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# Lawn & Landscape

10 05

EXCLUSIVE:

## 2005 STATE OF THE INDUSTRY REPORT

Working Smarter

- An Economic Outlook
- The Big vs. Small Company
- The Web's Growing Business Influence
- Regional Breakouts

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**Cover Story –  
2005 State of the  
Industry Report:  
Working Smarter**

S1

- *An Economic Outlook*
- *The Big vs. Small Company*
- *The Web's Growing Business Influence*
- *Regional Breakouts*

10.05

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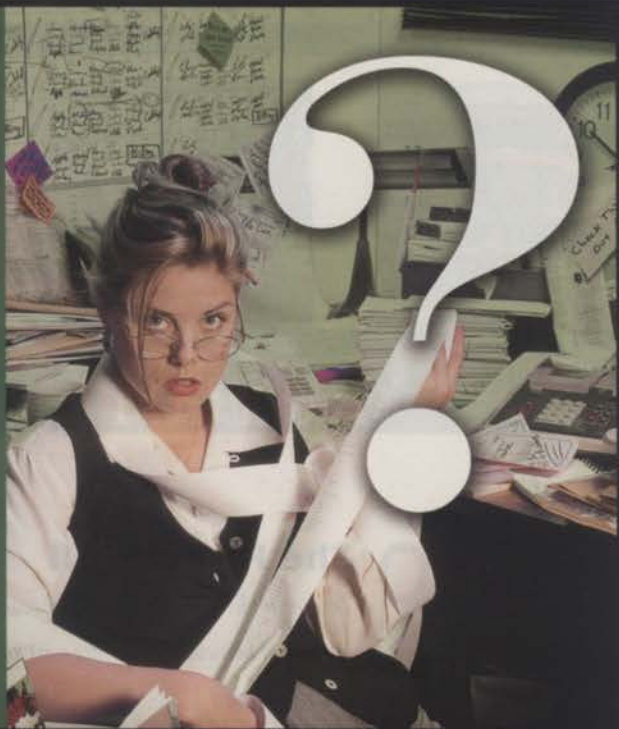
**138 Good Things from  
Small Packages**

*Compact utility loaders perform the same tasks as their full-size counterparts while boosting productivity and getting in those hard-to-reach places.*





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# Lawn & Landscape

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**156 Grassroots Concerns**  
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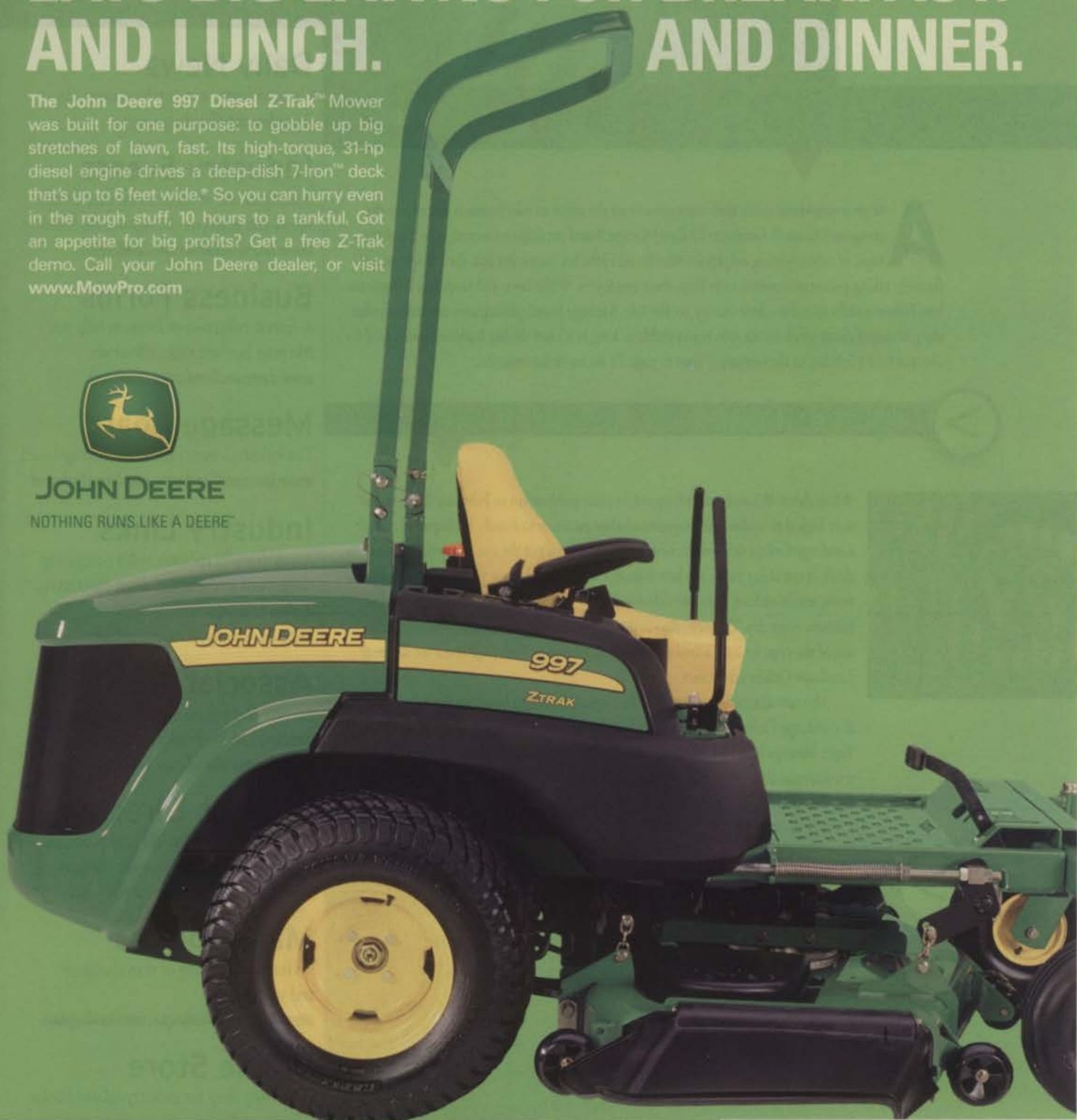
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**7 IRON**

PROFESSIONAL MOWING

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> > > best of the web

**A**re your employees using their time away from the office to take business away from the company? *Lawn & Landscape* Online Message Board participants recently discussed the topic of moonlighting employees who do odd jobs for customers and their neighbors, effectively taking potential business away from their employers. While lawn and landscape crewmembers have the skills to make a little money on the side, Message Board participants debated whether the practice of doing work on the side is acceptable as long as it's not during business hours, or if it's too much of a liability to the company. Turn to page 78 for more information.



Check Out *Lawn & Landscape's* New Look



When *Lawn & Landscape* redesigned its print publication in February 2005, it was only logical to update the magazine's online presence to match. In August, *Lawn & Landscape* Online debuted its new look. Haven't visited the site in a while? Be sure to check it out today to see the best industry Web site, bringing you up-to-date industry news, article archives, product information and many more resources to help your business every day. The new, sleeker design puts frequently used menus across the top of the page for easy access and opens up premium Web page space for *Lawn & Landscape* Online advertisers.

The new site design is the latest in a series of changes boosting the appeal of *Lawn & Landscape* Online. Other updates just this year include the addition of an Off-Topic Message board in February and the Dealer Search function in May. Visit [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com) now to see how all of these features and others came together in the New-Look *Lawn & Landscape* Web site.



online extras

Looking for the *Lawn & Landscape* Online Extras section? Now that *Lawn & Landscape* Online has been updated, you can find exclusive content not appearing in print by rolling your mouse pointer over the "Magazine" menu on the homepage and scrolling down to "Current Issue Online Extras." Here are some of the topics you'll find this month:

- Learn more about Dan's Landscaping & Lawn Care in the photo tour of the facility or by reading the *Lawn & Landscape* feature profile of the company – both of which will be located in this month's Online Extras section at [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com).
- Working on some fall maintenance? Check our October Online Extras section for information on how to mulch properly and what bulbs are popular this season.
- Appropriate transportation and storage of pesticides help protect the environment, assure worker safety, save money and avoid legal problems. Find out more in this month's Online Extras.

web tools

Daily News

Green industry news updates every day.  
[www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com)

Industry Events

A comprehensive list of conferences, trade shows and seminars throughout the industry.  
[www.lawnandlandscape.com/events](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/events)

Business Forms

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Message Board

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[www.lawnandlandscape.com/messageboard](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/messageboard)

Industry Links

A user-friendly industry index containing categorized information about contractors, dealers and suppliers.  
[www.lawnandlandscape.com/links](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/links)

Associations

An easy-to-navigate directory of local, state, national and international trade associations.  
[www.lawnandlandscape.com/associations](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/associations)

Product Directory

A growing database of industry products, including photos and supplier contacts.  
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Marketplaces

An interactive listing of manufacturers and suppliers.  
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A one-stop shop for industry-related books, software and more.  
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## “Snowball”

We recently hosted a meeting in Chicago where Dr. Paul Wang, Associate Professor of Integrated Marketing Communications at Illinois' Northwestern University spoke about marketing. He opened his talk with a video clip from the romantic comedy, *Roxanne*, starring Steve Martin. In the movie, firemen respond to an alarm which turns out to be a cat in a tree – “Snowball.” While a huge crowd has gathered around the firemen who are positioning ladders for the rescue, Martin, who is their supervisor, calmly walks onto the scene, looks up the tree, opens a can of cat food, and calls a very willing Snowball down the tree. Rescue completed.

The message, Wang said, is that it's easy to get caught up in what you are doing and lose sight of the customer and what he or she wants. In fact, Wang, who has consulted for major corporations, says that while most companies think they are doing a great job in serving their customers, the harsh reality is that often customers are simply tolerating the way the service is provided.

The solution is to see what you do from your customers' point of view – from Snowball's perspective. Wang says the way to do this is to ask the customer questions. That's not easy, he notes, because customers will not open up to you and will also lie. The solution is to come up with 20 good customer questions to get closer to the truth about what they really want, like and dislike. Wang doesn't offer a list of ready-to-use questions, but instead advises asking questions to discover which ones help you uncover what customers think and what they want.

One challenge is to fight assumptions about the standard way that lawn and landscape services are provided and focus more on the ideal. This means ignoring the price tag. As suggestions, Wang said it could be giving the customer a unique brand experience, more choices to let them feel they are in charge, simplifying the service experience, or even the service “packaging.”

Another mistake is believing that if your service makes good sense logically, customers will then make the obvious decision and buy your service. Customers often do not make buying decisions based on reason, Wang says.

Smart marketing is more a matter of doing the basics well, he adds, than in trying to find some secret formula or shortcut to get your customers to buy your services.

“Find out what you do best and what is most valuable to the customer and then give that to them,” Wang says. “Good marketing begins by finding out who you really are and not pretending to be what you are not.”

The time-proven formula for business success is to find out what customers really want by listening to them closely, and then delivering against it consistently to gain a positive reputation and referrals.

“All advertisements make promises,” he says. “I recommend looking at all your advertising promises to make sure you are delivering against them.”

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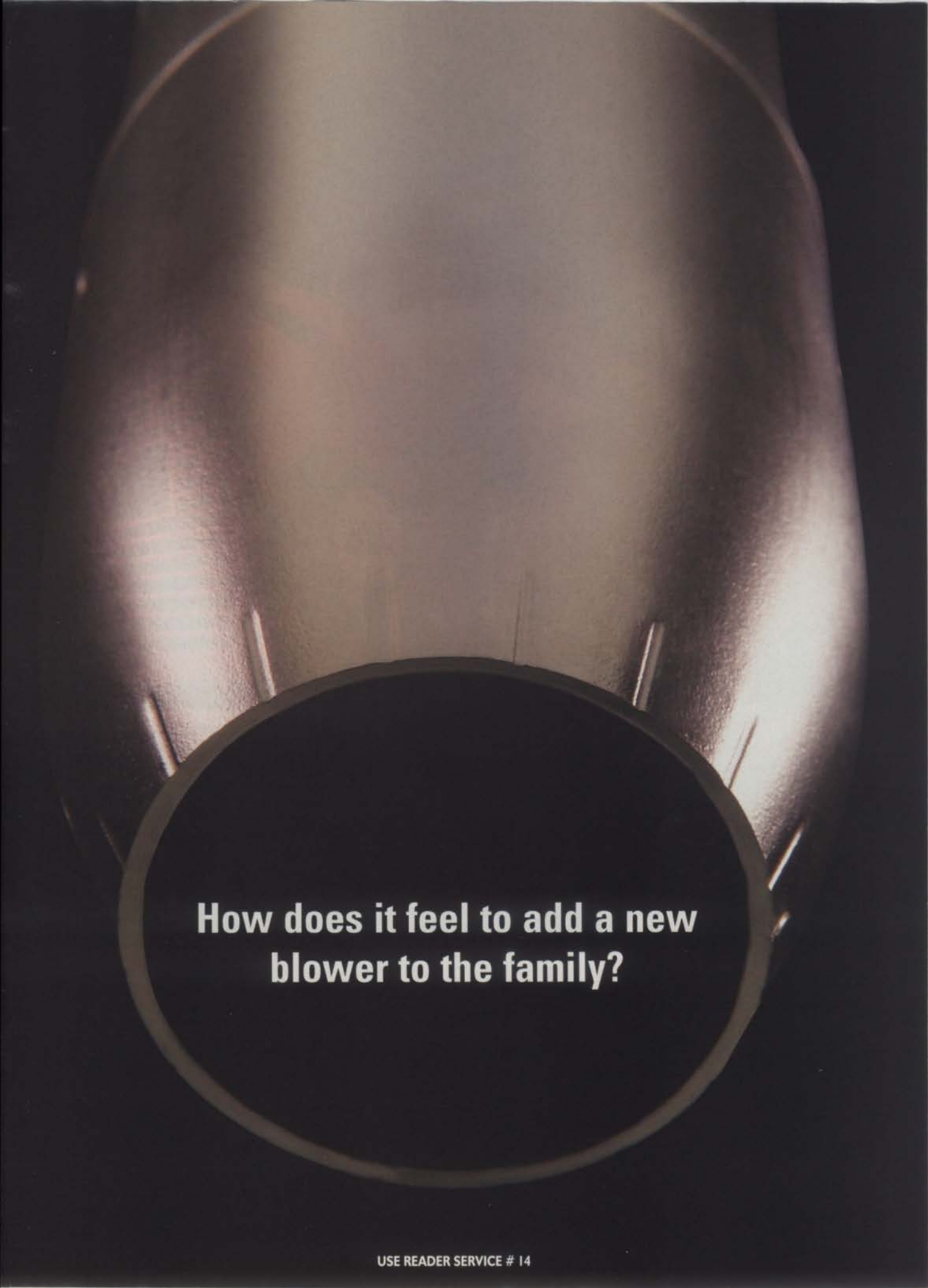
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## CALENDAR

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### Calendar Note

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.

**OCT. 12-15** The National Association of Home Builders and Texas Association of Builders Sunbelt Builders Show, Grapevine, Texas. Contact: [www.sunbeltbuildersshow.com](http://www.sunbeltbuildersshow.com), 800/368-5242

**OCT. 13** Michigan Green Industry Association Compliance 2005. Contact: [www.landscape.org](http://www.landscape.org), 248/646-4992

**OCT. 13-NOV. 3** International Pool and Spa Expo/Backyard Living Expo, Orlando, Fla. Contact: [www.backyardexpo.com](http://www.backyardexpo.com), 972/536-6366

**OCT. 14** International Society of Arborists Pruning Workshop, Riverton, Wyo. Contact: 303/756-1815

**OCT. 14-16** Expo 2005 – International Lawn, Garden & Power Equipment Exposition, Louisville, Ky. Contact: [expo.mow.org](http://expo.mow.org), 800/558-8767

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**OCT. 18-19** Landscape Ontario Garden Expo, Toronto, Ontario. Contact: [bspeck@landscapeontario.com](mailto:bspeck@landscapeontario.com), [www.hort-trades.com](http://www.hort-trades.com), 800/265-5656

**OCT. 19** National Association of Home Builders Construction Forecast Conference – Fall 2005, Washington, D.C. Contact: [registrar@nahb.com](mailto:registrar@nahb.com), [www.nahb.org](http://www.nahb.org), 800/368-5242

**OCT. 19** Ohio Nursery & Landscape Association Business School: Do You Know Where Your Money is Going?, Columbus, Ohio. Contact: [www.onla.org](http://www.onla.org), 800/825-5062

**OCT. 19-20** Southern California Turfgrass Council Expo, Pomona, Calif. Contact: [www.turfcouncil.org/NewSite/events.htm](http://www.turfcouncil.org/NewSite/events.htm), 800/500-SCTC

**OCT. 19-20** International Truck & Engine Corp. "Taking it to the Streets Tour," Dallas, Texas. Contact: [www.internationaltrucktour.com](http://www.internationaltrucktour.com), 866/483-2001

**OCT. 19-21** Plantscape Industry Alliance CalScape Expo 2005, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact: [cipa@cipaweb.org](mailto:cipa@cipaweb.org), [piagrows.org](http://piagrows.org)

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**OCT. 19-22** International Facility Management Association 2005 Fall Symposium, Philadelphia, Pa.  
Contact: [www.ifma.org](http://www.ifma.org), 713/623-4362

**OCT. 20** Michigan Green Industry Career Day, Royal Oak, Mich. Contact: [www.landscape.org](http://www.landscape.org), 248/646-4992

**OCT. 21-23** New Jersey Shade Tree Federation 80th Annual Meeting, Cherry Hill, N.J.  
Contact: [njshadetreefederation@worldnet.att.net](mailto:njshadetreefederation@worldnet.att.net), 732/246-3210

**OCT. 23-25** International Facility Management Association World Workplace 2005 Conference & Expo, Philadelphia, Pa. Contact: [angelique.florez@ifma.org](mailto:angelique.florez@ifma.org), [www.worldworkplace.org](http://www.worldworkplace.org), 713/623-4362

**OCT. 24-27** Kentucky Turf Conference, Bowling Green, Ky. Contact: [www.uky.edu/Agriculture/ukturf/KTC2002/](http://www.uky.edu/Agriculture/ukturf/KTC2002/)

**OCT. 25-27** Alabama Turfgrass Association Annual Conference & Trade Show, Auburn, Ala.  
Contact: [www.alaturfgrass.org](http://www.alaturfgrass.org), 866/246-4203

**OCT. 25-27** Grandy & Associates' Basic Business Boot Camp, Owensboro, Ky. Contact: 800/432-7963

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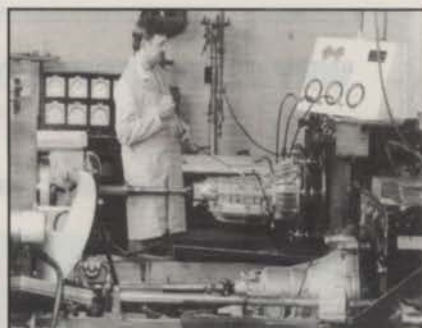
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**OCT. 26-29** The U.S. Society for Irrigation and Drainage Professionals Water Management Conference, Portland, Ore. Contact: [stephens@uscid.org](mailto:stephens@uscid.org), [www.uscid.org](http://www.uscid.org), 303/628-5430

**OCT. 27** Michigan Green Industry Association Plant Diagnostics: Case Studies and Timely Updates, Bingham Farms, Mich. Contact: [www.landscape.org](http://www.landscape.org), 248/646-4992

**OCT. 27** Virginia Agribusiness Council Virginia Legislative Tailgate at Virginia Tech vs. Boston College game. Contact: 804/643-3555, [www.va-agribusiness.org](http://www.va-agribusiness.org)

**OCT. 29** Certified Tree Worker/Climber Specialist Exam, Blue Ridge Community College, Weyers Cave, Va. Contact: 540/453-2349, [www.l.brcc.edu/murray/](http://www.l.brcc.edu/murray/)

**NOV. 2-5** Green Industry Expo 2005 Orlando, Fla. Contact: [info@gieonline.com](mailto:info@gieonline.com), 888/303-3685

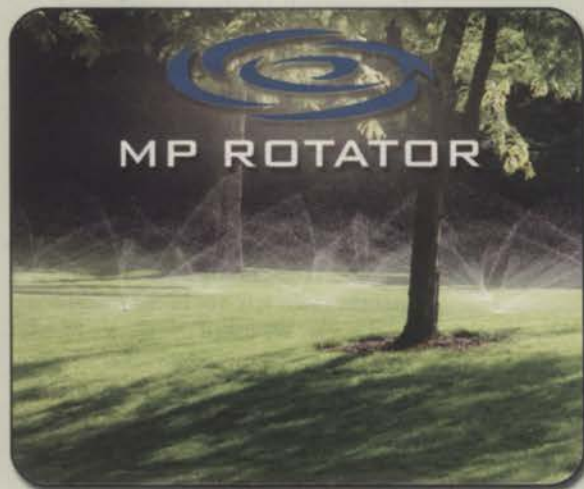
**NOV. 3-8** 26<sup>th</sup> Annual International Irrigation Conference & Show, Phoenix, Ariz. Contact: [victoria@irrigation.org](mailto:victoria@irrigation.org), [www.irrigation.org](http://www.irrigation.org), 703/536-7080



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## More True Service Stories

**L**ast month I shared some stories about bad service. This month, I'd like to share a few more and give you some ways to make certain your customer service is an asset, not a liability.

1. We rented a projector, and it would not work. We called the cell phone number on the card that was with the projector – no answer, so we left a message. After six hours without response, we called again. Still no response. Then we called the main number at the store and told them of our problem. They said we should call back. At that point, we let it go. When we returned the projector, we explained our problem, expecting a refund. Instead, we were told we weren't getting our money back since we didn't call. Out of principle, I pursued the matter – we got our money back and, needless to say, we won't be renting anything from that company again. The lesson: The obligation is never on the customer to read your mind. How well do you communicate with your clients? Are your policies clear or confusing?

2. Many years ago we had a truck that had a malfunctioning radio. We took it to the dealership to have it repaired as it was under warranty. They had the truck two days. When we got there, the service manager drove the truck to us, handed us the warranty receipt and the keys and thanked us. When my partner got in the truck he realized that the radio was not in the truck, but on the seat. We called the service manager over and showed him what he obviously did not see. Surprised, he said he'd have to see what happened and get back to us. One week later, we got our truck back with a working radio. The lesson:

When you have call backs, complaints or service calls, make sure you have a system in place to double check things. When clients have problems, you don't want to frustrate them further.

3. It was 7:55 p.m. and I knew the bank in the local supermarket closed at 8 p.m. I had to make a deposit. When I got 20 feet from the window, I made eye contact with the teller, and watched in amazement as she shut the door and turned on the closed sign. I knocked on the door, no response. I could hear her in there so I knocked again. Still no response. So I just waited. Ten minutes later, a young lady opened the door and left. She had her coat on and her purse in the other hand. I asked her why she closed early even though she saw me coming. She said, "I didn't see or hear you." I told her that was impossible and that I needed to make a deposit. She walked away and gave me a heartfelt "Sorry." The lesson: Employees can ruin a business in no time without proper direction, training and leadership.

We try to avoid mistakes by training, hiring the right kinds of people, rewarding those who do the right thing, and by following up constantly to ensure client satisfaction. In addition, we have excellent systems in place that help us avoid mistakes. Sometimes it is not the mistake but how you handle the mistake that matters most. Make sure that customer service training is part of your agenda. Customer service is an attitude and a culture – it is not a policy. In most cases, if you find a successful company, you will find an outfit that understands customer service. Study these firms and implement excellent customer service and watch your profits soar. **LL**

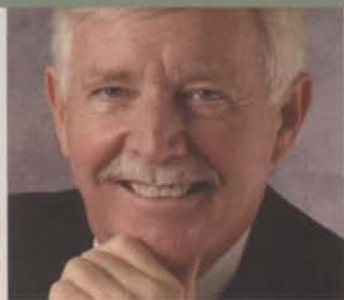
marty grunder

is a speaker, consultant and author, as well as owner of Grunder Landscaping Co., Miamisburg, Ohio. He can be reached at 866/478-6337 and via [www.martygrunder.com](http://www.martygrunder.com).



**DON'T COUNT ON THIS.**





## Turn Over a New Leaf

When it comes time for leaf removal operations, you need to get as creative as possible to develop an effective system of leaf removal and disposal. Consider directing crews to remove leaves in the grass areas every week and remove leaves in plant beds only every other week. Most clients accept this and it greatly reduces labor hours. Also, remember that at this time of year, your crews will spend more time on each site due to leaves, so schedule accordingly.

Leaf pick-up is another issue to deal with. One option is to have regular mowing crews remove leaves from each site every time they visit. Option No. 2 is to have a separate crew come by later and perform the removal. On larger properties, having a separate crew pick up leaves curbside is generally more productive, as it takes fewer people to eliminate the leaf pile than to actually remove the leaves and pile them at the curb. Further, having a large crew make trips to your dumpsite is not an efficient use of labor.


A large vacuum attached to a covered dump truck is used extensively in our industry for leaf removal. However, before you go out and buy a new vacuum, be sure you have studied how many hours you will actually use the equipment and how many labor hours will you save with such an investment. I strongly suggest renting a vacuum, even on a long-term basis, before you purchase. Remember, you'll continue to make payments on a piece of equipment like this, even while it sits in your yard without being used.

In lieu of a separate vacuum truck, consider equipping a single crew with the necessary tarps, etc., and schedule them to perform only leaf removal until all necessary sites have been visited. If you

have few sites, this means you might not start leaf removal until later in the week and the leaves will sit on clients' curbs for a day or two. This is generally not a problem. Remember, to become efficient, making every employee more productive is essential. Think in minutes.

Be sure to watch overtime during leaf season. This is not the time of year to incur extensive overtime costs. To address this, look at your crew configurations and see if it's more efficient to add a person to a crew for a few weeks than to work the overtime. Also, are there functions that can be postponed until the leaves let up? Should you try rerouting crews? Put lower-paid people on the pick-up crew on overtime? Also, think about using four days each week for leaf clean-up and the fifth day for pick-up on every property.

As you prepare for leaf season, gather your key people, including foremen, and have an open discussion as to how best to organize and perform this function. Getting their input will give you some valuable insights and remind your crews that you respect their ideas.

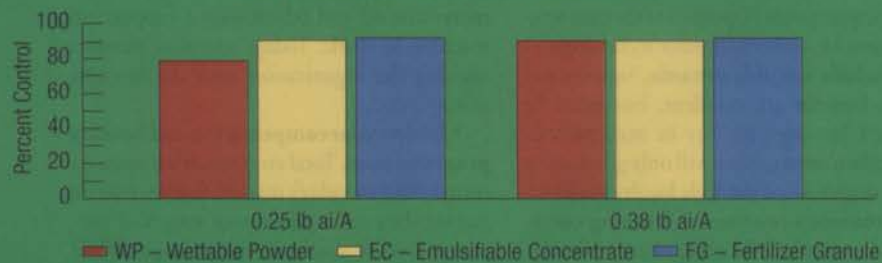
Also, consider having your estimator spend scheduled time in the field this fall actually observing how your crews remove leaves. This will help you make recommendations on how to improve efficiency this fall, and also teach you new techniques and procedures that you can pass onto other crews. In order to really dissect this operation, measure the turf areas and the plant bed areas and determine the total square footage of each. Use these numbers to time the leaf removal operation and come up with the number of labor hours per square foot to provide another way to look at this tricky landscape function. 

jack mattingly


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## Fostering Employee Loyalty

You give them the world: 401(k) plans, telecommuting, profit sharing, mentoring, flex time and costly insurance, but they are moving up and out as quickly as you can train them. In this age of diminishing loyalty, how can organizations retain talented workers? One thing is certain, traditional rules do not apply. You must begin to think out of the box.

- **Treat your employees like real business partners.** Promote entrepreneurial vision by allowing employees to make decisions that impact the business. People gravitate toward pursuits in which they can exercise a measure of control over their lives—they want to make decisions on their own and control the outcome of a situation. Control is often what brings satisfaction in work. This is why so many people start their own businesses.

- **Maximize job functions.** Challenge employees constantly. Once boredom and mediocrity set in, their resumes go on the Web.

- **Meet or exceed standard needs.** Provide resources that enable superior job performance. If an employee spends 70 percent of the time writing, invest in current computer technology.

- **Include tangible rewards.** Sign-on and tenure bonuses are excellent, but must be followed by ongoing buy-in mechanisms. Remember, an employee will only give loyalty to the degree he or she feels loyalty is given.

- **Promote a continuous learning curve.** Think in terms of educating your employees; giving them knowledge for a lifetime vs. training them, which typically amounts to teaching them skills for a narrow function. Employee development must be a never-ending process of education. If conducted properly, education becomes an asset, not a cost. Keep employees involved in industry trends and changes. The more immersed they are in the business, the more likely they are to commit.

- **Clearly define the path to professional growth and development.** Create programs for internal certification or promotions. Up-

grade education for managers and employees. Initiate people upon hire by means of unique, interesting and state-of-the-art orientation.

- **Communicate continually by means of an employee handbook, personal notes, meetings and educational sessions.** Instill culture, mission and philosophy every day. Consider an annual opinion survey to “take the temperature of the workplace” and identify gaps in quality, leadership, safety, morale and other important areas.

- **Get rid of the jerks.** Remember, good employees leave bad bosses, not good companies. If one of your employees ends up working for a jerky manager, the employee will be gone faster than you can say, “leadership training.” Managers who can’t respect and properly interact with their direct reports should be swiftly shown the door.

- **Consider customizing the workplace.** Offer a variety of benefits from which employees can pick and choose and, whenever possible, be more flexible. With several generations in the workplace, you’ll find that some want more time off and others want a cappuccino machine at work. Today, retention involves aligning the organization with the interests of employees.

- **Review your compensation and benefits programs now.** Total compensation must be competitive in today’s market. Gather reliable market data and update your ranges, if necessary. Review your benefits package. While your benefits may be generous, they may be outdated. For example, sick time is being replaced by “personal time off” and more of it so employees can take “mental health days” or care for their sick pets (believe it or not).

Money alone rarely keeps employees motivated and deeply committed. You must start by hiring the right person and then develop a culture of trust, enthusiasm and challenges. Support the system with strong leadership and innovative programs, and future success is imminent. **LL**

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inside look



## Facility Tour: Dan's Landscaping & Lawn Care

**P**robably the most important lesson that attendees of a recent *Lawn & Landscape* sponsored facility tour could take away was that Dan's Landscaping & Lawn Care, Terrytown, La., does what works for them. Held in conjunction with the *Lawn & Landscape* Weed & Insect Seminars – South, held in New Orleans, La., Aug. 17 and 18, company owner Dan Standley hosted visitors to his company's facility for a behind-the-scenes look at what's kept the business successful for 25 years.

"Our company has done a lot of benchmarking and learned a lot about running a business all on our own, but my philosophy is, 'Why reinvent the wheel?'" Standley told tour attendees as they gathered in the facility's lobby. "We've found that events like these seminars that *Lawn & Landscape* has are really invaluable to our business and it allows you to get involved with industry organizations and get to know other business owners in the industry. You can learn so much from what other companies do well."

Getting ready to celebrate its 25th anniversary next year, Dan's Landscaping & Lawn Care offers lawn and landscape maintenance and installation, weed control, horticultural services, IPM, paver and landscape lighting installation, aeration, landscape renovation and more. The company currently earns about \$1.2 million in rev-

enue, and while Standley says the company has been presented with a number of opportunities to grow significantly, the current business size works for them. "Sometimes bigger isn't better," Standley says. "The current size of our operation lets us provide a high standard of care for all of our customers and also helps us focus on the wellbeing of our employees and their families."

**EMPLOYEE FOCUS.** Specifically, Standley refers to the company's four-day workweek – a business tool that keeps the company efficient while still providing plenty of family time for employees. "Right now we have 13 crewmembers, who work in two-person crews with a separate crew for horticultural services," Standley says. "Monday through Thursday, we operate from 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and those four 10-hour days give us the ability to spend a lot of time with our families, or, we have a built-in weekday left to complete work on Friday if there were problems during the week. For instance, if we have bad weather on Wednesday, we can make that up on Friday. At the same time, if the crews are working on Friday when there were no adverse conditions during the week, we know we're running overtime. The four-day workweek helps us keep our labor hours in line as a result."

## V service solutions

### ▶ Selling Lighting Services in Fall & Winter

Sharing her international experience in residential and commercial landscape lighting during a Kichler Landscape Lighting educational conference on Aug. 24-26 in Cleveland, Ohio, Janet Lennox Moyer, a design principal with MSH Visual Planners, Brunswick, N.Y., and author of *The Landscape Lighting Book*, said that while lighting is a year-round business, contractors should not ignore some of the advantages of fall and winter.

"In the winter months, landscape lighting actually helps connect people with their landscapes because it's darker," Moyer says. "From an installation perspective, fall and winter work allows lights to be aimed and placements fine-tuned earlier in the evening than is possible in the spring or summer."

When talking to a prospective client, Moyer says it is important to both educate them about what is possible and to find out what they want. "I ask them how they feel about light," she says. "I ask what their long-



Photo: Kichler



Also focusing on crewmember incentives, Standley noted that employees receive paid vacation time, medical coverage and some retirement benefits, as well as more immediate rewards in the form of "Bonus Bucks." Passed out at the supervisor's discretion, Standley says crewmembers can accumulate bonus bucks in denominations up to \$20 and put this "funny money" toward serious prizes. Everything from dinner for two to video game consoles have been awarded to hardworking employees. Crewmembers can mention their ideal prizes to Standley who will add those options to a prize catalog from which employees can "buy" their rewards.

"Things like this are really inexpensive in the great scheme of things," Standley says, adding that he makes extra efforts in these areas, one time going so far as to wash the employee-of-the-month's car. "It's really about making sure our employees know that they're appreciated and that hard work will be rewarded."

**UNIQUE MARKETING TACTICS.** In addition to finding unique ways to please employees, Standley shared some of the company's unique and creative marketing tactics that keep customers coming in and coming back. Some of the highlights of the informal marketing effort are:

- **Good Deed Days.** "After September 11, I happened to be near a Burger King and saw a police officer going up to the store," Standley said. "I wanted to show him my appreciation for everything that police officers and other emergency responders do, so I bought his lunch. It wasn't much, but he thanked me for it and I gave him my card and

thanked him for his service. Not long after that, we got a work referral for a job in a nearby town." Standley says other good deeds, such as paying for drivers' tolls on a local highway, are also relatively inexpensive but memorable marketing techniques.

- **Magnetic Business Cards.** A well-designed business card may say a great deal about your company, but they can be easily misplaced, damaged or illegible after spending a while in a prospective client's wallet. Standley says he's taken to supplementing his traditional business cards with magnetic ones that customers can keep on their refrigerators for easy access. Not only that – the magnets are mobile. "Fifteen years ago I was using these magnetic business cards and gave one to a customer who put the magnet on her refrigerator," Standley remembers. "A number of years later, the homeowner moved, but she took her refrigerator with her. When she got to her new home and decided to put in some new landscaping, she knew exactly who to call and where to find our number."

- **Professional Proposals:** "Sometimes, you have to do things in the field, and that's fine, but it's important to have professional-looking folders to present a proposal to a prospective client," Standley says. "People will judge you by your cover and if they can see your professionalism in things like stationery that counts." Moreover, Standley says the company has had good luck with mini CD-ROMS that carry information about the company. Included in a proposal folder or on its own, this tool is easy to use and shows that the company is technologically up-to-date.

*continued on page 26*

term goals are for the landscape. I ask them what mood they want to create – fun, quiet or rambunctious? I try to get them to use adjectives to describe what they want."

The degree of conceptual drawings needed then depends upon the client's needs. Some can be done with sketches. Others require computerized images of the actual landscape to show what's possible.

Some of Moyer's other landscape lighting tips include:

- Use soft light, a lower wattage – even 20 watts works well against a dark environment – and use more lights.
- The power of lighting comes from the contrast between illuminated and dark areas, so use the dark areas.
- Consider the view from both inside and outside the home and interior lighting's effect on outside lighting.
- Create a visual destination – the entryway, for instance.
- Every plant on the site reflects light differently and ideally needs to be illuminated with a different light intensity.
- Down lighting is less dramatic than up lighting.
- Putting the brightest light further in the background

will make a space seem deeper.

- Consider lighting's impact on trees during all seasons.
- Consider relationships with neighbors.

Moyer usually does not light a pathway directly unless there are steps or an elevation change. She also only directly lights the building itself if it is architecturally interesting.

To prevent glare, do not set a lighting fixture above a 35-degree angle, she warns. Hiding fixtures is a critical aspect of good lighting designs, so when necessary fixtures should be hidden by their location, shielding or aiming.

When doing the actual installation, Moyer tackles the most difficult part of the job first. She also brings plenty of spare parts and documents everything – materials used and placements. An easy way to document a job is to make photo prints and mark the location of lights directly on them. On a larger job, numbering trees helps later if maintenance is needed. "I also like to get the client involved as you do the job to make sure they like it," Moyer adds, "and, if not, then you can make adjustments while they are there." – *Roger Stanley*



continued from page 25

## Inside Look

**SMOOTH OPERATIONS.** On the tour through the company's landscape yard, Standley showed off a business tool he says has helped the company stay efficient and project a professional image.

"We had one of our enclosed landscape trucks custom-made to suit our operation," he says. "There's a place for everything and everything in its place, and while we still operate two pickup trucks with trailers, as well as a landscape-body truck, this works great for us."

Standley says their custom truck has an easy-to-operate ramp, gasoline on board for hand-held equipment, and a side entrance for easy access. (Though he says when the company's ready to order another similar vehicle, they'll specify a wide side door so pallets of mulch can be loaded quickly.) Logoed on all sides, Standley says the truck is a "mobile billboard" that always looks great.

Learn more about Dan's Landscaping & Lawn Care in the photo tour of the facility or by reading the *Lawn & Landscape* feature profile of the company – both of which will be located in this month's Online Extras section at [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com). – *Lauren Spiers Hunter*

[www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com)

## SUPPLIER STATS

### LESCO Reports Service Center Openings and People Announcements

**CLEVELAND, OHIO** – Since the beginning of 2003, LESCO has opened more than 60 new Service Centers, bringing the company's total to nearly 300 locations in 39 states.

To ensure that the company continues opening these new selling entities at a rate of 10 to 15 percent and also increases its number of Stores-on-Wheels® (which currently total more than 100), the company has hired Michael Poole as its new vice president, real estate & store planning. Poole will report directly to Michael DiMino, LESCO's president and chief executive officer.

LESCO's analysis of the turf care and pest management industries indicates that there is potential for the company to open at least 250 additional Service Centers.

LESCO's newest Service Center openings occurred in Jacksonville, Fla., and The Woodlands, Texas.

In other news, LESCO also named Chuck Denny to the position of senior vice president, store operations & sales.

According to LESCO, Denny has spent the last 25 years working in sales and store management roles for a variety of organizations, including Target, Office Max, Linens N' Things and Big Lots.

Denny will report directly to DiMino, and he will manage LESCO's five zone vice presidents.

**LESCO**

## DESIGN/BUILD PROJECTS

### San Fernando Valley CLCA Announces Beautification Award Winners

**LOS ANGELES** – Recently, the San Fernando Valley chapter of the California Landscape Contractors Association (CLCA) presented several landscape contractors with Annual Beautification Awards. This year's theme was "The Best of the Best."

Held at the Knollwood Country Club in Granada Hills, this annual awards competition offers CLCA the opportunity to recognize contractors whose work stands tall above the rest. The goal of the awards program is to encourage interest in landscaping; to recognize craftsmen who produce outstanding landscapes; to create pride in superior workmanship; and to bestow public recognition on companies, institutions, municipalities and residents for their interest in a beautiful California. In all, 23 first place awards were distributed, with seven of them falling into special award categories.

The special award winners are as follows:

**Special Effects** – 3 Pinos Landscape, Northridge  
**Colorscape** – Oliver Holt Landscape, Northridge

**Hardscape** – Majestic Pools & Landscape, Northridge  
**President's Choice Award** – Majestic Pools & Landscape, Northridge

**F. H. Arklin Award**, presented to the project that best exhibits excellence in craftsmanship – Gothic Landscaping, Valencia

**Bob Moore Memorial Award**, presented to the contractor whose work shows the best use of rock and boulders – Sheridan Landscaping, Sun Valley

**Sweepstakes Award**, presented to the entry judged best in all categories – Southern California Landscape, Mission Hills

The San Fernando Valley Chapter of the CLCA has been meeting since 1959. The CLCA is a non-profit trade organization of state-licensed landscape and landscape-related limited specialty contractors. CLCA's membership, which totals approximately 2,500 individuals, also includes suppliers to contractors, landscape architects, educators, public officials and students.



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IN THE NEWS

## Shemin Nurseries Celebrates 50 Years

**DANBURY, Conn.** – Shemin Nurseries, a wholesale distributor of horticultural and landscape products, is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> year in business.

Founded by Emanuel "Manny" Shemin in October 1955 in Greenwich, Conn., Shemin Nurseries now operates 30 landscape supply centers in the east and Midwest. Shemin founded the company after his service during the Korean War where he gained experience with the military commissary system and learned the practicality of having a "one-stop shop" for everything someone might need. This, and the fact that Manny's father operated a retail nursery in Bronx, N.Y., combined to provide the spark to start Shemin Nurseries.

From the beginning, Shemin says he took great pride in helping his customers grow their businesses. "Up until the 1950s, most landscape contractors had been working on large estates," he says. "As people moved to the suburbs, small landscape firms appeared to service this newly developing market. From the introduction of new plants shipped in from across the country to training in business-related issues like bidding to letting contractors bring their customers to the nursery, we have always tried to help small contractors compete and grow."

Shemin also worked with growers to buy in quantity and passed these savings on to his customers. "Quantity discounts were a new concept for

growers who were used to selling in lots of five or 10," says Shemin. "By explaining the 'one-stop shop' concept and that we'd be buying in larger and more efficient quantities, they soon came to value the relationship."

Shemin, now 75, is still a member of the Shemin Nurseries board of directors. CEO Steffan Burns said his knowledge, experience and insights are still as valuable now as they were when Shemin established the landscape supply industry in 1955. "Manny emphasized what he called QVAS – quality, variety, availability and service," says Burns. "These are the core principles of what Shemin Nurseries was about in 1955 and what we are still about today."





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MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS

## John Deere Landscapes Acquires United Green Mark

**MOLINE, Ill.** – Deere & Co. announced that John Deere Landscapes has acquired United Green Mark to enhance its position as a wholesale distributor of irrigation, nursery, lighting and landscape materials in the green industry.

Deere says the acquisition adds momentum to the company's John

Deere Landscapes operation, which was formed in 2001 after Deere purchased companies in the wholesale landscape supplies and irrigation industries.

"The acquisition of United Green Mark expands the number of customers served by John Deere Landscapes

and allows the business to accelerate its potential growth in shareholder value added – an important measure for our investors," says Robert Lane, Deere & Company chairman and chief executive officer.

A wholesale landscape and irrigation business, United Green Mark has 41 locations in the western United States, mainly in California, and was previously owned by Olympus Partners, a private equity firm headquartered in Stamford, Conn.

John Deere Landscapes, which is headquartered in Alpharetta, Ga., will add the United Green Mark stores to the existing 250 John Deere

Landscapes stores across the U.S. and Canada. Deere said the transaction allows the company to accelerate its entry and penetration in the western U.S. states that are served by United Green Mark locations.

Financial details of the transaction were not made available as of press-time.



**JOHN DEERE  
LANDSCAPES**



Want to read more of the latest landscape industry news? Visit [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com). If you have news about your company that you feel is important to share with the industry, send the information to Nicole Wisniewski at [nwisniewski@gje.net](mailto:nwisniewski@gje.net) or mail it to her at 4012 Bridge Ave., Cleveland, OH 44113.



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A LEADING EDGE

## What's Your Company's MVP?

**H**ave you ever purchased a product or service because the company that sold it was able to offer you something none of their competitors could? If so, then you've come face-to-face with that company's MVP. No, we don't mean the salesperson who highlighted his employer's great features and then handed you a contract to sign. According to Keith Rosen, president of business coaching firm Profit Builders, an MVP isn't a "Most Valuable Player" — it's a "Most Valuable Proposition."

"Your MVP is a unique feature that clearly distinguishes you from your competition," Rosen told attendees at *Lawn & Landscape's* 2005 Weed & Insect Management Seminars held in Cleveland, Ohio and New Orleans, La., in August. "Think about it this way: 99 percent of every person's DNA is exactly the same; it's the last 1 percent that makes us different and unique. Many of the business owners I've met are all trying to sound like everyone else, including their competitors instead of trying to stand out. That's why it's essential to develop your own MVP."

A value proposition doesn't have to be limited to one of a company's products or services, Rosen says. It could be a credential that the company has earned, a unique commitment to customer service or a standard to which a company holds its staff members. "Think of Domino's Pizza," Rosen told seminar attendees. "Domino's Pizza is known for delivering pizza in 30 minutes or less or they're free. Certainly, people were delivering pizza in less than 30 minutes before Domino's came along, but they took something they knew they could deliver and wrapped a guarantee around it — they exploited the obvious."

Rosen says landscape contractors can do the same thing by highlighting something their company already does well — such as offer a certain type of warranty or exhibit exceptional customer service. By "wrapping a guarantee around it," companies have the ability to diffuse price objections to their services, thereby earning more sales and being able to sell their services at higher prices.

Rosen gave an example from his own consumer experiences to highlight his point about MVPs. After finding termites in their homes, Rosen and his neighbor agreed to hire a pest control service of Rosen's choosing to eliminate the problem. After interviewing a number of pest control operators, Rosen said he saw similar price points across the board, except for one company who's prices were significantly higher. "I came out and asked the salesperson directly, 'Why is your price so much higher than your competitors?'" Rosen says. "The salesperson said, 'Oh, didn't I tell you about our guarantee?'"

Rosen says that by using a certain type of termiticide delivery system, the pest control company guaranteed that the termites would be eliminated faster than their competitors could promise and that if the pests ever returned, the company would pay to repair any damage caused. "This company's termite damage guarantee was so compelling that it was worth spending hundreds of dollars more for the peace of mind the guarantee brought," Rosen says. "That was their Most Valuable Proposition."

In addition, Rosen gave two other MVP examples by referring to Oracle Corp., a developer of information management software, and Traco, a replacement window manufacturer. "I saw an ad at the airport that said, '17 of the 20 largest banks in the world run Oracle applications,'" Rosen says. "That's their MVP. No one else can claim that, and that shows that an MVP doesn't have

to be your service that differentiates you. Similarly, Traco Windows puts the Statue of Liberty in some of their ad materials. Why? Because they replaced all of the windows in Liberty's crown. No one else can claim that."

For Weed & Insect Management Seminar attendees, Rosen provided a worksheet to help those companies get started on developing their own MVPs — something any company can do and start seeing the difference without delay, he says. Here are some of those tips:

1. On separate pieces of paper, write the names of distinct components of your business. These could be Services, Products, Company, Staff, Guarantees/Warranties, Customer Service, among others.
2. For each category, write down what your competition is saying about themselves in relation to that item, as well as what your company is saying about itself. You'll see many similarities.
3. From there, change your thinking to focus on something within your company that other companies cannot say about themselves. Here are some examples:
  - What awards or certifications has your company or employees won for landscape work?
  - What level of education do you require of your managers or other staff members?
  - Do you belong to industry associations? The Chamber of Commerce or Better Business Bureau?

As you go through this exercise, make sure to follow all of the steps and don't skip to your company's outstanding assets. Understanding where you most compare to your competition can tell you the most about where you can start contrasting your company, positively, against them. — **Lauren Spiers**



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*EDITOR'S NOTE: This year, Lawn & Landscape begins its 25<sup>th</sup> year of service to the industry. To help celebrate this milestone, each 2005 issue of Lawn & Landscape will reflect on the people, companies and events that have shaped our industry.*

August 2003



March 1992



February 2005



THE EVOLUTION OF THE LAWN & LANDSCAPE COVER OVER THE PAST 25 YEARS.

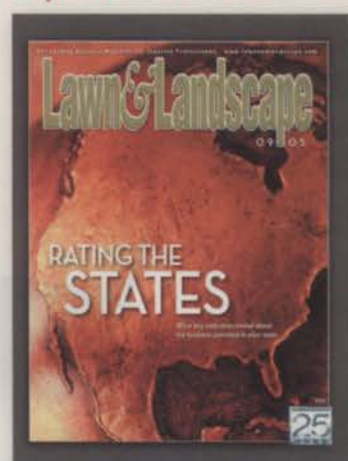
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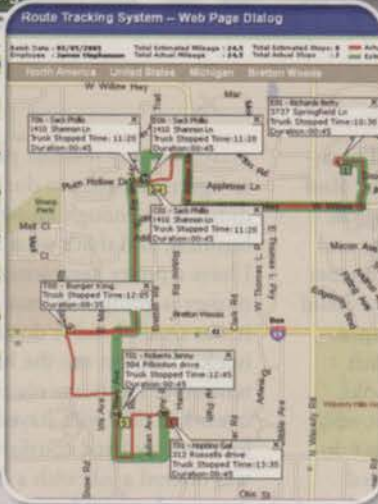


### Voice Turn By Turn Navigation



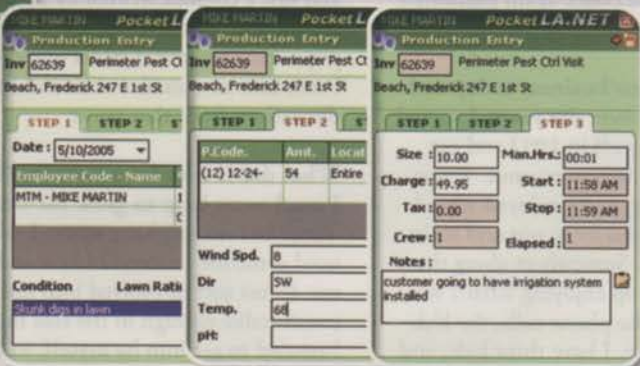
### LA.NET GPS Vehicle Tracking

Begin	End	Duration	Action Type	Location Name
05:54PM	05:56PM		Power	Power ON
05:56PM	05:59PM		Begin	Begin: 6701 -
05:56PM	06:03PM	00:07	In Transit	In-Transit
06:03PM	06:16PM	00:13	Stop 1	5317 - 5396
06:16PM	06:17PM	00:01	In Transit	In-Transit
06:17PM	06:57PM	00:40	In Transit	In-Transit
06:57PM	06:59PM	00:02	Stop 2	L-Customer
06:59PM	07:05PM	00:06	In Transit	In-Transit
07:05PM	07:06PM	00:01	Stop 3	5501 - 5396
07:06PM	07:09PM	00:03	In Transit	In-Transit
07:09PM	07:10PM	00:01	Stop 4	5317 - 5396
07:10PM	07:13PM	00:03	In Transit	In-Transit
07:13PM	08:26PM	01:13	Stop 5	L-Buffalo Bus
08:26PM	08:38PM	00:12	In Transit	In-Transit
08:38PM	08:39PM		End	End: 9401 - 54



### Vehicle Tracking

Name	Address	Site
Edit Robison, Rich	305 21st St	CO1
Edit Gray, Carolyn	319 7th St	CO1
Edit Spector,	6720 Aberdeen	CO1
Edit Cable, Martha	614 Ade St	CO1
Edit White, Steve	620 Ade St	CO1
Edit Bluedorn,	709 Ade St	CO1
Edit Sumbers,	814 Ade St	CO1
Edit Sanders,	916 Ade St	CO1
Edit Campbell,	610 Adams St	CO1
Edit Norton, Lori	637 Adams St	CO1
Edit Carey, Diane	652 Adams St	CO1
Edit Adedo, Bob	1526 Alan Ln	CO1
Edit Sykes, Gerald	862 Albright Dr	CO1
Edit Weiss,	1855 W Argyle St	CO1



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# Rediscovered Passion

by jonathan katz

In 2002, stagnant revenues and burn-out had Princeton Scapes owner Rud Mason on the verge of quitting the Sterling, Mass.-based landscape and masonry business he started 10 years earlier. Mason knew the only way he could go on was with some outside assistance. After researching different consultants in industry trade magazines and books, Mason hired an industry consultant who he says helped him realize he couldn't do it all and that he needed some defined business processes. Today, Princeton Scapes has grown to nearly \$1 million in revenue, and Mason says he's once again passionate about the business.

**Tell me about your business today and how it's changed over the years.** I started the business by myself in 1992 and got up to about \$200,000 in revenue. It was comfortable living, and I enjoyed what I did. I hired two guys to go out and maintain lawns for me. Somewhere along the way I started to stop enjoying what I was doing. It was all the phone calls, the kids and everything else. I have three kids, and it was just becoming too much. When our third child came along, I realized that I had

maxed out my revenue potential, so I tried to figure out what to do. I knew that I didn't have enough knowledge to grow the business, and that's what kept me small. I have a pretty keen sense of where my money is going – at least I did then when it was small. I didn't do anything by the books. I almost ran the business like an extension of my home checking account and it worked. My wife stayed home with the kids and we lived comfortably. In 2002, I was offered a job with a developer. It was a pretty decent job and good money. At that point, I was reading trade magazines and saw a column written by an industry consultant. Whatever he said in that article piqued my interest. I had a question, so I sent him an e-mail and he and I started discussions from that point.

**What did it take for you to finally say I need some help to grow the business?** There was no epiphany where I said I need someone to come in here and help me. It just sort of evolved into not being comfortable enough in the role that I knew I needed to get into by myself, so I needed the advice and coaching skills that a consultant could bring to me. I didn't want to

PRINCETON

SCAPES



grow the business at first, but it got to a point in the last two years or so where it wasn't growing that I also didn't enjoy what I was doing anymore. That's when I started to look at what else I could do because I didn't have the comfort level or thought process to grow. But what ultimately made me decide that I could grow was not necessarily hiring a consultant – it was more through reading trade magazines and some great books and realizing that even though I'm not the most intelligent guy in the world, if these people could do it, I felt I could do it. So at that point I knew that if I was going to do it and do it well, I should start looking for help. I realized right from the get-go that I didn't have the energy to grow the company while trying to balance my home life, working out in the field all

day and doing all of the office work. It was a gradual process for me to get only in the office, but that's what I am doing now and have been doing for almost a year. I'm an office person, a salesperson and a cheerleader and all that wrapped into one now.

**How did you make that transition into the office? How did that transition go?** The transition to the office has not been hard at all, which is interesting for me because I was a business major and I left school because I couldn't stand being inside. I couldn't stand sitting in an office. Even driving around in a truck looking at jobs drove me nuts, but now driving around and talking to the crew and talking to the customers and sitting in here plotting and strategizing and working on proposals – that's

what really invigorates me. I just get so pumped up to go to work. It's just an exciting thing, and I try to spread that throughout the company. I try to explain to everybody in the company that if we're going to be a great company, they're going to have to want to grow. And what I mean by a great company is a place where everyone from me down to the college kid who works for us during the summer can make a career out of this. The frustrating and not-fun part of my job is at the end of many days I go home feeling as though I've accomplished nothing. But as I look back on a week where a lot has been done, I realize that it wouldn't have gotten done without me. Back when I was building stone walls I could see the square footage, I could see the beauty arising, and now I don't get that at the end of the day, but





as long as I can keep that in context, it's totally rewarding.

**If you hated being inside and driving around before, why are things different now?** Before it was something that took me away from something I perceived to be the most important thing I was doing and it was. I was building things for the customers so returning phone calls and sending bills and all that sort of stuff didn't seem like it was anything more than a hassle. Plus, being inside on a nice day or a rainy day hasn't been my idea of a fun time. Being outside and working hard and flexing what muscles I had then – that is what excited me. But I'm a little guy, so doing the masonry work took a toll on my body and that was one of the things that made me think I had to do something

of six months or so of me trying to muddle my way through how to attack different things. At one point I told the consultant I thought I should be in the office 100 percent, and he said I wasn't big enough yet to do that. Soon after that I felt as though I had to, so I did. It's one of those dynamic things where he gives me advice, I listen to every bit of advice he gives me and then I have to weigh it against what I'm feeling and what I'm doing, and I think that's what happened in this particular instance.


**How did your transition impact the workforce?** A couple of years ago, I was trying to find a construction supervisor to replace me in the field, so I did an extensive interviewing process and put an ad in the paper. I got a guy who I thought was going to take us to the next

**What was the result of the ad?** I got all of two responses from it and the guy who came into the office looked out of shape. He was in a suit and tie type of thing with his tie undone, and he just didn't look the part, but he looked me in the eye and told me he could do the job and do it better than anyone I'd seen. I just didn't know what to believe, so I checked his references and his references checked out. It wasn't a long process because I didn't have a long time, so I hired him thinking this would be a short-term fill. I'll tell you, he's one of the biggest assets to our company. He's everything I was looking for and more, and next year he's probably going to turn into an operations manager.

**How comfortable were you letting other people take over your old**

**position?** It was a slow process. The year before I hired the gentleman who didn't work out I was letting some of the lesser-experienced guys do some of the work. When that new year rolled around and I set plans to let the other gentleman take over my role, I already knew that people without much

experience could handle some facets of the job, so I felt fairly comfortable that someone with a lot of experience could do even better.

**So now that you have some pieces in place, what's next?** Next year our goal is to have our new construction supervisor move to being the operations supervisor. We need to hire a dedicated mason. We need to hire an on-staff designer to take the heat off of me because I'm not that proficient in it. We could outsource it, but I think it would be much more efficient if we had a person in house. I don't want to stop growing. Before when I wasn't growing I wasn't a company. We don't want to put a cap on our growth. I don't have to be the biggest fish in the pond or the smallest fish in the pond. What I don't want to do is worry about any of the fish in the pond. I want to worry about what we're doing and make sure everyone who is here is happy and healthy and that our profit margins and revenues are growing. 

**"I don't have to be the biggest fish in the pond or the smallest fish in the pond. What I don't want to do is worry about any of the fish in the pond. I want to make sure everyone here is happy and that our profit margins and revenues are growing."**

else, in addition to the burnout of doing it day in and day out. Now, though, being inside isn't torture because I'm aware of and believe in the fact that what I'm doing is equally important as what the guys in the field are doing toward making our customers happy and, in some cases, more important.

**What did it take for you to realize that your current responsibilities are important?** I think with the consultant's guidance I realized I needed to spend a little more time tending the store rather than dusting the shelves. So it probably started with a little bit of a nudge from him and reading trade magazines. I think it was through a series of discussions with my consultant about the different dilemmas I was facing at the time, and realizing that I definitely needed to trust him. I can't just rubber-stamp everything he says, but I need to listen to what he says in order for him to help me. It definitely wasn't a one-discussion thing. It was over the course

level. He had all the credentials and all the references in the world. He came to work and hadn't been in the field for a couple of years. It was a little slow going at first and it just got worse and worse, and he actually left me at the beginning of May, which is like suicide for me. I thought I was dead. So I talked to my consultant about it and he helped me craft a help-wanted ad that really asked for the person I was looking for, as opposed to just throwing it at the paper.

**What was in the help-wanted ad that wasn't before?** Beforehand I would place an ad that said, "Construction supervisor. Need help immediately. Great pay." What I try to do now is give a quick descriptive line like "Soon-to-be \$1-million company needs a construction supervisor with three to five years experience." I give the price range that we're talking about, I give the benefits package that we're talking about, and I put the name of our company in there with the phone number so there's no guesswork.



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Mountain View Landscapes & Lawn Care has found that snow plowing and ice removal services are a great way to heat up profits during the chilly wintertime.

# Cold Cash

by kathleen franzinger

**A**s a contractor in the Northeast U.S., snow and ice removal seems like an obvious service to offer. Like death and taxes, snowy winters are inevitable. In an average winter, Mountain View Landscapes & Lawn Care in Chicopee, Mass., experiences 14 to 16 snow events, but Jason Hollway, commercial landscape manager, says they saw more than 20 last year.

For Mountain View, offering snow and ice removal made sound business sense besides the obvious reasons. The company's landscaping services start at the end of March and run until the middle of December. Snow and ice removal covers the gap in between for items such as administration costs, helping to keep the business open year-round.

Mountain View has been providing

snow services for 29 years and boasts a customer retention rate of 95 percent. Although it does service a couple of residential accounts, the bulk of the snow and ice removal work – about 40 accounts – is commercial.

**SNOW OPERATIONS.** Mountain View's snow and ice removal service entails plowing and applying sand and salt, and it includes sidewalks and entrances as well as parking lots. Loader work, which involves moving large snow banks, is also available. "We do a lot of large parking lots, so two to three times a year we have to move the snow that has accumulated to make room," Hollway explains.

In terms of equipment, snow and ice removal services require a large investment. In Mountain View's arsenal are nine one-



Photos: Sno-Way

tow plow trucks with 9-foot plows, five snowblowers for walkways, five compact skid-steers with blades and buckets for plowing and moving snow, three dump trucks with sanders, one 4-yard loader with a box plow, and two backhoes with box plows. "But a heavy-duty truck with a gross vehicle weight rating of at least 8,600 pounds and a plow, as well as a snowblower, would be a basic start for residential and light commercial plowing," Hollway says, adding that a snow plow costs about \$3,500 and a snowblower is around \$1,500.

He also recommends buying new equipment, as opposed to used. Breakdowns are bound to happen, but

that's why Hollway tries to build a large number of accounts in a tight area. The crews plow in teams of two or three trucks per area, which covers about a 10-mile radius. "In total, we have 12 vehicles covering a more than 20-mile radius," he says, adding that staying close makes everything more efficient.

Hollway lays off landscape crews as the work tapers off near the end of the season, but when the snow starts, the crewmembers come back. "We have about 25 guys involved in the snow services," he says.

**PLOW PROFITS.** When it comes to selling snow and ice services, Hollway

relies on the telephone. He first calls and tries selling the service to Mountain View's landscape maintenance accounts not participating in snow and ice removal. About 75 percent of the company's landscaping accounts also receive snow services.

To find more new customers, Hollway looks at industrial parks, property management companies and other businesses within 15 to 20 miles of his current customers. When he finds some with potential, he typically knocks on the door and asks for a contact name. "When I have a contact name, I send a letter of introduction and then follow-up with a phone call," he says.



In August, Hollway calls to secure new sales for the upcoming winter. "We try to get customers on board as soon as possible," he says. "I like to know how many new accounts I'm going to have in August and September so we can get the equipment while it's still available." Hollway calls current accounts for renewals even earlier – usually in July.

When priced properly, the service can be a viable source of revenue. Last year, Hollway says his company billed out close to \$350,000 on snow and ice removal. He says they strive for more than a 50 percent gross profit margin on jobs, which they achieved last year. In comparison, the company maintains a 45 percent gross profit margin in commercial maintenance, and construction services are around 30 percent.

There are a number of ways to price the service, and even more variables to consider when estimating how long a job might take. In addition to the size of the site, Hollway factors in how many objects – islands, light poles

flexibility helps him better meet clients' needs, preventing him from losing an account to a competitor.

Most of Mountain View Landscapes & Lawn Care's snow removal customers – about 50 percent – are charged on a per-inch basis. "The price for plowing a 1-acre lot may vary from \$80 to \$160 for 1 to 3 inches," he says. When snowfall is heavier, Hollway adjusts the price for every additional three inches. For example, he'll multiply the amount by approximately 1.5 to 2 times if snowfall is 3 to 6 inches, and the price can double or triple if snowfall approaches 6 to 9 inches.

Twenty-five percent of the customers receive a flat-rate seasonal contract price. Hollway estimates how long it will take to plow per inch and prices accordingly. Then he looks at the average number of snow events and amount of precipitation in each event over the last five years. "Our area averages 16 snow events per season," he says, adding that there are about five 1 to 3-inch events, five 3.1 to 6 inches, three 6.1 to 9 inches, two 9.1

long it will take to plow a property, which may be difficult if he doesn't have production rates from similar properties to use as a comparison."

**ICY CONDITIONS AHEAD.** Another slippery part to offering the service is protecting your company from lawsuits. Not having insurance coverage is a huge risk that could ruin a company financially. Whether or not a company's insurance costs would increase by offering the service depends on the current coverage. Because Mountain View already had a substantial amount of liability insurance, adding snow and ice removal didn't change the cost.

For insurance purposes, Hollway says he thoroughly documents snow events and the company's response to them. "It is so important to document all of the events leading to a storm, during a storm and after a storm for both insurance reasons and the satisfaction of the customer," he says. He details where every crewmember goes and when, the amount of snow and the entire weather forecast from the moment it's forecast on the local news.

The company's contracts state that crews will be out after 2 inches of snowfall, unless a customer requests something different. Hollway also makes sure to ask what time a client's business is open so he is sure to have the service done by that time.

But perhaps the biggest challenge to offering the service is taking on too much work, which only leads to headaches. Snow and ice removal is not a service in which most customers – residential or commercial – are willing to overlook sloppy or late work. Expectations are high because the service affects their businesses, safety and convenience. Getting the job done right and on time is the only way to keep customers happy and money in the bank. Hollway says his goal is to under promise and over deliver. "I try not to tell a customer that his parking lot will be completely dry and ice and snow free after a storm," he explains. "Due to temperature extremes and length, some storms are tough to cleanup completely."

Because of this, Hollway tries to educate customers about winter conditions, and keep in communication either by fax or e-mail to ensure his team is meeting the client's expectations. 44



and dumpsters – are in a parking lot. He also takes into account if it's long and narrow or wide open. He says in a 3-inch storm a 1-acre parking lot with few obstacles may take a half-hour to clear with a plow truck or it could take as long as an hour if there are objects to maneuver around.

Hollway charges for snow services in one of three ways: by the inch, by a flat rate or by the hour. When meeting with a new customer, he first offers a per-inch pricing, but if the customer asks for a flat rate or an hourly rate he can easily accommodate them. The

to 12 inches and one event more than 12 inches. Hollway then multiplies the number of events per inch by the price per inch and adds the totals.

The rest of the customers – the remaining 25 percent – are charged an hourly rate, which varies depending on the type of equipment needed. Hollway says the hourly price ranges from \$150 per hour for a plow truck to \$250 for a loader. He suggests that inexperienced plowers try per-hour pricing at first to ensure they're covering all of their costs. "A contractor pricing per inch has to know all of his costs and estimate how



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## 2005 STATE OF THE INDUSTRY REPORT

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- An Economic Outlook
- The Big vs. Small Company
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- Regional Breakouts

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By Nicole Wisniewski

# Working Smarter

Contractors adapt to rising costs and look forward to double-digit growth.

The 2005 State of the Industry research shows that total average revenue per company is up more than \$60,000; the percent net revenue increase is up by 1.8 percent; service prices are up by an average of nearly 12 percent; spending is up in all equipment categories except for one; and to top it all off, the average operating cost increase is down by 2.4 percent.

Despite a few continued drawbacks, such as surging fuel and health insurance costs, contractors are innovating and adapting by cutting costs to make 2005 a successful year.

**MORE WITH LESS.** With continued economic confidence, landscape business leaders are positioning their organizations for growth. That is according to *Lawn & Landscape's* survey of landscape professionals, conducted in August by an independent firm. More than 700 contractors from 49 states and the District of Columbia responded.

This year, the actions of green industry contractors reflect those of many business people in other industries – when costs rise yet the workload continues to grow, profits require streamlining systems and trying to do more with less. Marketing, communication and transaction costs

have already been driven down by an increase in less expensive Internet and e-mail communications. And, according to some business consultants, mergers and acquisitions is also driving down the cost of production and delivery for many goods and services. "Driving down costs is not an episodic phenomenon," explains Thomas Koulopoulos, president, Delphi Group, Perot Systems Corp. "Instead, there will be a continuing and accelerating pressure to drive costs down. The mantra of 'more for less' is now a manifesto for deep-rooted change."

This pattern is evident when looking at a contractor's average revenue per employee, which increased nearly \$5,000 with fewer employees (16.6 vs. 17 workers) in previous years. While the difference in the number of employees may seem small, that's \$357.27 more revenue generated per employee (\$2,891.39 vs. \$2,534.12), which can add up to a lot based on a contractor's business size. This is also the first time since 2000 where average revenue per employee is up over \$45,000.

When trimming back on employees, businesses normally do so from the ranks of middle management – in this case, supervisors. According to our survey, supervisors experienced a 16.2 percent decrease in pay from \$45,865 to \$38,436. Designers/architects also suffered an average salary decrease, but at a lower rate – 9.5 percent. Employees with hourly wages who encountered pay cuts included entry-level and experienced spray technicians and entry-level and experienced construction workers at 6.4 and 3.2 and 2.3 and 1.6 percent, respectively.

This is comparable to small businesses across the United States. Nationally, the average paycheck declined 2.3 percent

in May compared with a year ago, according to Michael Alter, president, SurePayroll, an Illinois-based payroll firm.

Owners/presidents enjoyed the greatest average increase in pay at 7.9 percent. Mower operators, foremen and account managers also benefited from increases ranging from between 2 and 3 percent. This shows that contractors wanted to retain workers in these key positions maybe more than they did in other positions.

In all categories except one (residential mowing), an increase in customers was also noted. But the number of average residential mowing acres increased by 19.23 percent, which reflects that on average contractors are servicing fewer but larger residential properties this year.

This client augmentation combined with a decrease in employees confirms that employees each had to take on more clients in every case except for residential mowing. The differences are most drastic in residential chemical work – the average employee handles 13.34 residential chemical clients today vs. 8.66 last year.

With rising health insurance costs, one way to service more customers with fewer employees and yet continue to add more jobs and offer more services is by hiring subcontractors who do not require health insurance or other benefits. This year, contractors increased their spending on subcontractors an average of 72 percent at \$41,018 – nearly double last year's expenditures in this category.

Spending also increased in every other category, more in miscellaneous (141 percent) and equipment parts (67 percent) than in the others, though they all experienced double digit increases. Snow and ice removal products was the only category



SERVICE PRICING			
SERVICE	2004	2005	% CHANGE
Residential Mowing	\$36.90*	\$41.00*	+11.11%
Commercial Mowing	\$41.90*	\$47.10*	+12.41%
Chemical Lawn Care	\$16.80**	\$18.80**	+11.90%

\*Charge per hour \*\*Charge per 1,000 square feet

where contractors spent slightly less – \$4,242 vs. \$4,343, which is in line with the more than 38 percent of contractors who identified a mild or inconsistent winter as their greatest challenge to doing business this year. However, 76.2 percent of snow contractors are expecting increased sales next winter (2005/2006), predicting a nearly 37 percent boost in sales, which should fuel spending in this category.

**SERVICE SECTORS.** More people are entering the landscape contracting business, as evident by the 30 percent of contractors who report that they've been in business for less than five years. This coincides with the fact that lowball competitors remains No. 3 on the average contractor's top five concerns list.

Historically, some of the ways contractors combat lowball competitors is by offering more services to retain their core customer

base while fostering growth. While the majority (42 percent) of respondents said lawn mowing/maintenance makes up the greatest percent of their annual sales, this is down 1.9 percent compared to last year. This shows the shift in contractors offering more services, such as chemical lawn care which increased from 9.8 to 11 percent of a typical contractor's annual sales and tree and ornamental care, which increased from 2.4 to 6 percent of a typical contractor's annual sales.

All service sectors are up over last year in terms of revenue growth – 17 vs. 14.8 percent for lawn maintenance, 15.6 vs. 11 percent for construction, 15.3 vs. 8.9 percent for chemical lawn care, 6.1 vs. 1.9 percent for arbor services, 9.4 vs. 5.3 percent for irrigation, 5.5 vs. 0.7 percent for nursery/retail, and 9.2 from 3.3 percent for snow removal services.

## HOW WE DID IT

In August of this year, 10,352 *Lawn & Landscape* readers received an invitation to take part in our State of the Industry survey, conducted by ABR Research, an independent firm. We received 705 responses to the survey. The margin of error based on these 705 returned surveys is calculated to be no greater than +/- 3.7 percentage points at a confidence level of 95 percent.

The data was then analyzed, compared to the previous eight years worth of surveys and used throughout this report.

Unless otherwise noted, the charts used in this report were taken from this research.

Regional report areas were broken out by states that experienced similar agronomic and climatic conditions and, therefore, comparable business challenges.



## THE 2005 LANDSCAPE COMPANY

Average revenue.....	\$796,750
Average company age .....	13.5 years
Average net revenue increase .....	19.2%
Average net profit increase .....	11.0%
Average net operating cost change .....	14.4%
Average revenue per employee* .....	\$47,997

\*Considering 16.6 total employees

## EMPLOYEES

Average number of year-round employees .....	6.5
Average number of seasonal employees .....	10.1

## RESIDENTIAL MOWING CUSTOMERS & ACRES

Average residential mowing customers .....	51.8
Average residential mowing acres serviced .....	106.6
Average acres serviced per customer.....	2.06

## RESIDENTIAL CHEMICAL CUSTOMERS & ACRES

Average residential chemical customers.....	221.6
Average residential chemical acres serviced .....	180.6
Average acres serviced per customer.....	0.81

## COMMERCIAL MOWING CUSTOMERS & ACRES

Average commercial mowing customers.....	21.5
Average commercial mowing acres serviced .....	175.7
Average acres serviced per customer.....	8.17

## COMMERCIAL CHEMICAL CUSTOMERS & ACRES

Average commercial chemical customers .....	39.2
Average commercial chemical acres serviced.....	109.6
Average acres serviced per customer.....	2.80

## TOP 5 COMPANY CONCERNS FOR 2006

1. Fuel prices
2. Worker's compensation costs
3. Lowball competitors
4. Health insurance costs & Overworked/stressed
5. Inflation/Rising interest rates





EMPLOYEE PAY SCALES			
POSITION	HOURLY RATE/ SALARY 2004	HOURLY RATE/ SALARY 2005	% CHANGE
Entry-level mower operator	\$8.00	\$8.20	+2.5%
Experienced mower operator	\$10.30	\$10.60	+2.9%
Entry-level spray technician	\$9.40	\$8.80	-6.4%
Experienced spray technician	\$12.60	\$12.20	-3.2%
Entry-level construction worker	\$8.80	\$8.60	-2.3%
Experienced construction worker	\$12.60	\$12.40	-1.6%
Foreman	\$30,088	\$31,071	+3.3%
Designers/architects	\$45,644	\$41,329	-9.5%
Account managers	\$35,323	\$36,135	+2.3%
Supervisors	\$45,865	\$38,436	-16.2%
Owners/presidents	\$54,450	\$58,744	+7.9%

Contractors were also able to increase service pricing in 2005. Residential and commercial mowing were both up about 10.5 percent in 2004, but this year are up 11.11 and 12.41 percent, respectively. Chemical lawn care service pricing per 1,000 square foot was only up 6.9 percent in 2004 – in 2005 it was almost double that at an annual 11.90 percent increase.

When looking to the economy and its influence on the landscape industry, the fact that real gross domestic product growth has remained at more than 3 percent for nine consecutive quarters is a sign that small business economic conditions remain strong and steady, according to Chad Moutray, chief economist for the Office of Advocacy, adding that small business optimism also remains high.

## HOUSING MARKET PREDICTIONS

The housing market remains strong and is expected to remain so for the rest of 2005, according to Al Schuler, USDA Forest Service. "The market remains at lofty levels due to combination of strong demand and innovative financing, plus rapid price appreciation in some markets is encouraging some prospective buyers to 'jump in' before rates get too high," he says.

According to a recent report by the National Association of Realtors, housing markets remain frothy in some regions. Nationally, NAR reports that prices have increased at a 13.6 percent pace, year over year – a very healthy rate that is skewed by even higher rates in some regions. For example, Schuler points out that in the past 12 months, metro regions in Washington D.C., Miami and New York are up 26, 32 and 18 percent, respectively. In contrast, over the same period, slower economies in Chicago, Denver and Houston contributed to slower price appreciation rates of 7.7, 2.6 and 2.4, respectively.

"Concerns are the weakening dollar, which puts upward pressure on interest rates, and rapid house price appreciation (pushing prices out of reach for a growing number of potential buyers)," Schuler says, adding that this means the housing market is expected to pull back sometime in 2006. "Single family sales will probably slow the most due to affordability problems with entry level buyers as higher mortgage rates shift some prospective single family buyers to the rental market."

These findings justify contractors concerns about the potentially negative business affects of inflation/rising interest rates, which moved from No. 7 to No. 5 on the landscape professionals' 2006 top concerns list.

AVERAGE EXPENDITURE PER COMPANY			
EQUIPMENT	2004	2005	% CHANGE
Truck purchases and leases	\$28,067	\$35,637	+27%
Landscape equipment purchases and leases	\$13,606	\$18,757	+38%
Landscape plants, trees and shrubs	\$55,277	\$74,292	+34%
Equipment parts	\$5,079	\$8,486	+67%
Irrigation systems and components	\$30,672	\$36,325	+18%
Chemical/fertilizer products	\$16,059	\$21,027	+31%
Snow and ice products	\$4,343	\$4,249	-2%
Construction hardscape materials	\$38,610	\$51,935	+35%
Subcontracted services	\$23,911	\$41,018	+72%
Miscellaneous	\$6,817	\$16,440	+141%



#### DOES YOUR COMPANY ASSESS CUSTOMERS A FUEL SURCHARGE?

RESPONSE	% OF CONTRACTORS
NO, we build fuel costs into service prices instead	51%
NO, but we're considering it	21%
YES, for all jobs	13%
NO, and we're not considering it	10%
YES, if the job is more than a certain distance	5%

Source: Lawn & Landscape Online, May 2005

#### HOW IS YOUR COMPANY HANDLING RISING FUEL COSTS THIS YEAR?

RESPONSE	% OF CONTRACTORS
We're raising prices as needed	44%
We're absorbing the added costs	34%
We planned for this and raised prices early	15%
We're looking at more fuel-efficient trucks and equipment	7%

Source: Lawn & Landscape Online, April 2005

#### HOW ARE EVER-INCREASING GAS PRICES AFFECTING YOUR BUSINESS?

RESPONSE	% OF CONTRACTORS
It stings - we didn't anticipate such high prices	40%
It's OK - we add fuel surcharges to some jobs	27%
Not good - it's pulling down our profits	20%
We're fine - we add fuel surcharges to all jobs	7%
Ouch - we're in the red this summer	7%

Source: Lawn & Landscape Online, August 2005

YEAR	SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSING STARTS	MULTI-FAMILY STARTS	TOTAL
2002	1,363,000	347,000	1,710,000
2003	1,505,000	349,000	1,854,000
2004	1,604,000	345,000	1,950,000
2005	1,663,000 (projected)	351,000 (projected)	2,014,000 (projected)
2006	1,563,000 (projected)	340,000 (projected)	1,903,000 (projected)

Source: National Association of Home Builders

## RIISING FUEL COSTS — A PERMANENT PROBLEM?

Rising fuel costs continue to be a top concern for business owners, and most expect this to continue into 2006. In fact, contractors named fuel prices their No. 1 expected 2006 success-limiting factor for the second year in a row. The concern rose from 7.7 to 8.2 this year on a scale from one to 10 with 10 being the greatest point of concern.

In an early August *Lawn & Landscape Online* poll, 73 percent of contractors reported fuel prices per gallon in the range of \$2.50 to \$2.74. No contractors reported prices less than \$2.25. Nationally, regular grade gasoline prices averaged \$2.37 per gallon as of early August.

When asked how higher gas prices were affecting business, 20 percent of contractors report that they are pulling down profits and another 7 percent said it put their numbers in the red this summer. Forty percent of contractors said they didn't anticipate such high prices and had to adjust their costs accordingly, and the remaining 34 percent had planned ahead to compensate for the increases with fuel surcharges for some or all jobs. This is a change from April, when 34 percent of contractors claimed they were absorbing the added costs and 7 percent were looking at more fuel-efficient trucks and equipment to try to combat costs internally.

Overall, according to another 2005 online poll, 69 percent of contractors said they either build fuel costs into their service pricing or assess a fuel surcharge on jobs, 21 percent are considering adopting one of these options if prices remain high and the remaining 10 percent do not cover fuel costs in their pricing or via a surcharge and are not considering doing so in the near future.

American homes currently spend 3 percent of their household income on gasoline and home heating expenses, according to Thorsten Fischer, senior economist, Economy.com. While contractors have not yet reported customers canceling services because they needed to cut costs due to rising fuel expenses, this could become an issue since 45 percent of Americans admit they are trimming back on purchases to compensate for higher fuel costs, as reported in an ABC News Poll.

So far, the ever increasing gas prices seem to be having no dramatic affects on the economy, Fischer says. "The effect is small for one major reason - the economy is healthy," he says, mentioning the healthy growth in the job and home markets, as well as historically low long-term interest rates.





By Nicole Wisniewski

# Big Vs. Small

A revealing look at the similarities and differences between small and large competitors.

The *Lawn & Landscape* 2005 State of the Industry research also revealed some interesting contrasts and comparisons between larger (more than \$200,000 in revenue) and smaller (less than \$200,000 in revenue) landscape companies.

In categories you'd expect, such as number of employees, number of customers and years in business, obviously smaller companies had fewer employees, fewer customers and were in business for fewer years than larger companies. But in other categories, the two different groups showed very comparable numbers. Even net profit and revenue growth were comparable, proving that small companies shouldn't always shun the advice of their larger competitors because they think it might not apply – in reality, they might learn a thing or two.

The similarities included:

- Smaller and larger companies shared a top concern for 2006 – rising fuel prices.
- Surprisingly, both groups serviced a similar customer mix. Typically, a smaller company will have a higher percentage of one type of client – residential, for instance – while larger companies have more of a mix because one of the ways they grow is to offer their niche services to a wider variety of clients.

The categories that stood

## DEFINING BIG VS. SMALL

In most research studies, the average – or mean – is revealed. This shows, what researchers call, the absolute value or the total divided by the number of respondents.

But in some cases, a number known as the median, or the mid-point where 50 percent of respondents are above and 50 percent of respondents are below, can actually show a more typical picture because it is not skewed by larger figures normally reported by a smaller percentage of respondents. For the majority of contractors in the U.S., which are those with less than \$200,000 in revenue, this can give them a better understanding of their business standing compared to others and prevent them from comparing their businesses to the unrealistic expectations of their larger competitors.

For instance, according to our 2005 survey, the average revenue of a landscape contractor is \$796,750. For economic impact studies, this number is completely sound – it truly provides an average figure counting all companies who responded, which represent a very good mix of all types of contractors in appropriate percentages.

However, when looking at the median, the revenue drops to \$150,000, meaning 50 percent of contractors' gross sales are below this number and 50 percent are above.

So, we took the research figures and split them in two – companies with 2005 gross sales of less than \$200,000 and companies with gross sales of more than \$200,000 – to see if there were any major differences in the average figures between the more than half of contractors who are below this mark and their larger counterparts who are above the midpoint. The findings are revealed in this story.

out between the two revenue groups were:

- Larger companies seemed to offer more services while smaller companies were more

specialized, saying they offered a greater percent of one service more than the larger companies. This seems to make sense because with growth



SERVICE PRICING		
	Revenue less than \$200,000	Revenue more than \$200,000
Residential Mowing	\$38.40*	\$42.70*
Commercial Mowing	\$45.30*	\$47.90*
Chemical Lawn Care	\$19.80**	\$18.00**

\* 2005 Charge per hour \*\*2005 per 1,000 square feet

comes greater diversification.

- Operating costs were up more for smaller companies than larger companies, showing that larger companies seemed to have more control on spending even with more moving parts. Smaller companies reported an average 16.3 percent increase, while larger companies reported an average 13.2 percent increase.

- Smaller companies charged less than larger companies by a difference of \$4.30 per hour in residential mowing and \$2.60 per hour in commercial mowing. But smaller companies charged clients \$1.80 more per square foot than larger companies for chemical lawn care services.

- Companies with revenue less than \$200,000 were worried more about lowball competitors, inflation/rising interest rates and weather. Larger companies worried more about worker's compensation and health insurance costs. From this, one can assume that larger companies would have more employees and therefore would have more at risk as insurance costs increased. Larger companies also ranked labor shortage worries as No. 5 on their top concerns list, where smaller companies only ranked that worry as No. 9. Again, the need for more employees at a certain size would make this a

#### THE BIG VS. SMALL COMPANY

CATEGORY	Revenue less than \$200,000	Revenue more than \$200,000
Average revenue	\$49,468	\$1,215,793
Average company age	9.1 years	15.6 years
Average net revenue increase	18.6%	19.5%
Average net profit increase	10.2%	11.2%
Average net operating cost increase	16.3%	13.2%
Average number of seasonal employees	6.2	6.6
Average number of year-round employees	6.1	11.7
Average revenue per employee	\$4,022	\$66,437

#### AVERAGE EXPENDITURE PER COMPANY

	Revenue less than \$200,000	Revenue more than \$200,000
Trucks	\$16,151	\$42,161
Landscape Equipment	\$7,246	\$25,080
Landscape Plants	\$9,419	\$106,199
Equipment Parts	\$1,637	\$12,384
Irrigation Systems	\$2,432	\$51,025
Chemical/Fertilizer Products	\$5,915	\$28,067
Snow & Ice Removal Equipment	\$1,515	\$5,273
Construction Hardscape Equipment	\$7,566	\$67,405
Subcontracted Services	\$3,202	\$51,760
Miscellaneous	\$3,295	\$25,859





natural worry for larger businesses. Overall, this shows that as a business grows, labor-based concerns become more important to owners, while smaller businessmen worry more about things that can impact their customer base, such as unstable weather and rising interest rates.

- Larger companies paid their salaried employees more in every category. However, when it came to hourly wage positions, larger companies paid less for entry level and experienced mower operators at \$8 and \$10.30 an hour, respectively, vs. the \$8.40 and \$10.90 an hour wages smaller companies paid these same positions.

- In the past 12 months, a greater percentage of smaller companies said they purchased more equipment than their larger counterparts, including riding mowers, skid-steer loaders, trucks, blowers, trimmers, chainsaws, bed edging materials, water features, all types of herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, fertilizer/pesticide combinations, and all snow and ice removal products. Yet the expenditures show that larger companies spent more than smaller companies in every equipment category. This is due to the relative size of the investment compared to a company's revenue. For instance, if a \$50,000-revenue company buys a \$25,000 truck, it spends 50 percent of its revenue, while if a \$5-million company buys a \$500,000 truck, it only spends 10 percent of its revenue.

- A greater percentage of larger companies used computers daily for all tasks compared to their smaller competitors. However, when looking at weekly and monthly numbers, smaller companies caught up in terms of computer usage, showing that smaller contractors may use computers just as much as larger contractors, but on a less regular basis. More larger companies (47.2 percent vs. 36.6 percent for smaller contractors) hired an outside service to take care of their Web sites, while smaller contractors (63.4 percent vs. 52.8 percent of larger companies) have internal employees maintain their Web sites.

- Larger companies invest more currently and plan to invest more in their Internet products than their smaller competitors – a more than \$1,000 difference in 2005, 2006 and 2007.

#### EMPLOYEE PAY SCALES

	Revenue less than \$200,000	Revenue more than \$200,000
Entry-level mower operator	\$8.40*	\$8.00*
Experienced mower operator	\$10.90*	\$10.30*
Entry-level spray technician	\$7.10*	\$9.30*
Experienced spray technician	\$10.40*	\$12.70*
Entry-level construction worker	\$8.80*	\$8.60*
Experienced construction worker	\$12.20*	\$12.50*
Foreman	\$25,542**	\$31,736**
Designers/architects	\$34,429**	\$42,101**
Account managers	\$18,778**	\$37,271**
Supervisors	\$28,818**	\$39,012**
Owners/presidents	\$31,273**	\$68,859**

\* 2005 Hourly wage    \*\*2005 Annual salary

#### CUSTOMERS & ACRES

	Revenue less than \$200,000	Revenue more than \$200,000
Residential Mowing Customers	32.8	66.8
Residential Mowing Acres	70.9	144.3
Commercial Mowing Customers	6.3	30.4
Commercial Mowing Acres	94.5	239.6
Residential Chemical Customers	44.7	334.4
Residential Chemical Acres	40.5	253.3
Commercial Chemical Customers	4.9	55.8
Commercial Chemical Acres	22.5	155.9



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By Nicole Wisniewski

# The Landscape Industry's Impact on the Economy

The green industry makes its mark on the economy in terms of number of companies, employment figures, revenue and Gross State Product.

**B**ecause the green industry has grown, it's showing up on economic radars, and more related research is becoming available as a result.

For instance, today's industry makes up nearly 1 percent of the Gross State Product\*\* sum of all states, according to "Economic Impacts of the Green Industry on the United States," a 2005 research study encouraged by the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Committee, spearheaded by Tennessee and Florida university researchers and supported by the American Nursery & Landscape Association and The Professional Landcare Network.

The study also breaks out landscape services as a part of horticultural services.

According to the research, the landscape services sector represents 92 percent (nearly \$40 billion) of the total horticultural services industry output (revenue). The research shows that sales output of the landscape services sector has grown dramatically, from around \$15 billion in 1987 to nearly \$40 billion in 2001, representing an average annual growth rate of 11 percent.

When using the term "output impacts," the study reveals an estimate in 2004 dollars of the impact that would result from a negative change in output, explains the University of Tennessee's Charles Hall. "In other words, there would be an almost \$53-billion loss if the landscape services industry went out of business today," he says. "This number shows how much our industry impacts growth in other industries, such as trucking or banking."

When looking solely at this number, the top five states providing landscape services include California, Florida, Texas, Illinois and Ohio, with impacts ranging from \$8.3 billion for

California to \$2.2 billion for Ohio. These top five states represent 38 percent of the national total, with combined impacts of a little more than \$20 billion. The next five states in terms of economic importance are New Jersey, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Virginia and Maryland. "The top 10 states combined represent 55 percent of the national economic impacts for landscape services, while the top 20 states account for 81 percent of the national total," Hall explains.

The research also shows that landscape service firms account for 93 percent of the employees in the horticultural services industry. "The top five employment states (California, Florida, Texas, Ohio and North Carolina) account for 40 percent of the national landscape workforce," Hall says. "Illinois, Virginia, Georgia, Pennsylvania and Arizona are the next five highest employing states, and when combined with the top five states, represent 57 percent of the national landscape workforce. The top 20 employing states together account for 80 percent of the national landscape workforce."

## ECONOMY REPORT

LANDSCAPE SERVICES CATEGORIES	NUMBER	DOLLAR	PERCENT
Total Establishments	76,458		
Total Employees	514,962		
Total Output		\$36,670*	
Total Output Impacts		\$52,971*	
Total Annual Wages		\$11,987*	
Green Industry Share of GSP**			.878%

Source: Economic Impacts of the Green Industry in the United States, 2005

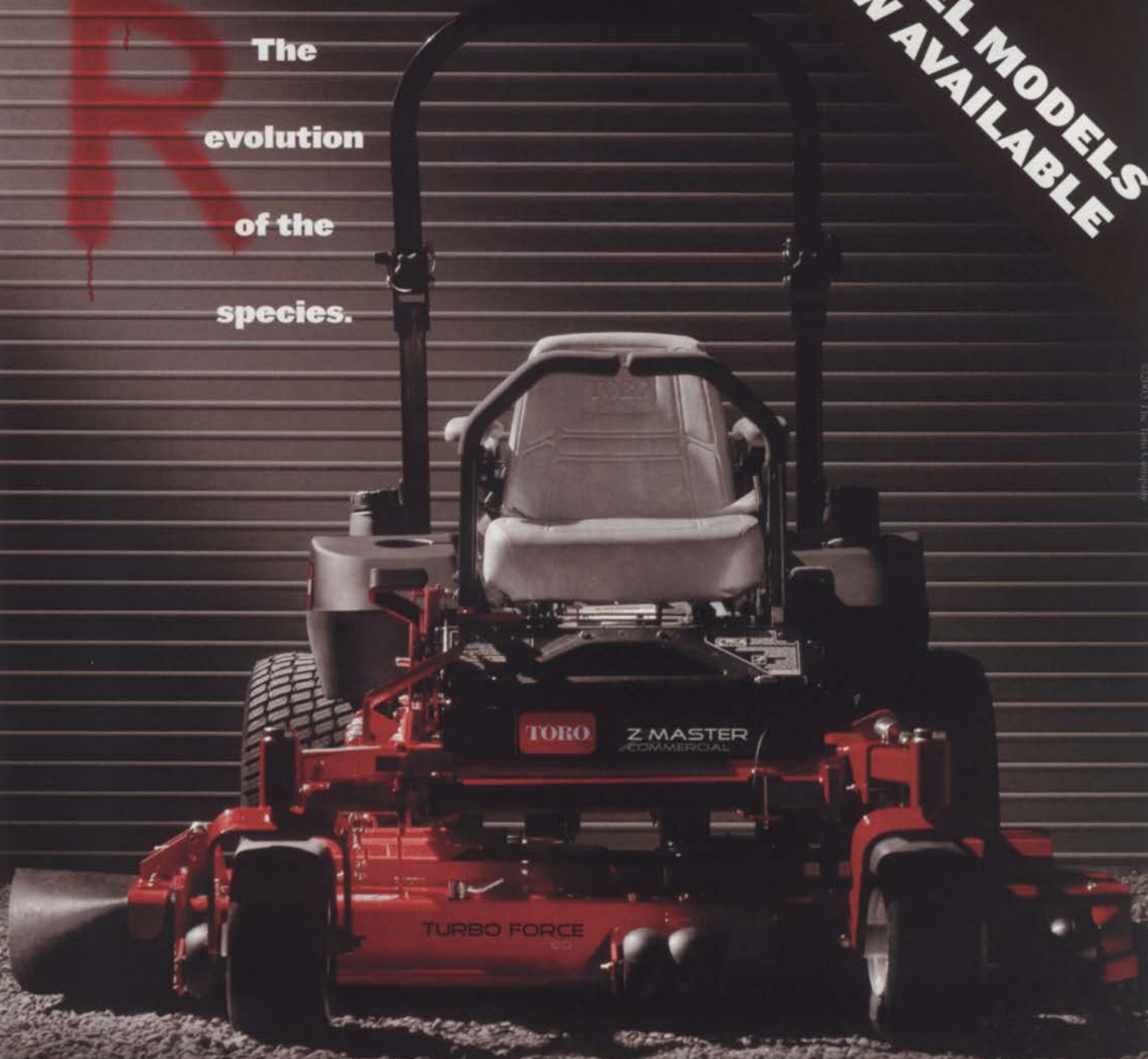
\*Values expressed in 2004 dollars/\$ per million

\*\* GSP is an economic measurement for states that is comparable to the Gross Domestic Product for the country.



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By Nicole Wisniewski

# Regional Report: East/Midwest

The East/Midwest green industry makes a comeback, surpassing the other regions' growth.

Compared to last year, the East/Midwest region has the biggest comeback story to tell, going from the lowest average revenue (\$595,617) and revenue increase (14.7 percent) per company in 2004 to the highest in both categories at \$824,624 and 19.2 percent, respectively, this year.

Though the West/Southwest region beat the East/Midwest by nearly 1 full percentage point in terms of average net profit per company, East/Midwest contractors fared better than they did last year with a higher percentage of contractors (23.7 percent) boasting an average 10 to 15 percent net profit (10.8 percent regional average overall) vs. 21.6 percent reporting only 4 to 5 percent net profit last year.

With less than one additional employee per company, the average East/Midwest business also boasted a 31.2 percent jump in average revenue per

employee at \$61,539 this year vs. \$46,898 last year.

Even when it comes to net operating cost increases, East/Midwest companies were able to decrease their total average amount of operating costs by 2.7 percent over last year (14.3 percent in 2005 vs. 17 percent in 2004).

Another factor that made some of this growth possible for East/Midwest companies was their ability to raise prices between 10 and 13 percent in the three main service categories. East/Midwest contractors charge the least for their residential mowing services and the most for chemical lawn care services compared to the other two regions.

But sometimes growth comes at a price. East/Midwest contractors decreased hourly rates and salaries in nine out of 11 categories – more than their regional counterparts. This is a big change from last year when East/Midwest companies paid the highest wages in the industry compared to

the other two regions. Supervisors experienced the biggest hit with a 30.1 percent salary decrease. The only two categories in which these contractors increased salaries are foreman and owners/presidents at 9.1 and 4.1 percent, respectively. Foremen made more in the East/Midwest by more than \$4,500 annually compared to the other two regions.

East/Midwest contractors also spent more in every equipment category, except for one – snow and ice removal products, where they spent 19 percent less than they did last year. This coincides with the fact that the 2005 snow season was lighter than in previous years.

When looking at unemployment, the Midwest's jobless rate has fallen by less than one-half percentage point over the past two years, which has shifted this region's rank from the lowest in fourth quarter 2002 to the highest of all of the regions in the second quarter 2005, reflecting the region's overall sluggish pace of growth in recent years, according to Economy.com's Regional Outlook. "Home price appreciation remains in the low teens, even though in the Northeast this number slowed to high single digits in 2005," the outlook explains. "The Northeast's stable growth is likely to continue into the coming year, outpacing the Midwest and keeping this region afloat."

When asked to look ahead to 2006, East/Midwest contractors' concerns were similar to last year, with lowball competitors moving from the No. 3 to the No. 2 concern on the list and weather problems being replaced by inflation/rising interest rates in the No. 5 spot.

States Included: Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, D.C., West Virginia, Wisconsin





SERVICE PRICING			
SERVICE	2004	2005	% CHANGE
Residential Mowing	\$34.50*	\$38.90*	+12.75%
Commercial Mowing	\$41.50*	\$46.50*	+12.05%
Chemical Lawn Care	\$19.00**	\$20.90**	+10.00%

\*Charge per hour

\*\*Charge per 1,000 square feet

EMPLOYEE PAY SCALES			
POSITION	HOURLY RATE/ SALARY 2004	HOURLY RATE/ SALARY 2005	% CHANGE
Entry-level mower operator	\$8.20	\$8.00	-2.4%
Experienced mower operator	\$10.70	\$10.50	-1.9%
Entry-level spray technician	\$9.90	\$9.00	-9.1%
Experienced spray technician	\$13.20	\$12.60	-4.5%
Entry-level construction worker	\$9.10	\$8.50	-6.6%
Experienced construction worker	\$13.30	\$12.20	-8.3%
Foreman	\$30,836	\$33,650	+9.1%
Designers/architects	\$46,643	\$42,086	-9.8%
Account managers	\$36,350	\$35,707	-1.8%
Supervisors	\$54,943	\$38,411	-30.1%
Owners/presidents	\$53,962	\$56,148	+4.1%

AVERAGE EXPENDITURE PER COMPANY			
EQUIPMENT	2004	2005	% CHANGE
Truck purchases and leases	\$26,201	\$39,245	+50%
Landscape equipment purchases and leases	\$12,634	\$17,369	+37%
Landscape plants, trees and shrubs	\$52,206	\$87,360	+67%
Equipment parts	\$5,563	\$7,379	+33%
Irrigation systems and components	\$23,873	\$44,602	+87%
Chemical/fertilizer products	\$18,692	\$21,041	+13%
Snow and ice products	\$5,093	\$4,117	-19%
Construction hardscape materials	\$48,680	\$54,442	+12%
Subcontracted services	\$31,058	\$48,048	+55%
Miscellaneous	\$7,506	\$20,778	+177%



## THE EAST/MIDWEST LANDSCAPE COMPANY

Average revenue .....	\$824,624
Average company age .....	13.3 years
Average net revenue increase .....	19.2 percent
Average net profit increase .....	10.8 percent
Average net operating cost increase .....	14.3 percent
Average revenue per employee* .....	\$61,539

\*Considering 13.4 total employees

## EMPLOYEES

Average number of seasonal employees .....	5.3
Average number of year-round employees .....	8.1

## RESIDENTIAL MOWING CUSTOMERS & ACRES

Average residential mowing customers .....	58.0
Average residential mowing acres serviced .....	64.6
Average acres serviced per customer.....	1.11

## RESIDENTIAL CHEMICAL CUSTOMERS & ACRES

Average residential chemical customers .....	219.5
Average residential chemical acres serviced .....	213.5
Average acres serviced per customer.....	0.97

## COMMERCIAL MOWING CUSTOMERS & ACRES

Average commercial mowing customers .....	25.3
Average commercial mowing acres serviced .....	180.9
Average acres serviced per customer.....	7.15

## COMMERCIAL CHEMICAL CUSTOMERS & ACRES

Average commercial chemical customers .....	37.5
Average commercial chemical acres serviced .....	161.0
Average acres serviced per customer.....	4.29

## TOP 5 COMPANY CONCERNS FOR 2006

1. Fuel prices
2. Worker's compensation costs & Lowball competitors
3. Health insurance costs
4. Overworked/Stress
5. Inflation/Rising interest rates





By Nicole Wisniewski

# Regional Report: Southeast

Southeast contractors didn't improve as much as those in the other two regions, but they are still growing at respectable rates.

Though the Southeast region is made up of companies with the lowest average revenue (\$639,613) this year compared to the other two regions, they were tied with the East/Midwest region for the highest average net revenue increase (19.2 percent).

But, one cannot ignore that this increase, though respectable, is still lower than the average Southeast company's net revenue increase of 23.4 percent in 2004.

The Southeast region also came in third compared to the other two regions when looking at the average company's net profit increase of 10.5 percent compared to 10.8 and 11.5 percent, respectively, in the East/Midwest and West/Southwest regions.

Average Southeast contractors hired 0.9 more employees this year (18.7 vs. 17.8 last year) and still experienced an 18 percent drop in average revenue

peremployee (\$34,203 compared to \$40,363 last year).

On top of all of this, Southeast contractors also increased their spending in every equipment category. The highest increase occurred in the construction hardscape materials category with a 290.4 percent increase in expenditures (from \$13,198 to \$51,530). Southeast company owners also doubled their spending in snow and ice removal products (\$1,211 to \$3,464) and subcontracted services (\$15,148 to \$31,035).

Though Southeast-based contractors had some business setbacks in 2005 compared to the numbers they reported last year, they did manage to decrease their average net operating cost increase from 23 to 14.3 percent.

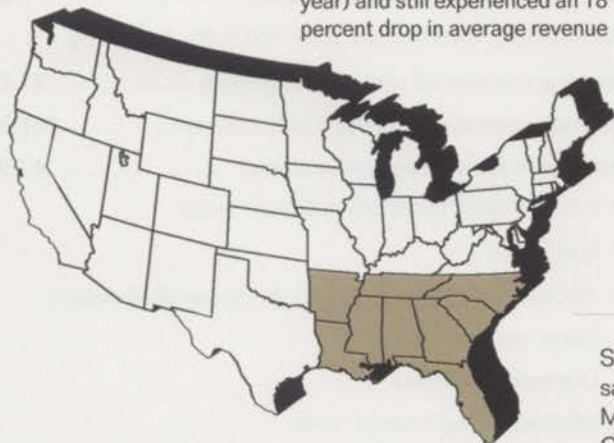
Southeast landscape contractors were also able to maintain or increase most of their employees' salaries this year, only decreasing wages in three categories - entry-level spray technician, foreman and owner/president. The decreases ranged from 0.5 to 4.3 percent.

On the service pricing front, Southeast contractors were able to raise their residential and commercial mowing service prices at a greater percent than contractors in the other two

regions. They were also able to raise their chemical lawn care service charge per 1,000 square foot by 10.71 percent, which brings this service charge up, but still leaves it at \$5 less than what contractors in the East/Midwest and West/Southwest typically charge.

The housing boom also gives some Southeast states, such as Florida, a positive outlook. According to Economy.com's Regional Outlook, "Florida markets show no sign yet of any letup in demand as house-price appreciation remains very strong. Elsewhere in the South, housing markets are stable with price appreciation in the mid-single digits on average."

In terms of company concerns, more Southeast contractors say they are overworked/stressed compared to last year, with this item moving into this region's top 5 concerns list at No. 3. Weather problems also made their way onto the Southeast contractor's concerns list, which is understandable considering hurricane damage in Florida, New Orleans, Alabama and Mississippi. Because of the amount of damage certain Southeast states are experiencing from Hurricane Katrina and the related flooding, weather is a major concern. As of press time, *Lawn & Landscape* was not able to reach New Orleans-based contractors about the initial impact Hurricane Katrina has had on their businesses and the industry.



States Included: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee



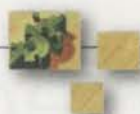
SERVICE PRICING			
SERVICE	2004	2005	% CHANGE
Residential Mowing	\$37.40*	\$42.20*	+12.83%
Commercial Mowing	\$40.90*	\$46.20*	+12.96%
Chemical Lawn Care	\$14.00**	\$15.50**	+10.71%

\*Charge per hour

\*\*Charge per 1,000 square feet

EMPLOYEE PAY SCALES			
POSITION	HOURLY RATE/ SALARY 2004	HOURLY RATE/ SALARY 2005	% CHANGE
Entry-level mower operator	\$7.70	\$8.30	+7.8%
Experienced mower operator	\$9.80	\$10.80	+10.2%
Entry-level spray technician	\$9.20	\$8.80	-4.3%
Experienced spray technician	\$12.20	\$12.30	+0.8%
Entry-level construction worker	\$8.20	\$8.70	+6.1%
Experienced construction worker	\$11.70	\$12.60	+7.7%
Foreman	\$29,122	\$28,820	-1.0%
Designers/architects	\$41,836	\$44,033	+5.3%
Account managers	\$28,038	\$40,529	+44.6%
Supervisors	\$37,600	\$39,464	+4.6%
Owners/presidents	\$52,870	\$52,585	-0.5%

AVERAGE EXPENDITURE PER COMPANY			
EQUIPMENT	2004	2005	% CHANGE
Truck purchases and leases	\$24,038	\$34,155	+42.1%
Landscape equipment purchases and leases	\$11,191	\$18,770	+67.7%
Landscape plants, trees and shrubs	\$59,199	\$61,259	+34.8%
Equipment parts	\$4,048	\$4,537	+12.1%
Irrigation systems and components	\$24,645	\$24,757	+0.5%
Chemical/fertilizer products	\$11,283	\$15,179	+34.5%
Snow and ice products	\$1,211	\$3,464	+186.0%
Construction hardscape materials	\$13,198	\$51,530	+290.4%
Subcontracted services	\$15,148	\$31,035	+104.9%
Miscellaneous	\$5,173	\$7,294	+41.0%



## THE SOUTHEAST LANDSCAPE COMPANY

Average revenue .....	\$639,613
Average company age .....	13.5 years
Average net revenue increase .....	19.2%
Average net profit increase .....	10.5%
Average net operating cost increase .....	14.3%
Average revenue per employee* .....	\$34,203*

\*Considering 18.7 total employees

## EMPLOYEES

Average number of seasonal employees .....	7.5
Average number of year-round employees .....	11.2

## RESIDENTIAL MOWING CUSTOMERS & ACRES

Average residential mowing customers .....	43.2
Average residential mowing acres serviced .....	146.1
Average acres serviced per customer.....	3.38

## RESIDENTIAL CHEMICAL CUSTOMERS & ACRES

Average residential chemical customers .....	165.0
Average residential chemical acres serviced .....	92.5
Average acres serviced per customer.....	0.56

## COMMERCIAL MOWING CUSTOMERS & ACRES

Average commercial mowing customers.....	15.6
Average commercial mowing acres serviced .....	201.6
Average acres serviced per customer.....	12.92

## COMMERCIAL CHEMICAL CUSTOMERS & ACRES

Average commercial chemical customers .....	29.5
Average commercial chemical acres serviced.....	54.0
Average acres serviced per customer.....	1.83

## TOP 5 COMPANY CONCERNS FOR 2006

1. Fuel prices
2. Worker's compensation costs/Lowball competitors
3. Overworked/Stressed
4. Inflation/Rising interest rates
5. Weather problems





By Nicole Wisniewski

# Regional Report: West/Southwest

West/Southwest contractors cut employees, salaries and equipment spending, which helped them retain profit.

Last year, the West/Southwest region was made up of companies with an average revenue of \$951,989. This year, that number dropped to \$754,412.

However, the region's contractors have been able to hold on to a more than 17 percent net revenue increase (behind the other two regions by roughly 2 percent, but still at a good rate) and boast the highest average net profit increase this year – 11.5 percent – compared to the other two regions.

The average West/Southwest company has been able to achieve this growth while maintaining a net operating cost increase of a little more than 15 percent, the highest compared to the other two regions, but not too dramatic of an increase compared to their numbers last year (15.2 vs. 15.4 percent this year).

Part of the reason revenue dropped might be the fact that West/Southwest contrac-

tors raised residential and commercial mowing service prices at a lower percentage than their East/Midwest and Southeast counterparts. But businesses in this region did raise their chemical lawn care charge per 1,000 square feet 13.97 percent – higher than the other two regions.

This year, the average West/Southwest company decreased its number of employees by 3.2 people, but still retained the highest average total number of employees (19.7) compared to the other two regions. Even with the elimination of a couple of workers per company, this wasn't enough to maintain last year's average revenue per employee, which dropped from \$41,571 to \$38,295 in 2005.

In addition to cutting the total number of workers, West/Southwest contractors did try to cut other costs to make ends meet, including trimming back employee wages in six out of 11 categories – entry-level and experienced spray technicians, foremen, designers/architects, account managers and supervisors, ranging from a 2.4 percent decline for fore-

men to a 19.1 percent decline for account managers. But West/Southwest company owners experienced the highest pay increase, 17.3 percent, compared to owners in the other two regions.

In terms of indulging in new equipment, West/Southwest contractors cut back the most compared to the other regions, decreasing spending by 56.8 percent on irrigation systems and components, 46.7 percent on chemical/fertilizer products and 27.8 percent on truck purchases and leases. West/Southwest contractors increased spending the most in the miscellaneous category, an average of \$14,978 this year vs. \$7,110 in 2004. This region's contractors also spent a great deal more on equipment parts this year.

West/Southwest contractors aren't as overworked/stressed as they were last year – that item has dropped out of the top five concern list to No. 6. Replacing it are health insurance costs and inflation/rising interest rates as No. 4 and 5, respectively.

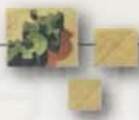
Interest rates could be more of a concern because affordability is becoming a serious constraint to home buying in the Southwest, according to Economy.com's Regional Outlook. One of the reasons is job growth, which has slowed in some regions like Southern California.

Drought – a typical problem for West/Southwest contractors – received a lower rating this year than it did last year at 4.7 on a scale of one to 10 with 10 being the highest degree of worry vs. 4.9, though it remained at No. 9 on their top concerns list. East/Midwest companies also ranked drought as No. 9 and Southeast contractors ranked it as No. 8.



States Included: Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wyoming





SERVICE PRICING			
SERVICE	2004	2005	% CHANGE
Residential Mowing	\$40.20*	\$43.50*	+8.21%
Commercial Mowing	\$40.70*	\$44.30*	+8.81%
Chemical Lawn Care	\$17.90**	\$20.40**	+13.97%

\*Charge per hour

\*\*Charge per 1,000 square feet

EMPLOYEE PAY SCALES			
POSITION	HOURLY RATE/ SALARY 2004	HOURLY RATE/ SALARY 2005	% CHANGE
Entry-level mower operator	\$7.90	\$8.30	+5.1%
Experienced mower operator	\$9.90	\$10.50	+6.1%
Entry-level spray technician	\$9.00	\$8.40	-6.7%
Experienced spray technician	\$12.10	\$11.20	-7.4%
Entry-level construction worker	\$8.50	\$8.80	+3.5%
Experienced construction worker	\$12.30	\$12.50	+1.6%
Foreman	\$29,590	\$28,873	-2.4%
Designers/architects	\$45,920	\$39,279	-14.5%
Account managers	\$38,635	\$31,272	-19.1%
Supervisors	\$41,051	\$36,069	-12.1%
Owners/presidents	\$56,480	\$66,237	+17.3%

AVERAGE EXPENDITURE PER COMPANY			
EQUIPMENT	2004	2005	% CHANGE
Truck purchases and leases	\$35,273	\$25,471	-27.8%
Landscape equipment purchases and leases	\$17,017	\$17,570	+3.2%
Landscape plants, trees and shrubs	\$59,522	\$59,640	+0.2%
Equipment parts	\$5,209	\$9,218	+77.0%
Irrigation systems and components	\$41,005	\$17,733	-56.8%
Chemical/fertilizer products	\$15,344	\$8,181	-46.7%
Snow and ice products	\$3,942	\$4,145	+5.1%
Construction hardscape materials	\$36,830	\$41,401	+12.4%
Subcontracted services	\$19,789	\$26,795	+35.4%
Miscellaneous	\$7,110	\$14,978	+110.7%

#### THE WEST/SOUTHWEST LANDSCAPE COMPANY

Average revenue .....	\$754,412
Average company age .....	12.1 years
Average net revenue increase .....	17.1%
Average net profit increase .....	11.5%
Average net operating cost increase .....	15.4%
Average revenue per employee* .....	\$38,295*

\*Considering 19.7 total employees

#### EMPLOYEES

Average number of seasonal employees .....	7.5
Average number of year-round employees .....	12.2

#### RESIDENTIAL MOWING CUSTOMERS & ACRES

Average residential mowing customers .....	50.6
Average residential mowing acres serviced .....	55.8
Average acres serviced per customer .....	1.10

#### RESIDENTIAL CHEMICAL CUSTOMERS & ACRES

Average residential chemical customers .....	122.1
Average residential chemical acres serviced .....	59.4
Average acres serviced per customer .....	0.49

#### COMMERCIAL MOWING CUSTOMERS & ACRES

Average commercial mowing customers .....	19.9
Average commercial mowing acres serviced .....	99.1
Average acres serviced per customer .....	4.98

#### COMMERCIAL CHEMICAL CUSTOMERS & ACRES

Average commercial chemical customer .....	25.2
Average commercial chemical acres serviced .....	48.9
Average acres serviced per customer .....	1.94

#### TOP 5 COMPANY CONCERNS FOR 2006

1. Fuel prices
2. Worker's compensation costs
3. Lowball competitors
4. Health insurance costs
5. Inflation/Rising interest rates & Generating quality leads





By Nicole Wisniewski

# The Web's Growing Business Influence

More than half of landscape contractors have a Web site, converting their businesses into 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week operations.

The Internet continues to become an increasingly significant part of a landscape contractor's business.

In fact, the Web has gained acceptance in everyday life by reaching 50 million users more rapidly (in five years) than the telephone (25 years), radio (38 years) and television (13 years), according to Wilson Internet Services. In the United States alone, there are more than 167.5 million people online and that number rises daily, according to Nielsen Net Ratings. NUA-UK reports that there will be more than 1 billion people online worldwide by the end of 2005.

By 2002, approximately

\$300 billion was spent on Internet purchases in the United States, which amounted to 3 percent of the gross domestic product, according to Web-SideStory. And over the last 10 years, we've gone from zero Web sites to 40 million. Today, more than 2.5 billion Web pages are indexed by Google.

There are many reasons the Internet is said to have become vital to business, according to ImageQuest Design, Muskegon, Mich. First of all, just having a Web presence today lends a bit of prestige to a company. The Internet is also inexpensive – as long as a contractor has a computer he can log onto the Internet for \$10 to \$40 per month with a local Internet service provider. In an increasingly busy work environment, the Internet also saves time and money. Communication is sped up since it takes only seconds to communicate via e-mail vs. hours or days via express or regular mail. Initial customer contacts can be made online and be followed up with face-to-face sales meetings or calls, etc. The investment of a company Web site is also much less expensive than newspaper display ads, tele-

vision spots, etc.

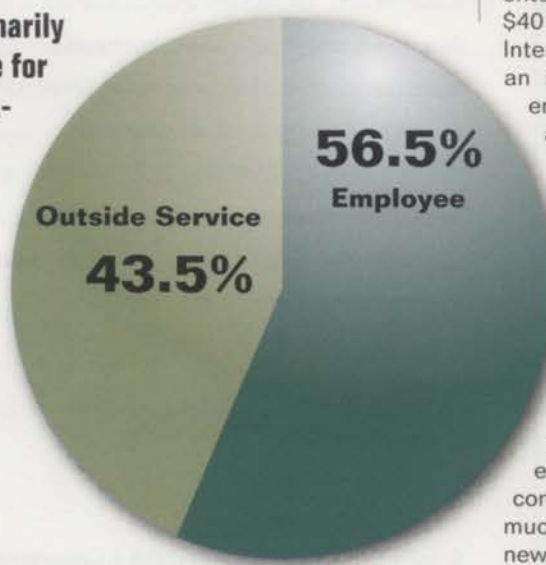
A Web presence also offers a competitive advantage considering that only 27 percent of companies with 50 or fewer employees in the United States have a Web site, according to *Fortune Small Business*.

According to *Lawn & Landscape* research, 56 percent of contractors have a Web site. Of those who have a presence on the Internet, 56.5 percent of contractors have an employee who maintains their site internally, while 43.5 percent hire an outside service for Web site upkeep.

When it comes to Internet use, nearly 80 percent of online contractors check their e-mail daily, with almost half going online to research new products for their businesses. Behind Internet access and e-mail, contractors use computers most for accounting and estimating.

Compared to three years ago, contractors say the Internet has had some impact on how they deal with their customers. For instance, 46.4 percent of contractors say customers do more service and price comparisons online. Customers also have more questions and concerns about landscape designs and hard-landscape materials now because of the Internet compared to three years ago.

Who is primarily responsible for your company's Web site?





### Which business reasons do you use Internet access for?

REASON	% OF RESPONDENTS		
	DAILY	WEEKLY	MONTHLY
E-mail Communication	79.1%	24.8%	13.3%
Research New Products	41.1%	44.1%	23.8%
Read Industry News	35.9%	39.1%	20.4%
Price Products	35.9%	37.6%	22.3%
Buy Products	26.2%	21.8%	30.9%
Get Answers to Technical Questions	21.4%	26.7%	28.5%
Maintain Company Web Site	12.6%	8.9%	16.2%
Visit Industry Chat Rooms/Message Boards	11.1%	10.9%	11.1%
Post Job Openings/Find New Employees	7.1%	4.0%	12.5%
Employee Training	5.2%	5.2%	10.1%



### What business applications does your company use a computer for?

REASON	% OF RESPONDENTS		
	DAILY	WEEKLY	MONTHLY
Accounting	64.8%	31.8%	21.8%
E-mail	82.0%	23.7%	14.8%
Inventory	20.9%	12.8%	16.0%
Purchasing	28.2%	18.0%	19.4%
Scheduling/Routing	43.7%	17.4%	10.6%
Design	24.0%	15.3%	10.8%
Estimating	44.8%	24.5%	13.2%
Sales Presentation	22.3%	14.9%	13.3%
Internet Access	84.3%	21.1%	15.7%

### Compared to three years ago, what customer impact are you seeing from the Internet?

IMPACT	% OF RESPONDENTS
More Comparison on Services Offered	46.4%
More Comparison on Service Pricing	41.7%
More Questions/Concerns About Designs/Possibilities	40.5%
More Questions About Hardscape Materials	26.9%
More Questions/Concerns About Pesticides Used	17.7%
More Question About Company Licensing	12.4%

### What are your Internet investment plans?

YEAR	% OF CONTRACTORS WHO PLAN TO INVEST	AVERAGE AMOUNT
In 2005	45.1%	\$1,167
In 2006	48.7%	\$1,232
In 2007	41.8%	\$1,040





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# Lawn & Landscape's Annual Top 100 List

**A**s the green industry grows, so grows the *Lawn & Landscape* annual Top 100 list. Since its debut as the Top 50 as part of the 1997 State of the Industry Report, *Lawn & Landscape* has worked to compile the industry's most accurate list of the largest green industry service companies by revenue – and it gets more impressive each year.

The 2005 Top 100 List includes 20 companies that were not on the list last year. An increase in participation also raised the revenue benchmark for the 100<sup>th</sup> company on the list to \$11 million, up dramatically from \$9.2 million last year. Overall, the companies represented here account for \$5,703,075,892 in industry revenue, an average of \$57,030,758. These companies enjoyed an average growth of 9.05 percent in 2004 and are planning for an average of 7.11 percent in 2005.

California is home to the most Top 100 companies – 17 businesses are headquartered there. Sharing the No. 2 spot for the most companies on the list are Florida and Illinois; both have 12 Top 100 companies.

A few notes on the completed list shared on pages S22 and S23:

- Companies were asked to provide their 2004 revenue,

the growth this represented over 2003 and their projected growth for 2005, as well as their service and client mixes.

- Revenue figures include each company's divisions, branches and other industry-related profit centers. However, companies reporting a percentage of revenue coming from structural pest control have had their revenue lowered by that percentage. For example, Middleton Lawn & Pest Control reported revenue of just over \$30 million with 34 percent of that coming from structural pest control. Because structural pest control is not a widely offered green-industry service, the company's reported revenue was lowered by 34 percent.

- There are actually 101 companies on this year's list, due to a revenue tie in the No. 100 spot.

In April 2005, after the majority of industry companies had closed their books on 2004, *Lawn & Landscape* began getting the word out about this year's Top 100 list. Brecksville, Ohio-based Proximity Marketing was hired to assist with the bulk of the contact effort via a fax campaign that reached more than 800 industry professionals. Additionally, *Lawn & Landscape* announced the Top 100 effort on its Web

site, [www.lawnandlandscape.com](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com), and reached more than 20,000 potential participants by including a link to the form in the weekly *Lawn & Landscape* e-Newsletter. *Lawn & Landscape* also wishes to thank the Professional Landcare Network, The Canadian Nursery & Landscape Association, the Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado and other industry associations that distributed the form or information about the list to their membership.

*Lawn & Landscape* made every effort to identify companies that should be included in the Top 100 List. Some companies chose not to disclose their 2004 revenues and therefore were not included. However, *Lawn & Landscape* encourages all companies who believe their company or another company should be included should contact Lauren Spiers Hunter at 703/768-0368 or by e-mail at [lspiers@gie.net](mailto:lspiers@gie.net). – Lauren Spiers Hunter





compiled by Lauren Spiers Hunter

# Top 100 Landscape Companies

Check below to see how the Top 100 list played out this year. The addition of 20 companies that did not appear last year raised the minimum revenue bar to \$11 million.

Rank	Company	City	2004 Revenue	% Inc/Dec From 2003	Expected % Inc/Dec For 2005	Year- Round Employees	Seasonal/ Part-Time Employees
1	The Trugreen Cos.	Memphis, Tenn.	\$1,419,649,000	5.4	5	n/r	n/r
2	ValleyCrest Cos.	Calabasas, Calif.	\$675,000,000	0.7	n/r	8,000	n/r
3	The Brickman Group	Gaithersburg, Md.	\$420,000,000	20	n/r	1,500	5,000
4	The Davey Tree Expert Co.	Kent, Ohio	\$398,000,000	15	4	5,200	5,800
5	American Civil Constructors	Irving, Texas	\$180,000,000	0	10	800	300
6	Scotts LawnService	Marysville, Ohio	\$155,000,000	24	20	1,300	n/r
7	Bartlett Tree Experts	Stamford, Conn.	\$114,000,000	6.5	4.5	1,200	250
8	Gothic Landscaping	Valencia, Calif.	\$103,445,000	14	20	1,600	n/r
9	Initial Tropical Plants	Riverwoods, Ill.	\$98,000,000	0	n/r	n/r	n/r
10	Weed Man	Mississauga, Ontario	\$88,032,190*	12	10	750	2,500
11	Lawn Doctor	Holmdel, N.J.	\$78,300,000	10.4	8	1,200	2,200
12	OneSource Landscape & Golf Services	Tampa, Fla.	\$78,000,000	11	n/r	1,200	1,400
13	U.S. Lawns	Orlando, Fla.	\$59,000,000	16	15	1,200	350
14	Vila & Son Landscaping Corp.	Miami, Fla.	\$50,837,000	6.3	10	625	n/r
15	The Care of Trees	Wheeling, Ill.	\$46,081,000	6.74	5	500	20
16	American Landscape Cos.	Canoga Park, Calif.	\$45,000,000	-10	n/r	750	n/r
17	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	Woodbine, Md.	\$43,000,000	12	12	310	130
18	Landscape Concepts Management	Grayslake, Ill.	\$38,200,000	12	18	140	475
19 (t)	The Bruce Co. of Wisconsin	Middleton, Wis.	\$38,000,000	5.5	n/r	200	425
19 (t)	Grounds Control Division of Sanitors	San Antonio, Texas	\$38,000,000	-5	n/r	630	40
21	Oak Leaf Landscape	Anaheim, Calif.	\$35,000,000	20	-5	400	n/r
22	Acres Group	Wauconda, Ill.	\$34,732,852	1.2	11.6	100	600
23	The Celtis Group	San Jose, Calif.	\$33,000,000	0	0	400	100
24	Jensen Corp. Landscape Contractors	Cupertino, Calif.	\$32,000,000	6	12	255	n/r
25	The Groundskeeper	Tucson, Ariz.	\$31,300,000	14	-3	640	n/r
26	Toll Landscape	Lambertville, N.J.	\$30,000,000	n/r	n/r	65	200
27	Lipinski Landscape & Irrigation	Marlton, N.J.	\$29,750,000	6.3	6.8	75	165
28	Nanak's Landscaping	Longwood, Fla.	\$28,500,000	15	15	550	n/r
29 (t)	Denison Landscaping	Fort Washington, Md.	\$26,000,000	25	10	145	100
29 (t)	Mariani Landscape	Lake Bluff, Ill.	\$26,000,000	8.3	n/r	80	300
29 (t)	Marina Landscape	Anaheim, Calif.	\$26,000,000	7	10	250	n/r
32	Choate Irrigation USA	Carrollton, Texas	\$25,200,000*	5	n/r	300	n/r
33	Chalet Landscape	Wilmette, Ill.	\$25,000,000	5	5	85	250
34	Cagwin & Dorward	Novato, Calif.	\$24,864,214	12.5	16	350	n/r
35	Dixie Landscape Co.	Miami, Fla.	\$24,600,000	34	20	300	n/r
36	Autumn Landscaping	Englewood, Colo.	\$24,500,000	n/r	22	450	n/r
37 (t)	AAA Landscape	Phoenix, Ariz.	\$24,000,000	10	12	425	500
37 (t)	Nissho of California	Vista, Calif.	\$24,000,000	26	8	310	5
39	Teufel Nursery/Landscape	Portland, Ore.	\$23,340,000	0	15	180	120
40 (t)	Control Environmental	Secaucus, N.J.	\$23,000,000	n/r	n/r	60	600
40 (t)	Lucas Tree Expert Co.	Portland, Maine	\$23,000,000	12	10	350	100
40 (t)	Naturalawn of America	Frederick, Md.	\$23,000,000	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r

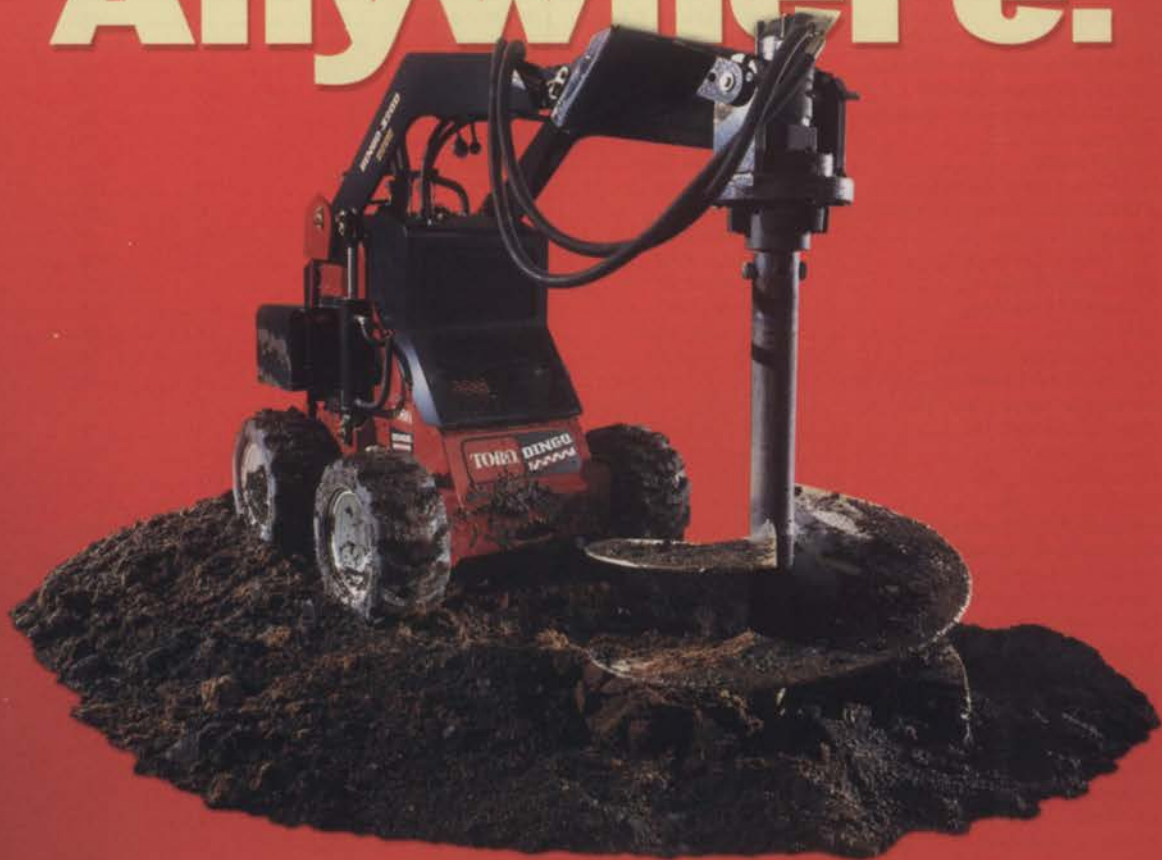
(t): tie n/r: not reported \*Revenue reported in Canadian dollars and converted to USD based on a 0.8384 exchange rate as of press time \*Based on contractor's 2004 projected increase/decrease



Rank	Company	City	2004 Revenue	% Inc/Dec From 2003	Expected % Inc/Dec For 2005	Year- Round Employees	Seasonal/ Part-Time Employees
40 (t)	Scott Byron & Co.	Lake Bluff, Ill.	\$23,000,000	0	n/r	80	200
40 (t)	Tropics North	Homestead, Fla.	\$23,000,000	5	15	300	n/r
45	CoCal Landscape	Denver, Colo.	\$22,100,000	4.2	24	225	275
46	Groundmasters	Cincinnati, Ohio	\$22,000,000	32	n/r	150	120
47	The Greenery	Hilton Head, S.C.	\$21,924,000	20	5	360	20
48	Spring-Green Lawn & Tree Care	Plainfield, Ill.	\$21,500,000	8.44	8	n/r	n/r
49	Clintar Groundskeeping Services	Toronto, Ontario	\$20,961,930*	18	n/r	140	300
50	Grover Landscape Services	Modesto, Calif.	\$20,400,000	n/r	n/r	145	20
51 (t)	Great Oaks Landscape Associates	Novi, Mich.	\$20,000,000	n/r	n/r	40	100
51 (t)	Odyssey	Stockton, Calif.	\$20,000,000	n/r	n/r	240	280
51 (t)	Urban Farmer	Thornton, Colo.	\$20,000,000	0	0	150	400
54	Middleton Lawn & Pest Control	Orlando, Fla.	\$19,801,013	20.16	15	330	3
55	McFall & Berry Landscape Management	McLean, Va.	\$19,150,000	1	6	180	60
56	Countryside Industries	Wauconda, Ill.	\$18,772,756	13.65	10	47	190
57	R.H. Dupper Landscaping	Tempe, Ariz.	\$18,465,000	11.6	3	130	45
58	Benchmark Landscape	Poway, Calif.	\$18,204,000	13	5	300	n/r
59	Complete Landscaping	Bowie, Md.	\$18,000,000	n/r	n/r	125	430
60	W.H. Canon	Romulus, Mich.	\$17,500,000	-10	10	85	115
61	Realty Landscaping Corp.	Newtown, Pa.	\$17,449,000	4.7	13.29	68	200
62	David J. Frank Landscape Contracting	Germantown, Md.	\$17,200,000	16	9	185	260
63	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	San Antonio, Texas	\$16,200,000	18	6	165	110
64	Clarence Davids & Co.	Matteson, Ill.	\$16,089,000	6.6	6	75	200
65	The Highridge Corp.	Issaquah, Wash.	\$16,013,000	20	n/r	183	67
66 (t)	Dora Landscaping Co.	Apopka, Fla.	\$16,000,000	0	n/r	75	n/r
66 (t)	HighGrove Partners	Austell, Ga.	\$16,000,000	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
66 (t)	Mariposa Horticultural Enterprises	Irwindale, Calif.	\$16,000,000	n/r	n/r	50	150
69	Northwestern Landscape Co.	Puyallup, Wash.	\$15,800,000	-10	5	200	100
70	Western Dupage Landscaping	Naperville, Ill.	\$15,750,000	15	10	44	140
71	Gachina Landscape Management	Menlo Park, Calif.	\$15,500,000	21	5	240	n/r
72	Landscape Specialists	Lake Forest, Calif.	\$15,375,000	14.4	9.27	400	100
73 (t)	Dennis' 7 Dees Landscaping	Portland, Ore.	\$15,000,000	30	20	225	50
73 (t)	DuBrow's Nurseries	Livingston, N.J.	\$15,000,000	7	n/r	75	150
73 (t)	McHale Landscape Design	Upper Marlboro, Md.	\$15,000,000	20	10	150	25
73 (t)	New Garden Landscaping & Nursery	Greensboro, N.C.	\$15,000,000	0	10	170	40
77	Girard Environmental Services	Sanford, Fla.	\$14,975,000	35	8	165	20
78	Sebert Landscaping Co.	Bartlett, Ill.	\$14,800,000	15	10	50	200
79	Massey Services	Maitland, Fla.	\$14,798,998	15	15	636	n/r
80	Pro-Grass	Portland, Ore.	\$14,500,000	0	0	275	n/r
81 (t)	Hermes Landscaping	Lenexa, Kan.	\$14,100,000	0	0	250	125
81 (t)	Stiles Landscape Co.	Pompano Beach, Fla.	\$14,100,000	34	n/r	185	40
83	Mainscape	Indianapolis, Ind.	\$14,000,000	21	n/r	80	80
84 (t)	Ecoscape Solutions Group	Charlotte, N.C.	\$13,500,000	17.5	16	160	25
84 (t)	Outside Unlimited	Hampstead, Md.	\$13,500,000	20	10	80	150
84 (t)	Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care	Denver, Colo.	\$13,500,000	-1.5	4	145	40
87	LMI Landscapes	Carrollton, Texas	\$13,400,000	11.8	57	250	n/r
88	Lied's Nursery Co.	Sussex, Wis.	\$13,231,000	16.5	5	190	43
89	Senske Lawn & Tree Care	Kennewick, Wash.	\$13,100,000	5	10	150	70
90	Piedmont Landscape Contractors	Tucker, Ga.	\$13,050,000	34	23	150	69
91	RGS Services	Anaheim, Calif.	\$12,797,000	19.6	0	176	29
92	Phillips Environmental Services	Clearwater, Fla.	\$12,700,000	n/r	n/r	150	n/r
93 (t)	Carson Landscape Industries	Sacramento, Calif.	\$12,000,000	18	5	175	n/r
93 (t)	Parker Interior Plantscape	Scotch Plains, N.J.	\$12,000,000	1	2	180	15
95	Ocean Woods	Hilton Head Island, S.C.	\$12,000,000	n/r	n/r	180	20
96	Alpine Gardens	Greeley, Colo.	\$11,712,580	15	10	60	120
97	Webb Landscape	Ketchum, Idaho	\$11,600,000	5.7	6.5	24	136
98	Designs By Sundown	Englewood, Colo.	\$11,400,000	-17	10	130	n/r
99	Bozzuto Landscaping Co.	Laurel, Md.	\$11,050,359	6	25	76	168
100 (t)	Arteka Cos.	Shakopee, Minn.	\$11,000,000	10	10	25	125
100 (t)	Yardmaster	Painesville, Ohio	\$11,000,000	n/r	n/r	100	150



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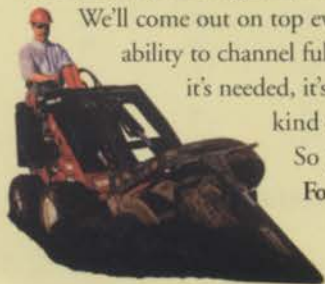
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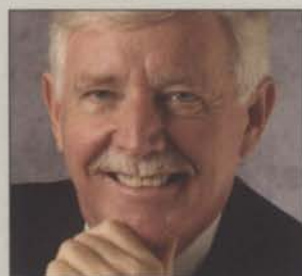


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# Best Face Forward

by kathleen franzinger

Being professional means more than just offering quality work. Contractors also have to look and act the part.

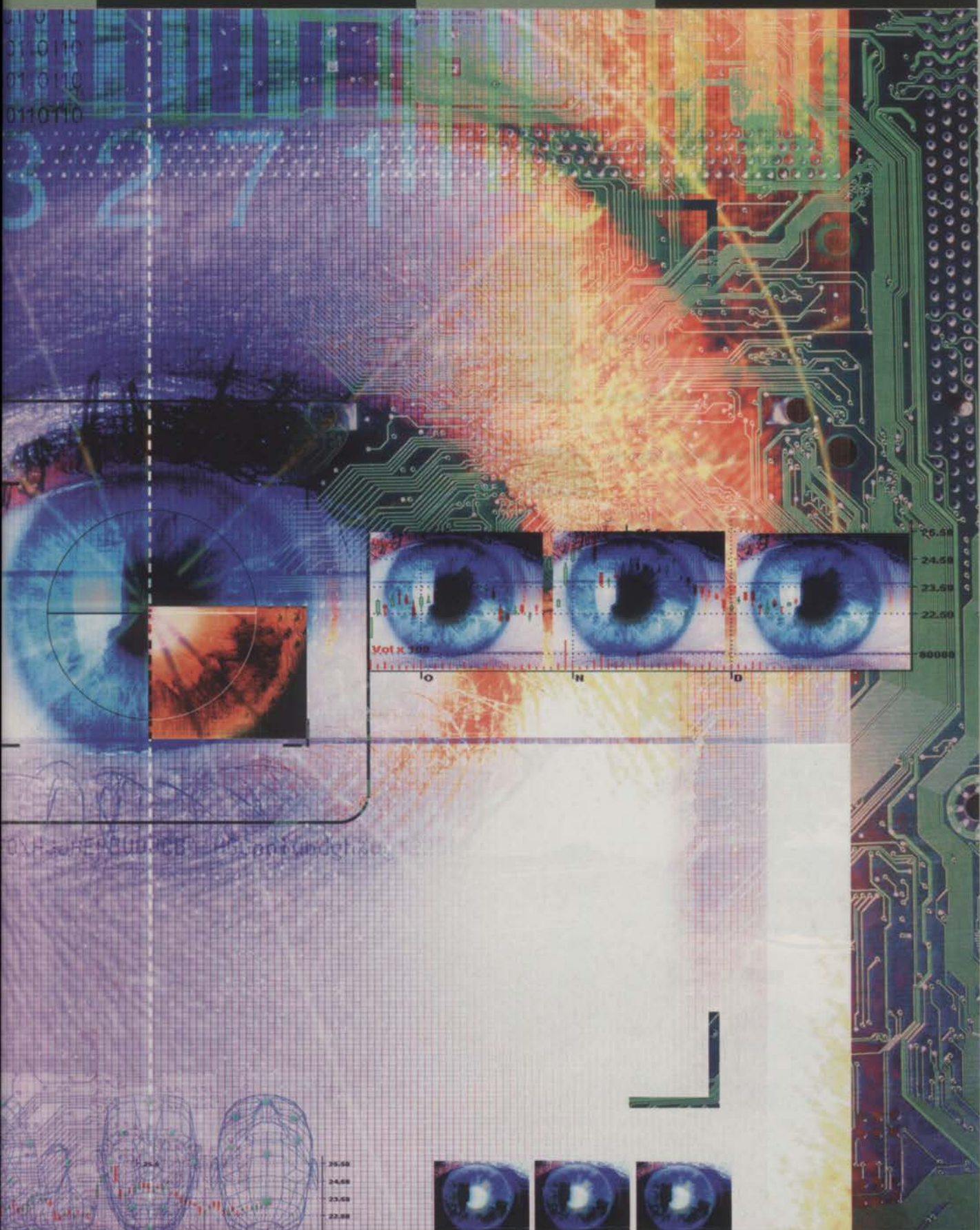
**E**ngineers are nerds, doctors are arrogant, and only a fool trusts a lawyer. Every industry has its negative stereotype to overcome, and landscape contractors are no different. Despite the huge strides the green industry has made to increase professionalism, the image persists of uneducated slackers who can't hold down "real jobs."

In order for existing and potential customers to think of contractors as professionals, contractors must make every effort possible to look the part. No, image isn't everything, but it is important. "If you're going to charge the kind of money we charge, you can't look like a wheelbarrow contractor," says Gerry McCarthy, president, Mac's Landscaping, Stoneham, Mass. "You have to look and act professional in order to get the professional price."

Boosting your business image not only benefits the industry, but also your company. Kory Ballard, president of Perficut Lawn & Landscape, knows this well. His Des Moines, Iowa-based company grew from \$4.4 million in 2003 to \$5.7 million in 2004, and he's expecting to gross more than \$7 million this year. Ballard knows he provides quality work, but he thinks his image also helps. "We've always spent a lot of time and effort on keeping our image really clean," he says. "I see other companies with no name or phone number on their truck and no uniforms, and they wonder why they can't get any business."

**DRESS FOR SUCCESS.** Lawn and landscape employees serve as representatives for their companies, so what they wear has an affect on customers' percep-









tions. Clean uniforms suggest quality service, whereas ripped jeans and bare chests do not.

Not only do uniforms look professional, they also help establish a company's identity. That's why August Girardi, director of the maintenance di-

vision, issues uniforms to the employees of the Elgin, Ill.-based Tecza Environmental Group, rather than leasing or renting them from a service. "Our name and logo are important, and we wanted to have it on every piece of the uniform," he says.

Because of what his uniforms represent, Girardi is serious about the company's uniform policy. "If a team member shows up without a proper uniform, he can choose to purchase a new hat, shirt or jacket or he is sent home," he says, adding that the strict

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rules reflect how much he values looking professional.

New hires purchase five T-shirts, a jacket and a hat, which costs them around \$150. The money is slowly taken out via payroll deductions. "We deduct \$25 per week until the balance is collected," he says. To help offset the costs, employees earn a uniform allow-

ance each year based on advancement within the company. For example, there are three levels of crew leaders. New crew leaders don't receive a uniform allowance. But when they are promoted to the second level, they receive \$50 for uniforms for the year. At the third level, they receive \$100.

Girardi also offers another way

employees can earn money to buy uniforms. The Tecza Bucks program rewards employees for good work, perfect attendance and customer praise. "We may reward employees with \$1 for attending weekly training or as much as \$50 for customer kudos about a specific employee or crew," he says. Not only do these programs help employees with uniform costs, Girardi notes they have also reduced the number of old or faded uniforms.

Rick Kier, president of Syracuse, N.Y.-based Pro Scapes, offers a uniform bonus to help his employees cover the price of uniforms, which cost \$150 to \$200. Employees are rewarded with \$1 for every hour they're in uniform, up to a maximum of \$40 per week. "Employees coming to work dressed properly earn an extra \$40 every week," he says. "If an employee comes to work in jeans and they work eight hours, that's \$8 he won't be getting in his paycheck." And being in uniform includes wearing proper safety equipment. "If an employee isn't wearing safety glasses or their hearing protection when they're running a piece of turf equipment, then they're out of uniform for the day."

Kier's uniform bonus kicks in once an employee's uniform is paid for. If an employee buys \$160 worth of uniforms, then the first three weeks he won't receive his uniform bonus. Instead, the money will go toward the uniforms he bought.

Ballard offers his employees a variety of uniform choices, all of which come with a logo and almost all in the company's bright blue color. "We have short-sleeved T-shirts, long-sleeved T-shirts, pullover coats, sweatshirts, three styles of hats and raincoats," he says. "We give them a lot of choices so there's no reason they can't be in uniform."

When he first started out, Ballard provided employees with uniforms, but he soon realized they were difficult to track, especially as his company grew to 100 employees. Some crewmembers took advantage of the situation and lost shirts or cut off the sleeves. "Once they started paying for them, they started taking much better care of their uniforms," Ballard says.

New employees pay \$15 out of each of their first two paychecks, which buys them three shirts, a coat and a hat. Any

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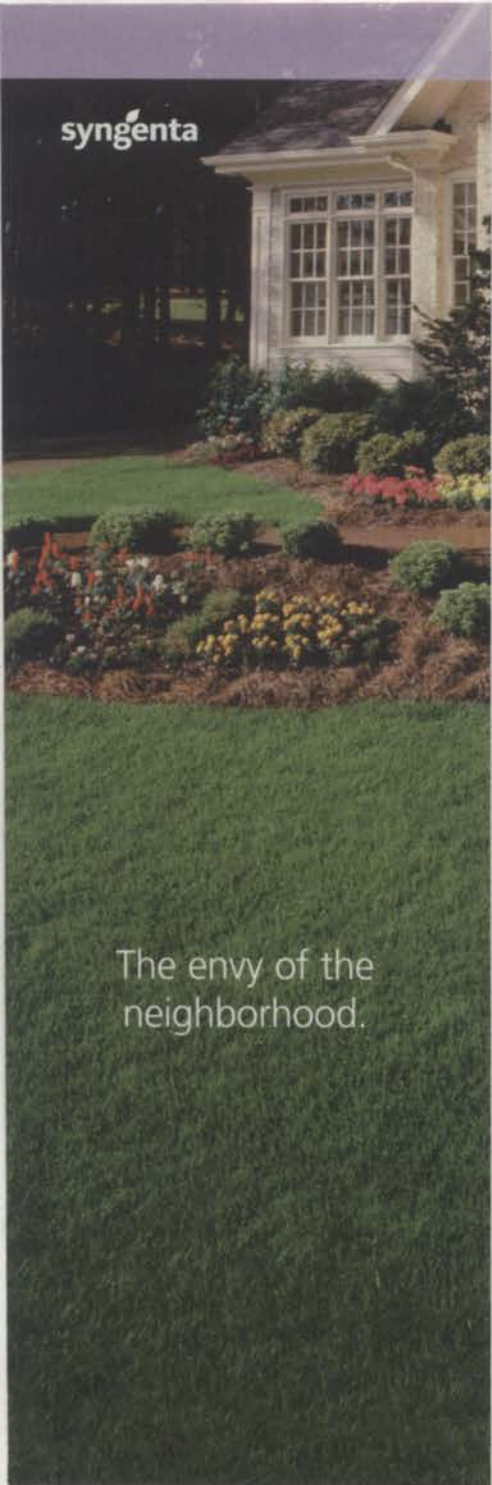
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## survey says: uniforms are in

**T**hink your customers don't care what your crews wear to work? Think again. The Uniform and Textile Service Association (UTSA), an international trade organization representing textile supply and service companies, sponsored a study to learn more about customer perceptions regarding uniformed employees. The study, conducted by J.D. Power and Associates, found that most consumer and business-to-business buyers ignore that old adage and do judge a book by its cover.

The study defined lawn and landscaping services as one in which uniforms are not typically expected. But it turns out customers expect more. When asked to choose between two service providers that were equal except for uniforms, more than half of consumers said they would definitely or probably prefer to use a service with uniformed employees. Business-to-business buyers agreed: More than 60 percent prefer to use a service whose employees wear uniforms.

In addition, 64 percent of respondents said uniforms increase their confidence in a worker's ability to do the job. Fifty-eight percent felt that employees wearing uniforms are more credible than employees not in uniform.

Need more proof? According to the UTSA survey results, both consumers and business-to-business buyers associated better work ethics with employees in uniforms, and they felt the service quality was likely to be higher when employees are wearing uniforms.

For more information, visit the UTSA Web site at [www.utsa.com](http://www.utsa.com).

uniform beyond that employees have to buy from Pericut. When an employee leaves, they can return their uniform and get their \$30 deposit back.

McCarthy takes on the cost of outfitting his 20 employees, which he says is around \$50 per employee per year. New employees are given five shirts and a hat. In the fall, they're issued sweatshirts.

Uniforms are a great way to look professional, but McCarthy has found they can be used for self-promotion as well. Typically his crews wear red shirts, but this year they'll be wearing blue in honor of the company's 30th anniversary. The new shirts, worn this year only, will feature a special emblem marking the occasion.

McCarthy wants to ensure his employees like their uniforms. He meets regularly with his operation manager and foreman to get their input on what, if any, changes need to be made. When he hears his employees want something different, he tries to accommodate them.

Management consultant Jack Mat-

tingly knows that buying uniforms for employees can be expensive for smaller contractors, but they're important. He even goes one step further to say they should be full uniforms. "It used to be you could just get by with a T-shirt, but not now," he says. "If you look around, your good competition probably has full uniforms for everyone in the workplace."

And uniforms aren't only for employees in the field, but management as well. Girardi has his laborers wear tan T-shirts, and foremen or team leaders wear teal green T-shirts. He says this differentiation helps customers know when management is on site and whom they should address with any concerns or questions. Kier's managers wear white or green oxford shirts to set themselves apart from crewmembers. "I've had several customers remark how much they appreciate seeing management staff on their site," he says.

It's also not enough for employees to just be in uniform. Those uniforms should also be clean. Many times, this



task is left to the employee to handle. But Ballard offers a uniform-cleaning service to his lawn and irrigation technicians. His crew laborers wear a company T-shirt with jeans, but technicians are required to wear a company shirt and khaki pants because they have more direct interaction with customers. Knowing that lighter colored pants are difficult to keep clean, Ballard hires a cleaning service to come in once a week to remove and clean dirty uniforms and leave a week's worth of clean uniforms. The service costs \$11 per employee per week. The employee pays \$7, and Pericut picks up the rest of the tab. Ballard says he has never received any negative feedback from employees about the cost of the service. "The service is very convenient for our technicians," he says. "We're saving them from doing

the logo and lettering on one truck costs about \$1,200 to \$1,500. But the cost is worth it. When potential clients are asked how they heard about the company, Girardi estimates that 30 to 40 percent say it's because they saw a truck.

Ballard's vehicles all sport his company's signature blue. The vibrant color has helped established an identity for his company. It costs about \$2,500 to \$3,500 per truck to have it painted and the logo added, he says.

Ballard is used to taking the extra step to get noticed. He recently purchased a Scion XB, in blue of course, as a company car for one of his landscape architects. Sure, most people tell him the boxy car is ugly, but it definitely stands out. And the fact that people are talking about it makes Ballard happy. "We really try to set ourselves apart from what our

**"I see other companies with no names or phone numbers on their trucks and no uniforms, and they wonder why they can't get any business."  
- Kory Ballard**

laundry. Plus they're able to come to work in clean clothes and go home in clean clothes."

**CLEAN MACHINES.** In addition to hauling crews and equipment, trucks and trailers serve as advertisements for a company. That's why all Kier's trucks carry his logo and contact information. The benefit to doing this far outweighs the cost. "I don't think it's expensive," he says. "It pays for itself because it helps increase business. It's a lot cheaper than a full page ad in the *Yellow Pages*."

Tecza's trucks are teal green with a white and pink logo on the side, along with the company's phone number and Web site address. His crews pull enclosed box trailers, which are also painted with the company logo and contact information. "The maintenance trailers are 20-feet long," Girardi says. "They're like a billboard driving down the road."

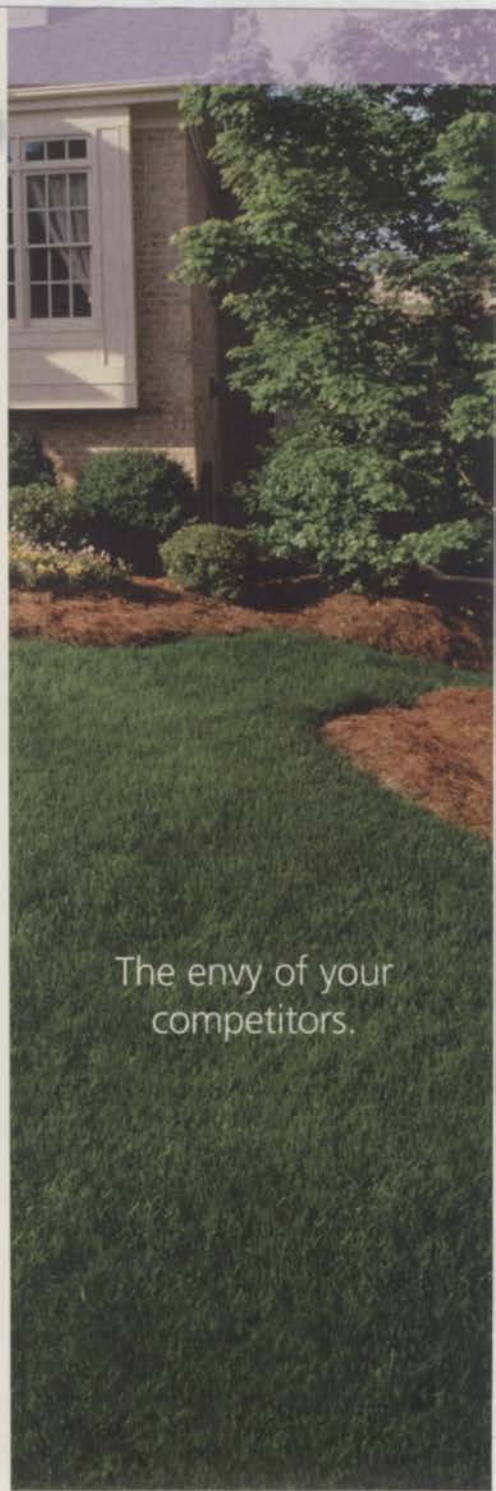
The teal green for the trucks is a standard color, but it's not available every year. On the off-years, Girardi pays a little more. He estimates that painting

competition is doing," he says.

When it comes to his trucks and trailers, McCarthy adds more than a logo. Not only do customers know the company name and contact information, but they also get a sample of the work quality. His trucks pull enclosed trailers, each with a picture of one of their landscape jobs laminated onto the side. "We're one of the first companies to do it," he says. But at \$15,000 per trailer, it's an expensive proposition. "But that trailer stays on the job site and looks attractive there."

A common mistake contractors make is only putting the logo on truck doors, says Mattingly. "It's very hard to read the logo on the side of a vehicle when it's traveling 30 to 50 mph," he says. "It's much easier for someone to take the information down if the logo is on the back of the truck or trailer."

But he adds that if contractors do that, they better make sure everything on the back of the truck, as well as the truck itself, looks clean. Cleanliness is especially critical for contractors



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working in residential areas, because customers don't want dirty, messy vehicles in front of their houses. "When a customer has to look at the equipment, it should look clean and presentable, even if it isn't new," Ballard says.

That's why many contractors clean their trucks and trailers regularly. Girardi has an outside company come in once a week. Ballard pays a full-time employee \$9 per hour to wash all the trucks and trailers from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. each night. The equipment is rotated so that most trucks are washed three times per week.

McCarthy also takes a unique approach when it comes to washing his trucks — he does it himself. Even though as president he could easily have someone else do it, he goes in every Sunday and washes each of the six trucks in his fleet. It takes him about

his employees to keep radio communication clean and in check because you never know who is listening. "It's possible a customer or potential customer could overhear what we're saying on the radio," he says.

Ballard also lays down rules for his crews when they're on site. In addition to the more common no smoking or swearing, two years ago, his company instituted a new rule that crewmembers aren't allowed to stop at fast-food restaurants for lunch. Ballard didn't like the idea of a dirty five-man irrigation crew tramping into a busy restaurant. It increases the potential for an employee to say something that could reflect poorly on the company. Not to mention, a truck and trailer wedged into a fast-food restaurant's busy lunch-time parking lot is at high risk for an accident. To ensure employees know

**"You have to look and act professional in order to get the professional price."**

**— Gerry McCarthy**

an hour and a half of what he calls relaxation time. "It's also a good way for me to see problems with the trucks," he says. "Just recently, I discovered a broken mirror no one admitted to."

Mattingly says aside from trucks and uniforms, the area many contractors miss is equipment. "A lot of times, trucks and uniforms are up to speed, but our equipment looks old, battered and unclean," he says. He recommends regularly cleaning equipment, even to the extent of waxing it.

**A CLASS ACT.** But image isn't all about looks. Behavior is also critical in portraying a professional image. "The trucks can look good, the employees can look good, but if employees aren't backing it up with how they handle themselves on the job, the image isn't worth a thing," Girardi says.

Kier makes sure his employees know their behavior on a job site reflects on the company's image. "We instruct our employees to keep the job site clean," he says. "We don't allow them to screw around or use profanity." Kier also tells

and understand company policies, all Ballard's new employees have to read an employee handbook and sign it before they can begin work. In addition, he credits his managers for regularly monitoring employees to ensure the company rules are being followed.

Girardi uses weekly meetings with crew leaders to discuss how employee behavior affects the company's image. "That first client visit is an opportunity — we can look great, but if there's no communication or good first impression, we may instantly lose that customer," he says.

The key is to be polite, Mattingly suggests. Even employees who don't speak English can be taught the words "Good morning. How are you?" But this behavior has to start at the top, he says. "You can't ask your employees to do that if you don't do that to your employees," he says. "Practice what you preach."

Kier runs his business with this phrase in mind: "Perception is reality, facts are negotiable." But he also understands that image isn't everything. "You can only project so far," he says. "You have to deliver the goods, too." ■



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# Moonlighting > Policies

by jonathan katz

*Lawn & Landscape Online Message Board users discuss how to handle employees who are caught working side jobs.*

**T**he prospect of generating extra income from side jobs is too strong for many landscape workers to resist. *Lawn & Landscape Online* Message Board participant Mark Musolf discovered this for himself when visiting a client's house in June. When he arrived, he observed three of his employees working at a neighbor's house during their off hours.

The incident prompted Musolf to ask other Message Board users how they would have responded in the same situation. "I see two possible scenarios here, writes Musolf, president, MJM Landscaping, Cockeysville, Md. "One, they were working for someone else who happened to get a job next to one of my company's clients. Two, while mowing our client's house, the neighbor approached them to do the work. I'm going with No. 2. I don't care about side work, but I do care about potential clients coming up to my crews, and they, as I see it, steal work. What to you guys/gals think?"

Musolf's question resulted in a variety of responses, from firing the employees to accepting it as part of the business.

**INVESTIGATE.** First, get the full story, suggests Bob Keating, president, Liberty

Land Management, Palm Harbor, Fla. "To be fair, you might ask them how they happened to be on that specific job," he writes. "Another way to get to the bottom of this is ask your client to talk to her next-door friend and see if she asked for a card. I don't do residential, but I understand the value of referral work in the residential area, especially when it adds to the monopoly you have on that street."

By getting all of the details first, contractors might discover it was a job they wouldn't get in the first place. Andrew Aksar, owner of Walkersville, Md.-based Outdoor Finishes, relates an incident in which a client's neighbor apparently tried to talk his employees into a side job without their full understanding of her request.

At this particular site, the crewleader, who isn't fluent in English, thought the neighbor was requesting the company provide an estimate for some excavation work. Aksar later discovered the neighbor was trying to get the job done "cheap" and that she likely expected his employees would perform the job as side work.

In the end, Aksar says contractors probably aren't affected too much by these types of side jobs. "I don't mind them doing side





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jobs," Aksar writes. "But it's a tough call when that side job is right next to a job that your company did. It's like taking business away from the company. But then again those people may be the type who will never pay a contractor to do the work, so then it may be better that they gave your guys work over someone else.

"'Steal work?' Maybe or maybe you never had a shot at getting the work for the reasons mentioned above. Think long and hard before you have 'the talk,'" Aksar continues. "Don't make drama out of it. It's better that your people get the work and money than someone else."

A frank discussion might also reveal that a contractor's employees don't realize they're breaking the rules, says Rob Shauger, owner of Deerfield, N.Y.-based Advanced Applications. "I would gather as much information as possible from the client or maybe even the person they did the work for," he recommends. "It is very possible they did not feel like they were being disloyal."

But if contractors are going to speak with the clients about their employees possibly working on the side for a neighbor, they should do it cautiously, suggests Kory Ballard, president, Perficut Lawn & Landscape, Des Moines, Iowa. "I would just stop by and talk to the customer and find out some information," he writes. "They didn't do anything wrong, so don't be pushy."

**SET THE RULES.** Contractor Chad Stern agrees that side work may be acceptable in some circumstances, but at the same time contractors should explain to the employees when side work is not acceptable. For instance, one worker tried selling tree service work while he was on company time, which Stern says violates his rules.

"I explain to my employees that I do not care if they do any side work, just as long as it is not near our service area or any of our existing customers," writes Stern, president, Mowing and More, Chevy Chase, Md. "If I saw any of my guys doing side work right next to one of our accounts, the meeting would not wait. I would not get angry at them or yell. This is the first time this has happened and maybe you did not offer any clear guidelines on what kind of side work is acceptable to you. It is possible they are being disloyal to your company, but it is just as possible that they do not see their actions as disloyal or unethical."

Message Board participant Jamie Bush recommends contractors discuss their policies regarding side work several times each

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year to ensure employees understand when such work is permissible. "I think in your (Musolf's) situation you need an upbeat policy where you explain that when on the clock, any leads come to you," writes Bush, president, Jamie's Lawn Service, Plano, Texas. "If they want to put an ad in the *Yellow Pages*

or pass out fliers, that is their business. But they don't get the leads from your business -- you do."

**JUST SAY NO.** The last thing most employers want in business is more competition, especially from their employees. Several Message Board

## risky business

**S**ide jobs present risks that could be more serious than workers stealing jobs. In some cases, employers could be held liable for injuries or accidents sustained while working off the clock.

If an employee causes an accident with company equipment during off hours, the company is still responsible for any damages incurred, says Rick Bersnak, president, M.F.P. Insurance Agency, Lewis Center, Ohio. "In every state, the insurance follows the vehicle, so if a company lets an employee take a truck home at night or over the weekend and that employee is moonlighting, there's no question the insurance policy would follow the vehicle no matter who the driver is because they're a permissive user," he explains.

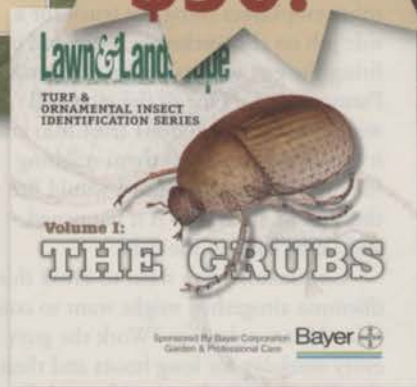
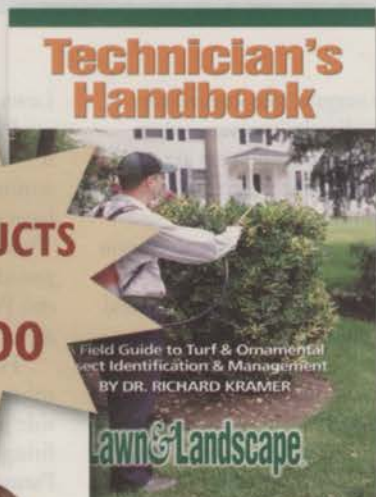
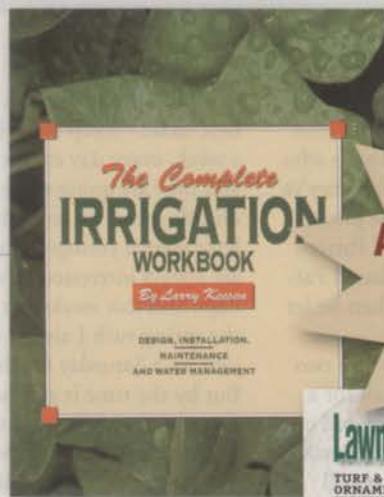
Moonlighting employees can also create problems if they don't issue a billing statement for the work they provide and are paid cash. In such a case, if the employee causes property damage, the customer may claim that employee was working as a representative of the company with no proof to show otherwise, Bersnak says.

The situation can get even more complicated if the employee no longer works at the company and is nowhere to be found. "If the contractor says, 'He didn't have permission to use our truck' and there was no work order, the homeowner won't care, the city won't care and if you turned the claim into the insurance company for a job that a former employee did where there's no contract, in my opinion, your insurance company wouldn't pay for it," Bersnak says.

If employers are going to permit their employees to work side jobs, they shouldn't allow them to take equipment home, Bersnak recommends. "I would never allow an employee to use any company equipment for anything other than company uses -- that would be equipment, as well as vehicles or trailers," he says.

But what should contractors do if employees simply take equipment without asking. One solution is keeping close tabs on inventory levels. "Keep your materials and equipment under lock and key or monitor your inventory very closely," suggests Michael Weisburger, president, Weisburger Insurance, White Plains, N.Y. "It has not been uncommon for technicians to do work on the side without their employer knowing, and that could create a dangerous scenario if you haven't done everything you need to do to safeguard your inventory."





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participants suggest that contractors should immediately intervene when they discover their employees are working for themselves because they risk losing current business.

"By not discouraging this, don't you now have a part-time competitor?" asks Michael LaPorte, president and general manager of Bristow, Va.-based Commercial Scapes.

Chuck Twist, president of TNT Landscaping and H.O.L.A. Labor Consultants, Stillwater, Okla., seems to think so. "What's to stop your current paying client from hiring them, also?" he writes. "I'm sure they are working for less money. You need to put a quick stop to it."

Landscape contractors should also consider liability factors. If the workers were operating under the company's name, the contractor could be responsible for any accidents at the property, explains Janice Waterman, owner, Friendship Garden Landscaping &


Lawn Service, Fairhope, Ala.

In addition, contractors might find it more difficult to trust employees who continue working for them after they've been discovered working a side job. That's what happened to Todd Patton, president of Haymarket, Va.-based Patton Property Maintenance, when he let an employee borrow his truck.

He later found the worker and two other employees using the truck for a side job on the weekend. "I did end up firing the guy who asked for the truck," Patton writes. "One of the guys still works for me. I still don't trust him and it would suck to catch them stabbing me in the back again, but I would fire them all in an instant if it happened, and I'd be back in the field."

Contractors who want to avoid this dilemma altogether, might want to consider Aksar's solution: "Work the guys every weekday for long hours and then they'll be too tired to do side work."

Bush agrees that this might be the best tactic. "Keep them busy 50 hours a week, every day except the weekends, and they are going to be less likely to do side jobs," he says. "In the spring, I have several younger, single guys who are always interested in working Saturdays, and this works out well, as with the spring rush I always put one or two jobs on a Saturday for these two guys. But by the time it gets hot, come Friday evening, they just want to crash."

After a weekend of Message Board discussions and a Monday meeting with the crewmembers caught working during their off-hours, Musolf says he decided to issue the employees a warning. "We decided to sit them down and explain to them what is allowed and what is not," he writes. "Next time, no warnings - they are gone. All three are brothers who have been working here for five, four and two years. I gave them the benefit of the doubt, this time." 



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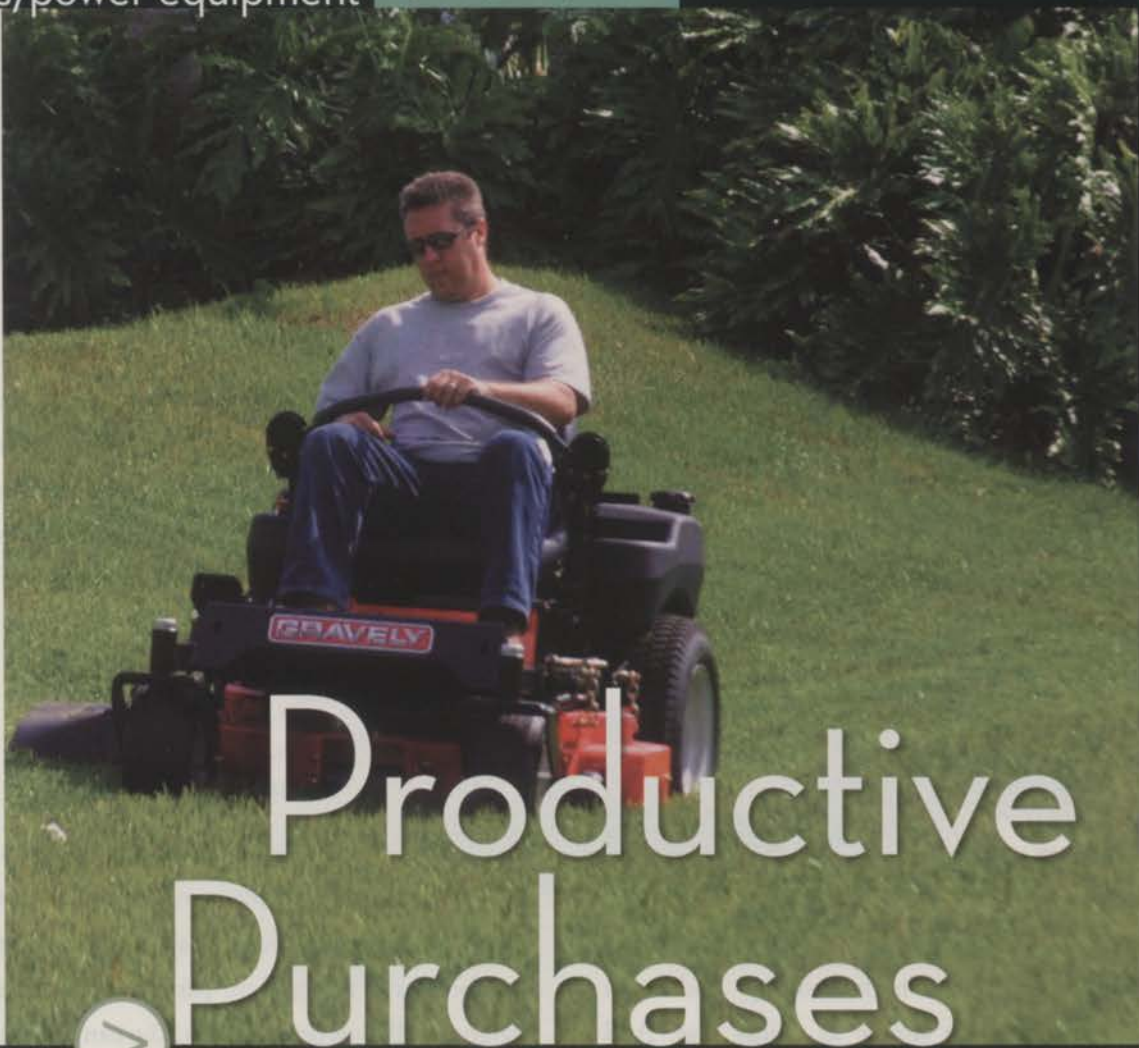


Photo: Gravely, an Ariens Co.

# Productive Purchases

by jonathan katz

Selecting the right mower for the job helps contractors reduce downtime and boost productivity.

**E**very year, mower manufacturers introduce new models designed to cut more grass at quicker speeds in the hopes that contractors will increase their productivity and, hopefully, their profits.

With so many models available, contractors are faced with some tough decisions. That decision-making process can ease somewhat if contractors take into account factors such as the type of properties they're cutting (commercial or residential), how long their crewmembers will be on the machines each day and typical mowing conditions.

Knowing these variables can better prepare contractors for making wise equipment investments. Landscape contractors

who are shopping for mowers should know how the machines will be used because mowing conditions vary, says Joe Pope, district sales leader, Ariens Co., Brillion, Wis. "Getting the right mower for the job is kind of like the story of Goldilocks," he says. "What's right for one is not always right for another."

Although the upfront price is important for many contractors, it's sometimes less critical than the long-term savings they may realize from a high-production mower. "There are a lot of attractive deals out there — some where you don't have to make a payment for a couple of years, but that doesn't mow your yards for you," says Tim Cromley, marketing manager, Walker Mfg. Co., Fort Collins, Colo. "You'll still have to pay for the mower sometime."





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**NOT SO FAST.** Logic says that a faster mower should get the job done quicker. But in reality, a mower that's too fast can actually impede productivity. "You've got mowers out there that are claiming 15 mph, and in conditions where you're cutting half an inch of grass at a time, perhaps you can achieve that," says Sean Dwyer, associate

product manager, Husqvarna Turf Care, Charlotte, N.C. "But, oftentimes, pure physics just doesn't allow that to happen properly, so the quality of cut is so poor that you have to go over it again, and your productivity is cut in half."

Ruthanne Stucky, marketing manager for The Grasshopper Co. in Moundridge, Kan. concurs with Dwyer

saying, "No matter how fast a mower can operate, if the cut doesn't meet the standards required, then the mower was operated at speeds too fast for the job."

The ideal mowing speed is between 7 and 10 mph, according to Pope. At this speed, contractors can avoid losing productivity from diminished cut quality and increased operator fatigue, Pope says. "If the finished cut is below the standard of the customer and you have to cut it a second time to get it to look good, how much productivity gain did you get?" he explains. "Second, if you're speeding along, the likelihood of hitting something becomes greater. If you do misjudge a tree or curb due to speed, think about the resulting damage to the equipment or property and how much time it will take to fix the damage."

Contractors should keep in mind that they must stop and turn at some point, which could result in turf damage if they're moving too fast, Cromley says. "Speed does not help in that case," he says. "As a matter of fact, it hurts you. If you're working on a finish type of lawn, speed does not really give you an advantage."

**DECK DECISIONS.** Deck size and type are more critical than speed when considering productivity, Dwyer says. The deck should be at least 5.5 inches deep so the mower has a large area to process grass, he suggests. "You're looking for a mower that disperses grass well out of the discharge instead of single streams or clumps," he says, adding that the grass should be dispersed from the deck evenly to avoid double cutting.

An adjustable deck might be ideal for contractors who mow in varying conditions. Some mowers allow operators to adjust the baffling or change the baffles of the deck to increase or decrease vacuum action.

Selecting the proper deck width depends on the size and type of lawns being cut. For residential properties with many trees and tight spaces, contractors should select a deck that is no more than 52 inches wide, Dwyer says. Pope recommends mowers between 32 and 36 inches for smaller jobsites – ½ acre or less – with gated areas and trees. "Most commercial mowers in that size range provide good stability and traction on slopes and can compliment a larger

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USE READER SERVICE # 53



zero-turn mower when used together at a larger job location," Pope explains.

On medium-sized sites, between a 1/2 acre to 2 acres, contractors should realize the most productivity from a 44- to 48-inch zero-turn riding mower, according to Pope. "too small of a mower here will waste valuable mowing time, but too large of a mower can be a hindrance and also will slow you down," he says.

A variety of deck sizes can be used to mow properties larger than 2 acres. Pope recommends deck sizes of 48, 52 or 60 inches for these jobsites. A 60-inch deck is ideal for jobs larger than 5 acres, but a deck this size can reduce the cutting quality on hilly terrain because of scalping, in which case a 48- or 52-inch deck would be preferable. Also available are 72-inch decks, which can cover 1.5 more acres per hour than a 52-inch deck, Dwyer says.

But Pope cautions that larger deck sizes can complicate matters if the

property size is too small. "You may find yourself having to stop and get off to move obstacles or going back with a trim mower to areas you cannot fit through, and that added time could have been eliminated by maybe downsizing 6 to 12 inches," he says. "Unless you're mowing in spacious, open areas, the larger decks are just not as practical."

Contractor Mark Smith considers where his mowers will be used before purchasing a certain-sized machine. "We assess the job the mower is assigned to and the type of mower required for that property," says Smith, president, Environmental Design Landscape, Charlotte, N.C. "We check whether the mower is accessible from the curb and the terrain of the property. A 48-inch mower needs to mow areas a 60-inch mower can't."

As deck size increases, horsepower becomes increasingly critical. Pope offers the following guidelines for matching horsepower to deck sizes: 15 to 21 horsepower for decks between 34 and 48

inches, 21 to 27 horsepower for decks 52 to 60 inches and 27 to 31 horsepower for decks 60 to 72 inches.

Jeff Scofield aims for the higher end of the 21 to 27 horsepower range for his company's 50- to 60-inch riding mowers because of the mowing conditions in Central Florida. "In Florida, the grass is wet and grows 8 to 10 inches a week, so if you have a 60-inch mower deck, you need some horsepower to kick it so the 25 to 27 horsepower is pretty standard, and that kicks it out pretty good," says Scofield, vice president, Earthscapes Complete Landscaping, Thonotosassa, Fla. "There's nothing worse than having to cut the grass twice because the blade wasn't running fast enough."

More horsepower can't hurt mowing performance and productivity, but it does come at a price. Contractors can expect to pay \$200 to \$300 for every two additional units of horsepower,

*continued on page 94*

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Many equipment dealers will allow contractors to try a mower for several days before making a final decision. This provides contractors with an opportunity to see how the mower performs in their unique operating conditions.

When operators test out mowers, they should do so on their own properties rather than at the dealership, says Tim Cromley, marketing manager, Walker Mfg. Co., Fort Collins, Colo. "A lot of dealers can mow their own properties in front of you and do just fine,

but any dealer serious about selling you a mower is going to take you out to your property and get some mowing done," he says.

The dealer should also have a responsive service department that can turn around repairs in a timely fashion to avoid prolonged downtime. Les Curtner, district manager, the Ariens Co., Brillion, Wis., recommends contractors tour the service department to make sure the dealer has adequate parts inventory for the mower being purchased.

Dealers should be able to complete repairs within a 24- to 48-hour timeframe, and the dealer should provide loaner equipment if the mower can't be fixed instantly, says Sean Dwyer, associate product manager, Husqvarna Turf Care, Charlotte, N.C.

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continued from page 91

Pope says. In most cases, manufacturers only offer higher-horsepower models with larger deck sizes, which can increase the price another \$200 to \$300, according to Pope.

Too much horsepower just wastes fuel, Smith says. "Most mowers are overpowered," he explains. "You can get a 30-horsepower engine on a 60-inch mower when 23 horsepower is usually adequate. We stick with 25-horsepower for those mowers because we don't need more power. It just burns more fuel."

**NO PAIN, MORE GAINS.** It might not matter how fast or powerful a mower is if the operator is uncomfortable. Operator comfort can impact mower productivity as much as any other factor, says mower manufacturers. "Groundspeed without ergonomics doesn't mean much," Stucky says. "When operators are provided with suspension seats, a natural sitting posi-

tion with good back support, a low center of gravity and decreased sound levels, they can mow more and faster with less exertion."

Les Curtner, district manager with the Ariens Co. agrees. "Probably one of the biggest impacts on productivity is whether the operator can stand to be on the mower," he says. "That's where you get into full-suspension seats and adjustable arm rests because if the operator sits on the machine five to eight hours a day, you want him to be as comfortable as possible otherwise he won't be as productive."

Comfort and ease of operation are some of the first attributes Scofield looks for when he's shopping for new mowers. Most of the controls on Earthscapes Complete Landscaping's mowers are mounted on top of the fuel tank just below the right armrest so operators can easily reach them from the seated position, Scofield says.

"You have to have something that's easily accessible for everyone — from a fat person to a skinny person to a short person," Scofield says. "You have to check whether all of the controls are within hand reach. On manual decks you need to make sure that you can easily raise and lower them, so we try to find something where you can get to the controls real easy from the seated position."

To reduce worker fatigue and increase productivity, mower manufacturers are making more user-friendly seats and controls. Contractors may want to consider mowers equipped with anti-vibration components to reduce stress and fatigue caused by constant jarring, Dwyer says. To reduce vibration, Dwyer recommends contractors look for features such as mower engines and seats supported with rubber mounts and full-suspension.

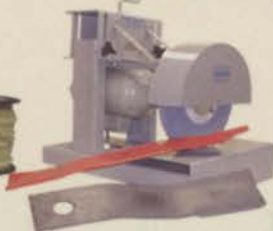
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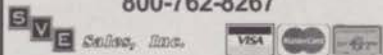
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**M**ulching mowers are popular with contractors who want to maintain the finished look they get with bagging grass clippings but without the hassle of hauling the material away. The problem contractors sometimes encounter with mulching mowers is they can bog down in tall, wet grass.

To make mulching mowers less cumbersome to operate and more productive in these conditions, mowers are now available that allow operators to switch from mulching to side discharge by flipping a switch. These mowers sell for approximately \$10,500 – about \$500 to \$800 more than a traditional side-discharge mower, according to Wes Freeman, brand manager, John Deere Commercial Mowing, Cary, N.C. He says, "In tough grass conditions where you might have received extra rain, the operator can switch to side discharge and take advantage of a little more horsepower to cut that grass."

At the same time, if a landscape bed is nearby, the operator can quickly move back to the mulching mode to avoid dispersing grass into the landscaped area, which can save additional cleanup time.

day and the operator has been on this vibrating piece of equipment all day, he's going to slow down," Dwyer explains. "Vibration is known for causing fatigue, so anything you can do to reduce vibration can help."

Some of these features can add to the mower's cost. A contractor will pay \$450 to \$500 more for a full-suspension seat on some mowers, and anti-vibration engines could add another \$500, Dwyer says. However, these features are standard on some larger mowers, according to Dwyer.

But the added comfort is likely worth the price if downtime is reduced. "Who are you kidding that the operator won't be taking breaks more often if he's cramped or uncomfortable or is using excess effort to drive the equipment?" Pope says. "When considering the mower purchase, take a look at what you can do to improve the mowing environment your operators are in all day long." **U**

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# Storage Solutions



by Fred Whitford

Follow these best practices for safe and secure pesticide storage.

**A** major component of overall good management practices is the safe storage of pesticides. Whether maintaining small amounts of pesticides in a locked cabinet or large inventories at highly sophisticated sites dedicated solely to chemical storage, the key is to limit the probability of accidental human or environmental exposure. Careful attention to your pesticide storage area will decrease the potential for accidental spills, environmental contamination and economic loss.

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is not possible, a precise area within an existing building should be specified for pesticide storage. The following guidelines will help ensure safe and environmentally friendly storage of pesticide products.

Pesticide storage facilities must be located away from human and livestock habitat; must not be constructed in areas that are known to flood; should be built as separate structures dedicated for pesticide storage; should be situated so that runoff from spills and leaks cannot contaminate surface water, drains, wells, etc.; and should be at least 100 feet from sensitive areas such as wellheads.

When choosing a storage facility, lawn care operators should consider the following conditions: prevailing wind, proximity of surrounding commercial and residential areas, potential fire hazard and availability

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# Puts You Ahead of Competitors

AND BRINGS IN CASH YEAR ROUND

**TWO OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR LANDSCAPERS** these days are differentiating their services and maintaining a steady flow of income in the slow months. Given their similar services, many contractors are forced to compete on price – after all, it's tough to convince a new customer why your flagstone patio should cost more than the next guy's. And come the slow months, the problem is compounded by the fall-off in business.

Many contractors have found that the addition of synthetic golf greens to their service offerings is the key to creating market differentiation and generating more income – not only in the slow times, but year round as well. By offering a desirable product that none of your competitors have – and by setting yourself up as a certified specialist in the installation and servicing of synthetic golf greens – you can convince potential customers to bring all of their landscaping needs to you. *Landscape Management Magazine* voted synthetic putting greens as the #1 Niche Service Idea of the year.

What's more, expanding into putting green installations can significantly increase your bottom line: Profits can run as high as 65 percent on some jobs. *Lawn & Landscape Magazine* states, "Synthetic putting greens can be a lucrative add-on service for landscape contractors"

For John Zemkoski, Owner of Custom Landscape Systems in Edison, N.J., offering synthetic golf greens as part of his product mix gave him a unique edge over his competition. It also enabled him to attract more customers and keep the company bank accounts a bit

fatter in the slow months. *Turf Magazine* calls synthetic greens, "A Viable business booster – selling greens are a way to sustain income and keep crews busy year round."

Despite the fact that synthetic golf greens are maintenance free, installing them often generates additional landscaping work. More often than not, customers want a distinctive landscape design tailored specifically around their new golf green. Sand traps, water features, flower beds, decorative lighting, patios, retaining walls, etc. are often added to enhance the overall look of the green in the client's backyard. And this landscape work can lead to the more traditional landscape work later on.

You have a golden opportunity to get into an industry that is still very much in it's infancy and making a lot of money selling and installing professional synthetic golf greens as a simple and easy add-on service with existing equipment and employees.

This issue discusses several ways to EXPLODE your putting green business by hosting a "Build A Putting Green Day" and "19th Hole Mixer". By using a combination of strategies and tactics we have developed, we guarantee your success. Best of all the publicity is FREE, there is NO out-of-pocket expense to you, it creates a HUGE amount of exposure for your company's services, it PROTECTS you from competitors in your area doing the same thing, and if done correctly can be done on a consistent year round basis generating NEW groups of LEADS, CUSTOMERS, and REVENUES each time.





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# Certification Training

## HANDS ON



**I**NCREASING YOUR EXPOSURE and giving you the competitive edge are ways All Pro is committed to helping your golf green business grow! We have conducted 24 nationwide workshops and 26 nation-wide tradeshows in the last 12 months and the response has been nothing short of phenomenal! We have met some of the finest contractors in the industry and they have asked for the same thing..... Certification Training! We are now offering certification training to contractors and retailers.

With the growing number of referrals that come into our office (hundreds a week), and the fact that we don't have an installation division of our business. We had to come up with a solution for referring the best installers in our industry. This solution is our brand new certification training classes. Only certified installers will be referred to homeowners for estimates and installations. It is in your best interest to take advantage of certification training. You do not have to be certified to sell our product, but the knowledge and information you take from our training class will exponentially grow your business.

All Pro is currently enrolling for installation certification classes at our corporate facility in Ringgold, Georgia. We will have certification classes throughout the U.S. and Canada within a few months. But do

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The reason we started these training classes, is that we have contractors that are doing high quality, first class installations and others that are doing very average installations. We want you to be successful in this business and for every installation to be great.

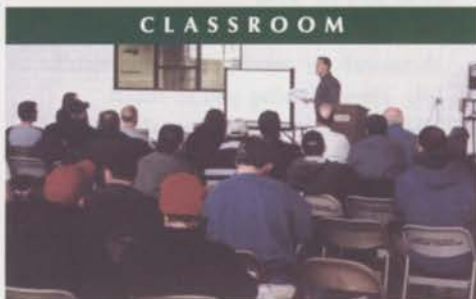
We have had contractors that have been installing our greens for two years show up to the certification class and learn more in 1 day than they did in 2 years installing greens. The response has been great and many of our contractors agree that the cost of the certification is minimal compared to the expense of just 1 call back from a bad installation.

For a minimal cost of only \$399 per person (\$200 per person for 3 or more), this will entitle you to know the proper installation techniques, successfully market and sell the product and exponentially grow your putting green business. Remember, that certified contractors will receive referrals and participate in our new marketing programs. For more information or to schedule yourself and/or your crew, call us at 800-334-9005 for a complete class schedule.

Some may say "I'm too busy" or "I don't have the time". "Too busy?" Too busy to create a brand new revenue stream with existing equipment and employees. "Don't have time?" Don't have time to learn the proper way to install a green that will cost you much more money and time in unnecessary call backs. We hear from contractors every week that are seeing their profit margins shrink from increased competition. It seems that every high-school kid with a pick-up truck and a lawn mower is calling himself a landscaper. Selling synthetic golf greens is a way to differentiate yourself in your local market and create a new profit center for your business.

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## WHAT CONTRACTORS ARE SAYING ABOUT "CERTIFICATION TRAINING"

"The class gave us the finer points, finishing touches to a great installation. Great hands on. Well worth the money."

— David Gray, Cornerstone Golfscapes, Leesburg, FL

"It was informative and well worth it." — Ed Bailey, Duluth, GA

"The installation DVD is good, but you learn much more from the hands on training. It was also helpful to see the manufacturer, belief and conviction. It is easier to sell the product when you know the manufacturer is behind the product and is supportive."

— Greg Lecuyer, Leisure Greens, Winnipeg, Canada

"Learning the tricks of the trade is the best benefit because you can't learn everything from watching a DVD. The hands-on approach is very helpful. I did a tradeshow after attending the training class and sold 6 greens. Also from the show I had several people interested in getting certified. Because the class we have become a "Mater Distributor" in South Carolina."

— Matthew Knight, Backyard Putting Systems, SC

"The class was perfect timing for me. I was concerned about seaming. They showed me how to seam. I was also glad to learn about the new installation techniques and marketing programs. Since the training I have sold 3 greens which valued \$29,376.00."

— Don Ellis, Tee Time Greens, Sparks, NV

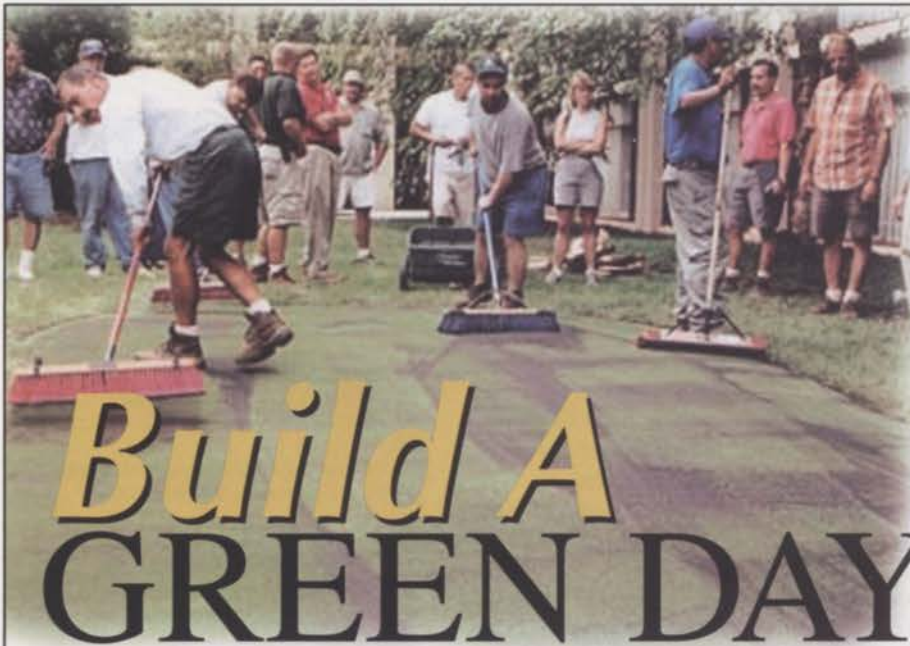
"We were pleased with how thorough Chris was on step by step. We had no problem with our first installation at the mall. Everyone knew exactly how to do the install. The marketing literature is outstanding."

— Dave Garland, Creative Landscaping, Walnut, IL

"The demonstration was very helpful. It showed all the hands-on details we needed. There was a lot of information on marketing but was broken down to be simple. Being able to do a "Build a Green Day" is going to help our company stand out from the others."

— Bob Hanson, R. Hanson, Inc., MN





# Build A GREEN DAY

Our program allows your customers that do not want a turn key installation for \$10.00 - \$15.00 per sq. ft. an opportunity to get a professionally installed green for half the price.

## STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL BUILD A GREEN DAY

Your customer pays \$5.00 per square foot for the putting green kit.

Your customer pays an additional .50¢ per square foot to have you as a Certified IGC (Independent Green Consultant) supervise the installation. As the IGC, you will NOT do the installation, but will oversee the job so the installation is done correctly.

Set a date and a time with your customer for the Build A Green Day. Have them invite their golf buddies to provide the free labor for the installation 1 week prior – this will make for a fast and easy install.

Give your customer a materials list and have them purchase and/or rent everything needed for the installation. All materials need to be on site two days prior to the project.

Remind your customer to provide lunch for their friend's efforts.

You will start the install in the morning and they will be practicing their short game by the afternoon.

## EXAMPLE

You will be able to save your clients thousands by purchasing a self-install kit. Thus allowing you to reach another huge untapped market that could never afford a turn-key installation.

You make nearly \$1,000 for supervising the job.

### EX: HOW A BUILD A GREEN DAY EARNS INCOME:

Retail Sales — based on \$2.20 per sq. ft — (\$5.50 retail - \$2.80 wholesale = \$2.20 per sq ft commission)

#### EXAMPLE:

12'x30' = 368 sq. ft. x \$2.20 = \$809.60  
Overseeing an installation — You get paid .50¢ a sq. ft. to oversee an install.

#### EXAMPLE:

12'x30' = 368sq. ft. x .50 = \$184.00

Combine the retail sales commission of a 12' x 30' green and overseeing an installation for a Build a Green Day and you have earned \$993.60 for 1 day of supervision.

## BENEFITS

- For every Build A Green Day, you will sell 2 more greens. Each golf buddy providing the free labor is a potential sale for a turn-key install, Build A Green Day or other landscape/hardscape work. From just one Build A Green Day, you have the ability to generate at least 12 leads.
- It only takes one person to supervise the job. This means the rest of your crew can be busy on other projects.
- You have the ability to eliminate local competition. There is no way that another company can compete with you at \$5.50 per sq ft – that is their cost.
- You can directly communicate the benefits of a green.

During the installation, you have the opportunity to get to know the guest and begin qualifying potential sales leads. This will generate more Build a Green Days, more turn key installations and more landscaping/hardscaping sales.

As you can see there is definitely value in the Build A Green Days, which is why we encourage you to take advantage of our certification training. Only certified contractors should be hosting Build A Green Days.

Think about it like this, what happens if you ruin just one installation? First of all, you've lost many potential sales. What is the cost of that? You have an upset customer, and what about your company's reputation in the community? Good news travels fast, but bad news travels faster. Don't make this mistake. We guarantee it will be worth your time and money invested in certification training to do it right the first time and every time.





# 19th HOLE Mixer

The 19th Hole Mixers are preplanned network parties that are an effective way to gain additional exposure for your company and increase sales. Why would a customer get involved in a 19th Hole Mixer? The answer is simple. They get excited about showing off and bragging about their new green to their golf buddies.



## STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL 19TH HOLE MIXER:

Once the green is installed ask your customer if they would like to show off their new golf training aid to their buddies. This will give them an idea of a guest list.

Golfers love to show off their new accessories! Let your customer know that this is not only a way to entertain their friends and family, but also lets others tryout their green.

Set a time and a date for the mixer and send out invitations at least 1 week prior to the event.

Attend the mixer and demonstrate the benefits of the green.

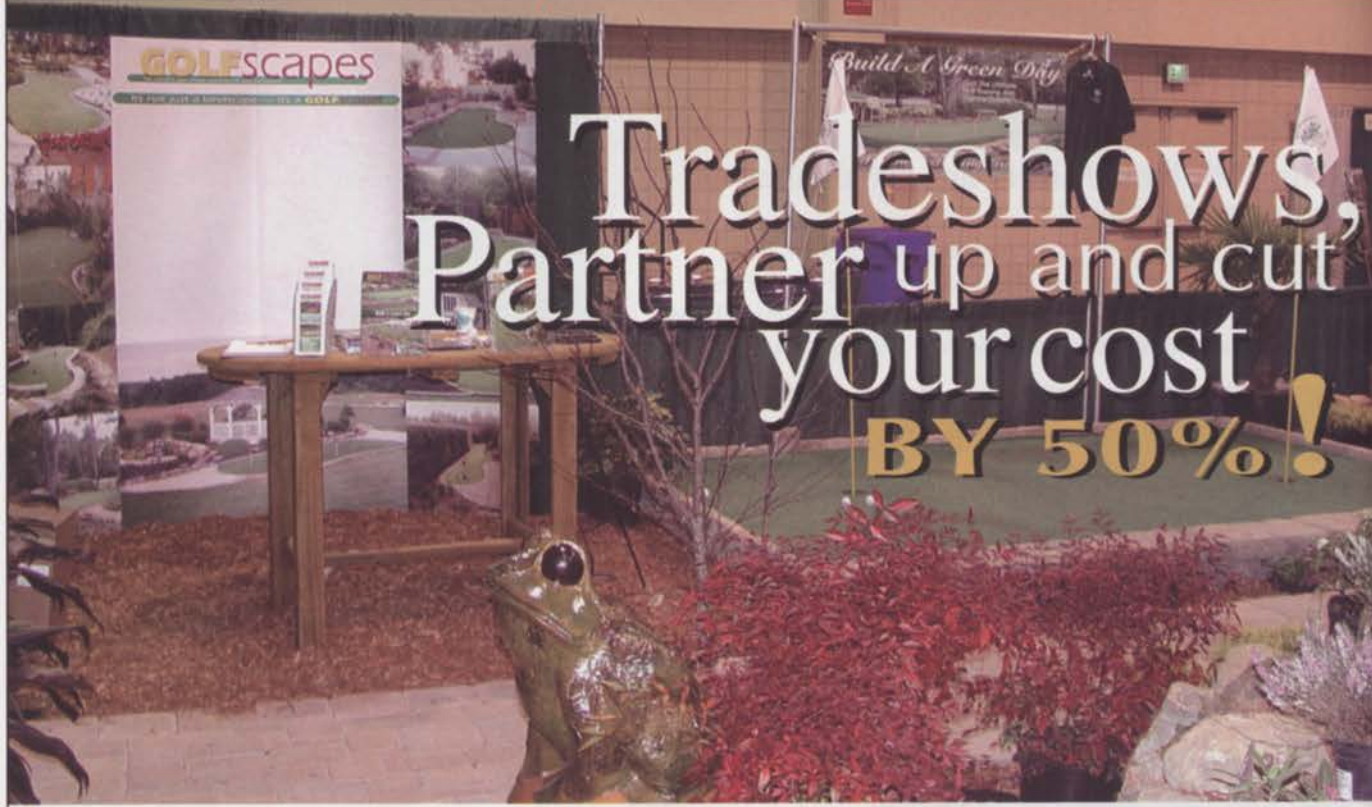
Just like the Build a Green Day – You have the opportunity to get to know the guest and begin qualifying potential sales leads. This will generate more Build a Green Days, more turn key installations and more landscaping/hardscaping sales.

## BENEFITS

- You get to meet many people at one time – each person (golfer) attending is a potential sale. From each mixer you should be able to generate at least six sales leads.
- You will increase your company's exposure to more people and increase sales.
- You are one-on-one with potential customers. You gather information about their game, their home, their community, their income and professional interests. This gives you the ability to reach new markets for your entire business.
- You can directly communicate the benefits of a green.







# Tradeshows, Partner up and cut your cost **BY 50%!**

**TRADESHOWS** (home & garden, golf, landscape, ect.) are a great way to gain exposure in your local market. Sometimes, the expense of booth rental and set up make it impossible to participate. Until now. We have developed a program that cuts your booth cost by 50%.

Find a local Pond/Water Feature Installer to share your booth space. You will be able to save money and show your potential customers how beautifully ponds and greens compliment each other. You may be thinking to yourself, why would I want to share my

booth with another company offering a completely different product? These products are very different, but compliment each other very well in a landscape. Many people, who have a green, tend to have or want a water feature and vice versa. You are targeting the same income demographic and these customers can afford a putting green, a water feature or both. The great thing is that you are not sharing in the amount of sales or profits. They go hand in hand.

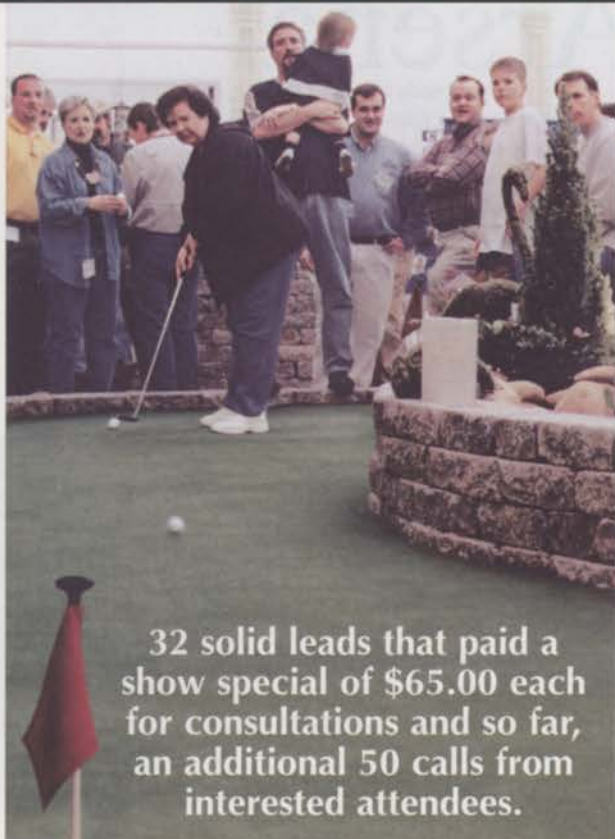
As far as ways to save on materials we have found that retaining wall block companies are a great choice for donations, because you can work a deal with a local retailer. You can offer to promote their block to your customers and send referrals if

they donate their block for the tradeshow green. You can even offer to put a small sign near the green stating that they furnished the block. Hardscaping is just another complimentary element to a great green installation. Garden centers are also great partners. They can supply plants, flowers and sub-base for the same agreement. Potential customers love to see an installed green and if your display is well thought out and looks great they will be prone to want to use the same materials in their own yard. So, as you can see there are definitely incentives for suppliers to help you with display materials. The more greens you sell the more installation supplies they will sell.

Recently in Atlanta, GA, Steve







**32 solid leads that paid a show special of \$65.00 each for consultations and so far, an additional 50 calls from interested attendees.**

Vandervest with Turf Management Lawn Care, Inc. found that partnering our putting green with water features attracted quite a bit of attention for both products. They rented a 50' x 50' booth at the Home Show in Gwinnett. The booth consisted of a water feature with two waterfalls that flowed into a 5000 gallon pond. This display was complimented with a pond-less waterfall and a 12' x 8' All Pro green. They had great booth location where everyone who came into and out of the show had to go through their booth. They had several local suppliers donate materials including pavers, retaining wall block, shrubs, bushes and even a gazebo in the middle of the pond to use during the show. They saved an estimated \$10,000 in material cost! Once all was said and done they had a great looking booth for less than half the cost of renting and paying for installation materials. If they sold this entire booth, it would cost the customer around \$50,000. They were able to rent the booth and set it up for around \$ 4,500. From this they gave out over 3,000 magazines and over 800 Build A Green Day brochures. They were able to get 32 solid leads that paid a show special of \$65.00 each for consultations and so far, an

additional 50 calls from interested attendees. This also gave them the opportunity to talk to each person about a Build A Green Day or turn-key installation. With an average profit of around \$1,000 per Build A Green Day, you can definitely see some serious income potential in that alone. If they convert only 10% of those leads into sales they have the potential to make around \$80,000 just from Build A Green Days! Not to mention the potential turn-key installations and additional landscaping and hardscaping. Wow! Not bad for a minimal investment and a couple of days at a tradeshow. The

money they saved in booth rental and supplies now can be used for additional tradeshows and/or additional advertising to further promote their business.

Building a working relationship with local pond installers, block companies, and garden centers can benefit you both in the long run with product and installation referrals. We want you to succeed in this business. Because of this, we have developed a program to help you with tradeshows. Here is how it works: Log into our website and fill out the form

[www.allprogreens.com/tradeshows](http://www.allprogreens.com/tradeshows). Our staff will locate and partner you with a complimenting business in your area – for FREE. This program is free will be offered on a first come, first serve basis. Don't wait until the last minute. Even if the tradeshow is 6 months away or a year away, go ahead and register. Also, you will receive special pricing and product & sales material for the show.

If you are working with an extremely tight marketing budget and need to build some sales before you can afford to go out and rent a tradeshow booth, you can always contact your tradeshow coordinator to inquire about vendor tables in the entryway where you can place brochures. Most shows allow you to do this at no cost. A lot of people entering the shows will pick up materials that are of interest to them from these tables. This is an excellent way to gain some added exposure for your business.

**Don't wait until the last minute. Even if the tradeshow is 6 months or a year away, go ahead and register.**

**Our staff will locate and partner you with a complimenting business in your area – for FREE.**





# A Marketing Arsenal to Explode Your

If you are ready to explode your golf green business, you need to take advantage of the many marketing tools that we have available to you. Using All Pro Green's marketing materials will help you effectively and efficiently explode your business. We've done all the research and hard work developing attractive and educational materials so you don't have to. Tried and true, these tools have helped make our installers successful ones.

## PICTORIAL MAGAZINE

Our new 33 page full color magazine will help your client to envision a dream green in their backyard. This magazine is packed full of many different kinds of installations from stand alone greens to greens with water features. A golfer is sure to find a green that he will like in his backyard, and his spouse is sure to find all the extras with which she can decorate around the green. You can expect a great reaction from potential customers when they see all the options that they have to choose from. Once they show this to their golf buddies and co-workers, you are sure to see more sales leads for your golf green business.

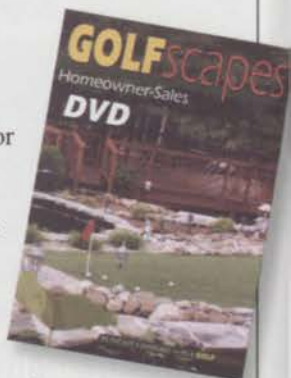
**\$1.60 EACH**



## per 100 INSTALLATION, HOMEOWNER & SALES DVD'S

Another great tool for generating interest and excitement is a putting green DVD! Getting the customer emotionally involved is important for the sale.

Three videos are available, Contractor installation, Homeowner installation and Sales. The Sales DVD is strictly for customers interested in a turn-key installation by you. The Contractors installation is great for training you and your crew on installation techniques, estimating, material requirements and sales & marketing. The Homeowner installation DVD is great for the do-it yourselfer or to show the installation process to those interested in a Build a Green Day. **\$1.25 EACH**



## SALES BROCHURES

This quad fold brochure is designed to generate excitement because of the many diagrams of shapes, sizes and designs possible for synthetic putting greens. When creating this excitement with your customers, be sure to reinforce the value of larger greens by describing how well they look in well-landscaped yards. These brochures also provide information

to help inform and educate customers. Making the sales process that much easier! **\$20.00 per 100**

## POSTCARDS

Postcards are great follow up tools for the prospective customer. The postcards will reinforce the advantages of having a synthetic green and will keep the possibility with top of mind awareness. We recommend sending the postcard as follow up each week for 5 weeks after you've given the estimate.

**\$15.00 PER 100**

## BANNERS

If you have a retail location, banners are great ways to stimulate your customer's visual

## BUILD A GREEN DAY BROCHURES

These brochures are imperative for helping your putting green business explode! They will help you promote Build A Green Days to all of your customers. You will not lose those sales from customers who can not afford turn-key installations and maintain steady income year round! This beautiful full color brochure not only highlights different green installations, but also educates your customers about the Build A Green Day program. **\$20.00**



interest and draw attention to your greens. These custom printed banners are available to enhance your putting green display area. They also work great at tradeshows to give your booth more visual interest and draw attention to landscape options available to your customers!

**Size: 30" X 60" \$50.00 EACH**

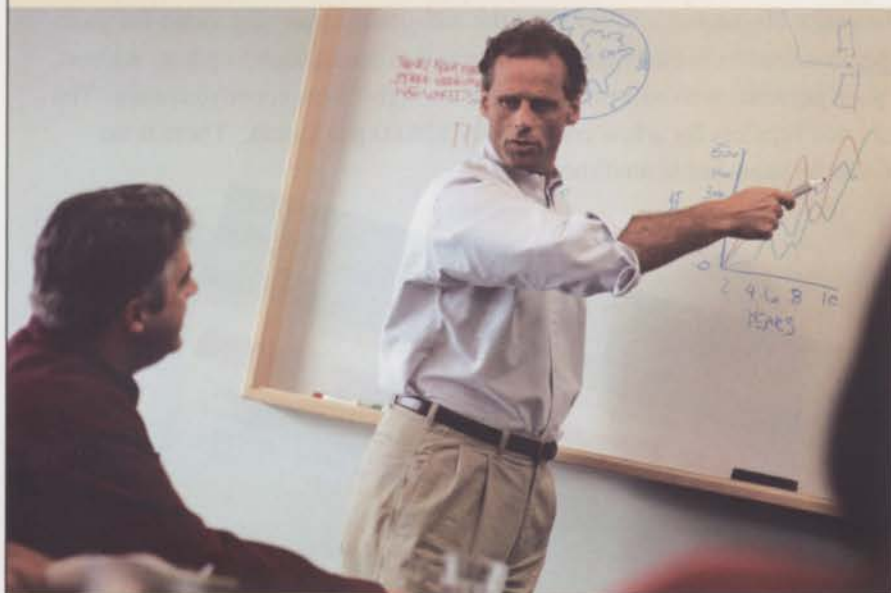


Using All Pro Green's marketing materials will help you effectively and efficiently explode your business.



# GOLFscapes

## INSTALLER CERTIFICATION CLASS



**NEW** install techniques to save time and money

**NEW** marketing strategies to grow your business 10X

**NEW** tactics to cut your advertising budget in HALF

2005: Sat. Oct. 8, Oct. 22, Nov. 5, Nov. 19, or Dec. 3

2006: Sat. Jan. 14, Jan. 28, Feb. 11, Feb 25, or Mar. 11

**Cost \$299.00 each  
or (two or more) \$199.00 each (lunch provided)**

**Bring yourself and your entire crew  
for this information packed training day!**

What you will **learn** in the  
**one-day  
TRAINING**

**On-Line  
Certification  
Training Classes  
Now Available**

- Hands-On Advanced Installation Training
- Estimating - Small & Large Jobs
- Successful Marketing & Selling Strategies
- Hosting a "Build A Green Day"
- Hosting a "19th Hole Mixer"
- Up-Selling Your Current Products & Services
- Trade Show Promotions
- Design Consultation
- The Golf Industry

Only certified installers will be eligible for the All Pro referral program. Make sure that your staff are properly trained and certified installers. Space is limited to 10 companies per class.

**FREE  
VIDEO**



**Call today for details and to reserve your space!**

[www.golfscaper.com](http://www.golfscaper.com)

**1-800-334-9005**



# Replicated Websites

**WE NOW OFFER REPLICATED WEBSITES.** These websites are carbon copies of our [www.golfscaper.com](http://www.golfscaper.com) website. The entire Homeowner DVD is on the website in streaming video for your clients' convenience. Your site will be personalized to contain your business information, such as name, address, phone number, email, fax, etc.; In fact, your personal web address would be [www.golfscaper.com/yourname](http://www.golfscaper.com/yourname). The sites are available to all of our contractors and retailers for a low cost of only \$26.00 per month. There is no minimum subscription commitment and can be canceled at anytime.

## HOW YOU BENEFIT FROM A PERSONALIZED WEB SITE:

**PERSONALIZED SHOPPING CART** – You will have the speed and convenience of ordering on-line anytime of the day or night.

**WEEKLY GOLFSCAPER E-MAIL** – Every week, you will receive a newsletter from All Pro letting you know the latest in marketing strategies from other contractors across the country. — Instead of getting this information twice a year (every 6 months) in our contractor magazine, you get it every week!

**PERSONALIZED CONTACT INFORMATION** – Your personalized contact information will be available for anyone in your area interested in a Design Consultation or placing a turf order.

You get a professional looking website for a minimal monthly fee. This is a great sales tool for you that is designed to educate and inform your customers. Increasing your exposure on the internet is another way to make potential customers aware of the services you offer. The more exposure you have the more your business will grow.

Put your website on every piece of sales material you have (business cards, letterhead, brochures, banners, vehicle signage, and yard signage) to drive traffic to your business.

**GOLFscaper**

HOME GREEN INFORMATION COMPANY INFORMATION PHOTO GALLERY BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY TOOLS & INSTALLING SIZING & ORDERING

## Golf Greens for Your Home

Get a professional synthetic putting green for your home or business. All Pro Greens are the most affordable synthetic green in the industry.

- No maintenance.
- Easy to install.
- Affordable.
- Weather resistant Golf all year long!
- Increase the value of your home.

Available in presized kits or in custom sizes! Go to [Sizing & Ordering](#) and build your own GOLF GREEN!

Learn more about our product by viewing this short video.

**BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY**

Looking to start a successful business. Part time, Full time or Anytime Visit the [Dealer Info Section](#) to get started.

Register to **WIN** a 12' x 24' Green! [Click here](#) to register your name for a free golf green from All Pro Putting Greens.

**WIN A GREEN!**

**All Pro's Photo Contest RESULTS**

The results are in! Check out the winning photos. Thanks for all of the great entries. [See the winners.](#)

DEALER INFO GOES HERE

**CALL TODAY TO GET YOUR WEBSITE!**

**A great sales tool designed to educate and inform your customers**



# Your “Model” Show GREEN

With a profit margin  
of 60 % that's  
\$54,000.00 in profit  
made by using equipment  
and employees he  
already had.

Before



During



After



## CUSTOMERS ARE FLOODED

with salespeople and companies telling them that their product is the best. These customers crave simplicity. Therefore, you must convince your customers that your company provides a hassle-free and truly unique product that is of the best quality.

You can overcome this obstacle with your model green. It must be built with precision and detail. You have to represent yourself, your green, and your services as the trustworthy leader in your industry. You don't get a second chance to make a great first impression.

To do this, you have to know your products and services inside, out, upwards and down. Be ready to fend off your customer's hesitation to buy with knowledgeable and creative facts and suggestions that match what you think they need. Do this with an air of confidence and tact, and you need not bother with frustrating second chances!

In order to sell our product, your only requirement is to buy and install one putting green. That's it!

## EXAMPLE:

Dave Matz of Atlanta Landscape Group invested \$645.00 in a 12x18 green. In just 4 months he sold \$90,000 worth of putting greens. With a profit margin of 60% that's \$54,000.00 in profit made by using equipment and employees he already had.

## YOU NEED TO HAVE A SHOW GREEN FOR SEVERAL REASONS:

People don't normally pay 1000's of dollars without seeing, touching, and testing the product — The product needs to be tangible — not invisible.

You become confident & comfortable with the install process — helping you to believe in the product.

## INSTALLING A GOLF GREEN HELPS YOU IN MANY WAYS:

A show or display green is a great sales tool — your first green provides you with first hand knowledge of the installation process and a demonstration green to show your customers.

You become confident & comfortable — with the install process — helping you to believe in the product.

A great add-on business — selling and installing golf greens are simple and easy ways to increase revenues with your current business using existing equipment and employees on a year-round basis.

The investment pays for itself — you only need to sell one green to recover your show green cost.

If you don't want to spend the money on a show green, then approach a customer and ask if you can install a green for them at cost on his/her property with their permission to use it as a show green.

## BENEFITS FROM THIS INCLUDE:

- you've got a show green
- you have nothing out-of-pocket
- you're confident & comfortable with the install process
- you have a customer as a referral source

Many contractors have “Gone the extra mile” to create spectacular model show greens — See our new Golfscapes Pictorial magazine. Adding extras like a fringe, sand trap, lighting, patio, retaining walls, water gardens, or traditional landscape plants will let the customer know these “extras” are available to them while creating additional work, revenues, and profit margins for you.



# ARTIFICIAL LAWN TURF

## DROUGHT CONDITIONS ARE NOTHING TO JOKE ABOUT.

All across the country legislation regarding water conservation gets more serious by the day. There are sporadic droughts throughout the United States and conservation efforts are becoming more a fact of life than a temporary adjustment. Water districts, Gardening centers, nurseries, home builders, architects and contractors are responding by increasing the educational awareness about the different varieties of residential landscape techniques, which can be beautiful as well as water-wise.

Water districts are beginning to implement programs providing rebates for the installation of synthetic turf as a way to conserve our most precious resource. Some water districts have been educating and rewarding conservation efforts by homeowners for years. According to the Southern Nevada Water Authority, the Water Smart Landscapes program available to homeowners and commercial property owners has more than

overspray or run off. No wonder the water districts are supporting the retrofit of sod lawns with artificial turf.

Colorado landscape expert William Story couldn't agree more with such water-wise practices, "We all need to become better water managers. Adding xeriscape and synthetic lawn turf to an existing landscape is a great step towards smart landscaping and smart water management."

Good news! In water-police patrolled El Paso, folks can have a luscious green yard without the risk of citations, and still be eligible for water-wise rebates. That is because under the El Paso Water Utilities Turf Replacement Program, homeowners who have "synthetic turf lawns," can qualify for rebates as long as the turf is permeable. And, those lawns stay green all year. Synthetic turf is yet another product that landscape professionals can add to their product offerings in efforts to build water-cautious landscapes.

Jeff Dungan, Landscape Operations Manager for All State Landscaping in

As a water-saving landscape alternative, synthetic turf is in its infancy stage of popularity. However, more and more landscape professionals are implementing this non-traditional, yet water-wise, landscape technique.

So how can landscape contractors combat the dwindling water supplies and use them to their ADVANTAGE? By adding synthetic lawn turf to their product mix and watch as their company out shines their "drought-ridden" competition. You can show your customers how they can eliminate the need for water, (and still abide by any water use restrictions) by installing our synthetic lawn turf. Not only can you show them how easy and affordable it is you can also add to your profits by up-selling your customers in more features like lighting, patios, retaining walls, and other landscapes that require little water.

Besides having a beautiful year round green yard, the most beneficial advantage for them is the lawn turf's low maintenance features.

Homeowners need not spend more time "maintaining" their lawn than they do "playing" on it because no watering, mowing, or fertilizing is necessary. A leaf blower is all that's needed to blow debris off the lawn's surface. Occasionally, brooming is recommended for high traffic areas to stand the fibers up, but it's rarely needed.

## THE NEW HYBRID POLYETHYLENE POLYPROPYLENE LAWN TURF . . .



doubled its incentives. Homeowners previously receiving .40¢ per square foot for grass that's replaced with water-saving "xeriscape," can now receive a \$1.00 per square foot; up to \$50,000! Commercial property owners can earn up to \$300,000 for giving up grass in exchange for water-saving landscape.

Landscape irrigation has long been a target of concerns for water districts. In addition to using vast amounts of water it is nearly impossible to set irrigation systems so there is no

Salt Lake City, Utah, employs a program that calculates how much water homeowners can save by installing a combination of synthetic turf and xeriscape. "We install synthetic lawn turf as an add-on service. A homeowner with a 10,000 square foot yard would have to install a rather large 1,500 square foot lawn turf to save about 30% off his or her water bill. However, when we combine a mix of xeriscape and synthetic turf, the savings shoot up to 70%!" said Dungan.

If neighborhood pets find it necessary to do their "duty" on a lawn turf, a little "scooper" is all that's needed, followed by a quick spray from the garden hose. Our "double backed primary backing system offers unmatched product stability. All Pro Greens lawn turf backing drains better because we add thousands of specifically heat-perforated drainage holes that not only assure the fastest water evacuation, it ensures the removal of contaminants, and helps recharge the aquifer. Our porous





backing system has been designed to provide maximum drainage and leave the turf fiber perfect even under heavy downpours. The fiber itself is UV treated and resists the damaging effects of Mother Nature.

All Pro Greens uses an all-recycled copper slag or coal slag infill product, that does not compact, change composition, or absorb contaminants. The recycled copper slag or coal slag infill product drains much faster than sand filled systems. Because the slag product will not absorb moisture or contaminants, the infill will not compact or harden over time. The infill surrounds each fiber like natural

earth holds a blade of grass and provides a non-compactable, resilient, natural earth feel. The combination between the synthetic grass fibers and the infill delivers the ultimate lawn surface look and feel.

In states where the droughts are persistent, the advantages awaiting a savvy landscape company are stronger than ever. Not everyone wants a putting green, but most homeowners like some lawn in their landscape. Who will

be the next wise landscape pro to outshine his competition by providing water-cautious landscapes that are attractive, functional, and environmentally friendly?



## Attractive, Functional, and Environmentally Friendly

This entire  
three acre yard and  
putting green are  
100% synthetic

**CALL TODAY FOR A SAMPLE**



# Why ALL PRO?

Just in the last six months alone we have developed the "Build A Green Day", "19th Hole Mixer", "Replication Website", "Tradeshow Cross Promotion", "New Pictorial Magazine", "New Contractor Magazine", "Certification Training Classes", and "New Hybrid Synthetic Lawn Turf" for you.



ALL PRO has always been committed to helping your business grow. We realize how very valuable contractors are to our business. That is why we have incorporated Installation certification into our vast array of services. Just in the last six months alone we have developed the "Build A Green Day", "19th Hole Mixer", "replication Website", "Tradeshow Cross Promotion", "New Pictorial Magazine", "New Contractor Magazine", and "Certification Training Classes" for you. In the months ahead we will bring you even more new field-tested programs to exponentially grow your golf green business. More than anything, we educate contractors, so that they can educate and inform their customers. Education is key to making good wise solid business decisions and avoiding bad costly mistakes. Eliminating callbacks and increasing customer satisfaction will ultimately lead to increased profits for your business. The things that you will learn from this magazine and our certification training class will save you thousands and make you successful in this business. Our goal is to help you work smarter instead of harder. Synthetic greens are one of the fastest growing segments of the golf industry that are directly tied to the lawn and landscape industry.

We know that once you book a job, time is of the essence and that is why our policy is and has always been to ship every order out the door within 24 hours of you placing the order. We are able to maintain that policy because we are the manufacturer and always have the product in stock for each and every order.

We have a referral network for our certified contractors, giving them the ability to increase business and exposure. Our competitors have installation divisions. These are corporate employees that take all of the end user referrals in your area and keep the installation income in-house. Leaving the independent contractor on their own to find new business.

Others do offer Installation certification, but you will pay a rather large fee. These fees usually range between \$5,000 and \$15,000.

Our contractor network drives our business and we have pledged to stand behind you and continually bring you fresh, exciting and innovative sales and marketing programs to help you succeed. That is why we constantly strive to provide you with the best education and the best marketing materials available in the industry.

## WHAT ALL PRO HAS TO OFFER CONTRACTORS VS. OTHER COMPANIES

	All Pro	Others
Quarterly Contractor Magazine	✓	
Annual Pictorial Magazine	✓	
Contractor & Homeowner specific DVD's	✓	
24/7 Tech Support	✓	
Track Each Shipment After Leaving Dock	✓	
Build a Green Day Program	✓	
19th Hole Mixer Program	✓	
Replicated Websites	✓	
Nationwide Workshops	✓	
Nationwide Tradeshows	✓	
Nationwide Cross Promotion Programs	✓	
Nationwide Referral Program	✓	✓
Certification Training Classes	✓	✓
Corporate Installation Division		✓
Franchise And/Or Protective Territory Fee		✓
Shipping Within 24 Hours	✓	
Extensive Product Field Testing	✓	
Extensive Marketing Programs	✓	
Constantly Improving Of Marketing Materials	✓	
Constant Product & Installation Improvement	✓	
Easy Access Into The Business	✓	



# The Golf Industry



## AS AN ALL PRO

**INSTALLER**, you have the prime opportunity to earn your share of business from the synthetic putting green industry, which has become the fastest growing segment of the \$50 billion a year golf industry. Synthetic turf applications are directly tied to the lawn and landscape industry both residentially and commercially. It is important to know and understand the demographics of the markets in each in order to take advantage of all the opportunities they present.

The golf industry continues growing at phenomenal rates. More than 42 million Americans play golf, but they aren't the typical upper-class, white-collar worker anymore. Men and women from all ages and income groups are taking up the sport that has spurred yearly expenditures of more than \$25 billion on golf equipment and fees and another \$26 billion on golf travel. Just as the golf industry evolves, so do golfers' demographics. However, amidst all the changes, one thing will

always stay the same, golfers want to improve their game.

Many equipment manufacturers, golf schools, instructional aids, and numerous other products claim to help golfers hit the ball farther, straighter and with more consistency. What they fail to do, however, is teach you that the game of golf is won and lost on the putting green.

The success of your putting green business is contingent on learning, understanding, and taking advantage of industry trends and their related demographics. We have created a marketing plan that addresses the different aspects of each market. Using this plan, you can efficiently and effectively provide the right information to the right people, at the right time.

By understanding who your potential buyers are and what their "Golfscape" budget is, you will be much more successful. This magazine will give you the knowledge you need to compete and prosper in this fascinating industry.

## RESIDENTIAL

- Members of semi-private or private golf clubs and country clubs
- Members of golf associations
- Newly built neighborhood communities
- Upscale neighborhoods
- Those who entertain at their homes
- Residents of golf course communities
- Middle income homeowners — \$45,000 to \$100,000
- High income homeowners — \$100,000 and up

## COMMERCIAL

- Golf course superintendents
- Driving range owners
- Golf professionals, instructors, and schools
- Resorts and Hotels
- Retail and discount golf shops
- Managers/Owners of apartment complexes, hotels, auto dealerships, office complexes, shopping malls, and condominiums
- Retirement facilities
- Home Builders
- Pool companies
- Tennis Court companies
- Junior and High Schools with golf teams



# GREENS & WATER FEATURES

**CREATE A PERSONAL  
BACKYARD PARADISE!**



“**Water tends to bring out the kid in all of us and having the green close to the water feature encourages interaction and activity in the area.**”

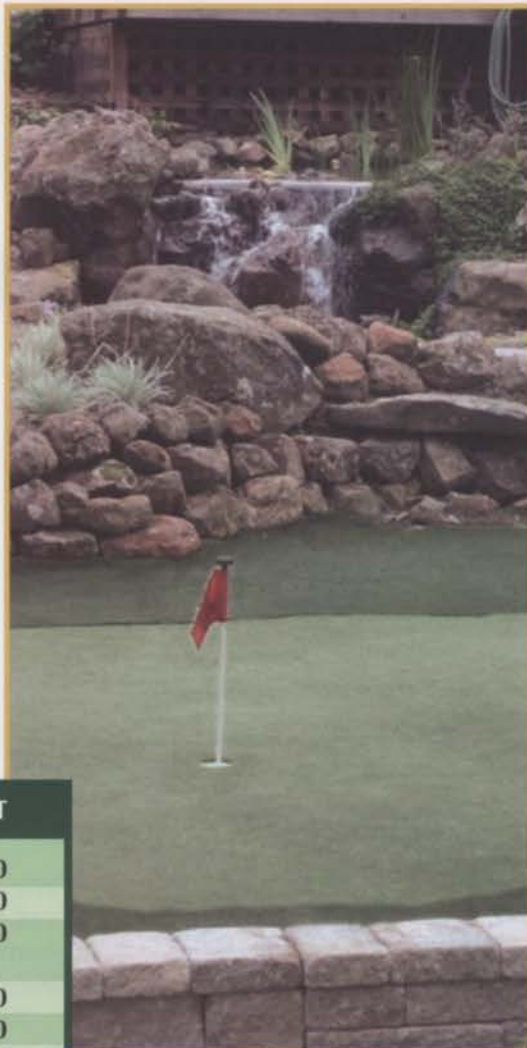
Imagine the endless design possibilities of combining putting greens with water features. You will truly be able to offer your clients a total transformation of their existing yard.

Look at this great before, during and after green and water garden installation. The Stout Group in Hendersonville, NC was able to be involved in this project. This is just one beautiful example of how greens and water features compliment each other to create a beautiful and functional backyard paradise. Michael Stout was approached by James Tate of Tate Landscape and Design in Highland, NC to design the landscape and install the water feature. In the breakout, you will see how both companies were able to make great profits and give the homeowner exactly what they wanted in their landscape design.

Michael Stout had this to say about the project. “It’s a great satisfaction for us when we are about to create a personal paradise and the satisfaction the customer receives from that.”

James Tate said that when designing a landscape utilizing both a putting green and a water feature that he feels the green should be close to the water feature to get a more natural feel. He tries to make them interactive. “Water tends to bring out the kid in all of us and having the green close to the water feature encourages interaction and activity in the area.” They were not sure in the beginning whether or not they were going to install a natural or synthetic green in the area. Once they contacted Michael and the installation began, he knew that they had made the right choice for the project. The end result is truly a personal paradise for their customer.





#### ITEM

#### YOUR COST

1 - 12 x 30 roll (@ \$2.80 per sq. ft.)	\$1,030.40
1 - 12 x 15 roll (@ \$2.80 per sq. ft.)	515.20
1 - 12 x 6 roll Fringe (@ \$3.45 per sq. ft.)	255.30

#### ACCESSORY KIT

4 Flags/Poles (@ 18.00 ea)	96.00
2 Additional cups (@ 6.50 ea)	17.50
Adhesive/Tape	20.00
Freight	223.79
<b>Putting Green Kit Total</b>	<b>\$2,198.19</b>

Stone Base (12 tons)	\$ 230.60
Coal Slag Infill (24- 100lb bags @ 10.50/bag)	252.00
Sand trap materials	75.00
Geo Textile Underlayment (12x60)	58.00
Plate compactor rental (1 day)	65.00
Labor (3 men for 2 days)	1,200.00
<b>Additional Materials Costs</b>	<b>\$1,880.60</b>

Pond Kit (Pump, liner, filters, lighting etc)	\$1,500.00
Landscape Boulders & River Rock & Additional plant material	4,235.00
Labor (85 man hours @ \$9.00/hr)	765.00
<b>Total Pond/Landscaping Costs</b>	<b>\$6,500.00</b>

#### SELLING PRICE

Putting Green (625 sq. ft @ \$13.00 per sq ft)	\$8,125.00
Sand trap install/additional accessories	1,200.00
Pond Water feature/additional landscaping	10,000.00
Actual cost of putting green	4,078.79
Actual cost of pond/landscaping	6,500.00
Putting Green Profit 56%	\$5,246.21
Pond/Landscaping Profit 35%	\$3,500.00





# DEALER *Profile*



**Kevin New of Putting Greens of Atlanta, in Buford, Georgia on marketing and selling quality turn-key installations**

## **How did you get into putting green installations?**

Researched all manufacturers for personal green at home and chose All Pro's Product, because it is more natural and great customer support. Price was secondary after quality. After entertaining at home, friends started asking how they could get one and something clicked in my head to start a business after retiring from the corporate world.

## **How many installations have you done in the Atlanta area?**

75 – 100 or more in 2 years both residential and commercial installs

## **What is your target customer?**

80% high income homeowners

## **What kind of advertising do you do to reach your target customers?**

Advertise in Atlanta homes and lifestyles magazine, half page ad that circulates monthly to high end

homeowners along with tradeshows and referrals from golf course architects and current customers.

## **What is the biggest selling factor that you offer your clients?**

My own reputation as a great contractor in the area. You are only as good as your word, so you should always live up to your word. Your customers will appreciate you going the extra mile to make their experience great.

## **What are the average size, cost and profit margin you receive from a typical green installation?**

16'x26' green costing \$6,000-\$7,000 with an average margin of 63% -65%

## **Do you find it easy to up-sell other landscaping services such as hardscaping or water features?**

Definitely, the people are buying my reputation and trust. They want additional landscaping around the green. Usually the first question a customer will ask me is what can you do as far as landscaping? That is a great lead in to a sure close on other services.

## **What is your process for selling the greens?**

Initial phone conversation explaining installation, then a no obligation consultation and laying out the green with an extension cord in their yard, (they need a visual, it gets them excited!) take measurements, at that point they increase or decrease size, then we look at when to install.

“ I spent \$750.00 on the booth rental and the sales started at \$38,000 for six greens along with an additional \$5,000 in landscaping around them. ”

## **What is your secret to successfully closing a sale?**

Establishing a trusting relationship with the customers, asking for the order and explaining that we run a 3 week installation schedule and need to get them on the schedule to have the project done in a timely manner.

## **How has the referrals sent to you by All Pro helped your business?**

Tremendously, I have closed 95% of the referrals All Pro has sent me.

## **How do you think tradeshows have impacted your sales?**

Tremendously, allows face to face encounters with potential customers, I can explain the install process & warranty, they will usually fill out a contact sheet for a free consultation.

## **In your last tradeshow, how many solid sales would you say you walked away with?**

12-15 solid sales, still closing sales from the Home and Garden show in Atlanta. That number is increasing everyday that I do a consultation.

## **How did the cost of the booth compare to the sales profits generated?**

I spent \$750.00 on the booth rental and the sales started at \$38,000 for six greens along with an additional \$5,000 in landscaping around them. One sale will pay for the cost of the booth and then some.

## **What advice would you give others on how to be successful at tradeshows?**

Be personable, be knowledgeable, and trade shows are not the time to go for the close. It is a time to provide knowledge and establish a relationship. You will be able to better





close a sale one on one at their home during a consultation.

**What other ways of marketing have been effective for you?**

Providing a commission for any sales brought in by associates, friends or current customers and making sure they have brochures to pass on. Establishing relationships with golf course architects in the area and working off their referrals.

**What sets you apart from other installers in your area?**

Reputation and living up to my

word. Some contractors do not show up on time or finish on time and I always deliver to my customers what they want and expect. Projecting a professional image to my customers at all times makes them more comfortable with me.

**Do you think customer referrals play a big role in your sales success?**

Most definitely. If I keep my current customers happy they will refer me and keep me in mind for anyone that admires their green and wants one of their own.

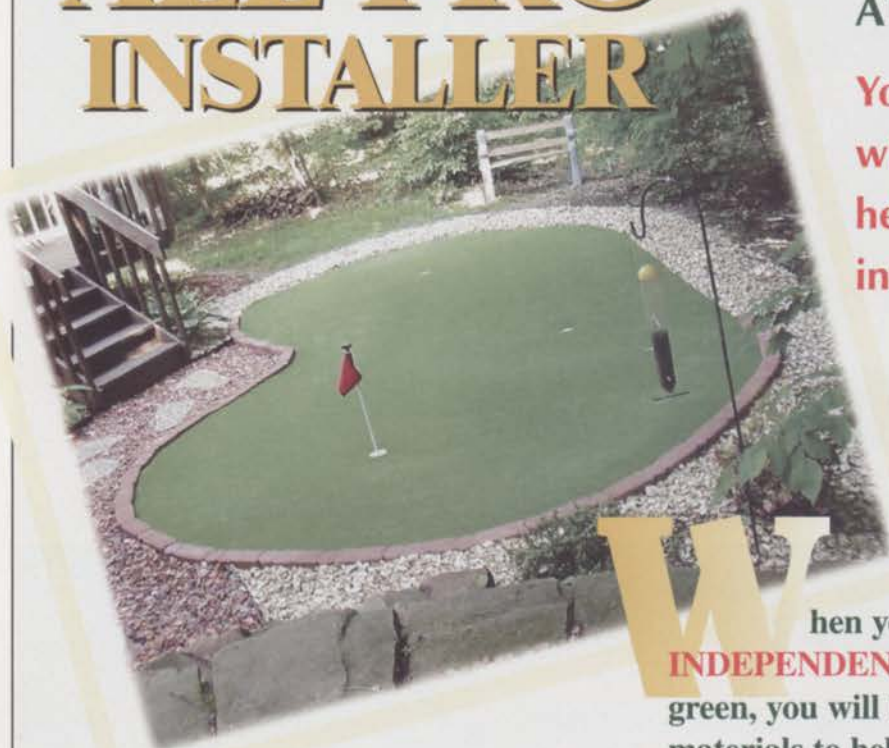
**How do you keep those referrals alive?**

Offering incentives, commissions, paying attention to detail and not cutting corners on their installs. Always listening to my customers needs and concerns, so that I can do the best job possible and avoid any callbacks.



You only have one requirement to become an installer:  
**PURCHASE AND INSTALL ONE PUTTING GREEN. THAT'S IT!**

## How to become an **ALL PRO INSTALLER**



**SIMPLY CALL US AND  
PURCHASE YOUR GREEN  
AT WHOLESALE COST.**

**You will be provided  
with free tech support to  
help you during the  
installation process.**

**W**hen you become an **ALL PRO  
INDEPENDENT INSTALLER** with your show  
green, you will be provided with the following  
materials to help you market and sell your  
greens and explode your business!

**QUARTERLY GOLFSCAPES MAGAZINE** – details the  
strategies and tactics you need to sell and install  
your greens.

**WEEKLY GOLFSCAPER NEWSLETTER** – covers how  
our most successful dealers are selling greens and  
how you can apply their techniques to your local  
market.

**10 PICTORIAL MAGAZINES** – showcases greens  
from all various shapes, sizes, and price ranges.

**25 BUILD A GREEN DAY BROCHURES** – easily  
explains the program to your customers

**50 FULL-COLOR BROCHURES** – outlines diagrams  
of green shapes and information.

**100 FULL-COLOR POSTCARDS** – great for  
following-up and mass mailing.

**4 SALES DVD'S** – to use while on design  
consultations with qualified customers.

**ACCESS TO OUR REPLICATED WEBSITE** – a great  
sales tool designed to educate your customers. Also  
receive weekly email updates.

**TRACKING SERVICE** – we provide you with  
complete tracking information once your shipment  
leaves the door.

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technical support, design layouts, and ad  
development.

### **MANY EXTRAS!**

Call today and take advantage of the  
fastest growing segment of the \$50  
billion a year golf industry – synthetic  
golf green installations!

**CALL TODAY TO ORDER YOUR SHOW GREEN!**



# Enter All Pro Putting Greens/ Photo Contest



**\$10,000.00 in cash prizes**

That's right! Enter photos of your prize-winning putting green installations. Simply choose a category below that best demonstrates the type of green(s) you have installed.

## CATEGORIES:

1. **BEST STAND-ALONE GREEN** – an installation of a green only
2. **BEST GREEN WITH PEOPLE** – this means people actually putting on the green from Build A Green Day or 19th Hole Mixer (not children using it as a putt-putt surface)
3. **BEST GREEN WITH A BORDER** – an installation including a retaining wall, concrete wall, fringe, patio, walkway, etc.
4. **BEST LANDSCAPED GREEN** – an installation with added landscape: plants, bushes, trees, flower garden, mounds, rock garden, etc.
5. **BEST GREEN WITH A WATER FEATURE** – an installation with an added water feature: waterfall, water garden, pond, water hazard, creek, etc.
6. **BEST TRANSFORMATION INSTALLATION** – an installation where the most dramatic change occurred from before, during, to after.

**Prizes for each category will be awarded as follows:**

**1st Prize \$800.00**

**2nd Prize \$400.00**

**3rd Prize \$200.00**

**5 Runner-ups \$50.00 each**

## RULES / GUIDELINES:

- Pick a category(s) to enter
- ALL photos must be mailed or emailed to us
- Size of photo must be a minimum of 4 x 6
- Emailed photos must have a resolution of at least 2048 pixels by 1536 pixels or 300 dpi
- All photos **MUST** have name, address, phone #, and size of green on the back or in the email
- Take photos at the time of day when no shadows appear on the green, best time is usually when sky in overcast. Also take photos from many angles.
- 1 green can only be entered once but submit as many greens in as many categories as you'd like (can't enter same green twice)
- Photos can be taken by you or a professional
- Provide details about how the green improved you or your customers game, enhanced the appearance of the yard, added property value to home, created a no-maintenance area, made more family time, was installed at a charity or school, etc.
- **DEADLINE for entries is DECEMBER 1, 2005**

Winners will be announced and contacted by December 20th, 2005. Winning photos will be featured on our web site.

Get snapping and get those photos into All Pro Putting Greens Photo Contest today!







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continued from page 98

of emergency response services.

Once a storage area is chosen, follow these tips for the exterior:

- Secure the storage facility (separate building, room, cabinet) against theft, vandalism and unauthorized access.

- Post the storage area with warning signs labeled "DANGER - PESTICIDES - KEEP OUT" on walls, doors, and windows. Signs should be legible at least 50 feet from the building.

- Store drums on sides to avoid accumulation of rainwater in top or bottom recessed areas.

Once the exterior of your pesticide storage facility is secure, follow these tips to create a safe interior:

- Pesticides should always be stored on the ground floor.

- Buildings used for pesticide storage should not contain office space unless pesticides can be completely isolated and good ventilation can be maintained.

- The interior of the storage area should be well-lit and dry; should have a cement floor to facilitate cleanup of spills; should not contain floor drains or sump pumps; should be equipped with exhaust fans to prevent vapor accumulation and heat buildup; should be insulated to help maintain an even room temperature (pesticides should never freeze or become excessively hot — specific temperature information generally is provided on the pesticide label with the recommended range for liquid pesticides normally around 40 to 100°F); should contain metal shelves with lips for storing chemicals off of the floor (wooden shelves are unacceptable because they can absorb spilled pesticides and large metal drums and nonmetallic containers should be kept on pallets); and should include an area for storing properly rinsed, empty containers awaiting disposal.

- Store liquid pesticides and highly toxic pesticides (those with "danger" on the label) on low shelves to minimize the potential for exposure if the containers are broken or begin to leak. Containers should not extend beyond the shelving.

- Separate pesticides by classification (herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, etc.) within the storage facility to prevent cross-contamination and decrease the likelihood of accidental misuse.

- Never keep seed, fertilizer, feed, drinking water, veterinary supplies, protective equipment or foodstuffs in a pesticide storage area.

- Title III of the Superfund

Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA), also called the Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act of 1986, requires that the storage of certain specified extremely



## pesticide storage checklist

**S**afety is the key element in proper pesticide storage. If you answer "No" to any of the statements below, you should correct your storage facility immediately.

### Enter date of each inspection:

#### General Information:

- Clean, neat pesticide storage site?
- Current, on-site pesticide inventory?
- Posted emergency phone numbers?
- Labels and MSDS on file?
- Accurate storage inspection log maintained?

#### Pesticide Containers:

- Containers marked with purchase date (old pesticide inventory to be used first)?
- Insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides segregated?
- Pesticides stored in original containers?
- Labels legible and attached to containers?
- Container caps tightly closed?
- No reused pesticide containers present?
- Pesticides stored off floor and low to ground?
- Dry formulations stored on pallets?
- Feeds stored separately from pesticides?
- Used containers rinsed and punctured?
- Rinsed and unrinsed containers separated?

#### Spills and Disposal:

- Storage area free of spills or leaks?
- Shovel and absorbent materials?
- Floor drains sealed (if present)?

#### Safety Information:

- No smoking signs posted?
- Safety equipment separated from pesticides?
- Fire extinguisher in good working order?
- Storage room locked?
- Storage room posted with "Pesticides, Keep Out." sign?
- Storage site well lit and ventilated? - Purdue Pesticide Programs /Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service





hazardous substances be reported to local emergency planning commissions. While SARA, Title III, primarily affects pesticide manufacturers and commercial dealers, individuals storing large quantities of certain pesticides may also have to comply with the law.

**STORAGE AREA SAFETY TIPS.**

Once the exterior and interior of your pesticide storage facility is secure, keep these safety pointers top-of-mind.

- Always store pesticides in their original containers with the original labels attached. However, if a pesticide container is leaking, transfer the chemical to a sturdy new container that can be sealed. Attach the original label to the new container or label the new container with specific information immediately.
- Purchase only the quantities of pesticides required for a single season to minimize the need for off-season storage.
- Keep the storage site neat and tidy.

Pesticide handlers must be able to see labels, detect leakage or corrosion and get to leaks or spills to clean them up.

- Store protective equipment and clothing in a nearby location that provides immediate access but is away from pesticides and their fumes, dusts or possible spills.
- Provide an immediate supply of clean water, and have an eyewash dispenser available for emergencies. Soap and a first aid kit are also necessary.
- Establish procedures to control, contain and clean up spills. Familiarize everyone with the procedures.
- Provide tools (shovel, broom, dustpan) and absorbent materials (clay, sawdust, shredded paper) for spill clean-up.
- Mark pesticide containers with the purchase date and rotate inventory to ensure you use the oldest material first.
- Keep an accurate, up-to-date stored pesticide inventory; a file of product labels available for reference; a file of

Material Safety Data Sheets; a building floor plan showing the exact location of pesticides; emergency phone numbers (police, fire, poison control center, and your state Department of Environmental Management Emergency Response) at the storage area and in the office.

- Maintain an inventory of all safety kits and signs.
- Develop a fire emergency plan in consultation with the local emergency planning committee and fire, police, and sheriff's departments. Notify the appropriate officials of the types of pesticides and quantities stored.
- Know and follow local fire codes. Consult with local fire authorities regarding the best methods for fire protection: water, foam, dry chemical, halon or carbon dioxide. **LL**

*The author is with the Purdue Pesticide Program, and can be reached at 765/494-1284 or fwhitford@purdue.edu.*

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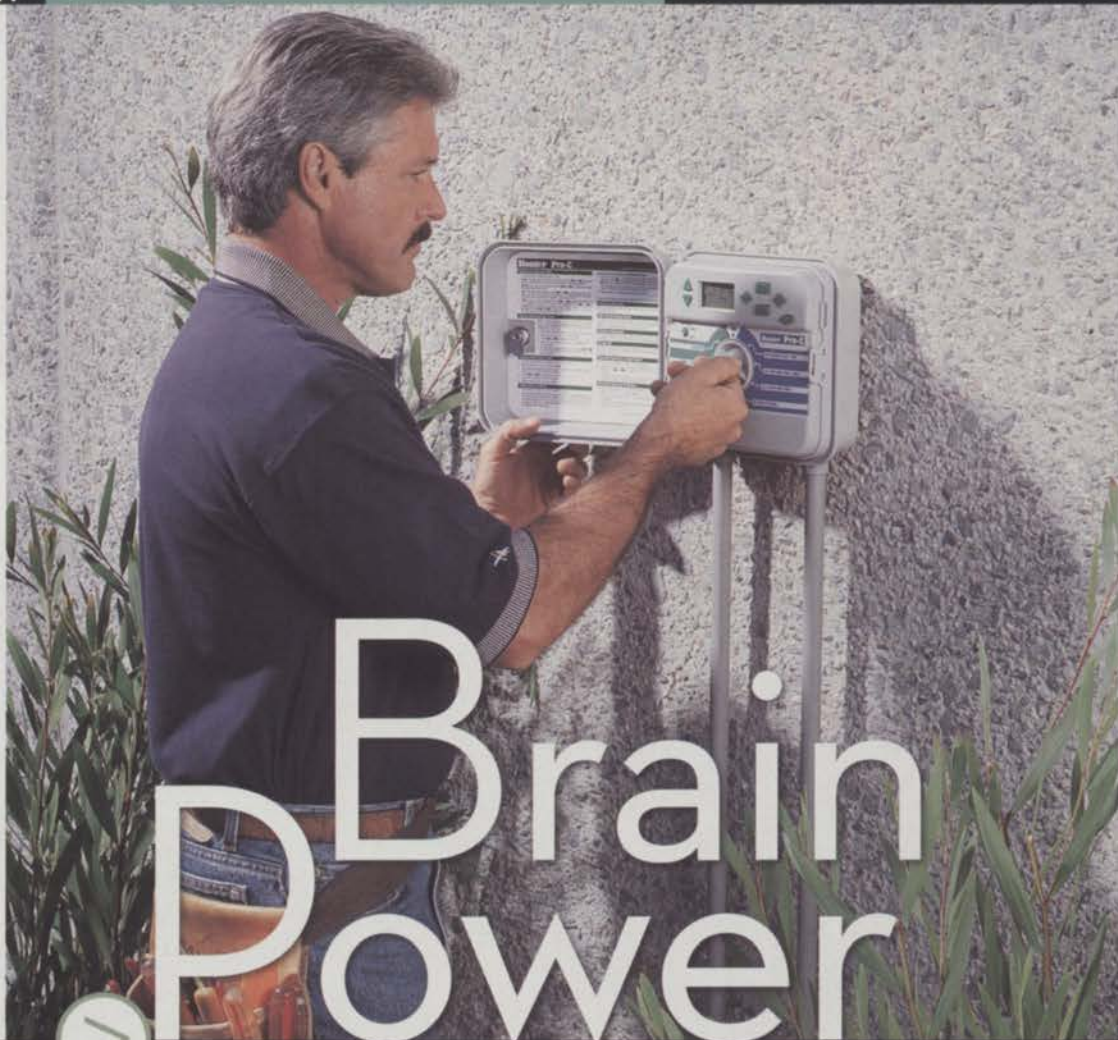
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Photos: Hunter, Rain Bird (page 128), Campbell Scientific (page 132)

# Brain Power

by kathleen franzinger

The push for water conservation is driving controller manufacturers to constantly improve the “brains” of irrigation systems.

**C**ontrollers are often called the “brains” of irrigation systems because they determine when to turn the water on and off. The instruments range from traditional time-based devices that control water flow according to a preset program to smart units that automatically adjust watering schedules based on local weather conditions.

In these days of ever increasing water restrictions, conservation is king. And controllers are a major factor in how efficient – or inefficient – an irrigation system is. “A good portion of the efficiency of an irrigation system is tied to whether the controller is set to the correct watering schedule,” says Jeff Carowitz, vice president of marketing, Hunter Industries, San Marcos, Calif.

Driven by legislation and water purveyors’ needs to reduce water waste, manufacturers are constantly coming up with new controller features. Improving a controller’s ability to accurately determine a property’s watering needs and making it easier for property owners and contractors to use will inevitably lead to better, more efficient water use. “When coupled with an efficient irrigation system and adjusted on a regular basis to meet local site and changing weather conditions, controllers can improve plant health,” says Don Clark, senior product manager for contractor controllers, Rain Bird, Glendora, Calif.

Carowitz agrees. “There has been a lot of emphasis in the last several years on making





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controllers easier to use," he says. "Making the controller easier to use will encourage good maintenance practices. It's important that the local user be able to program and operate the controller to make modifications. It prevents the contractor from needing to go back out to a jobsite multiple times, which can cost him a lot of time and money."



and add expansion modules. "Instead of carrying different types of controllers for different sized applications, contractors can carry a single controller and expand it to whatever the job site requires, as well as add on to it in the future," Carowitz says. "For the contractor, it's more convenient because it cuts down on inventory costs and eliminates trips back and forth to distributors to get the right size."

**NOW FEATURING.** Irrigation controllers have come out with several significant features in recent years. One that more manufacturers are incorporating is modularity, which enables controllers to expand to fit various application requirements.

Controllers are designed based on

the number of stations they control, and station numbers are dependent on the size and complexity of the landscape. Before, contractors needed to carry six-, nine- and 12-station controllers to ensure they would have the right one handy. With modular controllers, contractors can simply buy a base model

Clark adds that modularity also makes it easy to meet future expansion needs. "In the past, contractors would have to either replace the existing controller with a larger station count controller or add a second controller to handle the expanded landscape area," he says. "Modularity is especially beneficial in tract home applications where the developer may provide a front yard landscape and irri-



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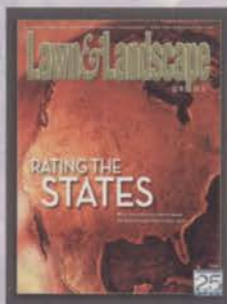
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gation package. When the homeowner decides to also landscape the back yard, the controller's capacity can be expanded by simply inserting a station expansion module into the controller."

Carowitz estimates that only about 20 to 30 percent of controllers today are modular. "But I would guess 10 years from now, all controllers will be modular because it offers so many advantages," he says.

Nonvolatile memory is another feature most major manufacturers are starting to include in all controllers.

In the past, controllers would lose their programs as a result of a power interruption. Then came the idea of providing battery backup. "Controllers evolved so that if the power went out, battery backup would save the time, but not the program," Clark says. "Now many controllers have nonvolatile memory which retains both the time and program in the event of a power inter-

ruption, making it unnecessary to go out to the site and reprogram the controller, thereby saving time and money."

Another popular feature is flow sensing. Most controllers have the ability to interact with a wind, rain or freeze sensor, but controllers able to interact with a flow sensor are a significant innovation because the controller can communicate to a sensor unit mounted in the pipe of a system, Carowitz explains. When the controller turns on a station, it measures the amount of water flowing through the main pipe of the system. Contractors enter the correct amount of water that should be flowing for each station. If something happens in one of the stations – either too low or too high of a flow – the controller diagnoses the problem and displays an alarm. "The feature is more for commercial or public-area applications," Carowitz says, adding that these high-traffic areas are more susceptible

to vandalism or damage that causes high- or low-flow situations.

Modularity and nonvolatile memory are so beneficial, they're quickly becoming standard features on new controllers. Carowitz relates it to CD players in cars. "Ten years ago, you had to pay for a CD player as an option, whereas today you can get it as standard on some cars," he explains. While controllers without modularity and nonvolatile memory are still available, they're in the same price range as ones that offer the features. Flow sensing, on the other hand, requires the purchase of a flow sensor. The cost to add the feature is less than \$300 per system, according to Carowitz.

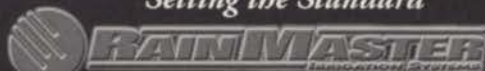
**SMART STUFF.** One of the biggest innovations in irrigation controllers has been the introduction of smart controllers. Unlike timer-based controllers that turn the water on and off based on a preset time, smart controllers factor in

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irrigation > > >

local weather conditions when determining a property's watering needs. Solar radiation, humidity, temperature and wind speed and direction data is used to determine the amount of water that will evaporate and transpire, also known as evapotranspiration or ET. Using that information, these controllers automatically adjust the schedule to apply the appropriate amount of water.

It depends on the controller make and model, but ET data can come from historical weather information, on-site sensors or one or several weather stations. Some smart controllers use satellite technology to send data gathered from more than 18,000 weather stations across the United States.

The most difficult thing for many contractors is determining a property's watering needs. Chris Spain, president/chief executive officer, HydroPoint Data Systems, Petaluma, Calif., says ET-based controllers do the math for them. "The controllers apply scientifically based principles, ones that contractors are usually forced to figure out in their heads, and calculate the watering schedule based on real database values," he says.

**"The most important thing in my opinion is who the user is. I see so many systems with a sophisticated controller, yet the person is not using it to it's fullest potential."**

**- Don Clark**

Some smart controllers prompt contractors with a series of questions about site conditions, such as slopes, soil and plant type. Based on the answers, "the controller's scheduling engine creates a customized, scientifically based schedule for each zone," Spain says. "For example, contractors can create 48 customized irrigation schedules for each of their 48 zones."

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## irrigation > > >

they can offer significant water savings according to manufacturers. They can eliminate over- and under-watering, runoff and the possibility of a controller being left on a summer program in the middle of fall. Of course, in order to realize the savings, the irrigation

system needs to be well-designed and well-maintained. "Until the body is working right, there is no sense putting in a smarter brain," Spain says, which is why he recommends contractors perform a system audit before they install a smart controller.

## climate control

It's impossible to predict the weather. But weather stations, when used in conjunction with controllers, can help contractors better access a property's watering needs and fine-tune their irrigation practices.

Jeff Adams, application engineer, Campbell Scientific, Logan, Utah, explains that a weather station provides four sensor readings on solar radiation, temperature, relative humidity and wind speed.

These readings are then plugged into an equation to calculate the amount of water that would evaporate or transpire, a process known as evapotranspiration or ET. "Scheduling based on ET numbers can speed up the learning curve, take out some of the guesswork and help contractors move toward a more automated process," Adams says.

Cynthia Turski, IPM product specialist, Spectrum Technologies, Plainfield, Ill., says weather stations have three parts: data logger, sensors and software. Users decide which parameters are important, such as wind speed, direction, rain and temperature. "After the base unit and sensors are selected, users need the software to communicate with the computer to configure the station and download the data," she says. "The comprehensive software allows for reports and summaries that help in making management decisions."

As far as costs, Turski says data loggers range from \$65 to \$300, depending on the number of ports and sensors. Full weather stations range from \$700 to \$1,500, depending on the included sensors. In addition, she says the data loggers require protective enclosures, which can range from \$25 to \$50. The software is sold separately for about \$200.

Turski recommends contractors sell weather stations by emphasizing the variability of weather. "Even within short distances, parameters such as rainfall, soil moisture and soil temperature can vary greatly," she says. "Relying on weather service data can be risky. A weather station also offers a convenient way to track environmental conditions over time to identify trends that can make for more efficient management of their turf or landscaping."

But weather stations aren't a set-and-forget-it device. Proper installation and maintenance are critical to weather station performance. "It's been said that no data is better than bad data," Adams explains. "If you're willing to invest a little time in education and maintenance, a weather station could add enough value and be a tipping point in winning the bid on many desired installations."





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irrigation > > >

Carowitz points out that although there is a lot of buzz surrounding this next generation of controllers, they come with a higher price tag. "You're stepping from a unit with a retail price of \$150 to a unit with a \$650 retail price," he says. "It's a substantial bump. And some even require a monthly fee to pay for the data needed to make them work."

Because of this, Carowitz thinks smart controllers' penetration into the market will be slow. "The market will like them, but the conventional controller will remain the bread and butter for the foreseeable future in many parts of the country," he says. "Because of that, I encourage contractors to install the best possible conventional controller."

In Spain's opinion, the water savings that smart controllers provide more than make up for cost. "Typically, these controllers can pay for themselves in water savings alone within a year or two," he says. In addition, a number of water districts and agencies offer rebates and incentives for installing smart controllers. To learn more about available city and state rebates, he suggests contractors contact their local water providers.

**CONTROLLER CHOICES.** The wide range of controllers can make the selection process a confusing one. A number of factors, including microclimatic conditions, planting schemes, type of sprinklers and emission devices, as well as the customer's budget, can help determine the best controller for a site. "But the most important question in my opinion is, 'Who is the user?'" Clark says. "I see so many systems with a highly sophisticated controller, yet the person operating and programming the controller isn't trained to use it to its fullest potential."

Keep in mind that the controller is an investment that is going to last 15 years, says Carowitz. "The homeowner and contractor should budget for a quality controller that gives enough features and flexibility to create a good watering schedule for the property," he says. "It really comes down to the number of features the property owner wants."

An important step in selecting a controller is determining the watering needs for a property. Watering needs come down to several factors, Carowitz says, including plant type, soil type, soil-holding capacity (clay soil holds more water than sand, for example) and ET rate. "Contractors need to develop a sense for what the monthly weather is and what the typical monthly runtimes are," he says.

To help determine a site's watering needs, some manufacturers offer free train-





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ing seminars, information booklets and interactive guides on CD or online – all of which are aimed at offering scheduling tips. Clark also recommends contractors take the irrigation auditor course offered by the Irrigation Association ([www.irrigation.org](http://www.irrigation.org)), which covers the basics of scheduling.

In addition, Clark says many communities are beginning to post watering indexes on their Web sites, as well as in newspapers. Contractors can use this information to their advantage. "By utilizing this information, contractors can adjust their schedules on a regular basis to match current weather conditions and subsequent plant watering needs," he says.


When trying to match the irrigation schedule to meet the current plant watering needs, Clark notes that contractors need to keep

**"A good portion of the efficiency of an irrigation system is tied to whether the controller is set to the correct watering schedule."**

**- Jeff Carowitz**

in mind that the efficiencies of an irrigation system may only be 50 percent. "Therefore, to provide 1 inch of water in a week to a turf area, the schedule for that zone will need to be set to deliver 2 inches of water or twice as long to make up for the inefficiencies present in the sprinkler system," he says.

Once a program has been set, it's critical that contractors and property owners understand that watering requirements change throughout the year. "Most people overirrigate because many controllers only get adjusted two times a year – once in the winter and once in the summer," Clark says. "Most people turn off their controller in the winter, and in the summer they'll adjust it to take care of the hottest time of the year. But they don't go in and make incremental adjustments, and that can waste a lot of water. Just think of how much water could be saved if the controller was adjusted two additional times per year." **U**



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# Good Things From Small Packages

by kathleen franzinger

Compact utility loaders perform the same tasks as their full-size counterparts while boosting productivity and getting in those hard-to-reach places.

**W**hoever said size doesn't matter never tried to fit a full-size skid-steer loader through a 36-inch gate. A skid-steer may seem like a dream machine for a job, but that dream fades the moment a contractor tries maneuvering in tight spots. That's where compact utility loaders or mini skid-steer loaders come in handy. These versatile machines can handle the same tasks as their full-size counterparts — only on a smaller scale.

Not only do compact utility loaders get in hard-to-reach places, they also boost productivity by replacing labor and saving time on jobs. "If a piece of equipment can save labor or time, then it's a worthy investment," says John Malinowski, vice

president of sales and marketing, Ramrod Equipment, Minot, N.D., adding that his company's compact equipment sales are up 15 to 20 percent over last year. "I think what is driving the growth is the fact that the equipment helps small contractors become more productive with less labor."

Rob Otterson, landscaping marketing manager, Bobcat Co., West Fargo, N.D., says the demand for compact equipment has grown in part because of the versatility of the machines. "Contractors see the opportunities to use the many attachments available for mini loaders and realize they can quickly expand their services into new areas to make more money or replace dedicated machines, such as trenchers," he says.

Whatever the reason, the use of compact equipment is on the rise. Roger Braswell, CEO, Compact Power Equipment,





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**Power-to-Weight Ratio** - ASV loaders work aggressively using a good balance of horsepower to weight. Their performance is legendary. Other brands reduce the power available for work by replacing tires with a much heavier track system. As a result, they burn more fuel and have less power available for work.

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Fort Mill, S.C., estimates that this year around 4,500 compact utility loaders or mini skid-steers will be sold in the United States. "My guess is that will bring us 18,000 to 20,000 units sold since they were introduced 10 years ago," he says. "And we're still scratching the surface of the opportunity for the units to be sold in the United States."

**A SMALL ADVANTAGE.** The small size of compact utility loaders comes with definite advantages, namely accessibility and maneuverability. Obviously, contractors can take a 3-foot wide machine places they can't take a 5-foot wide machine. And once on a job site, a smaller machine is easier for contractors to maneuver and causes less damage on

their customers' properties.

"Where a compact loader really shines is when you have to get into tight areas, especially when it's a track unit on existing turf," says Neil Borenstein, senior marketing manager, Toro Sitework Systems, Bloomington, Minn. "A compact utility loader, especially a track unit, doesn't skid around and can really limit the turf damage."

The other plus is portability. Oftentimes, contractors don't have the option of owning a lot of equipment. They're constrained not only by budget, but also how much they can transport. "Contractors can trail a compact utility loader to a job site behind a smaller truck that doesn't require a commercial driver's license," says Braswell. "With a skid-steer loader, you might have to take a tractor trailer to get everything out to a site that you bring on a ¾-ton

**"Owning a compact utility loader is equal to two to three laborers in terms of how much more you can do."**

**- Neil Borenstein**

pickup and a small trailer with compact equipment."

But size isn't the only advantage compact utility loaders offer. These workhorses are proving to be real labor savers. "I think people are noticing the machine's productivity and how they can replace quite a bit of manpower," Borenstein says.

As an example, Borenstein says it costs about \$365 to pay a laborer \$9 an hour for a 40-hour week. But it only costs about \$195 a week to finance a compact utility loader, assuming the contractor finances at a 5.9 percent rate for 36 months. "And after 36 months, it costs less than that," he says. "Once it is paid off, it would only cost about \$40

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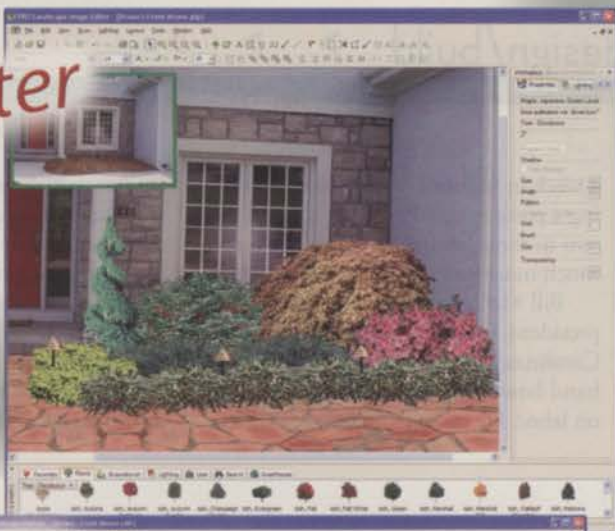
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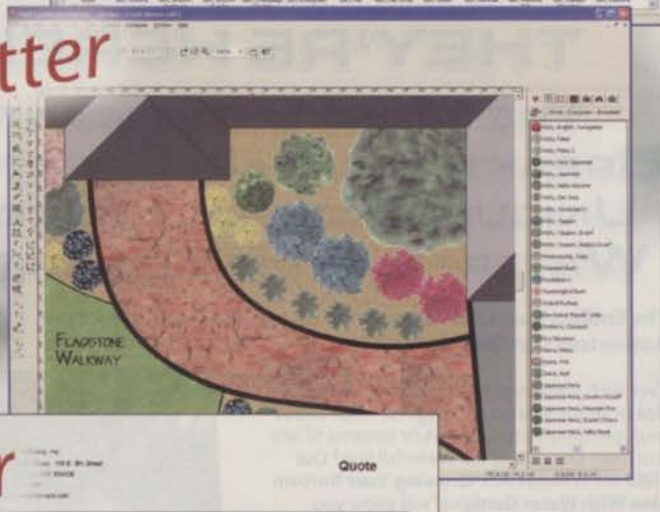
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a week in fuel and maintenance. Owning a compact utility loader is equal to two to three laborers in terms of how much more you can do."

Bill McCarley, co-owner and vice president, Outdoor Creations of the Carolinas, Charlotte, N.C., knows first-hand how compact equipment can save on labor. He owns two compact utility

loaders, which he uses mainly for irrigation installation and planting shrubs and trees. As his company was growing and getting more jobs, McCarley needed a machine that would speed up installations. "With compact loaders, we saw a chance to make more profit with a machine having less people on a job," he says. "The machine could do

the job of five men with one operator."

John Hackett, president, Dynamic Environments, Stafford, Tex., purchased his first mini skid-steer last December. He likes it so well, he will likely buy another one in 24 months. "We like the compact loader's power," he says. "We own a concrete company. With three guys doing the breaking by hand, it would take a day. With the mini, we can break it in an hour and a half and haul it away."

**COST CONSIDERATIONS.**

Generally the cost of purchasing a compact utility loader or mini skid-steer ranges from \$15,000 to \$30,000.

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**- John Malinowski**

But the total investment depends on a number of factors. "Price depends on whether you're talking wheels or tracks, gasoline or diesel power and lifting capacity," Malinowski says.

McCarley purchased a compact utility loader with a gasoline engine about three years ago, and added a diesel version about five months ago. "The gas machine was around \$15,000 for just the unit itself, no attachments," he says. "The diesel powered machine cost about \$17,500."

The total price of compact equipment can't be calculated without figuring in attachments. "It's uncommon to sell a unit with just a bucket," Borenstein says. "We usually sell a unit with a bucket, a trencher, a fork, a leveler and a trailer."

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The cost of attachments depends on whether or not they're powered. Imm says powered attachments, like a tiller, snowblower or brush-cutter, will add \$3,000 to \$5,000 to the price, whereas a nonpowered attachment like a bucket or fork costs about \$500.

Hackett uses his compact loader mainly to move bulk and materials, break concrete and for grading. His machine cost about \$24,000 with attachments, which include a concrete breaker, land plane, bucket and forks.

When it comes to buying attachments, Borenstein advises contractors to buy ones sized to work with compact utility loaders, as opposed to full-size skid-steers. "They can auger a hole as big as a skid-steer, but if you put an



attachment designed for a skid-steer on a compact utility loader, the motors, pumps and hydraulic demands aren't always matched up and sometimes you get subpar performance," he says.

Transportation costs also have to be

factored into total cost. Braswell estimates a compact utility loader with a basic bucket has an end user price from \$10,000 to \$20,000. "A 16-hp rubber track unit with 5.8 gpm flow sells for \$10,000," he says. "But a complete system with a trailer and attachments, depending on the size unit, is going to range from \$16,000 to \$35,000."

Because it is a substantial investment, contractors should test out a compact loader as much as possible before purchasing one. This will help ensure that the equipment meets their needs. Before purchasing his first compact utility loader, McCarley rented it on five or six



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separate occasions for two or three days at a time.

"Renting is perfect because they can try it for three days to a week, so you can try multiple attachments," Borenstein says. "You can really see what it can do for you."

Malinowski also suggests asking for a demonstration of the product, which

is what Hackett did. "They let us try it out for one month," he said. "We liked it and we bought the demo machine they gave us."

**FEATURE SHOW.** Just because the size is right doesn't mean compact utility loader manufacturers aren't continuously trying to improve the machines.

When it comes to new features, most of the attention is on power. Realizing the benefit of compact equipment isn't the drive unit, but the attachments, many manufacturers focus on offering as many attachments as possible, as well as trying to find ways to increase hydraulic power without increasing size.

"The trick is to keep a small machine with plenty of power for attachments," says Braswell. "The more flow the machine puts to that auxiliary hydraulic outlet, the more effectively you can run the attachment," Braswell says. "The question is how many gallons per minute of hydraulic fluid can you put through to that motor? The more gallons per minute, the faster the motor turning the attachment works."

As an example, Braswell mentions one machine that is less than 36 inches wide with its rubber tracks fully retracted. "You can go through a 36-inch gate, but you can still carry more than 14 gallons per minute of hydraulic flow to your attachment," he says. "In the past, you had to use a machine that was 5-foot wide and weighed 5,000 pounds to deliver that kind of power. Now we can do it with a unit that is 3-foot wide and weighs 2,000 pounds."

Increasing lift capacity – how high a load can be lifted – is another area manufacturers are looking at. "While mini loaders excel at accessing and working in tight conditions, they don't have the lift capacity needed in some lift and carrying applications, such as unloading a 2,000-pound pallet of sod or stone from a truck," Otterson says. Because of these limitations on lift capacity, Braswell says manufacturers are always trying to raise the bar. "You want the machine to be able to lift soil onto the bed of a 1-ton truck for example," he says.

Along with more power, manufacturers are always coming out with new attachments for the machines. "In the last few years, we've come out with attachments such as a landscape rake and a cultivator, which is a little less aggressive than a tiller but prepares turf for seeding or sodding," Malinowski says. Otterson points to an underground boring attachment for irrigation installations. "The attachment provides an alternative to hand digging under sidewalks, driveways or other obstruc-

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tions," he says. "And it keeps the ground intact at the same time."

Rubber tracking is another feature more manufacturers are offering on their compact machines. "With tracks, you can work in muddy and wet conditions," Braswell says. "They also let operators take a unit across wet turf without damaging it." Tracking systems are able to do this because they have less ground pressure per square inch, explains Braswell. In fact, some new track systems are a smooth track, meaning they have no tread pattern. "With smooth tracks, you can drive across the green on a golf course and not leave a mark," says John Imm, territory manager,



ager, Finn Corp., Fairfield, Ohio.

Another tracking system feature is the variable-width rubber track undercarriage, which has been available on mini excavators for a number of years. With the flick of a lever, the tracking system can retract to less than 36 inches

wide or slide back out to 43 inches wide. "The undercarriage can retract to get through a gate," Braswell says. "But once inside the gate, it can be extended for more stability so you can use it on slopes."

And who knows what the future may hold. In an attempt to boost power, Malinowski says contractors may see sit-in versions of compact equipment in the future. "We don't want to compromise the length or width of the machine, but it may help us to lift more," he says.

Malinowski also mentions the possibility of electric versions of the machines. "I don't think an electric version of the machine is too far away," he says. "I think that within two to three years you'll see more electric machines on the market." ■



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# The Rise of Fall



by lauren spiers hunter

Tending to clients' landscapes as the weather cools isn't just a good horticultural practice – it's an important business venture.

**F**or many people, the autumn is a distinct seasonal change that signifies a natural closing of doors. But this is also a time when other doors can be opened. Even though turf and ornamentals start to slow their growth at this time of year, that doesn't mean lawn and landscape companies should take a break. In fact, while some companies see a significant drop in work at this late date, many businesses boast year-round operations and find fall to be a particularly lucrative time of year. From horticultural practices, such as leaf removal, late-season pruning and bed preparation, to enhancement and seasonal color installations, many contractors say cool-weather work is the perfect time to nail down next spring's contracts and solidify client relationships. More importantly, adding a menu of fall maintenance services to become a year-round business can make a company more attractive to potential employees – a big plus in an industry where employee retention is a common concern.

**MANAGE YOUR MENU.** While homeowners and office workers are huddled inside during chilly days, maintenance crews gear up to provide a wide range of services best offered in the fall. "Our philosophy is that fall is the best time of year to upgrade your landscape for planting, turf renovation





Photos: Yardmaster



and other forms of maintenance," says Bob Franey, Total Landscape, St. Louis, Mo. "Taking care of these types of tasks is great during the fall because the landscape has already made it through the stress of summer and is ready to get set for the spring growing season."

Franey says his maintenance crews get started with autumn work as early as mid-August, and while the tasks may not be more complicated than at any other time of year, there are important services to complete in the fall. "In terms of maintenance work, at this time of year our crews are doing fall pruning of trees and ornamentals, landscape bed maintenance, a turf assessment and

will prepare to shut down irrigation systems," he explains. "There's nothing overly technical about fall preparation, but one thing you do have to pay attention to is pruning ornamental trees and shrubs at the right time of year. A lot of plants have spring blooms that are set in the fall, and you want to make sure you don't reduce the plant's bloom cycle by pruning off the buds. Timely pruning is critical."

In addition to caring for trees and shrubs, Roger Myers adds that paying attention to what's going on at ground level also is important. "You need to know that your shrub beds need a nice blanket going into the wintertime by

adding a good layer of mulch – about 2 to 3 inches deep. This will reduce root damage from the cold because it insulates the ground against freeze-thaw cycles," says the owner of American Beauty Landscaping, Boardman, Ohio. "Mulch has more importance than just for aesthetics – its function is really to help plants maintain their temperatures."

Myers and Franey agree that fall also is a great time to manage a lawn's health by finishing up late-season weed control applications and laying down a fertilizer that will help turf survive the winter and bounce back beautifully in the spring. "Fall is a great time to build your lawn and prepare for the



## the whole package

**R**ather than offering maintenance service à la carte – a little aeration here, some pruning and mulching there – many companies choose to include fall maintenance as part of a full-service landscape care package. Not only does this allow the company to generate more revenue from each account, but it also provides an opportunity to prequalify customers who call in for service.

"If a client needs a specific service, we may sell outside of the package, but we really want to sell all of our maintenance services together," says Bob Franey, owner, Total Landscape, St. Louis, Mo. "When a client calls and asks for just aeration or just leaf removal, we want to find out the motivation behind their call. If they're the kind of person that just shops for a certain season or service, they're probably not a client we want to take on. However, if they're in a situation where their current service provider isn't meeting their expectations, there could be an opportunity there."

Franey says sticking to a profile of what Total Landscape's ideal client looks like helps the company create relationship-based accounts that remain with the company for the long term. The company's account managers also are able to leverage the maintenance package when bringing on new customers by explaining that the company will make a commitment to the client and be able to serve them year round – something that companies

who don't offer maintenance can't say.

Roger Myers says he's had the same success with selling his company's maintenance services as part of a package. "When we bring on a new account, we'll do our best to have the client buy into all of the services we offer," says Myers, owner of American Beauty Landscaping, Boardman, Ohio. "The contract will be broken down with items like 'mowing,' 'seasonal color' or 'lawn care' itemized out, so it's easy for the client to see what they're getting, but it also lists a total dollar amount for all of the services, which the client can pay monthly, quarterly or by some other arrangement."

Offering fall maintenance and selling it as part of a full package allows both companies to bring in consistent revenue, even in slower months. Likewise, Myers says the recurring revenue afforded by maintenance services has helped push his company over the \$1-million mark. "With a design/build firm, you sell the job and it's done and you move onto the next one – then the next year you start from scratch again," he says. "That's what we used to do, but when we added maintenance four years ago, we stopped having that problem. With maintenance, it's possible to have 70 to 85 percent of your clients back from the year before – you start where you left off instead of going back to zero. Recurring income is huge – that's one of the most important things I've learned about offering maintenance."

next year," Myers says. "By feeding it, the turf will generate roots through the winter – when most people think it's dormant – and have a nice, strong root system in the spring. It's also important to know the proper fall mowing height on the types of grasses you're working with. Lowering your mowing height will allow more sun to get to the roots during the winter so the soil warms sooner, and falling leaves will blow right over the turf instead of collecting in the grass and possibly leading to snow mold and other diseases."

Indeed, leaf removal is often an essential fall maintenance service that many companies must perform for customers on a routine basis during the cooler months. Doing so requires crews to

forget their mower blades for a while in favor of rakes and vacuum attachments.

### MAKING THE TRANSITION.

For companies that offer maintenance throughout the summer, coordinating crews for fall work requires routing for efficiency. In terms of leaf removal, however, most companies that mow lawns during the summer will need to transition those teams to the maintenance side for leaf removal jobs.

"Our maintenance team now has about 15 crewmembers and the jobs

that they'll do on a given day in the fall are all weather dependent," says Myers, whose company has offered maintenance for four years. "It's definitely a challenge – one day you're mowing and then it might snow, but you still need to make sure you get the leaves off of the lawn, so our crews could be running a different apparatus every day."

Franey agrees that the transitional fall season can be difficult to manage, but says his company does its best by sticking to a plan when moving mowing crews to the maintenance side. "We

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transition our mowing crews into fall clean-up crews, so as they stop doing so much mowing, they'll pick up more leaf removal," says Franey. "We pay close attention to the turf and once we see a decline in the growing cycle, we begin to cut those mowing crews' schedules back accordingly. Our crews are usually completely transitioned by the

middle of November, which is when we like to have the first leaf clean-up finished. From there, we'll set up more established routing for leaf removal to the point where we'll have those crews revisit properties over the course of two to three weeks. Some properties have more mature trees than others, so we may have to visit them more often dur-

ing that time, while others will require very little leaf clean-up."

While Franey's mowing crews start tackling leaf removal and other routed fall maintenance services such as lawn renovation, aeration and pruning, the company's construction crews begin focusing on fall functions as well, taking on landscape enhancements. "There's plenty of time in the fall before the ground freezes to take on additional installation projects," he says. "As part of our transition into fall, our account managers will get the message out to clients that we're ready to take on other projects that they may have been considering about during the summer. In our climate, we're able to work on these types of jobs, in addition to maintenance, until Christmas, as long as the work is requested by Thanksgiving."

Franey's maintenance crews also use the fall to rotate customers' seasonal color plantings, installing mums, pansies and bulbs that will bloom in spring.

**BUSINESS BENEFITS.** Right now, maintenance accounts for 40 percent of American Beauty's annual revenue, and Franey says 25 percent of Total Landscape's work comes specifically from fall maintenance. By offering the services, both companies have enjoyed business success.

Primarily, Myers says he turned to maintenance services – and fall maintenance in particular – as a way to extend his company's service season and create a more stable work environment for his employees. "In the past, I was laying off crewmembers in November and December and we wanted to quit doing that so we could better attract and keep employees," Myers says. "Now we have 15 to 20 employees who are with us year round completing all of these services and it's really provided a lot of stability for their salaries and their work/life balance. They know they can always depend on their jobs to be there at the end of the year and we're able to build a stronger company because of it."

Franey offers a word of marketshare wisdom: "It's a good horticultural practice to maintain landscapes in the fall with clean-up and getting debris off of lawns, but in our market – and others, I would imagine – if you're not cleaning your client's property in the fall, someone else will be." □



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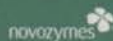
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# PRO Landscape Software

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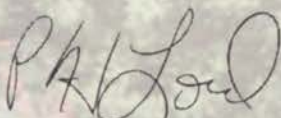
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Since the early 1990's, PRO Landscape software has been a crucial tool for landscape contractors, designers, and architects across the country and around the globe, helping them save time and make more money.

As we release our 11th version, there are a number of new features and functions in PRO Landscape that have us all very excited. New features such as seasonal changing, time lapse views, automatic edging tools, symbol shadowing and new bid presentation options are just a few of the features and functions added to the newest version of PRO Landscape design software. These new features affirm our commitment to our existing customer base as well as to new customers by constantly improving the product and providing the innovative functionality that our customers require.

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Sincerely,



Peter H. Lord  
President, Drafix Software





# Seeing is Believing

**W**ould you buy a car without taking a test drive? Go on vacation without perusing a few travel brochures? Probably not. But how many of your landscape design/build clients invest in your services without getting a full picture of how their finished landscapes will look?

"We used to hand-draw designs with circles representing different plants," says Chris Walter, owner, Computerized Landscape Design, Kansas City, Mo. "If I told the customer 'These circles represent burning bushes,' I'd still have to go through a horticulture book or visit a nursery with the client to show them exactly what a burning bush is. Even then, the customer still might not have a solid concept of how their landscape would look. The PRO Landscape software takes away all of that guesswork."

Walter has been using PRO Landscape from Drafix Software, Kansas City, Mo., since it debuted in 1992. Though he used other design software before that, Walter says PRO Landscape sent his business through the roof. "That year, I doubled my sales," he says. "We added \$100,000 worth of business in

one year and it's all in the pictures – people love to see what they're buying."

Drafix Software President Pete Lord agrees. "There is an old cliché that a picture is worth a thousand words," he says. "When you can show someone what their landscape design will look like, the new cliché is, 'A picture is worth a thousand dollars,' – at least!"

Mike McQuay, landscape manager, Stark Brothers Nursery & Orchards, Louisiana, Mo., says his company used to close 50 percent of its jobs before using PRO Landscape. "Once we learned about this software, started using it our business and implemented our own photos in addition to what Drafix already offers, we started making more sales," he says. "The last two years, we closed 95 percent of our jobs and I credit that to customers being able to visualize the project."



With tools refined over the last 10 editions, PRO Landscape's 11th and newest version is easier to use than ever before. Simply upload a digital image of a client's house or building and use fully customizable image libraries to place realistic images of trees, shrubs, annuals and perennials in the virtual landscape. Image libraries and software features also allow designers to incorporate everything from groundcovers to hardscaping to night and holiday lighting. In a fraction of the time it takes to hand-draw a design, PRO Landscape users can design and sell landscapes before clients' very eyes.

"I'm much more productive with this software," says Brett Seltz, chief landscape designer, Grasshopper Landscape, Franklin, Tenn. "Typically, it would take me twice as long to hand-draw one of these CAD designs if I weren't using PRO Landscape. With a hand drawing, if you decide to change part of the design, you either have to erase and redraw or completely start over. This software eliminates all that and it frees up my time to do more designs."

Seltz also says PRO Landscape's CAD and design imaging tools are easy to personalize. "I love the flexibility the program offers," he says. "I've customized the symbol libraries and also imported a number of plant images for the design imaging side. When we print a proposal or show the client our finished CAD design, those plant images become a really good visual feature and a great selling point for our customers."



## New Features

Beyond the ability to import design symbols and plant images, the 11th version of PRO Landscape offers new features that will make designers' jobs even more impressive. Here are a few exciting additions to the program:

- Dashboard: A single launch point for PRO Landscape makes it even easier to use
- Slope Tool: Automatically curve the bottom of a wall to fit on a slope
- Time Lapse Views: View time-lapse growth of entire project or layer by layer
- Picture Callouts: Add real plant photos to your CAD drawings
- Symbol Shadowing: Enhance the look of your CAD symbols with shadowing
- Automatic Edging: Automatically draw any color edging around a landscape bed



# Top-Notch Tech Support

Computers...they're only human. Or, at least they're subject to human error. Whether an operator clicks too fast and makes the wrong selection or has trouble importing an image, the tech support team at Kansas City, Mo.-based Drafix Software has answers for all of its PRO Landscape customers' technical questions.

"Just like any software, it takes some time to learn how the bells and whistles of PRO Landscape's design imaging and computer-aided design (CAD) tools work and how you can get the most out of them," says Brett Seltz, chief landscape designer, Grasshopper Landscape, Franklin, Tenn. "I've been using the software for 10 years and I'm very comfortable with it now, but there are still times when I have questions. One of the things Drafix has going for it is that the company has unbelievable technical support."

Drafix President Pete Lord notes that PRO Landscape includes video tutorials, and a comprehensive user manual to help customers learn the software. "If for some reason those tools don't get them where they need to be, we offer free lifetime technical support," he adds. "That's rare since many software companies have gone

to charging \$25 to \$100 just to talk to a real person."

Seltz says he's given the Drafix tech support team a call when working on collaborative projects with builders and architects. "I'll sometimes work with building contractors who are required to submit a full set of plans for a proposed property to a neighbor-

hood architectural review committee," Seltz explains. "There have been instances where I've been asked to have landscape designs for these projects turned around in one day. If I get to a sticking point, I can email the plan I'm working on to the tech support team at Drafix and they'll either physically call me on the phone and walk me through the mistake I'm making or they'll instant

message me and we'll clear it up over the Internet." Even with a tight timeframe, Seltz says the Drafix tech support team has never let him down. "I've never had a experience where they weren't able to get back to me on time or were unable to fix the problem," he says. "It's really unbelievable."

Mike McQuay agrees. "The whole Drafix staff has bent over backwards to make sure we're happy and make things easy for us," says the landscape manager for Stark Brothers Nursery & Orchards, Louisiana, Mo. "They have a great deal of product knowledge and make every effort to help us get to know our software better. Plus, they use customers' problems and suggestions to incorporate updates and better tools in subsequent editions of the software."

Lord says features in PRO Landscape's 11th edition, such as seasonal changes and shadows on CAD symbols, have come from user suggestions. "We pride ourselves on having innovative features in every new version of PRO Landscape," he says. "The majority of those new feature ideas come directly from our customers or the questions they ask that spawn an idea on how we can make the software even more useful to them."



*Using PRO Landscape, a designer can spend just one hour on a typical job site and end up with a signed contract, while the traditional approach might require multiple meetings and a few hours at the drawing table.*

hood architectural review committee," Seltz explains. "There have been instances where I've been asked to have landscape designs for these projects turned around in one day. If I get to a sticking point, I can email the plan I'm working on to the tech support team at Drafix and they'll either physically call me on the phone and walk me through the mistake I'm making or they'll instant

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# Design Mobility

Landscape designers who have invested in PRO Landscape regularly share stories about their increased productivity and impressive number of closed sales as a result of using the versatile software. But imagine the success a company could see by combining PRO Landscape's ease of use and seeing-is-believing characteristics. Landscape designer Chris Walter has done just that.

**DESIGN ON-THE-FLY.** "The design imaging, the computer-aided design feature, the landscape lighting – all of the PRO Landscape features help me close deals and design more landscapes," says Walter, the owner of Computerized Landscape Design, Kansas City, Mo. "But I've taken that one step further." Walter explains that before PRO Landscape, his sales process included several steps:

1. Take a call from a potential client and set up a time to meet.
2. Visit the property.
3. Go back to the office and hand draw a design – a multiple-hour process.
4. Set up another appointment to discuss the design.
5. Meet with the client again to – hopefully – sell the design.

Needless to say, it's a lengthy process. And, Walter adds that many of his Midwestern clients don't install their landscapes all at once, which calls for him to go through those steps again and again for multi-phase projects.

Now, Walter says he's eliminated many of the scheduling hassles and the time-consuming design process simply by loading his PRO Landscape software onto a laptop computer. "In the preliminary phone call, I let the

*By loading PRO Landscape software onto laptop computers, landscape designers can make their work mobile, allowing them to flesh out potential designs while standing with the client on a job site. Plus, additional services, such as night or holiday lighting, can be added to the plan and sold in minutes.*

client know that I want them to be truly involved in the design process and I find out where they want to put their main emphasis for the project – probably the front of house with some trees, shrubs and annuals or perennials," he explains. "I set up an appointment to meet with the client and I make sure to arrive a little early. Then I just snap two or three digital pictures of the front of the house and load them onto my laptop. When the appointment time rolls around, the clients and I sit on their front porch and design their landscape together right on the spot."

With the software's features, Walter says he can easily work with the client to change the types of plants used in the design, their placement, etc. When clients see their landscapes – and their ideas – come to life right on the screen, "I don't even have to sell the job," Walter says. "They sell it to themselves."

**EASY ACCESS.** So, by designing landscapes with clients on the spot, Walter has taken his productivity and percent of closed sales to even higher levels, noting that he doubled his sales


the year he began using PRO Landscape software. He credits this success partly to the seeing-is-believing aspect, but also notes the impression of professionalism this process provides. "When someone's going to invest thousands of dollars in anything, they're going to do a little research," he explains. "If I'm one of three contractors a customer calls and the other two say, 'We'll be out in a week to see your property,' That could be fine – until I show up within a few days and design their landscape on the spot. Who would you go with?"

But Walter's success with mobile design doesn't end there. He notes that if a client is late for a design appointment, he can use that time to develop preliminary designs or work on other design projects without ever having to be at his desk or a drafting table. And his ability to multitask on the road goes even further. "I've had instances where a client has called my cell phone while I was driving down the road and said, 'You did some landscaping for me last spring and I have a question,' or 'I'd like you to create a design for another part of my property,'" he says. "A designer





# Shine a Light on Upselling



who did a hand drawing would have to go all the way back to the office, look up the design and delay getting back to the client, whereas I can pull over to the side of the road for a minute, bring up their file on my laptop and answer their questions as soon as they call."

When landscape clients know that their designers and crew are easily accessible, Walter says their level of customer satisfaction rises.

**HIT THE GROUND RUNNING.** Compared to the number of landscape designs Walters says he used to be able to hand draw over the course of a year, he now completes hundreds annually using the PRO Landscape software. And some of his designs aren't even requested.

"In late fall or early spring when business is usually slower, I use the PRO Landscape software on my laptop to generate new business," Walter says. "For instance, I'll go to a new subdivision and shoot some digital pictures of different houses on the block. I keep a printer in my van, so I'll create a quick landscape design for these houses, print them out and leave the design and our company's contact information on their doors."

Using this technique, Walter says he usually gets three or four calls for new work, which helps him get a head start for the season. "Not only has the PRO Landscape software helped me build my business by becoming more productive, but it's a great tool to get your foot in the door," he says. "I'm an excitable guy and if I can use my skills and these tools to get my potential clients, it's great – people just love to see what they're buying."

**F**or contractors using PRO Landscape, brightening up a sale is as easy as turning off the lights.

In addition to creating upselling opportunities with features like the ability to add hardscaping, many users report earning thousands of dollars more on individual landscape design sales with the addition of a landscape lighting package.

"A lot of lighting sales have historically been made with generators and test lights at night after a full day in the field," says Pete Lord, president, Drafix Software, Kansas City, Mo. "The PRO Landscape software lets you create the lighting design simultaneously as you prepare the landscape design."

Brett Seltz, chief landscape designer, Grasshopper Landscape, Franklin, Tenn., says he creates night lighting packages for the majority of landscapes he designs. "Because our designs are very custom, we use the computer-aided design (CAD) program more often than the design imaging," Seltz says. "But lighting is something a blueprint can't portray and that part of the program is unsurpassable when it comes to showing the customer the possibilities."

Though Seltz focuses on PRO Landscape's CAD features, for each design he'll also use the imaging tools to create a realistic rendering of the client's future landscaping by incorporating a digital image of the client's house and importing images of the plants and trees the crews will be installing. When all that's done, Seltz says he adds the lighting fixtures and then turns out the lights.

"We add the lamps and light fixtures in last and then essentially turn the lights out on the PRO Landscape program itself," he says. "You can portray night in the program, which illuminates the lighting features so the client can see exactly what their prop-



erty will look like when it's all lit up. You can manipulate the angle of the light and the flood to make sure it's covering the area it needs to, not to mention representing different levels of darkness – evening lighting or dark night, for instance – to enhance the effect."

Chris Walter, owner of Kansas City, Mo.-based Computerized Landscape Design says that even clients who hadn't originally considered landscape lighting end up adding several thousand dollars worth of value to their properties after viewing their options. "Most people don't ask me about lighting, but if I create a design for a property, I always show them lighting options," he says. "That can add \$2,000 to \$3,000 to the job and it's a great tool to close a deal."

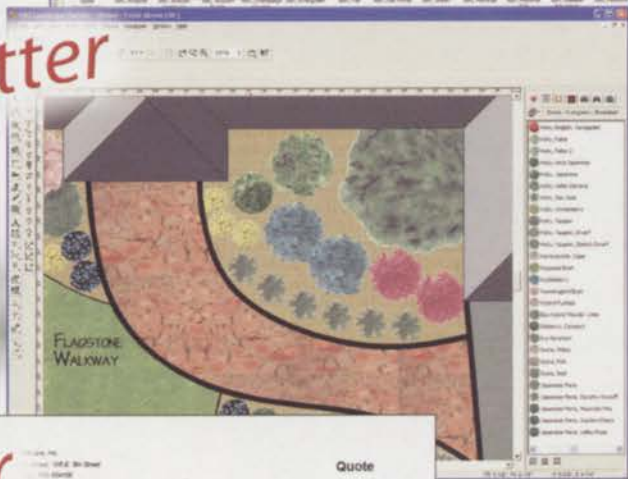
Walter says 50 percent of his clients buy into night lighting after seeing his PRO Landscape presentations. "Landscaping is a lucrative business and the visual aspect of the PRO Landscape software has allowed us to take advantage of that," Walter notes. "Whether it's landscape lighting, or adding boulder or a perennial border, or any of the other upselling tools I have at my disposal with the program, we can bring in a lot of additional sales. Some customers may think they know exactly what they want, but I can show them a picture of their house with a border of blooming coreopsis, or a few light fixtures and create a landscape that they'll really love."



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Expiration Date: December 08, 2003  
Name:  
Project Name: Beverly Ford Island  
Project Address: Beverly Ford Island  
Project #: 2004-02

Item Description

Item	Unit	Description	Quantity	Unit Price	Estimated Price
PLANT	1.00	Red, Blue Prunella	1.00	\$80.00	\$80.00
PLANT	5.00	Hydrangea Compacta	5.00	\$18.00	\$90.00
PLANT	1.00	Stem, Albino Red	1.00	\$80.00	\$80.00
PLANT	2.00	Junco, Pink	2.00	\$95.00	\$190.00
PLANT	2.00	Junco, Blue/White	2.00	\$95.00	\$190.00
PLANT	1.00	Maple, Japanese Lancelot	1.00	\$270.00	\$270.00
PLANT	6.00	Hydr. Prunella	6.00	\$15.00	\$90.00
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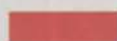
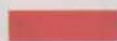
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# Grassroots Concerns

by nicole wisniewski

*Lawn & Landscape* and Bayer Environmental Science brought together lawn care operators from across the country to get a field-level perspective of the issues challenging their businesses.

**L**awn care operators and landscape contractors are urging their peers to get involved in the on-going fight to defend the industry against pesticide bans and government regulations and to promote professionalism.

This was the message heard loud and clear June 8-10 at the Grass Roots Industry Involvement Roundtable: How to Make a Difference for your Business, Community and Industry in Aventura, Fla., presented by *Lawn & Landscape* magazine and sponsored by Bayer Environmental Science.

Attendees soaked in knowledge during state regulatory updates, case studies and a public relations lesson. Then the invitees, representing various types and sizes of lawn care businesses from across the United States, got a chance to share their own personal views and tips during a roundtable discussion.

Here, *Lawn & Landscape* presents an excerpt of their conversation.

**L&L:** *What is the secret to garnering customer support when environmentalists attack your local industry?*





## discussion participants

**CHRIS JOYCE** – Definitely client communication. What's surprising to me is that half of the people who belong to the local anti-pesticide group working to ban nitrogen runoff are our customers. They don't seem to know what sort of bans they are supporting – the services they love might be taken away, but they are supporting it. We have to educate our customers.

**NORM GOLDENBERG** – Lawn care operators should also try to gain customer feedback about these issues. When facing regulations in New York, we sent out survey cards to customers and thousands came back. Ninety-two percent said they were against what the government was trying to do. Don't take your customers for granted – they are paying us to maintain their lawns. They know that a home sells faster and for a higher price if it's well landscaped.

**KAREN CORDS** – That's right – you get a 15 percent increase in the value of your property if you have a well-maintained landscape. Your customers don't want to lose this value.

**ALAN WHITE** – Don't take your customers for granted. You don't need to call them and rally them to the city on your behalf but you should keep them informed. You want them to hear your story more times than not.

**L&L** – *What can lawn care operators do when the media contacts them with questions about the use of pesticides on lawns to avoid any negative publicity?*

**WHITE** – Have your media processes down and keep your employees informed of your policy – they are the face of the company more than you are. Let them know what they can and cannot do. Don't isolate them from any attention – tell them what is happening and how you are dealing with it.

**GOLDENBERG** – Sometimes, however, it's not good to have employees answer reporter questions on the spot. We tell our people to shut down and go back to the office if they see a reporter. The reason is because they have used television footage of our guys doing the work with national stories and it's not always positive. Be careful and prepared.

**GARY LASCALEA** – You can also assign someone in your company as the best person for reporters to talk to and answer questions. If a media representative knocks at your front door, your employees should know what to do.

**L&L** – *How can lawn care operators be more proactive when fighting pesticide bans in their local communities?*

**TIM DOPPEL** – Get involved. Our local department of agriculture regulates pesticide and fertilizer use. We've spent time cultivating a good relationship with them and it's paying huge

### **Steve Ambrose**

ABC Pest & Lawn Services, Austin, Texas

### **Angela Bendorf Jamison**

Communicopia, Wake Forest, N.C.

### **Tom Burish**

Florida Landscape Maintenance Association, Bradenton, Fla.

### **Dr. Karen Cords**

Massey Services, Orlando, Fla.

### **Tim Doppel**

Atwood Lawn Care, Sterling Heights, Mich.

### **Frank Gasperini**

Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment, Washington, D.C.

### **Norman Goldenberg**

The TruGreen Cos., Memphis, Tenn.

### **Chris Joyce**

Joyce Landscaping, Marstons Mills, Mass.

### **Terry Kurth**

Weed Man, Middleton, Wis.

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JP McHale Pest Management, Inc., Buchanan, N.Y.

### **Shayne Newman**

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### **Tom Polak**

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### **Mike Rotter**

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### **Dan Standley**

Dan's Landscaping & Lawn Care, Terrytown, La.

### **Dan Warehime**

Senske Lawn & Tree Care, Kennewick, Wash.

### **Covey Wise III**

Wise Landscaping, Kissimmee, Fla.

### **Alan White**

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dividends now. Today, when rewriting legislation, they talk to us beforehand to ask questions and find out our views.

**GOLDENBERG** – Forty-one states have preemption laws being discussed. We can't let things like this go unnoticed without banding together and fighting. If we all had a passion for fighting these bans, we could hold the effort down very easily.

**LASCALEA** – If you're not involved early and you try to pull people together when something hits, it's much harder. Plus, by being more involved in the community, you might even gain new customers from it. This may take some time, but people will start to call you for advice. You become the local expert.

**WHITE** – Lawn care operators should also get involved in an association and

develop a network within their local industries. That can help them to deal with crisis management more quickly. They can also discuss ways to make the industry better. Via this peer support, lawn care operators can create a positive promotional industry message as well. Then selling these facts will be easier when we're under attack and it becomes problematic to build a positive message or respond to attacks.

**COVEY WISE III** – Getting involved with other associations outside of the industry that your clients are involved with also helps you educate your customers. I attend a local Home Owners Association meeting once a month and I get to hear about what the local problems are and stay informed.

**DAN WARHIME** – I agree, but joining the association isn't enough. If you don't show up to meetings, you're not

going to get anything out of it. You have to get on a committee – don't just become a member. Activists are good at segmenting some issues out and then dividing and conquering. We have to do the same thing. Get on a committee with an organization like the Building Owners and Managers Association – get involved and do some work.

**WHITE** – You have to stand up and be proud of the industry even in the face of tough times. Remember, we provide a tremendous benefit to society – don't hide behind it.

**JOYCE** – If the activists get a good foothold, they will keep going until they've eradicated the industry. This could affect our livelihood. The problem I see is that a lot of people don't think past tomorrow. We need to have more conversations more often to be prepared for these attacks. **LL**

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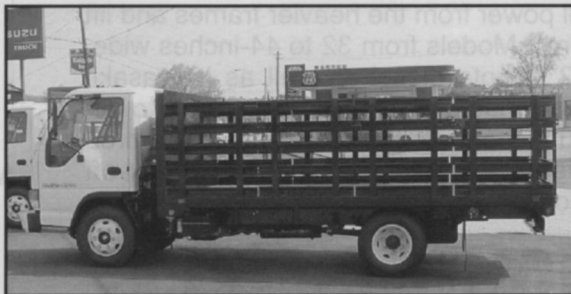
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▶ compiled by kathleen franzinger

## Pine Hall Brick English Edge Pavers

- Series comes in seven colors
- Beveled edges highlight pattern
- Spacer nibs provide consistent joints and eliminate edge chipping
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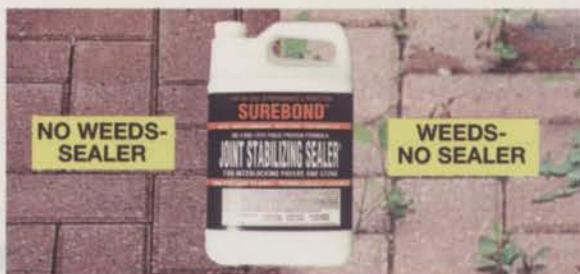
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## Surebond SB-1300-1370 Paving Stone Sealer/Joint Stabilizer

- Clear protective sealer for all types of paving stones
- Penetrates and bonds the joint sand in flexible paving stone applications
- Nonflammable and nontoxic
- Can be applied as soon as pavers are installed
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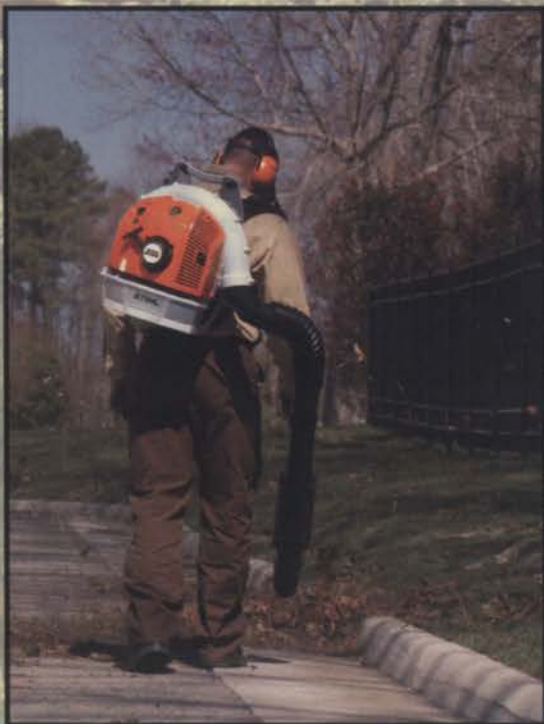
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### Pave Tech PaverGuard VOC-Compliant Sealer

- Acrylic solvent waterproofing sealer for concrete
- Meets VOC emission regulations in every county, state and province in North America
- Offers shorter cure time and less odor while still providing the "wet-look" of an acrylic solvent sealer
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### Envirospec Pave-El Paver Stone Pedestals

- Level, space and provide drainage of paver stones for roof gardens and green roofs
- Four-squared honeycomb structure with eight vertical spacing ribs on the upper surface
- Placed below the intersecting joints of four paver stones, with the vertical ribs acting as uniform spacing guides
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- Controls mites for four to eight weeks and whiteflies for four to six weeks
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- Offers lipid biosynthesis inhibitor mode of action
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- Compatible for tank mixing with foliar fertilizers and insecticides
- Bayer Environmental Science  
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## Rain Bird 115-E Rotors

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### HAWK Portable Stump Grinder

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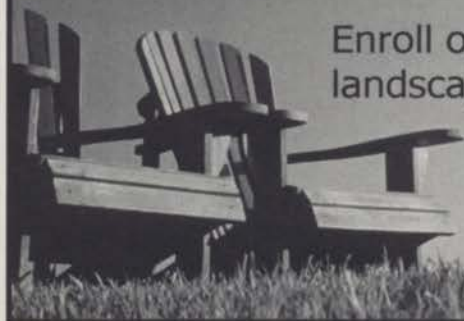
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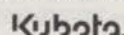
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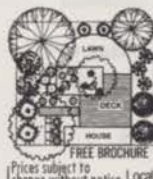
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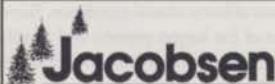


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The authors are human resources manager and safety and hiring officer, respectively, for Stay Green, Valencia, Calif., and can be reached at 800/858-5508.

## At Stay Green, "Safety First" Means Hiring Right

**W**hen Stay Green, Valencia, Calif., went into business 35 years ago, we knew our staff had the skills to create beautiful landscapes. In the last few years, we realized that one thing we didn't pay enough attention to was making sure crews could complete those projects safely.

Any company dealing with Workers' Compensation should be familiar with Ex-MOD or "Experience Modification" ratings, sometimes just called MOD rates. By comparing a company's annual losses in insurance claims to its policy premiums, insurance companies use the Ex-MOD as an indicator of a competence. A rate of 1.00 says claims are in line with industry averages, while a rate above 1.00 means the company has more Workers' Compensation claims than average and insurance premiums rise accordingly.

Early on at Stay Green, our Ex-MOD rate was well over 1.00 – at a rate of

1.25 the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) comes knocking on your door, and they had started visiting us. Also, our Workers' Compensation costs were very high. In April 2004, we finally stepped back to find the problem. Hiring a new safety officer, Erick Farrugia, helped us do this.

Erick began by looking at all of our accident records from the previous four years and made an important finding: 80 percent of Stay Green's accidents were caused by employees who had been with us for one year or less. To us, this meant we needed to refine our hiring procedures and safety training for new employees.

Prior to this investigation, our hiring procedures weren't very sophisticated – sometimes we took a few minutes just to hire "warm bodies" to fill a position. All we had to wait for were the results of the applicant's physical. Now, our updated hiring procedures are much more involved.

### 5 Keys To Safe Hiring & Operations

1. Hire or appoint a safety officer for your company – someone who will be focused only on the company's safety policies and who will train new hires for safety.
2. Analyze your company's accident claims to identify trends in who is causing accidents or if certain problems come up repeatedly. Use that information to determine where to start remedying safety problems.
3. Make safety important from the time an individual is first hired. Train them on company safety practices with videos, tests and other tools.
4. Involve all employees in safety constantly by providing personal protective equipment and implementing requirements for when it must be worn. Be consistent in reprimanding employees who do not comply.
5. Present changes to your safety program to your insurance company for their input. Discuss how the changes can help lower your insurance rates and when you can expect to see lower premiums.





Photo: Jeffrey Frew

The Stay Green team is working hard to create a safer work environment for everyone. Photo: Stay Green

Once an applicant is considered for a position, we give them a safety test to determine if they're capable of performing the required duties. If so, the employee is then sent to a medical facility for a pre-placement physical and drug screening. These tests ensure there are no pre-existing conditions that would keep the employee from performing their job. When we receive the necessary results, the employee is officially hired and safety orientation begins.

After filling out the necessary hiring paperwork, Erick interviews all new employees and asks them directly if they or their families want them to have accidents at work. Obviously, the answer is always, "No," and we ensure the individual that Stay Green doesn't want them to have accidents either. From there, Erick administers a safety test covering a number of questions related to issues we deal with everyday, such as wearing personal protective equipment,

handling and report accidents, etc. New hires are trained on all of these topics and the test helps solidify the concepts in their minds. Additionally, Erick filmed and edited a 20-minute safety video featuring our own employees in actual on-the-job situations. Applicants watch the video with Erick, who stops it frequently to discuss the situations on the film and how Stay Green's safety practices were presented. The safety orientation takes about two hours.

As for the training video, because Erick filmed our crews during routine site visits, creating it took little time outside of his regular work hours. We were able to save the time and thousands of dollars we could have spent on a professional film crew by creating the video in-house. Also, while many safety videos are available from OSHA and green industry associations, featuring our employees lets new hires see how our own crews work with their protective gear and lets us ad-

dress actual problems we've experienced as a company.

Our new "Safety First" mentality also applies to existing employees and not just new hires. All employees now wear fluorescent vests with "Safety First" printed on them and are required to wear safety glasses and gloves. The vests must say on at all times during the workday, though the glasses can come off while employees are driving. Stay Green supplies all of the protective equipment, which costs about \$180 per employee. If an employee is found without the appropriate safety gear, they are given a formal reprimand.

All of our new safety practices were implemented simultaneously. While we experienced some turnover and a few employees were reluctant to change, everyone now realizes that without these changes, accidents happen and employees at Stay Green all end up getting hurt. That's a lose-lose situation, but the steps we've taken have turned things around dramatically.

In just one year, our Ex-MOD rate dropped 16 percent and the number of accidents we reported dropped 75 percent. Because Ex-MOD rates are calculated using three years' worth of claim information, it will take about two to three years for us to meet or exceed a score of 1.00. However, we're already seeing significant changes. By making our company safer, in just one year we've saved \$150,000 to \$200,000 in Workers' Compensation costs – and those savings will continue to increase over the next few years.

At Stay Green, we're very proud of all our employees and their dedication to keeping the company safe. In February 2005, we celebrated our first no-accident month since 2001. By updating our hiring and safety procedures, we've been able to make dramatic changes for individuals at all levels of employment. – **Jorge Donapetry and Erick Farruggia** LL





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Greg Heimes  
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