evaporation. Together, NOx and THC produce smog and can cause health and environmental problems that can affect millions of people.

The EPA emissions standards, charted below with other international standards, went into effect in 1997 and compel manufacturers of small non-road engines to reduce their THC and NOx emissions to only 37 grams per horsepower hour (g/HPH) by 2007. Previous emissions allowances were as high as 184 g/HPH. Manufacturers are rising to the challenge by developing new technologies for both 2- and 4-cycle engines that have the power that contractors are used to minus the exhaust that they can do without.

– **Lauren Spiers**

Emissions regulations for small off-road engines (20- to 50-cc) THC + NOx g/HPH

Region	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
CA	184	54					37						
USA	184			146	110	74	37						
EU						184			37				
Japan					184								37

Source: RedMax, Komatsu Zenoah "Engine Basics" guide

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FUNGICIDE EQUATIONS

PURCHASING TIPS

Comparison shop your fungicide purchases by computing the cost per ounce, cost per day and total application costs.

With maintenance budgets under pressure, fungicide purchases can be a major factor in a lawn care program. Often, lawn care operators consider the case, bag or unit price to determine which product is the most economical to use. Getting the most for your money requires a range of considerations.

VENDOR PRICE LISTS. One way to comparatively shop fungicides is to distribute a price list for vendors to submit to you. In putting a price list together, simply list the product name, an estimate of the number of units you will need for the coming year and an estimated delivery date. Giving the vendor a delivery date allows them to consider delivering the product through their own trucking schedule, which can save you commercial shipping costs. Because shipping costs add up very quickly be sure to note whether the vendor's price includes shipping, and also ask for a copy of their shipping policy. Organizing delivery dates will



*Foliar lesions induced by brown patch on tall fescue.
Photo: Lane Tredway*

ensure products will be on hand when you need them and keep your inventory down.

Your bid list should also include the quantity per unit. For example, one vendor may give you a price for a 2-gallon case of a product while another may give you a price per gallon. Being specific will cut down on confusion and ensure you are getting an apples-to-apples comparison. An example bid can be found on Table 1 (see page 136).

You may also include a letter or a note on the sheet to encourage any special financing available and a copy of their payment policy.

Traditionally, fungicide prices are in vendors' hands in November for the following year. This allows you to send out the bid list in November with a request for responses by mid-January and have time for questions and budget considerations. The chemical group a fungicide belongs to is defined by its mode of action on a fungus. There may be differences among products in a particular group. How-

(continued on page 136)

THE FUNGICIDES

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Product Trends

(continued from page 134)

ever, all products in that group will attack the fungus in the same manner. For this reason, the differences between products within the same chemical group are usually agronomically insignificant. When forming your price list, be sure to consider the other products within the same chemical group. This will give you the ability to not only compare vendor prices, but prices among several manufacturers as well.

Having the unit prices from your vendors is one element of the equation. Other considerations include:

- Past performance of the fungicide
- How long the fungicide will control the pathogen once applied to the turf
- What the fungicide controls
- What rotation will be required to insure resistance does not occur

COST PER OUNCE. After you have the cost of the product containers, you should convert the price to a cost per ounce. For example, for a product that comes in 11-ounce soluble packets, four to a pack and four packs in a case, you have a total of 176 ounces per case (11 ounces x 4 x 4 = 176 ounces). Now, take the total price per case and divide it by the total ounces in the case (price/176 ounces = cost per ounce). This will give you the cost of the product per ounce. Once you find the price per ounce, you are ready to begin to compare the other factors in the cost equation.

APPLICATION INTERVALS. Fungicide labels specify recommended application intervals based on how long the fungicide can be expected to control the pathogen and when the next application should be made. However, the actual application interval can vary by area and is dependent on heat, humidity and other environmental conditions. Look at the application interval as a guide in your consideration.

A key element when looking at the application interval is how long the fungicide is likely to control a particular pathogen. For example, compare two different fungicides/active ingredients used to control a specific disease. Product A, which has one active ingredient, might be able to give seven days of control before the next application is needed, according to the label. Product B, which has a different active in-

Combating turf, tree and ornamental diseases with fungicides continues to be a growing service for lawn care operators (LCOs).

According to a research study conducted earlier this year by *Lawn & Landscape*, LCOs said their fungicide services overall grew an average of 21.09 percent in 2003 – giving this service one of the highest average growth rates among other pesticide-related offerings.

This year, LCOs expect their fungicide services to grow an average of 15.87 percent.

Concerning specific applications, on average LCOs said they spend 4.54 percent of their total turf pesticide expenditures on fungicides, 10.91 percent of their total tree pesticide expenditures on fungicides and 11.97 percent of their total ornamental pesticide expenditures on fungicides each year.

– Nicole Wisniewski

A Soaring Service

redient, might need to be applied every 14 to 28 days, depending on disease pressure. With the application interval in mind, we need to then consider the application rate of the product.

LABEL APPLICATION RATES. Variables in application rates are based on the product used, disease pressure and even the particular fungus. For instance, Product A may instruct the LCO to apply it at 4 ounces per 1,000 square feet to control brown patch, while Product B instructs the LCO to apply 1 ounce per 1,000 square feet.

COST PER DAY. The cost of control per day of a fungicide gives you a valuable indication of the cost of the fungicide. This amount can be calculated for each fungi-

cide you are considering. The cost of control per day is calculated by taking the application rate and then multiplying it by the cost of the product on a per ounce basis, then dividing the result by the recommended application interval. This will give you a cost per day to control a pathogen.

Using the earlier example of Product A and Product B, Table 2 (see page 138) illustrates the equation. When comparing the two fungicides, we can see it would cost 8 cents per day using product B vs. 23 cents per day using Product A to control brown patch.

TOTAL APPLICATION COSTS. Using the costs illustrated in Table 2 on a landscape with 130,000 square feet of turf we can calculate and compare how much it would cost to control brown patch over a 21-day period. An LCO could control brown patch over a 21-

(continued on page 138)

EXAMPLE BID LIST

Product	Size	Approximate Delivery Date	Projected Min. Quantity Needed	Unit Price	Total Price
Product A	1 lb	May 30, 2003	1		
Product B	4 x 5.5 lb	May 30, 2003	4		
Product C	2 x 2.5 gal	May 30, 2003	2		
Product D	11ozx4x4	April 1, 2003	2		



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Product Trends

(continued from page 136)

day period for \$336.70 less using Product B rather than Product A.

CONTROL METHODS & FUNGICIDE USE.

Control methods must be designed and executed by the superintendent based on differences from site to site and turf area to turf area. The two basic program options are preventive and curative. In a curative program, no treatment is made until the turf damage symptoms are noticed. In a preventive program, fungicide applications are made when environmental conditions are favorable for fungal growth. It may seem logical that a curative approach would ensure that fungicides are only used when absolutely necessary, resulting in less fungicide use and lower costs. However, this may not be the case for three key reasons: First, preventive rates are frequently one half the curative rate. Second, once fungus is prevalent enough in a turf area to cause symptoms or turf damage, two treatments at the curative

rate are often required. Third, turf weakened by fungal damage is less able to fight off future infection, which can result in more fungicide use to maintain turf quality.

The adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure holds true.

Putting all of these factors and techniques together will ensure you have all of the information you will need to make an effective evaluation of the prices among vendors

and products. Setting up delivery dates, knowing the actual application costs of products in advance and ensuring they are available when needed, and executing an efficient fungal program will make the most of your purchase decision.

The author is a sports turf consultant from Buckhannon, W.V., and can be reached at turf guru@yahoo.com.

TABLE 2.

Calculating Fungicide Cost Per Day of Control

	$\left(\begin{array}{c} \text{Application Rate} \\ \text{ounce/1,000} \end{array} \times \begin{array}{c} \text{Cost/ounce}^* \end{array} \right) /$	$\begin{array}{c} \text{Application} \\ \text{Interval} \\ \text{in days} \end{array}$	$=$	$\begin{array}{c} \text{Cost Per} \\ \text{Day of} \\ \text{Control} \end{array}$
Product A	4	\$0.40	7	\$0.23
Product B	1	\$1.70	21	\$0.08

*Cost of Product A is based on a 768-ounce case at \$306 and Product B is based on a 176-ounce case at \$299.75.

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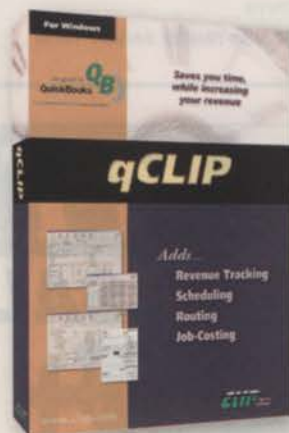
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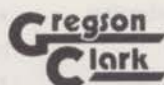
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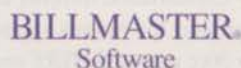
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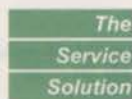
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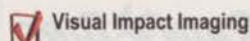
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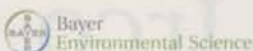
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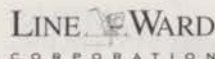
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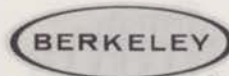
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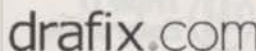
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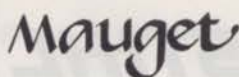
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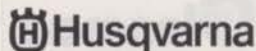
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Circle 216 on reader service form

Morbark 2004 Product Guide

- Features the manufacturer's latest heavy-duty equipment
- Contains product specifications for the full line of grinders, screens, dry colorant processing system, chippers, etc.
- Provides information on product support, parts and service

Circle 217 on reader service form

Caterpillar 268B Skid-Steer Loader

- Features a high-flow XPS hydraulic system that senses load size and compensates for changes in pressure
- Offers vertical lift linkage for efficient truck loading and materials handling
- Has a rated operating capacity of 2,700 pounds and a maximum lift of 127 inches
- Powered by a 76-hp Cat 3044C diesel engine
- Attachment options include tillers, augers, hammers, compactors and brooms
- Anti-stall and pilot hydraulic joystick controls offers comfortable operation



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Perkins 4-Cylinder Engine

- 4-cylinder, 1.5-liter engine developed for Tier 2/Stage II requirements
- Model 404C-15
- Light, compact and quiet
- Developed specifically for use in the light construction, agricultural and lawn care sectors
- Standard oil and filter changes are at 500 hours

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Products

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- Improves water filtration, increases water conservation, retains fertilizer and other nutrients
- Can help reduce erosion and repair brown patches

Circle 220 on reader service form

Swisher Trim-Max

- Combines three tools in one – trimmer, edger and mower
- Powered by a 6.5-hp Briggs and Stratton Quantum engine
- Offers a 22-inch cut radius
- Features a maintenance-free trimmer head
- Includes protective eyewear, engine oil and replacement trimmer line
- Patent-pending features allow operator to adjust the trimmer head from left to right and rotate the trimmer head 90 degrees

Circle 221 on reader service form

Profile Products Flexterra

- Flexible erosion control medium composed of long strand, thermally processed wood fibers, crimped, interlocking fibers and performance-enhancing additives
- Acts as a hydraulically applied blanket
- Requires no cure time to be effective
- Forms a bond with the soil surface
- Can be combined with other erosion control technologies

Circle 222 on reader service form

Lawn & Garden Products' SLUGGO-AG

- Snail and slug bait
- Based on the active ingredient iron phosphate



- Safe for use around pets and wildlife
- Eventually breaks down into fertilizer
- Remains effective after rainfall and irrigation
- Now registered for commercial growers in 40-pound bags

Circle 223 on reader service form

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SNAPPER

Concentrates on Commercial Cutting

The manufacturer of commercial lawn mowers has repositioned its business under the name SnapperPro, representing

a lasting devotion to addressing the needs of professional operators.

Snapper Products is repositioning its commercial mowing business under a new name – SnapperPro.

Over the years, the Snapper brand has represented a host of commercial products, namely versatile commercial mowers. The company has developed, built and sold these products based on demand from its dealer network and commercial customer base. As the demand for commercial mowers has increased in recent years, Snapper has transformed its manufacturing process to better serve the needs of professionals. As an indication of that production transformation, Snapper devoted plant space, labor and tooling to manufacture commercial mowing products.

"Snapper has a focused factory which manufactures a wide variety of products for the turf management industry," says Shane Summers, president of Snapper. "Constructed specifically for the rigors of commercial cutting, we are bundling them under the name of SnapperPro. Our objective is to bring more commitment to developing innovative products for the commercial market."

The SnapperPro line currently includes:

- FastBack mid-mount zero-turn mowers
- Turf Cruiser zero-turn mowers with out-front mowing decks
- Pro Hydro hydrostatic zero-turn walk-behind mowers
- Pro 32, hydrostatic and gear-driven 32-inch walk-behind mowers
- Pro Express mid-size gear-driven walk-behind mowers
- Commercial trim mowers
- Grounds Cruiser utility vehicles

For more information about these and other SnapperPro products, visit the company's Web site, www.snapperpro.com.

And be sure to check out the latest SnapperPro products listed at left.



SnapperPro Turf Cruiser

- Zero-turn riding mower with out-front mowing deck
- Allows commercial contractors to mow large acreage while still trimming in and around trees and other obstacles
- Available with three engine choices, three cutting deck

widths and a single-lever joystick control

- Engine options include: 21-hp Kubota in-line, three-cylinder, liquid-cooled diesel; 23-hp Kubota in-line, three-cylinder, liquid-cooled gas; and 25-hp air-cooled Kohler Command OHV V-twin model
- 52-, 61- and 73-inch decks available
- Features electric clutch blade engagement
- Includes the Qwik-O-Nect attachment system for the addition of a snow broom, snow blade, two-stage snowthrower or debris blower
- Two-year commercial warranty

Circle 200 on reader service form

Snapper Pro 27-hp FastBack Mower

- Mid-mount zero-turn mower
- Features a new suspension seat for enhanced comfort
- 27-hp Kohler V-twin OHV engine and 61-inch mower deck
- Includes adjustable twin lever steering controls and fan-cooled dual hydrostatic drive systems
- Features anti-scalp rollers, a six-position foot-assisted deck lift and 24-inch rear drive tires
- Can reach a top speed of 9.5 mph
- Two-year commercial warranty

Circle 201 on reader service form



Products

SpreadEx Granular Spreader

- Ideal for spreading seed, fertilizer and control products
- Comes standard with a variable-speed controller
- Spreader's material flow gate calibrates and controls material flow
- Spread pattern is also available from the cab
- 12-volt DC direct-drive system includes a revolutionary, maximum-torque transmission
- Holds up to 5.75 cubic feet or 350 pounds of dry, free-flowing granular material
- 10-inch, lightweight polymer construction spinner can spread up to 40 feet in width

Circle 224 on reader service form



- Features four pump speeds
- On-demand operation allows operator complete control
- 24-inch spray lance and 4-gallon polyethylene tank

Circle 228 on reader service form

Hanay 1000 Series Hose Reel

- Compact, sturdy reel for pest control, lawn care and grounds maintenance applications
- Suitable for power cleaning applications, such as washdown and degreasing
- Made to handle ID hose from 50 to 175 feet in length
- Can handle product temperatures from 20 degrees to 400 degrees Fahrenheit
- Features direct-crank rewind feature
- Removable crank is available

Circle 229 on reader service form

Terex Telehandler

- Model TX5519 incorporates an innovative cab design
- Includes easy-to-use joystick controls
- Has a rounded profile
- Complete with an ergonomically designed interior
- Features a 5,500-pound lift capacity
- Combines with a variety of attachments for on-the-job versatility
- Three drive options include two-wheel drive, four-wheel drive and cab steer modes

Circle 230 on reader service form

NGK Commercial Spark Plugs

- Designed for various small-engine applications, including outdoor power equipment
- Rolled threads feature improved strength and easy installation
- Packaging includes part conversion to make switching plugs easy
- Designed to prevent fouling
- Includes a protective tray-style holder

Circle 231 on reader service form

Aliette Fungicide from Bayer

- For all-season ornamental applications
- Provides effective, preventive control of Pythium, Phytophthora, downy mildew and fire blight
- Suppresses bacterial diseases caused by Xanthomonas campestris pathovars
- Enhances the plant's natural defense mechanisms to fight off disease
- Applied as a drench or a foliar treatment

Circle 225 on reader service form

Gehl 7810 Skid-steer Loader

- High-capacity loader for a diversity of applications



- Powered by Perkins 1104-E44T turbo diesel engine
- Offers vertical-lift linkage for consistent forward reach throughout the lift cycle

- Delivers bucket breakout force of nearly 7,900 pounds
- Offers a lift height of nearly 12 feet

Circle 226 on reader service form

Stellar Industries Xchange 3X-Tra-Lift

- Pick-up mounted hydraulic loading device
- Designed to expand versatility of standard truck applications
- Various bodies can be used, including dump boxes, flatbeds and small water or fertilizer tanks
- Hydraulic action allows for loading, off-loading and dumping
- Uses permanently lubricated bushings and stainless steel pins throughout the hooklift

Circle 227 on reader service form

Shurflo ProPack Sprayer

- SRS-540 rechargeable backpack sprayer
- Powered by 12-volt battery
- Eliminates the need for manual pumping, with enough power to spray up to 120 gallons on a single charge
- Micro-processor offers advanced one-touch master control



Shindaiwa Professional Cut-off Saw Diamond Blades

- 12- and 14-inch diameter heavy-duty diamond cut-off saw blades
- Engineered to cut in dry or wet applications
- Green label blade is designed for general-duty applications
- Recommended for professionals who use a cut-off saw only occasionally, or for less experienced operators

Circle 232 on reader service form

SpreadEx LG 375 Spreader

- Material flow gate calibrates and controls material flow



- Allows the operator to distribute the right amount of material for each application
 - Adjustable deflector allows spread pattern manipulation
 - Designed to work with multiple service vehicles
 - Comes standard with a 2-inch receiver hitch mount
 - Mounted in a weather-tight enclosure
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ArborSystems Pointer™ Insecticide

- Used to stop emerald ash borers and hemlock woolly adelgids
 - One application of Pointer using the Wedgle™ Direct-Inject™ Tree Treatment System provides season-long control of adelgids, borers, beetles, and other tree pests.
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Drip Irrigation

(continued from page 90)

"I've also noticed that in urban areas where we have jobs with parks, vandalism is part of the motivation. These clients see that drip is the most efficient way to water all their shrubbery and the fact that no one can see the emitters or drip line means they won't be bothered."



or mainline for his larger applications, digging that trench by hand could take two to three hours. Likewise, Mugavin explains that landscape beds or other small, intricate applications require more time and labor. "When you have long 400- or 500-foot runs it's easy to lay that down, but if you have something like planter boxes to work in, those can be more time consuming," he says. "You may only have to install 60 or 70 feet in those boxes, but all the hand digging and



On the other hand, 90 percent of Gallagher's drip business is in the residential market. "We stress the importance of the system's efficiency in terms of getting equal parts of water to every plant and not having to change it because of plant growth and things of that nature," he says. "We push the idea that they're actually going to save money on water because they're not going to waste any water."

Though opinions differ on how to charge for drip irrigation services, most contractors agree that, as with other irrigation jobs, time and materials are the basis for their pricing structures. "Some of our jobs are all machine work and some are all hand digging," Gallagher says. "Machines improve our efficiency tenfold, so we start by looking at the job and determining what we can do by hand and where we can use a machine."

Gallagher notes that while it can take 30 minutes for a machine to pull the "feed line"

them how it will specifically help them," Mugavin says. "Once we mention drip to some of our residential clients that have big rose gardens, they eat that up because roses like to be watered from below. The more informed your customer is, the easier it is to sell them the proper equipment for their irrigation system."

Gallagher agrees. "Whenever you're dealing with irrigation in or around a building, you want to be careful not to overspray water on the structure because it can create issues with dampness and mold," he explains. "Drip won't allow that, so that's a selling point. Also, especially with water conservation, there's no waste and people appreciate that, as well."

At the same time, Rivers notes that, for manufacturers, the key is being able to sell drip irrigation to contractors in the first place. "A lot of contractors are reluctant to switch to drip irrigation because it's something new and different," he says. "They have to take the time to learn a new set of skills, inventory new products on their vehicles and in their warehouses, so it's almost like starting a whole other business."

"Still, it's the vital and responsible thing to do for contractors to learn the drip products and incorporate them into every system that they can in order to be responsible users of the resources that our industry depends on," he continues. "We can either regulate ourselves now or wait for someone else to regulate us later."

Stoll agrees. "When you talk about how contractors can sell the service, the easy answer is to say that dripperline irrigation is generally recognized as being able to grow plants to maturity at least 50 percent faster than overhead irrigation, reduce weed growth by as much as 70 percent and use about half the water of an overhead system," he explains. "The slightly deeper answer is that low-volume irrigation is not going away. It is growing faster than other segments of the irrigation industry and the sooner a contractor embraces it as a mainstream product and the faster crews become proficient, the sooner people will wonder what they ever did before dripperline appeared."

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

Installing main drip irrigation parts is similar to installing traditional systems.

Photos: Rain Bird

intricate patterns of where the emitters need to be can take several hours."

Another factor that can complicate pricing is that there is a wide range of job sizes, depending on the type of client and the application. "The largest drip installation we ever did was 60,000 feet and the smallest was 500," Mugavin says. "Sometimes in residences, a foundation planting may only be 500 to 1,500 feet and some larger commercial projects are 50,000 or 60,000. It all depends on how many landscape beds or larger turf areas need to be irrigated and those numbers can range quite a bit."

But regardless of job size, manufacturers note that the benefits of drip irrigation appeal to everyone, making it an easy sell. "The more educated customer can accept the product a lot better, so you have to show

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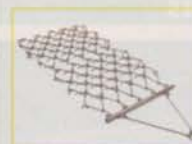
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Mower Attachments

(continued from page 70)

COST CLUES. Cost also is a top consideration for contractors who are browsing the market for mower attachments, Hile says. A sophisticated attachment – such as an aerator or tiller – could cost between \$1,500 and \$2,500, depending on specific functions and brand names. In contrast, bagging attachments and other less complex products may cost a contractor between \$150 and \$350.

Thus, a supreme benefit of using an attachment often translates into cost, explains Peter Andnoian, president, Accelerator Industries, Mercer Island, Wash. “Usually you’ll spend a lot less money on an attachment than on a dedicated piece of equipment.” For instance, a stand-alone aerator may cost about \$3,200, while an aerating attachment might cost half that.

But cost may not be a cut-and-dry factor for contractors, Andnoian says. An added bonus of purchasing the aeration attachment could be the fact that the add-on tool does not require significant maintenance like a dedicated aerator would. Also, an aerating attachment could save in terms of space, since it would require less truck area during transport and minimal shop space during storage.

And considering the high cost of labor, attachments can more than add to a company’s bottom line in terms of man-hours saved, Gamaldi notes. “You hear the term ‘adding value’ quite a bit these days, but I like ‘multiplying value’ better than adding,” he shares. “If I purchase a tractor with the right attachments, that enables one operator to do the work of three men – and I have multiplied his capabilities threefold.”

Consider what is the real return value of the product purchased, Gamaldi continues. “If a contractor hauls away clippings and

invests in a grass catcher, some interesting results follow. He spends less time doing the same amount of work. If he saves an hour a day of grass-handling time during the growing season, how many accounts can he add to his business in to fill the extra hours?”

The answer depends on the contractor in

“IT’S NICE TO BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN YOUR PROPERTIES WITH THE SAME POWER SOURCE ALL YEAR ROUND. YOU CAN TAKE THE DECK OFF OF YOUR MOWER AT THE END OF THE YEAR AND PUT ON A DOZER BLADE FOR SNOW REMOVAL.” — TIM CROMLEY

question, but Gamaldi insists adding attachments to a company’s equipment stockpile can produce extra business and, thus, increase income.

Purchasing attachments also can maximize the initial purchase of a mower by keeping it busy year round. “If you can make the mower into a multifunctional unit, that is obviously the best,” Andnoian says.

However, attachments may not always be the ideal route for contractors. Those companies doing tremendous amounts of aerating, thatching, etc., may see a better return on the investment of a specialized machine.

“If you’re a contractor who is adding a service here and there, you’re not going to need a dedicated aerator or dethatcher,” Andnoian says. “You don’t need specialized, more expensive equipment to offer those infrequent services. Instead you can

get an attachment for less money and less maintenance.”

Andnoian suggests contractors try to stick with one or two brands when purchasing mowers and their associated attachments. The reason? “In my opinion, wise operators will keep a similar brand of lawn mowers in their shops so when it comes to getting parts or doing service, they can maximize the utility of spare parts inventory,” Andnoian says. “Doing this also gives you greater leverage with the dealer because you become a more important and valuable customer when your money is focused in one or two places – not all over the market.”

However, he acknowledges there is not a one-stop shop when it comes to purchasing attachments. “There are all kinds of players in the market,” he shares. “There is not one obvious giant. That means contractors have lots of options for their attachment needs.”

When weighing those options, Cromley suggests contractors look at each tool’s potential to add to the power source’s overall length. Adding length to a mower’s frame by adding long attachments can make use of the machine awkward for operators. Extending the machine’s overall ‘footprint’ or size also can prevent an operator from reaching tight areas with the attachment, thus decreasing productivity and quality.

And, just as the restaurant that turns out deliciously decadent meals through the use of unique cooking tools and specialized utensils, a lawn care company with the right attachments can create well-groomed properties and happy clients. ■

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

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Rewarding Customer Referrals at Naturescape Landscape Co.

Opening Naturescape Landscape Co. in 1991 was an eye-opening experience. I had imagined that the work would be easy and that managing the cash flow would be similar to managing the household budget.

But I learned quickly that if the phone didn't ring, the company would have no work and no cash to manage. After trying several ineffective marketing tactics like *Yellow Pages* ads and radio commercials, we moved onto more effective but expensive approaches like direct mail.

When I saw how those approaches impacted our bottom line, I enlisted the help of my wife and her marketing skills. Last year, we developed a system of rewarding customers who referred work to us, thereby increasing our word-of-mouth advertising and decreasing our marketing costs. Our strategy to provide personalized, thoughtful rewards that don't break our budget is to offer gifts to referring clients based on the size of the jobs we receive and only after the jobs are signed.

In order to make the system work for us, we created a simple lead sheet to track all calls from prospective clients. We ask every lead that comes through, "How did you hear about us?" along with other pertinent information, all of which is logged in our database. We schedule appointments with these clients, present them with a job proposal and make follow-up calls within 72 hours. If a referred client decides to move ahead with the project,

we reward the customer who referred him or her to our company.

This system creates a situation where clients gain from simply passing on our name to their friends and family. Some customers have passed our name along three times already. We give them frequent bonus incentives like coupons they can redeem for work on their own properties, along with the gifts for their referrals.

The reward system includes four price breaks as referrals and gifts get larger:

- Clients who refer work under \$10,000, receive a basket of fruit and flavored coffee.
- Clients who refer jobs between \$10,000 and \$50,000 receive a \$200 gift certificate to a fine dining restaurant.
- Clients who refer high-end jobs from \$50,000 to \$100,000 receive a local weekend away, perhaps to a bed and breakfast in Santa Barbara or Newport Beach.
- Clients who refer jobs more than \$100,000 receive a long weekend on Maui, Waikiki or Oahu, Hawaii.

Many of our colleague's jaws drop when they hear some of the high-end rewards we give our customers, but the expense is not much different than the cost of traditional marketing. In fact, we have been able to phase out all of our expensive marketing methods and replace them with weekend getaways to exotic islands. Last year, we shopped for the deals and gave away \$3,200 in trips and \$6,500 in dinners, harbor cruises, T-shirts, etc. Combined, the expenditures were just under 1 percent of our gross sales but they never actually cost the company anything because we build the cost of the gift into the price of the referred work. This way, the cost never hits our bottom line until we protect our profit by securing the work.

To let our clients know about the referral program, we mention it in our monthly newsletter, in frequent thank-you cards, and any time we close a sale. Prior to implementing our customer referral program, each lead cost our company \$250, whereas now they cost us nothing. This method of rewarding referrals has grown our company by leaps and bounds because our clients receive more than just a "thank you." With focus groups and client surveys, we plan to continue growing and tweaking this system by making our clients our greatest resource. — Bill Shwab

The author is owner of Naturescape Landscape Co., Solana Beach, Calif., and can be reached at 858/794-8444.

5 KEYS TO *Rewarding Referrals*

1. Develop a lead-tracking system to identify which existing clients are referring potential clients.
2. Create reward tiers so clients with more profitable referrals are thanked accordingly.
3. Recognize customers who provide frequent referrals with extra gifts, such as coupons that can be redeemed for a percentage off landscaping done on their own properties.
4. Build the cost of customer referral gifts into the proposal for the referred work and wait to award the gift until the new work is secured.
5. Phase out less profitable marketing efforts as word-of-mouth increases in order to lower marketing costs.

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- 4. Bedding Plants & Color Installation
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- 6. Landscape Lighting
- 7. Hardscape Installation
- 8. Water Features

Landscape Maintenance

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- 10. Turf Fertilization
- 11. Turf Aeration
- 12. Tree & Ornamental Care
- 13. Tree & Stump Removal
- 14. Irrigation Maintenance
- 15. Erosion Control

Pesticide Application

- 16. Turf Disease Control
- 17. Turf Insect Control
- 18. Turf Weed Control
- 19. Tree & Ornamental Pesticide Application

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